



**Cross-Cultural Communication**  
Vol. 14, No. 3, 2018, pp. 14-21  
DOI:10.3968/10619

ISSN 1712-8358[Print]  
ISSN 1923-6700[Online]  
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[www.cscanada.org](http://www.cscanada.org)

## Story as a Vehicle to Promote EFL Learners' English

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Received 5 July 2018; accepted 18 September 2018

Published online 26 September 2018

### Abstract

With the increase of the interest in foreign language teaching at early stages over the last few years in China, more and more researchers and teachers devote to teaching English to young learners. They try to find out the most effective way or approach to teach English to young learners and English story teaching is one of them. The paper reviews previous research on English story as a vehicle to promote young learners English as a foreign language in China and the supply with the criteria of selecting a story for young English learner.

**Key words:** Story; Vehicle; English as a foreign language (EFL)

Duan, J., & Sun, Y. H. (2018). Story as a Vehicle to Promote EFL Learners' English. *Cross-Cultural Communication*, 14(3), 14-21. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/ccc/article/view/10619> DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/10619>

The interest in foreign language teaching at early stages has been increasing over the last few years in China. For example, not only students of Grade 1 in primary schools, but those in kindergartens begin their English learning. Many training agencies, such as New Ladder Education, EF Education, Uncle Sam Kids English, Disney English, Leap English and Mover English, are devoted to teaching foreign languages to young learners. Besides the textbooks adopted in primary schools, other English teaching and learning materials, such as Oxford English, Good English, Hongen English and Pop Kids English, are popular among young learners as the supplementary English learning resources.

The boom of young learners' English teaching and learning is supported by the theory of Critical Period. According to some scholars, as in first language acquisition, there is a critical period in second (SLA) or foreign language acquisition (FLA). If learners do not start learning a second or foreign language before this period, they may have difficulty in learning it or at least they cannot learn it as well as those who learn it before their puberty would. For example, when children move to a new country, they will pick up a new language easily and get a native accent. These children perform much better than their parents who have passed their puberty. However, experiments with English speakers learning Dutch as a second language indicates that adolescents (from age 12 to 15) did best in most parts both in the beginning and the end of the experiment; the adult (from age 18 to 60) was the second best; the children (from age 3 to 10) outperformed the other two groups only in story telling at the end of the program (Lightbown & Spada, 2005).

Although researchers hold different views on the excellence of children and adults' SLA in a certain period of time, they all agree that the more time learners spend on languages, the more proficient they would be. Wang (2009) points out:

“Since the 1990s, there has been a rapid expansion of programmes in Teaching English to Young Learner (TEYL) across the world, mainly as a response to the ever increasing competitiveness in the world.... It is obvious that improving proficiency of English has become one of the national strategies for many governments to respond to this more globalised world (Graddol, 2006, p.277).

Young learners are enthusiastic and active. They are less anxious and more open to different cultures than older learners. These characteristics of young learners contribute to their learning of foreign languages. However, early age alone does not automatically guarantee success. The quality of teaching and teaching materials, the amount of

time, the chance to use the language and other factors are also important. For this reason, the appropriate teaching method and teaching materials should be adopted in language courses.

Researchers and teachers have been trying to find out the most effective way or approach to teach second and foreign languages to young learners, such methods including grammar-translation method, direct method, audio-lingual method, total physical response (TPR) and many other teaching methods and approaches. These methods and approaches have been proved successful for different purposes. For example, during World War II, the audio-lingual method was an effective way to train soldiers in the American armies. However, most of those methods and approaches are appropriate for teaching adult language learners or teaching English as a second (ESL) or foreign language (EFL) in the target language contexts. What researchers and teachers are concerned about recently is how to teach young learners foreign languages in their native land.

