

“What is the Importance and Impact of Illustrations in Children's Books?”

An investigation into children's responses to illustrations.

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Abstract:

This paper sought to investigate the importance of illustrations in children's books and children's responses to them. The project raises some key issues related to children's books and illustrations, such as the importance of pictures for children, the impact of illustrations on children, and factors to analyze pictures. Based on responses of a group focus discussion and individual discussions with six 9-year-old students (3males and 3 females), this paper explores the role of illustrations in children's world. It also investigates their analyses and responses to pictures. In addition, it examines the situations of children's books and illustrations in Oman. The results show that illustrations play a vital role in children's books. Most children prefer colorful pictures than black and white. The study finds that pictures help children comprehend the text better. Specialists believe that there is limited number of Omani children's books, but the awareness of the importance of illustrations has increased among Omanis. This study suggests having a center of collections of illustrated Omani folktales and fairytales. This center will help to save Omani culture and heritage in a way that most children like.

Key words: Pictured books, Analyze pictures, Investigation in illustrations.

Chapter One

Introduction:

It is often said that "a picture is worth hundreds of words," and there is no doubt that illustrations have played a vital role in the history of human communication. In fact, humans have used pictures all along. To illustrate, people started using pictures as a way of sending and receiving messages a long time ago. Indeed, illustrations of the ancient Egyptian were the first form of written language; they used to write letters using symbols and pictures instead of letters and words. In the past, people around the world used to draw their letters, memories and problems before they had used letters of words (Kate,1994). Throughout the centuries, people had believed that the words in written books were the source of knowledge. Then, writers started to flavor their books with some good elements to attract the readers' attention. One of the main methods which are used to attract the readers' attention is adding related pictures and illustrations to the text. Moreover, pictures can help adults understand and imagine the topic, but for children illustrations play a more important role: visual illustrations allow them to understand the event of a story even before they learn how to read (Segun, 1988).

The field of illustrations in children's books has become an academic issue. Many people have studied this topic from different aspects: there are many studies which investigated the importance of illustrations in children's books, children's preference in picture books, children's comprehension of narrative picture books, analyzing illustrations in children's books and children's respond to pictures. People are aware of the vital role that illustrations play in the world of children's books: there are many famous illustrators in this field. For example, Maurice Sendak is one of the famous children's book illustrators: he received the National Medal of Arts. There are many others who have been known in this field, such as, Jonathan Allen , Caroline Arnold , Tedd Arnold , and Mike Artell (Brown, 1998).

Some illustrations allow children to see imaginative things that they may not find in the real world. The imaginative sense that a picture has is one of the magic elements that attract children to read a book. Because children are very imaginative, pictures play a special role in their books. Illustrations can arouse children's interests in books and increase their love of books because pictures let children meet with their loved characters. In addition, pictures in books make the reading process more enjoyable than reading words: illustrations make the text vivid. Moreover, children have their own view of illustration according to their thoughts and interests.

This paper focuses on some elements of pictures. Some of them can draw children to read the book, while others may discourage them to open the book. Children's actions depend on the use of four elements: color, size, realism of the picture and the layout of the page in the book. In most cases pictures help to engage children with the text, but the way that the pictures are designed and illustrated might affect the child's views a lot. Furthermore, good illustrations can contribute to the overall development of the child by "stimulating his imagination, arousing his perception, and developing his potential" (Segun, 1988, p1). Segun also reports that pictures can protect heredity since children like visual learning and illustrations can help teaching children about other cultures, too. In brief, there are various functions of illustrations in children's books and they impact powerfully on the child, evoking diverse a range of responses. Specifically, this research paper attempts to answer a key question: what role do illustrations play in children's books and how children respond to them? There are three main themes and other sub themes this paper intends to mention: the main three themes are the importance of pictures in children's books, the analysis of illustrations for children, the children's response to illustrations.

As a first step in answering the research question, Chapter 2 of this paper outlines the importance of pictures in children's books (2.1). To do this, I have drawn on research by Mabel Segun who suggests that illustrations in children's books increase children's comprehension of the text, attract their interests, increase the love of books, and make the text more pleasurable, increase children's reading ability, save culture and identity, and prevent the loss of history. Moreover, this paper draws a summary of Piaget's theories about the relation between pictures and children's cognitive development. It also associates the function of pictures with two types of illustrations: visual and tactile pictures. The research also presents four of the main elements of good pictures (2.2): the kind of colors that children prefer, the suitable size of the picture, the level of realism in the picture, and the layout of the page. Theme three of this paper outlines the children's response to illustrations and the impact that illustrations might leave on the child, as a reader (2.3). This part of the research focuses on the impact of pictures on children. Many research find that illustrations can change children's mood. Children's response to pictures can also affect their imagination and their behaviors and thoughts.

Drawing on the key areas argued in Chapter 2, Chapter 3 then explains how I collected data to explore the topic more and localize my question in Oman – specifically to investigate how does Omani children respond to children's books, what are the reasons behind the lack of Omani children books, and what are the obstacles that face the writers and publishers of children's books? This chapter reviews and analyses the data gathered from interviews with an Omani writer of children's books, a designer of the pictures in children's books, and a teacher who found the children's library in the College of art. This chapter shows the magnificence of illustrations in children's books from a specialist point of view. It also presents some expected impact of the use of pictures in children's books. In addition, I worked with Sultan school students applying the group focus discussion and the individual discussion techniques in order to analyze children's responses to illustrations. Furthermore, Chapter 4 provides the analysis of the main points and a summary list of findings.

In the final Chapter, Chapter 5, I go back to the key question of my research and offer a brief answer that I gained from my reading and findings. I also provide a summary of the main three themes that this paper has covered. In the closing sections of Chapter 5, suggestions and recommendations will be suggested to promote the situation of Omani children's books and to arouse the awareness of the importance of picture for children.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

In this chapter I will discuss various functions of illustrations in children's books and how they impact powerfully on the child, evoking diverse range of responses.

2.1 The importance of illustrations in children's books

For the whole of human history, pictures have been used as a tool of communication and conveying messages. Many pictorial forms have been used throughout human history; for example, cave painting, sign writing, art and sculpture were mainly used thousands years ago. Thus, when written books have started to be published, pictures were used to clarify the meaning of the text. Without doubt, pictures are very important especially in children's books. Waymack and Hendrickson found that "children prefer books with more than twenty five percent of the space in pictures" (cited in Stewig, 1972, p273). Illustrations play various roles in children's books.

Increase comprehension

It is a fact that children are sensitive to pictures even before they speak and there is no doubt that pictures play a significant role in children's books. In general, for most children, understanding a pictorial code is much easier than understanding a verbal code because a pictorial code is more direct (Hall, 1990). Pictures can also play a vital role in helping children to interpret the text (Hall, 1990). Hall adds that pictures sometimes can provide more details of the text than words can explain. In addition, illustrations are very effective with the children who have not learned how to read fluently yet. Segun (1988) and Stewig (1972) show that even for children who know how to read, illustrations might help them understand the text better. Marshall (1988) raises an important point here about children who are old enough to read, but have difficulties with reading. Illustrations can be useful for them. In addition, Paris and Paris (2001) report that pictures have a significant role for children in order to get the idea of the text then to understand it. They say that children look at the pictures of the book before reading the text, so they get the idea of the text through their first look at the pictures. Then they read the text to get more details about the general idea.

Attract attention and increase the love and enjoyment of books

One of the important roles of illustrations in children's books is to attract children's attention to read the text. The nice shape in a picture can easily arouse children's interest in a book (Marshal, 1988). Another importance is that pictures increase the enjoyment of the text (Segun, 1988). In other words, children enjoy the text more if they see pictures and they connect them with the words in the text. Other writers also agree in the great importance of pictures in books; Susan Hall (1990) believes that the main role of pictures is to enhance the book. She says that words tell the story and pictures make the book more interesting. Furthermore, pictures can strengthen the relation between the child and the book. Segun (1988) says that comic and humours illustrations can increase the child's love of books. Illustrations that include the picture of some lovely characters, he says, will lead the child to love the book which has that nice character.

