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CAN PICTURE BOOKS IN ENGLISH CLASSROOM LEAD TO INCREASE VOCABULARY LEARNING?

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Abstract:

Although English Language is taught in the Malaysian national and national-type primary schools for six years, the competence of the language among primary school students is still low. One of the areas where students are observed to be weak in is vocabulary where the teaching of vocabulary has always been neglected as language teachers often felt that the acquisition could be acquired through the teaching of the 4 language skills. There are many ways to teach vocabulary, but picture books in teaching vocabulary is not widely used in Malaysian context. This qualitative research attempted to explore the use of picture books in English language classes in Sekolah Rendah Jenis Kebangsaan (C). The respondents of this research were nine Chinese primary school pupils aged from seven to eleven in Kubang Pasu District, Kedah. Focus group discussion and semi – structured interviews were the instruments used to collect the data and they were analysed thematically. The use of picture books in SJK (C) classrooms was believed to be helpful to the pupils. Pictures, short sentences and careful choice of words in the picture books help pupils to understand new and difficult vocabulary better. Furthermore, the use of picture books also enables the visual learners to understand the story plot well too. Different displays of the picture books are one of the merits to attract pupils and maintain the interest of reading.

Keywords:

Low-Enrolment Schools, Picture Books, SJK (C), Vocabulary Learning

Introduction

Book reading is widely identified as an important activity in the development of children's oral language and vocabulary skills (Marulis & Neuman, 2010). It is beneficial for vocabulary acquisition as books can be read and re-read multiple times over a period of time to allow for multiple exposure to new words and ideas. Besides, books also provide opportunities for exposure to vocabulary that is not often found in everyday conversations (Mol, Bus, Dejong & Smeets, 2008).

Vocabulary is one language component that links the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing all together. A person might find the language learning process challenging without having ample vocabulary to comprehend the language. A normal kid with limited vocabulary would hardly comprehend the text that he or she has read and start to decline reading. It will also affect the learning interest and attitude. This scenario might be caused by a lack of learning opportunities but not the lack of natural ability (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008). However, acquiring a range of extensive vocabulary is one of the largest challenges in learning a second language.

There are many strategies and ways to learn vocabulary. Using picture books to learn vocabulary is effective as picture books contain a lot more unique words at a given sample size than child-directed speech (Montag, Jones & Smith, 2015). Besides, the wonderful combination of visual and textual story in the picture books offers a valuable literacy experience, making picture books an important resource in every classroom (Hurst, 1997).

To help the students master and communicate well in English, one of the most important elements that should not be neglected is the mastery of the vocabulary. Without sufficient vocabulary, one cannot communicate effectively or even express an idea. They will not be able to speak fluently, write the sentences correctly, or even read and comprehend if they do not know the meaning of the words.

Vocabulary learning has been considered as a dull and boring task since a long time ago. The ways of learning vocabulary are normally merely copying and remembering. Hence, with these traditional ways, vocabulary learning becomes less effective. In addition, since the English language is the second language for most of the Malaysian students, it becomes even harder for the students to learn and acquire vocabulary in English. Therefore, in order to make vocabulary learning easier, a more creative approach needs to be implemented.

Scholars have done research on teaching vocabulary through pictures, games and songs. However, there are not that much research focusing on teaching vocabulary using picture books in the Malaysian context. Ismail & Yusof (2016), for instance studied the readability of English picture books and mentioned that there is lack of study on children's book, especially locally written and produced. According to scholars, picture books for young readers are building blocks that promote literacy, vocabulary skills, sentence structure and story analysis. Though most picture books only have about 500 words, they are effective tools for language teaching. Terry Peirce, a children's book author, as cited in Sanders (2014), picture book writers must distil language to its very essence. This is the reason why the text in the picture books is often rich, evocative, and engaging. This type of language will enrich a child's language development.

This paper thus sets out to answer these questions:

- a) What do the Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Cina (SJK(C)) pupils do when they come across difficult words?
- b) How does picture books help Sekolah Rendah Jenis Kebangsaan Cina (SJK(C))pupils to learn new vocabulary?

