Connecting Learners to Literature through Critical Thinking and Creativity

Mary Hillis
Ritsumeikan University
Luke Draper
Kwansei Gakuin University
Alison Hasegawa
Rikkyo University
Martin Sedaghat
Niigata University of Health and Welfare

Reference Data:

Hillis, M., Draper, L., Hasegawa, A., & Sedaghat, M. (2024). Connecting learners to literature through critical thinking and creativity. In B. Lacy, P. Lege, & P. Ferguson (Eds.), *Growth Mindset in Language Education*. JALT. https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTPCP2023-38

Literature is a powerful yet underutilised tool in EFL learning (Ristoska et al., 2021), and although some may view traditional literary forms as inaccessible for language learners, literature and its teaching has been undergoing a transformation. The focus of this paper will be on how teachers in Japan have used literature as a foundation for linguistic, cultural, and emotional growth and development. Literature can be multimodal, as seen in picturebooks and on social media, and additionally stories can be directly related to areas students are struggling with, as seen in literature related to gender and social issues. Literary texts can be used in EFL settings across age groups, including young learners and university students, developing language skills through creative activities.

文学はEFL学習において、強力でありながらも十分には活用されていないツールである（Ristoska et al, 2021）。伝統的な文学形式は、言語学習者にとってアクセスしづらいと捉えられるかもしれないが、文学と文学研究は変革を遂げている。 本稿では、日本の教師が文学を言語的、文化的、情緒的な成長と発達の基盤としてどのように活用してきたかに焦点化する。絵本やソーシャルメディアに見られるように、文学はマルチモーダルであることができ、さらにジェンダーや社会問題に関連した文学に見られるように、物語は生徒が困難を感じている分野に直接関連することもある。文学的なテキストは、創造的な活動を通して言語能力を発達させることができるため、若年の学習者から大学生を含む幅広い年齢層のおけるEFLの場で活用することができるだろう。

Literature has long been used as a material for language teaching. Carter and Long (1991) established three reasons to use literature in the language classroom: The first is to foster intercultural and global understanding, the second is to facilitate lexical and syntactical development, and the third is to promote personal growth, which identifies literature as "a vehicle to educate, to promote critical awareness, and to have students assess, evaluate, and discuss issues within the text and provoked by the text" (Bibby & McIlroy, p.19). Literature is a powerful yet underutilised tool in EFL learning (Ristoska et al., 2021). Although some may view traditional literary forms (e.g., novels, poetry, prose) as inaccessible for language learners because of their perceived inaccessibility (Aghagolzadeh & Tajabadi, 2012), creative discourse is essential for natural language use. Literary texts are characterised by their use of distinct language features to construct a narrative discourse (Paramour, n.d.), and the exploration of narration, storytelling, and figurative language in literature may facilitate this development (Hall, 2015). Furthermore, the broader reception of a range of print and digital forms of literature, along with the emergence of new classroom approaches in the twenty-first century have created new opportunities for the integration of literature and language teaching (see Thaler, 2019).

Literature can be multimodal, as seen in picturebooks and on social media, and additionally stories can be directly related to areas students are struggling with, as seen in literature related to gender and social issues. Picturebooks can be used in teaching

contexts ranging from young learners to adults to encourage not only language development but also collaboration between learners. Reading and interacting with Instapoetry (Instagram poetry) involves learners in familiar online behaviours, such as 'liking' and commenting on posts which incorporate both textual and visual elements. Multimodal texts such as these help students develop both reading comprehension and visual literacy skills (Lewis III & Lewis, 2020). Analysing Japanese short stories in English translation gives students an opportunity to draw on their background knowledge to explain storylines, characters, and cultural concepts in English. These accessible literary texts and creative classroom activities highlight the power of literature to engage students in higher-order thinking skills while developing language skills.

