

Picture Stories in Japanese Elementary School English Classrooms

(2) Role of Narrative Picture Stories in the New Course Guidelines

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Abstract

This paper, Section 2 of the series ‘Picture Stories in Japanese Elementary School English Classrooms’, introduces the new course guidelines for elementary school English activities and classes, especially focusing on the advantages of using picture stories as a part of the curriculum. Interactive reading aloud technique as well as different types of after-reading activities will be exemplified to find the outcome differences in the communication elicited by the teacher and from and among the learners.

The present paper serves as a preliminary study leading to Section 3, which will discuss the effect of narrative picture-story use in elementary school based on both qualitative and quantitative research.

1. Introduction

The first paper in this series titled ‘Picture Stories in Japanese Elementary School English Classrooms (1) An Overview’ (Kaneko, 2017a) briefly discussed the relevant issues of the topic, including the theoretical background of introducing read-aloud activities using picture stories. It also showed that narrative picture stories in elementary schools can have a key role in encouraging children to recognize the importance of communication.

In March 2017, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) officially announced the new course guidelines for elementary school English effective from 2020. The present paper explains the details of the statement in the course guidelines on how to use picture stories and read-aloud activities. It also explores how picture stories facilitate elementary school English activities and classes, presenting an example story with different types of after-reading practices.

2. New course guidelines for elementary school English

The new MEXT course guideline for the 5th and 6th graders which comes into force in 2020 aims to promote children’s capacity to make a way to their future based on the School Education Law (1947) and the Basic Act on Education (2006). The guideline partly follows the current elementary school foreign language activities that ask educators to raise children’s ability to listen and speak. However, it also asks for a rise in the ability of the learners to think, judge and express themselves in English and emphasizes the improvement of the quality of understanding required in the current English activities as well.

Although the MEXT newly prepared the course guideline for 5th and 6th graders because English will be taught as an official subject from 2020, the 3rd and 4th graders' course guideline mostly follows what 5th and 6th graders are now learning as activities outside the curriculum.

2-1. Importance of learning English through communication

Both the 3rd and 4th graders' English activity and the 5th and 6th graders' English class course guideline (2017) ask learners to be more interactive and become autonomous. Even if the learners have enough knowledge of vocabulary and grammar, they often miss out on various chances to communicate with people of different cultural backgrounds, appreciate their cultures, and learn how to communicate to understand each other. The following section explains the results of some trial lesson projects administered by the MEXT, which contributed to the inclusion of picture book use in the new course guidelines.

2-2. Findings from the trial lesson projects

The MEXT started a project, assigning several elementary schools in various areas in Japan to do trial educational projects in English starting from 3rd graders up to 6th graders to make textbooks to be used at those levels. At the completion of the project, with reflection, it was found that although repeated vocabulary writing practice did not bring much growth in children's motivation to learn English, 'small talks' by teachers and 'module activities' improved their motivation. Also, listening to stories while looking at picture books followed by comprehension questions and answers based on the story were especially attractive for the learners. The results lead to the use of picture stories for 3rd and 4th grade activities as well as 5th and 6th grades.

Report on the Attempts for Improvement of Elementary School English (2016) introduces the project results by model elementary schools for English teaching, which administered a series of trial activities using picture stories to 5th and 6th graders. Their findings are:

- (1) By listening to a certain number of sentences linked together in a story, children hear English sounds, rhythm, and intonation, enabling them to understand some easy English structures unconsciously.
- (2) With the help of illustrations and some familiar words, children are able to guess the meaning of unlearned vocabulary and to follow the gist of the story.
- (3) Based on the motif of the story as well as things, nature, buildings, clothes, or lifestyles expressed in illustrations, children have chances to come into contact with different cultures and to raise their interests and concerns about different cultures.
- (4) As they work with stories specific to various countries, children become aware of different perspectives of the world and to cultural values.
- (5) When children are in 3rd grade and above, they have some interest in alphabets and the relationship between sounds and letters. By frequent repetitions after the teachers, children can read English words by themselves naturally.