Literature Review

Vocabulary

Vocabulary, as one of the knowledge areas in language, plays a great role for learners in acquiring a language (Cameron, 2001). One who masters enough vocabulary will find fewer difficulties than those who have fewer vocabularies. When they read certain text, they will easily get the information from it since they can understand almost every word in the text. On the other hand, those who lack vocabulary will face a lot of problems. Mastery of vocabulary will be useful for the process of achieving language-teaching objectives, that is the mastery of the four language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing. Without vocabulary, one cannot communicate effectively or express ideas. Hence, having limited vocabulary is a barrier.

Vocabulary Acquisition in Second Language Learning

According to Harmon, Wood & Keser (2009), learners' vocabulary development is an important aspect of their language development. Vocabulary knowledge is often viewed as a critical tool for second language learners and is always challenging because of the size of the task. It involves understanding the carried types of vocabulary which include single word, phrase, idiom, collocation, strategic vocabulary, grammar pattern, and fixed vocabulary (Alemi & Tayebi, 2011). Nation (2001) further describes the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and language use as complementary; knowledge of vocabulary enables language use and, conversely, language use leads to an increase in vocabulary knowledge.

Researchers such as Laufer and Nation (1999), Maximo (2000), Read (2000), Gu (2003), Marion (2008) and Nation (2011) have discovered that the acquisition of vocabulary is essential for successful second language use and plays an important role in the completing information in spoken and written texts. In an English as a second language or English as a foreign language learning environment, vocabulary items play a vital role in developing all language skills which are listening, speaking, reading and writing (Nation, 2011). The acquisition of adequate vocabulary is essential for successful second language use because without an extensive vocabulary, learners will be unable to use the structures and functions they have learned for comprehensible communication (Rivers & Nunan, 1991).

Research have shown that second language readers rely heavily on vocabulary knowledge and the lack of that knowledge is the main and the largest obstacles for L2 readers to overcome (Kucjin, 1995). In production, when we wish to express an idea or a concept, we need to have a store of words from which we can select to express this meaning or concept. According to Lewis (1993), when students travel, they do not carry grammar books, they carry dictionaries. This implies the importance of acquiring a reasonable range of vocabulary. Many researchers argue that vocabulary is one of the most important – if not the most important – components in learning a foreign language and foreign language curricula must reflect this.

Vocabulary Teaching

Teaching vocabulary may be problematic because many teachers are not confident about the best practice in vocabulary teaching and at times do not know where to begin to form an instructional emphasis on word learning (Berne & Blachowicz, 2008). Teaching words is a crucial aspect in learning a language as languages are based on words (Thornbury, 2002). Both teachers and students agree that the acquisition of vocabulary is a central factor in teaching a language (Walters, 2004). Teaching vocabulary is one of the most discussed parts in teaching English as a foreign language. When the teaching and learning process takes place, problems would appear to the teachers. They have problems on how to teach students to gain satisfying results. The teacher should prepare and find out the appropriate techniques, which will be implemented in their classrooms on the students. A good teacher should equip himself or herself with a variety of and up-to-date techniques. Teachers need to be able to master the materials to be understood by the students and make them interested and happy in the teaching and learning process in the classroom. The teachers should be concerned that teaching vocabulary is something new and different from student's native language. They also need to know the characteristics of his or her learners. Hence, they need to prepare good techniques and suitable materials to achieve the target of language teaching.

Commonly, there are several techniques concerning the teaching of vocabulary. However, there are a few things that need to be remembered by most English teachers if they want to present a new vocabulary or lexical item to their students. It means that if the English teachers want students to remember the new vocabulary, it then needs to be learnt, practised and revised to prevent students from forgetting the vocabulary learnt. Techniques employed by teachers depend on factors such as the content, time availability, and its value for the learners (Takac, 2008). Teachers will then consider these factors while employing certain techniques in presenting vocabulary. In presenting one planned vocabulary item, the teacher usually combined more than one technique, instead of employing one single technique. Teachers, furthermore, are suggested to employ planned vocabulary presentation as various as possible (Pinter, 2006).

Picture Books

There are many types of books with pictures that can be found nowadays. Among them are comics, pictorial reference books, illustrated story books, picture books and others. Each of them has different characteristics and functions. However, picture books are an essential resource often used as a teaching tool for primary pupils (Bianquin & Sacchi, 2017) as a picture book for children, as distinguished from other books with illustrations, is one that essentially provides the child with a visual experience.

