

In Between Word and Image. Contemporary Children's Picturebook and Illustrated Book in Poland

Summary

The doctoral dissertation entitled *In Between Word and Image. Contemporary Children's Picturebook and Illustrated Book in Poland* was devoted to the Polish illustrated children's book. It was created on the basis of research conducted on a selection of Polish titles from 2001–2021. The content and qualitative analysis, using 30 original categories, covered 550 children's books, translations were not included in the selection. The research was carried out with the limitation of the initial assumptions and applied theories to a minimum.

The aim of the research and doctoral thesis was to analyse, from the editor's point of view, contemporary Polish illustrated and picturebooks. Due to the growing popularity of research on picturebooks, as well as putting in order and development of Polish terminology, it was decided to establish a method of distinguishing illustrated publications from picturebooks and to draw a possibly sharp border between them, in order to check what percentage of picturebooks constitute the selected sample. Picturebooks were those titles in which the separation of words and image leads to the destruction of the work and the loss of meanings, and the reading (decoding) of such a work is accompanied by increased intellectual work, and they were classified as a type of illustrated books. One of the key assumptions of the work is the claim that picturebooks are a phenomenon characteristic of contemporary visual culture and are not so much a literary genre or type of publication, but a certain stage of the development of the illustrated book, which we can observe in Western Europe since the 1960s., while in Poland, on a greater scale, only from the beginning of the 21st century. Then the name "picturebook" would also mean a contemporary trend of thinking about an illustrated children's books, the way they are designed and published.

Therefore, the research and the work itself focused on the unity of form, content and function, on the fusion and inseparability of the textual and visual means of communication, characteristic of picturebooks, while design, typography, illustrations and material features, as significant, were also taken into account. In order to show contemporary trends in designing and publishing an illustrated children's books, the dissertation takes into account the historical outline and the most important changes in culture, worldview, printing and graphic design, which led to the emergence of publications prepared, according to special needs of young readers, out of the general production of printed materials. The role of images and illustrations as well as transformations in the approach to the relationship between word and image were also analysed, with particular emphasis on the philosophy of images and the iconic turn.

As a result of the research carried out on the selection of books, a huge amount of information was gathered on how illustrated children's books are published and designed. The research categories included: publishing address, material parameters (e.g. type of binding,

format, paper), typography (layout, typefaces), art of illustration (styles, trends, techniques, colours), relations between word and image, and data enabling the identification of picturebooks against the background of illustrated ones, and to outline of “in between” the word and the image (synergy, the ability to separate words and images, intellectual work necessary to read the work). In order to highlight a given feature/tendency, the data obtained are presented as percentages of the entire selection. Thanks to this, on the basis of the obtained results, a comparative summary of illustrated and picturebooks was made. Much attention was paid to the issues of typography, design and book architecture. Due to the fact that the researchers emphasize that picturebooks are very often created by one person and due to the significant representation of such titles in the selection, the author’s books were analysed in the dissertation. Therefore, a separate monographic chapter is devoted to the author’s work of an outstanding book artist – Iwona Chmielewska. In the surveyed sample, numerous non-fiction books stood out, which, after considering terminological issues, were discussed in more detailed way. In their case, issues related to design and information architecture turned out to be important. The last chapter of the dissertation is devoted to specific non-fiction, educational titles – activity books that have not been extensively developed so far.

The conducted research showed that illustrated books dominate among publications for children. The comparative analysis presented similarities and differences in the editorial structure of illustrated books and picturebooks. It confirmed that the picturebook is a variant of the illustrated book appropriate for contemporary visual culture, at its (so far) highest level of integration of word and image.