

Abstract for ICLC-15

A Multimodal Cognitive Poetic Study of Postmodern Picturebook:
The Stinky Cheeseman and Other Fairly Stupid Tales

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Keywords: multimodality, cognitive poetics, cognitive narratology, postmodern, picturebook

Jon Scieszka's *The Stinky Cheeseman and Other Fairly Stupid Tales* (1992), winner of many prizes, has been commonly acknowledged as the typical contemporary postmodern picturebook. Its characteristics of postmodernity have been widely discussed by scholars in children's literature and children's education, enhancing our understanding of its charm as a masterpiece in children's literature. And yet so far most of these studies are predominantly preoccupied with sorting its postmodern devices and analyzing their implications to the young readers on researchers' literary expertise. Few approaches its postmodernity as a sophisticated cognitive phenomenon mediated via multimodal semiotics. The existing literary study of the picturebook fails in providing adequate account for complicated cognitive mechanisms underlying those postmodern devices which can cast light on readers' comprehension. Drawing on Text World Theory, the notions schema and subjective/objective construal, the present study conducts a multimodal cognitive poetic analysis over the book, with a view of disclosing its "tricks", metafictional devices in particular, the enabling cognitive mechanisms for readers agency and functionality. The multimodal deviations and subversions at three planes, narration, story and design, are produced mainly on three types of cognitive operations: multiple embedded objectification, intertextual subversion of fairy-tale schema; and coupling double situatedness. Postmodern picturebooks, via means of the dynamic interplay visual-verbal representations, play with readers' existing story schema at multiple dimensions, triggering uncommon reading experience, encouraging rebellious and challenging mindset. As a collection of innovated fairy-tales, this picturebook is a perfect carrier of postmodern ideology: rule-breaking, authoritative deconstruction, ontological fictionality and readers' agency. This study helps to broaden the scope of cognitive narratology and promote the advancement of burgeoning multimodal cognitive stylistics.

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