Picture books are not easy to define – they are often confused with reading schemes, readers or illustrated books. Within ELT, picture books are commonly known as “real books”, (Machura, 1991; Dunn, 1997; Mourao, 2003) and “authentic storybooks” (Ellis & Brewster 2002). Though we call the audience “readers”, in reality, picture books are meant to be read to the child. The text is short enough to encompass the whole story without taxing the young child's attention span. The illustrations on every page enhance the words and give the child something to look at while listening to the story (Backers, 2014).

Picture books come in different size, shapes and even in textures. There are a few types of picture books. They included the board books, pop-up books, musical books and texture books.

A board book is also known as a hardcover book, which usually has thick and durable covers. Hardcover books are usually made of cardboard covered with various materials such as cloth or leather and printed on acid-free paper. In board books, the entire book, down to the pages, are made of paperboard, so the entire book is durable. Serious book collectors would choose the board books for this reason. Besides, board books are exclusively for children as they will have a hard time tearing the entire book apart. They also find the pages easy to turn. Turning a single page in a book is actually one of the fine motor skills that need to be mastered by the children at the age of 3.

Using Picture Books in Learning

Picture books are multi-sensory, which aids a child's growing mind and stimulates their imaginations. Lewis (2001) refers to picture book text as an "interweaving of words and pictures" whereby the words may tell us the exact same story as we can "read" from the pictures. It can also be seen "as a kind of miniature ecosystem" which suggests that "the words and the pictures in picture books act upon each other reciprocally, each one becoming the environment between which the other lives and thrives (Lewis, 2001). This is also being supported by Freedman (2010), a picture book creator who stated that picture and words in the picture books both contribute to the message we take from a page, for pictures show, and words tell, and when seen together they affect each other's showing and telling qualities.

The picture books were taken seriously as an object of academic study during the latter years of the twentieth century (Grundvig, 2012). Picture books have been introduced in English language for learners of different ages level due to its biggest characteristic - telling stories through the pictures. Pictures can be vivid in many different situations (Li, 2015). According to Hurst (1997), picture books have important roles in every classroom. The wonderful combination of visual and textual story that picture books offer is a valuable literacy experience. Besides, picture books help pupils link the ideas and vocabulary to illustrations, and readers can define unknown words through context clues easily (Schoch n.d.). So, picture books have the potential to develop language skills, especially vocabulary, grammar and the reading skills.

Moreover, good picture books contain texts which capture the essence of a story (Backers, 2014). The words in picture books are chosen sparingly. Besides, the characters and plot are developed without access descriptive baggage. The sentences in the picture books contain a single, concrete idea, and every two or three sentences should convey a different visual image that can be easily illustrated. Furthermore, picture books are meant to be read aloud to a child, and therefore the rhythms of the words are important. Ellis and Brewster (2002) suggested that using children's literature can help develop positive attitudes towards the foreign language culture and language learning; using stories allow the teachers to introduce or revise new vocabulary and sentence structures by exposing the children to language in varied, memorable and familiar contexts, which will enrich their thinking and gradually internalised as their own speech.

Ghosn (2002) offered the following good reasons for using authentic children's literature. It provides a motivating context for language learning since learners are naturally drawn to stories and secondly, literature can contribute to language learning as it presents natural language, language as its finest, and can thus foster vocabulary development in context.

Methodology

This research was conducted in a National Type Chinese school in a rural area in the Kubang Pasu District. Apart from having easier access to the school, as the researcher is also a teacher there, the school was specifically chosen due to its small enrolment where almost all the participants came from all classes and from various levels except for Standard Six which was an exam class. Five pupils were chosen for the focus group discussion. The researcher chose the respondent based on their age as to make sure their level of thinking and proficiency are not much of a difference, leaving the ones age 7 from the research as they were still new to the school. For semi – structured interview, only two pupils were involved. They were chosen based on their performance during the focus group discussion. It was found that they were actively engaged and can express themselves better when having the focus group discussion. Since Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that the real names should be avoided to maintain the ethics in conducting research, a pseudonym will be given to each of the pupils. Table 1.1 to Table 1.2 presented the information about the pupils.

