

Play Spirit Facilitating Cultural Transmission: Three Chinese Picture Books

Guo Ruifeng¹, Astri Yulia^{2*}

¹Universiti Selangor, Batang Berjuntai, 45600, Selangor, Malaysia

Email: xle302@outlook.com

²Universiti Selangor, Batang Berjuntai, 45600, Selangor, Malaysia

Email: dr.astri@unisel.edu.my

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR (*):

Astri Yulia
(dr.astri@unisel.edu.my)

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the manifestation of play spirit in Chinese picture books. It uses three picture books with Chinese characteristics, namely Happy Chinese New Year, Chinese Mythological Stories, and Traditional Chinese Festival Stories. Through in-depth analyses of these picture books, the study will focus on the impact of play activities on children's creativity and imagination and their understanding and perception of Chinese culture. By studying these picture books, we can better understand how Chinese culture is conveyed through play and how Chinese picture books work to stimulate children's learning interests and creativity. This paper has explored the influence of play elements in these picture books on children's understanding and perception of Chinese culture. These picture books often cover elements of traditional Chinese culture, such as traditional festivals, arts and crafts, and mythological stories. Through playful presentations, children can gain a deeper understanding of the connotations of Chinese culture. By analyzing these picture books, we can understand how the play elements help children build up their knowledge and feelings about Chinese cultural traditions through storylines, illustrations, and interactions.

Contribution/Originality: This research uniquely analyzes how play spirit in Chinese picture books enhances children's cultural understanding, creativity, and emotional development. It integrates interactive design, gamified education, and storytelling to bridge cultural transmission and learning engagement, addressing gaps in children's literature, educational strategies, and cross-cultural pedagogy.

1. Introduction

Picture books, as a form of children's literature, play an important educational and entertainment role for young children across cultures. In recent years, there has been an increasing number of studies on picture books involving different themes and elements. [Hooykaas et al. \(2022\)](#) dived into vocabulary and visual literacy, while [Edirisinghe et al.](#)

(2018) investigated receptive language skills. Play spirit, an important element of picture books has also received widespread attention in Chinese picture books (Bian, 2023; Ullan & Belver, 2019). The core concept of playfulness is to stimulate children's curiosity, imagination, and creativity through play and interaction and to promote their cognitive, emotional, and social development. However, the current understanding of the embodiment of playfulness in Chinese picture books and its impact on children is relatively limited in the academic community (Fung & Chung, 2022). This study, therefore, aims to fill this gap by conducting an in-depth analysis of the play spirit in Chinese picture books, exploring its specific manifestations in picture books and its impact on children's growth and development. Specifically, this study investigates how play spirit is manifested in Chinese picture books, specifically through an analysis of three distinct works. We argue that the play spirit enhances children's engagement and creativity and is a crucial conduit for transmitting and reinforcing traditional Chinese cultural values.

2 Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative narrative approach grounded in play-based concepts to assess how Chinese picture books can facilitate the passing of culture. In contrast to the coding-based paradigm, the approach focuses on narrative patterns and cross-case comparisons to maintain cultural meanings of play at the sample level. Based on Fisher's (1987) narrative paradigm theory and Rogoff's (2003) sociocultural learning model, two primary profiles are considered: ludic-cultural synergy, play mechanics as cultural enhancers, and inter-generational memorization, historical and contemporary identity.

2.1. Analytical Framework and Operationalization

The study operationalizes three constructs central to cultural learning through play. Narrative playfulness focuses on how game-like agency is incorporated into stories; it is determined based on bullet-point features such as branch plots, including the choice of legendary heroes in Mythological Heroes and reader-endowed endings. Cultural resonance measures the extent to which specific cultural values (e.g., filial piety, collectivism) are passed down by identifying culturally salient motifs and contextual usages, as supported by children's drawings regarding ancestral practices after reading the book (Jia, 2022). Cognitive anchoring assesses cultural knowledge using a 5-point scale to rate the children's performance on re-telling folklore after one month with increased validity using observational transcripts of parent/child reading (Smith et al., 2009).

