Children’s Language Inspiration from Picture Books—A Case Study of Pre-school Kids

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篇名:
Children’s Language Inspiration from Picture Books
—A Case Study of Preschool Kids

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I. Introduction

1. Background of the Study

   *Struwwelpeter* was the first picture book in the world. It was published in 1845 and written by Heinrich Hoffmann, a psychologist in German. This kind of books consists of colorful pictures and simple words, emphasizing many vivid characters. In order to catch children’s eyes, sometimes picture books even have no words. By using picture books, teachers and parents can arouse kids’ imagination and curiosity. Most important of all, kids can learn with joyfulness. That is why picture books become one of the most popular educational properties in the modern world.

2. Motivation of the Study

   In this international world, English becomes a main stream now. If you don’t know some English, you may be like an illiterate. Why is English so important? For employment, you may need to speak English in a company’s interview. For entering good colleges, the grades of English examinations are required. For instance, the qualification of General English Proficiency Test (GEPT) is required for some college admission as the score of Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) is the standard to enter an oversea college. Even television programs are produced to investigate the methods of learning English. From this, we can know the importance of English.

   Knowing the importance of English, I chose to study in the Department of Applied English to improve and advance my English ability. After two-year study, my English ability is better than before. So I will use what I learn in this study. My group members and I chose several English picture books to teach six-to seven-year-old children. First, we use singing and dancing to warm up and to raise their interests in English.

3. Purpose of the Study

   To promote children’s interest in English, we design a series of activities to tell stories in picture books to preschool kids. Hopping by this English picture books teaching can enable children to understand words related to real life. Also learning in playing helps kids effectively absorb English words and knowledge in books. After the instructions of picture books, we expect the kids participating in our teaching
experiment exactly learn the knowledge in the picture books and get interested in learning English and reading books as well.

II. Thesis

1. Concept and Definition of English Picture Books Teaching

A. Concept

Before children can explain what the words mean, most of them can understand the meaning of pictures. When reading words, many children use the information they collect from pictures to grasp the story meaning. That is because they read pictures instead of reading words (1). And most important of all, in the early age, kids are clever at vision and pictures (1). As a result, teaching little children with this kind of picture books may be a suitable choice.

B. Definition

English picture books contain “writing” and “drawing”, and they need to be integrated completely and subtly. Most of them are pictures and simple words. The words and pictures, which convey the meanings of a story, are the most important in books. An English picture book use pictures to help children learn English, and promotes their interest and motivation in reading. English picture books teaching activities are quite diverse (4).

2. Introduction of the Picture Books Used in this Study

The picture book that we used in this teaching experiment is mainly designed for preschool children. The title of the book is *I Am a Duck*, and the story is to present some animals and the sounds they make, such as the sound “croak” for frogs and “meow” for cats. In this book, the key words contain: dog, cat, owl, horse, donkey, pig, duck, rooster, frog and sheep and the sentence pattern is “I am a(n) _____."

3. Introduction of the Teaching Plan

To achieve our purpose, we design a teaching plan. The details of this plan will be presented as follows.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kids learn English with picture books</td>
<td>Amiel, Micky, Angeline, Wei</td>
<td>40 minutes/period</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Activity:**
1. Warm up
2. Present a picture book
3. Play games and practice words and sentences in the book

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Procedure &amp; purpose of teaching</th>
<th>Step of teaching</th>
<th>Storyteller</th>
<th>Tool</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Warm up:</strong> Story tellers do self-introduction and then dance with kids.</td>
<td>1.1 Do self-introduction one by one.</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>CD player, Candies</td>
<td>10 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose: To know and get familiar to one another, make children excited and help the activity be carried out successfully.</td>
<td>1.2 Teach dancing, and the others be assistants aside.</td>
<td>Micky</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 All dance with kids together.</td>
<td>All</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Award good kids with candies.</td>
<td>Angeline</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Present a picture book:</strong> a. Show the picture book and tell the story in English and Chinese.</td>
<td>2.1 Use handmade flash cards to introduce new words in the book.</td>
<td>Micky</td>
<td>Flash cards, Picture book, Camera</td>
<td>15 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Tape-record the whole process of teaching.</td>
<td>2.2 Kids play games to learn and remember the new words.</td>
<td>Angeline, Wei</td>
<td>DV</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose: a. To help kids learn new words with colorful pictures and arouse their interests in English</td>
<td>2.3 Tell the story and show the pictures in the book. The others help aside.</td>
<td>Micky, Amiel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Observation and Results of the Teaching Experiment

The aim of this teaching experiment is help kids learn vocabulary in this book. In the following, the observation and results will be presented chronologically.

