

Using English picture books for elementary school and junior high school collaboration

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Our idea for promoting collaboration in English education between elementary schools (ES) and junior high schools (JHS) is English picture books. The authors oversaw an ES/JHS professional development program for foreign language instruction where ES and JHS teachers conducted an English picture book class at an ES. This study analyzed two classes. One class focused on learning language from the story while the other focused on enjoying the story. The importance that ES curricula placed on learning language determined the focus. In both classes, JHS teachers enhanced the storytelling and English speaking activities while the ES teacher acted as the facilitator.

小学校の英語活動と中学校の英語教育を繋ぐためのアイデアとして英語絵本の活用が考えられ、私達は、小学校教員と中学校英語教員が英語絵本を使って小学校の英語活動を協働して行うことを課題とする小中学校教員研修プログラムを実施した。本研究においては、そのプログラムの中で実施された2つの授業を分析した。一つの授業は、絵本で使われている「英語」に学習の焦点を当て、もう一つの授業は、英語だけでなく「物語を鑑賞」することにも焦点を当てた授業であった。その小学校の英語活動が英語という言語形式の学習をどのように重視するかにより、指導の焦点は決定されている。両者ともに、中学校英語教員は読み聞かせおよび英語を話す活動に関する技能を高め、小学校教員は授業全体のファシリテーターとしての役割を果たしていた。

Elementary school foreign language activities and junior high school English

Starting in 2011, foreign language activities in elementary schools (ES) will become compulsory for all fifth and sixth graders in Japan. Under this plan, English activities will be conducted once a week. The goal is not to acquire English as a skill (Ministry of Education, Culture, Science, Sports and Technology [MEXT], 2008, p. 34). Rather, it is hoped that ES children will become active communicators and thus be more willing to communicate in English when they reach junior high school (JHS). In Yamazaki and Ushiro's (2010) interviews of ES and JHS teachers, however, teachers reported the goals of ES foreign language activities to be confusing. ES teachers felt that having students learn English during foreign language activities is clearer than developing a positive attitude, and JHS teachers expected English to be taught in ES even though it is not a subject.

The authors' idea for enhancing the connection between foreign language activities in ES and English education in JHS is to use English picture books. First, we believe that English



picture books can be used to support the goals of foreign language activities. Second, if ES and JHS teachers cooperate in using English picture books in ES, it is a chance for JHS teachers to understand the purpose of ES foreign language activities and for ES teachers to learn about English instruction.

Figure 1 shows the uses of English pictures books we have observed in four years of collaborating with ESs in Iwate Prefecture (Hall, 2008, 2009) and MEXT's overall objectives for foreign language activities (2008, p. 34). First, English picture books are a means to learn about different cultures; second, they can be a means for students and teachers to learn about language; and lastly, the stories themselves succeed in attracting students' interest, behooving them to listen attentively to the story. Using English picture books as a means to learn about culture is related to the first objective of foreign language activities: deepening understanding of languages and cultures. Using picture books as a means of learning about language and culture is related to MEXT objectives 2, 3, and 4. Lastly, since children are more likely to learn about the language and culture presented in a story that captures their interest, the last strength of English picture books can be thought to facilitate all the objectives.

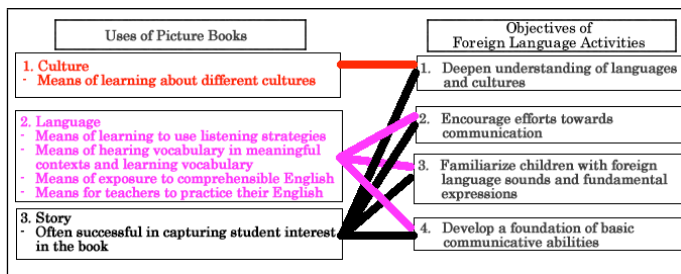


Figure 1. Uses of picture books (Hall, 2008, 2009) and the objectives of foreign language activities (MEXT, 2008)