2.2. Data Collection and Case Selection

Based on popularity (2020-2023), three cultural works were chosen from the 'bestselling' list of the China Children's Press & Publication Group through a three-step approach. The order of preference for selecting games was: (a) cultural fitness, vetted by China Folklore Association experts about UNESCO's Intangible Heritage Lists; (b) game mechanics novelty - augmented reality simulations of rituals recipe creation games; (c) child activity indices based on parental rating obtained with the use of Vygotskian scales (Marsh, 2017). The video 'Happy Chinese New Year' with AR ancestor worship scenes received the highest engagement score of 4.6 out of 5 ± 0.2 , proving the efficiency of multisensory play in maintaining the themes of family togetherness (Table 1).

Table 1: Characteristics of Selected Picture Books

Title	ISBN	Year	Key Play Mechanism	Cultural Focus	Child Engagement (M±SD)
Happy Chinese New Year	978-7-5397-98622	2018	AR ritual simulations	Familial traditions	4.6 ± 0.2
Chinese Mythological Stories	978-7-5332-9156	2021	Hero journey decision maps	Mythological ethics	4.2 ± 0.3
Traditional Chinese Festival Stories for children	978-7-5113-79740	2020	Festive culinary traditions	Culinary heritage	4.8 ± 0.1

Note: Using a validated observational protocol, engagement scores are based on 120 parental reports (Marsh, 2017).

2.3. Analytical Process and Validation

In the three-phase analytical procedure, the play-culture motifs are traced intertextually while the efficacy of various media is compared. First, intertext linking identified the titles' recurring playful elements (as temporal construction of lunisolar pictures for a lunar calibration). Second, the cross-modal comparison made between cultural retention of the touch ($82\% \pm 4\%$) and digital play ($63\% \pm 7\%$) shows that haptic learning was generalizable and longer than that of the digital one (Table 2). These findings correspond with Gonzalez et al. (2021) embodied cognition theories, particularly in the culture-affordance aspect of kinesthetic learning. Last, and most importantly, considering the proposed pedagogical pathway, it created causal chains with the help of the child artifact analysis that involved drawings and role-play videos and analyzed them according to connoisseurship criteria.

Table 2: Cultural Learning Outcomes by Play Modality

Modality	Retention Rate (M±SE)	Emotional Connection*	Parent-Child Dialogue Frequency
Tactile	82% ± 4%	4.5 (± 0.3)	2.7/hour (± 0.5)
AR Digital	63% ± 7%	3.9 (± 0.6)	1.2/hour (± 0.4)
Narrative	58% ± 5%	3.2 (± 0.8)	0.8/hour (± 0.3)

Note: Emotional connection is rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = minimal, 5 = profound). Retention is measured one-month post-reading.

2.4. Ethical and Validation Considerations

To ensure ethical conduct, participant identifiers were concealed using pseudonyms such as 'Participant R-Dragon,' all research personnel working with minority cultures

undertook cultural sensitivity training as recommended by [Wang \(2019\)](#). Construct validity was established through six months of ethnographic involvement with the children in the preschool reading circles to understand play behaviors better. Audit trials linked raw data such as child retellings to analytic conclusions, and debriefing with three other literacy specialists ensured that the interpretations were consistent with the data.

3. Conceptual Framework of Play Spirit

As an important form of children's literature, picture books have gradually gained widespread attention and development in China. Among them, the spirit of play, as an important element in creating picture books, is key in guiding children to explore the world, stimulate their imagination, and develop social skills. Play spirit is often defined as children's ability to participate actively and express themselves freely, as well as their enthusiasm for exploration, discovery, and problem-solving. As [Ghazanfar \(2019\)](#) points out, "*Play is one of the most important activities that children engage in as they develop, learn, and grow.*" play spirit emphasizes children's ability to construct their worldview and develop creativity, self-expression, and problem-solving skills through play and exploration ([Ghazanfar, 2019](#)). The specific characteristics of play spirit in Chinese picture books are threefold.

3.1. Interactive Design

Chinese picture books are popular for their interactive design (shown in [Picture 1](#)). The books often use rich interactive designs to stimulate children's participation and imagination. For example, interactive elements such as page-turning, dragging, pushing, and pulling are added to picture books to allow children to actively develop the storyline and create their reading experience ([Lam & Wong, 2017](#)). The application of interactive design in Chinese picture books is an innovative way to stimulate children's participation and imagination. Through rich interactive elements such as page-turning, dragging, and pushing and pulling, picture books create an active and interactive reading environment for children and a unique reading experience. Page turning is one of picture books' most common forms of interaction. By turning the pages, children gradually unfold the story, which enhances their sense of participation and reading coherence.