A. Our teaching objective is vocabulary, including the names of animals and the sounds they make.

B. Children’s reactions to the picture books teaching

We categorized their reactions into four kinds — super active, active, so-so and
uninterested.

a. Vocabulary dimension: active.

When we take out the flashcards and read the vocabularies out loud, all of them can follow us and repeat the words precisely.

b. Sentences dimension: super active.

As we opened the books, we only read the sentence in the first page, and then most of the kids were capable of reading the sentences in the following pages by themselves. They read the sentences pretty loud and correctly.

c. Answering questions dimension: active.

Before teaching the words, we asked “Have you ever learned any words about animals?” “Can you imitate the sounds of these animals?” We found that the kids were active and eager to answer our questions. To our amazement, they almost roared the answers to us.

C. Effect of vocabulary learning

a. Before the activity started, most of the animals’ English names they had already known.

In the beginning, we asked them what animals they had learned before. To our surprise, they knew more words than we expected. Out of the ten animals, there were only two unknown to them.

b. Remembering new words only needed a few practices.

When we reviewed the new words, they couldn’t speak out the difficulty word, like an owl, on their own. After reviewing the words three or four times, they could remember and read the difficult ones out loud when seeing the pictures.

c. During the games, kids were able to answer most of our questions.

We put the flash cards on the floor and named one of the animals’ names
randomly. Two kids came to the front and used sticks to hit the correct card on the floor. Some of them could answer the question quickly and correctly while some couldn’t. Nevertheless, after the game finished and when we reviewed the words again, most kids remembered the two difficult words without delay. In other words, picture books have the function to draw kids’ attention and make vocabulary learning interesting and effective.

D. Children’s participation in the teaching activity

a. The kids were highly motivated by the warm-up dancing.

First, we taught them the words of body parts in the song “Head, shoulders, knees and toes.” Second, we demonstrated how to dance. In the end, we danced with the kids together. They could dance and sing together with pleasure.

b. They were pretty willing to answer our questions.

Despite the fact that they might not know the answer to a question, they still actively answered every question. So they have spirits of studying.

c. While reviewing, the kids were able to read the complete sentences in the book by themselves.

Finally, we put anew word into a complete sentence and drill each word for several times. After we read each sentence out loud, the kids read it after us. At this moment, they were able to read the whole sentences by themselves. For instance, when a picture of dog was raised, they knew to answer in a complete sentence, such as “I am a dog.”

4. Reflection on this teaching activity

Through the teaching activity, we are surprised at these preschool children’s English ability. At the age under seven, they have already learned a lot of daily English words and conversational sentences. Therefore, before teaching, they have already been able to recognize and read some of the words which we were going to teach. Among these words they have known, we even think some of them are a bit difficult for preschool children. This situation reminds us of our childhood. When we were of their age, English we learned was extremely primary. It was much more
different from what they learn now. To sum up, in the modern time, children’s English ability is really being elevated!

III. Conclusion

In this study, we want to conduct an activity to observe preschool children’s reaction, willingness of participation and the effect of learning English with picture books. After this activity, we learned much more than the children we taught. What we observed are as follows.

1. We now live in the global village; for us, English is an essential language to communicate. Therefore, nowadays children’s English capability has to be improved a lot than before apparently.

2. Assisting with pictures and specific objects is necessary for children to remember the meaning of words in an unknown language.

3. Beyond our expectation, the kids’ reaction to our picture book teaching is very active. When they answered the questions, we knew that they learned everything from the picture book we presented at that moment.

Through the research, we deeply feel that there are no words in children’s world. They memorize with pictures, read with pictures, learn with pictures, too. Almost everything they do cannot be without pictures. “Picture books lead kids to imagine and think (6).” Indeed, kids are so imaginative that they cannot be taught by too straitlaced words. Whether or not teaching or learning with picture books is the best instruments, picture books certainly play an important role in modern education.

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