- (6) Stories often carry a certain message, which encourages the development of healthy minds.

The participating teachers in Chiba prefecture also advised that teachers should keep the following issues in mind.

- (1) It is necessary to select appropriate picture stories according to the learners' interests.
- (2) The more the illustrations give hints to help learners understand the story, the better. Too many words on the page are not suitable.
- (3) When the teacher does not have confidence in reading the story, it is better to use CDs or ask ALT (Assistant Language Teacher) or someone who is proficient in English to help.
- (4) It is preferable to let the learners naturally use the English expressions in the picture book through repeated sessions with the children listening as the teacher reads aloud. Interactions between the teacher and the learners about the story will also bring the expected effect.
- (5) It is effective to let the learners guess what will happen on the next page and ask what happened on the last page to encourage frequent interactions between the teacher and the learners.

To summarize the findings of the trial lessons, the participating teachers conclude that picture stories raised the learners' self-esteem as they can make themselves understood in English and become more active in expressing themselves in English. One concern is that since teachers need to act, ask questions, and engage the learners fully with the story, they need repeated training sessions on how to teach.

Towards developing better ways to promote students' ability to interact and gain skills to become autonomous learners using picture stories in the classroom, the following sections introduce the requirements and recommendations newly added in the course guidelines in using picture stories.

2-3. Role of picture stories in English activities for 3rd and 4th graders

The following excerpt is my translation from the course guideline for elementary school 3rd and 4th graders' English (2017) regarding the purpose of doing activities.

Based on the way foreign language communication forms a view of the world through listening and speaking activities, English classes aim to cultivate the learners' capacity and ability in language use, which are the foundation for communication.

The guideline further states the importance of learning English, by using it in communication so that the learners improve their ability to think, judge and to express themselves in English. Language plays important roles that support children's learning. Some children may not find communication in English easy. However, by listening to the teacher very carefully or trying to make themselves understood by their friends, they can learn the importance and enjoyment of communicating with each other using English. In this way, the learners will consolidate the

foundation of the English language together with their native language. It is also essential for the learners while in this stage to gain a good impression of background cultures around the world.

It is extremely important to learn through using English in various activities, rather than from the teachers' explanation about English. It is also important for the children to find communicating in English fun at this stage.

Children will be able to develop their ability to think, to judge and to express themselves by receiving definite tasks to listen to and question or respond to the teacher. It is very important to note that the new course guidelines starting from elementary school up to senior high school divide the macro skills in English into five areas; listening, presenting, interacting, reading and writing. Based on the present four areas, listening, speaking, reading and writing, the speaking skill is divided into two, presenting and interacting in order to strengthen the learners' productive proficiency. Among the five areas, the elementary school 3rd and 4th graders are going to practice mainly listening and responding in easy English, for example, "How are you?" "Fine, thank you." or "The A card, please." "Here you are." They also try easy presentations, for example, telling their friends what they like or what they want using pictures, photos or realia. The situations most often practiced are, for example, family, neighborhood, school, or children's play. Greetings, self-introduction, shopping, meals, and giving directions are usually the themes of the interactions.

The course guideline also recommends teaching English rhythm through chants and songs. It also recommends listening to native English speakers about their own cultures looking at pictures. The guide also states it is useful to let the learners listen to a story by guessing what will happen next or what word will come next in order to give the learners autonomy. In addition, various performances including plays are suggested to be effective, because children usually enjoy acting out the story themselves.

2-4. Role of picture stories in English classes for 5th and 6th graders

In the English class course guidelines for 5th and 6th graders, the purpose of doing activities is written in the same way as stated in the guideline for 3rd and 4th graders as shown below:

Based on the way foreign language communication forms a view of the world through listening, reading, speaking and writing activities, English classes aim to cultivate the learners' capacity and ability in language use, which are the foundation for communication.