At the same time, page-turning interaction allows children to read at their own pace, stimulating their curiosity and desire to explore ([Reese et al., 2021](#)). Drag and push-pull interaction is a more complex interactive design widely used in picture books. Children can change the scenes or characters in the pictures by dragging, pushing, and pulling elements and participating in developing the storyline. This interactive design provides more ways to participate and encourages children to use their imagination to create their storylines. With technological advances, some picture books are beginning to use touch and sensory technology to incorporate touchable elements into the pictures. Children can interact with the elements in the pictures by touching the screen or sensor points in the picture book. This interactive design further enhances children's participation and experience and stimulates their imagination and creativity.

Picture 1: Interactive Design

Source: [Zhang \(2021\)](#)

3.2. Creative Inspiration

The picture books are enriched with creative inspiration (shown in Picture 2). Illustrations and storylines in picture books often stimulate children's imagination and creativity through creative inspiration. Through the skillful use of paintings, narrative techniques, and words, picture books can create fantastical scenes that are different from reality, guiding children to participate and create independently actively (Kang & Choi, 2021). The application of creative inspiration in picture books is to stimulate children's imagination and creativity. Through the creative treatment of illustrations and storylines, picture books use painting, narrative techniques, and words to create fantasy scenes different from reality, guiding children to participate and create independently. Illustrations in picture books are an important means of stimulating children's imagination (Strouse et al., 2018).

In paintings, illustrations represent the author's and illustrator's imagination and creation of the story world. These illustrations often feature bright colors, exaggerated images, and unconventional compositions, enabling children to experience the rich imaginative space behind the story visually. Children can freely imagine and build their storylines and characters by looking at the illustrations. The storylines in picture books also stimulate children's imagination and creativity through creative techniques.

Picture 2: Creative Inspiration.



Source: [Qise Wangguo \(2018\)](#)

3.3. Problem Solving & Cooperation

Chinese picture books commonly incorporate problem-solving and cooperation (shown in [Picture 3](#)). Chinese picture books also develop children's problem-solving and cooperation by introducing problematic plots and character interaction. Characters in picture books often face a variety of challenges and dilemmas, and children need to cooperate to solve problems, which develops cooperation, thinking, cooperation, and social skills ([Wang & Stringaris, 2020](#)) cooperatively. In Chinese picture books, problem-solving and cooperation are important educational elements, and children's problem-solving and cooperation are developed by introducing problematic plots and character interactions. Characters in picture books often face various challenges and dilemmas, stimulating children's ability to think positively and solve problems cooperatively and developing their logical thinking, cooperation, and social skills.

Picture books (shown in [Picture 3](#)) usually introduce a variety of problematic scenarios that make it necessary for the characters to face and solve challenges or dilemmas. These problems can be emotional issues within the characters or real problems related to the outside world. By empathizing with the characters, children can feel the presence and pressure of the problem, motivating them to think positively and find solutions to the problem ([Dowdall et al., 2020](#)). Characters in picture books often need to interact and cooperate to solve problems. In short, Chinese picture books develop children's problem-solving and cooperation by introducing problematic plots and character interactions. Children develop logical thinking, cooperation, and social skills by engaging in character interaction, thinking, and problem-solving ([Li & Tardif, 2019](#)). These experiences help children think and solve problems when they face them in learning and life and promote their cognitive and social development.

Picture 3: Problem Solving and Co-operation



冬至是中国传统节日，时在公历12月22日左。殷周时，以冬至前一天为岁终，后二十四节气则以冬至为首。因此，中国民间有“冬至大如年”一说。这天，家人团聚，祭祀祖先，庆贺往来，犹如年节。东北、河北、河南等地则有冬至吃饺子的习俗。.....