Table 1.1 Demographic Background of Participants in the Focus Group Discussion

Name	Age	Gender	Race
Arisha	8	Female	Malay
Steve	8	Male	Chinese
Donny	8	Male	Chinese
John	9	Male	Chinese
Kaison	10	Male	Chinese

Table 1.2 Demographic Background on Pupils Involved in the Semi –structured Interview

Name	Age	Gender	Race
Donny	8	Male	Chinese
John	9	Male	Chinese

Focus Group Discussion

To conduct the mini focus group discussion, the sample are 3 Year 2 pupils, 1 Year 3 pupil and 1 Year 4 pupil. The rationale for selecting these respondents for the focus group discussion was because the Year 2 pupils were the most in terms of number in the population in the school. To make sure the gap among the targeted respondents are not too far, the researcher chose the Year 3 pupils and the Year 4 pupils instead of the 2 Year 5 pupils. The Year 1 pupils were not chosen as the sample as they could not give a lot of feedback during the pilot test.

Prior to the research, the researcher obtained an approval from the Ministry of Education and informed the respective authorities, in this case, the District Education Office and the designated school on the intention to conduct research using focus group discussion and semi-structured interviews. Due to the fact that the students are young learners, a consent letter needed to be signed by their parents or guardians before the researcher could carry out both the group discussion and semi-structured interview.

The group discussion was conducted for about 33 minutes with the 2 students (and nine questions were asked by the researcher. The researcher added some questions when necessary along the process in order to ask for clearer explanations. The mini group discussion was carried out in a relaxing way where the respondents and the researcher sat in a circle on

the floor and they started to talk. Respondents can answer the questions in their mother tongue which is in Mandarin or Bahasa Malaysia so that they can express their idea accurately. The researcher recorded the discussion and transcribed it after the session. To check the validity and reliability of the discussion, a teacher who can read and understand the 3 languages — English, Mandarin and Bahasa Malaysia helped to check the transcription along with the voice recording.

Semi-Structured Interview

After the transcription of the focus group discussion, the researcher found that there were some answers that were overlooked during the discussion and thus felt that there should be clearer clarification from the respondents. Therefore, a semi — structured interview was carried out. Similar to the same procedure required in the focus group discussion, before the interview session could be carried out, it had to be validated. The participants also need to be informed and their parents as well before consent letter could be signed. Approval from the Ministry of Education and the District Education office must be obtained prior to the actual interview. The interview questions were first validated by a qualitative expert to omit any unnecessary and confusing questions as the participants are young learners of a second or a foreign language. The questions also must be more direct and simpler enough but yet could invoke their opinions about using picture books in class to help with their vocabulary and comprehension.

The researcher managed to interview only two respondents since both were found to be actively engaged during the focus group discussion. They can also express themselves better during the focus group discussion. They managed to state their opinions, preferences of picture books in class. The interviews took about 25 minutes each so that each pupil can take their time to talk about their perceptions on using the picture books in helping them to learn vocabulary. The researcher also repeatedly asked and rephrased some of the questions and in different languages to ensure that they understand the question. The researcher allows the students to answer in any languages that they are comfortable with to converse. Similar to the focus group discussion, transcribing the interview had to be done and checked by the same teacher who can read and understand English, Mandarin and Bahasa Malaysia.

Data Analysis Procedures

In this study, constant comparison analysis is being used to analyse the data such as focus group discussion. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), there are three major stages characterizing the constant comparison analysis. During the first stage, the data are chunked into small units. The researcher attaches a descriptor, or code, to each of the units. Then, during the second stage, these codes are grouped into categories. Finally, in the third stage, the researchers develop one or more themes that express the content of each of the groups (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Data gathered from the interviews were coded and classified for the purpose of categorizing the responses of the participants. In analysing the data, first, the data collected was transcribed verbatim and translated into English. Inter-rater was used to ensure the accuracy and validity of the transcription. As highlighted earlier, a colleague of the researcher was willing to aid the researcher in this process of transcribing. She acted as an inter-rater as she is a fluent Mandarin-Malay-English trilingual person, thus it would eliminate any misinterpretation and distorted meanings.

Verbatim transcripts of the interviews have been compiled for analysis and interpretation. To ensure the reliability and validity of the data, the verbatim transcribed interviews could not be presented to the respondents for the process of verification and confirmation. Instead, the triangulation was carried out using focus group discussion, semi-structured interviews and during classroom time when picture books were presented and used. Later, the data was analysed by coding them and looking at the themes that emerged from the data. The data collected from the interviews were scrutinized and tabulated according to the emerging themes. Later, each of the transcripts was compared according to major and minor categories. This content analysis aids to identify the similar themes as well as unique and distinctive data from the sample.

