

Curriculum Adaptation on Native Picture Books for Primary ELLs in China—A Case Study

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Abstract

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In this thesis, the author conducted a case study to explore one way to adapt native picture books for primary ELLs in China. Since traditional ESL picture books have some defects that may have a negative impact on students' second language acquisition, the author chose native picture books as an appropriate alternative. The purpose of the study is to examine the feasibility of curriculum adaptation on native picture books for ELLs in China and to what degree the program can improve the ELLs language skills. The study shows that primary ELLs in urban China can gain access to the native picture books through curriculum adaptation. But it's also found that the adapted read aloud curriculum played a limited role to improve their speaking skills.

Introduction

A common approach to teaching English to Native Chinese speakers is reading ESL picture books. These picture books use simplified language and short sentences, making them easier to understand. However, there are many problems with this approach. First, Chinese students, find themselves working with texts which are not sufficiently challenging intellectually. Many authors of ELL picture books neglect students' intellectual development by editing stories with simple topics and plots. They assume that second language deficiency determines that they aren't able to read intellectually challenging stories. However, an appropriate picture book for ELLs should be not only educationally age-appropriate in the language sense but also chronologically age-appropriate in the concept sense (Smallwood , 1988).

Second, as Walqui & DeFazio (2003) stated, "cognitive simplification leads to texts that are easier to comprehend, while linguistic simplification often leads to the opposite." They made a comparison between an original text and a simplified text:

Original text:

Because he had to work at night to support his family, Peco often fell asleep in class.

Simplified text:

Paco had to make money for his family. Paco worked at night. He often went to sleep in class.

People who read the simplified text need to construct the cause and effect relationship among the three simple sentences by themselves before they get the exact meaning. By decomposing a complex sentence into separate simple sentences, the comprehension isn't

promoted but hindered instead. The reason is that the linguistic adjustments such as less complex sentences and fewer modifiers often lead to some loss of the semantic context (Walqui & DeFazio, 2003). In fact, students who have learning disabilities or ELLs may work hard to supplement the semantic contexts by themselves.

Third, the books fail to help students to “internalize the new language by providing access to a rich variety of linguistic items” (Ghosn, 2002, p.172). For example, verb tense of the past and the future are sometimes replaced by simple present to simplify the texts. Students aren’t able to acquire more advanced languages by this way. David Crystal (1987) also argued that this emphasis on the simple present is unnatural since narrative accounts for most part in students’ daily lives.

The author argues that native picture books can be used as an alternative for primary ELLs in China because of the following advantages: (a) the authors don’t make artificial simplification in the linguistic sense; (b) the texts reflect the authentic world out of the classroom; (c) these story books have delicate illustrations which facilitate readers’ comprehension; (d) the story books are intellectually appropriate for ELLs especially for older language learners.

However, considering their second language proficiency, ELLs are not able to gain the meaning of a native story book without assistance. Curriculum adaptation is one of the applied methods to provide students such assistance. Besides, curriculum adaptation was defined as modifying and supplementing the curriculum to meet the needs of individual students (Hoover & Patton, 2005). ELLs in China have unique needs in terms of English acquisition. For example, their speaking and listening skills are severely delayed compared to

their writing and reading skills; their cognition is well prepared to read English stories with challenging plots but their second language proficiency blocks this access. That's why teaching strategies should be adapted to better meet ELLs' need and facilitate their learning. The present study explores curricular adaptation of picture books for primary ELLs in China.

Literature Review

In this part, the author reviewed some literatures. These literatures consist of four parts: Curriculum adaptation and its application in classrooms, Theories related to curriculum adaptation, Traditional curriculum for ELLs in China and Importance of read aloud

Curriculum adaptation and its application in classrooms

Curriculum Adaptation is a broad concept with many elements inside such as content, instructional strategies and instructional settings (Hoover & Patton, 2005). Classroom teachers are expected to identify the needs for different groups of students and then modify the text itself, teaching strategies or settings. It has been applied largely on standard-based education for students with disabilities or content area reading and proved a big success (Hoover & Patton, Garisson & Mora, Short).