In China, English instruction in primary schools began in 1993. After nearly 20 years' practice, English teaching in primary schools is still faced many problems. Due to the influence of the traditional teaching mode and test-oriented educational system, some teachers pay more attention to language skills and knowledge. Students are asked to memorize vocabulary and sentence patterns, but they dare not communicate with others and do not know how to connect their linguistic knowledge with the real situation. Most students, especially those in rural areas, only learn English in class. What they are learning seems to have no connection with their reality. For example, few of them know what "hamburger" or "spaghetti" in their textbook is and it is difficult for them to understand why there are so many rooms in English because they sleep, have dinners and meet friends in the same room. These different cultures and lifestyles add the difficulty of English learning. Many students show little interest in English because of monotonous teaching methods, inappropriate teaching materials, different background information and some other factors. That is, they are forced rather than motivated to learn. To arouse students' interests, teachers try to make English class full of fun. For example, teachers plan many games or teach English songs and chants. The chance is that English classes are turned into game classes or singing classes. Students are very happy, but they learn little English. The New National English Curriculum Standards point out "according to primary school students' physical and psychological development and needs, the main task of the English curriculum for the phase of primary school is to develop students' interests, self-confidence and positive attitude towards learning English; to cultivate their language sense and enable the acquisition of good pronunciation and intonation and to develop their preliminary ability to use English in daily exchange and to lay a good basis for

further study" (Wang, 2003, p.69). This indicates that both young learners' affective needs and language proficiency are important in English learning. Therefore, the best way to TEYL is to develop their interests and positive attitude towards English learning and to improve their English proficiency at the same time.

English stories, as "one of the most powerful tools for surrounding the young learner with language" (Pesola, 1991, p.340), can be used to provide successful language learning. First, young children need concrete experiences and love to name objects, define things and learn about objects in their own world. They also have vivid imaginations and like stories of fantasy. They learn best through oral language, therefore, they love being told stories with a solid beginning, middle and end (Murray & Christison, 2011). Second, children learn best through discovery and experimentation. They would be more motivated in a playful and relaxed context. Stories allow for such a process to take place. In addition, making and acting out the stories engage children in cooperative and team learning. They encourage interaction and provide opportunities for real communication by bridging the gap between the classroom and the real world.

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## 1. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR STORY TEACHING

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### 1.1 Input Hypothesis

The Input Hypothesis is central to Krashen's SLA theories. Krashen (1985) first distinguished the term "acquisition" and "learning". "Acquisition" is a subconscious and intuitive process of constructing the system of a language just as what we do when we get our first language, while by "learning" we attend to form, figure out the rules and are aware of our own process just as what most adults do when they learn their second language. They are two accesses for learners to internalize the target language and the "acquisition" access is believed to be a better one. However, acquisition may occur only when one is exposed to the "comprehensible input". Krashen brought forward the concept of "i + 1": learners' current level of competence is "i" and the next level is "i + 1". It means what language learners are exposed to should be neither too difficult nor so close to their current stage so that they can understand most of it but still be challenged to make progress. Learners would understand the language with the help of context, including extra-linguistic information, knowledge of the world and previously acquired linguistic competence.

Stories are interesting and meaningful and composed of a large amount of vocabulary and repetitive structures. If stories which are suitable and slightly higher than learners' current language level are chosen

as the teaching materials, it is helpful for learners to get more comprehensible input. Even though some of the words and structures are out of the learner's current level, they can guess the meaning with the aid of the context. Therefore, when selecting stories, the teacher should consider students' language proficiency and their prior knowledge, including both the language and the culture. The content should be readable and comprehensible and it is better if the book has many colourful pictures to help learners guess the meaning of new words and predict the following plots based on their prior knowledge and the context.