Promote children's reading ability

Since pictures can add the flavor of joy to the text, Segun (1988) reports that illustrations help in promoting the reading habit of children. Because the child enjoys reading the text, in the presence of illustrations, he might reread the text again. No doubt this is the best way to increase the child's reading skills level. Stewing (1992) also adds that children will get two benefits from reading books with pictures. They learn how to read the pictures and increase their reading ability of reading words. To conclude, even when words are used in children's books, children understand the text better with pictorial language and pictures can function as stimuli to promote the child's reading habit.

Save culture and identity, and prevent the loss of history

Good pictures in children's books can help children to know more about their culture and identity (Sugen, 1988). In other words illustrations help the child to discover his identity and cultural heritage. For example, the way people used to dress in the past can be described by words, but the image will not be as clear as if children see a picture of their traditional clothes. Sugun (1988) emphasizes the idea that using pictures in children books can have a significant role in countries which suffer from the effect of colonization. Colonization usually brings changes in people's beliefs and tradition. Moreover, one way to teach new generations the missed tradition is to visualize it in pictures, so at least they know their tradition and they also can imagine it. In other words, pictures are extremely important because they can impact children's beliefs and strengthen their feelings towards their identity. Another important point Segun mentions is that the history of the country can be taught better using pictures in books since children are more attractive to read books with pictures. History books are more effective if they contain pictures of the historical events (Sugen, 1988) because as Piaget proves that children will remember the events better if they combine the action with a picture. In brief, "illustrations can give children a sense of personal identity and an awareness of their cultural heritage. Events of long ago are made alive by vivid illustrations" (Sugun, 1988, p1). In short, pictures are important for children: they attract children's attention, increase children's love of books, make children the text more enjoyable, promote children's reading ability, save culture and identity, and prevent the loss of history.

Piagetian theory of pictures and children's cognitive development

Piagetian theories show the importance of illustrations in children's books. According to Piaget's theory, the relationship between illustrations and children's cognitive development differs with children's ages. In his theory, Piaget divides childhood into two different stages. In the early childhood (3 -6 years) children like visual illustrations: they prefer abstract things while in the middle childhood (6 -11 years) children would like more to deal with concrete things. Thus, in this stage they prefer tactile picture than visual illustrations since the first type allows them to see the thing clearly with its different dimensions. In addition, tactile pictures allow children to touch the material (Ginsburg & Opper, 1988).

Types of illustrations

Each type of illustration has different functions and according to the function that a picture plays in a book we measure its importance. For example, visual illustrations and tactile illustrations are two different types of illustrations which are commonly used in children's books. Both types have been clarified separately in a study for Suzette Wright (2008). To begin with, visual pictures which usually represent events and things in flat shapes help children to fully understand both

the events and the meaning of the text. This type of illustration is useful because it holds the young children's attention easily even before they learn how to read (Wright, 2008).

Tactile illustrations are those "illustrations (which) are designed to give tactile (touch) information related to the book's topic" (Wright, 2008). For example, if the book teaches a new word like pen, the book would include a real pen or something similar to let the student touch it. In actual fact, tactile illustrations work in the same way as the visual illustrations. Moreover, tactile illustrations also give the child a chance to explore and think actively about what he has already discovered in the visual illustrations (Wright, 2008). All in all, one has to differentiate between different types of pictures in order to be able to analyze illustrations.

2.2 Analyzing pictures

Important points in analyzing illustration.

As there are people who are good in reading books, there are also others who are good in reading pictures. The reader of pictures has to be good analyzing the elements of pictures. In addition, there are many points which have to be taken into consideration when analyzing pictures. Hixson (2003) suggests that the first thing that has to be kept in mind when analyzing pictures is to know what the picture is about. In other words, what is the main message that the picture carries? Second, the picture can be interpreted differently according to the audience. For example, to analyze illustrations in children's books, we have to see things from children's point of view because they are the target audience. Hixson (2003) reports the third important point in analyzing pictures which is considering time and place. We have to consider both the moment and sitting of the picture. For instance, we can infer the time of the event that the picture represent from the way people dress in the picture.

There are specific features of illustrations that attract children's interest: for example, the kind of color, size, and the level of the realism in a picture with the page's layout play a magnificent role in pictures. No doubt that the overall shape of the picture is very important. One has to consider the spread of the pages. For example, the page can be unified page which represents a single scene or moment, or can be separate page which represents separate scenes or moments. Dodge's research (2003) aims to identify some of the conventions used in the illustrations of children's book. He looks at illustrations in terms of three main categories, layout, spread, & orientation. In short, Doge divides the Orientation of the picture to portrait (e.g see appendix D figure1), landscape (e.g see appendix D figure 2), and square shape (e.g see appendix D figure 3). He finds, "the page may be laid out with its major dimension being either vertical or horizontal, conventionally referred to as being either portrait or landscape orientation, respectively or it may be a square page" (Doge, 2003, p1).

Doge reports that the text is circumscribed in each illustration. He suggests that the page's layout can be presented as separate or half-page (e.g see appendix D, figure 4), region within illustration, and text or pseudo-box (e.g see appendix D figure 5). These are the three main things that Doge focuses on in his research.

Colors in pictures

No doubt color has a vital importance in children's world. The kind and the level of brightness of a picture can affect the child's preference toward a picture. Whipple (1953), Bloomer (1960) and Stewig (1972) state that children prefer colored pictures to white and black. When the first pictured books were published, the pictures were in black and white, but as Cleaver, Scheurer and Shorey have mentioned pictures became less popular used when colored, printed pictured books have widespread. They show that children preferred color illustrations than black and white illustrations regardless to the style of writing. They also mention other studies with similar findings.

Moreover children have specific color preferences that differ from adults. Bamberger (1922) shows that young children prefer primary colors (red, blue, green) while older children prefer soft tints. Amsden (1966) also reports that "children prefer light tints and dark shades to bright" (cited in Stewig, 1972, p276). Bloomer (1960) also raises a very important point which the child may not think about claiming that too colored pictures might distract the child from the subject. To sum up, children prefer colored pictures than black and white.

Size and dimension of pictures

The picture size can be another important element in illustrations. Children's interests in the change of sizes of pictures differ with the child's age. Moreover, Schwacz talks about the different sizes of pictures and he concludes that "the changing size of the illustrations constitutes the most dramatic element in the book" (Schwarcz, 1982, p191). To illustrate, large size picture can be more attractive for children than small pictures. Marshall (1988) says that a picture that stands up a whole page makes the meaning more clear and such picture can even give the child the deep meaning and message which the words cannot convey. Actually, not all children agree in the same size of pictures according to their age. Although most studies show that younger children like larger size in comparison to older children, Whipple found that grade four students prefer large pictures, while Freemans found that nursery school students like more the small and intermediate pictures (Stewig, 1972).

Findings recommend that pictures should be represented close to the real shape of the figure in term of the picture's size and form, especially for young children. Illustrations can be less realistic for older children. Moreover, pictures would seem more realistic if they are in three dimensional forms rather than flat pictures (Stewig, 1972). Welling (1931) adds that illustrations for children should be bold to represent the real life truly and that illustrations in three dimensional would help to represent the reality of life closely (cited in Stewig, 1972).

Realism of pictures

Children generally like fiction more than non-fiction books (Marshall, 1988) because there they can live in their imaginative world where they might find things that do not exist in the real world. The realism of the pictures is important to some degree, but imaginative pictures should be relevant to the child's perception and experience. The pictures should not be too abstract that children cannot understand. For instance, the picture should represent the full shape not half of it. Marshall (1988) conducts that the level of the fancy in children's books illustrations should be limited. Illustrators should try to make their illustrations vivid as much as possible. As Welling (1931) reports illustrations should represent the reality of life and illustrators should provide for children the true picture of life and reality (cited in Stewig, 1972). Schwarcz also suggests that there are some illustrators who try to imitate the reality faithfully and there are also others who do not care about the realism in their illustrations. In this view, the last group, "cheat the child's perception by presenting to him and her inconsistent imitations of reality" (Schwarcz, 1982, p178).

Methodologies of analyzing pictures

Readers of the pictures use different methodologies to analyze illustrations. This paper presents two of them. The first one is presented by Paris and Paris. They, first, recommend collecting data about children's level of reading. Second, the children read the text. This step goes through stages: children read the words of the text in isolation, children read the text accuracy, and children read for comprehension and memory. Finally, the students will be asked questions about the text they have read. There will be different type of question to fit with student individual differences (Paris & Paris, 2001).