Source: Li (2020)

Relating Chinese picture books to the way of life in China, a joyful Chinese New Year embodies the concept of play spirit by guiding children to participate in traditional games and craft activities for the Chinese Lunar New Year. Many picture books incorporate the Lunar New Year celebration, where children experience New Year's customs such as setting off fireworks, paper-cutting, and writing Spring Festival couplets with the main character through role-playing, interactive tasks, and a gamified storyline. More recently, picture books have embedded gamified elements. Through the gamified design, children will not only be able to participate wholeheartedly but also understand the traditional activities and cultural significance of China's annual celebrations. Stories of Traditional Chinese Festivals focuses on actively guiding children to explore traditional Chinese culture through playful elements. This picture book utilizes an interactive design to bring children into the adventures of a little girl. Through interacting with the characters in the book, solving puzzles, and exploring, children can learn about traditional Chinese cultural elements such as Chinese calligraphy, Peking Opera, and traditional music. Through children's active participation and interaction, the gamified presentation stimulates their interest in and knowledge of traditional Chinese culture.

Chinese Mythological Stories incorporates ancient Chinese mythological stories into the picture book playfully. Through the introduction of game elements, children can participate in the plots of the mythological stories and experience the fun of interacting with the characters. This picture book not only presents the essence of Chinese mythological stories but also allows children to participate in them and deeply

understand and explore the wonder and fun of the ancient mythological world through play spirit manifested in this picture book provides a unique learning and entertainment experience that stimulates children's imagination and creativity (Hu & Wang, 2021). By analyzing these three elements of picture books, we can see the concept and expression of play spirit in Chinese picture books. Introducing game elements stimulates children's active participation, creativity, and imagination and promotes understanding and knowledge of traditional Chinese culture. This expression of play spirit not only enriches the form of the picture book but also provides children with an active platform for learning and entertainment.

Picture 4: Problem Solving and Co-operation



春节是指汉字文化圈传统上的农历新年，俗称“年节”，传统名称为新年、大年、新岁，但口头上又称度岁、庆新岁、过年。中国人过春节已有4000多年的历史。在现代，人们把春节定于农历正月初一，但一般至少要到正月十五（上元节）新年才算结束



Source: Li (2020)

In summary, the spirit of play in Chinese picture books is important in promoting the creation of picture books. Through interactive design, creative inspiration, and the introduction of problem-solving and cooperative spirit, picture book works can stimulate children's participation, imagination, and problem-solving ability. Through interaction with characters, children learn cooperation with others and problem-solving skills through play. Therefore, further research and attention to play spirit in Chinese

picture books can help to promote the development of picture book creation and provide more opportunities and possibilities for children's overall growth.

4. Educational Impacts of Play Spirit

As a unique form of literature, children's literature aims to meet children's reading needs and emotional development. As a core element of children's activities, play plays an important role in real life and occupies an important position in children's literature. The application of play spirit in children's literature is not only to provide entertainment and learning experiences but also to influence children's emotional intelligence development positively. Emotional intelligence refers to emotional intelligence, which is the ability of an individual to manage and understand his or her own and others' emotions and to interact with others. Interactive elements in picture books, such as problem-solving tasks, scaffold emotional understanding (Zhang, 2020). The following will illustrate how play spirit in three picture books, Joyful Chinese New Year, Traditional Chinese Festival Stories, and Mythological Stories, contributes to children's EQ development.

4.1. Emotional Intelligence Development

The spirit of play is embodied in children's literature. Cultivation of imagination and creativity: Children's literature creates a virtual world through paintings, illustrations, and vivid words so that children can experience the fun of games in reading. This creative experience can stimulate children's imagination and creativity and develop their ability to solve real-life problems. Role-playing and identity: Storylines in children's literature often involve role-playing, and children can emotionally identify and interact with the characters through immersive reading experiences. This role-playing experience develops children's social skills, self-identity, and emotional expression. Co-operation and teamwork: Children's literature stories often involve teamwork and joint problem-solving. Children can learn to cooperate with others, share resources, understand others' perspectives, and develop teamwork and communication skills by reading such stories. Play spirit in picture books often requires children to cooperate with others to complete tasks or solve problems. "*Chinese festival-themed books engage children in cultural problem-solving, strengthening teamwork and cross-cultural EQ*" (Wang, 2019). This kind of cooperative play develops children's sense of teamwork and coordination, stimulates their ability to cooperate, communicate, and negotiate with others, and thus enhances social skills and interpersonal relationship building in EQ.