The Power and Potential of Picturebooks

Alison Hasegawa

Picturebooks could be considered to be time-fillers in the language learning classroom and simple, repetitive stories could be thought to have little value apart from perhaps assisting basic language acquisition and introducing a classic tale. However, their true power and potential as a classroom resource is much greater. Bader offers a detailed definition that encompasses the multiple facets of the picturebook:

> A picturebook is text, illustrations, total design; an item of manufacture and a commercial product; a social, cultural, historic document; and foremost, an experience for a child. As an art form, it hinges on the interdependence of pictures and words, on the simultaneous display of two facing pages, and on the drama of the turning page. On its own terms, its possibilities are limitless (1976, p. 1)

Although the word *child* appears here, more recently it has been exchanged for *reader* to emphasise the current understanding that picturebooks are appropriate for "readers of all ages" (Mourão, 2015, p. 200). Similarly, the picturebook author Mac Barnett emphasises that he and others primarily write for children, then adults who read with children, and finally adults who enjoy children's books (Barnett et al., 2011). He concurs with the term "art form" as opposed to "genre" to describe picturebooks because the narrative is transmitted through the active interaction of two semiotic modes (Mourão, 2013): the verbal information-text, and the visual information-illustrations. This combination of multimodal input goes largely unnoticed by the reader, as the words and images seamlessly overlap to create a book's impact (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2001). However, the sharing of information by the words and pictures can range from equal, as in *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle, for example, or it can be weighted, especially in a wordless picturebook, where the illustrations carry almost all the meaning. In more sophisticated picturebooks, like *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak, the reader has to actively integrate "two different sorts of information about the same events" (Nodelman, 1988, p. 200) allowing for a range of personal interpretations.

Developing an Interactive Approach with Picturebooks

If picturebooks contain layers of meaning that require *reading* the illustrations and the text to interpret meaning, then this supports the practice of sharing a picturebook with a group of learners interactively and discussing the contents from multiple perspectives. Bland (2023) informs us that "literature teaching with children and adolescents is increasingly seen as transaction, not transmission, and a highly communicative event" (p. 51) and goes on to emphasise that "during booktalk the picturebook reveals its story and the students create an understanding of its secrets gradually, layer by layer" (p. 76).

Interactive read-alouds have been depicted as a "playground for the mind" (Lambert, 2015, p. 96) with children and adults discussing all three aspects of the picturebook: the words, pictures and design. Encouraging the sharing of ideas after a group reading thus facilitating learning from each other, is recommended (Roche, 2015), and enjoyable group read-alouds have been proven to help learners connect reading with pleasure and increase the motivation to read (Trelease, 2019). Ghosn (2002), first introduces conventional arguments for utilising literature: creating a "meaningful context" or "contributing to language learning." However, the third point, "promoting thinking skills" and the fourth point, recognising a picturebook as a "change agent" (p. 173), are also important aspects to focus on when using picturebooks in the language learning classroom.

Results From a Pilot Programme

To experiment with this interactive approach and hone skills in facilitating it with young learners, 10 to 12 monthly read-aloud sessions were held annually over three years at a local community centre with groups of 15-20 Japanese young learners aged 6-11, from different primary schools. Planned strategic questioning was implemented to facilitate divergent, or creative thinking, as well as convergent, or critical thinking. From a focus on developing learners' self-awareness, next, nurturing social awareness was focused on through introducing books ranging from the simple, such as *It's Okay to be Different* by Todd Parr, to the more complex, such as *The Suitcase* by Chris Naylor-

Ballesteros. This story depicts an outsider finally being accepted into an established social group, but only after initial suspicion and mistrust, and was selected for deeper analysis because the underlying message of practising kindness is not explicit.

Prior to beginning the read-aloud of *The Suitcase*, the instructor used a role-play to familiarise the learners with the plot. An outsider, unknown to the learners, arrived in the classroom but instead of conventionally greeting the person by saying, "Hello! What's your name?" or "Nice to meet you!" the instructor just asked bluntly, "What is in your suitcase?" The outsider, a friend of the instructor, introduced three items: a Santa Claus, a Christmas tree and a photograph of a little dog, therefore mirroring the situation in the story.

During the read-aloud, closed and then open questions were used to help the learners first notice important information in the text or the illustrations, and then try to interpret it at a deeper level. For example, at the end of the story a new house is built. When asked what colours were used the learners first noticed it was "like a rainbow", i.e. made up of many colours, then in reply to the question, "What do you think this means?" they concluded that the combination of the characters' colours represented the new friendship that developed. This symbolism is not highlighted in the written text and could easily be overlooked by readers, without drawing attention to the illustration.