The second one is suggested by Hixson (2003). He divides the methodology of analyzing pictures into three stages. The first one is called description in which she provided a general idea about the picture: listing the objects of the picture, stating the main theme of the picture and explaining the common mood of the picture are part of the description stage. The second stage is called analysis which is more specific than the previous stage. In analysis stage Hixson told about the context of the picture, but this step requires prior knowledge of the culture that picture represents. The last stage is called interpretation. In this stage he explored the intrinsic meaning of the context of pictures. In this stage, he was more specific about the feelings that picture reflect (Hixson, 2003). In brief, Hixson methodology of analyzing illustrations starts with a general look at the picture.

2.3 Children's response to illustrations

Illustrations can impact children in different ways and from different aspects. For instance, pictures can change children's mood, affect their imagination and impact their behaviors and thoughts.

Children's mood

One of the results of children's response to illustrations is changing the child's mood according to the pictures' color. It is commonly believed that each color has a special meaning and impact: for example, red is a sign of danger while blue is a

sign of calmness. What is amazing is that children's association of colors with emotions differs from adults. A study has been done about the emotions that different colors evoke by Cole, Donenberg, Agunga, and Rutledge (2001). They find that color association changes with age. For example, they found that the color red makes children feel calm but it makes adult feel angry. For blue and yellow, they both reflect the same feeling for children and adult. Furthermore, the color yellow reflects happiness for them, while the color blue reflects calmness. In brief, children like some colors more than others since each color represents something different. Furthermore, an interesting point is that the same color may reflect different emotions to children and adults. Children respond in a different way to colors that adults do (Cole, Donenberg, Agunga, and Rutledge, 2001).

Children's imagination

Imaginative pictures can be useful or harmful for children's mind and that depends on the way that children respond to illustrations. To illustrate, pictures of fairytales and folktales which have lots of imagination can put children's minds at risk because they might spoil the mental pictures in the child's mind about the reality: some stories represent unreal things and children might easily believe in these false things and start imagining them in their real life. Despite that, imaginative illustration can be good for the child's mind if the element of the picture is within children's world (Marshall, 1988). For instance, Schwarcz (1982) says that unrealistic pictures can be attractive and in safe hands if they embody the child's dreams, warm colors and slightly funny abnormal figures because children will response naturally to these familiar pictures.

Children's behaviors and thoughts

The way that children respond to illustrations might affect their behavior. For example, children's response to myths and unrealistic stories might lead to inappropriate behaviors. To illustrate, myth is kind of unrealistic, mysterious story which are usually presented with illustrations. In most cultures they are told to children. Usually they are illustrated to make the unrealistic story more clear and believable. Marshall (1988) says that the way in which the picture represents the character makes the child like or dislike the character and that the good characters are always shown in a lovely way. As a result, children try to imitate their loved character. In addition, myths are usually about the man's struggle against strange and strong creatures. They also talk about God and the origin of evils. Marshall also adds that children believe what they see and their beliefs might be affected by the good or bad ideas of these false stories. They might build their view about what is magic: whose God? And why good always triumphs? Moreover, Myths and unrealistic stories usually depend a lot on supernatural power of the hero which might lead the child to try illogical things just because he saw in the picture the hero of the story doing so.

One of the magical elements in children's books that children really like is the pictures of animals. On one side, that can affect the child negatively since stories sometime represent unreal animals. The picture of that strange unreal animal will stay in the child's mind and he might start to see that strange creatures in his day dream, in response to what he saw. Visual pictures of some animals might also have an educational benefit. It helps the child to imagine animals that are extinct; for example, we have never seen the Denasoors but we know how they look like through seeing pictures (Marshall, 1988).

To sum up, Chpter 2 presented some studies about illustrations in children's books and found that children's responses to illustrations differ and takes many aspects: illustrations can impact children's mood, imagination, behaviors and thoughts. Chapter3 concerns on the data collection and the analysis of this data. This chapter explains the methodologies that were used to collect the data, the respondents, and the results.

Chapter Three

Data and Data collection

3.1 Introduction

In Chapter 2 this paper showed many studies which have been done about this topic and they confirm the important role that illustrations play in children's books. Here are some of the findings that studies showed and I have mentioned in Chapter2; children prefer books with more than twenty five percent of the space in pictures (Stewig, 1972), children understand a pictorial code better than a verbal code (Hall, 1990), pictures can strengthen the relation between the child and the book (Hall, 1990). In addition, the kind of color, size, and the level of the realism in a picture have different effects on children (Stewig, 1972).

After my reading, I have quite good information about the topic. In this chapter, the research will be presenting more collected data and the localization of the study.

3.2 Aims and research questions

The purpose of this study was to answer the key question: what is the importance of illustrations in children's books and how do children respond to them? In addition, the study aimed to investigate the relation that children make between the text and its picture, to discover the elements that children prefer in pictures and to find the impact of illustrations on children. Here are some related questions that this research tended to answer: What can pictures add to children's books? How can pictures help children comprehend the text? How can illustrations affect children's feelings and thoughts? How can pictures affect children's imagination? How can visualizing surrealistic elements affect children's behaviors? When can pictures be harmful?

3.3 Methodology

This paper investigated how six children, 9years old, responded to pictures and how specialists and people how have interest in the topic value pictures in children's books. I used two main phases in my methodology in order to localize my research and expand the themes. The first phase consisted of three interviews: the first one was with Mr. M, a writer of children's books. The interview investigated some of the research themes, such as, the effect of using non human elements in pictures, and illustrations as a motive for reading. The second interview was with Ms. P, a designer of pictures of children's books. This one related to the features of preferred pictures for children; colors, layout, size of pictures and their realism. The last one was with Mr. J, a teacher in the department of library and information science and the founder of the children's library in the College of Art. The last two aimed to localize the research topic to Oman: the situation of children's books in Oman and the role that pictures play in them. In addition, these interviews also investigated the difficulties that publishers of such books face.

The second phase was divided into two parts. The first one was the group focus in which six children from Sultan school had been shown a picture and asked for their responses. This part involved 15 minutes discussion with the children. The orientation of the picture that was showed to the children (see appendix D figure 6) is landscape and it shows an animal zoo which seems to be like a village for animals. The animals in the picture are anthropomorphized and the picture contains several nonrealistic elements; lion riding a bicycle, an ostrich playing with a snake and animals wearing colorful clothes. In general, animals are the centre of the picture which shows also colored houses and fruits. The colors are used in the picture are bright and soft; pink and bright blue.

The second part was an interview/discussion with the children individually in order to investigate their responses to illustrations, e.g. what attracts them, how do pictures affect their comprehension, and identity? For this part I spent 20 minutes discussion with each child

3.4 Respondents

Six 9-year-old students (3males and 3 females), from year 5 at Sultan school were included in the15-minute group discussion about their responses to a picture. The same six students were involved in the 20-minute individual discussion about the relation between the text and its pictures.

Mr. J, a teacher in the department of library and information science and the founder of the children's library in the College of Art. He is also giving a course called "Children Literature."

Mr. M, an Omani writer of children's books. He has written an illustrated book which includes 12 stories. The book published by the Cultural Center.

Ms. P, a designer of pictures of children's books. She is the designer of the same story book which is written by Mr. M.

3.5 Data Collection Instruments:

Focus group discussion

The group discussion aimed to discover what attract children in the picture and a certain methodology was followed starting with lead in questions in order to involve the children in the atmosphere of the topic; do you like books with pictures and illustrations? Do you prefer black and white pictures or colorful pictures? The children were shown a picture that was prepared for the discussion. Then, they were asked to look at it for seconds. The discussion started asking about the first thing they noticed in the picture, then, discussing their preference in the picture. This small discussion aimed to get a general view of their view of the picture. After that, they were asked for their analysis of the picture; what do you think about the colors used in this picture, and the size of the picture?

The discussion was ended with the most important point which is their responses to the picture. The children raised different and interesting points by answering the following questions which aimed to discover their different responses. What does the picture make you think of? What does the picture make you feel? Why? Does it remind you of something else?