In *Adapting Mathematics Instruction for English Language Learners: the Language Concept Connection*, Garisson and Mora (1999) described a teaching strategy to help Latino ELLs learn mathematics in an English speaking context. The strategy can be summarized as "to teach an unknown concept, use the known language; to teach an unknown language, use a known concept" (Garisson & Mora, 1999, p.37). In this article, the authors agreed that students' first language plays a significant role to promote the transfer of mathematics concepts. Except from the concept development, the authors also mentioned the grouping and

writing issues that can be adapted to meet the special needs of ELLs. For example, they advocated small-group settings because they give students greater chances to speak and listen to English in a both receptive and expressive way.

In *Adapting Materials for Content-based Language Instruction*, Deborah J. Short (1989) discussed a way to adapt content-based materials for limited-English-proficient (LEP) students. The author argues that “successful materials adaptation goes far beyond simplifying vocabulary and shortening sentences...but adapting information to make it accessible to language minority students.” She also adapted a text into a pictorial representation in a sample history lesson to clarify the steps in adapting materials.

Theories related to curriculum adaptation

Through a close examination the author found that there’s no independent and systematic theory to back up curriculum adaptation. However, this concept can be derived from many classic second language learning theories such as Krashen’s (1981) $i+1$, Cummins’s (1984) transfer between first and second language and Walqui’s (2000) “amplify, don’t simplify”.

The significance of Krashen’s (1981) $i+1$ is that it gives classroom teachers some insights to pick out native picture books. Based on the theory, texts must be one level above the learner’s second-language proficiency in order to be comprehensible. To achieve $i+1$ in practice, the selection of appropriate materials and text modifications are important.

Classroom teachers need to know their students’ English proficiency thoroughly to determine the goals they wish them to reach. The goals should be attainable with the assistance of adapted instruction strategies and texts modification (Hoover&Patton, 2005).

Walqui (2000) already points out the essence of curriculum adaptation by saying “Amplify, don’t simplify”. She thinks the redundancy of resources and the elaboration of texts bring more benefits to ELLs. These contextual redundancy and elaboration involve background knowledge; genre knowledge; illustrations; amplified words, sentences and even paragraphs. Based on what she believes, “the paragraphs ought to be made up of sentences that provide multiple attachment points to each other and to the vocabulary and phrases they contain”. That requires classroom teachers to clarify a concept such as “pilgrimage” (Walqui&DeFazio, 2003) in an ample but not a streamlined way by providing different examples of the religious reasons of pilgrimages. Classroom teachers can activate students’ background knowledge, offer meaningful illustrations; take examples and make contrast and comparison to add abundances and elaborations to the texts and instructions.

Widdowson (1979) distinguishes two similar terms-“simplified texts” and “simple accounts”. Replacing the verb tense of the past and the future with the simple present is one of the examples in simplified texts. Most educators think it’s harmful for ELLs because it excludes the natural qualities of daily conversations or speeches. On the other hand, simple accounts are those that try to make themselves comprehensible “by clarifying referential and prepositional meanings and by adding redundancy and elaboration” (Walqui & DeFazio, 2003). Thus, classroom teachers should add more simple accounts instead of simplified texts to the instruction.

Even though the first language is always considered as an impediment of the targeted language’s immersion, researches have proved that the proficiency of a learner’s first language facilitates his/her second language learning (Cummins, 1984). Based on Cummins’

statement, the transfer happens not only in languages but also in concepts. The transfer in languages is easier to attain if the languages share the same cognates. However, since Chinese and English belong to two different language families, the transfer in languages is difficult. Though the transfer in languages rarely happens, transfer in concepts is always accessible. For example, learners may know the meaning of “光合作用” but have no idea about what “photosynthesis” is. In this case, classroom teachers can use Chinese to explain and elaborate “photosynthesis”. This strategy can also be used in reading picture books to facilitate the comprehension of some vocabularies and concepts.