4.2. Cognitive & Social Skills

The influence of play spirit on the development of emotional intelligence. Emotional Cognition and Management: Play spirit in children's literature helps children recognize and understand the expression of different emotions through emotionally rich storylines and characterization, enhancing emotional cognition. At the same time, the emotional changes children experience in reading can also develop their emotional management skills, helping them adapt to the environment and solve problems. The emotional changes that children experience in reading can also develop their emotion management skills, helping them adapt to the environment and solve problems. The expression of storylines and characterization in children's literature is often emotionally rich, involving different moods and emotional states. Children are exposed to various

emotional expressions by reading such works and learning to recognize and understand the characteristics and manifestations of different emotions. Traditional and modern stories expose children to diverse emotional states, building cross-cultural emotional intelligence (Hyson & Taylor, 2020).

The spirit of play guides children to experience the emotions and conflicts of the characters in the picture books. Through role-playing and plot advancement, children can learn the skills of emotion management and self-awareness. In Chinese Mythological Tales, children participate in the adventures of the characters and experience emotions such as joy, anger, sadness, and happiness. Through the changes in the characters' emotions, they can learn to identify and express their own emotions, as well as to understand the emotions and wishes of others, thus enhancing the emotional management and self-awareness skills of emotional intelligence.

4.3. Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution and problem-solving: Play spirit in children's literature often presents a variety of conflicts and problems that are resolved through the efforts and ingenuity of the characters. Play spirit in children's literature often presents a variety of conflicts and problems, which are resolved through the efforts and ingenuity of the characters. This presentation aims to develop children's conflict resolution and problem-solving skills to learn to face difficulties and challenges and find appropriate solutions. Storylines in children's literature often include conflicts and contradictions between characters. These conflicts can come from a clash of opinions, needs, values, or challenges in the external environment or interpersonal relationships. Through the efforts and ingenuity of the characters in the story, they can often find solutions to the conflicts, such as listening, compromising, and problem-solving skills. Such presentations help children understand the nature of conflict and learn how to face and resolve it. *"Interactive storytelling and play enable children to practice empathy, share emotions, and collaboratively address conflicts"* (Bergen & Fromberg, 2020). Play spirit encourages children to express their feelings and opinions through role-playing and interaction. During the joyful Chinese New Year, children can experience the traditional activities of the Chinese New Year. Through participation in games, they can express their excitement, happiness, and curiosity, and at the same time, they learn to listen to others' emotional expressions. This sharing and understanding of emotions help to enhance children's emotional intelligence and sense of agency.

The spirit of play in children's literature significantly impacts the development of emotional intelligence. Through the cultivation of imagination and creativity, role-playing and identity, cooperation and teamwork, children's literature provides a rich, playful experience promoting emotional intelligence cultivation and development. Play spirit positively impacts emotional awareness and management, social skills and interpersonal relationships, conflict resolution, and problem-solving. Therefore, encouraging children to participate in children's literature reading and activities related to play spirit in children's literature can help promote their EQ development. Play spirit in children's literature has a positive impact on EQ development. Through the design of playful picture books, such as Joyful Chinese New Year, Traditional Chinese Festival Stories, and Chinese Mythological Stories, children can develop the ability to express their emotions, teamwork, and the skills of emotion management and self-awareness by participating in role-playing and cooperative interactions. *"Children's literature fosters emotional intelligence by engaging imaginative play, role-playing, and cooperative*

interaction, which develop skills in emotional expression, teamwork, and self-awareness" (Kuo & Lai, 2020).

5. Cultural Transmission and Innovation

Chinese picture books, as one of the important forms of children's literature, have always been popular among children's readers. Among them, the spirit of play, as an important element in picture books, plays an important role in children's reading, learning, and entertainment (Chuang & Chang, 2018). Traditional research on play spirit focuses on the application of game elements, interactive design, and entertainment in picture books; however, in studying three picture books, Joyful Chinese New Year, Traditional Chinese Festival Stories, and Chinese Mythological Stories, we can put forward new perspectives to further explore the potential role and value of play spirit in Chinese picture books.

5.1. Cultural Heritage Preservation

In addition to providing children with entertainment and learning experiences, play spirit carries the role of cultural transmission in Chinese picture books. These three picture books introduce children to traditional Chinese cultural elements, such as Chinese New Year customs, traditional handicrafts, and mythological stories, through gamification. New Perspectives suggests that through gamification, children can actively participate and experience Chinese culture, further deepening their understanding and knowledge of traditional Chinese culture. Recently, some researchers have emphasized the cultural value and emotional expression of picture books when studying play spirit in Chinese picture books.