With a grant from the National Center for Teachers' Development, the authors launched a program called the Collaborative Model Curriculum Project (CMCP) to help ES and JHS teachers learn to use English picture books. CMCP participants were divided into five mixed ES and JHS teacher groups consisting of four to five teachers. Each group attended five workshops and then collaborated in conducting a foreign language activity using an English picture book at an ES. CMCP used a total of four picture books with each picture book corresponding with the theme and language from a lesson in *English Note (Eigo No-to)*, the textbook written by MEXT for foreign language activities (2009). Before the classes, we had the following questions about the nature of collaboration between the ES and JHS teachers:

1. What will be the focus of a picture book lesson whose teachers come from different contexts?
2. How will ES and JHS teachers utilize their respective strengths in the lesson?

Method

Two CMCP classes taught by two groups were observed in November, 2010. Each class was taught at a different school, and a total of four teachers, two ES teachers and two JHS teachers, collaborated on teaching each lesson. Class 1, the Hats Class, used the book *Hats!* while Class 2, the Child Class, used the book *I'd Really Like to Eat a Child*. For the Hats Class the theme of the corresponding *English Note* lesson was clothes and colors and the text of the picture book was rewritten to include the expressions "Do you like~" and "I don't like ~," which appeared in *English Note*. For the Child Class, the theme of the corresponding *English Note* chapter was ordering food at a restaurant, and both the textbook and story contained the same words for food as well as the expressions "What would you like?" and "I'd like ~." The text for both picture books was shortened to make it easier for ES

students to understand. Table 1 shows the basic characteristics of each class as well as a description of the books.

Table 1. Characteristics of the Hats Class and Child Class

	The Hats Class	The Child Class
Grade	5	6
Teachers	2 ES, 2 JHS	2 ES, 2 JHS
Students	39	25
Book	<i>Hats!</i> (Luthhardt, 2004)	<i>I'd really like to eat a child.</i> (Donnio, 2004)
English Note Lesson	Book 1, Lesson 5, <i>I don't like blue</i>	Book 1*, Lesson 8, <i>What would you like?</i>
Book Summary	A boy and his friends buy hats they like, but the hats are called ugly by another boy. How will they respond to the mean boy?	Achilles is a young crocodile. He stops eating his favorite foods, because he wants to eat a child. One day, he meets a child. What happens?

In the school where the Child Class was taught, *English Note, Book 1* rather than *English Note, Book 2* was used for the sixth grade.

Our method for investigation was to film and transcribe each class. Transcripts and stimulated recall interviews of one ES and JHS teacher from each class were used to determine the focus of the lesson. In the stimulated recall interviews, teachers watched videos of their teaching and then recalled what they were thinking or doing at the time (see Borg, 2006, pp. 209-220).

Results: A tale of two classes

Table 2 shows the goals of each class and a description of what happened in each stage in the lesson. While the focus of the

Hats Class was both the book's language and story, the focus of the Child Class was language. Each class consisted of a pre-storytelling, storytelling, and post-storytelling stage which was recommended by the researchers in the CMCP workshops. The homeroom teachers (HRTs) in both classes interrupted the story before a major development in the plot to hold a discussion or language learning activity. In this section, we will show the roles that the teachers played in each stage of the lesson and how the picture book was utilized to accomplish the lesson goals.

Table 2. Outline of the two classes

	Hats Class (40')	Child Class (50'49")
Goal(s)	Learn the names for various colors and clothes in English and enjoy the picture book.	Learn a polite way to say "I want."
Pre-storytelling (Time)	Teacher self introductions and talking about the color of teachers' clothes. (9'23")	A speaking activity between teachers and students where they use "I like ~," "I don't like ~." (4'45") Teacher introductions using "I like ~" and "I don't like ~." (45")
Storytelling 1 (Time)	Four teachers act out the story. They wear the hats of the characters they are portraying. The pictures from the book are shown on a large digital screen. (5'00)	Four teachers use paper puppets of the characters to act out the story. The story is changed so that the question, "Would you like ~?" is repeatedly used. (2'44")



