The Perspective of Primary School English Teachers in Using Picture Books

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Abstract

Recently, many educators and scholars have focused on the research and the topic of how to use picture books in improving the effectiveness of English education meaningfully and appropriately. However, it is also important to realize and examine English teachers’ perspective of using picture books in their teaching. Therefore, this study aims to explore primary school English teachers’ perspective of using picture books in their classrooms. 10 primary school English teachers will fill out the questionnaires. Through the results of the study to find out their perception of using picture books as a English teaching tool based on their teaching experience or process on class.

Keywords: English teaching, picture books, English teachers’ perspective, classroom, teaching experience

1. Introduction

Children’s literature is a powerful language-teaching source, and it is vital that teachers use the highest quality in the classroom. Multicultural literature serves as an important part of language education, and not only enhances all children’s understanding of different cultures, but also improves children’s reading, writing, and thinking abilities (Norton, 1990). Picture books are best understood in light of the interaction between the words and pictures in the book, which are different with other common literary works interpreted only by verbal language. Children’s picture books are an important part of children’s literature and also play a vital role in promoting the development of children’s psychology, language competence, cognitive ability and creativity.

Since many scholars and educators had already provided many characteristics and benefits of picture books in English teaching, primary school English teachers could have many opportunities in using picture books for all practical purposes. Due to their teaching experience and process, they are qualified to share their attitude towards using picture books to teach children English with the researcher. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the perspective from the standpoint of elementary school English teachers. The major hypothesis is that using English picture books effectively aids elementary school English teachers to teach on class.
2. Literature Review

2.1 Children’s Literature
According to Faltis (1998), children’s literature really plays an important role in education. First, picture books develop the concepts and vocabulary of different cultures by presenting them in contexts, and using pictures and some clues to be the aid tools in comprehension. Second, children’s literature can help kids frame appropriate attitudes and behaviors needed in order to be successful in realistic society. Kearney (1969) exhibited that there are ten values of picture books for children: (1) they can tell stories in an entertaining way; (2) children can share the same experience or identify with the characters in fiction; (3) through the stories, children can find out the solutions when facing some problems of life; (4) they can broaden children’s imagination and improve self concepts; (5) they can aid kids to appreciate beauty; (6) they can help children to appreciate artistry; (7) they can help children to learn content-area knowledge; (8) they can cultivate children’s sense of humanity; (9) they can provide background knowledge for future perplexing adolescent literature; (10) they build a children’s concept of a “hero.”

2.2 Educational values of picture books
Within the context of children literature, picture books provide both visual input and contents for children. Although the public children literatures are originally designed for the purpose of entertainment, more and more studies show that children’s language development has a great deal to do with children’s literature experience. Originally, picture books were created for reading aloud to children (Tomlinson & Lynch-Brown, 1996) and it is a common phenomenon in many countries that parents read picture books aloud to their children at the bedtime, because they think that reading picture books can not only build an intimate relationship with their children but also enhance children’s language learning, and this concept is widely adopted by some EFL teachers who apply picture books into language classroom. Consequently, many practical advantages and features of picture books have been discussed in numerous studies, and the results continue showing various educational values of using picture books in language classroom. Marriot (1991) noted some values of using picture books. For example, pictures books can help children to develop their intellectual abilities, provide the raw material for children’s meaning making, and enhance children’s motivation of reading and help them become mature and fluent readers. Pictures books can also promote children’s language abilities, such as reading, speaking and listening. They can expand children’s social ability of cooperation and develop children’s aesthetic sense.

2.3 Picture books and teaching
Through monitoring children’s reading picture books responses, most teachers can realize
their psychological development and individual cognition (En-hui Kuo, 1999). Teachers can easily observe children’s emotional and physical responses when teaching with picture books (Mei-ling Liu, 1994). Picture books also provide children with free space of imagination and creation, allowing them to create multidimensional meaning of the text through the reading process. In addition, they have less words and more space for children’s imagination to expand (Chen-shin Wang, 2004). The significance of picture books to children is that to introduce fine literary works and different culture to children. And using picture books as a teaching tool can be one of the interactive methods in teaching children English (Yu-Feng Chou & Chin-Ron Wu, 2008).

