A Review of Executive Styles of Illustration in Music Education Books for Children (Elementary School Students) from 2000 to 2016

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Abstract

This article is derived from my MA thesis with the title of "A Review of Executive Styles of Illustration in Music Education Books for Children (Elementary School Students) from 2000 to 2016". Illustration is one of the branches of visual arts and is referred to as a type of creative works. Illustration is the induction of a concept or a story with the visual form. Nowadays, illustrators use various styles in their illustrations. Illustration of Children's books depends on the age groups of the readers, especially in selecting the method and the style of pictures. In this paper, after reviewing various executive styles in music education books for children, these topics were used to analyze the related works concerning illustration in music education books published from 2000 to 2016 in two parts of flat styles and perspective method of illustration.

Key words: Illustration, Music education books, Children

INTRODUCTION

Illustration is one of the branches of applied arts which the illustrators use to express their ideas and concepts of visual elements in the best possible way. Pictures always hold a special place in children's books and journals. Children always need to see pictures related to their lessons, so that they can communicate better with the text; especially in music education books, because music is not like their mother tongues and children need pictures to understand better. The analysis of illustration in children's books is carried out by 2 approaches. Several critics, especially art experts who most of them are experts in children's literature insists on not only the aesthetic aspects of the pictures and their role as the visual language, but also on the storytelling and conveying the concepts.

In this study, we focus on the aesthetic aspects of the pictures and the executive styles in music education books for children. This review shows clearly which executive styles of illustration in education books can establish an active relation with the children who are in elementary schools. The question in the study in that which executive styles have been more commonly used for illustrations in music education books for children (who are in elementary schools)? Considering the question, we can come up with a hypothesis that it seems that the dominant style in illustration of music education books for children is the flat illustration style.

BACKGROUND RESEARCH

(Maryam Aghajani; Paper collage technique in Iran's contemporary illustration). In this paper, understanding the paper collage technique in Iranian illustration is the main concern. (Mozghan Asna-ashari; Nahid LashkariFarhadi; Faride Shahbazi; Mirzaei; Mohammadi; Khadije Haddadian; Jamaloddin Akrami). Do the pictures in the books ruin the mental image of children? In the 36th conference of criticisms on library science, archives and manuscripts, they discussed if it is possible that pictures in books may ruin the mental image of children. In this discussion, it's been stated that carelessness toward illustration of non-fiction books has led to fundamental
problems in our elementary school books. These books lack the necessary attractions.

(Tahere Fazlali; A review of fiction books’ pictures published from 1999 to 2001 in the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults for 3rd grade to 6th grade children). The method used in the first part of this research is desk and document study and in the second part, content analysis has been used.

(Zohre Qayinei; Reactions of 4 to 6 year old children to science-fiction visual books.). In this study, she focused on the main readers of visual books who are children under 6. Visual books of this age group was prepared according to the epistemology features of these children.

THE ANCIENT HISTORY OF BOOK ILLUSTRATION

Book illustration has even a more ancient background than printed books. The incorporation of texts and pictures started much sooner in the east, than it did in the west. Many years before Christ, paper was invented in China and then went to Egypt, where the first books of ancient times were created by papyrus. Some of the papyrus books were in form of a scroll with big pictures drawn on them. Since papyrus was damaged when folded, these books were created in the forms of a scroll, so that they can be rolled easily. The most ancient visual book that has been discovered so far is an Egyptian papyrus scroll from 1980 BC.

The good condition of this scroll is due to the retentive quality of Egypt’s sands. Findings of scientists demonstrate that in the 13th and 14th century BC, there were books written on wood in China and some were visual books, but all of them have been destroyed over time. Egyptian papyrus books that have survived from then are named “The book of the dead” and involve more pictures (Pictures 1 and 2).

On these scrolls, prayers, religious songs and spells were incorporated with pictures. Because of people’s beliefs, these scrolls were buried with the corpses; people thought these scrolls will bring the dead eternal joy. “Book of the dead” were not the only books Egyptian used to write; they also wrote other visual scrolls about astronomy, magic and animal tales. In the 4th century BC, scrolls were also being produced in India. In the 1st century BC, these scrolls became common in China and then traveled to Japan alongside Buddhism. Most of these scrolls contained religious tales (Bland, 1988).

EXECUTIVE STYLES IN ILLUSTRATION

Although the terms “executive styles” and “art tools” have different meanings, some reference books have used them as synonyms. Art tools are the instruments and materials that are used in illustration; such as watercolor or oil paint and etc.

The application or the method of using these tools are referred to as styles. In this section, the common term “style” has been used to refer to both of them.