	Hats Class (40')	Child Class (50'49")
Storytelling intermission (Time)	The HRT stops the story before the characters confront a boy who is making fun of one of their hats. They then have a discussion where children answer what they think the characters will say to the boy. (5'02")	The HRT stops the story before Achilles says "I'd really like to eat a child." The HRT asks the children what they think Achilles wants to eat. The class then plays two games using the key expression, "I'd like ~." All the teachers participate in the games. (35'31")
Storytelling 2 (Time)	The teachers act out the rest of the story. (1'58")	The HRT reads the remainder of the story. (2'05")
Post-storytelling (Time)	Children give their impressions of the story. The HRT posts all the book's pictures on the blackboard and children call out colors and clothes they heard in the story. The HRT's "friends" give their impressions of the lesson and praise the children. Lastly, the children line up to say farewell to the teachers. (18'37")	The HRT confirms what happens in the end of the story and then asks some students to write their impressions of the lesson. After writing their impressions a few students read their impressions aloud. The HRT finishes the class by telling students that today they had studied "I'd like~" which is a more polite way of saying "I want ~." (5'00")

Pre-storytelling

In the Hats Class, the HRT began the lesson by herself and then invited the other teachers in as her friends. Her reason for this was that she thought that students would become nervous if she

began the class with four teachers and that calling the teachers her friends would relax the atmosphere. The teachers were also dressed in brightly colored attire such as hats, scarves, and tights. After the HRT's "friends" entered the classroom, they gave a self introduction. When this had finished, the HRT called each teacher to the front and talked about the clothes that they were wearing. Transcript 1 shows the self-introduction of one JHS teacher (Lines 1–6), JHS1, and the HRT remarking on her colorful clothing (Lines 7–15). According to JHS1, the point of this was for the children to hear the names of clothing and colors to help them understand the story.

Transcript 1. Pre-storytelling in the Hats Class: Introducing the teachers

- 1 JHS1: Hi, everyone. My name is Hiroko Okamoto. Nice to
- 2 meet you. How are you?
- 3 Children: (Many children respond)... I'm fine... I'm
- 4 hungry. (Children are laughing at the teacher's clothes)
- 5 Children: How are you?
- 6 JHS1: I'm cold. Thank you. (The children clap)
- 7 (After JHS2 introduces himself, the HRT calls on JHS1 to
- 8 step forward and then she comments on her clothes)
- 9 HRT: Oh, Hiroko, come here, come here!
- 10 (JHS1 steps forward)
- 11 HRT: (Pointing to the various articles of clothing while she
- 12 talks about them) Look, look! Red and black hat. Oh, white
- 13 scarf, purple sweater, gray scarf, black *tights* are very cool!
- 14 Yeah!!
- 15 (The children clap)

Note: In all the transcripts, speech written in *italics* was said in Japanese and translated by the authors. The abbreviations for the guest ES and



JHS teachers will be ES2 and JHS1 or JHS2. These transcripts reflect what was said by teachers and students, including grammatical errors.

In the Child Class, on the other hand, the teachers wore normal clothes and were in the room from the beginning. The teacher started the class by calling on two children to answer an English question and then conducted a speaking activity where the children asked three people what they like. The condition was that they talk to one boy, one girl and one teacher. According to the HRT, this was typically how she started each English activity. After this, the teachers introduced themselves.

Storytelling

In both classes, the teachers acted out the characters of the book. In the Hats Class, the teachers dressed in the clothes of the characters and showed the pictures of the book in the background on a touch-panel LCD monitor. They also modified the text of the book so that children would hear more colors and clothing and therefore receive more exposure to the words they had learned in *English Note*. Below is the original text for the clothing store scene in *Hats!* (Excerpt 1) and Transcript 2, which shows how the teachers changed the text.

Excerpt 1. Original text of the clothing store scene in *Hats!*

Boy 1:	Wow I like those hats.
Boy 1:	I really like this hat!
Children:	Look at our hats!
Boy 2:	I like the red and blue colors!