Individual discussion

Individual face-to-face discussion with children from Sultan aimed to explore children's analyses and responses to pictures. The discussion was divided through three sages; introduction to the topic, choosing book and story or article, and then responding to the picture after reading the text.

The discussion started with simple questions to lead the discussion to the concern of the research; do you like to read? What are your favorite books? How do you think or feel about reading? What do you like more in these books?

After showing the children the three children's books; Animals Around us, Way up high, and Marvelous Monsters, They were asked about their first impression about the book and their expectation about what they were going to read for the purpose of comparing their exception before reading the text and their response after relating the picture with the text. After choosing the book they were asked about which book he/she chose and why. They were also asked the same two questions after they chose a story or an article to read.

Children were asked the following questions after reading the text in order to investigate their interest in the picture; have you found the topic/story interesting? What is the most interesting thing in the story? Does it matter for you if the book has pictures or not?

The discussion also raised other points to find how children relate the picture with the text, such as, thoughts that the picture brought to the child's mind, feelings that the picture reflected, actions that the picture remind the child with, and the children's responses to the colors, and the size of the picture. These last four points aimed to focus on the children's responses to the pictures and their analysis.

Interviews:

For data collection, three interviews had been done with an Omani writer of children's books, a designer of pictures in children's books, and a teacher of "Children Literature", College of art, Department of library and information science and he is the founder of children's library in the college.

Interview with Omani writer of children's books

This interview aimed to investigate the importance of writing for children; what is the importance of writing for children? What can pictures add to children's books? When can we consider the illustration as a motive to read, and when can the illustration be a distraction from reading? In addition, some of the interview's questions have discussed the suitable topics for children, such as, you have written a story about "death" for children, do not you think that you are introducing the child to a world where they shouldn't think about yet? What do you think are the suitable topics for children's books? To investigate children's response to visualizing myths and unrealistic stories the interview carried some other questions; What do you think about writing and visualizing myths, fairytales and such unrealistic stories for children? (animals, unrealistic creature). Should illustrators have limits when drawing imaginative pictures for children? How?

Interview with Omani designer of pictures in children's books

This interview's questions were divided into of five parts; each one was designed for a different purpose as the following:

Part 1 aimed to investigate the importance of pictures in children's books.

Part 1

- What do pictures mean for children?
- What can pictures add to children's books?
- When can we consider illustrations as a motivation to read, and when can illustration be a distraction from reading?

Part 2 aimed to discover points that illustrator have to keep in mind while illustrating for children.

Part 2

- What kinds of pictures are suitable for children? Why?
- What are the elements that illustrators of children's books have to be careful with while illustrating for children?
- What roles can the color and size of a picture and the layout of the page play in children's books?

The third part concerned about the impact of pictures on children. This part aimed to find the different effects of pictures on children.

Part 3

- How can pictures promote the child's grade level of reading?
- How can pictures affect children's imagination?
- How can pictures impact children's behaviors and thoughts?

When can we consider illustrations as a motive to read, and when can illustration be a distraction from reading?

Part four was looking for cases in which illustrations can be harmful for the child.

Part 4

- What do you think about visualizing myths, fairytales and such unrealistic stories for children? (animals, unrealistic creature)
- When can pictures be harmful?

The last part aimed to investigate the situation of children's books and illustrations in Oman.

Part 5

- How is the situation of children's books in Oman?
- Who is responsible of publishing books for children in Oman?
- What are the reasons behind the lack of Omani children's books?
- Is there any kind of censorship for children's books?(examples)

Interview with a teacher of "Children Literature", College of art, Department of library and information science and the founder of children's library in the college.

This interview aimed mainly to localize the research topic to Oman by asking how is the situation of children's books in Oman? How Omani children respond to Omani illustrations in their books? The interview also investigated the reasons behind publishing problems in Oman and the responsible for publishing children's books; who is responsible of publishing books for children in Oman? What are the reasons behind the lack of Omani children's books? Is there any kind of censorship for children's books? (examples)

3.6 Data results

To start the discussion, children were asked if they prefer children's books with illustrations and whether they prefer black and white or colored pictures. The group discussion showed that the six children like books with pictures and children prefer colorful pictures than black and white, but what was amazing is that half of the children said that they do not care a lot if the book has illustrations or not. They were aware that the content of the book is more important than pictures and three of them had already read books without pictures. This result was somewhat unexpected: a similar investigation has done by Stewig (1972) showed that children prefer books with more than twenty five percent of the space in pictures.

The children were also asked about the first thing that they noticed in the picture. The six children gave different, clever answers. The color correlation was the first noticeable thing that attracts the children to the picture. For instance, child B was concerned more about the colors of the mail boxes and how they matched the houses' colors. Children D and E also concerned about the bright colors in the picture. It was clear from their answers that they focused more in the colors of the pictures and relating the images to the real life. Then, the children were attracted by the surrealistic elements in the picture; animals with different colors and clothes. Child C and E noticed first the nice clothes that the animals wear while child A was very interested in the picture of the pink ostrich. Moreover, in the third step the children were paying attention to the theme and mood of the picture. After mentioning the colors and the surrealistic element in the picture, all children noticed the relationship between the animals that the picture showed. They were amazed by the friendship between the ostrich and the snake; they commented that cannot be in a real life.

Children's preference

To be more specific, children were also asked about the thing that they liked or disliked most in the picture. Their answers were divided into three main points; realism of the picture, size and the mood of the picture. Almost all the children concerned about linking the picture to their lives. Child A was attracted to the fiction side of the picture. He said that it looked like a zoo where a lion was riding a bicycle. Moreover, child B was confused if that was really an ostrich because he has never seen a pink ostrich. Child D liked the idea of numbering the mail boxes (e.g box1, box2, box3) because real mail boxes are not numbered in that way. Child F was very clear about what she liked most. She said that she liked the bicycle because it had two sits with two handles and she would like to have one like that. Moreover, some of the children disliked the size of the elements. Child A was surprised to see the large legs of the ostrich. He disliked that because a real ostrich has thin legs. Child C disliked the fat neck of the ostrich because he thought it should be also thin. Another child was astonished because the houses looked smaller than the animals. Child E classified that because the houses were further than the animals, they looked smaller. This shows how children are sophisticated somehow in reading pictures. Interesting thing is that children were also looking to the mood of the picture. Children A and C liked the friendship between the animals and this represented their concern about the emotional side.

Children's responses to illustrations

The children were also asked about their feelings and thoughts regarding the picture. The mood of the picture affects children's psychology. All children agreed that the picture made them feel happy because all the animals were happy and the picture is full of colorful elements. The good mood of the picture reflects a positive feeling on the children. Pictures also expand children's imagination and make them think about what is beyond the picture. The children agreed that the picture made them think of a dream world where they can see things that they might not see in the real life; they saw there an ostrich and a snake playing as friends. Child A said that the picture made him think of a village where animals live as humans and child D added that the animals looked as if they have a holiday and they are going in a trip. In short, the impact of the picture on the children's psychology was obvious.

In addition, the children were also asked about their impression about the color, size and the layout of the picture. The six children agreed with the colors which were used in the picture to present a colorful land. Four of the six children had given a very great detail about the colors in the picture; the color of each mailbox matched the color of a house, the bird looked like an ostrich but its color made it look like a flamingo, and the small fruits in the trees were colorful. Another thing is that all the children agreed with the form that the picture took, which was landscape. They discussed how this form made the elements clearer and gave more space between the elements. It was very interesting that the children were not all concerned about the size of elements in the picture. Just two of them were interested in the sizes; child D commented that the pool was too small for the hippopotamus, and child F mentioned the small size of the houses compared to the size of the animals.

Individual discussion and interviews

Importance of pictures for children

Pictures play a main role in children's world and as Hall (1990) has found children understand a pictorial code better than a verbal code. Ms. P, an illustrator and a designer of children's books, considered pictures as a medium of communication and she added that there is a movement towards "picture books" in which the pictures carry the message without a text. Mr. J, a teacher of Children Literature, supported the same idea clarifying that children interact with illustrations more than words. In addition, Mr. M, a writer of children's books, said that illustrations add a lot to children's books since they were one of the first arts that humans used to communicate even before they knew how to write. There is no doubt that pictures can enhance the book and give life to the text. Moreover, Mr. M added "I believe that the impact of pictures in children is more than words; the power of pictures depends on the illustrator creativity. There is no doubt that illustrations can communicate message in their own, especially in children's books." In the individual discussion, the six children approved that books with pictures attract them more, but half of them insured that it is not a great deal for them if the book has pictures or not. They care about the content of the book more than pictures.

