

A Study on the Integration of Primary English Picture Book and Textbook Targeted at Reading Literacy

Qingshuang Liu, Kelu Wang

Leshan Normal University, Leshan 614000, China.

Abstract: English reading, as one of the four language skills in English teaching, takes a significant position in English teaching. However, the amount of reading materials provided in the existing English textbooks is limited, so students' reading competence cannot be fully developed. Based on the analysis of this paper, it can be concluded that English picture book has prominent influence on reading and it can be combined with schools' textbook through different ways, which is benefit for developing students' English reading literacy. The teacher should combine different kinds of picture books with textbooks for various learning requirements.

Keywords: Reading Literacy; English Picture Books; Textbook; Primary English

1. Literature Review

As one of the main forms of early childhood reading, picture books have the characteristics of intuitiveness, life, story, emotion and rhyme of words and sentences. Through consulting domestic and foreign literature, the author found that picture books not only have important reading value in early childhood enlightenment, but also play a teaching value in English teaching^[1].

Picture books originated abroad, developed in Korea and Japan, and finally spread to China. In America, Niblack (1995) taught reading to students in the lower grades of primary school by combining artworks with picture books into formal classes with remarkable results. The thematic significance excavated in the teaching of English picture books helps students interpret the cultural connotation in classic stories and improve their cultural literacy (Turan, 2016: 169-176), which effectively infiltrates the cultivation of core literacy.

In China, the attention to picture books is also getting higher and higher. Teaching activities based on academic conditions in the process of teaching reading with English picture books can improve students' reading competence (Yu Lidan, 2013: 140). Zhang Lu (2017) found that the combination of picture books and phonics can enhance students' reading motivation and improve their reading interest effectively. Wang Qiang (2017: 68-73) published *Teaching Instructions and Methods of English Picture Books in Primary and Secondary Schools*, which plays an important guiding role in the teaching practice of picture books. Tian Tian (2021: 103-104) based on the current teaching status, studied the way to optimize the teaching of English picture books in primary schools^[2].

2. Theoretical Framework

The study of languages is inseparable from the guidance of theories, which is the same with English. As one of the important teaching theories, the Whole Language Approach can effectively guide classroom teaching activities and promote students' ability to use language comprehensively. And the Reading Literacy is the interpretation of educational goals, and the combination with the curriculum system is an international trend (Xin Tao & Jiang Yu, 2015: 26-30). This chapter mainly expounds the concepts of Whole Language Approach and the Reading Literacy and their significance for English teaching, especially the teaching of English picture books in primary schools^[3].

2.1 Definition of the Core Concepts

Picture books are those materials supplemented by a large number of illustrations and a small amount of text. In this study, English picture books refers to those storybooks that combine pictures with English text, especially for children who learn English as a second language, which can be imported or domestic books.

Textbooks are official materials that are prepared according to curriculum standards. In this study, the textbooks refers to primary school English textbooks, especially PEP primary school English textbooks^[4].

The textbooks provides a complete structural system for English learning. However, some of the contexts designs in the textbooks are not very perfect, and the humanistic values are not prominent enough. In addition, due to the limitation of the length of the textbooks, students often have a feeling of inadequacy about some topics of interest, as a result, it is hard for students to develop good reading literacy only with the help of textbooks.

Students can use the words or sentence patterns learned in the textbooks to read picture books, and experience pure language and interesting stories in picture books if those appropriate picture books are introduced into primary school teaching. This can not only cultivate students' interest in reading to meet students' curiosity, but also effectively improve students' reading literacy^[5].

2.2 Whole Language Approach

In the past, communicative approach divided language learning into four categories: "listening", "speaking", "reading" and "writing". But the establishment of the Whole Language Approach led to a new reform of language teaching^[6].

2.2.1 The Theory of Whole Language Teaching

The Whole Language Teaching Theory holds that language is a whole, and the meaning is constructed in the process of understanding and using language (Goodman, 1986). The Whole Language Teaching Theory not only advocates the integrity of language learning, but also emphasizes the authenticity of language. Teachers should strive to create a real language environment to better immerse in English learning.