The only difference is that in the 3rd and 4th grades, the teaching purpose incorporates only listening and speaking, while in the 5th and 6th grades, the course guideline emphasizes the additional skills, reading and writing. The children are expected to read English words and phrases, which they repeatedly pre-heard in 3rd and 4th grades, by combining the English

sounds and letters, and guessing the meanings in new contexts.

The ability to understand the outline of a short talk or story with some visual cues, for example, illustrations or pictures, will be attained at this level. Children learn basic phrases, for example, “look at”, “stand up”, “be good at”, and idiomatic expressions like “I see.” and “You’re welcome”. With respect to reading activities, they also learn how to identify words and basic phrases, which have been orally pre-practiced repeatedly.

The course guideline also gives special attention to providing various situations for using English in the familiar environment of the learners, for example, family, school or neighborhood. It also focuses on teaching typical expressions used in greetings, self-introductions, shopping, dining, and so on. In addition, the guideline asks teachers to practice English expressions with different functions, such as facilitating communication, e.g. back-channeling, conveying feeling, fact or opinion, or prompting the children to respond to the teacher’s words with actions, e.g. asking questions, a favor or ordering.

Since children know how to enjoy making rhythms because they sing songs and practice percussion instruments in music classes and because they learn how to express what they feel, imagine or see in arts and crafts classes, they are sure to be interested in listening and reading storybooks with pictures. In addition, all schools have a library, with many storybooks on the shelves, and the children read many stories in Japanese language class, too. Considering these favorable environments for using picture storybooks in teaching, why do we not use picture stories for teaching English?

In the next chapter, based on the statements and recommendations supporting the use of picture stories in the new course guidelines, I will present three model-teaching plans I have created for after-reading activities, mainly focusing on 3rd and 4th grades.

3. Model teaching plans for using picture stories in classrooms

In preparing a teaching plan using picture stories in classrooms, teachers often wonder what syllabus they should follow, because there are quite different types of syllabi in teaching English.

In 3-1, I will describe several popular syllabus designs. The difference between incidental learning and deliberate learning will also be discussed here because the difference is currently an issue in SLA and is relevant to the use of picture stories in the classroom. Then in 3-2, following the three popular syllabi, I will introduce three picture-story teaching plans and after-reading teaching plans using the picture story.

3-1. Types of syllabi

Nunan (1988) explains the importance of the role of a syllabus. He explains that a syllabus shows what contents and in what order they are taught. Robinson (2009) also starts his chapter on “Syllabus design” in *The Handbook of Language Teaching* edited by Long and Doughty

(2009) with the statement that “Syllabus design is based essentially on a decision about the ‘units’ of classroom activity, and the ‘sequence’ in which they are to be performed” (p.294, ll.5–6). He continues as follows:

Theoretical rationales, of course, should be concerned with issues of how the L2 is internalized and learned, and also accessed and acted upon, since it is the cognitive processes leading to learning and successful performance, as they take place in specific pedagogic contexts that the syllabus is intended to promote. (p.294, ll.23–26)

Robinson (2009) categorizes the syllabus designs in two upper-order categories, traditional and contemporary. A short explanation of syllabi categories based on Robinson’s work follows, with some lower-order syllabi categories often used in Japan.

3-1-1. Traditional approaches

Grammatical syllabi

A grammatical syllabus is based on the structures of a language. Grammatical structures are presented according to level of difficulty, i.e. complexity, not the frequency in use. Developmental sequences and corpus analysis in SLA research show that the order of second language acquisition does not occur in parallel with the degree of complexity and accuracy of grammatical structures. However, the grammatical syllabus is still most common in published materials, mostly because it is the easiest type of syllabus to sequence.

Notional-functional syllabi

This type of syllabi is specified in terms of “notions,” for example, spatial, temporal or evaluative features of real-life situations. A notional syllabus further presents language “functions,” such as expressing attitudes, getting things done, or socializing. Brockett (2000) uses this approach to set standards for Japanese language instruction and recommends introducing “students to structural pattern in the context of their communicative functions and concepts within the specific topic areas” (2000, p.19). For example, following the notional-functional syllabus, a lesson might be about how to buy something at a shop. The notion is shopping and one of its functions might be asking prices. It is often the case that functions are naturally expressed by specific grammatical patterns or common expressions, such as “how much is this?” in shopping.