One of the obvious values of illustrations is that they motivate children to read, as Mr. M said that value can be reached if the picture is related to the text and they are illustrated in an interesting way that attracts the child. Ms. P explained the point more, a picture can be a motive to read, but that depends on the kind of books they represent. In superstitious books, children would choose the book when they see the pictures. Furthermore, five of the six children selected a story/article according to the picture of the story/article. Another value of illustrations is that they help to comprehend the text better. Five children emphasized that the pictures increased their comprehension of the text. Child E said that the picture helped her understand the text better because the text had mentioned some sea creatures which she did not know and she recognized them when she saw the picture. Child A did not agree with that idea because the picture of the text he chose was small and it did not represent the idea of the text clear. He said that when I read the text, I drew a better picture in my mind which I think it would represent the idea better. In addition, Ms. P gave an example to support the idea that illustrations can help children promote their reading level. She said that books which teach alphabets can be very useful if the letters are beautifully illustrated. In this case, she believed that illustrations promote children's level of reading. From her own experience, she illustrated, she started reading for her son since he was six months and a half. Only seven months ago her son was looking at pictures and he would ask about what was happening in the story and she would be reading the story. Now, he is two years and a half and he made the shift towards the text; he asks what this letter is and what does this say, pointing to paragraphs. "His first focus was pictures and then he generally moves to the text," she said "I believe that pictures draw my son's attention to the text.

In addition, pictures can help protecting history and heritage. For example, child B was attracted to a picture which shows two men wearing clothes from old ages. He liked it because it represented something from the history which does not exist

anymore. Ms. P concerned about representing Omani culture and heredity in his illustrations. He drew people wearing Omani clothes and he also pictured real places in Oman which Omanis can easily recognize.

Another important related point to pictures in children's books is the kind of topics that are suitable to be illustrated for children. Mr. M viewed that children have the right to be introduced to all issues without expectation, but what matter is the way that the writer and the illustrator view the topic. A good point to be mentioned here is that Mr. M has written a story about "DEATH" for children. He clarified his view, children have to be prepared to face any expectation in life; death is one of the sad events that anyone might face at any time, but the way it is deliver to children make difference. He added that if we do not prepare children to such actions, we would be raising a naive person who knows nothing about the real world. He also mentioned that he wrote the story for 11 years old child who probably knew or even had experienced losing somebody. In the individual discussion, half of the children chose to read stories or articles from the factual book, Way High up, only one of them chose to read fiction stories, Marvelous Monsters, the last two chose to read about animals, Animals Around us. These three said that they prefer to read something that would add something new to their knowledge. The one who selected Marvelous Monsters said that he likes fiction and enjoy more seeing pictures of unreal creature. The last two said that they like animals and love to read more about animals that they have or see in the real life.

Points that illustrators should care about

Beside the theme of the picture, there are many other things that illustrators should be careful about when illustrating pictures, especially for children; which part of the story the picture should represent, which colors match the mood of the event, the size of the elements in the picture, and the level of realism and imagination in the picture. Ms. P, the illustrator of the picture of the "DEATH" story commented that she usually read the story, then she sit with the writer to discuss which part of the story would excited the reader and made him read more, so it depends where it falls in the plot. For instance, in some stories the picture comes at the very beginning of the story because the illustrator wanted to make the child think about what is going in the story. It also might be at the end of the story to show the ending of the story. Child E mentioned that the story she read has two pictures the first one was not related to the text as she described because the picture showed people and there was no mention to people in the story. She was attracted to the second one because it represented the main event of the story; she retold the story by looking at that picture. Child D was also very interested in the part of the picture that showed what she read about because she has never seen the space ship from inside and the picture illustrated that. She liked the picture because it represented exactly what she read.

Colors have great impact on the reader of the pictures. Ms. P emphasized that illustrators of pictures should keep in mind the age of the child and the mood of the picture when illustrating for children. She added, "I would make my illustrations more childlike for young children. For older, I would make the pictures more mature and even the lines would be just clearer and not childlike while for teenagers I would not mind black and white and I would not mind if the text dominate the picture." Although all the six children preferred colorful pictures, they looked at the colors of the pictures in different ways. Some of them were looking to the psychological part that the colors can leaf on them as a reader of the picture. Child A analyzed the colors of the picture in his story; black would represent darkness and fear. Child B was looking to something very technical. He said that every two elements in the picture matched in colors. For example, the blue color of the hot balloon matched with the blue color in the man's cloth. Child D tried to be logical when she analyzed the color because the picture represented a factual element. She clarified, "The colors are bright; yellow and grey, because you do not expect rainbow colors in the space."

Another fact that illustrators have to be careful with is the size of the picture and the elements in the picture. Mr. J said that the size of the picture depends on the age of the child. Usually young children prefer large pictures while older children prefer smaller pictures. Ms. P supported him and she added that she would enlarge some elements in the picture to make them the center of the illustration. For example, she explained "in the picture about death, the picture of the child is dominating because he is the center of the picture. He takes the readers' attention because that what I wanted the reader to focus on. The size of his picture in relation to the page is quite big; he is taking half of the page." Four of the children were satisfied having the pictures in a whole page. Child D added that the size of the picture of the space ship that she saw was good because if it was smaller, it would be difficult for her to understand what is inside the space ship. Child B was very accurate analyzing the size of the elements in the pictures he saw. In the first picture the shape of two men was bigger than other elements in the picture. He said that was because they were the most important thing in the event that the picture represented. In the second picture, the hot balloon seemed larger then people. He clarified, that was because the balloon was the center of the picture. On the other hand, child A was not happy with the small size of the picture of his story. He

preferred a bigger picture which would interact more with the text. He also thought that the hero was supposed to be bigger than the monster because he was stronger, but the picture showed the opposite; the monster was larger than the hero.

Kind of children's books and illustrations

Interestingly, only one of the six children was very interested in reading fiction stories. Child A likes fiction books because it opens the door for his imagination. Mr. M encouraged such books for children because they promote the child's creativity and his exploring talent. He added that imagination in children's books illustrations should not be over used: there should be limits for using fiction. As an illustrator, Ms. P commented, "I think there should be no limits of imagination in pictures. Why the child goes to pictures if they represent just what is around us. If we have enough imagination in our real world, we do not need to illustrate?" Moreover, the individual discussion proved that children were aware about what they were reading about. They easily distinguished between what can be real or imaginative. Ms. P illustrated her point more mentioning her personal experience. She said that she would remember some pictures from the stories that she read in her childhood and the one that stuck in her mind was the most imaginative one. She added, as an illustrator she would prefer imaginative illustrations because she loves to illustrate monsters and strange creatures, but as a parent she would be more concern about what is in the market for children because there are some artists who focus more on these imaginative things more than communicate educational message.

Negative impact of illustrations

Although illustrations can be good if they are used in an appropriate way, they also might be harmful if they are misused. Mr. J emphasized the important role of imaginative pictures, but illustrators have to be careful because over imagination might ends with negative impact on children. He also added that illustrators and writers of children's books should be cautious dealing with sensitive issues, such as, humiliating human, violence and sex. Ms. P explained that as a child one would like superstitious stories which have characters like superman, but cannot make sure if they communicate a good message or if they can be a good role model for children. These characters have strange ideas and thoughts and children can be affected by these ideas which might lead them to bad or dangerous behaviors. She added that illustrations can be harmful for children if there is no message behind them; they can be unsafe if marketing becomes a goal. If the illustrator aims to market a certain product or a certain theme, unconsciously illustrations can affect children badly. For instance, if the illustrator wants to market for junk food, he would have the hero having the junk food and looking good. In this case illustrations are hurtful because they do not carry an honest message.