### 1.2 Affective Filter Hypothesis

According to Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1985), various affective factors, such as motivation, self-confidence, anxiety and many other factors, play an important role in SLA. The affective filter is a kind of mental block. Lack of motivation, low self-confidence and debilitating anxiety would raise the filter and form the mental block and thus prevent learners from receiving the input. On the contrary, when learners are highly motivated and with low anxiety, the "filter" will be "down", and the Comprehensible Input would reach the Language Acquisition Device (LAD). The affective filter controls how much input the learners receive and how much input is converted into output. Therefore, learners with high motivation, self-confidence and low anxiety have low filters and would obtain plenty of input. On the contrary, those with low motivation, self-confidence but high anxiety have high filter and they would let in little input.

From the above, we can see that low affective filter plus comprehensible input "i+1" is the best way to acquire the target language. Therefore, language teachers should help students to discard their psychological barriers such as anxiety, being too shy to speak and other similar behaviors. Only when students have gotten rid of this kind of psychological barriers and their affective filter are lowered, can they feel at ease in their foreign language learning. An interesting English story would arouse learners' interest, reduce their anxiety and thus enhance their language ability. In the process of listening to or reading the story, learners would be attracted by the funny characters, the interesting plot and the vivid description; and they would be involved in the events and forget their anxiety. In role-plays, students select the role they like; if one of them has difficulty in playing the role, others would like to help him/her in order to give a good performance. This will reduce the students' fear especially those who are shy or at a low level of English proficiency.

### 1.3 Schema Theory

The concept of schema was first put forward by the German philosopher Kant. He believes that there is a link

that connects the concept in the mind and the object in the world. German psychologist Bartlett (1932, p.201) defines schema as "an active organization of past reaction or past experience". The oral or written material does not pass any meaning itself and it only provides guidance for the listeners or readers to retrieve or construct meaning from their previous learned knowledge. The previous learned knowledge is known as listeners' or readers' background knowledge and its structures are called schemata. The schemata are stored in long-term memory. When new information enters, the original schemata stored in our minds will be stimulated. In the interaction of new information and original schemata, listeners or readers will form a new structure to help them understand and remember the new information.

According to schema theory, knowledge is stored in our mind in hierarchies. That is, a schema is embedded in other schemata and contains sub-schemata itself. These schemata contain a variety of information and represent all sorts of knowledge, including natural science, human society, objects, routines, rules and much other information. The role of these schemata is to help us understand languages. When people use the existing schemata to process new information, they would evaluate whether the original schema is suitable for the new information being processed or new scenarios. For example, the schemata in children's minds would be compared with the information in the books in the process of reading. The relevant knowledge stored in the mind would be activated to look for consistency and differences between existing knowledge and the information provided in the books. If new information is inconsistent with the schema, the processing will be finished. If they do not match, repeatedly observation and re-adjustments would occur or other schemata which seem similar to the new information would be activated. The more schemata learners have in their mind, the easier they understand new information. English stories provide young learners with different schemata. There are many characters with unique features in the story, including people, animal or other figures. They would activate the role schemata in learners' mind. The colorful pictures illustrated in the books would activate their image and colour schemata. The story usually includes the beginning, the climax, and the end. In order to understand the story, children have to identify it with related schemata to predict events in the books, such as the development, change and results, and confirmed their suspicions.

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## 2. STUDIES OF STORY TEACHING TO YOUNG LEARNERS

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Story is a record of a series of events. Generally, it contains four parts: plot, setting, characters and theme.

Plot refers to the action in the story, including a series of connected happenings and their result. The background where the incidents take place is called setting, including the place, the time and social conditions. There must be living things in the story that think or act to keep the story going on. The character can be a person, a personalized animal or a plant. Themes are important in the story. Without a theme, a story would lack meaning or purpose. A story can be long or short. The short story may focus on only one incident, has a single plot, a single setting, a limited number of characters, and covers a short period of time, while in the longer one, there may be more than one incident, several settings and many characters.

