Preschool Students Learn English With Picture Books

稿類別:英文寫作類

篇名：
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I. Introduction

A. Motivation of the Study

English learning developed in early ages is recently considered important for non-native speakers in many countries; therefore, children are encouraged to learn English from picture books as early as possible. For instance, Birmingham (1992) was the first one to design a reading activity for children; it was named BookStart. At that time, 300 children participated in this plan. According to the result of this research, they found the 300 participants performed better than other children in reading. And later, American Library Association (ALA) advanced the activity and named it Born to Read in 2005. In a kindergarten, the children were taught to learn English through listening and reading picture books, and they found the children could better understand the word meanings in picture books from storytellers. After reading the research, we are more curious about the function of picture books. Thus, we are motivated to explore the connection between reading picture books and children’s English learning ability.

B. Background of the Study

Picture books are formed of imagery and words; that is, they mainly express the meanings of stories with imagery. And imagery is the most important reading tools for preschool children (4).

In modern time, bilingual preschools are popular, and many of them hire foreign teachers—native speakers—to teach the kids who are under-six. Kids learn everything in an environment with whole English; by doing so, they are able to be exposed to the language English intimately. To experience an English life, whatever the children do, it is always related to American language. In order to nurture children’s interest in reading English picture books, teachers use funny and vivid body language and voice expression to tell the stories. If the story is too hard for children to understand, teachers may simplify the story and use easy vocabularies to replace the hard ones. So children can grasp the story meaning, and teachers will proceed with the story smoothly (5).

C. Research Questions

Based on our motivation, we find three main aspects as our research questions
to further understand how children’s English learning ability can be initiated from picture books. The questions are listed as follows.

RQ1. What are the benefits of reading picture books for preschool children?
RQ2. What are the shortages of picture books on education?
RQ3. What methods are often used to foster children’s interests in reading picture books?

II. Thesis

A. Benefits of reading picture books

There are five advantages to read picture books.

1. First of all, picture books show stories by using many pictures, which easily attract and encourage children to read and learn. For example, picture books use bright and animated drawings to catch their attention.

2. Second, picture books arouse children’s imagination and do not put a lot of pressures on them. Some pictures are meaningful and fantastic, so children can think outside the box to image the frame.

3. Third, the contents of picture books are short, and children can finish one in a short time. Through many pictures and some easy words, children can understand the main theme of picture books soon.

4. Fourth, picture books enrich children’s knowledge and imaginative power so that they are interested in language. They can learn knowledge through reading picture books. Moreover, their reading ability, speaking ability and listening ability can be improved by reading books.

5. Fifth, with reading a number of books, children can find out what they like to learn. Reading picture books helps children unafraid of studying English. Because of reading picture books, they can make progress in English step by step. Besides, they can find out what they want to do or what they like in the future. Then, they can find out the way they like and be willing to do it.

The contents of picture books are mainly displayed by colorful imagery, easy words, and short lines to present the atmosphere and the purposes that the story aims to express. Besides, children are also easy to acquire special vocabularies with repeated patterns. By reading such interesting and adorable picture books, children’s reading ability will be improved day after day (6).
B. Shortages of picture books on education

Though picture books bring many advantages to children, there are also some shortages when picture books are used on education.

1. Picture books are not cheap, so caretakers cannot spend much money buying them to children.

2. If children read books more than speak words or write, their listening, speaking and writing ability will not be improved.

3. Sentences in picture books are few and short, and children may easily pay attention to imagery instead of words or the contents. Then, they may not think about what meanings of the sentences are and become dependent on pictures, so they cannot focus on sentences. Besides, Perry Nodelman and Evelyn Goldsmith said, “Children can use pictures to learn, but some of them do not look at words but just focus on pictures. In doing so, children would lose the endurance of reading (7).”

C. Methods used to foster children’s interests in reading picture books

Since we have reviewed on the advantages and shortages of picture books used for children, we now look at the methods that teachers like to use when picture books are read in classrooms (8).

1. Warm up: Teachers use some games, songs or activities to “cause their motivation,” which is to arouse students’ willing and interests in learning.

2. Reading: Teachers introduce the basic information of picture books first. When proceeding reading activity, teachers read words out loud first and then show the illustrations on books to children; also, they may show the illustrations first and then read words after-wards. Or they read and show pictures at the same time.

3. Words and sentence patterns exercise: Teachers teach words and sentence patterns first and kids practice the pronunciation and meanings of new English words and the patterns, intonation and grammar of sentences.

4. Appreciation: Teachers show pictures on books to help kids understand the contents of stories. Teachers may raise their voice to read the stories, explain the meanings of stories. Most kids can know the relations between words and illustrations by looking at pictures. Thus, the ability of appreciation is built up.
5. Explain the cultural differences: After reading and appreciating the stories, teachers need to explain the cultural background, and customs that are identical or different to those in our country relationships.

III. Conclusion

A. Suggestions

Picture books provide kids with unlimited imagination; thus, compared with English word texts, pictures are more attractive than word-sin English texts. Picture books not only cultivate kids’ interests in reading but also activate institutional English classes and satisfy learners with different levels. What lies behind picture books are the values of cultural stimulation and morals of connotation.

B. The importance of picture books on education

1. To help children establish cognition

Many educationists and psychologists said that the period aged from 0 to 3 is the accomplished stage of personality because the age from 0 to 3 is the important stage to the entire life. But, there is no formal school for these children who are under three. So, the teaching mission should be conducted by parents, and it is suggested that they can teach their kids with picture books.

2. To build up children’s confidence on using words

Kids are often not confident of taking something which they first learn. So parents can read picture books for their kids every day and teach the words inside the books from simple to difficult ones, and from household and school using words to social using words. Taught by parents, children become more confident of reading and learning.

3. To form an interpersonal and interactive study

When we read picture books to children, they listen with concentration. They learn the interpersonal relationship and know how to respect others. In addition, the speaker should tell something meaningful instead of cooking up meaningless contents, or the listeners will feel confused and learn nothing. So, children’s listening, respect,
expression and communication abilities can be formed from picture-book education.

4. To increase the connotation of literature art and to induce the ability of creation

The articles inside picture books are very short, but every sentence is the essence which makes the articles wonderful. Different levels of picture books can be read from age three to eighty. Some children can read a picture book for 20 to 30 times, and they won’t be bored with it. On the contrary, they may feel bored after they read the school textbooks a few times. In addition, after teaching children picture books for a while, children can be demanded to make picture books on their own. They will be happy to do that, and some of the kids even take these personal creations as their treasures. To them, this is the most valuable thing in their life. For this reason, children’s originality can be induced by various picture books.

C. Summary

From the research reviewed above, we can understand that reading picture books is good for children. A foundation of literacy, Hold away, D, said that children learn, share and interact with adults; that is a way to promote kids’ language development and writing ability. So we can know how important it is for us to help children to learn English in their early age. However, often reading picture books for children may cause them not to read words. They just want to watch pictures. So caretakers can teach them by playing games. Through this study, we can understand that children can learn English by reading picture books and other ways as well. In addition, we also find that reading picture books not only gets benefits but also disadvantages. Compared words with imagery, imagery may convey information to children more easily than words. Also, the patterns on picture books make children have unlimited imagination and encourage them to make sentences. While teaching children the picture books, teachers can use diverse instruction methods to bring children’s interest in picture books. By doing this project, we have known how to give kids an impressive instruction by using picture books.

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