Conclusion

The recent development and deployment of highly sophisticated LLMs such as ChatGPT has significant implications for language teachers and learners. While some students may be tempted to use these technologies to take shortcuts in homework and coursework, others may be able to use them in ways that genuinely help them to improve their language proficiency. Efforts have already begun to list the ways in which language learners could use ChatGPT productively (Deubelbeiss, 2022; Gravell, 2022; Ryan, 2022). The possibilities for teachers, too, are almost limitless, and many innovative activities and exercises using ChatGPT will surely be forthcoming in 2023 and beyond.

References

Deubelbeiss, D. (2022, December 19). *NLP and language education*. Substack. https://deubel.substack.com/p/nlp-and-language-education?s=03

Elsen-Rooney, M. (2023, January 4). *NYC education department blocks ChatGPT on school devices, networks*. Chalkbeat. https://ny.chalkbeat.org/2023/1/3/23537987/nyc-schools-ban-chatgpt-writing-artificial-intelligence#:~:text=%E2%80%9CDue%20to%20concerns%20about%20negative,education%20department%20spokesperson%20Jenna%20Lyle.

Gravell, S. (2022, December 18). *A Few More Cool AI Things*. Wordpress. https://samueltgravell.wordpress.com/2022/12/18/a-few-more-cool-ai-things/

Greteman, B. (2022, December 12). ChatGPT can write better essays than my college students. That's a good thing. *Newsweek*. https://www.newsweek.com/chatgpt-can-write-better-essays-my-college-students-thats-good-thing-opinion-1769136

Hern, A. (2022, December 31). AI-assisted plagiarism? ChatGPT bot says it has an answer for that. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2022/dec/31/ai-assisted-plagiarism-chatgpt-bot-says-it-has-an-answer-for-that

Hougham, D. (2021). *Making positive use of machine translation for writing essays*. The Language Teacher, *45*(6). 45–47. https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTTLT45.6

Karpf, D. (2022, December 22). Money will kill ChatGPT's magic. *The Atlantic*. https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2022/12/chatgpt-ai-chatbots-openai-cost-regulations/672539/

Marche, S. (2022, December 7). The college essay is dead. *The Atlantic*. https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2022/12/chatgpt-ai-writing-college-student-essays/672371/

Oda, T. (2020). *How to make positive use of machine translation*. The Language Teacher, *44*(2), 30–32. https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTTLT44.2

Raf. (n.d.). *Does ChatGPT remember what happened earlier in the conversation?* [Online forum post]. OpenAI. https://help.openai.com/en/articles/6787051-does-chatgpt-remember-what-happened-earlier-in-the-conversation

Ryan, K. (2022, December 12). *Bank of GPT3 activity types for language learners*. Edge of CALL. https://edgeofcall.net/2022/12/12/bank-of-gpt3-activity-types-for-language-learners/

Zhang, M., & Li, J. (2021). A commentary of GPT-3 in MIT Technology Review 2021. *Fundamental Research*, *1*(6), 831–833. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.fmre.2021.11.011

[JALT PRAXIS] YOUNGER LEARNERS

Martin Sedaghat & Emily MacFarlane

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 editors at the address below. We also welcome questions about teaching, and will endeavour to answer them in this column.
Email: jaltpubs.tlt.yl@jalt.org

The Bigger Picture: Part 2
Not Just a Time-filler: Expanding the Use of Picturebooks

Emily MacFarlane
Tohoku University
shetland.emily@gmail.com

In the previous issue, Martin Sedaghat shared a variety of different post-reading activities that can be used with picturebook read-alouds to further

children's learning and enhance their enjoyment. In this issue, I will discuss ways to improve how picturebooks are currently used in the elementary English classroom. While many Japanese teachers are still unfamiliar with using English picturebooks in the classroom (Kaneko, 2020), the Ministry of Education, Sports, Sceince, and Technology (MEXT) has begun recommending their use to increase students' confidence (MEXT, 2017) and help develop their listening skills (Tada, 2020). Therefore, in addition to discussing how to improve the current use of picturebooks, this article will also explore how teachers can expand their implementation in the classroom. Although public elementary schools will be the main focus of this article, I hope practitioners in different teaching contexts will also be able to gain inspiration and learn new ideas.

Why Use Picturebooks?

