

How to Use Picture Tour Method to teach Picture books in Primary School

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Abstract

The English Curriculum Standard for Compulsory Education(2022 edition) points out that teachers can break through the constraints of traditional books, supplementing other related materials like picture books and videos etc. Picture tour as an approach to teaching picture books, can help students understand the story so that to cultivate their reading literacy. Teachers are supposed know how to use this method to teach picture books.

Keywords

Picture Book; Picture Tour; English Teaching

1. Introduction

Picture book teaching is becoming a trend in primary school English education. Picture books are engaging for students, encouraging them to read and fostering their interest and habits in English reading. Additionally, authentic English expressions and rich content provide students with a better language learning experience. Compared to traditional English textbooks, English picture books are complete works, including all elements of a book, such as the cover, title page, and author information. This helps students develop a concept of textual structure. Moreover, there are many kinds of picture books. They have abundant content, lively plots and they are rich in contexts. Students have sufficient room to imagine. In addition, the vivid character features and culture values benefit students to sense the cultural discrepancy. They can also learn how to find out, analyze and solve the problems. As picture tour books have so many merits, more and more scholars recommend it to English teaching area. There are many ways to carry out picture tour teaching. Wang mentioned five ways to teach picture books: picture tour, sustained silent reading, story maps, jigsaw reading and reading circle. In this text, the writer discuss how to use picture tour to teaching picture books.

2. Picture tour

The picture tour teaching method uses images as information cues, leveraging vivid and colorful pictures to capture students' attention and stimulate their interest in reading. By using visual stimuli, it activates students' prior knowledge, helping them make reasonable predictions about the story's direction and key plot points. Through this method, students gain a general understanding of the story and its critical moments while learning to interpret and articulate language expressions, thereby improving their reading and speaking skills. Specifically, picture tour teaching takes picture as reading material, by using pictures to present the key information in the story. The teacher guides students to observe pictures, imagine and predict the content.

2.1. The Essence of Picture Tour

The picture tour method was first proposed by New Zealand educational psychologist Marie Clay in the 1970s. While studying children's reading development, Clay found that many children lacked a holistic understanding of texts. She suggested that guiding children to observe and analyze the pictures in picture books could enhance their comprehension of the story and textual content. Before reading the text, teachers guide students to examine the illustrations page by page, discussing details, predicting plot developments, and connecting the content to their own experiences. This approach aims to activate students' background knowledge, spark their interest in reading, and prepare them for subsequent text-based reading.

The picture tour process resembles parent-child reading, fostering emotional connections and creating a relaxed reading atmosphere. At its core, picture tour is a form of shared reading, where teachers and students collaboratively construct meaning. It employs question chains to encourage students to observe, predict, reflect, and share personal experiences. Throughout the picture tour, students learn language and construct meaning by identifying, analyzing, and solving problems, thereby developing their reading literacy.

3. Teaching Steps of the Picture Tour Method

3.1 Analyzing Students and Teaching Materials

Before conducting a picture tour lesson, teachers should first assess students' current proficiency levels, including their phonetics, grammar, vocabulary, listening, speaking, and reading abilities. Based on this assessment, suitable picture books should be selected, and questions should be designed accordingly.

Additionally, the teaching materials must be analyzed. The picture books students read primarily include fiction and informational books. Teachers should evaluate the book's theme, plot, cultural knowledge, language and grammar points, and the learning objectives to be achieved. Considerations should also include whether the book will engage students, activate their prior knowledge, integrate new knowledge

with existing knowledge, and relate to their real-life experiences.

3.2 Designing Questions for the Picture Tour

Zhao points out that questions in picture tour has the characters of logic, integrality, entertainment and thought orientation. During the picture tour, two types of questions can be posed: big questions and small questions.

- **Big Questions—Exploring the Theme of the Picture Book**

Big questions are primarily used at the beginning and end of the lesson, often introduced on the cover page. Students observe the cover and answer questions, which help them understand the main characters and plot while making predictions about the story. These questions also teach reading strategies, such as asking about the book's title and author, helping young learners become familiar with the structure of picture books.

- **Small Questions—Examining Plot Logic and Details**

Small questions are integrated throughout the picture tour. They typically begin with interrogative words and form a chain of questions to guide students in observing and reflecting on the images. Small questions can be divided into factual and emotional questions. Factual questions (e.g. What are they doing? What is this?) prompt students to answer based on the pictures, encouraging observation and critical thinking.

Emotional questions (e.g. Do you think they are happy? What is his feeling? Do you like it?) require students to delve deeper into the story, perceive its emotional significance, and respond accordingly.

3.3 Leveraging the Educational Value of Picture Books to Cultivate Core Competencies

The English Curriculum Standard for Compulsory Education (2022 Edition) emphasizes that English courses should develop students' core competencies, including thinking skills, language proficiency, learning ability, and cultural awareness. Every picture book has a theme, and teachers should fully explore its thematic significance to maximize its educational value. The characters in picture books have kinds of images. Teachers can guide students to analyze these characters and form right values.

4. Teaching Practice

Here we take the picture book *The Lion and The Mouse* as an example. The story revolves around a lion who spares a mouse, and later, the mouse returns the favor by freeing the lion from a hunter's net. Through this story, students learn the importance of helping others, kindness, and not underestimating those who seem weaker, fostering values of solidarity, friendship, and mutual support.

Before students read the book, the teacher first guides students to observe the cover, which has a lion and a mouse. The teacher asks students, what can you see from the cover? Can you guess what happen between them? What is the title of this book? Who writes this book? Then the teacher guides students to tour this book? When the mouse and the lion comes out, the teacher ask who this is. When the lion catch the mouse, the teacher asks what the lion is doing. In order to highlight the difference between the lion and the mouse and prepare for the later plots, the teacher asks students who is big, who is little and why the lion laughs at the mouse. Then it comes to part two. The lion is caught by the net. The teacher asks students what happens to the lion. Then the mouse sits up and sets the lion free. After the mouse sits the lion free, the teacher asks students: Does the lion laugh at the mouse again? The answer is definitely no. Students can see the change of the lion' s attitude and experience the value of this story. After finish reading the book, the teacher asks students what they have learned from the book. Students can talk about their thoughts freely. Their thoughts mostly surrounds the theme: always help others.

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