Stories are popular among different groups of people because of its vivid characters, conflicts, and surprising results. Stories are recorded and transmitted in two ways: the oral and the written forms. At the very beginning, most of the stories were told from person to person. With the development of technology, stories can be recorded in a tape or CD. Storybooks, as another form of record, are also very popular. They appear in two ways: words and words plus pictures. Picture storybooks, especially those with colourful pictures, are hot among children these years. The illustrations are as important as the written text in this kind of books. Most of the picture storybooks are designed for young children. Some have basic language to help children develop their reading skills. Therefore, picture storybook have two functions for children: they are first read to young children, and then children read by themselves after acquiring their reading ability.

Stories have been used for transmitting knowledge among people for a long time, especially as a tool of teaching children. In the teaching of stories, teachers often tell some stories are relevant to the content of the curriculum or they could choose stories as the main teaching materials. The teaching process includes the collection, choosing, presentation, analyzing and evaluation of the stories. This method has been proved to be successful in the field of the first language learning and teaching. In recent years, many language teachers and researchers are devoted to the application of stories in second or foreign language teaching and learning.

## **2.1 Research on English Story Teaching in China**

The most influential theory of English story teaching method in China is Sandwich Story Methodology invented by Ji Yuhua of Xiamen University. Sandwich Story Methodology is a special method of teaching English to Chinese children. The sandwich stories are written with English words, phrases and sentences sandwiched between Chinese chunks. English words, phrases and sentences are embedded gradually and children can understand them with the help of both the Chinese context and the story plot. English words would be increasing story by story, until young learners are able to understand

stories written completely in English. Although many empirical studies were done with this method and it has been proved successful in some aspects, Sandwich Story Methodology has many problems. First, according to the Input Hypothesis, what learners are exposed to should be neither too difficult nor so close to their current stage so that they can understand most of it but still be challenged to make progress. In the sandwich story, the difficult words or phrases are translated into Chinese. Whether it is helpful in learners' English internalization is still under investigation. Second, learners develop their reading ability by guessing the meaning from the context and making full use of their reading strategies. In the learning of sandwich stories, they spare no effort in guessing or applying reading strategies for all the difficulties or unknown parts are presented in Chinese. Third, language from different regions has its unique beauty. The sandwich stories, like eating steak with chopsticks, are neither fish, flesh, nor fowl and they would destroy the beauty of both Chinese and English. What's more, although in the short-term, the sandwich story methodology has been proved effective in some aspects, such as enlarging English vocabulary, no data show its effectiveness in promoting other abilities in the long-run.

In the year of 2005, Xu Huayan proposed another story teaching method: teaching stories with songs and dances. She holds the view that English stories are composed of many dull and length declarative sentences, which would hinder young beginners' English learning, while songs and chants are easy to remember but the content is too easy and isolated. Therefore, she combines these two forms: English songs, chants and simple sentences are linked together through an interesting story with a definite beginning and end. This kind of story is catchy and rich in content. This method proved to be successful in enhancing students' interest in English learning and promoting their English proficiency. However, unlike the Sandwich Story Methodology, the theory is not widely used in teaching practice and no storybook based on this theory has been found published. Chen's (2004) study on 601 students in Lincun primary school shows that students interest in English and English stories and English scores are enhanced after the story teaching experiments. She also promotes a four-step story teaching method: Warm Up-- Presentation-- Practice-- Follow-up in this study.

Many researchers give their reasons and suggestions for using stories in English teaching in primary schools. Lu (2006) discusses the advantages and strategies of using English story teaching in lower grades in primary schools while Chen (2005) concerns about how to chose and teach English stories to students in higher grades in primary schools. Cheng and Wang (2008) point out English stories selected as the teaching materials in primary schools should be interesting, have a definite beginning and end and cover the key language points. They suggest students should understand the story and know the key language

points such as vocabulary and sentence structures in the story and the context where they are used. Students are also required to be able to read the story by themselves and can act it out. Sun and Sui (2008) claim that English story teaching should be designed from two aspects: preparation of the lesson, including the teaching objective, the content of the story, teaching materials and teaching activities, and the teaching procedure, including the tasks in pre-teaching, presentation and post-teaching of the story. Liu and Gao (2008) discuss about the English story teaching from the perspective of psycholinguistics. Zhang (2010) suggests English stories should be used both in English curriculum and the hidden curriculum in primary school. Recently, more and more pre-school children are becoming English learners and English stories have their way in kindergartens. Li (2011) believes that English stories provide comprehensible and adequate language input for pre-school children. English stories can stimulate their interest in learning English effectively, provide opportunities for language practice, and help build their confidence to learn English. In the teaching process, the selection, presentation of English stories should be based on children's cognitive level.