Results and Discussions

From the focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews and classroom teaching time, a few themes emerged. When asked on strategies that the students employed when coming across difficult words in L2 text, they mentioned three most commonly used which are i) referring to the pictures, ii) looking up in dictionaries and finally, iii) referring to their teachers, peers and elder siblings.

Meanwhile, the second research question that was asked on the participants on the ways picture books can help SRJK (C), the themes that were found were it helped them learn new vocabulary, short sentences help them to understand the text better and lastly, careful choice of words in picture books help learners to understand the new vocabulary better.

Strategies Used When Encounter Difficult Words

Refer to the Pictures

Item 4 in the focus group discussion asked about what the students do when they do not understand the words during the picture books sharing session, 2 out of 5 pupils claimed they referred to the pictures. Here are the excerpts from the focus group discussion.

That is easy! I like looking at the pictures. The pictures! (Steve).

Me too. Because the pictures sometimes showed the objects (John).

However, one of the pupils claimed that he sometimes could not understand the main idea of the picture. He needs to guess the idea that the pictures want to portray. In that case, sometimes he could not get the meaning of the new vocabulary from the pictures.

...but sometimes I can't find, I need to read first (Kaison).

From the above, pupils referred to the pictures to find out the meaning of a new vocabulary when they come across difficult words in an L2 text because it is one of the strategies that are taught by the teacher. There are one or two questions in the comprehension paper that require pupils to find out the answers by looking at the pictures too.

Based on the meta-analytic review in terms Levin's five functions (Levin, 1981), there are five functions that pictures serve in a text. They included the decoration, representational, organizational, interpretational and the transformational which were already mentioned in Chapter 2. Thus, not every picture in the book has the interpretational functions. Some of the

pictures merely function as decoration purpose. Since some pictures might be for representational and organizational purposes, only some parts of the texts are being illustrated. Therefore, pupils could not always get the meaning from the pictures.

Look Up the Meaning from The Dictionary

Another strategy used by the students when they come across difficult words in an L2 text, 2 out of 5 pupils stated that they will look up the meaning from the dictionary.

I will find the meaning from the dictionary (John)

Normally I would find out the meaning from the dictionary. (Kaison)

Even though it was unexpected from young learners to use the dictionary to look up for meanings of words, the students cited using dictionary look up for meanings of difficult words. They also mentioned that they also looked at how the words are used in a sentence. They further commented that they are often asked to use the dictionary by their teachers and parents and thus, it turns into a habit of looking up for words in their bilingual dictionary.

The teacher said use dictionary. So, I look at the words and the sentence. (Arisha).

The dictionary tell me how to use the word. My mother ask me to use (Steve).

If I don't know I check the dictionary. I also look at the word, like how they use (Donny).

Before I do my homework, my mother and sister will tell me, where is your dictionary. I will put the dictionary on the table. Then do homework. If I don't know, I check (Donny).

From the results of the study, looking up for the meaning from the dictionary become the last alternatives when pupils come across a difficult L2 text. This is being supported by Scholfield (1982), who mentioned that even where dictionaries are available, they are often not utilized to the full and are frequently regarded as the last resort when the student “can’t work out” what a word means.

Houtman and Wouters (1994) as cited in Carstens (2013) also mentioned that resistance to dictionary use is a world-wide tendency, especially among school pupils. It is probably due to the fact that most students lack adequate reference skills and that dictionaries have resultantly frustrated them or let them down. Since the pupils nowadays are considered technology natives or digital natives, they tend to prefer technologies more than using the printed dictionary to look up for meanings of words.

Born in the digital age, the students have been networking most or all of their lives. They used to receive information really fast and they have little patience for lectures, step-by-steps logic and “tell-test” instruction (Prenksy, 2001). Therefore, using an ordinary dictionary is not the first choice anymore. They would rather choose to use the dictionary application in the laptop or the smartphones because they prefer everything at their finger tips. As mentioned by Prensky (2001), kids born into this digital culture learn new language using technology easily, and forcefully resist using the old (paper).