3-1-2. Contemporary syllabi

The structural syllabus

This syllabus is based on the idea proposed by Ellis (1993, 1997) that explicit, declarative knowledge of L2 grammar can influence the development of implicit knowledge through communicative activity. Ellis argues explicit grammatical knowledge works for learners as a production monitor as well as for noticing the gap between their own production and a target model.

The lexical syllabus

Based on large-scale corpora of spoken and written language use, Willis (1990) focused on

words and collocation frequencies. He supports the idea that lexical syllabus indicates how the structures which make up the syllabus should be identified. Robison (2009) explains that the lexical syllabus is “a language focused synthetic syllabus, but with some control given to the learner about which forms to attend to and focus on” (p.300, ll.13–15) based on the guide from the corpora.

The task syllabus

In contrast to a structural syllabus, the task syllabus is composed of real-world activity involving language use identified on the basis of a needs analysis (Long, 2005). Long (2000) points out that meaning is primary, there is a goal that needs to be worked on, and the activity is outcome-evaluated in Task-based Learning (TBL). Thus, the students are free of language control and they will have a much more varied exposure to language. The primary focus of classroom activity in TBL is on meaning, not on form. Therefore, the main advantages of TBL are that language is used for a genuine purpose, allowing real communication to take place.

3-1-3. Synthetic and deliberate versus analytic and incidental

Looking back the syllabi that have been dominating the English teaching, all of them except the task syllabus are synthetic. Wilkins (1976) states that in synthetic syllabi, “Different parts of language are taught separately step by step.... At any one time the learner is being exposed to a deliberately limited sample of language. The language that is mastered in one unit of learning is added to that which has been acquired in the preceding units” (1976, p.2).

On the other hand, the task syllabus is analytic. Wilkins (1976) explains that “Analytic approaches ... are organized in terms of the purposes for which people are learning language and the kinds of language performance that are necessary to meet those purposes” (1976, p.13). Long and Crookes (1993) also explain that analytic syllabuses are those that present the whole chunks of the target language at a time without linguistic control.

In reviewing the synthetic syllabi and analytic syllabi, it is also worth knowing whether the learners learn better deliberately or incidentally. Some syllabi aim at deliberate learning and others naturally provide an environment that supports incidental learning. Picture book reading in English classes, which is the focus of the present paper, can create many opportunities for analytic and incidental learning to take place.





Deliberate learning is planned and intended. It is effective when the teacher wants to teach something specific, especially the grammar, structure, vocabulary, phrases and so on. On the other hand, incidental learning is accidental, indirect, unplanned and always happens in the context of another activity or experience. ‘Small talk’ is a good example that provides plenty of chances for incidental learning. The main advantage of TBL is that language is used for a genuine purpose, to exchange meaning, so that real communication takes place. Having said as this, TBL in a synthetic syllabus can still enable deliberate learning if the syllabus is planned to elicit target forms of language frequently.

In the next section, teaching plans following grammatical, notional-functional and TBL syllabi for deliberate and incidental learning will be presented to show how picture stories are used as teaching materials in English classrooms in elementary schools in Japan.

3-2. Picture-story teaching plan and after-reading activities

The title of the story is *Where's My Tennis Ball?* originally written by Kaneko (2017b) and illustrated for use by children at an elementary level in the form of playful dialogue. I will present an example of an interactive story reading teaching plan first and then after-reading activities following a grammar syllabus, a notional-functional syllabus and a TBL syllabus.