2.2.2 The Relationship between Whole Language Teaching Theory and English Teaching

The Whole Language Theory has brought about revolutionary changes in the concept of language, learning, curriculum, teaching and teacher, respectively. Many of the basic methods in English teaching in primary and secondary schools in China, such as communicative teaching methods, task-based teaching methods, and situational teaching methods, can be found in the Whole Language Teaching Theory^[7].

2.3 English Reading Literacy

English Core literacy is the ability to understand, express and communicate in other languages, such as spoken or written, according to one's own wishes and needs (Cheng Xiaotang, 2014: 58-64). And as an important part of English core literacy, the reading literacy plays a vital role in personal progress. The International Research on Progress in Reading Literacy (PIRLS) argues that reading literacy is the most important competency that students should master from primary school^[8].

2.3.1 The Composition of English Reading Literacy

English reading literacy includes two parts: English reading competence and English reading character (Wang Qiang 2017). The first part consists of English decoding competence, language points, reading comprehension and cultural awareness. The second part consist of English reading habit and English reading experience.

2.3.2 The Significance of the Reading Literacy to English Teaching

The application of English reading literacy can not only correct the educational shortcomings of paying too much attention to knowledge and skills, ignoring emotional attitudes and values, but also systematically reflect the concept of quality-oriented education. Besides, English reading literacy can guide and promote the quality of English teaching, so that students can understand English culture and enhance cultural identity through reading English books. In English learning, students can have a deeper understanding and application of English knowledge, so as to better grasp the core essence of

reading. As a result, they can enhance their cross-cultural understanding and communication ability, establish the right value of life, and boost their humanistic literacy^[9].

3. Strategies of Integration Textbooks and Picture Books

Based on the literature and teaching practice, the author summarizes several ways to improve students' reading literacy by integrating picture books and textbooks.

3.1 Standards of Selecting Picture Books

In the process of reading English picture books, children can make progress in cognitive learning, language development, personality cultivation, aesthetic feeling and creativity. The primary students are unique in the understanding competence, acceptance ability and emotional experience. Therefore, in the selection of picture books, teachers should consider students' cognitive levels and choose picture books with different levels and themes (Hou Yunjie & Zhou Fang, 2018: 5-11).

Teachers can choose the appropriate picture book level and picture book content according to the specific situation of students, according to different dimensions such as the topic, language objectives, and strategic goals of the main textbook, and integrate the use of the main textbook and picture book. Through such reading teaching, on the basis of cultivating language ability, students develop their diversified thinking and cultural identification ability, cultivate reading interest and reading habits, so as to promote the healthy and sustainable development of students' English reading literacy^[10].

3.1.1 The Match of the Cognition and Emotion

Since primary school students' cognition and emotions have their own particularities, the teaching content and materials should conform to the regularity of cognitive development. Hou Yunjie and Zhou Fang (2018: 5-11) also pointed out that the integration of picture books and teaching materials should be not only based on the characteristics of textbook design, but also in line with the development law of primary school students' language learning ability. Wang Qiang and Chen Zehang (2016) also provided suggestions for the selection of picture book reading materials according to the laws of primary school students' cognitive development.

3.1.2 The Match of the Topic and Content

The selection of picture books should be based on the principle of the new curriculum standard topic, and to fit the topics and contents of textbooks. Picture books with a high degree of compatibility with the topics or contents of the textbooks can allow students to use the words and sentence patterns learned in the textbooks to read the picture books, and realize the natural connection between the picture books and the textbooks, which is based on the textbooks, and not limited to the textbooks^[11].

The English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2011 Edition) lists 24 topics: personal situation, family, friends and people around them, living environment, daily activities, school, personal interests, emotions and emotions, interpersonal communication, planning and arrangement, holiday activities, shopping, eating, health and health, safety and rescue, weather, recreation and sports, tourism and transportation, communication, language learning, nature, world and environment, popular science knowledge and modern technology, history and society, stories and poetry.