Insightful learner responses like these were collected during the session through an audio recording and in written answers to a questionnaire in Japanese. Examples of creative thinking included a learner's comment when noticing the suitcase was "like a boat" because it was utilised as a floating device. An example of critical thinking would be a learner only accepting that there could be a table and chair inside the suitcase if they were collapsible. These are examples of the co-creation of meaning by the learners through natural interaction while enjoying the story and illustrate the value of strategic questioning to facilitate learners looking closer and thinking deeper.

As already mentioned, in the story, rather than the outsider receiving a friendly greeting, only the question "What's in your suitcase?" is asked. After the read-aloud, learners completed the task of writing new original dialogues, and in comparison, these were friendly and showed sensitivity to the outsider. Similarly, in the post-reading questionnaire, all participants answered that they wanted to be kind to people they don't know, one writing, "If we are kind, that kindness may come back to us."

In the final part of the 90-minute session, a news clip of a Ukrainian girl starting primary school in Japan was shown to highlight that although the picturebook was a work of fiction, migration due to war is occurring around the world, and the learners could encounter such a migrant in their daily lives. Subsequently, in the questionnaire, learners said they would be kind and try to "make friends" with a new student, and although there is no assumption that this feeling would remain with them over time, it can be said that at that moment they felt sympathy for the girl.

The power and the potential of picturebooks and practical ways to use them have been introduced here. Picturebooks, especially on the sophisticated side, should be considered when choosing classroom resources for learners of all ages, because of the possibility of facilitating higher-order thinking and contributing to a shift in attitudes about a range of issues.

Happily Ever After: Post-Reading Projects for Picturebooks

Martin Sedaghat

Picturebooks are a vital resource for teachers, as they can cover a wide variety of contexts and topics such as friendship, emotions, and intercultural learning (Hasegawa et al., 2022), and are often the very first interaction that children have with literature in their lives. However, for very young learners such as children in preschool and early elementary school, it can be difficult to express their feelings and thoughts about these books in either their first or second language. Thus, post-reading projects can be an effective way for children to explore the various aspects of picturebooks and reflect on their reading experiences (Brun-Mercer & Moore, 2022), creating meaningful connections between books and readers.

This section will address three key points: What are post-reading activities, why use these kinds of projects, and how to choose books and the activities that go with them. Post-reading activities, as the name suggests, are tasks that help learners engage with books after the reading stage (Shin & Crandall, 2014). These activities may use arts and crafts as a medium to extend the experience of the book and allow learners to explore the book's themes and messages on a personal level.

Post-reading activities are useful for a number of reasons. By observing how learners respond to the project prompts, their overall comprehension of the picturebook can be checked. Through the use of physical materials such as paper, crayons, scissors, and glue, learners can practise communication, sharing, turn-taking, and other important social skills. Furthermore, creating and then taking their artworks home gives learners the opportunity to share the projects with their family, hopefully leading to further discussion about the books. These activities can help to connect English learning to

creative and memorable experiences, which can ultimately motivate learners to return to the books and develop their interest in reading.

Regarding the choice of picturebooks, short and simple books with an emphasis on pictures over text lend themselves well to post-reading activities. This can also be a valuable opportunity to share different kinds of picturebooks with learners, showing them the wide variety of formats and styles that are available, including concept books, wordless books, and nonfiction picturebooks (Ciecierski et al., 2017). Overall, it can be effective to select books that have a clear core theme, pattern, or interactive element, and use this as a focus for the art project.

A few questions might be considered when designing the activities to help connect books with projects.

- What is the central theme or element of the book?
- What is an interesting character or perspective that learners can investigate?
- What is the most important message from the book that you want learners to reflect on?
- Is there an art style that would be interesting for learners to experiment with?

The following are a number of examples of post-reading activities for preschool lessons:

Retelling a Story

Teachers can take a story and break it down into a few short and simple parts. For each lesson they can read or tell one part of the story without showing the learners any pictures, and then ask them to draw that scene. After telling all parts and collecting all of the learner's drawings, the teacher can take one drawing for each part and put them together to make a collaborative version of that story that each learner has added to.

Student-made Books

Some books that have a specific visual or thematic point can be adapted and remade by learners. For example, *Ketchup On Your Cornflakes* by Nick Sharratt pairs multiple foods and other objects to create strange new combinations. Learners can choose and draw their own items on strips of paper which can be glued together to make their own unique copy of the book.