Traditional curriculum for ELLs in China

Many findings show that ELLs in China are used to learning English through repetition, recitation, mimicry and memorizing (Jin & Cortazzi, 2002). The debate about whether or how communicative approach can be applied for ELLs in China has lasted for 2 decades. Some educators argue that it's impossible to implement communicative approach in China because Chinese culture such as the Confucian heritage affects China's ESL education and students' use of English (Watkins & Biggs, 1996). However, others think this is cultural stereotyping (Stephens, 1997). They hold the opinion that China can explore a unique communicative approach that meets Chinese cultural expectations.

Jin and Cortazzi (1996) have found that many ESL classrooms are changing in a positive way. For example, many interactive patterns such as “clear teacher explanations”, “varied and vigorous questioning”, “organized learner participation” and so on appear gradually (Jin & Cortazzi, 1996).

Importance of read aloud

Read aloud has become a common practice in families and schools to improve students' language and literacy development. Many researchers believe that by reading books to kids in an interactive provides them more opportunities to use languages and learn vocabularies (Wasik & Bond, 2001). Wasik and Bond (2001) conducted an interactive book reading program for preschoolers who came from low income families to examine the effects of it on students' language development. In the study the students were engaged in the dialogic reading and open-ended discussions. The result shows that students who participated in the program scored highly than the students in the control group on Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test III.

Swanson, Vaughn, Wanzek, Petscher, Heckert, Cavanaugh, Kraft, and Tackett (2011) conducted a research on the effects of reading picture books for students from 3 to 8 years old with reading disabilities. The result shows that read aloud improves students' language skills including their phonological awareness, print awareness, vocabularies and comprehension.

The literature review shows that little research has been done to explore curriculum adaptation on native picture books for second language readers especially those who are in non-English speaking countries. Thus the purpose of the study is to examine the feasibility of curriculum adaptation on native picture books for ELLs in China and to what degree the program can improve the ELLs language skills. Meanwhile, the adapted read aloud program is a meaningful exploration to reconcile Chinese traditional approaches with the communicative approaches. The data from a teacher and several students were also collected to supplement the case study.

Methods

Setting

Hope Latitude Corporation (HLC) is an English training institution in Beijing where the author was working for more than two years. It was founded by four professors from the Department of English in the Capital Normal University. The founders aim to explore a research-based approach to learn English as the second language for urban children. Thus, even though it's a commercial institution, it gives teachers more freedom to conduct meaningful experimental classes. If a teacher has any good ideas to implement a program, he/she is encouraged to send a proposal to the founders first. Once the proposal is approved, the teacher will be assigned a small group of students and can conduct an experimental class.

HLC has already established a progressive read aloud program in recent years. The main purpose is to increase the students' interaction with English texts and expand their language knowledge (Wei Gao, personal communication, June 17 2013). The program has become a routine apart from the regular classes. The ESL story book series used by HLC is called "The Magic Box" which was published by Beijing Youth Audiovisual Press (2008). It's widely used by some institutions or families for their read-aloud programs. There are forty books in the series and are grouped by four different levels. For example, books in the red box are for students from one to three years old; books in the green box are for students from four to six years old. Each book has an attached video so that students can watch the video and listen to the story. One story book is usually read in two sessions a week to expand their language knowledge. The teacher follows 5 steps to when reading a new picture book: introduction, picture walk, read-aloud, watching the video and production (such as role play or make up an ending). These steps help construct a framework for this program.

Participants

The five students in the study are Cecilia, Cindy, Spencer, Mark and Alex (to protect the students' privacies all their names are replaced with pseudonyms). All of them are living in Beijing and from middle-class families. Their parents have at least bachelor's degrees. Most of them are engineers, teachers, doctors or lawyers. They are financially capable of supporting their children's early second language and literacy development. Since they all work full-time, they have little time to spare to the children, which means that the children aren't expected to receive extra second language instruction in their families.