Other researchers do empirical studies to prove the effectiveness of using stories in English teaching to young learners. Chao (2004) wants to know whether Big Book Approach (BBA) could enhance young learners' reading comprehension and the ability to use vocabulary. The research takes young learners at around 9 years old as the participants and lasts for 10 months. The data prove the effectiveness of teaching reading with BBA in EFL classrooms. Tian's (2011) study also suggests English stories can be used to teach vocabulary in primary schools. In order to teach pronunciation in an interesting way, Lin (2011) makes a new story with the words including the target phonemes. The phonemes are acquired by students after being repeated for many times. The data show that among 34 students, 4 of them master the phonemes before the lesson; 28 students master the phonemes in the lesson; only 1 student has difficulty in acquiring the phonemes. Other studies (e.g., Lu, 2008; Lei, 2011; Zhang & Li, 2003) also proved the effectiveness of story teaching in enhancing English learning interest, listening, speaking, and reading. Besides, English stories are also found effective in revising the content that has been taught (e.g., Zhou, 2011) and facilitating the word recognition (e.g., Ding, 2011).

Although English stories are proved to be effective in enhancing students' interests and developing their language proficiency, there are many problems in the teaching practice. In the traditional story teaching, students are divided into different groups and asked to read in different roles; some teachers ignore the significance of the story, focusing on vocabulary teaching; some teachers are involved in explaining the contents of the story (Zhang, 2011). With the development of the theory and practice of English story teaching, researchers

pay more attention to the methods of solving the problems in teaching practice and the way to use English stories more effectively. Lin (2009) explores the strategies in enhancing the efficiency of reading English stories in primary schools. Jing (2009) argues by analyzing the cohesion and coherence in English stories, students would have a better understanding of the whole stories and enhance their ability of organizing the language. Zhu (2011) focuses on the blackboard design in the process of teaching, holding the view that a good presentation of the blackboard will help the story teaching while the bad arrangement will diminish the effects of English stories. Wang (2012) discusses some issues in English story teaching in primary schools. Shan (2012) tries to find out the way to make effective use of English stories in higher grades in primary schools. Some researchers (e.g., Li & Xu, 2011; Zhu, 2012) suggest students should be encouraged to make their English stories. They believe the purpose of making English stories is to explain and consolidate students' vocabulary and sentences and the story should be an interesting account of topics and vocabulary, highlighting the key sentence structures. In the cooperation of Xiangyang Vocational and Technical College and New Star Education, a series of English pantomime were created and performed (Wang, 2011).

With the development of technology, researchers call for the marriage of English stories with the multimedia. As early as in the year of 2006, three teachers from Taiwan, Tsou, Wang, and Tzeng, developed a multimedia storytelling website to study how web-based technology can assist the foreign language learning. There are three modules in the website: an accounts administration module, multimedia story composing module, and story re-playing module. The project was implemented in an elementary school to test the effectiveness of this website in facilitating teachers' storytelling and children's story recall processes. The results of the study suggest the effectiveness of the website in instruction and in resultant student learning and support the significance and educational value of the multimedia storytelling website in foreign language teaching and learning. However, in Mainland China, the related researches are backward. Researchers and teachers (e.g., Wu, 2011) are still busy with exploring the significance and the education value of applying the multimedia in English story teaching.

