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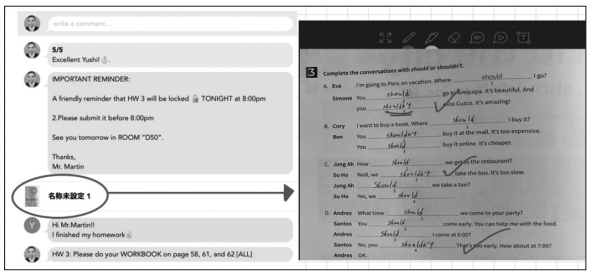

Figure 6. A Showbie prompt for a teacher to provide assignment instructions, feedback, and grades.

Conclusion

Showbie is a fantastic way to simplify and streamline a classroom's grading workflow. The combination of tools for assignments, feedback, and communication in an easy-to-use app not only makes it possible for teachers to reduce time spent on assigning and distributing homework, it also allows them to provide immediate feedback to students. Using the app's features—from registration to grading homework—is easy for basic users to learn in minutes. Beyond the functions described in this article, teachers may benefit from *Showbie's* more advanced features, such as quiz integration, customized class folders for specific purposes, copying assignments, grouping students, editing schedules, and more.

As an individual *Showbie* Pro subscriber for over a year now, I cannot recommend this app enough. It has it helped me streamline my workflow process and has revolutionized the way I assign and manage my students' homework. I hope that this article inspires other teachers to implement a paperless solution and expand their classroom practices in new ways.

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[JALT PRAXIS] YOUNGER LEARNERS


Mari Nakamura & Marian Hara

The Younger Learners column provides language teachers of children and teenagers with advice and guidance for making the most of their classes. Teachers with an interest in this field are also encouraged to submit articles and ideas to the editor at the address below. We also welcome questions about teaching, and will endeavour to answer them in this column.

Email: younger-learners@jalt-publications.org

Using Picture Books to Engage and Inspire Learners

This is a report on the forum sponsored by the Younger Learners SIG at the JALT 2019 conference.

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On November 2, 2019, the four of us gathered in Nagoya for a 90-minute forum to share our knowledge and individual experiences of storytelling with picture books. We hoped to learn not just from each other, but from the participants, and what was achieved was a very lively, informative, and interactive session. In this article, we'd like to share what each presenter focused on on that day and also some conclusions.

From Reading 'To' Children to Reading 'With' Children

Alison Hasegawa (Nemoto)

I have been using picture books in the primary classroom for over 20 years, but during that time my expectations of the degree and quality of learner participation has changed drastically. Back in 2000, I believed the aim of using picture books was to provide repeated oral input in a meaning-rich environment while exposing children to natural English. Indeed, Trelease (2013, p. 14) emphasizes the benefits of reading picture books for overall language development by literally pouring words and phrases into a child's ear. He suggests that "filling up" a child's listening vocabulary, or "reservoir," should cause an overflow of rich and varied language into their speaking, reading, and writing vocabularies.

So clearly, using picture books for language input is important, but my focus more recently has shifted to discovering ways to move children from a passive listening role during story time to a more active one, thereby achieving a deeper emotional and cognitive engagement with the content. Lambert, in her book *Reading Picture Books with Children,* introduces the Whole Book Approach. She sees a picture book as, "a meeting space, that 'playground for the mind' for children and adults to interact with one another on a common ground of words, pictures and design," (Lambert, 2015, p. 96) and offers practical ways to increase learner agency through various questioning techniques.

Personally, I now break storytelling down into three stages: pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading. At first, we can show the cover, elicit or teach key vocabulary, or ask the children about the topic in L1 or L2. For example, "Have you ever been to a zoo?" or "What's your favorite animal?" Then, as we continue to read the story, we need to create space and opportunities for learners to share their thoughts and make predictions by asking questions like, "What do you think will happen next?" The secret to changing the activity from a traditionally teacher-centered one to a child-centered one is to gently draw learners in this way, to plan and welcome interaction. Only by the teacher slowing down and pausing can learners join in the experience and share their ideas. Various post-reading activities such as student-made quizzes, communicative activities, role-play, artwork, or creative writing can be enjoyed after the children have made a personal connection with the story through this interactive approach.

The World of Storytelling for Young Learners

Chiyuki Yanase

Storytelling has been one of the most powerful tools that humans have used to communicate with other members of society or to transfer vital knowledge to younger generations (Ellis & Brewster, 1991). Among numerous storytelling methods, the effect of reading aloud or shared reading with a picture book has been discussed earlier in this article. This section discusses oral storytelling in which a story is told to an audience by a teacher. The subject of the story can vary, including a folktale, an event in one's life, a memoir, or even about a dream that one had. Gottschall (2012) claims that storytelling is an essential part of human nature and sharing and listening to stories helps us to deal with complex social issues and navigate our lives. Moreover, Smith et al. (2017) assert that the effects of storytelling can include fostering social cooperation, teaching social norms, and gaining respect from members of the storyteller's society. Also, storytelling after traumatic life events such as losing one's parents or friends due to accidents or sickness can help with the healing process (Cox, 2000, Sunwolf, 2005). For example, in South Africa, a local storyteller helped ten children, aged from 9 to 12, who became orphans after the brutal death of their parents, to overcome their trauma by co-creating a story. As the protagonist Lyana overcame her traumatic life events and achieved her dream, the children were able to regain their self-esteem and a more hopeful perspective towards life.

In summary, shared book reading can be a powerful learning tool for young learners. However, other forms of storytelling such as oral storytelling, movies, songs, and writings can be cherished in various settings, including in a classroom, at home, and at work, regardless of your age. Through storytelling, we might be able to find insights, solutions, or inspiration when dealing with the social issues we face together. It is my hope that by sharing stories at home or at work, many of us can find connections with each other and heal the wounds that may have occurred through disturbing or traumatic events in our lives.