3-2-1. The story

| Where's My Tennis Ball? | |
|---|---|
| <p>Where's my tennis ball? Do you know, Joe?</p> <p>No, I don't. I've no idea.</p> <p>There was a tennis ball on the grass yesterday. Was it your tennis ball, Lisa?</p> <p>I'll look for the tennis ball on the grass. There's no tennis ball on the grass!</p> |  |
| <p>Where's my tennis ball? Do you know, Emma?</p> <p>No, I don't. I've no idea.</p> <p>There was a tennis ball under the bench this morning. Was it your tennis ball, Lisa?</p> <p>I'll look for the tennis ball under the bench. There's no tennis ball under the bench!</p> |  |
| <p>Where's my tennis ball? Do you know, Ben?</p> <p>No, I don't. I've no idea.</p> <p>There was a tennis ball near the swings 10 minutes ago. Was it your tennis ball, Lisa?</p> <p>I'll look for the tennis ball near the swings. There's no tennis ball near the swings!</p> |  |
| <p>Where's my tennis ball? Do you know, Lucy?</p> <p>Meow, meow. Prr, prr.</p> <p>Here it is! Here it is! Here's my tennis ball in the fountain!</p> |  |

3-2-2. Interactive story reading teaching plan

The following teaching plan is based on Mary Roche (2015). Roche recommends interactive reading aloud, which demands a lot of engagement between the teacher and the learners. The teacher needs to read the story very carefully so that s/he is ready to ask questions to start the interaction with the learners. Careful planning and timetabling are also important. However, the most important thing for the teacher to keep in mind is the “open-mindedness and a willingness to listen carefully to children” (2015, p.63).

Example of Interactive Story Reading: “Where’s My Tennis Ball?”

Introduction

- T: Do you like sports? Ss: Yes.
T: What sport do you like? How about tennis? Ss: Yes.
T: Do you know Kei Nishikori? Ss: Yes.
T: He is Japanese and one of the top tennis players in the world. Do you agree? Ss: Yes.
T: Do you play tennis? Do you know how to play? Ss: Yes.
T: What do you use to play tennis, bat or racket? Ss: Racket.
T: What else do you need to play tennis? Ss: Whm....
T: Do you need a tennis ball? Ss: Yes.
T: I play tennis, too. (T adds some short talks according to the learners’ English levels.) I play tennis on the tennis court. (Showing the picture card of Lisa, T continues.) Lisa plays tennis. The tennis court is in the park near her house.
T: This is the park near Lisa’s house. (T explains showing the picture cards.) This is the tennis court. You see green grass, a big bench, small swings, and a water fountain. It looks fun to play tennis here. Now, Lisa is in trouble today. What’s her trouble? Can you guess? Well, please listen to me carefully. (T starts reading the first section of the story changing the voice for Lisa and Joe.)

The first three sections

- The interaction continues by asking children various questions in the context in the first three sections as follows:
What is Lisa looking for?
Why is she looking for her tennis ball?
Who is Joe (Emma, Ben)? (There is no correct answer. T elicits different answers from the children.)
Did Lisa go to the park to check if her tennis ball is there?
Did she find the tennis ball?
What is Lisa going to do next?

The last section

- T: Who is Lucy? Is she Lisa’s friend? Ss: A cat.
T: Yes, Lucy is a cat. How do you know? Ss: Prr, prr.
T: Great. A cat says Prr, prr. Lucy is a smart cat, isn’t she? Ss: Yes.
T: Do you like cats? Ss: Yes./No.
T: (T asks to the Ss who said “No.”) What animal do you like? Ss: Dog.
T: (T gives children corrective feedback by recasts.) Oh, you like dogs. I like both cats and dogs. How about you, ...? (T asks the same question to as many children as possible.)
T: (T elicits children’s critical thinking by asking questions.) By the way, where were Lucy and Lisa when Lisa asked about the tennis ball? Were they at home? Were they at the park?
T: Look at the last picture. I think Lucy seems very small. The tennis ball looks large. Do you think so, too?
T: Can you guess how old Lucy is?

3-2-3. After-reading teaching plans

In this section, three example teaching plans for after-reading activities based on the different syllabi are presented.