Making Predictions

Many picturebooks have incomplete or ambiguous conclusions, which invite learners to decide on the ending for themselves. *Shh! We Have a Plan* by Chris Haughton ends with the main characters trying to catch a squirrel but does not show the results of their attempt. Learners can think about and draw their own final page, leading to classroom discussions about what they think might happen and why.

Exploring a Central Theme

Books like *Don't Push the Button* by Bill Cotter feature recurring motifs that can be used to let learners show their creativity. Just as the eponymous button leads to all kinds of changes for the main character, learners can draw or make their own buttons and show what happens when they are pushed.

Reimagining Elements

Cut-out shapes are interesting ways for picturebooks to create a sense of mystery as learners can try to guess what will be revealed on the next page. *Green* by Laura Vaccaro Seeger is a good example to share with learners, followed up by giving them paper with a shape cut out of it, asking them to imagine what that shape might be and drawing around it to create a setting.

Sequencing

Learning to understand and express the order of events in the storytelling process is an important skill for young learners. *The Snowman* by Raymond Briggs is a useful resource for this, as it is a wordless book and thus relies on images and their sequential order to make meaning. Many of the events in the story can be broken up into a beginning, middle, and end, with their own cause and effect, and learners can be tasked with continuing the story by drawing on a paper with three clear sections for their own original Snowman adventure.

Linking to Other Subjects

Many picturebooks include images and aspects of history, geography, culture, and the natural world. These can be valuable opportunities to connect to topics beyond the books and expand into other subjects. *Papa, Please Get the Moon For Me* by Eric Carle can be a chance for learners to talk about and look closely at photographs of the moon,

noticing the unique landscape. Following this discussion, they can use a variety of materials to experiment with paint and texture to create their own moon.

Picturebooks, along with songs and games, are a core part of the young learner classroom. Pre-literate children enjoy looking through the pages of colourful characters and settings, and it is in this way that many begin to build a positive relationship with books by reading the pictures (Bland, 2015). While picturebooks themselves are important tools for teachers to share and read with their learners (Ghosn, 2013), they can become even more valuable when paired with post-reading activities. Carefully designed and introduced projects can build a connection between books and children, allowing young learners to reflect and express their thoughts, feelings, and creativity in ways that may not be possible for them to do with language alone.

Engaging Language Learners though Instapoetry

Mary Hillis

Although poetry offers students rich experiences with language, some teachers are reluctant to use it in the classroom because of unfamiliar vocabulary, syntax, or concepts (Koch, 2012). However, a newer form of poetry called "Instapoetry" has gained readership among the general population due to its accessibility (Ekmark, 2022), and it has potential in language learning classrooms at the junior high level and above (see Alber, 2016; Barbosa & Sales, 2022). Instapoetry is a form of digital poetry created for sharing on social media, specifically the Instagram platform, which has gained popularity over the past decade. Sharing their work online with an international audience in timely and creative ways, Instapoets often pair short texts with images (e.g., line drawings, photos, videos), and readers engage with their work by liking, sharing, commenting, and even remixing their poems—this interactivity is a key part of the form (Naji, 2021). Perhaps the most well-known writer in English associated with Instapoetry is Rupi Kaur, who has been called "the queen of Instapoets" (Pitt, 2019). She currently has over 4.5 million followers on Instagram and three published poetry collections: *Milk and Honey* (2014), *The Sun and Her Flowers* (2017), and *Home Body* (2020). Her work has been translated into more than 43 languages, including Japanese (Kaur, 2023).

Instapoetry can be used as the basis for interactive and collaborative activities in the language classroom. For example, it has been used in a university academic department's English minor program, in a course titled *English Seminar: Social Issues through Poetry*, with second through fourth-year students. This section focuses on a small selection of Kaur's poems which can be used alongside academic or news articles related to a variety of social issues, such as body image, social media, advertising, beauty, life online, and mental health. For an in-class activity, students were given four of Kaur's poems to read and discuss in small groups. The following is an in-depth look at one of the poems and the resulting classroom discussion. The poem reads: "Look down at your body / whisper / there is no home like you / thank you — rupi kaur", and it is accompanied by an embellished line drawing of a human figure (see Kaur, 2022).