Among the students, Alex is eight years old who is a second grader in a local elementary school. The rest of them are seven years old who are first graders. Cecilia, Cindy and Alex have been learning English in HLC for almost four years. Spencer and Mark attended the class two years ago. Since they have known each other for many years, they have had solid relationships: they joked with each other; they laughed together and whispered occasionally in the case study.

Angela (to protect her privacy, her name was replaced with a pseudonym), who is a graduate student in the Capital Normal University, has been teaching ESL in HLC for three years. Being a lead teacher of the read aloud program, she is quite familiar with the five students' family backgrounds and their second language proficiency. She was volunteered to conduct the case study with the author. With her help, the information about students' language proficiency was collected. She also made some contributions to the study by offering the wonderful classroom practices and instructional skills.

Assessment

Cambridge Young Learners English (YLE) test is “a series of fun, motivating English language tests, aimed at children in primary and lower secondary education. There are three activity-based tests that give children a clear path to improve their English: Starters, Movers and Flyers” (Cambridge English Language Assessment, 2013). It was designed by Cambridge English Language Assessment, part of the University of Cambridge, to assess ELLs’ listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. Students are not given specific scores but shields as a reward. For example, if a student gets 5 shields (the maximum shields) in the listening section, it means that he/she does a good job and answers most questions correctly. The five students got at least 4 shields for each section in Starters. This implies that each of them has mastered certain English skills as a primary learner and has acquired at least four hundred vocabularies.

Procedures for Adapting Picture Books

An adaptation procedure was created by the author based on the theories reviewed at the beginning: Krashen’s $i+1$ (1981); Walqui’s “amplify, not simplify” (2000) and Cummins’s statement about the transfer between the first language and second language (1984). The purpose of the procedure is to elaborate the texts and provide students more redundant information.

Text Selection According to Krashen (1981), texts used for read aloud instruction must be one level above the learner’s second-language proficiency. This should create a text that students are able to understand with teacher support and offer a text that is intellectually challenging at the same time. Other factors should also be considered when selecting a text. For example, the big size print and recognizable font are preferred when the students are

expected to be able to read the story at the end. Good illustrations provide another access for readers to comprehend the texts apart from the print. In terms of genres and patterns, narratives with repetitive pattern are always an easy start for primary ELLs because the repetitive pattern is helpful for students to make predictions when they read.

Set Goals Teachers should know their students' second language proficiency and set goals based on their language level and performance before making a teaching plan. Teachers can get their second language proficiency through the formative assessment or summative assessment. Besides, the goals of a class include not only academic ones but also social skills ones.

Activate Background Knowledge Students' prior knowledge is a valuable resource to help make sense of a text. It's significant to activate their prior knowledge in a read aloud program. The range of prior knowledge is including, but not limited to the knowledge of topic. Knowledge of language function and knowledge of genre are also important and should be included. Besides, the prior knowledge should relate to the academic goals of a program. If the activated knowledge has nothing to do with the goals, the activation itself is meaningless.

Vocabularies Vocabularies are regarded as the biggest obstacle to comprehend a text by the students. Even though it has been proved that reading comprehension is a complex mechanism that involves the interrelationship among decoding, metacognition, vocabulary, reading strategies and skills and so on, vocabulary is always seen as the only solution for second language reading by teachers and educators in China. To acquire a word, its sound, meaning and spelling should be instructed comprehensively. The acquisition will be a failure

if any of the factors is neglected. Thus, phonics, as a method to teach vocabularies through building the relationship between sounds and spellings, only works when the relationship between sounds and meanings or spellings and meanings has existed. For example, native speakers have already learned the meaning of “crocodile” through many communicative activities (listening and speaking) such as a conversation with their parents (They may point to the picture of crocodile or point to the animal when they visit a zoo, asking their parents or caregiver what it is) before they start to develop the literacy skills. When they are around three or four years old and enter preschools, they already build many relationships between actual items and their sounds in brains. In this case, phonics works to further link the sounds and the spellings.