(1) Grammatical syllabus (synthetic, mostly deliberate)

Theme: Past and present tenses

T: Listen carefully. (The teacher reads the sentences and points to the word “past” or “present” on the board to show whether it’s about the past or present.)

| | | |
|---|------|---------|
| There was a tennis ball on the grass yesterday. | past | present |
| Was there a tennis ball on the grass? | past | present |
| Yes. There was a tennis ball on the grass. | past | present |
| Look! There’s a tennis ball on the grass. | past | present |
| Is there a tennis ball on the grass? | past | present |
| No. There’s a tennis ball on the grass! | past | present |
| Where was the tennis ball? | past | present |
| It was on the grass. | past | present |
| Where is the tennis ball? | past | present |
| It’s on the grass! | past | present |

T: Now, please look at this picture and answer my questions. (T shows a picture of a notebook on the desk titled ‘yesterday’ and another picture of a desk without a notebook titled ‘now’.)

There was a notebook on the desk yesterday. Was there a notebook on the desk?

Ss: Yes.

T: There was no textbook on the desk yesterday. Was there a textbook on the desk?

Ss: No. There was a notebook on the desk.

T: Is there a notebook on the desk now?

Ss: No. There’s no notebook on the desk.

T: Look! There’s a fly on the glass. (T shows a picture of a fly on the glass, titled ‘now.’) Is there a fly on the grass?

Ss: No. There’s a fly on the glass.

T: Where was the fly yesterday? (T shows a picture of a fly on the grass titled ‘yesterday.’)

Ss: It was on the grass.

T: Where is the fly now?

Ss: It’s on the glass.

(2) The notional-functional syllabus (synthetic, deliberate)

Theme: Asking questions and replying about places

Part 1

T: Listen. This is my room. I have a desk, a computer, a calendar, a bookcase, a sofa and a lamp in my room.

(T shows a picture of his/her room without furniture and lists the things he/she has there showing stickers of the 6 items.)

T: There’s a desk near the window and a calendar on the wall.

(Talking to the students, T puts the stickers on the picture.)

T: Now I have a bookcase on the desk. Can anyone put the bookcase on my desk?

S1: I will.

T: Thank you. And there is another thing on the desk. Look. (T puts the computer sticker on the desk.) Tell me, everyone.

Ss: There is a computer on the desk.

T: Is there a lamp by the window? No. (T puts the lamp sticker near the sofa.) Is there a lamp under the desk? No. Where is the lamp?

Ss: It's near the sofa.

Part 2

T: Now, this is our kitchen. There are many things in the kitchen. Where is the calendar? Is it on the wall or on the table?

Ss: It's on the table.

T: Where's my apron? Do you know?

Ss: No.

T: It's in the box on the table. (T takes off the sticker top of the box and takes out the sticker of an apron.) Then, where's the fridge?

Ss: There's no fridge in the kitchen.

T: There is a fridge in the kitchen. It's behind the curtain. (T takes off the sticker curtain and takes out the sticker of the fridge from behind the curtain.)

Part 3

Students have a picture of their own study room, which has no furniture. They have stickers of the furniture and arrange them on the picture before the following conversation.

S1: I have a desk, a PC and a chair in my room.

S2: Where is your desk? Is it beside the window?

S1: No. It's in the center.

S3: Do you have TV in your room?

S1: No, I don't. I watch TV on the PC.

It's possible to increase the level of this activity into an information gap activity. Student A makes his/her own room arrangement using stickers and explains what he/she has in the room and student B puts the appropriate stickers in the appropriate places on the original picture of the study room.

(3) TBL syllabus (analytic, basically incidental)

Theme: Finding something lost

T: (T starts short talks.) I don't see my pen. Where's my pen? Do you know?

S1: No, I don't. I've no idea.

T: Where is my pen? I left the pen around here. OK, I found it. It was under the notebook. (T explains that the students' task is to find the purse the other groups are trying to find.)

Procedure 1

Students make 4 groups of 4. The following students will be told by the T where red, blue, green, and yellow purses are hidden. The students will not say where the purses are except when they are asked.

