

A Study of Textbook Illustration in Primary School from the Perspective of Semiotics

Wang Cheng, Ge Ziwei

Art College, Anhui University of Finance and Economics, Bengbu, Anhui, 233000, China

Keywords: Semiotics, primary school aesthetic education, textbook illustration, children's aesthetic psychology

Abstract: The education of fine arts is a weak link in the basic education of Chinese primary and secondary schools. Although the aesthetic education of Chinese primary and secondary schools is actively discovering and improving problems, the overall form has changed greatly, but some aesthetic education problems have been ignored. Aesthetic education is the combination of aesthetic teaching and aesthetic teaching. Aesthetic education is not only reflected in the reasonable design of fine arts curriculum and the sufficient resources of teachers, but also reflected in the appropriate content of textbook illustrations in primary school. Combining with the connotation of semiotics, guiding students to cultivate aesthetic consciousness and establish correct and positive concepts is what we need to implement actively at present.

For a long time in the past, aesthetic education as an important part of school education, but not very good attention. In recent years, the state has introduced various policies to actively improve aesthetic education in primary schools, but these policies are mainly aimed at aesthetic education courses and resources. Besides aesthetic education courses, there are still some problems related to aesthetic education that need to be paid attention to and improved. Catering to the development goal of semiotics, from the perspective of semiotics, combined with the value of textbook illustration in primary school, solve the possible loopholes in illustration design, and escort the correct development direction of textbook illustration design in primary school.

1. Overview of Semiotics

CAI Yuanpei once said, "The purpose of aesthetic education is to cultivate a lively and keen spirit and cultivate a noble and pure personality." [1] In the past, aesthetic education did not get people's attention and was neglected to discuss and develop. In recent years, with the increasing attention of the country, the problems of aesthetic education in various primary schools have been found and put forward for improvement. In combination with semiotics, this paper defines the connotation of textbook illustrations with semiotics, improves students' ability to distinguish right from wrong with semiotics, and creates the illustration design system of primary school textbooks with symbols.

1.1. The advantage of semiotic perspective

There is a common problem in the aesthetic education course of primary school, that is, the content taught by teachers is not enough to arouse students' interest. Tracing back to the research methods of iconography, the purpose of iconography is to deduce the theme and spiritual connotation that the painting is intended to express through rigorous interpretation of the drawing works. In combination with the semiotics research method, the illustration of primary school textbooks is rigorous, from the text content of textbooks to textbook illustrations, from images to schematics to rational formulas, and finally to musical notes.

1.2. "Metaphor" in Semiotics

When the semiotics research method is applied to the history of Chinese painting and calligraphy, painting and calligraphy belong to a kind of image symbol. Images can be divided into three categories: imagers, simulacra, and metaphors. Among them, metaphor has the highest and most abstract symbolism, which can be divided into three categories, namely non-political metaphor, political metaphor and stylistic metaphor. In the illustration design of primary school textbooks, relevant illustrations are related to the text content of textbooks. For example, in primary school Chinese textbooks, there will be pictures such as plum, orchid, bamboo, chrysanthemum and history magazines, which have different metaphorical meanings combined with different text contents. Therefore, we should be careful in the selection of illustrations in primary school textbooks, which is related to the growth of students and the shaping of students' personalized emotions.

2. Semiotics and illustration content of primary school Textbooks

2.1. Analysis of inappropriate illustrations in primary school textbooks

As mentioned above, textbook illustrations have great influence on students, especially primary school students. Excellent textbook illustrations with correct content will bring good influence to students. However, it is worth thinking about what kind of influence will be brought to primary school students if inappropriate and misleading textbook illustrations appear in their textbooks?

Before the problem of illustrating math books appeared in front of the public and caused great heat and discussion, we never seemed to pay attention to the appropriateness of illustrations in elementary school textbooks. Opening the teaching version of primary school textbooks published in 2013, we can see that the illustrated characters have no eyes, no sense of beauty, lack the agility and vigor that children should have, and no artistic level and aesthetic sense at all. "Art is a language, a graphic language without translation." [2] For primary school students, visual information is their main way of learning, and picture symbols are the most important way of visual cognition. Primary school children are like a blank sheet of paper, which needs us to fill in the colors with knowledge and education to help them establish the correct values of life. From the point of view of their development stage, pictures are the most intuitive and effective way to convey information to them. Therefore, illustrations in textbooks should have artistic, aesthetic, clear and educational significance. Only when children can understand and appreciate aesthetic illustrations can they have a good influence on children. Otherwise, the result can be imagined. When parents choose extracurricular reading materials and picture books for their children, they will think twice about the content and illustrations, let alone the illustrations in textbooks.

2.2. Analysis of illustrations in old textbooks

For children's books and picture books in the book market, we can still select and select by ourselves, but textbooks cannot be selected by ourselves, so it is very important for students to have a textbook with excellent content and aesthetic illustrations of online textbooks. The textbook illustrations in my student days were healthy, sunny and positive. Moreover, most of the illustrations in the textbooks at that time were not illustrations, but classic art works created by an old artist, such as the impressive "Flight to Luding Bridge", which was created by painter Lei Tan in 1977. The picture freeze in the Red Army soldiers to forge ahead of the moment, give us a great visual impact and spiritual shock, has a very good historical education significance; Another example is "Let's Swing the Double OARS" in the primary school Chinese textbook, which was drawn by Wang Weizhen, who created the classic characters such as the boy Leap Tu. This work vividly shows us the scene of a group of young pioneers boating on the lake in the North Sea. The author can still clearly remember this illustration after many years. What these textbook illustrations have in common is that they all have high aesthetic value, strong Chinese elements, and strong educational significance. Some historical events and historical stories cannot be well understood and memorized by text description or oral expression alone, but a good art work can. In the negative background of the illustration incident of 2013, it is particularly urgent and important to inject classic art works into primary school textbooks.