2.4 Educators’ perspectives of picture books instruction
The EFL teachers commented that a teacher needs to have unrestrained personality and good leading ability in order to use picture books auspiciously in the classroom practices (Yi-Ling Liu, 2007). This could be accordant to what Zheng & Lin (2004) claimed in their study about picture book teaching. Zheng & Lin (2004) indicated that the classroom practice by using picture books, the roles of the EFL teachers were the instructors, who had enough abilities to guide the students to learn the things from the picture books and further change students’ passive learning attitudes into active ones. In addition, the EFL teachers proposed that the teachers’ abilities of using picture books would be enhanced by attending different kinds of workshops and observing other teachers’ classes. Likewise, Lin (2007) also mentioned that it could be helpful for the teachers to improve their skills of using picture books if they could constantly observe other teachers’ skills of storytelling, and ask for advice or comments.

3. Research question
What are primary school English teachers’ perspectives regarding using picture books in their teaching?

4. Methodology
The participants for this study were 10 English teachers in Sin-ku elementary school in New Taipei city, every teacher had experience in teaching kindergarteners before, and all of them have taught English in primary school for over 5 years. The Likert- scale questionnaire for them to fill in consisted of 10 questions about the teachers’ perspectives in using picture books for their teaching tool on class. Each question was answered in degrees (1-5, from strongly disagree to strongly agree).

5. Data analysis
As Table 1 shows, many primary school English teachers think that picture books are a great
resource for their teaching (M = 4.04, SD = 0.89). Specifically, they think that picture books could be a good supplementary tool (M = 4.06, SD = 0.77) or an important tool to teach literacy (M = 3.84, SD = 0.84), especially for early graders such as kindergartners (M = 4.25, SD = 0.82). In addition, teachers think that for their teaching, picture books are a fun tool for their students (M = 4.17, SD = 0.77) and most of their students have fun to read picture books on class. (M = 4.02, SD = 0.88). Most of the teachers think that if they have chance, they want to learn more and get the knowledge to develop their teaching skill in using picture books (M = 3.80, SD = 0.81), such as taking courses or attend seminars(M = 3.79, SD = 0.82). Last but not least, according to their experience, most teachers would like to spend time on finding more picture books for their teaching (M = 4.33, SD = 0.88) and keep using picture books for their teaching. On the whole, many primary school English teachers’ perspectives regarding using picture books in their teaching are positive and really help them in English teaching.

Table 1. Summary of primary school English teachers’ perspectives of using picture books as a teaching tool

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>I think that using picture books is a great resource for my teaching.</th>
<th>I think the picture books are a good supplementary tool in my teaching career.</th>
<th>I think picture books are one of the important tools for me to teach literacy.</th>
<th>I think that teaching based on picture books (or electronic picture books) are great resources for teaching literacy to early grades (e.g., kindergarteners).</th>
<th>I think the picture books are fun for my students to learn English.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Min Value</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max Value</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>4.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Responses</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Summary of primary school English teachers’ perspectives of using picture books as a teaching tool (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>My students talked me</th>
<th>I want to learn more about the</th>
<th>I hope to take courses or</th>
<th>I would like to spend time on finding more</th>
<th>I think that I will keep using picture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
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</table>
that they like to read picture books on class. instruction of picture books based on theories and practices. attend seminars related to the instruction of picture books picture books for my teaching. books for my teaching.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Min Value</th>
<th>Max Value</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Total Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>that they like to read picture books on class.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>instruction of picture books based on theories and practices.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>attend seminars related to the instruction of picture books</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>picture books for my teaching.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>books for my teaching.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Conclusion

Based on the outcomes of quantitative data, I concluded that many primary school English teachers are willing to use picture books in their teaching practices and that they wanted to learn more about related resources in their work. This not only shows the significance of picture books instruction but also indicates that teacher education programs should provide future primary school English teachers the related courses and appropriate time to study the instruction skills of using picture books, which can help them become creative and confident when teaching. In addition, this study serves as the first step to find out the teachers’ perspectives of using picture books, future studies should focus on the effectiveness of using picture books and show how offering instruction with picture books.

As instructors, primary school English teachers need to keep up with current information about teaching tools such as picture books and carefully think about how to integrate picture books into instruction meaningfully in order to encourage future teachers’ appropriate practice.

7. References


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