However, for ELLs in China, listening and speaking seldom precede writing and reading. Usually the four skills company together. Take the same word “crocodile” for example; ELLs in China need to learn its meaning, spelling and sound at the same time. In this case, phonics works partially. Thus it’s recommended that classroom teachers should follow the natural sequence of acquiring languages. They are encouraged to design some activities to help students build the relationship between meanings and sounds first and then seek for phonics. These activities include “tap it” (a teacher say the words; students listen and tap the flashcards), “jump to” (a teacher say the words; students listen and jump to the flashcards) and so on.

Given different types of words, different strategies were applied to promote students’ acquisition. Flashcards can be used as a facilitator for most nouns. However, for most verbs, “act out” is the best strategy to use. Analogy is also useful for students to link the meaning of

a word to its sound or spelling when they encounter some similar words. Expansion is another strategy that works when the students have learned one meaning of a word.

Though Chinese is discriminated by many classroom teachers and parents, it still plays an important role to transfer the concepts that students are already familiar with in Chinese to English. When facing with abstract words or those that are hard to explain in English, teachers can rely on Chinese to clarify the meaning of a word.

Dialogic Reading Dialogic reading is an interactive read aloud method that provides students opportunities to improve their oral language and reading comprehension. It has been proved that “ dialogic reading gives teachers a structure in which to ask meaningful questions that begin a conversation about what is happening in the story and help students comprehend the story” (Doyle & Bramwell, 2006, p.554). Dialogic reading has been conducted among Pre-Kindergarteners or older kids and has proved to have a positive impact on students’ oral language development (Zevenbergen & Whitehurst, 2003).

Dialogic reading has standardized prompts and can be categorized as C (completion questions); R (recall questions); O (open-ended questions); W(wh-questions) and D (distancing questions) (Morgan & Meier, 2008). With these prompts, students are trained to improve their listening and speaking skills, which is especially important for ELLs. Teachers are taught to use the sequence of prompting and responding techniques as well: prompt, evaluate, expand and repeat (Morgan & Meier, 2008). The techniques have the following benefits for ELLs. First, it provides many ways to scaffold students’ reading comprehension. Second, it expands students’ answers by asking them to repeat. The feedback is given face to face and the promotion of language can be achieved immediately. Third, it increases students’

interests and motivations to read a story book. When teachers are asked to follow the sequence and give students positive evaluations each time, students are usually encouraged to work hard to listen and respond. Even if the students are not able to offer the best answer or sometimes give a wrong response, positive evaluations are necessary to push them toward more advanced language learners.

Extended Activities To wrap up the read-aloud program, extended activities are needed. These activities on the one hand, give students some chances to practice the language functions they have learned and on the other hand, serve as a formative assessment to examine their language proficiency.

Role play is a good choice. Students usually would like to try different roles and play them out. They practice their oral language and work in close cooperation with each other through this activity.

Writing a story is also another extended activity that can be used in a read aloud program. Compared to role play, this activity asks for more language skills such as spelling and creative thinking. To decrease the difficulties of accomplishing this task, teachers usually give students some guidelines or a prompt. Many other forms of scaffolding can also be provided to help students write a story or a part of a story. For example, students can be arranged into small groups and have a discussion before writing a piece of work. Word wall should be prepared to facilitate students' writing.

Overall, teachers who want to adapt native story books for ELLs should make full use of the resources that are available to scaffold their second language learning. The main purpose is to amplify the texts and instructions instead of simplifying. Based on the adaption

procedure, a case study was conducted.

Data Collection

Data was collected in four phases on September, 2013. The author first conducted initial interview with the five student participants to better understand the students' attitudes toward the existing read aloud program.