The red purse: Group 2 student C, Group 3 student D, Group 4 student A

The blue purse: Group 1 student B, Group 3 student A, Group 4 student B

The green purse: Group 1 student C, Group 2 student D, Group 4 student C

The yellow purse: Group 1 student D, Group 2 student A, Group 3 student B

Procedure 2

The goal for the students in each group is to find the purse as soon as possible by communicating first within the group and then with students in the other groups. Students A, B, C, and D in each group will silently read each card where they can find their tasks.

Group 1

A: You forgot where you left your red purse. Ask B, C, and D if they saw the purse. After you ask all the members of your group, you can ask the students in the other groups, too.

B: You don't know where the red purse is. You saw a blue purse.

C: You don't know where the red purse is. You saw a green purse.

D: You don't know where the red purse is. You saw a yellow purse.

Group 2

A: You forgot where you left your blue purse. Ask B, C, and D if they saw the purse. After you ask all the members of your group, you can ask the students in the other groups, too.

B: You don't know where the blue purse is. You saw a red purse.

C: You don't know where the blue purse is. You saw a green purse.

D: You don't know where the blue purse is. You saw a yellow purse.

Group 3

A: You forgot where you left your green purse. Ask B, C, and D if they saw the purse. After you ask all the members of your group, you can ask the students in the other groups, too.

B: You don't know where the green purse is. You saw a red purse.

C: You don't know where the green purse is. You saw a blue purse.

D: You don't know where the green purse is. You saw a yellow purse.

Group 4

A: You forgot where you left your yellow purse. Ask B, C, and D if they saw the purse. After you ask all the members of your group, you can ask the students in the other groups, too.

B: You don't know where the yellow purse is. You saw a red purse.

C: You don't know where the yellow purse is. You saw a blue purse.

D: You don't know where the yellow purse is. You saw a green purse.

4. Comparison of the teaching plans based on the three syllabi

The two types of syllabi, synthetic and analytical, and the two types of learning, deliberate and incidental, complement each other. Although the emphasis needed on one or the other will depend on the student's knowledge and interest, considering the purpose of teaching English activities in the 3rd and 4th grades in elementary schools, an incidental learning environment, whether synthetic or analytical, seems to be preferable. Even in the 5th and 6th grade English classes, an environment that supports incidental learning may prove to be a better choice.

So far, analytical, deliberate learning has been mainstream in Japan. As a result, learners seem to attain a certain level of knowledge of English vocabulary or grammatical items. If the focus continues to be on the same ways of teaching, the learners' communication ability may

not change very much even if English is taught from a younger age. This is because, given the ways English has been taught in Japan up till now, the learners' communication ability, especially the productive interactional skills, does not show much progress. By focusing more on synthetic, incidental learning, it is hoped that the learners at elementary school at least, will follow the order of using English for communication first, and then start to analyze the English language later. As a result, the TBL syllabus is most recommended for use in elementary school English classes in Japan in order to promote the learners' interactional ability and their progress towards autonomy, which will be gained both through interactive story reading and after-reading sessions based on a synthetic syllabus which encourages incidental learning.

5. Summary

In this paper, firstly, why the new teaching guide recommends picture stories to be used in elementary school classrooms is explained. Then the paper states that the purpose of starting to teach English from the 3rd grades in elementary schools in Japan is to promote students' ability to interact and gain skills towards becoming autonomous learners. It also shows that the new teaching guide expects teachers to teach how to communicate using English, not the knowledge of English language. In this sense, using picture stories in elementary school English is highly recommended. Since there are several different types of syllabus that could include after-story-reading activities, three types of frequently used syllabi, grammatical, notional-functional, and TBL syllabi are considered. Comparing the three, it is concluded that the TBL syllabus, which enhances incidental, analytical learning is deemed most powerful in terms of promoting the learners' ability to interact and paving the way to the long-term goal of becoming autonomous users of English.

Whether or not TBL actually elicits analytical and incidental learning and how it does or does not so will be shown by collecting actual learning data from classrooms. This will be the topic of the last paper in this series.

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