

# Brief Exposition on the Language Characteristics of Children's Literature From the Perspective of "Whole Language"

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## ABSTRACT

Whole language is a theory of children's language education that rose in the middle of last century. Based on the theory of "whole language", "literary language" and "oral language", as different language types, complement each other. The combination of "literary language" and "oral language" strengthens the effect of children's language learning. Based on this, kindergarten education activities should provide children with a rich language environment as possible as they can. It can improve their language level of daily communication, and also cultivate their sensitivity to artistic language and help children prepare for learning written language.

**Key Words:** *Children's language learning, Children's literature, kindergarten activity*

## 1. Introduction

"Whole language" was an important theory in the field of western children's language education in the late 1970s. It was first defined by Goodman, a language educator from the U.S. as "a way of thinking that regards children's language development and language learning as a whole." [1] Its connotation included two dimensions: language development and learning of knowledge content. He thought that only the language learned completely was the real language, which included listening, speaking, reading and writing abilities, and they were related to each other. "Guideline for kindergarten education (Trial)" also included the cultivation of early reading ability in kindergarten language education goals, "Use books, paintings and other methods to arouse children's interest in books, reading and writing, and to develop pre-reading and pre-writing skills.." [2] This requirement is consistent with the theory of whole language. It is shown that kindergarten language education should not only pay attention to listening and speaking and other oral language learning, to guide children to understand and use everyday language, but also to guide children to learn literary language, and to understand and use written language to a certain extent to achieve "comprehensiveness" of language learning. According to whole language, "literary language" and "oral language" have the same important value. They complement each other and jointly realize the "complete" function of children's language education. Based on this, kindergarten education activities should provide children with a rich language environment as possible as they can. On the one hand, it can improve their language level of daily communication, on the other hand, it can cultivate their sensitivity to artistic language and help children prepare for learning written language so as to form a complete and good language ability in preschool period. The "literary language" involved in kindergarten language

education is usually defined as the written language in children's literary works. It is an artistic language that takes children as the target and conforms to their age characteristics, cognitive level and aesthetic psychology. From the perspective of whole language, on the one hand, children's literary language retains the essence of language as an abstract concept and, on the other hand, it also has aesthetic implication and aesthetic characteristics of literature. Compared with oral language, children's literary language has the following characteristics in language education:

### 1.1. "Normative" of Discourse System

Literary language, is also known as standard language, it is a highly processed and standardized language among national languages, and it is the advanced form of national common language. Literary language is quite normative and must reflect the internal connection and essence of things. Its accuracy and precision are more prominent than oral language, which is of great value to the formation of language sense of mother tongue. Besides, from the perspective of literary language creation, although what is marked by language is still a phenomenon in children's eyes, it is also higher than that in children's eyes. That is, to regulate and restrict the world children's phenomenon. The writer puts "the perception, representation, casual association and unintentional imagination that adults have already understood into children's perception, representation, casual association and unintentional imagination, which can make the world of children's phenomenon distinctive, complete and accurate, and make the main and secondary, phenomena and essence, accidental and inevitable, causes and results, quality and quantity relations become very clear, and organized, with concepts, judgments, reasoning, mathematical logic and internal connection and essential truth behind it." [3]

Besides, the standardization of children's literary language is also reflected in the language structure. "Discourse construction is an artistic process, that is, the materialized process of rhetoric subject to the objective world and subjective world. The beauty of discourse comes not only from the illusion of psychological illusion of objects aroused by discourse, more importantly, it comes from the sequence of discourse in reconstructing the subject world, and provides a reasonable structure that can arouse people's aesthetic sympathy for psychological calculation".[4] Language is one of the expression form of thinking, and the goal of language education should also include the training of children's thinking. Therefore, there must be structural aesthetic characteristics in children's literary language. Structural beauty is mainly realized through rhetoric, such as the coherence beauty of thimble rhetoric, the momentum beauty of parallelism rhetoric, and the symmetry beauty of antithesis rhetoric. And through the arrangement of characters, words, and sentences, the language will have a structural beauty of being neat, uneven, progressive, or extended, so as to realize the aesthetic value of language art.