During group discussions, students read the poem for understanding before moving on to a discussion of the emotions expressed as well as the combined effect of the poem and its illustration on the reader. Of their own volition, students confirmed their understanding of the poem using Japanese. At this time, they discovered that they were unsure about the meaning of the phrase "there is no home like you". Here, "there is no" is used to say that something is "unique" or "like no other", and even though the sentence contains the word "no" the overall meaning is positive. Other similar expressions, such as "there is no friend like you" can be used to help clarify the meaning. As an extension activity, students can use the structure "there is no [noun] like [comparison]" to come up with similar sentences to express their own ideas.

After clarifying their understanding of the poem in Japanese, students discussed the poem in English. To explore the emotions associated with the word "home", groups came up with their own definitions and emotions associated with home. If necessary, a stem sentence, such as "home is a place where ..." can be used to scaffold the activity. For example, one group shared the idea that "home is a place where you feel comfortable" and connected the poem to the concepts of body positivity and body neutrality from the news and academic articles which were studied in class. They concluded that the accompanying illustration was a human form with a house drawn in the torso, the sun and sky in the head, and roots in the feet, which further supported their interpretation of the poem.

Taking advantage of the digital format of Instapoetry, after reading all four poems by Kaur, students decided which poems to like and to write a comment. On the Instagram platform, a like is expressed by clicking a heart mark and generally denotes positive feedback or appreciation. Students also wrote a comment for at least one of the poems. In the comment, students were free to write anything, but most elected to write about their interpretation of the poem or reasons for liking it. To protect student's privacy, their likes and comments were shared with the class members through an activity which was conducted on the learning management system. To conclude the activity, during an in-class discussion, students explained their thoughts on the poems. Other extension

activities could be to further interact with poetry on the Instagram platform or to write original Instapoems.

Teacher and student reflections from the university classroom suggest that Instapoetry can foster a collaborative learning environment that promotes language learning and creativity as well as support for social emotional learning (SEL). Of the five SEL competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and making responsible decisions (CASEL, n.d.), Instapoetry discussions can help students develop self-awareness through the identification and exploration of emotions and relationship skills through working with others during group activities.

The Lonesome Bodybuilder: Exploring Gender through Literature in the EFL Classroom

Luke Draper

Literature has long been used as not only a rich source of language in the EFL classroom, but also as a means to explore issues that currently impact society. While much prose originally written in the English language is available, I designed a class based on English translations of Japanese literature. The rationale for this decision is underpinned by concepts in text-world theory that study the way meaning is constructed through cognitive representation — or the mental formation of "text-worlds" — as the learner reads (Gavins & Lahey, 2018). These mental images are shaped by the context of the story, the stylistic choices of the author and/or translator as well as the readers' narrative schema: the stored memories, life experiences and real-world knowledge that help construct a mental visualisation of the text (Giovanelli & Mason, 2015).

English Translations of Japanese Literature is an advanced accredited class in the English Language Program of Kwansei Gakuin University, School of Policy Studies. The course is delivered entirely in English and all spoken activities and assessments are conducted in English by the learners, though L1 learner interactions are accepted for task instruction clarification. It is fair to assume that the learners' collective schemata lacks the richness of readers with more world experience. Indeed, when the language of a text fails to integrate with the reader's narrative schema entirely, a loss of engagement with the text and motivation with the reading task is likely to occur. Text selection, then, is a vital part of any literature-based syllabus. McRae (2022) suggests that texts must have "a clear and readily identifiable setting, and/or situation and/or characters" (p. 103). McRae also states that the text must be accessible and within the linguistic capabilities of the students, which is often challenging due to the ungraded language in most literary prose. In selecting relevant text, it is important to apply pedagogical intuition and analyse the text carefully to ensure the setting aligns with the learner's mental text-worlds and that the text level will not severely disrupt the reading process.

A key objective when designing the course was to ensure that "authentic" reading experiences are provided over "manufactured" ones. Giovanelli and Mason (2015) describe authentic readings as borne out of independent response and interpretation, while manufactured reading is created through an imposition of meaning from instructor onto the learner. Hall (2015) describes the distinction as a "'discovery' rather than a 'transmission' model", (p. 55) which fosters greater confidence in the learner's evaluation of their reading ability. To facilitate this style requires more emphasis on dialogic assessment over knowledge testing.

Assessment was designed to facilitate development in the four skills and to focus on language production. As a result, formative assessments included two text analysis essays and three "Book Club" discussions.