Nowadays, illustrators use various styles in their illustrations; from pencil and color pencils to watercolor, gouache, various types of printmaking, collage and even computer software. But in the past, illustrators didn’t benefit from various options. Evolution of illustration in children’s books, especially in selecting styles and methods of pictures has had a close relationship with
the development of printing technology or the mass production of books.

In each historical period, illustrators had to think of printing features and limitations when selecting their styles. Before it was possible to print through photography and before offset printing existed, illustrators drew their pictures on papers using pencils or pens, and then they gave them to engravers to apply them on wooden or metal surfaces. Color printing in children's books started with painting with hands and then evolved to color separation with the method of photography and printing by offset devices. Color printing started a revolution in illustration of children's books.

With the advances of printing devices, the barriers for illustrators to select styles no longer exists and illustrators have achieved the freedom to choose their favorite styles. In the last two decades and especially in the previous years, Iranian illustrators faced a new situation for printing their works. With the import of advanced offset printing devices to Iran which are capable of computer color analysis, on one hand, the advances in the color chemistry and printing materials will decrease and on the other hand, the difference between the original work and the printed version gets more and more unnoticeable. Illustrators can easily use different styles and materials and make sure that the printed version will have the same quality as their original work. The only limitations on the way of illustrators, especially when we look at visual books from a semantics point of view, are the limitations that the style of work creates for the illustrators in selecting their method.

Most illustrators change their styles, based on the text type. They select styles that fit the text style. Therefore, if an illustrator prefers a particular style, he/she will chooses texts that are in coordination with his/her preferred style. Some illustrators have only one style of illustration and that becomes their personal signature or style. Color pencil, watercolor, gouache, acrylic, color inks, oil paint, collage, hand print are some of the styles that are used in the works of many illustrators (Picture 3).

**SAMPLE NUMBER ONE**

The sample number one is presented in Picture 4.

**Illustration Features**
The executive style: Illustration style by acrylic
Title: The music education of “Teaching the little fingers how to play”
Illustrator: Xheight Limited Barnett
Year of publication: 2005

**Description of the Work**
This illustration is for teaching piano to children who are in elementary schools and the book was published in 2005. The frame of this work is a horizontal rectangle and the background color is white.

The lesson's title is written above the frame and there are some related descriptions below. There is a picture of an owl below the text and next to it, there is a piano with only 3 octaves depicted. The black claviers of the piano represent the double keys and gray claviers represent triad keys. On the middle clavier of the piano, the related musical notes of “do re mi” are written. Below the frame, the musical notes are placed in 5 carrier lines and 2 hands have been illustrated by drawn lines and on each finger, their related
numbers were written. Below the frame, there are some descriptions regarding the G-clef and F clef.

The executive style of this work is acrylic. The illustrator has used the black color without shades for the piano; but the owl has both shade and color. The owl is wearing a blue suit, a red tie and a pale green pants.

SAMPLE NUMBER 2

The sample number 2 is presented in Picture 5.

Illustration Features
The executive style: watercolor
Title: Sing with me, Play with me 2
Illustrator: Fariba Aflatoon
Year published: 2014

This illustration is for teaching bells and flute recorder to children who are in elementary schools and was published in 2014. The frame of this work is a horizontal rectangle and white color has been used for the background. The executive style of this work is watercolor. In the upper part of the picture and just below the frame, the musical notes are set horizontally with black color. At the bottom, pictures of a fireman and a waste collector are on the right side; in the middle, we can see pictures of a surgeon and a nurse and on the left side, there is a policeman and a chef. These characters have been colored alternately by warm and cool colors. In the background 5 thin lines have connected them together.

CONCLUSION

As we explained earlier, nowadays illustrators use various kinds of styles in their works. Illustration of children's book, especially in selecting the method and styles of pictures depends on the reader's age. The needs and interests of children are different depending on their age. Understanding the psychological characteristics of children and their preferences are one of the primary principles of illustration.

Beautiful and intense works bear less educational value if they don’t consider the characteristics of children's age groups. Compared to adults, children are more emotional and they communicate with the pictures more easily than they do with reading and comprehension.

In this research, we reviewed 53 illustrated books with the subject of teaching music to children (who are in elementary schools) from 2000 to 2016 and we analyzed 15 samples to see which executive style has been more commonly used (flat or perspective). Findings showed that 11 out of 15 cases had used the perspective method.

By reviewing the above-mentioned samples, we concluded that the most used style in music education books for children is “perspective” and considering the specific readers, illustrators used this style for music education books for children published from 2000 to 2016.

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