

How is envy depicted in picture books?

Abstract

Envy can motivate self-improvement, but it can also lead to low self-esteem and interpersonal problems. It is particularly **important to teach children how to handle envy appropriately**. However, adults are unlikely to express envy in daily conversation, making it difficult for children to acquire the language used to describe it. **We examined how picture books use words related to envy** and evaluated their effectiveness as tools for emotional education. Previous research primarily focused on analyzing the frequency of emotion words. Our database of full-text picture books enables us to **analyze their contexts, such as events that trigger envy**. Our findings revealed that the various situations in which envy arises in daily life are also depicted in picture books. **Picture books help children develop emotional understanding and interpersonal skills** by allowing them to imagine characters' feelings while learning to express and respond to their own.

The acquisition of emotion words

Innate emotions

Basic Emotions

Sadness
Happiness
Anger
etc.

Emotions arising from the presence of others

Social Emotions

Envy
Pride
Guilt
etc.

The unpleasant emotion that can occur when an individual lacks something that another person has.

- Acquiring words that express social emotions such as **envy** is important for maintaining one's mental health and interpersonal relationships.
- Picture books are rich in emotion words.



Can children learn words that express envy and the situations in which to use them through picture books?

Analyses of how envy is depicted in picture books

Analysis 1: Frequency of words expressing envy in the database of 8,860 picture books

	Frequency (Token)	Volumes (Types)
Urayamashii	309	225
iinaa	211	149
Zurui	58	50
Netamashii	25	22
Shitto	8	5
Senbo	1	1

The words *iinaa* and *zurui* have multiple meanings besides envy

Analysis 2: The target object of envy in sentences containing the word *urayamashii*

	Frequency (Token)	Volumes (Types)
Possession	59	19.1%
Experience	54	17.5%
Status, life, and/or money	49	15.9%
Interpersonal relationships and/or family	48	15.5%
Ability, talent, and/or personality	39	12.6%
Temporary food	26	8.4%
Physical attractiveness	22	7.1%
Introduction of the word or proverb	11	3.6%
Others	1	0.3%
Total	309	100.0%

Picture books contain a variety of words that express envy and the contexts in which they are used, suggesting that they may be useful for emotional education.

References

[1]A. Nakai, S. Fujita, N. Watanabe, T. Hattori, T. Kobayashi, "How is envy depicted in picture books?: An examination of the frequency and context of envy-related words," Proceedings of the 33rd annual meeting of Japan Society for Research on Emotions, PS1-21, 2025. (in Japanese)

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