

Primary School English Picture Book Teaching Activity Design Based on the English Learning Activity View

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Abstract: The introduction of the "English Learning Activity View" in the Compulsory Education Curriculum Plan and Curriculum Standards (2022 Edition) establishes a systematic framework for achieving the core competencies of the English subject. In contrast to traditional textbooks, picture books, characterized by their rich illustrations and authentic contexts, can more effectively facilitate students' development in language application, transfer, and innovation. Nevertheless, current practices in picture book instruction often prioritize linguistic knowledge at the expense of fostering critical thinking and literacy skills. Therefore, this paper utilizes the picture book *The New King* as a case study to analyze the teaching content through the lens of the six curriculum elements. It also designs progressive teaching activities that encompass three levels: learning and comprehension, application and practice, and transfer and innovation. This approach aims to promote the integration of learning with thinking, application, and creation, thereby offering a practical teaching pathway for English picture book instruction in primary schools.

Keywords: English Learning Activity View; classroom activity design; picture book teaching

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1. Introduction

The Compulsory Education Curriculum Plan and Curriculum Standards (2022 Edition) (hereinafter referred to as the New Curriculum Standards) establishes training objectives across three dimensions: "observation and discrimination, induction and judgment, and criticism and innovation." These objectives aim to enhance students' logical, dialectical, and innovative thinking. However, traditional English teaching materials primarily rely on single-sentence dialogues or vocabulary explanations, which often lack sufficient context and present fragmented themes. This limitation hinders the development of deep thinking skills and cross-contextual transfer. In contrast, picture books, with their rich illustrations and authentic contexts, offer abundant language input while fostering students' observation and induction skills. Consequently, they serve as a vital resource to address the deficiencies of conventional textbooks and facilitate contextualized teaching and cognitive development.

In practice, many teachers lack the necessary concepts and methods for effectively teaching picture books, resulting in two predominant instructional models. The first model adheres to the original textbook's teaching methods, emphasizing vocabulary and functional sentence patterns. The second model regards picture books as supplementary reading materials, encouraging students to enhance their reading volume through independent exploration (Li Feng, 2024). This superficial approach to language instruction urgently requires a shift towards fostering deep language learning and critical thinking skills. The introduction of the English Learning Activity View offers a promising avenue for improving picture book instruction. At the level of instructional design, this approach transforms static picture book narratives into a series of exploratory and interactive language practice activities, enabling students to gain a profound understanding of themes, cultivate diverse modes of thinking, and simultaneously enhance both their deep language learning and critical thinking abilities.

2. The English Learning Activity View

Research on "activity" conducted by foreign scholars predates that of domestic researchers. Rousseau first introduced the concept of "learning through activity,". This idea was subsequently inherited and expanded by Pestalozzi, Dewey, and others, who championed the educational philosophy of "learning by doing." Building upon this foundation, Soviet psychologist Leontiev developed the "theory of learning activity," asserting that cognitive development occurs through social activities.

The General Senior High School English Curriculum Standards (2017 Edition) (hereinafter referred to as the Curriculum Standards) were the first to introduce the "English Learning Activity View" (hereinafter referred to as the "Activity View"). This framework positions "activity" as the fundamental mode of English learning, emphasizing that students engage in language use to convey textual meaning through activities, while also fostering cultural awareness and diverse thinking (Ministry of Education, 2018). The New Curriculum Standards have incorporated and expanded upon the foundational concepts of English learning established in the Curriculum Standards. They further assert that the curriculum philosophy should embody the Activity View of "integrating thinking with learning, and prioritizing application and creation," thereby advocating for the synthesis of thought and learning, with a focus on practical application and innovation. At this stage, the essence of the Activity View has been elucidated. It aims to cultivate students' core competencies, prioritizes a student-centered approach with teacher guidance, and facilitates "learning-thinking-application-creation" activities aligned with learning objectives and practical contexts, thereby reflecting the interactivity and developmental aspects of language learning (Mei Deming, 2024).

The Activity View employs "activity" as its central concept and adheres to a "student-centered" teaching philosophy, which aligns well with the cognitive characteristics of primary school students and the fundamental objectives of picture book instruction. In reading education, teachers can utilize "thematic context," one of the six essential elements, as the primary focus. By designing comprehensive teaching activities, educators can guide students to explore and expand upon the text, fostering an understanding of the connections between reading materials and real-life experiences (Ji Xiaoting, 2018). In conclusion, the Activity View offers a practical and effective approach to reading instruction in primary schools, demonstrating significant practical value. Through theme-driven and task-oriented comprehensive activities, it can effectively enhance the synergistic development of students' language skills and core competencies while broadening their cultural perspectives.

3. Analysis of Picture Book Teaching Content

The teaching content within the Activity View comprises six fundamental elements: thematic context, discourse type, linguistic knowledge, cultural knowledge, language skills, and learning strategies. Optimizing and integrating these elements is essential for effectively cultivating students' core competencies and facilitating their comprehensive development (Wang Qiang, 2021). Consequently, educators must first address the question of "what to teach" prior to analyzing "how to teach."