3.1.3 The Match of the Language

Vygotsky, a well-known psychologist in the former Soviet Union, proposed the concept of "Zone of Proximal Development" in the 1930s, and Vygotsky (1994) believed that "the decisive factor affecting the recent development zone is not the IQ level, but whether the learning content is in line with the child's current development level." Therefore, when selecting picture books, teachers should not only know what knowledge students have mastered, but also understand what knowledge students have the ability to learn. In summary, according to the recent "i+1" theory of development zones, it is feasible to use picture books that are slightly more difficult textbooks, which can prompt students to higher levels^[12].

3.2 Goals of Picture Book Class

The Standard for English Group Reading for Primary and Secondary School Students in China (Experimental Draft) divides the development stage of English reading literacy into three stages: starting, advanced and refining respectively according to the division of primary school, junior high school and high school. Among them, the initial stage of primary school is divided into three steps, each of which corresponds to two grades. Among them, the first grade of primary school corresponds to preparatory reading materials, and from the second grade onwards, the upper and lower volumes of each grade correspond to two levels of reading materials.

3.3 Methods of Curriculum Implementation

Picture book teaching requires teachers to change the traditional teaching methods and concepts, not only to explore curriculum standard, textbooks and picture books carefully, but also to use a variety of teaching methods and evaluation systems to bring students into a happy English reading and learning journey.

3.3.1 Integration of Theme and Content

Based on the theme and content of the textbook, teachers can integrate appropriate picture book with textbook to enrich the content of the class. By teaching picture books, teachers can help students consolidate vocabularies and key sentence patterns in the textbook, and supplement the appropriate amount of new vocabularies and phrases in the picture book for deepening the emotional education and the theme of the textbook^[13].

3.3.2 Expansion of Textbook

Based on the teaching content of the textbook, teachers use picture book as a tool for emotional penetration, sublimate the theme of each unit in the textbook, and use it as an extension of the textbook. In this process, students can fully experience the humanity of each unit.

3.3.3 A Material for Textbook Reviewing

After completing the teaching content of the main textbook, teachers can use the picture book as a material for reviewing. The teacher can summarize the pronunciation, vocabularies, sentence patterns and functional communicative terms in the textbook first, and then integrate these scattered knowledge points into a story in the appropriate picture book. As a result, students can organize the knowledge points in the textbook into a clear and ordered logical chain through reading picture book (Yan Liping, 2021: 30-31).

3.4 Teaching Methods

Pre-reading:

In the pre-reading stage, teachers can guide students to review relevant vocabularies by brainstorming, singing, topic discussing and other activities, which can stimulate students' knowledge, stimulate their interest in reading, and then naturally transfer to picture books to read. When reading, teachers can guide students to observe the cover, invite them to predict and guess, which can mobilize their thinking ability. Yang Liu (2017: 10-14) also believed that the preparation activities before reading can remove some obstacles for the subsequent reading process^[14].

While-reading:

In the while-reading stage, through the picture tour, teachers can guide students to understand and conclude the text structure and form a mind map by observing, guessing, connecting the context, inducting and other learning strategies, which is helpful for students to form effective reading strategies and cultivate their good reading habits. Tu Bin (2016) believed that "activating students' subjective initiative in learning, enhancing their sense of experience, awakening their thinking ability, and strengthening their self-efficacy in learning." is important. Therefore, after completing the picture tour, teachers can guide students through activities such as role play and repetition, let students experience the characters' spirit experience, which can deepen their reading experience and reading fluency^[15].

Post-reading:

Liu Xilang and Zhang Shanshan (2015: 7-10) pointed out that since literacy is generated in the interaction between people and situations, scenario design is an inevitable choice for cultivating core literacy, teachers should advocate experiential learning. Therefore, in the post-reading stage, it is particularly important to create real life context. After reading, the teacher can guide students to think and discuss the characters or plots in the picture book, which can cultivate their thinking ability, deepen their reading comprehension competence, and guide them to form correct emotional values. In addition, students can flexibly use the knowledge in the real life that have learned in textbooks and picture books, so that the value and meaning of reading can be fully utilized^[16].