## 2.2 Research on Stories in Foreign Language Teaching Abroad

As in China, the research of stories in FLT abroad focuses on three aspects: the theory of story teaching, the significance and the education value of stories, and the empirical studies of the application of English stories in FLT curriculum. The research in other countries, especially in America and Europe, is much earlier than that in China,

therefore, they are richer both in theory and practice of stories in foreign language teaching and learning.

The most influential theories of story teaching abroad include Story-Centered Curriculum, Teaching Proficiency through Reading Storytelling (TPRS), Episode Stories and other story teaching methods. The idea of story-centered curriculum is to create a story that a student will live in for a certain period that encompasses everything he or she would do in the given time frame. However, this curriculum requires learners' autonomy and a higher cognition. Therefore, it is unlikely to apply such a curriculum among young language learners. TPRS lessons use a mixture of reading and storytelling to help students learn a foreign language in a classroom setting. In TPRS lessons, students are involved in the story making and learn words and structures by repetition in different contexts. However, the classroom management will be big problem if TPRS is used in a large class. Episode Stories are first used in McGraw-Hill International School. There is a separate story in each unit and those separate stories comprise a whole big story just as stories in a soap opera. Most English books such as *Primary English* by Beijing Normal University Press and *PEP Primary English* published by People's Education in China are organized with episode stories. Episode stories provide to students a real language context, relaxed atmosphere and chances to contact each other.

The practice of story teaching in the context of foreign language classroom is as rich as its theories. As early as in 1990, Barton and Booth pointed out that English stories could be viewed as an important tool in teaching foreign language. In the following years, the significance and education value of stories in foreign language teaching has been discussed over and over again. Andrew Wright is one of the researchers who are interested in using stories in foreign language teaching. He practiced teaching English with this method in Hungary for years and made great achievement. In his book *Storytelling with Children*, Wright (1996) shares his experience of using English stories in foreign language teaching and offers systematic guidance to foreign language teachers. Other researchers (e.g., Ellis & Brewster, 1991; Watts, 1992; Handler, 1993) also give their suggestions for including stories in the teaching of English as a foreign language. Wilson (1997) believes storytelling can improve the level of learning in speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. Isbell (2002) finds out many stories that work well with children include repetitive phrases, unique words, and enticing description. Slattery and Willis (2001) hold the view that stories are valuable resources for language teaching. For example, the funny stories are motivating so as to encourage students to continue their learning. The fantasy are adapted from the real world, therefore, they can stimulate students' imagination and creativity. Through listening or reading stories, the learners will share a social and emotional experience.

Besides the significance of education value of stories in foreign language teaching, many researchers give their suggestions in selecting, teaching English stories and testing the story learning. Ellis and Brewster (1991) propose some criteria for selecting storybooks. First, the language, sentence structures, grammar and vocabulary involved in the story should meet learners' current level. Second, the contents and illustrations should be attractive to children and related to their daily life. Third, the story should contain repetitive vocabulary and patterns. In addition, when teaching English stories to a group of learners, their different taste should be taken into consideration. Andrew Wright (1996, pp.14-15) also suggests language teachers should choose a story that the tellers like and feel they can tell well. The selective stories should be appropriate for the learners and engage the children within the first few lines. Besides, the stories should offer children a rich experience and do not have long descriptive passages.

However, the researchers abroad have not spared so much effort to empirical studies to prove the effectiveness of stories in the foreign language curriculum as what has been done in China. They are devoting to the developing of the storybooks based on the findings in the fields of linguistics, psychology and language teaching. In the year of 2004, Pearson-Longman developed a multi-level primary course: *Hip Hip Hooray*. This course aims at making English fun through classic stories. It covers six classic fairy tales, such as *Urban and Rural Mice*, *The Elf and the Shoemaker*, *Jack and Peas* and other stories. Children learn vocabulary, sentences and dialogues with the storylines supplemented by songs, verses, and games. *Our Discovery Island* published in 2012 by Pearson-Longman is another series of storybooks designed for English learners from elementary one to six. Different from the traditional storybooks, this series provide learners with The Online World, which recreates a digital environment for children and guide them in their English learning through a real desire to play, explore, create, and interact. Therefore, learners are not only the listeners or readers; they are part of the story. The research which aims at perfecting the electronic storybooks is still going on. For example, in Smeets and Bus's (2012) study, extra textual vocabulary questions were added to the electronic storybooks. Children respond to the questions presented in a multiple-choice format by clicking on the picture that best represented the target word. The data show that children learn more words when reading with questions.