Ask Teachers, Peers and Elder Siblings

Meanwhile, during the class time, discussion, 3 respondents mentioned that they will ask other people like their teachers, classmates, parents, and cousins for the meaning. The following excerpts illustrated this:

*I will ask my parents (Donny). Steve:
Ask my teachers or classmates (Steve).
Ask my cousin (Arisha).*

During the interview session, the same questions have been asked to Donny and John. Both of them agreed that the strategies that were mentioned in the focus group discussion were the strategies they often use. Besides, they also compared the strategies from preferable to less preferable. Both of them have the same preference whereby they placed “ask the teachers or classmates” at the first place, then followed by “look for the meaning from the dictionary” when they read the books without picture.

John mentioned that when he does not understand a word, he would normally ask the teacher for the meaning. He sometimes will also refer to the pictures to find out the meaning if there is one. Otherwise, he would just find out the meaning from the dictionary. Among these three methods, he rated “ask the teacher or the elderly” at the first choice. According to him, it is the fastest and easiest way compared to the other two. This method does not need any hard work from him. All he needed to do was to ask. He also claimed that not all books have illustrations or pictures for him to guess the meanings of words. Therefore, referring to the picture was his second choice. He put looking up the meaning from the dictionary as the last choice because he stated that sometimes looking up for meaning from the dictionary is time consuming. He also could not get the exact meaning because there are sometimes too many explanations in the dictionary and he did not know which was the most accurate explanation. When pupils were asked to clarify the reason, John stated that:

Because ask the teacher is faster than the other methods and it just need to ask. And sometimes the book does not have a picture for me to refer. Then I just refer to the dictionary. But dictionary is quite slow and need to flip pages by pages to find out the words. Sometimes there is too much explanation and I do not know which one I need to refer to (John).

Meanwhile, for Donny, when the teacher asked about the steps he took to make sense of words when he does not understand a word during the picturebook sharing session, he stated that he just sat there and ignored it. This is because the teacher read the book too fast and he could not get the chance to ask. If he had the opportunity, he would ask the teacher for the meaning. He also rated “ask the teacher or the elderly” at the first place as he mentioned that he could get the answer or meaning immediately. He would also find out the meaning from the dictionary. However, the dictionary that he normally used was the application (apps) in his father’s smartphone. His father would allow him to borrow the phone to search for the meanings when he needed. After all, he does not have an ordinary dictionary at home. Nonetheless, he still preferred to ask the meaning from the teacher at school so that he would not forget to search for the meaning when he got home.

Because when I get home, I will forget. Forget to find out the meaning of the words. If I do not ask at school, and when I get home, I will forget to find out the meaning (Donny).

Asking for the meaning of words from the teachers, peers and elder siblings is a common strategy the pupils apply when they do not understand the meanings of the vocabulary. This is because it is the fastest and easiest way as compared to the other two mentioned above. However, pupils are not encouraged to do so. Asking for the meaning from the teachers, peers and elder siblings do not need much effort from the pupils themselves. They are merely receiving the knowledge without the need to do any processing of information. They never doubt the meaning given by the teachers, parents or elder siblings. They would just note the meaning down. Learning should be an independent process. Students should not rely on the others to spoon feed them with the necessary information. Furthermore, although pupils jotted down the meaning which is in the cognitive strategies in Gu and Johnson's taxonomy, without any revision or hard work to memorize, pupils will not acquire the vocabulary. Hence, this is the main reason the pupils are poor in vocabulary.

Using Picture Books To Learn New Vocabulary

Pictures In The Picture Books Help Learners To Understand The New Vocabulary Better

All the 5 pupils claimed that they have learnt new words from the picture books even though most of the words are quite familiar to them. The words that they have just learnt from the picture book included "still", "warm", "sausage", "salami" and "cocoon". To assure that pupils really get the meaning correctly, teacher asked the pupils to explain. Pupils gave their explanation in their mother tongue, which is Mandarin and they were mostly correct. Pupils mentioned that they get the meaning of the words from the pictures in the story. Nonetheless, pupils can only get the meaning for the nouns like "sausage" and "salami" correctly but they cannot get the meaning of "warm" which is in the category of adjective.

This is a salami. (pointing to the picture) (Kaison).
And this one is a sausage. That is hot dog (pointing to the picture) Dny
It is a "yong" (in Mandarin, it carries the meaning of "cocoon"). It is because of this (pointing to the picture) (John).

During the interview session, once again John clarified that the pictures in the picture book help his understanding.

Because when I look at the text, I know the words that I do not understand, and then look at the pictures to see what the picture tells (John).