The author also collected data by observing the read aloud program. Since the purpose of the study is to examine the feasibility of the adaptation and students' language development, many observational notes were recorded. These notes were later used to analyze students' participation and learning experiences.

Following the adapted lesson, students were asked to do a self-evaluation. The self-evaluation was designed to collect students' responses about the program and document their language development.

Last, final interviews were conducted with the five students and the teacher. The author asked the teacher some questions about the research topics. Students were asked to clarify or expand their responses to the self-evaluation. Key findings and analysis will be described in the following sections.

Findings

Results from Initial Student Interviews

The initial interview (See Appendix A for interview questions) shows that all five students enjoyed the storytelling classes because they liked the videos and it was more relaxing than the regular classes. When asked: "do you like the read aloud program and why," all of them gave positive answers. Mark said: "

I love to attend the story telling classes. The reason is that we can watch the video and draw pictures in the class. ”

Cecilia said: “

Compared to the regular classes, I prefer to take the story telling classes because the atmosphere is relaxing and we don't have to do many worksheets.”

When asked: “do you like the stories and why,” all of the students said that they didn't like the stories because the stories weren't challenging intellectually. Mark said: “

They are silly. But I like to watch the videos. The videos are interesting because they make the stories like cartoons. ”

Spencer said: “

I don't like the stories. They look like for little kids. But I'm already a grown-up. ”

Alex said: “

They were interesting at first. But when we grow older, they aren't attractive any more. You know, the stories are dull. ”

In response to the question: “could you understand the stories? What's the barrier that interferes your understanding,” 3 out of 5 students thought it's easy to comprehend the stories. But all of them pointed out that the vocabulary was the top difficulty that interferes their understanding. Cindy replied: “

Not always. Some words are strange for me.”

Spencer said: “

It's easy to understand but it's hard to use the sentences or words in my oral English.”

Mark said: “

I have learned some grammars. So the stories are less challenging to understand. But some words are difficult. If we don't know the meaning of two or three words in a sentence, the whole sentence doesn't make any sense to me. ”

In all, the initial interview shows that the students are interested in the read aloud program but the ESL picture books couldn't meet their needs on the way to be more advanced learners.

Observations for Story Intervention

The native story book Angela used in the read aloud program is *That Is Not a Good Idea*. The book was written and illustrated by Mo Willems. It tells how a plump goose is led into a trap one step after another by a very hungry fox. Except from the common advantages shared with other picture books such as i+1 input, repetitive pattern, fantastic illustrations, this book has some unique characteristics. First, it's formatted as a silent movie, which enhances the suspense of the book. Second, dialogues account for a large amount in the book, which means that students' participation can be increased through many oral practice activities (such as role play or dialogic reading). Third, the book can be approached from distinguished perspectives so that it can be read for more than one time with different purposes.

Besides, the picture book has been used in many native classrooms and some useful reading strategies and skills have been created by native teachers. For example, the book has been nominated by a CLEL (Colorado Libraries for Early Literacy) Bell Award. Here is the comment from the nominators is: “

After reading this story, you could play a game with your child or class where they take turns thinking of silly things they could do (“I'm going to go home and eat all the cookies in

the house!”) and recite the catch-phrase, “That is not a good idea!” or decide to say, “That is a VERY good idea!”

These strategies and skills can also be adapted to meet the needs of ELLs in the case study.

Since the story is about how the fox leads the goose into the trap by the repeated invitations “would you care to,” one of the objectives of the class is asking students to understand and use the formulaic expression. Students were then asked the following questions by Angela to activate their prior topic knowledge: “have you ever been invited to a place by a stranger” and “what would you do if invited by a stranger.”

Angela then designed an interesting activity to help students activate the prior knowledge of language function. They were asked to bring their favorite toys to school first. Then Angela encouraged them to use the formulaic expressions such as “do you want to join...” or “come and...” or “let’s...” to invite their friends to share. They enjoyed a lot when they realized that their favorite toys were also attractive to the friends. To switch to the targeted language functions, Angela further explained: “I know that all of you can invite your friends in English. But today we are going to learn some new expressions of making an invitation from the story.”