Transcript 2. Storytelling: Portrayal of the store scene in *Hats!*

1	ES2: Wow, I like those hats. Hi.
2	JHS1 & JHS2: Hi.
3	ES2: (Pointing) I really like...
4	JHS2: Look at me. (Touching his hat) I like the pink and red
5	colors.
6	JHS1: Look at me. (Pointing at her clothes) I like this orange
7	and yellow hat and green sweater, and brown pants, and
8	purple shoes. They are really nice.
9	ES2: (Pointing at her hat) I like the red and blue colors!

In the Child Class, the teachers acted out the first-half of the story and used paper puppets for the characters; they did not show the book's pictures. They also rewrote the first half of the story. Below is the original text (Excerpt 2) where Achilles' parents try to convince him to eat but Achilles insists he wants to eat a child, and Transcript 3, which shows how the text was modified. The teachers changed the text to include more food because, according to the HRT, "children would find it easier to understand with familiar words." Additionally, they omitted the part where Achilles gave his reason for refusing the food. They also used the expression "Do you want ~?" at the beginning but then changed it to "Would you like ~?" so they could demonstrate the difference between these phrases. The HRT commented, "Politeness is one of the topics that should be taught according to *English Note*, so we focused on this grammatical point."



Excerpt 2. Original text of parents offering Achilles food

But one morning, Achilles did not eat bananas. Mama crocodile asked, "What would you like?" Achilles said, "I'd really like to eat a child!"

Papa crocodile asked, "Would you like a sausage?"

Achilles said, "No, I'd really like to eat a child."

Mama and Papa crocodile had an idea. "Let's make a cake!" they said. "I don't want cake!" said Achilles, "I want to eat a child!"

- 18 ES2: Would you like ramen?
 19 JHS2: Ramen? No, I don't.
 20 HRT: Achilles, would you like sushi?
 21 JHS2: Sushi! No!

Storytelling intermission

In the Hats Class, the teachers stopped the story where the three children confront a boy who is teasing them about their hats. During the intermission, the HRT facilitated the discussion. The HRT said she thought it would be too difficult for the guest teachers to lead the discussion because they did not know the children. Transcript 4 shows how the teachers stopped the story (Lines 1-4) and how the HRT facilitated the discussion (from Line 4).

Transcript 3. Storytelling: Portrayal of parents offering Achilles food

- 1 JHS1 (Narrator): One morning Achilles don't eat bananas.
 2 HRT (Mother Crocodile): Achilles, do you want bananas?
 3 JHS2 (Achilles): No, I don't.
 4 ES2 (Father Crocodile): Achilles, do you want sausage?
 5 JHS2: Sausage? No, No, I don't.
 6 JHS1: Do you want salada ?
 7 JHS2: Salad? No, I don't.
 8 ES2: Achilles, do you want donuts?
 9 JHS2: No, I don't.
 10 HRT: Do you want sandwich?
 11 JHS2: Ummm, No, I don't.
 12 ES2: Achilles, do you want cake?
 13 JHS2: Cake, umm, No, I don't.
 14 HRT: Do you want ice cream?
 15 JHS2: Nooooo.
 16 ES2: Achilles?
 17 JHS2: Yes?

Transcript 4. Storytelling intermission in the Hats Class: Discussion

- 1 HRT: (Portraying the mean boy) Oh, no! I don't like those
 2 hats. (Pointing to the three children) Hey! Ugly hats!
 3 ES2: He doesn't like our hats.
 4 HRT: (Stops the story) *OK. In this scene the three children are talking. What will these three children say to the boy?*
 5 *Talk to the person sitting next to you.*
 6 (The children start talking)
 7 HRT: *Yes.* (Raises her hand to invite answers)
 8 (About 10 children raise their hands)
 9 HRT: *No idea? I'll give you a little more time.*
 10 (The children start talking with their partners again)
 11 HRT: *Yes!*



- 13 (About 15 children raise their hands)
- 14 HRT: *OK, everyone who wants to say something. Let's get started!*
- 15 *Alright, over there.* (She points to a child and then pretends
- 16 to be the mean boy from the story)
- 17 HRT: *It's ok in Japanese.*
- 18 Child: (Talking to the HRT as if she is the boy) *You have a*
- 19 *nice hat.*
- 20 HRT: *Eh?*
- 21 Children: We have the same answer!