The benefits of using picturebooks for both linguistic and broader educational reasons have been recognised since the 1980s (Ellis & Mourão, 2021). Picturebooks can be used in the English language classroom in order to create ideal learning conditions and an environment to allow for easy acquisition of language (Ellis & Brewster, 2014). They expose children to new language that is rich and authentic while their often-repetitive patterns make linguistic input more noticeable and allow children to pick up language easily (Pinter, 2017). The visual support of pictures as well as intonation, gestures, facial expressions, and mime from the reader can also allow children to grasp the meaning even if they do not understand the words (Ellis & Brewster, 2014). In the Japanese elementary context, Kanayama (2021) showed that picturebooks were often used in Japanese classrooms to increase students' motivation and interest in English. He suggested this increase in motivation and confidence would allow students to improve their listening abilities and by listening to the same story multiple times, students would increase their understanding of English.

The Current Situation at Elementary Schools

As detailed in MEXT's 2018 new *Course of Study Guidelines*, from 2020, foreign languages have been required to be taught from the third grade nationwide. MEXT also recommends the use of read-alouds as a method of developing the listening skills of young learners (Tada, 2020). The materials used in the foreign language activities classes at the third- and fourth-grade level, were from the MEXT-created *Let's Try! 1* (MEXT, 2018b) and *Let's Try! 2* (MEXT, 2018c) in which the final units for both levels are shorter "digest" versions of two picturebooks called *Hi, friends!*. In the teacher's versions of both *'Let's Try!'* books, MEXT recommends using read-alouds to give students confidence through the experience of understanding a story read to them in English. In the MEXT Training Guidebook, published in 2017, they go into greater detail recommending using picturebooks for input at this level, as well as emphasising the importance of reading in an interactive style and adapting the English in the books to fit the students' level of comprehension. There is no obligatory use of picturebooks in the fifth- and sixth-grade curriculum; however, the published MEXT commentary on the curriculum guidelines does suggest that English picturebooks could be used to make skits or plays that could be performed at a school show (MEXT, 2018a). At all levels, teachers could still supplement the official curriculum with their own use of picturebooks.

How are Picturebooks Used in Japanese Elementary Schools?

Teachers may choose to utilize picturebooks for numerous reasons. However, their use in the English language classroom can be classified into 3 main groups (Mourão & Ellis, 2020):

1. Storytime: picturebooks are used for the purposes of students' enjoyment which together with the shared social experience helps to develop the students' language naturally.

2. Picturebooks, as one resource of many: the use thereof exposes students to the target language in a meaningful, authentic manner.

3. Story-based methodology: all activities and learning outcomes are based around the picturebook.

In the context of the Japanese elementary classroom, a survey by Kaneko (2020) suggested that read-alouds were usually done as a separate activity at the end of class if there was extra time. This use fits the 'storytime' category and contrasts with use in other countries where learning is often based around the read-aloud. Anecdotally, many elementary English teachers in Japan state that they chose picturebooks related to whatever topic they are currently teaching—for example, *Brown Bear, Brown Bear* by Bill Martin Jr. and Eric Carle (1967) when studying animals—in order to introduce the students to the topic or review what students have already learned. As previously mentioned, picturebook read-alouds are also often used because they are enjoyable for students and help increase students' motivation.

How to Improve Current Picturebook Use

When using picturebooks to introduce a specific topic or even just to increase students' motivation there are a few things to consider that could improve their use:

Selection

One of the biggest hurdles when working at a public elementary school is that the choice of English picturebooks can be very limited. Even if you have a budget for picturebooks, the sparse stock carried by approved suppliers can leave teachers using their own money to buy new and interesting picturebooks. In order to avoid this, I recommend checking out local libraries, international centres, and universities or asking your local teacher community to expand the available books. I also have had some success in working with the school librarian directly to order new books, as their own suppliers were able to get some of the books that I requested, which were not available through other means. However, my all-time favourite way to get around the purchasing limitation and to save my wallet is to use Japanese books, which are much easier to access. When using these books, rather than translating the written Japanese into English, I provide my own questions and commentary for the students. For example, the book きんぎょがにげた [k*ingo ga nigeta*] by Tarō Gomi (1982; see Figure 1), about a little goldfish that hides in different scenes, is great to use to practise answering "Where?" questions as the students have to find and describe where the fish is.