Impact of illustrations in children's psychology

Children respond to illustrations in different ways and mostly they are affected by the mood of the picture. Child A was affected by the mood of risk that the picture reflected through its dark colors. He commented that the colors make him feel of danger and fear. Child C express that the first picture of the story made her feel sad because there were lots of animals which did not have anything to eat or drink . Children B, E and F had pictures in which people and animals were happy and that feeling transferred to the children.

The situation of children's books and illustrations in Oman

To localize the topic and know the situation of children's book and illustrations in Oman, this paper had raised some other questions. Mr. J was asked about the situation of children literature in Oman and the awareness among Omanis of the importance of pictures in children's world. He answered that the situation cannot be determined exactly because there is no survey has been done in the field. He added if we want to know the situation exactly, studies should be done to count the number of the private libraries for children in Omani houses, and in schools. Regarding the Omani awareness of the role of pictures in children's books, he said that there is also lack of studies in this topic, but from his observation and reading in the topic he can say that the awareness is connected with two facts. The two facts are people's life style and the level of education that they have. Generally, there is more awareness among rich and more educated people. Rich people are more aware and have the ability to buy the books that they want, so they have the chance to know more about the topic. The educated people are also more aware because of the way they raised which is more suitable to value books than uneducated people. He also said that he noticed an increase in the awareness of the importance of illustrations and of children's books in general among Omanis through the last ten years. Establishing the Children Central Library in Muscat is the best example. He also mentioned that there are three good libraries for children at Sultan Qaboos University campus; the first one is in the university hospital, the second is the children's library in the child center, and another private one behind the

staff club. In addition, the small library that Mr. J had founded in College of Arts which contains numbers of children's books and educational toys. Mr. J is also giving now a course called Children Literature in which he teaches the importance of this type of literature and the impact of childhood stories for people when they get old. The course aims to raise the awareness about the role of children literature.

Ms. P agreed that there is a lack of awareness about the topic in Oman and there is also a limited number of books for Omani children which reflect Omani culture and identity. She clarified the problem that there are some books but there are not enough and there are not directed to different age group. She added "I am not saying that children should only read what is related to their culture. I believe in more attitudes towards books. Children can read about any culture they want to know about as long they read enough about their own culture." She and Mr. J provided some reasons for the lack of Omani children's books and illustrations. The first one is that there is no motivation to work in such field. Ms. P said "I had worked two to three years illustrating pictures for that book, but I did not get any paid for my work. If I am not really interested in what I am doing why I bother to do thing that I get nothing out of it." The second reason is that there is no official press in Oman. Mr. J added that it is the government and the private sector responsibility to sponsor such press. Moreover, Ms. P mentioned a third reason. It is rarely to find people who are really interested in promoting the work of children's literature. For example, the book that she illustrated was published by the Cultural Club, but it has not been distributed in the market till now; the copies are still in their store.

One more question was asked about the books' censorship. Mr. J answered that there is kind of censorship especially for the books which enter schools' libraries; the books are checked by the Ministry of education, but nobody knows what kinds of children's books people have in their private libraries and he believes that there are some books in the market which should not be read by children. Thus, he recommended families' and schools' censorship because these are the closest friends to the child.

Chapter Four

Findings and discussion

Overall, the data collection had investigated many issues related to the topic of illustrations in children's books. Chapter 4 presents the findings of this paper.

4.1 Children prefer books with more than half of the space in pictures.

According to Stewing study (1972), children prefer books with more than twenty five percent of the space in pictures. In the individual discussion, the children said that they prefer books with illustrations, but surprisingly three of them mentioned that they care about the content of the text more than the illustrations in the book. They added in a book with pictures they would like the pictures more if they cover a whole page next to the text page which usually does not take a whole page in children's books. Thus, they prefer the picture of the text to cover more than half of the page size.

4.2 Illustrations can help to save culture and identity.

Ms. P concerns about reflecting Omani culture in her illustrations because she believes that pictures contribute building children's thoughts and view of life. She cares that her illustrations should show the Omani culture; Omani people and even sometimes real Omani places. She believes that this helps shaping the child's personality and strengths his identity, so she considers illustrations a way of saving culture and identity. Sugen (1988) concludes with the same finding in his paper about the importance of illustrations in children's books; good pictures in children's books can help children to know more about their culture and identity.

4.3 Illustrations impact children's feelings and mood.

The group and the individual discussions showed that children are affected by the pictures' moods. They feel happy if the picture shows happy people and animals or represents a pleasant atmosphere. Four of the children said that they felt happy when they saw the pictures of their texts because all things in the pictures were happy and the bright colors of that pictures reflected positive feelings. In addition, one of the children was not happy because the pictures that she had showed animals suffering from hunger and thirst. Another one felt fear because of the dark colors in the picture and the fight between the

hero and the monsters that the illustration pictured. Marshall (1988) also supported the same idea that illustrations can impact children's mood and feelings whether positively or negatively.

4.4 Children are sophisticated about realism and colors of the picture more than adults.

Many surveys found that children are better than adults reading pictures. Mr. J, Ms. P and Mr. M supported this idea strongly and the focus group discussion with the individual discussion explores that children are sophisticated reading pictures. They were accurate with the colors and realism of the pictures. Some of them were focused matching every two elements according to their colors. They analyzed the reason of using colors according to the mood of the picture. Most of the children were also caring about the realism in the picture. They related everything to their real lives in order to compare what can be true and what cannot be true in the real life.

4.5 There is a growing up awareness to the importance of illustrations in children's books in Oman.

Studies showed that the field of illustrations in children's books has become an academic issue and there are many studies which talk about the magnificent of illustrations in children's books. Mr. J and Ms. P agreed that there is a lack of awareness of the role of children's books and illustrations among Omanis. Mr. J added that this awareness has been increased in the last ten years because of the changes in people's lives styles and their level of education. He also mentioned the increase of the number of Omani children libraries to show the results of this awareness. Ms. P added that there is an increase in the number of people who are interested in this field; now, there is quite a good number of illustrators and writers of children's books.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

The world of children's books is a wide world and illustrations are one of the most important elements in these books. This paper focused on the importance of illustrations in children's books and how children respond to them. Because of the impact that illustrations might leave in people when they grow up, many studies have been done in this field. In most cases pictures help to engage children in the text, promote their reading ability, and might affect their feelings, imagination, thoughts and behaviors. However, the effects of illustrations on children differ according to the way that pictures were illustrated: for instance, the impact of illustrations depend on the illustrators' choose of color and size, and their use of imaginative pictures

The findings of this research paper showed that most children prefer illustrated books. They also like most the colorful pictures which covers more than half of the book's page. In addition, pictures play a very important role in children's books. They help children to comprehend the text better, and might affect building the child's personality and identity. The pictures reflect some thoughts and culture and children are affected by these thoughts, especially because children are sophisticated reading pictures more that older people. Because children are very interested in pictures, they analyze every small detail in pictures. Moreover, illustrations impact children's feelings and mood; if the picture has sad mood, the sad feeling would be transferred to the child. In addition, there is an increase in the awareness among Omanis about the role of illustrations in children's books.

Omani people attitudes towards illustrations in children's books needs further study. The number of the studies about the situation of children's books in Oman and the awareness among Omanis of the role of pictures in children's books is very limited. The idea of having courses about children's literature for university students is very useful to raise the awareness among the next generation of the role of pictures in children's books. More reliable results about the situation in Oman can be reached by doing a program to count the number of private children's libraries in Omani houses and schools.

Furthermore, there should be kind of censorship from families, schools and the Omani government to the books that children read. More precise data can be collected if Oman has a special center or press of Omani Children Literature which contains illustrated Omani folktales and fairytales for children. That would help a lot transferring the Omani history, strengths Oman identity and would attract children more to read.

(around 10,000 words)

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Appendices

Appendix A: Proposal

The Importance and impact of pictures in children's books

Introduction

Many people believe that reading is the generator of people's minds and that books are the best tools through which we gain knowledge. In fact, each book has to be suitable with the reader's level and interest. For that, there are special books for children, which match their interests and level. Furthermore, Pictures are one of the useful elements that can be used to attract a child to read a book and it has been said for a long, "A picture worth hundreds of words." In addition, the famous writer Lewis Carrol has insured in his great fairytale Alice's Adventures in Wonderland the importance of pictures in children's books. He started his fairytale by, "And what is the use of a book without pictures or conversation?"