### 3. CRITERIA FOR SELECTING STORIES IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

A good story can stimulate learners' imagination and curiosity and promote their language learning; therefore, it is important to choose appropriate stories. When selecting

storybooks, teachers and researchers should consider the following questions:

- Should the story be presented only in the target language or both in the target and the native languages?
- Should the story be presented only in words or illustrated by pictures?
- What are the criteria for selecting the content of stories?

There are two voices in the use of native language in foreign language teaching. Some researchers and language teachers believe that we should use authentic materials only with target language, while others think highly of the role of native language. Ji Yuhua, the pioneer of Sandwich Story Methodology stands in the second line. Although many empirical studies were done with this method and it has been proved successful in some aspects, Sandwich Story Methodology has many problems. For example, the sandwich stories cannot provide "i+1" input; the learning of the sandwich stories is not helpful in developing learners' reading ability; the sandwich stories would destroy the beauty of English. Therefore, the stories used in the present study would be written only in the target language: English.

Compared with the storybooks only with words, the picture storybooks are more popular among children. A picture storybook is a book that has pictures, but the illustrations are only the ingredients of the text or linguistic message. The semiotic symbols in the books would activate the picture, image and colour schemata in children's minds and thus would help them understand the story. Besides, books with colorful pictures would be more attractive to readers. All the participants in the present study agree with this point. In the interview, they point out the textbooks used in their school are full of words and with few small pictures and this would discourage their interest in English learning.

Many researchers and teachers give their suggestions for selecting stories. Ellis and Brewster (1991) believe that the language, sentence structures, grammar and vocabulary involved in the story should meet learners' current level; the contents and illustrations should be attractive to children and related to their daily life; the story should contain repetitive vocabulary and patterns; and learners' different taste should be taken into consideration. Andrew Wright (1996) suggests stories designed for young language learners should not have long descriptive passages. Cheng and Wang (2008) also point out English stories selected as the teaching materials in primary schools should be interesting, have a definite beginning and end and cover the key language points.

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## CONCLUSION

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Young learners have their unique physical and psychological characteristics. They have a short-span

attention; they have different learning styles and they may be at the different cognitive stages. Therefore, TEYL is a much challengeable job. The teaching materials should be carefully selected to draw young language learners' interest in English learning. The teaching tasks should be well designed to draw their attention and cater for different learning styles. Language teachers should try to arouse learners' interest in English (e.g., motivating them to learn, helping them build a positive attitude to English and English learning) and English learning and promote their English proficiency.

English stories, as a vehicle of TEYL, have been drawing more and more researchers' and teachers' attention in recent years. Although a lot of research has been done both in China and abroad, which provides us a good understanding of English story teaching and learning, there are still many limitations. Most of the researches are the theoretical introduction of the values and benefits of English story teaching or the implementing strategies in classrooms. Although some empirical research has been done to prove the effectiveness of English stories in arousing learners' interests and promoting their language ability including listening, speaking and reading abilities, most of them are quantitative and give subjective data and the changes during the English story teaching practice is not carefully exploited. From the perspective of philosophy, all the things develops and changes with time and space. Compared with the results, the changes in the teaching process account more. Besides, Scovel (2001) points out SLA researchers pay little attention to the individual learners. Although the theory derived from the study of a group of learners are more comprehensive and subjective, the implication that individuals brings to us should not be neglected.

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