3.1 Thematic Context

The themes of picture books can be categorized into three major areas: man and nature, man and society, and man and self. The "man and nature" theme emphasizes the development of students' understanding of nature, ecological awareness, and scientific reasoning. The "man and society" theme encourages the cultivation of social responsibility, cultural awareness, and skills in communication and collaboration. The "man and self" theme focuses on fostering self-awareness, emotional regulation, and value formation. For instance, the picture book *The New King* narrates a competition for a new ruler in the animal kingdom, where smaller animals demonstrate their strengths to vie for the throne. This narrative aligns with the "man and self" theme, prompting students to reflect on their own strengths and weaknesses while highlighting the significance of listening and observation in communal life.

3.2 Discourse Type

Common discourse types in picture books can be categorized into fictional and non-fictional genres. Fictional picture books often construct comprehensive scenarios through the interplay of text and illustrations. For example, *The New King* centers on animals such as lions, foxes, and rabbits campaigning for a new ruler in the forest. The text is succinct, and the illustrations are vibrant, not only providing a complete narrative framework but also suggesting the value that "listening and observation are more important than empty talk." This approach aids students in enhancing their oral expression and cross-cultural value judgment through reading and role-playing.



Non-fictional picture books often focus on real information, presenting content such as popular science, life knowledge, cultural introductions, and emotional management, with an emphasis on factual explanation or knowledge transmission. For example, *The Magic School Bus*, helping students understand astronomical concepts such as planetary orbits and the structure of the solar system, retaining the fun of adventure while providing accurate popular science information.

3.3 Linguistic Knowledge

The development of language ability is rooted in the accumulation of linguistic knowledge, encompassing multiple dimensions such as phonetics, vocabulary, and grammar. High-quality picture books often integrate these linguistic elements seamlessly within their content. For instance, in *The New King*, the recurring core sentence patterns, such as "Why should you be king?" "I am...than...I should be king," and "They all want to be the new king," not only reinforce the fundamental grammatical structures of interrogative and declarative sentences but also illustrate the pragmatic rules of English through the dialogues of animal characters.

3.4 Language Skills

The cultivation of language skills covers multiple dimensions such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, and viewing, and picture book teaching places particular emphasis on developing students' reading and viewing skills. *The New King* mostly consists of interactive dialogues between animal characters. This clear linguistic distinction is suitable for classroom role-playing activities. By having students read aloud the campaign declarations of different animals, such as "I am stronger/ taller than you. I should be king," students can not only effectively practice their oral expression skills but also better understand the practical application of comparative sentence patterns.

3.5 Cultural Knowledge

Cultural knowledge encompasses both material and non-material aspects. Acquiring cultural knowledge extends beyond merely understanding and memorizing specific information; it fundamentally involves uncovering and evaluating the underlying attitudes and values (Ministry of Education, 2022). The picture book *The New King* primarily conveys the spiritual cultural insight that observation and listening hold greater significance than unconsidered expression.

3.6 Learning Strategies

Learning strategies primarily encompass metacognitive, cognitive, communication, and emotional management strategies. In primary school picture book instruction, it is essential for teachers to guide students in mastering and applying these diverse learning strategies. In *The New King*, the cheetah, elephant, and giraffe each advocate for their selection as the new king by employing comparative sentence structures to highlight their respective strengths, such as "I am faster/stronger than you." Teachers can leverage this scenario to encourage students to immerse themselves in the campaign context, mimic the animals' language and actions, and enhance their comprehension and application of comparative grammatical forms. Furthermore, at the conclusion of the narrative, the meerkat is elected king due to its keen observation and listening skills. Teachers can facilitate discussions that compare the meerkat's behavior with that of the other animals, fostering critical thinking strategies.

4. Design of Picture Book Reading Teaching Activities Based on the Activity View

In the instruction of picture book reading, educators should focus on the six elements of curriculum content and create progressively layered activities that encompass the three dimensions of learning: comprehension, application and practice, and transfer and innovation. The subsequent discussion will use the teaching of the picture book *The New King* as a case study to elaborate on the design principles and implementation strategies for various types of activities at different levels.

4.1 Design of Learning and Comprehension Activities

The first level of the Activity View encompasses learning and comprehension activities, which primarily

include perception and attention, acquisition and sorting, and summarization and organization activities (Qian Xiaofang, 2019). During the reading of picture books, students gradually clarify the story's clues, summarize key information, and comprehend the overall content, core ideas, and values of the picture book through activities such as plot retelling, mind mapping, and group discussions.