Figure 1
Front Cover of きんぎょが にげた *by Tarō Gomi*

Another example is when I teach "What's this?" I like using three books by Katsu Kiuchi (see Figure 2), くだもの なんだ [*kudamono nanda*] (2007) and やさいの おなか [*yasai onaka*] (1997), which show the silhouettes of different fruits and vegetables, as well as やさいの せなか [*yasai senaka*] (2005) which has charcoal rubbings of the texture of vegetables. These read-alouds can become very interactive as you can create your own English hints to help students guess the particular fruit or vegetable.

Figure 2
Front Covers of Three Books by Katsu Kiuchi

Adaptation

Another common issue when using picturebooks in the Japanese classroom is that there is often a gap between the students' English ability and their cognitive level. A report by the Fukui Prefecture Educational Research Institute showed that teachers often felt that if they chose a book for its English level then it was often aimed at much younger students or the contents were lacking, whereas if they chose a book for the story, then the vocabulary and grammar would be far too difficult (Yoshimura et al., 2017). Therefore, teachers should focus on selecting picturebooks where the pictures show as much of the story as possible, and the English can be adapted to suit the students' level. Ellis and Brewster (2014) suggest looking at these four areas and possible ways they could be adapted:

1. Vocabulary and general meaning (unfamiliar content and words, idioms, clarity)
2. Grammar (tenses, use of structures, word order)
3. Organisation of ideas (sentence length and complexity, time references, how ideas are linked and explained)
4. Story length (number of ideas in the story)

Even though there is always the possibility of losing some of the magic of a story through adaptation, the benefits of making it more accessible to students outweigh the risk.

Timing

The final thing to consider when improving current picturebook use is the timing of picturebook read-alouds. Teachers often have the least freedom when reading picturebooks during English class. Instead, why not try reading a picturebook over the school broadcast during lunchtime or on a rainy day during break time, starting a recess read-aloud

club, or volunteering to read picturebooks to a class during morning work before registration? These are all situations that have been very popular at the elementary schools I have worked at. Creating an atmosphere where English picturebook read-alouds are fun, interesting, and frequent will make them less daunting when they happen in English class. Consequently, it will give students the confidence that they will understand what they are about to hear.

Thinking Outside the Box

While improving on read-alouds to fill time or introduce certain vocabulary or grammar points is a great start, there are also a number of other ways that we can use picturebooks which are not often seen in the Japanese elementary school classroom.

Critical Thinking

Picturebooks can be used to help develop children's critical thinking. In my experience, English read-alouds are often the first time that students are involved in an interactive style read-aloud as they are otherwise expected to sit and listen passively. Allowing students time to think about picturebooks and then involving them in discussion encourages their language ability as well as their critical thinking and visual literacy (Roche, 2014). My students enjoyed books with open endings such as *Shh! We have a Plan!* (2015) and *Oh no, George!* (2012) both by Chris Haughton (see Figure 3). They expressed that they were not used to this uncertainty and struggled in the beginning with open questions such as discussing what might happen next. However, with practice they became more familiar with expressing what they thought and imagined. Even in read-alouds such as these, where motivating students was actually the main aim, allowing discussion and reading in an interactive style can also improve students' critical thinking skills.

Figure 3

Front Covers of Two Books by Chris Haughton

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

Another way picturebooks can be used is to help develop children's emotional literacy as the images in picturebooks can portray strong emotions for which words would be inadequate and help train children's empathy. This can be as straightforward as using a book like *Glad Monster, Sad Monster* by Ed Emberly (1997) to practise recognising different emotions with special needs classes or talking about what makes us feel glad or sad with younger students. However, it can also involve much deeper topics. My favourite SEL themed read-aloud involved using the book *Red: A Crayon's Story* by Michael Hall (2015), where a blue crayon has been mistakenly labeled as "red" and suffers an identity crisis. This book has been used in other countries to discuss gender identity but there are a number of other possible interpretations, too. In my case, a number of students who were neurodivergent related strongly to the idea of not being able to act how everyone expects. This also allowed their classmates to gain insight into and sympathise with their struggle to fit in.