Short texts were selected for their thematic focus as well as linguistic appropriateness and language learning potential. The first unit focused on environmental issues and technology and used the texts *Factory Town* (2006) by Minoru Betsuyaku, translated by Royall Tyler and *Shoulder-top Secretary* (1973) by Shin'ichi Hoshi, translated by Jay Rubin respectively. The second unit focused on female identity in Japanese society with two short stories written by Yukiko Motoya and translated by Asa Yoneda: *The Lonesome Bodybuilder* and *Fitting Room* (2018).

The Lonesome Bodybuilder is written in the first person with a Japanese housewife narrator. The story begins with the narrator coming home from shopping to find her inattentive husband watching boxing on the television. Inspired by the figures on television, the narrator takes up bodybuilding as a hobby. Her body grows while her husband still does not notice the difference.

The formative text analysis essay question was constructed as such:

> To what extent does *The Lonesome Bodybuilder* comment on women and female identity in Japanese society?

And the Book Club discussion prompts were the following:

> One member of the group should summarise the story (1 minute).
>
> Questions to discuss:
>
> *Characterisation*: How would you describe the narrator and the narrator's

husband?

Analysis: Why did the narrator take up bodybuilding?

Interpretation: How does this story comment on women and female identity in Japanese society?

Find examples in the text to support your ideas.

In both the written and discussion assessments, the key skills displayed are *characterisation* and *interpretation*.

Characterisation allows learners to develop descriptive vocabulary, especially adjectives and adjective phrases. Examples of verbalised sentences from the materials include: "I think the narrator is *a cautious person*" and "a good way to describe the narrator's husband is *inconsiderate*". Learners then refer to a specific part of the text that demonstrates this quality. While vocabulary was pre-taught, many learners verbalised individual characterisations, with a small minority even sympathising with the husband and showing disdain for the narrator's choices.

The interpretation element constitutes the most significant area of focus of both assessments. In the discussion, learners give their own thoughts as to why the narrator takes up bodybuilding. These reasons, as encouraged through authentic reading, vary. Below are paraphrased examples of some learners' verbal responses:

Statement 1: (opinion) I think the narrator wanted the attention of her husband, like he gave to the boxers on the television. (Reference) The story begins: *when I got home from the supermarket, my husband was watching a boxing match on TV.*

"I didn't know you watched this kind of thing. I never would have guessed," I said, putting down the bags of groceries on the living room table.

He made a noncommittal noise from the sofa. He seemed to be really engrossed.

Statement 2: (opinion) I think the narrator was regretful that she was unadventurous.

(Reference) Page 5 reads: *Why had I never watched this kind of thing before? Boxing, pro wrestling, mixed martial arts--I'd assumed they weren't for me. How wrong I was. I always do that. I decide who I am, and never consider other possibilities.*

When discussing how the story comments on women and female identity in Japan, most learners were quick to discuss how bodybuilding is an unusual hobby for Japanese women and how societal expectations of femininity are deeply ingrained and represent a "stereotype".

Statement 3: (opinion) This story shows there is a stereotype that women should have a slender body type in Japan. (Reference) Page 7 reads: *On the first day of my private sessions, I confided to the trainer—a boy in his early twenties—that I wanted to become a bodybuilder. He stopped writing on his clipboard and looked at me with surprise.*

"Bodybuilding? Not weight loss?"

Statement 4: (opinion) Bodybuilding appears to be a metaphor for a lot of housewives in Japan.

(Reference) On page 18, the narrator's personal trainer says: *"Of all athletes, I most respect bodybuilders because there's no one more solitary. They hide their deep loneliness and give everyone a smile. Showing their teeth, all the time, as if they have no other feelings. It's an expression of how hard life is, and their determination to keep going anyway."*

As can be seen by the example responses above, learners respond to the parts of the text that resonate with them the most and connect these to their own knowledge and experiences of Japanese society. As is encouraged, discussion often changes toward personal experiences. By engaging in fictionalised representations of this issue and being provided a platform to exteriorize their authentic readings, it is clear that EFL learners' literary responses are well worth exploring.