To help students familiarize the repetitive pattern in the story, Angela then made an analogy between the story and a story they read before *Oh No, Francisco*. She reminded students by saying: “in this story, when Francisco draws pictures on the wall, what does mother say? She said: ‘Oh no, Francisco’. When Francisco makes noise at night, what does mother say? She said: ‘Oh no, Francisco’. So we could predict what mother would say when

Francisco climbs on the roof, right? This is the repetitive pattern. It helps us to predict what will happen next. That Is Not a Good Idea is also a story with the repetitive pattern. You can predict what’s going on when we read.”

Before reading the story, vocabularies that need to be instructed explicitly have been picked out and categorized based on their functions as Form 1 shows:

Noun	Verb	Adjective	Adverb
Luck	Stroll	Nearby	Really
Ingredient	Care	Key	
	Boil	Missing	
	Warn		
	Continue		

Form 1

Angela and the author realized that it’s significant for students to build the relationship between a word’s meaning and its sound first. She used many strategies to achieve it. To distinguish the words “stroll, walk and run,” students were asked to play a game by acting as a robot while the teacher gave them directions like “Robots, stroll.” Students were asked to play the “jump to” game for several rounds. This is an activity that Angela uses frequently to build her students understanding of specific words from the texts before they read. She also expanded the meaning of the word “key” by explaining that “you all know that key is used to open or close doors. But it also means important. Think about it: key is important because if

you lose the key you have no access to the house.”

After the vocabulary instruction, Angela conducted the dialogic reading. The planned prompts in the story book *That Is Not a Good Idea* were listed in Form 2. The story book was read for three times. Different types of prompts are emphasized each time. When the story was read for the first time, students were mostly asked wh- questions because these settings and characters related questions were easy to answer. Also, the first reading gave them a general idea about what happened in the story. The second reading was focused on completion questions and recall questions. The third reading was switched to deep reading by asking students open-ended questions and distancing questions. Even though the story was read three times, most students were involved in the whole process from the beginning to end because they had different purposes to read at each time. Angela, in the progress, acted as a facilitator to push students toward deep readers and deep thinkers.

Angela used the PEER sequence (Prompt, Evaluation, Expansion and Repeat) in the whole process. For example, when asked “what would you do if you were Mrs. Goose,” Alex answered: “run away.” The answer was right but not complete in terms of language expansion. So Angela further requested: “Right! If I were Mrs. Goose, I would run away. Could you please repeat the sentence with me?” Alex replied: “If I were Mrs. Goose, I would run away.” When students responded, no matter right or wrong, Angela always gave them positive evaluations.

Last, students were asked to write a new surprising ending for the story *That Is Not a Good Idea*. This activity is part of Angela’s usual routine. Cecilia made up a story with Detective Bear appearing and saving Mrs. Goose at the end: “Detective Bear show up and

catch Mr. Fox. Mrs. Goose is happy.” Mark wrote: “Mr. Fox and Mrs. Goose have dinner together. They have vegetable soup.”Angela asked them to draw pictures for their ending pages and wrapped up the class.

Planned Prompts: 1 per page or two					
May be a question or a comment					
Page #	Completion	Recall	Open-ended	Wh-	Distancing
1-4				What is the fox doing? What is he thinking about when he sees the plump goose?	
5-10			Do you think it's a good idea to go for a stroll with a fox? If you were Mrs. Goose, what would you do? Do you think she is in danger now?		
11-16			Do you think it's a good idea?		
17-22	Could you please complete the sentence with me? Could you please complete the sentence of the small geese with me?		I think Mr. Fox is leading Mrs. Goose into a trap. What do you think? Do you think it's a good idea? If you were Mrs. Goose, what would you do?	Where are they right now? How many "really"s are there?	
23-28	Could you please		Do you think it's a treat or a	Where are they? What's	Were you in danger before?