They believe that picture books, as cultural products, should reflect traditional Chinese culture and values and convey emotions and values through plot and characterization. Recently, some researchers have emphasized the cultural value and emotional expression of picture books when studying play spirit in Chinese picture books. As cultural products, Chinese picture books carry rich traditional cultural elements. Picture books can show the essence of traditional Chinese culture by choosing themes and plots, such as traditional festivals, legends and stories, and ancient poems. These elements can enrich children's cultural cognition and give them a deeper understanding and feeling of traditional Chinese culture. Guided by the spirit of play, picture books integrate traditional culture into stories, allowing children to experience the value and charm of traditional culture while enjoying the pleasure of reading.

Picture books convey emotions and values through plot and characterization in a narrative form. Picture books convey these values through the storyline and demonstrate the practical application of these values through the characters' behavior and thoughts so that children can understand and accept these positive values under the guidance of the spirit of play. Scholars highlight the importance of culturally rich picture books in shaping children's awareness of traditions, emotional regulation, and ethical values (Wang, 2019). Picture books reflect traditional culture, convey emotions, and pass on positive values, and are important for children's cultural awareness, emotional education, and value development.

5.2. Social Development

While the traditional spirit of play emphasizes individual participation and interaction, the new view is that play spirit in picture books also promotes children's social development. In Tales of Chinese Traditional Festivals, children must work with the book's characters to solve puzzles and explore. This cooperative play design encourages cooperation, communication, and teamwork among children. By engaging in play spirit in picture books, children can develop social skills, foster friendships, and develop respect and understanding for others. By reading picture books, students can share their understanding of the storyline and images, which promotes communication and cooperation. In addition, picture books can be used as a tool for cooperation between students as they work together to create picture books, write stories, and participate in the reading and parsing process. Picture books usually involve multiple subject areas, such as language, maths, science, and social studies.

Teachers can use picture books as an instructional tool to guide students in interdisciplinary learning and thinking. This interdisciplinary learning experience can help students develop integrative learning skills and apply knowledge and skills from different disciplines to real-world problem-solving. *"Scholars emphasize that picture books transcend traditional pedagogy by offering immersive, interdisciplinary experiences that prepare students for complex real-world tasks"* (Liu et al., 2021).

5.3. Educational Innovation

In addition to entertainment and learning, Chinese picture books' play spirit can stimulate children's creativity. These three picture books encourage children to actively participate and independently develop their imagination and creativity by creating characters and interactive tasks. Through gamification, children can express their ideas and creative thinking freely within the framework of the picture books. This playful spirit of creativity development helps children develop creative problem-solving skills and independent thinking. The new perspective also emphasizes the potential of Chinese picture books for innovative educational and pedagogical applications. Picture books can be an innovative pedagogical tool to help children acquire knowledge and skills and develop creative thinking and problem-solving skills through reading.

Indeed, Chinese picture books are important in innovative educational and pedagogical applications. Traditional teaching materials are usually presented in text and pictures. However, picture books can provide a more diverse and rich text presentation by combining images and text. Picture books can convey information in a visual way that stimulates students' imagination and thinking. This diverse presentation helps to capture students' attention and increase their engagement and interest in reading. Picture books usually have concise but powerful storylines and rich and detailed illustrations. When reading picture books, students need to understand the meaning of the text and obtain more information through the interaction between the images and the text. This integrated reading process helps students develop reading comprehension skills and stimulates their critical and creative thinking skills. Picture books are visual and emotional, which can help students better understand and express their ideas.

We can further study play spirit in Chinese picture books with the new ideas mentioned above. By exploring the role of cultural inheritance, social development, and creativity in cultivating play spirit in picture books, we can better understand the potential impact

and value of the spirit of play. These new perspectives provide new ideas and theoretical foundations for further research on the application of play spirit in Chinese picture books. New perspectives have emerged from the study of play spirit in Chinese picture books, emphasizing cultural value, emotional expression, the application of virtual reality and digital technology, and innovative educational and pedagogical applications. These new perspectives expand the horizons of the picture book research field and bring new ideas and methods for creating publishing, and educational application of picture books. Interdisciplinary research underscores the evolving role of play spirit in Chinese picture books as a driver of cultural continuity and educational innovation (Wang et al., 2022). Further research and practice will help deepen the understanding of play spirit in Chinese picture books and promote the development of children's literature and children's education.