In the Child Class, the teachers ended the story before Achilles said what he would like to eat. The storytelling intermission stage of the lesson was 35'35" and it was devoted to activities for practicing and using the key expressions. Transcript 5 shows that the HRT focused more on the language used between Achilles and his parents than the story content. For example, in the interaction between the HRT and students she shifted the topic of the discussion from the content of the story (Lines 8–23) to the language that Achilles' mother used to offer him food (Lines 24–43). The goal of the lesson, she said in line 39, is using polite expressions for saying what you want. In this stage, the HRT introduced the language and facilitated the activities; the other teachers demonstrated the activities and model dialogues (Lines 28 and 43).

Transcript 5. Storytelling intermission in the Child Class: Language focus

- 1 (The teachers are reading the story)
- 2 HRT: Achilles.
- 3 JHS2: Yes.
- 4 HRT: What would you like?

- 5 JHS2: I like ~
- 6 JHS1: Stop!
- 7 HRT: *[We'll read] up to here.*
- 8 HRT: *What was this story about?*
- 9 Children: (Raising their hands) *Yes! Yes!*
- 10 HRT: Akihiko?
- 11 Akihiko: (unintelligible)
- 12 HRT: *Jin?*
- 13 Jin: Well. *[He] has many likes and dislikes. He doesn't like this*
- 14 *and this and this...*
- 15 HRT: *Kota?*
- 16 Kota: *Achilles does not like any food.*
- 17 HRT: *Ayaka?*
- 18 Ayaka: *Achilles ate bananas every day but then he started*
- 19 *disliking them and refused to eat what his mother offered him.*
- 20 *The story stopped when he said I like ~.*
- 21 HRT: Oh, I see. *And what happens after he says, "I like ~?"* Mika?
- 22 Mika: *He will say what he likes.*
- 23 (Other children call out answers at the same time)
- 24 HRT: Ok, wait. *Yes, just like you all say. When the parents asked*
- 25 *Achilles what he wanted, what did they say [in English]?*
- 26 (No answers)
- 27 HRT: OK, let's listen again.
- 28 (HRT, ES2, JHS1 and JHS2 act out the dialogue)
- 29 HRT: *What did you hear?*
- 30 Child: *Would you like.*
- 31 HRT: *Did you hear "would you like" from the beginning? From the*
- 32 *beginning you heard "Do you like ~." Then from the middle you*
- 33 *heard "Would you like ~." What is the meaning of "Do you like*



- 34 ~," "Do you want~?"
 35 Child: (Says the meaning in Japanese)
 36 HRT: Yes. And "Would you like?"
 37 Child: (Inaudible)
 38 HRT: Yes. They are similar. Both of them mean "want" but
 39 "Would you like" is more polite. Today's lesson is being able to
 40 say what you want using polite expressions. (She posts a
 41 paper slip of the goal of the class
 42 on the blackboard) Let's listen to the polite expressions.
 43 (The teachers act out a dialogue using polite expressions.)

Storytelling 2 and post-storytelling

For the Hats Class, the second half of the storytelling was done in the same manner as the first. Afterwards, the HRT asked the children to say their impressions of the story. After children gave their impressions, the teacher displayed the pictures of the story on the blackboard and asked the children to say the names of the colors or clothes they had learned. The HRT commented that she was surprised that many children who usually do not raise their hands volunteered answers. At the ending of the class, ES2, JHS1 and JHS2 gave their impressions of the lesson. Then, the children made a line and each child took turns saying good bye to each teacher individually in English. When watching the video during the stimulated recall interview, the HRT commented that the children spent much time speaking freely with the teachers in English and surmised that they were very happy to have guests.

In the Child Class, the HRT read the story by herself while another teacher showed the book's pictures. After reading the story she confirmed the ending of the story and then asked children to write their impressions of the class. After a few children

spoke, she concluded the class saying, "Today we first heard 'I like,' but we studied the polite expression 'I'd like.'"