Activities	<i>The New King</i>
Perception and Attention	Play a piece of forest sound effect with a mysterious atmosphere. Then, display the silhouettes of some animal characters from the picture book. Ask the students to guess the identities of the animals and naturally lead into the theme of the picture book, <i>The New King</i> .
Acquisition and Sorting	<p>Initiate the "Story Clue Search" activity by asking students to speculate on the types of competitions the animals might engage in if they were vying for the title of king. Subsequently, guide the students to examine the cover and table of contents of the picture book to identify relevant clues pertaining to the election.</p> <p>Conduct the "Scene Little Theatre" by progressing through the book one page at a time. The teacher and students will read the picture book collaboratively. The teacher will outline the plot, while students will employ simple actions and expressions to depict the animals' emotions, thereby organizing the key content.</p>
Summarization and Organization	The "Story Puzzle Challenge" involved the organization of key scene images from picture books, which were transformed into puzzles. Students were grouped to assemble these puzzles. Upon completion, they summarized the story using the sentence structure "Who + What They Are Good At + What Happened" and collaboratively created a concept map focused on "The Election Process and Results."

Activity 1, serving as a pre-reading guide, establishes a mysterious atmosphere by playing forest sounds and displaying animal silhouettes. This approach captures students' attention and allows them to form preliminary perceptions of the characters in the picture book while speculating about their identities, thereby laying a foundation for engaging with the story.

Activities 2 and 3 prompt students to consider the various aspects in which animals might compete for kingship, thereby stimulating their curiosity and desire for exploration. Subsequently, students are instructed to examine the cover and table of contents for clues, followed by a "scene mini-theater" designed to assist them in organizing the main content of the picture book. Following this, Activity 4 guides students in summarizing and structuring the fragmented plot information, enabling them to grasp the overall story structure and appreciate the emotional themes of competition and cooperation presented in the narrative. Collectively, these activities encompass the vocabulary, grammar, and discourse knowledge embedded in the story. Through their engagement in listening, reading, viewing, and speaking activities, students enhance and refine their language skills.

4.2 Design of Application and Practice Activities

The second level of the Activity View encompasses application and practice activities, which primarily include description and interpretation, analysis and judgment, as well as internalization and application activities. These activities represent the intermediate tier of the Activity View. They involve students, after completing learning and comprehension tasks, connecting the plot of the story through oral or written expression. Subsequently, students employ cognitive strategies such as induction and reasoning to analyze and evaluate the content of the picture book. Building on this foundation, they further internalize the language and knowledge within the context of the narrative, explore the underlying cultural phenomena and meanings associated with the language, acquire cultural experiences, and thus facilitate the transition from knowledge to ability.



Activities	<i>The New King</i>
Description and Interpretation	5. Re-tell the story of the picture book based on the mind map.
Analysis and Judgment	
Internalization and Application	6. Choose any scene to engage in role-playing.

(Note: Continued table)

Activity 5 guides students in retelling the story's content, clarifying the narrative's clues, and consolidating the core vocabulary and sentence structures present in the picture book, thereby establishing a foundation for the subsequent production of complete discourse. Activity 6, through role-playing, enhances students' understanding of the characters and sentence structures, fostering the comprehensive development of their language skills.

4.3 Design of Transfer and Innovation Activities

The third level of the Activity View encompasses transfer and innovation activities, which primarily involve reasoning and argumentation, criticism and evaluation, and imaginative and creative endeavors (Qian Xiaofang, 2019). At this stage, teachers must guide students in analyzing the implicit value orientations within the text, as well as the positions, thoughts, and behaviors of the characters. This guidance enables students to attain a profound understanding of thematic connotations, identify the essence of various concepts, and formulate accurate value judgments. Subsequently, in new contexts devised by the teacher, students are encouraged to apply the knowledge and methods they have acquired, integrate their personal life experiences, and creatively address novel problems, thereby demonstrating positive values and transforming knowledge into core competencies.

Activities	<i>The New King</i>
Reasoning and Argumentation	Ask the students, "If you were a lion, who would you choose to be the new 'King of the Forest'? And why?" Guide the students to understand the importance of listening.
Criticism and Evaluation	Ask the students which animal they like best? State your reasons.
Imaginative and Creative	

Activity 7 encourages students to appreciate the significance of "listening" by engaging with the narrative, thereby deepening their understanding of the text's thematic meaning. Activity 8 aims to facilitate students' self-expression, stimulating their desire to articulate personal preferences and enhancing their critical thinking and communication skills, which aligns with the cognitive characteristics of children.

5. Conclusion

This paper, grounded in the English Learning Activity View, examines the design philosophy and practical approaches to teaching primary school English through picture books. In the context of picture book instruction, educators can facilitate students' comprehension of the text by employing activities that enhance perception and attention, as well as acquisition and categorization. Subsequently, students can internalize linguistic knowledge through practical tasks such as role-playing and story retelling. Ultimately, critical discussions and creative expressions enable students to achieve transfer and innovation. This instructional model not only enhances students' language skills but also fosters their observation, judgment, and values, thereby fully realizing the educational value of the English subject and advancing the development of core English competencies.

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