6. Multicultural Contexts and Global Relevance

In today's context of globalization, multiculturalism has become an important social phenomenon. As a country with rich and diverse cultural traditions, China has unique performances and insights in applying game elements in picture books. *"Interactive picture books grounded in Chinese cultural elements encourage children to engage with global diversity while preserving local traditions critically"* (Nie & Cheng, 2020). In the following, the application of game elements in multicultural contexts in three picture books, Happy Chinese New Year, Traditional Chinese Festival Stories, and Chinese Mythological Stories, will be explained in detail.

6.1. Cross-Cultural Communication

The element of play can promote communication and understanding among different cultures. In Joyful Chinese New Year, children experience the traditional customs of Chinese New Year in the game, and at the same time, they can have cross-cultural exchanges with other characters. Such cross-cultural game design can help children understand other cultures and promote cultural exchange and mutual respect. Chinese picture books often demonstrate the plurality of Chinese culture by depicting local customs, ethnic characteristics, and traditional cultural elements from different regions. Multicultural picture books employ playful storytelling to highlight China's regional pluralism, transforming cultural education into an engaging, curiosity-driven process (Lee & Kuo, 2019).

6.2. Cultural Integration

The element of games in Chinese picture books can also show the integration and mingling of different cultures. In Chinese Traditional Festival Stories, children get to know traditional Chinese culture and interact with other cultures through the characters in the game. The design of such game elements demonstrates the integration and exchange of multiple cultures, helping children to understand the characteristics of a multicultural society and enhance their knowledge of multiple cultures. Storylines in Chinese picture books often involve conflict and integration between different cultures. Through the adventures and growth of the characters, the picture books convey the importance of mutual influence and integration between cultures, helping children to understand and respect the differences between different cultures. Application of multiple languages: Some innovative works in Chinese picture books try to use multiple languages, such as Chinese-English bilingualism and Chinese-minority languages, to

provide a more diverse reading experience. Multilingual picture books integrating Chinese, English, and minority languages encourage children to view language as a tool for cultural exploration rather than a barrier ([Guo & Li, 2020](#)).

6.3. Global Pedagogy

Game elements in picture books can be culturally orientated and help children understand the cultural connotations more deeply. In Chinese Mythological Stories, children can explore Chinese mythological stories through role-playing and game plot advancement. The design of such game elements allows children to participate in cultural activities and enables them to understand the essence of Chinese myths and culture through immersive game experiences. Game elements in Chinese picture books are often combined with multiculturalism, allowing children to experience the characters and plots of different cultures through role-playing and games. This kind of gamification can promote children's understanding and acceptance of multiculturalism. Some cultural metaphors and symbols are presented in Chinese picture books through game decoding. Children need to unravel the metaphors through observation, thinking, and reasoning to have a deeper understanding and exploration of the cultural background. Gamified cultural education in picture books employs interactive quizzes and scenario-based tasks to enhance children's critical awareness of global cultural practices ([Hu & Zhang, 2021](#)).

Through the detailed description of the above applications, we can see that in a multicultural context, the application of game elements in Chinese picture books can bring about a rich reading experience and cultural exchange. Through cross-cultural communication, multicultural integration, and culturally oriented game design, picture books can help children better understand and respect different cultures and develop a sense of cross-cultural communication and cultural diversity. This application of game elements in a multicultural context provides children with engaging and educational reading content and promotes cultural transmission and the construction of a multicultural society.

7. Conclusion

The spirit of play is widely reflected in Chinese picture books, positively impacting children's growth and development. Picture books provide interesting stories and rich interactive experiences through games to stimulate children's curiosity, imagination, and creativity. Play spirit also helps develop children's observation, thinking, and problem-solving skills and promotes physical and social development. The findings of these studies suggest that play spirit has important applications and value in Chinese picture books such as Joyful Chinese New Year, Tales of Traditional Chinese Festivals, and Chinese Tales Fairy Tale Series: Mythological Games. The playful elements in these picture books provide children with entertainment and learning experiences and promote their creativity, social development, and multicultural understanding and respect. These findings help us better understand and apply play spirit's potential impact and educational value in Chinese picture books.

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

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Conflict of Interest

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