Intercultural Understanding

One of the best ways to use picturebooks with the national curriculum—5th and 6th grade in particular—is by using read-alouds to help students' intercultural understanding. When only using the textbook, I felt that students did not connect with the content in a meaningful way. However, when the same material was taught combined with a picturebook, it sparked interest and encouraged students to think more deeply about other cultures as well as their own. On the topic of names, we used the book *Alma and How She Got her Name* by Juana Martinez-Neal (2018). The story follows the main character as she learns about the family members that she has been named after. This allowed the students to consider naming traditions and the meaning behind their own names. Although finding suitable picturebooks to fit each part of the curriculum is challenging, the benefits to students' interest and understanding are undeniable.

If you are looking for further inspiration, the *Intercultural Citizenship Education through Picturebooks in Early English Language Learning (ICEPELL)* project has created teaching packs, ICEKits, to use with 18 different picturebooks including *The Suitcase* by Chris Naylor-Ballesteros (2019; see Figure 4). The most obvious use of the story of a tired animal carrying all his worldly possessions in a suitcase is to familiarise students with migration and refugee stories, however as the ICEKits suggests, each pic-

turebook has a number of different ICE outcomes. Personally, I used this picturebook in the final 6th grade English class of the school year and focused on the ICE outcome of "learning not to judge people on first impressions." This allowed the students who were all moving to new schools to relate to the story on a personal level while still creating discussion about reasons why other people might need to leave their homes.

Figure 4

Front Cover of The Suitcase *by Chris Naylor-Ballesteros*
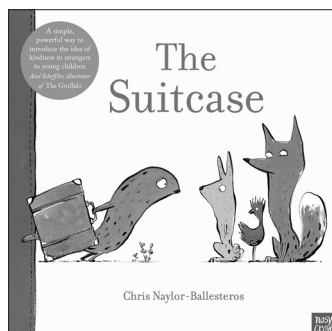

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)

CLIL lessons—where language learning and content learning take place at the same time—and lessons involving picturebooks are some of the most enjoyable for children. Students like to learn about interesting topics, enjoy actively participating in activities related to read-alouds, and are genuinely motivated to acquire language in order to understand the content when the two types of lessons are combined (Hasegawa et al., 2020). Whether it's using *Clean Up!* by Nathan Bryon and Dapo Adeola (2020) as a springboard to talk about recycling or *The Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle (1969) to segue into tissue paper art projects, there are a multitude of options for CLIL picturebook classes.

Creating these kinds of classes can be more difficult at public elementary schools unless you focus on levels without a nationally set curriculum such as special needs classes or the lower grade levels. However, it is still possible to include some CLIL elements in some of the older classes. I have enjoyed expanding beyond the standard lessons when teaching numbers and shapes by using books from the *Mouse Math* series (Penguin). These are small and aimed at native speakers so they need some adaptation to be suitable, but my students enjoyed learning shape names beyond the standard circle, square etc. without any pressure to remember them. The

book, *How Many Jelly Beans?* by Andrea Menotti and Yancy Labat (2012; see Figure 5), made teaching larger numbers in a class so much more interesting as the characters in the book decide how many jelly beans is *too* many starting at ten and ending on a giant fold-out page with one million jelly beans.

Figure 5

Front Cover of How Many Jelly Beans? *by Andrea Menotti and Yancy Labat*
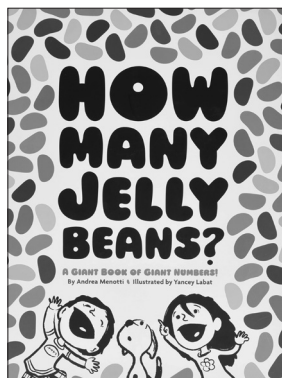
Conclusion

While picturebook read-alouds in English class at the elementary school level are encouraged by MEXT, there are few stories in the actual curriculum and there is little, if any, instruction on how and when any extra read-alouds should take place. Many teachers do not use picturebooks beyond filling time at the end of class and struggle to select books that suit their students' needs. Current picturebook use at this level can be improved with careful consideration and adjustments to selection, adaptation, and timing. Furthermore, while expanding the use of picturebooks can be difficult due to curriculum constraints, it is possible to use picturebooks at this level to promote critical thinking, SEL, intercultural understanding in CLIL lessons. Picturebook read-alouds can spark interest and motivation in students of all ages and abilities if teachers just look beyond using picturebooks as a time filler and try to see the bigger picture.

References

Byron, N., & Adeola, D. (2020). *Clean up!* (D. Adeola Illus.). Puffin.

Carle, E. (1969). *The hungry caterpillar*. Puffin.