Although pictures have different roles in a book, the pictures in picture books tend to function as interpretational purposes. The illustrations in the picture books are not merely decorations but they carry important role. The illustrations work well with the text to help the readers to understand the content better. Pictures connect students' prior knowledge to a new story, and in the process, help them learn new words. There are plenty of vocabularies that can be introduced by using illustrations or pictures. Illustrations in picture books are excellent means

of making the meaning of unknown words clear. In addition, children's picture books have appealing, self-explanatory illustrations to reinforce and expand students' English vocabulary.

Short Sentences In Picture Books Help Learners To Understand New Vocabulary Better

In the focus group discussion, 100% of the pupils voted that they like picture books. They like picture books for several reasons. One of the pupils mentioned that he likes picture books because the sentences in the picture books are normally short. The short sentences help him to understand better.

I like picture book because the sentences are short. The sentence is short and I can understand (Kaison).

Shorter sentences in picture books are also another advantage of picture books. Children might not be able to read and comprehend wordy texts. They are not able to understand the message if the sentences are too long. Besides, Backers (2014) also stated that the texts in picture books are short, and each word is important. In longer books or books without pictures, a weak paragraph can go undetected, but in a picture book a few unwieldy sentences will kill the story. Therefore, short and precise sentences in the picture books become an advantage of picture books and they help pupils to understand new vocabulary better.

Careful Choice Of Words In Picture Books Help Learners To Understand New Vocabulary Better

While for the other pupils like John and Donny, they mentioned that they like the picture books because the words used in the picture books are easy for them. They stated that most of the words in the books are the words they had learnt before. Thus, when they found some new vocabulary, they can still try to guess the meaning. In short, they can have the chance to learn new words through guessing with the help of their previous knowledge (the known words).

Because the words are easy to read. Most of the words being read by us (Donny).

We have learnt the words before (John).

Another advantage of the picture book is the words used are normally high frequency words or sometimes can be categorized as sight words. Apart from that, they also suit the vocabulary word list for CEFR A1 level pupils. Having said that, the publishers or authors need to write in very simple English language, being careful not to use any big, abstract words. The idea of the story is to speak more through the pictures and images than just the text or content.

Pictures In The Picture Books Help The Visual Learners To Understand Plot Of The Story Better

One of the pupils mentioned that the pictures in the picture books help him to have a clearer view on how the flow of the story goes. For example, the illustrator drew the caterpillar entering the holes, and exits from the holes in the next page. It provided a clear view for the pupils to understand the sequence and the flow of the story.

This book is special. It lets us see it (caterpillar) goes through. After eat then goes through. Like here, it just wanted to go in, then at the back, it ate the fruit and came out (Donny).

His view was supported by another pupil, John who claimed that the illustrations or pictures in the picture books improved his understanding and made him more interested too.

The pictures are beautiful and the stories are interesting. If a book without picture, we can't really see. Because this book, teacher, here. There are holes here to let us have a clearer view. Then, just like sometimes most of us don't know how the caterpillar bites the holes. For us, we would think that if being bitten, it is just a flat hole (2D), then it showed us how it bites. This can improve, and let us see better. This also can open to see, to let the children an interest. This is so interesting.

The pictures in the picture books do help the learners especially the visual learners to understand the plot of the story better. Visual learners love pictures. For them, a picture is worth a thousand words. They can create strong pictures in their mind when they read. Furthermore, according to Confucius's saying, "I hear and I forget. I see and I remember....", thus, with the concrete images before pupils' eyes, they tend to remember the story better. The link between the pictures and texts helps pupils to make connections, understand relationships and recall related details.

In this study, when the researcher was using the book, "The Hungry Caterpillar" with the pupils, the pupils will not remember the food which has been eaten by the caterpillar if there were no pictures given. With the aid of the pictures, the pupils are able to recall the food and state the correct amount and the sequence the food was eaten. Having the visual aids can help the children understand the texts better especially when they are reading lengthy or wordy texts.

In addition, it is reported in the findings that picture books expose readers to something they are not familiar with in their daily life. For example, the pupils could not imagine how the caterpillar eat the food as they do not get chance to see the process in real life. Perhaps they also cannot imagine how this small creature can eat food which is so much bigger than itself. So, after reading this picture book, the pupils can have a clearer view on the way the caterpillar eats food.

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