Discussion: Answering the hypothesis questions What will be the focus of a picture book lesson whose teachers come from different contexts?

Although the classes consisted of teachers from different contexts, the focus of the class was determined by the HRT, and the other teachers served as assistants. The transcripts show that the HRTs were the leaders of each class and this was acknowledged by all the teachers interviewed. The focus of the lessons was therefore conceived to meet the educational goals of the HRTs' contexts. For example, in her interview, the HRT for the Hats Class said that as a university student she had a complex about speaking English and she was not able to overcome it until she became an ES teacher. She said that the primary goal for her foreign language activities was to teach children how to communicate. Transcript 1 (Lines 9–15) demonstrates how the HRT was an active communicator in front of the students. She also provided the children with opportunities to communicate with the guest teachers. In the Hats Class, the HRT placed equal importance on the story content and language. In the interview, a JHS teacher for the Hats Class, JHS1, said she was impressed that the children learned the words for the colors and clothes even though most of their attention was on the story rather than the words.

In the Child Class, the focus on the lesson was the language of the story, as language learning activities constituted more than 30 minutes of the class. The lesson plan was devised by the HRT and the teachers followed the plan. The HRT said that she did not want to change the foreign language activity curriculum on which her school had decided. Thus, the criteria she used for choosing the CMCP book was the *English Note* lesson her class would be studying at the time of the experimental lesson



rather than the content of the book. Although the focus of this lesson was language, a JHS teacher in the group, JHS2, noted that the teachers spent a lot of time preparing to tell the story in a way that children could understand and enjoy. She also said that the type of team work (teachers playing the roles of the characters) was something she could use at her school to help students understand the textbook. Therefore, teachers also cooperated to make the story enjoyable and comprehensible while encouraging children to learn the target phrases from *English Note*. It is the authors' opinion that the Child Class serves as an example of the dilemma many educators face when planning foreign language activities: should their goals be for children to learn language or to enjoy the experience of listening and speaking a foreign language?

How will ES and JHS teachers utilize their respective strengths in the lesson?

In the Hats Class the teachers were the “friends” of the HRT. When the HRT viewed the lesson on video, she said that the children were genuinely excited to have guests in the class. This was evident in how the children reacted to the guests during their self-introductions and the willingness they showed to socialize with the guests at the ending. Therefore the JHS teachers (and, in this case, the guest ES teacher) utilized their strengths in English to speak to the children and entertain them through their storytelling. The ES and JHS teachers also served as advisors to the HRT. The HRT said that she received feedback from all the teachers and changed her lesson plan accordingly. For example, the HRT's original idea was for one person to read the story but the teachers suggested that they act it out together. The teachers also rewrote the story together and decided together where the story should be stopped. The HRT said that she was able to think of ideas that she could not have conceived on her own. Reflecting on her experience, one of the JHS teachers said

that the ES teachers proposed the learning activities while the JHS teachers provided support with the language.

In a similar vein, JHS teachers in the Child Class enhanced the language of the lesson by participating in the language drills, performing the story, and helping to rewrite the story. During the language activities, they also interacted with the children in English. As a result of their collaboration, the HRT could offer a wider variety of drills and activities. Also, children in the class had much more opportunity for interacting in English with the three guest teachers participating in the communicative activities.

Conclusion

We have argued that picture books are a means to support the goals of foreign language learning activities and the collaboration between ES and JHS teachers. In this study, we examined the nature of collaboration between ES and JHS teachers in two picture book lessons. In the Hats Class, teachers focused on the book's story and language. In the Child Class, the primary use of the picture book was to teach the key phrases found in the corresponding lesson of *English Note 1*. Although the HRTs of each class were the leaders, the JHS teachers collaborated in acting out as well as rewriting the story and also served as conversation partners and model speakers to the children. Thus, in both classes, it was evident that JHS teachers can enhance the storytelling experience for ES children as well as the communicative activities and, thus, contribute to the goal of developing “a foundation of basic communicative abilities” (MEXT, 2008, p. 34).

Bio data

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