According to Margaret Marshall in his book An Introduction to the world of children's books, "Ninety percent of what we learn is learned by sight and we tend to remember what we have seen. The old saying "Seeing is believing" is still largely true today." This insures the importance of using the sense of sight in learning. Marshall explains that more in his book saying, "Human beings are accustomed to giving and receiving information both formally and informally by means of sight, vision and pictures." (Marshall, 1988, p.193)

From my preliminary reading I also found that children's books have a rich history and the illustrations in books also have gone through stages till arriving at the bright, colored pictures that are in books now. Bill Katz has mentioned in his book A History of Book Illustration examples of the stages that illustrated books went through, "The range and variety of printing processes available in the last quarter of the nineteenth century made possible an abundance of illustrations in publications for children." (Katz, 1994, p.618)

Simply, the illustration in children's books is an art form as Schwarcz has described, "It is an art form because it bears the characteristics by which we recognize art. It communicates in symbolic language; it expresses its intentions by creating, from verbal and visual elements, an aesthetic order carrying content and meaning." (Schwarcz, 1982, 169)

I think this shows the importance and validity of the topic to put it in a research form. My research question is, "What are the impact of pictures and illustration in children's books?" In other words, to what extent can picture affect the child, as a reader?

Background

When books for children were first published they were connected only with studying but then elements have been added to these books in order to attract the child and capture his interest. The term "Fun to Learn," has been welcomed to the world of children books and PICTURES are one of the fun components which have been used in books.

My research will focus on pictures in children's books. The research discloses the importance of pictures for children and the impact of pictures and illustration in children's books. I am really interested in the topic because I am one of those who believe that "Today's reader is tomorrows' leader" and I am living in a society which does not value the treasure of books especially for children. I strongly believe that children with their innocence are not living mostly in our word. They have their own world and their books should follow their world criteria.

The center of my research is PICTURES in children's books and in the introduction I will talk about pictures in books in general and will also give a brief summary about the history of illustration in these books.

From my reading and discussion with colleagues and some teachers about the topic I found three main related themes which can also be discussed in the research. The first one is the importance of pictures in children's books. There are many theories in the topic I can analyze to clarify what a picture means to a child. One of these theories is Piaget theory about the early and middle childhood cognitive development. I think another good point to be discussed under this theme is how pictures are important to the child's Motivation, Interpretation, Emotional responses, Imagination, and Language?

The second theme related to my research question is the analysis of illustration for children. Pictures and illustration can be analyzed in term of their colors, sizes and realism. Pictures may leave a positive or negative effect on the child, so illustrators have to be careful choosing every item when drawing for children. Additionally, The analysis will follow written theories about analyzing pictures and illustrations.

The third theme related my research question is the impact of illustration on the child as a reader. This theme can be expanded in term of the child understanding, his visual perception, his fear of some kind of pictures, the affect on his language and cultural beliefs. Under this point I can also find out how pictures are important to the child's Motivation, Interpretation, Emotional responses, imagination, and language. The last point can be mentioned her is when pictures can be harmful for the child?

The data collection will also help to give a clear picture of the situation of the Omani children books and its expected future. The main questions to be answered here are which what do children like more in their books? What do they like more in a picture? And what are the obstacles faces the responsible of writing and publishing these kinds of books in Oman?

Aims

The main aim of my research is to show the various impact of the pictures on the child. The study also intends to clarify the following issues related to the topic:

1. The importance of pictures for children.
 - What is the relationship between visual image and children cognitive development?
 - What does Piaget theory says about the child cognitive development and pictures?
 - What does a picture mean to a child?
 - How important are pictures for children?
 - What kinds of pictures are suitable for children? Why?
2. The analysis of illustration for children.
 - What role can the color, size of a picture play?
 - Has the picture in children's books reflected reality or can it be imaginative picture?
 - What features in a picture capture the child's interest?
 - In addition, some theories about how to analyze illustration.
3. The impact of illustration on the child as a reader.
 - Can picture be a motive for a child to read?
 - Can pictures help a child to understand the text better?
 - How pictures are important to the child's motivation, interpretation, emotional responses, imagination, and language?
 - When pictures can be harmful?

Data collection

The data for the research will be collected through:

* A questionnaire which will be distributed among Grade 2 students to understand their point of view about the topic. (60 students)

The questionnaire aimed to know which books children prefer, what do they like in picture books, and what do they like better in a picture?

*A group focus:

I'll provide two stories for the child, one with colored pictures and another with very simple, uncolored pictures. Then I'll ask the child to choose what he want and let him read. After he finishes, I'll ask him, why he choose that one, and what he

like more about it. I'll check his association of the words with pictures.

(My Plan is to go to ABA school; the book chosen is "Aesop's Fables" as the colored, picture book and another fable for Aesop for which I have to draw simple pictures.)

*An interview with Mr. Abdullah AL-Aysari, the head of AL-Aysari Center. (The centre which has published some books for Omani children with pictures)

*An interview with two Omani writers of children's stories.

Basically, the field work part of the research will open the floor to see how children look at the topic, and what the specialists say about the secrets beyond pictures.

Findings

After analyzing the data collected through the questionnaires and the interviews, the research main question will hopefully be answered and the related issues will also be classified and analyzed carefully.

The importance of the illustration in children's books will be clear and the way of analyzing illustration will also be provided. Besides that, the different impact of pictures will be listed and explained logically from both sides, positive and negative.

Conclusion

By the end of the study, I hope I will be able to draw a clear picture of the value and risk of using illustration in children's books. In addition, I will state clearly what elements of a picture can affect the child and how beside the importance and impact of the pictures in children's books. The conclusion will also include some recommendations and suggestions.

Bibliography

1. Marshall, Margaret R. (1988). An introduction to the world of children's books. London : Gower Publishing Company Ltd.
 2. Katz, Bill. (1994). A history of book illustration. 29 Points of view. Metuchen, N.J., London: The Scarecrow Press.
 3. Schwarcz, Joseph H. (1982). Ways of the illustrator. Visual communication in children's literature. Chicago: American Library Association.
- # The study will basically be structured according to the following **out-line**:

Introduction	It will introduce the topic. It will provide a simple background about the history of children's books illustration. It will reveal the things covered in the following chapters.
Background	It will show the importance of pictures and illustration in children's books. It will deal with different aspects of the topic. It will provide ways of analyzing illustration. It will disclose the different impact of pictures and illustrations in children's books.
Data collection	It will explain the ways that are followed to collect the data. It will show the findings gathered from questionnaire, group focus and interviews.

	Most of the data collection will draw a picture of the situation of children's books in Oman.
Findings	It will reveal what has been found in the previous chapter.
Conclusion	It will sum up the main points. It will provide some recommendations and suggestions related to the topics.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT: SCHEDULE

Week 1,2&3	Decide on topic Discuss topic with my tutor Write a letter to my tutor Search the database for relevant literature Write my plan for the project Choose the sources.
Week4	Examine the related areas to the topic Read some sources to state the problem in the proposal Draft my proposal Discuss my draft plan with my tutor and classmates.
Week5	revise the proposal carefully Submit the proposal on 10 th , Marsh, 2010 Read deeply in the sources I have. Arrange meetings with the interviewees
Week6	Submit annotated bibliography on 17th, March, 2010.
Week7,8&9	Write a draft introduction (Ch1) Give the draft to my tutor
Week10	Refine the draft Discuss the draft with my classmates Submit the introduction and the literature review on 14th, April, 2010.
Week11- 14	Distribute questionnaires, case study and make interviews. Analyze the data collection.
Week15	Proof-read all parts Finalize Appendices in correct order <u>Submit the complete paper on 19th May, 2010.</u>

Appendix B: Annotated Bibliography

The annotated bibliography1

Marshall, M R. (1988). An introduction to the world of children's books. London : British library Cataloguing in Publication Data.