Picture Books for Empowerment

Karen Masatsugu

We can use picture books to empower learners by choosing books which embrace diversity and challenge us to look at the world from others' perspectives. We need to consider the messages conveyed by the visuals as well as the ideas expressed in the text. In *The Dot* (Reynolds, 2003) a teacher encourages Vashti, an angry girl reluctant to draw, to "just make

a mark," enabling her to explore her creativity and inspire others. While the language might be complex for L2 learners, the changing size and color of the dot conveys Vashti's changing emotions as she learns to express herself. *Julian is a Mermaid* (Love, 2018) uses mesmerizing pictures and simple text to show Nana's acceptance of Julian's imagination and her encouragement of his desire to be a mermaid.

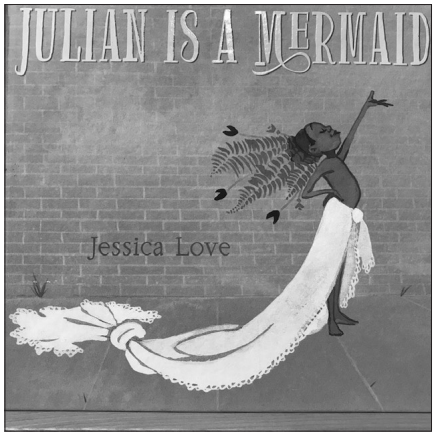

Figure 1. Julian is a Mermaid by Jessica Love (2018).

The dynamic pictures and rhythmic repetition of *They All Saw a Cat* (Wenzel, 2016) show how our perspective shapes the way we see things, including ourselves. The blue crayon in *Red: A Crayon's Story* (Hall, 2015) struggles to meet the expectations of his red label, but ultimately, with help from a new friend, recognizes and embraces his true color and abilities. Similarly, in *Perfectly Norman* (Percival, 2017), Norman desperately tries to hide his extraordinary wings and ability to fly in order to appear "normal," until his self-realization that he can only be happy if he accepts his difference and fulfils his true potential. The language might be difficult for young L2 learners, but they can interpret the visual message of such books and empathize with the characters as they come to terms with their differences. Learners can respond in a variety of ways. For example, orally by naming the emotions shown in the pictures or imagining what they would do if they had wings, graphically by drawing their reactions, physically by pretending to be a mermaid or having an unusual skill, and in writing by telling their own stories of feeling different or of how they may feel in such a situation. Mourão tells language teachers to use a picture book "as an object of discovery" (Mourão, 2013, p. 71). Picture books such as these can help learners to explore the idea of diversity and encourage them to accept and respect others' differences as well as their own unique qualities.

Using Picture Books for CLIL Lessons

Lesley Ito

One of the wonderful things about teaching children is that they will participate in an activity, simply because they find it enjoyable (Keskil & Tevfik Cephe, 2001). Two types of English lessons that children respond to positively are Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and storytelling. Children like CLIL lessons because they like to learn about interesting topics, and it "creates a genuine need to communicate, motivating students to acquire language in order to understand the content" (Lightbown & Spada, 2006, p. 159). Children also like storytelling because they love to actively participate in story-related activities after those stories have been read to them. Therefore, it follows that children would enjoy CLIL lessons that involve a storybook.

One example of this type of lesson uses the storybook, *Me on the Map* (Sweeney, 1998), to teach geography. In this book, a little girl draws a picture of her room and zooms out to show her street, city, state, country, and continent, then zooms back in. The book ends with the idea that everyone has their special place on the map. After reading the story and using Google Earth to show the students the continent, country, prefecture, city, and street of their school, students are asked to make their own version of the book with their own drawings.

Another example is a math lesson explaining fractions, using the storybook, *The Doorbell Rang* (Hutchins, 1986). In this book, two children start out with 12 cookies to eat at snack time. However, their friends keep ringing their doorbell, wanting to play. They have to keep dividing the 12 cookies up for four children, six children, and finally twelve children. At the end of the story, grandma shows up with a box of freshly baked cookies for the children to share.

Not only do storybooks provide a vehicle to deliver the lesson content, they can also provide a model to the teacher on grading down the language. CLIL lessons that use a lot of low-frequency jargon or complex language to teach the content will not be accessible to children learning EFL. Storybooks can show teachers how topics can be explained using easy-to-understand language.

Conclusion

Picture books can be a highly engaging, inspiring, and versatile resource in the EFL classroom. We can challenge learners to try to understand new language scaffolded in the meaning-rich context of

a picture book, then help them communicate and share their ideas. We can create an opportunity for them to consider the content deeply, personalize it, and then apply this new understanding to other situations.

One of the key points we realized during the forum was that being familiar with various kinds of picture books probably makes us more effective classroom storytellers. If we have a wide knowledge of titles covering a range of topics and levels of language complexity, we can dip into that library to find a suitable book for any age group or topic, including subjects other than EFL.

Each of us has our own favorite titles, and when we get together with other picture book fans, like at this forum, it's always a great opportunity to get to know some new titles. So, we'd like to use this opportunity to share access to the joint book list of over 60 recommended picture books and teachers' resources that we created prior to the conference, with additions from participants at the forum. It can be accessed on Google Docs with this QR code.

Finally, as teachers of young learners, we know the importance of building up a repertoire of techniques for quick warm-up activities and effective classroom management. In the same way, let us work towards becoming a versatile 'Picture Book Sommelier'— someone who knows numerous titles and can pull out the perfect one to match any teaching situation, thus enabling this resource to engage and inspire many more children here in Japan and all around the world.

Figure 2. Alison Hasegawa (Nemoto), Chiyuki Yanase, Karen Masatsugu, Lesley Ito.

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