### ***1.2. "Musicality" of hearing level***

Complete language learning needs interesting perceptual stimulation. Children mainly experience the "beauty" of literary language through "listening". The acceptance characteristic of "listening and appreciating" determines that children's literary language takes visualization as the most basic characteristic, and presents people and things to children concretely, perceptually and vividly through artistic language. In language form, through the elaborate combination of pronunciation, vocabulary, sentence patterns and other elements, this characteristic is expressed as a kind of "music beauty", such as melodious and harmonious rhyme beauty, cadence tempo beauty and catchy melody beauty. "Rhythm and tempo are as important as semantics in children's literature. Rhythm is not only rhyming, but also exists in the meaning of sentences. Rhythm and tempo are two inseparable and mutually reflecting elements that constitute the language musicality. That is, the length of sentence patterns and the volume of pronunciation form the external rhythm of a language; The ups and downs of writing and the looming of thinking are the inherent rhythm of language. Rhythm and tempo interweave, permeate and combine with each other, making the language of children's literature have strong musicality. " [5] The music beauty of literary language can enrich children's hearing level and make them produce pleasure and beauty on physiological hearing and psychology.

### ***1.3. "Variety" of Language Situation***

Whole language thinks that language acquisition needs real

and natural language environment. For example, Brown proposed that whole languages should be used in real situations, and children's language acquisition should be carried out in rich situations. Children's literary language relies on the carrier of literary works with many forms, and it can create a variety of language situations outside the real scenes and realize the accuracy and richness of language arts. This accuracy based on pragmatic functions and the richness of emotional functions are exactly the presentation of situational beauty. In the context field created by literary language, children produce a special emotional experience and form rich imagination and resonance, they will match experience and imagination with past experience, automatically form emotional transfer, and apply the beauty of artistic language to life, enrich and beautify emotions, and get rich experience of language sense.

For example, in Fragment of "Thumbelina" in Andersen's fairy tales, the cradle of Thumbelina is a beautiful walnut shell with bright light, her cushion is a petal of blue violets, and her quilt is a petal of rose ... On this table, that woman puts a plate with a circle of flowers on it. The branches of the flowers are soaked in the water, and a big tulip petal floats on the water. Thumbelina can sit on this petal and use two white horsetails to paddle from side to side in the plate. This is really beautiful! She can also sing, and she sings so softly and sweetly that nobody has ever heard before.

Through the vivid narration of the kindergarten teachers, this passage constructs a vivid fairy tale situation, and makes the picture in children's mind match it to form artistic experience with strong individual color. In addition, children's imagination processing in listening and appreciating can complete the complete experience process from language characters to literary situation and then to real life.

### ***1.4. "Innocence" of value orientation***

"Innocence" is the value pursuit of children's literature, it includes two orientations-"childishness" and "children's interest".

"Childishness" is a natural aesthetic characteristic of children's literary language, it presents a childish and clumsy style of childrenization. This childish and clumsy beauty is presented in content and form, and the combination of them forms a kind of natural aesthetic realm that seems clumsy but smart in fact. For example, based on the thinking characteristics of children's "animism", there are many works on this subject in children's literature. Under the playful language style, if investigating the root, it all reflects the love and praise for children and a childlike feeling of "returning to childhood". "Children's interest" is the best form close to children's psychology. In children's literary works, children's interest is reflected in the depiction of images, in language, it is reflected the application of various rich language forms. For example, lullaby, chain tune, clapping song, tongue twister, initial tune and reverse song in children's songs

have both children's interest in content and interest in integrating game factors. For example, lullaby, chain tune, clapper song, tongue twister, acronym tune, transvestite song and so on in children's songs not only have children's interest in content, but also have interest integrating game factors. For example, if a kindergarten level 1 teacher saw a child (with a nick name of Taotao) who did not wipe mouth and had rice on the face after the meal, the teacher would jokingly said: "Meow meow meow, little Taotao, you are a little dirty cat, don't you believe it? Touch your face." This kind of children's song style language is more fun than serious preaching, and it can also better reflect the kindergarten teachers' psychological and emotional acceptance of children.

"Guideline for kindergarten education (Trial)" issued in 2001 proposed that children language education should "guide children to contact excellent children's literary works so that they can feel the richness and beauty of language." Compared with the previous "Guideline (Trial Draft)", its language goal is higher. Besides its pragmatic ability, it also emphasizes the aesthetic and emotional nature of language arts. Although literature and language often overlap in the field of humanistic education, they still have their own essential characteristics. The organic integration of literature and language is conducive to realize children's language education and "aesthetic education" function together.

## 2. Conclusion

In conclusion, we believe that adults should consciously guide children to learn literary language in language education, so as to help them build a more comprehensive perception and understanding of their mother tongue. In the language activities of kindergarten, it is also necessary to help children learn written language and feel the norms and aesthetic feeling in language through literary works. Learning literary language will not cause trouble for children to learn oral language. On the contrary, it will help children master their mother tongue more comprehensively.

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