Conclusion

The use of literature in language learning classrooms affords students with numerous opportunities for linguistic, cultural, and emotional growth and development. Learners of all ages can appreciate literary texts when they are meaningful and relevant to their lives. Picturebooks, with the rich combination of illustrations and texts, serve as a foundation for group discussions and creative activities. Instapoetry, another form of multimodal literature, can be interacted with digitally through liking and commenting

on social media posts. Japanese short stories translated into English provide a culturally familiar lens for students to examine and discuss contemporary social issues. These successful examples of integrating various literary forms suggest that literature can enrich the experience of language learning.

Bio Data

Luke Draper is from Portsmouth, UK and has an MA in Creative Writing. He currently teaches EAP at the School of Policy Studies, Kwansei Gakuin University. He enjoys writing, especially speculative fiction, and researches between creative writing and EAP pedagogy. His current project explores interaction in Creative Writing workshops and how stylistic metalanguage may influence the writer's revisional process.

Alison Hasegawa is from the UK and gained her B. Ed. in Primary Education before coming to Japan. She taught children for over 20 years, then became a teacher trainer at Miyagi University of Education (2012-2022), gaining her MA in Teaching English to Young Learners in 2015. She has used picturebooks extensively with young learners, and currently as a Specially Appointed Professor at Rikkyo University, Tokyo, is introducing them to university students.

Mary Hillis teaches English at Ritsumeikan University in Kyoto. She serves on the Awards and Recognition Committee for JALT and the Membership Professional Council for the TESOL International Association. Her professional interests are literature in language teaching and teacher professional development.

Martin Sedaghat is a preschool and university teacher at Niigata University of Health and Welfare. He has been teaching in Japan since 2003 and received his MA in TESOL in 2023. He is currently an editor for the young learners section of the JALT publication The Language Teacher. He has a background in illustration and his professional interests include picturebooks, game design for young learners, and second language acquisition for children.

References

Aghagolzadeh, F & Tajabadi, F. (2012). A debate on literature as a teaching material in FLT. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research. 3*(1). 205-210. https://doi.org/10.4304/jltr.3.1.205-210

Alber, R. (2016, December 6). *Enliven class discussions with gallery walks*. Edutopia. https://www.edutopia.org/blog/enliven-class-discussion-with-gallery-walks-rebecca-alber

Bader, B. (1976). *American picturebooks from Noah's Ark to the beast within.* New York: Macmillan.

Barbosa, T. R., & Sales, L. S. (2022). Poetry in digital times: A didactic proposal for the use of Instapoetry in the EFL context. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 12(4), 66-78. https://doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v12n4p66

Barnett, M. (2011). *Proclamation*. http://thepicturebook.co/

Bibby, S. & McIlroy, T. (2013). Literature in language teaching: What, why, and how. *The Language Teacher. 37*(5). 19-21. https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTTLT37.5

Bland, J. (2015). Pictures, images and deep reading. *Children's Literature in English Language Education*, *3*(2), 24-36. https://clelejournal.org/pictures-images-and-deep-reading-bland/

Bland, J. (2023). *Compelling stories for English language learners – Creativity, interculturality and critical literacy.* London: Bloomsbury.

Briggs, R. (1978). *The Snowman*. London: Hamish Hamilton.

Brun-Mercer, N., & Moore, C. (2022). Motivating student reading through post-reading book creation. *English Teaching Forum, 60*(3), 2-13.

Carle, E. (1969). *The very hungry caterpillar.* New York: Penguin Random House.

Carle, E. (1999). *Papa, please get the moon for me.* New York: Little Simon.

Carter, R., & Long, M. (1991). *Teaching literature*. Harlow: Longman.

Ciecierski, L., Nageldinger, J., Bintz, W. P., & Moore, S. D. (2017). New perspectives on picture books. *Athens Journal of Education*, *4*(2), 123-136. https://doi.org/10.30958/aje.4-2-2

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. (n.d.) *Fundamentals of SEL*. https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/

Cotter, B. (2016). *Don't push the button.* Naperville: Sourcebooks Jabberwocky.

Ekmark, Y. G. (2022). The ecocritical Instapoet: Digital media ecofeminist poetry. [Master's Thesis, Stockholm University]. https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1675366/FULLTEXT01.pdf

Gavins, J. & Lahey, E. (2018). *World building: Discourse in the mind.* London: Bloomsbury.