In this book, Marshall shows what the world of children's books includes. She first defines the term "Children literature." She talks about its development and then gives the picture of children's books publishing scene. She also shows what features a good children's book should have and considers illustration as one of the most important elements of children's books. A key point for Marshall is that "Books for children tend to follow a similar pattern because they satisfy similar needs, worldwide." (p8)

Chapter 7 is about illustrations and children's books. Marshall believes that human beings learn better by sight and she considers "seeing is believing" a truth for any time and place. In this chapter, she emphasizes the importance of pictures for children. She lists many purposes for having pictures in children's books, such as, in purpose of decorate the page, enhance and interpret the text, increase visual perception and provide visual information. (p195)

I am interested in further answering and explaining the following questions: What does a picture mean to a child? How important are pictures for children? What kinds of pictures are suitable for children? Why? I think this book can provide many good answers and points to my research. I also believe that the information that I will get from this book is current since the book is about the children's literature as a whole.

Marshall argues that illustration can have a great impact on the child, as a reader, which shows its importance and value. Her points relate directly to my research first theme which is the importance of illustrations in children's books.

(266 words)

The annotated bibliography2

Schwarcz, J. H. (1982). Ways of the illustrator: Visual communication in children's literature. Chicago: American Library Association.

This book discloses the points that are taken in consideration while illustrating which helps a lot inferring the relation between the picture and its effect. Schwarcz specifies the first section to introduce the topic. Then he divides his fourteen sub-themes into two parts. Part one is called examples of forms and expression which includes different kinds of illustrations, like "Continuous Narrative." The second one is about variations on themes of illustrations. I am interested in his introduction and the first section is "Relationships between text and illustration," because that serves my second and third themes in my research about the feature of the picture and its impact in the child.

Schwarcz believes that "books with their wealth of stories and pictures have become an outstandingly important factor in initiating children." (p1) Pictures always play a role in the story with words which words cannot play alone because pictures are more concrete than words. The author argues that the text enter into various relationships with pictures and illustrations. Illustrations fulfill many functions and roles within the shared framework with words. He divides the relations between the text and the picture into spatial relationships and composite narrations.

The last chapter of part two, chapter14, is also a good one for my research. My research question is, "what is the impact of illustrations in children's books?" and this chapter gives an answer to a magnificent part of the question since it tells about the role of the illustration in the child's aesthetic experience. (p169-195)

This book is very useful to my research since it discusses the major point of my research, the impact of illustration in children's books.

(276 words)

The annotated bibliography3

Ginsburg, H., & Opper, S. (1988). Piaget's theory of intellectual development. New York: Library of congress cataloging-in-publication data.

This book is a collection of Piaget's work in human intellectual development. The two writers divide the book into six chapters. The first one is an introduction to the topic which they call "Biography and basic ideas." The chapters from two to five talk about the human intellectual development in different stages. The last chapter is about learning, development and education. There is no doubt that children's view of pictures is different from adults because of their cognitive and intellectual development. Thus, my research will point out at the association between the child's intellectual development and his view of illustration.

The authors argue that Piaget's ideas are discussed in many different circles, such as, psychological, educational, philosophical, and psychiatric circle. They believe that with the popularity of Piaget, he remains a difficult author, especially for an English-speaking reader. The book "is not concerned with lengthy discussion or criticism, but provides a concise description and clear analysis of Piaget's thought and work." (1988, p4)

The book is useful for my research since the research will talk about the intellectual development in the childhood. I am really interested in chapter three which shows the Piaget's later work in the field. Furthermore, this chapter will help a lot answering my questions in this area, for instance, what is the relationship between visual image and children cognitive development? What does Piaget theory says about the child cognitive development and pictures? What does a picture mean to a child? How important are pictures for children?

All in all, this book helps a lot covering a significant part of my research.

(words 264)

The annotated bibliography4

Walker, D. (1979). Understanding pictures. New York: Library of congress cataloging-in-publication data.

In this book, Walker presents studies that discuss the theories and ways of understanding pictures. He begins his book with a study about designing appropriate visual materials for education. Then, he divides the book into two parts. The first part contains three chapters about pictures as a medium of communication, cross-culture studies in picture perception and the nature of intelligence and some implications for development education. Part two is also divides into three chapters which are about problems of picture recognition, understanding the picture space and the last chapter is a summary and conclusions of the whole book.

The writer argues that "understanding pictures is not as spontaneous as it might appear" and that analyzing pictures involves many learned abilities. (p9) The book provides theories about understanding pictures with some examples. In addition, it seems that the author believes in Aristotale words, "the reason of the delight in seeing the picture is that one is at the same time is learning."

Since my research second theme is about analyzing pictures, I will use most of the chapters in the book because almost all are useful. Moreover, I may be more concern with the first chapter in the first part which discusses my points clearly. Briefly, this book will help me cover the second theme of my research since it provides theories of analyzing illustrations and will help answering most if not all these questions, what role can the color, size of a picture play? Has the picture in children's books reflected reality or can it be imaginative picture? What features in a picture capture the child's interest?

(267 words)

Appendix C:

The research instruments

Group Focus discussion (Pictures in children's books)

Interviewee _____ Date: _____ Time: _____

Location: _____

Questions:

1. What you notice first in the picture?
2. What do like most in the picture?
3. What does the picture make you think of?
4. What does the picture make you feel? Why?
5. Does it remind you of something else? What?
6. What do you think about the colors used in this picture, and the size of the picture?

Individual discussion

Individual interview/discussion

Interviewee _____ Date: _____ Time: _____

Location: _____

Questions:

-lead in questions

1. Do you like to read?
2. What are your favorite books?
3. What do you like more in these books?

(After giving the book)

1. What have you chosen? Why have you chosen this particular book?

(After choosing the topic/story)

2. Why have you chosen this particular one?
3. What do you think the topic/story is talking us about?

(After reading the text)

4. Have you found the topic/story interesting?

5. What is the most interesting thing in the book?
6. What do you like most in this picture?
7. Do you like the colours of the picture? Which colour do you like most?
8. What do you think about the size of the picture? Is it good?
9. What does the picture make you think of?
10. What does the picture make you feel? Why?
11. Does the picture help you to understand the text? How?
12. Which part of the text relates to the picture? How?

Interviews

Interview with Omani writer of children's books

Interviewee _____ Date: _____ Time: _____

Location: _____

Questions:

1. Why have you chosen to write for children? In other words, what is the importance of writing for children?
2. What can pictures add to children's books?
3. When can we consider illustrations as a motive to read, and when can illustration be a distraction from reading?
4. Can pictures help children to understand the text better? How?
5. You have written a story about "DEATH" for children, do not you think that you are introducing the child to a world where they shouldn't think about yet?
6. What do you think are the suitable topics for children's books?
7. Do you believe in the saying, "A picture is worth thousand words?" How and when that can be true?
8. What do you think about writing and visualizing myths, fairytales and such unrealistic stories for children? (animals, unrealistic creature)
9. How can pictures affect children's imagination?
10. What are the limits of imaginative pictures?

Interview with Omani designer of pictures in children's books

Interviewee _____ Date: _____ Time: _____

Location: _____

Questions:

1. What do pictures mean for children?

2. What can pictures add to children's books?
3. When can we consider illustrations as a motive to read, and when can illustration be a distraction from reading?
4. What kinds of pictures are suitable for children? Why?
5. What are the elements that illustrators of children's books have to be careful with while illustrating for children?
6. What roles can the color and size of a picture and the layout of the page play in children's books?
7. How can pictures promote the child's grade level of reading?
8. Should pictures in children's books reflect the reality or can they be imaginative? Why?
9. How can pictures affect children's imagination?
10. What are the limits of imaginative pictures?
11. What do you think about visualizing myths, fairytales and such unrealistic stories for children? (animals, unrealistic creature)
12. How can pictures impact children's behaviors and thoughts?
13. When can pictures be harmful?

Interview with a teacher of Children Literature and the founder of the children's library in the College of Art.

Interviewee _____ Date: _____ Time: _____

Location: _____

Questions:

1. How is the situation of children's books in Oman?
2. How Omani children respond to Omani illustrations in children's books?
3. Are Omanis aware of the importance of books for children?
4. Who is responsible of publishing books for children in Oman?
5. What are the reasons behind the lack of Omani children's books?
6. Is there any kind of censorship for children's books? (examples)
7. When can we consider illustrations as a motive to read, and when can illustration be a distraction from reading?
8. What are the obstacles that publishers of children's books might face?

Appendix D
Examples of illustrations