Ellis, G., & Brewster, J. (2014). *Tell it again! The new storytelling handbook for primary teachers* (3rd ed.). Pearson Education. https://www.teachingenglish. org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/pub_D467_Storytelling_ handbook_FINAL_web.pdf

Ellis, G., & Morão, S. (2021). Demystifying the read-aloud. *English Teaching Professional*, *136*, 22–25.

Emberly, E., (1997). *Glad monster, sad monster*. Little Brown.

Gomi, T. (1982). *Kingyo ga nigeta* [The goldfish got away]. Fukuinkan.

Hall, M. (2015). *Red: A crayon's story*. Greenwillow.

Hasegawa, A., Yanase, C., Masatsugu, K., & Ito, L. (2020). Using picturebooks to engage and inspire learners. *The Language Teacher*, *44*(4), 35–38. https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTTLT44.4

Haughton, C. (2012). *Oh no, George!* Walker Books.

Haughton, C. (2015). *Shh! We have a plan!* Walker Books.

ICEPELL. (n.d.). *ICEKits.* ICEPELL. https://icepell.eu/index.php/icekits/

Kanayama, K. (2021). Ehon no yomikikase ga shōgakō eigo no mokuhyō tassei ni ataeru eikyō: Kokunai kenkyū wo chūshin ni shita rebyū kara [Effects of picture-book reading on the achievement of English education goals in elementary schools: Literature review of previous studies in Japan]. *Journal of Hokkaido University of Education: Humanities and Social Sciences*, *71*(2), 93–106. http://doi.org/10.32150/00007002

Kaneko, T. (2020). Picture stories in Japanese elementary school English classrooms: A comparison of the use of picture stories in Japan and three English speaking countries. *Gakuen/Eigo Komyunikeeshon Kiyō*, *954*(4), 2–14. http://id.nii.ac.jp/1203/00006593/

Kiuchi, K. (1997). *Yasai no onaka* [*The stomach of vegetables*]. Fukuinkan.

Kiuchi, K. (2005). *Yasai no senaka* [*The back of vegetables*]. Fukuinkan.

Kiuchi, K. (2007). *Kudamo no nanda* [*What are fruits*]. Fukuinkan.

Martinez-Neal, J. (2018). *Alma and how she got her name*. Candlewick.

Menotti, A. (2012). *How many jelly beans?* (Y. Labat Illus.). Chronicle.

Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT). (2017). *Shōgakkō gaikokugo katsudō/gaikokugo kenshū gaidobukku* [*Training guidebook: Primary school foreign language activities and foreign languages*]. MEXT. https://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/kokusai/gaikokugo/1387503.htm

Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT). (2018a). *Shōgakkō shidōyōryō kaisetsu gaikokugo katsudō/gaikokugohen* [*Explanation of the course of study for primary school: Foreign language activities and foreign languages*], Kairyudo Shuppan.

Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT). (2018b). *Let's Try! 1*. MEXT.

Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT). (2018c). *Let's Try! 2*. MEXT.

Mourão, S., & Ellis, G. (2020). *Teaching English to pre-primary children: Educating very young children.* DELTA Publishing.

Naylor-Ballesteros, C. (2019). *The suitcase*. Nosy Crow.

Pinter, A. (2017). *Teaching young language learners* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.

Roche, M. (2014). *Developing children's critical thinking through picturebooks*: *A guide for primary and early years students and teachers*. Routledge.

Tada, W. (2020). Benefits of shared reading: For L1 and L2 learners. *Hyōgo Kyōikudaigaku Kenkyū Kiyō*, *57*, 109–115. http://hdl.handle.net/10132/19028

Yoshimura, M., Yoshida, T., Imai, N., & Fukushima, Y. (2017). Shōgakkō ni okeru eigoehon no yomikikase no kenkyū: Tannin ga murinaku torikumeru shuhō wo saguru [A study of English picturebook reading in elementary schools: Exploring methods for homeroom teachers to work effortlessly]. *Fukuiken Kyōiku Kenkyūsho Kenkyū Kiyō*, *122*, 122–133. https://www.fukui-c.ed.jp/~fec/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/122_-10eigo_u2.pdf

Emily MacFarlane is a teacher of English with over twelve years' experience in primary schools. She recently completed an MA in TESOL and currently teaches at several universities in Sendai, Japan. Her research focuses on effective scaffolding techniques for picturebook read-aloud sessions.