2.3. The importance of cultivating aesthetic consciousness from an early age

American psychologist Danny Woolf proposed the three-stage theory of aesthetic cognitive development in 1987. He divided children aged 4-18 into three stages. Woolf explained the aesthetic psychological development of children and adolescents aged 4-18 in a segmentation way, and the second stage was children aged 8-12. He calls this the stage of understanding the visual system, in which it is crucial for children to become familiar with the visual language or system within a certain range defined by a particular culture, because this step must be based on their understanding of the general organization of symbols. That is, the development of understanding of a particular visual language depends on a cultural situation. Therefore, for primary school children, when learning new knowledge, they need a large number of visual materials to help them understand, which is why there are always a large number of illustrations in primary school textbooks, while there are few illustrations in middle school and high school textbooks.

Aesthetic education is also called aesthetic education or aesthetic education. Aesthetic education guides people to learn how to look for beauty with their eyes and hearts. Primary school students have begun to have a certain degree of aesthetic appreciation ability, and a certain degree of aesthetic expression ability. But children's aesthetic ability is still limited. The implementation of aesthetic education in primary school is actually to consciously cultivate children's aesthetic consciousness, so that children can know how to understand, discover and feel beauty, in order to improve children's inner ideal, the pursuit of beauty, quality and quality. It is also the function of primary school textbooks to use the beauty of illustrations to influence children's aesthetic consciousness imperceptibly. Teaching students to feel, appreciate, and create beauty will benefit them a lot.

3. The significance of textbook illustration in primary school under Semiotics

Psychology professor Li Xiaodong put forward in his book *Child Psychology* that human perception mainly includes visual perception, auditory perception, olfactory perception, spatial perception, time perception and motion perception, and 80% of the information people get comes from visual perception. [3] There are two main ways to use visual knowledge in class: first, teachers

collect pictures or videos and then show them to students in slides; The other is free illustrations in each student's textbook. Children's visual acuity develops fully when they are 7-10 years old. Children's ability to distinguish the shape of objects, the ability to discriminate between different colors, the ability to distinguish between different shades of the same color are rapidly improving. Because children in primary school can not concentrate well, it is difficult to focus on the teacher's oral teaching or pure text teaching, resulting in the class effect will be very unsatisfactory. When teachers use the combination of text, pictures and video to teach, it will help students better understand and stimulate their interest in learning, and finally achieve good teaching effect. When publishing houses edit textbooks, professionals in charge of this work will insert a lot of pictures into the textbooks to help students learn in a more intuitive visual education way. The subjects involved are Chinese, mathematics and English, etc. These pictures have two meanings: one is to assist teaching, to help students understand the content of the textbook; The second is to make art appreciation, now there are many publishing houses in primary school Chinese textbooks insert some classic works of painters, some reflect current events, some have aesthetic function, some contain stories[4-5].

By using the formal beauty of illustrations in textbooks and combining the text content of textbooks, children's aesthetic consciousness can be cultivated imperceptibly from the perspective of semiotics, which is also the comprehensive effect of primary school textbooks. Learning how to appreciate and create beauty is a compulsory course for primary school students' emotional education and personality education. Through the beauty of textbook illustration, it is beneficial to cultivate students' unique aesthetic consciousness[6].

4. Summary

For primary school children, aesthetic education exists not only in the art class, but also in the illustrations in textbooks of various subjects. A good illustration, such as classic art works, can help children establish the correct three views and good aesthetic consciousness, which will benefit them for life. An inappropriate illustration without aesthetic and artistic quality, such as the illustration in the 2013 teaching textbook, may bring the opposite effect to the former. Therefore, we need to guide students to cultivate aesthetic consciousness and establish a correct and positive concept from an early age. At present, aesthetic education is still in a weak position in basic education, and its value has not been given due attention. Therefore, schools should pay attention to other forms of aesthetic education while improving the design of fine arts curriculum, increasing its innovation and interest. Schools should consciously cultivate students' aesthetic consciousness and improve their aesthetic spirit from the perspective of semiotics. Combining symbolic connotations, students can be trained to imagine, appreciate and create beauty, so that they can enjoy the illustrations with historical educational significance and Chinese elements in various textbooks, which is conducive to the cultivation of students' aesthetic consciousness and the healthy development of body and mind.

References

- [1] Cai Yuanpei. *CAI Yuanpei Aesthetic Literature Selection* [M]. Beijing: Peking University Press, 1983.
- [2] Danny Wolf. *Images, systems and Art Choices: Children's developmental changes in the process of creating, perceiving and reflecting on visual art* [A]. Netherlands: *Papers of the International Conference on Art Education and Basic Education*, 1987.
- [3] Li Xiaodong. *Elementary School Psychology* [M]. Beijing: People's Education Press, 2003.(75-77)
- [4] Jiang Liang. *Teaching Choice of Fine Arts* [M]. Hunan: Hunan Fine Arts Publishing House, 1998. (392-394)
- [5] Wang Dagen. *Theory of Early Childhood Art Teaching* [M]. Beijing: People's Education Press, 2007.
- [6] Hu Xiaohe. *Under the perspective of semiotics newspaper news pictures generated and express* [D]. Yunnan normal university, 2021.