Ghosn, I. K. (2002). Four good reasons to use literature in primary school ELT. *ELT Journal, 56*(2): 172-179. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/56.2.172

Ghosn, I. K. (2013). *Storybridge to second language literacy: The theory, research and practice of teaching English with children's literature*. Charlotte: IAP.

Giovanelli, M. & Mason, J. (2018). 'Well I don't feel that': Schemas, worlds and authentic reading in the classroom. *English in Education*. *49*(1). 41-55. https://doi.org/10.1111/eie.12052

Hall, G. (2015). *Literature in language education* (2nd ed.). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hasegawa, A., MacFarlane, E., Sedaghat, M., & Masatsugu, K. (2022). Opening windows to the world: Developing children's intercultural understanding through picturebooks in Japan. *Children's Literature in Language Education, 10*(2), 29-55. https://clelejournal.org/3177-2/

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

Kaur, R. [@rupikaur_] (2022, September 30). *Look down at your body whisper there is no home like you thank you - rupi kaur* [Photograph]. Instagram. https://www.instagram.com/p/CjldQfzu-Xs/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=ZWQ3ODFjY2VlOQ==

Koch, K. (2012). *Rose, where did you get that red?: Teaching great poetry to children.* New York: Vintage. (Original work published 1973).

Lambert, M. (2015). *Reading picture books with children.* Watertown: Charlesbridge.

McRae, J. (2022). *Literature with a small 'l': Developing thinking skills in language teaching and learning*. (3rd edition). Eugene: Wayzgoose Press.

Lewis III, D. R., & Lewis, T. Y. (2021). A multimodal approach to higher order literacy development of low-level EFL university students in Japan. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching, 15*(4), 364-383.

Mourão, S. (2013). Picturebook: Object of discovery in children's literature. In J. Bland & C. Lutge (Eds.), *Second Language Education* (pp. 71-94). London: Bloomsbury.

Mourão, S. (2015). The potential of picturebooks with young learners. In J. Bland (Ed.), *Teaching English to Young Learners: Critical issues in language teaching with 3–12-year-olds.* (pp. 199-218). London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Motoya, Y. (2018). *The Lonesome bodybuilder* (A. Yoneda, Trans.). New York: Soft Skull. (Original work published in 2015).

Naji, J. (2021). *Digital poetry*. Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-65962-2

Naylor-Ballesteros, C. (2019). *The Suitcase.* London: Nosy Crow.

Nikolajeva, M. & Scott, C. (2001). *How picturebooks work*. London: Routledge.

Nodelman, P. (1988). *Words about pictures: The narrative art of children's picture books.* Athens: The University of Georgia Press.

Paramour, A. (n.d.). *Using literature in ELT.* http://fdslive.oup.com/www.oup.com/elt/teachers/generalcontent/focus-papers/using-literature-in-elt-focus-paper.pdf

Parr, T. (2001). *It's okay to be different*. New York: Little, Brown & Co.

Pitt, H. (2019, November 2). *Thought poetry was dead? The Instapoets raking it in online would beg to differ*. The Sydney Morning Herald. https://www.smh.com.au/culture/books/thought-poetry-was-dead-the-instapoets-raking-it-in-online-would-beg-to-differ-20191029-p53578.html

Ristoska, E. K., Neshkovska, S., & Prodanovska-Poposka, V. (2021). Students' perspectives on teaching literature in EFL classes: Various possibilities for creating exciting classroom experiences. *Horizons-International Scientific Journal, 29*(2), 89-103. https://doi.org/10.20544/HORIZONS.A.29.2.21.P09

Roche, M. (2015). *Developing children's critical thinking through picturebooks.* London: Routledge.

Seeger, L. V. (2012). *Green.* New York: Roaring Book Press.

Sendak, M. (1963). *Where the wild things are.* New York: Harper & Row.

Sharratt, N. (2006). *Ketchup on your cornflakes.* Scholastic.

Shin, J. K., & Crandall, J. A. (2014). *Teaching young learners English: From theory to practice*. Boston: National Geographic Learning.

Thaler, E. (2019). Lit 21–Teaching Post-Millennial Literature. In E. Thaler (Ed.), *Lit 21: New Literary Genres in the Language Classroom.* (pp. 13-28). Tübingen: Narr Francke Attempto Verlag GmbH+Co.

Trelease, J. (2019). *Read-Aloud Handbook* (8th ed.). New York: Penguin Books.