3.5 Diversified Evaluation System

Liu Xiaoxia and Guo Haijin (2018: 26-29) pointed out that the current evaluation of English teaching in primary schools pays too much attention to knowledge and skills, ignores the evaluation and guidance of other aspects, which result in the phenomenon of "lack of legs" in the development process of students, and it is difficult to achieve all-round development. Besides, Chu Hongqi, Zhang Yongmei and Tian Yi (2015: 4-7) believed that the cultivation of students' core literacy should be promoted through evaluation reform. Therefore, in order to promote the better integration of picture books and textbooks, the construction of a pluralistic evaluation system is also particularly important. First of all, the content of evaluation should be multiple, and it should be evaluated from the four dimensions of language competence, learning ability, thinking quality and cultural character in the English reading literacy. Secondly, the subject of evaluation should be diversified. In addition to teacher evaluation, parent evaluation and student mutual evaluation also play a crucial role. Thirdly, evaluation methods should be diversified. In the context of core literacy, the evaluation of primary school English class should be based on qualitative and formative evaluation, and combine qualitative and quantitative evaluation, formative evaluation and final evaluation (Liu Xiaoxia & Guo Haijin, 2018: 26-29).

In addition, from the specific implementation method, different evaluation methods can be used for different teaching content and scenarios. For example, reading is evaluated from the four dimensions of speech, intonation, fluency, and emotion; performance is evaluated from six dimensions of language, fluency, emotion, expression, limb, and effect; and reading report is evaluated from the dimensions of language clarity, content interest, and thought profundity. Similarly, oral and written assignments should be evaluated in a pluralistic manner. At the same time as verbal evaluation, with the help of body language, such as nodding, smiling, gently patting shoulders and other small movements, can let students feel the affirmation or encouragement from the teacher. For the evaluation of written homework, Wu Bian (2021:66) believed that the evaluation of students who have done a good job can draw a smiley face or sticker, which is in line with the innocent and cute nature of primary school students, but also allows them to feel the joy of learning, which can stimulate their desire to learn. Fourthly, respect the individual differences of students, and then implement evaluation accordingly. Liu Xiaoxia and Guo Haijin (2018: 26-29) believed that according to the differences in students' levels and abilities, they should be divided into three levels: excellent students, middle students and students with academic difficulties, and students at different levels should be evaluated accordingly based on different standards.^[17]

4. Conclusion

This present study provides subjects with different teaching materials, aiming to find out whether English picture books have positive effects on students, reading competence, compared with the English textbooks. Based on the analyses, the major findings of the present study can be found as follows.

4.1 Research Conclusion

Firstly, the effective application of the English picture book teaching in reading teaching can facilitate students' reading learning, and improve students' reading competence.

Secondly, English picture books and textbooks can be integrated in various forms. On the one hand, English picture books can be integrated with different lesson types, such as vocabulary class, dialogue class, etc.; on the other hand, integrating of English picture books and text books can appear at different times of the course, such as pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading.

Thirdly, in the process of picture book teaching, primary school English teachers sometimes face the phenomenon that picture books are out of touch with the main teaching materials. In this way, teachers need to find teaching materials again, supplement the content of picture books, and ensure the normal reading teaching^[18].

Based on the above analysis, it can be concluded that picture books can be organically combined with the main teaching materials of the school. On the basis of cultivating language ability, it can develop students' multi-thinking and cultural identification ability, cultivate reading interest and reading habits, so as to promote the healthy and sustainable development of students' English reading literacy.

4.2 Research Limitations

The present study explores the effectiveness of English picture book teaching on reading competence. What about the effects of English picture book teaching on listening, speaking, writing? Besides, English picture books are just supplementing to the textbooks, how to integrate the English picture books with the textbook still needs further exploration.

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