	complete the sentence with me? Could you please complete the sentence of the small geese with me?		trap? I feel so worried about Mrs. Goose. She doesn't know the danger has come. How about you?	Mr. Fox doing? Why is he holding such a big pot? How many "really"s are there?	How did you feel? Do you know any ways you can seek for help? Could you name some?
29-36	What is Mr. Fox asking for right now? Could you please complete the sentence with me? Could you please complete the sentence of the small geese with me?	Do you remember how Mr. Fox lead Mrs. Goose into the trap? Do you remember how Mrs. Goose replies every time?	What will she reply this time? Guess what will happen next?	What do you think the key ingredient is? How many "really"s are there?	
37-40			I thought they were trying to warn Mrs. Goose. What do you think? I think Mrs. Goose is pretty cool! What do you think?		

Form 2

Final Interviews

Teacher Angela was first interviewed (See Appendix B for interview questions). Here're her responses toward each question. When asked: "do you think This Is Not a Good Idea has some advantages over the 'The Magic Box' series," she agreed that native picture books have

some advantages over ESL picture books. She explained:

Absolutely! “The Magic Box” series are specially edited for ELLs. The stories have been shortened and simplified to meet their language proficiency. Sometimes, they lose authenticity compared to native picture books. For example, the editors often keep to the simple present to simplify the texts, intentionally overlooking the verb tense of the past and the future, which is unnatural in daily lives. Also, I think the language is diverse in native story books. For example, the formulaic expression ‘would you care to...’ that appears in *This Is Not a Good Idea* is seldom seen in ESL textbooks.

When asked: “what’re the difficulties to adapt native picture books in classrooms?” she pointed out that read aloud program isn’t commonly practiced in China. One of the difficulties to conduct an adapted read aloud program is the shortage of appropriate texts.

Angela offered:

First, I think most classroom teachers have no idea what adaptation means. Some of them misunderstand the concept of adaptation and think the concept is similar to simplification. But it’s not the case. Second, I don’t think most private English training institutions or public schools can afford the expenses of native picture books. It’s rare to see them introduced to the domestic market. If we buy them from the international market, the prices are expensive. But let’s stop talking about curriculum adaptation on native story books. Let’s talk about the read aloud program first. As far as I know, most ELLs in China have never been read a story or any other piece of work. Most ESL educators haven’t realized the importance of read aloud.

When asked: “what accomplishments do you think they gained in the class?” she held the

opinion that the adapted curriculum helps students to achieve the goals that are beyond their reach at the beginning. She noted: “

They were involved in the program. They were read a fabulous story and came to understand it with my help. They learned many new vocabularies and practice oral language. They achieved the academic goals you set at the beginning.”

When asked: “do you think the adaptation contributes to their accomplishments?” she gave the author a positive answer. She replied:

Yes, without the adaptation, they are not able to understand the story based on their language proficiency. I think the vocabulary part plays an important role. I just want to know whether it works better if I teach them the formulaic expression ‘would you care...’ explicitly by explaining its meaning and grammar before or after the read-aloud. I’m not sure. Right now they know that it’s a more developed way to invite people but this information is vague. They got this information from the repeated pattern and reading, not an explicit instruction.

When asked: “do you find anything that we could enhance to make the program better except for the explicit instruction you just mentioned,” Angela explained: “

No, actually. I think the idea curriculum adaptation is wonderful because it gives students a chance to achieve what seems impossible for them. I also learned a lot from this program.”

To get students’ attitudes to the adapted curriculum, they were assigned a self-evaluation sheet to complete (See Appendix C).

Students’ responses to the self-evaluation were collected as the chart below shows.

Responses Chart	Cecilia	Cindy	Spencer	Mark	Alex
1	Superior	Superior	Superior	Satisfactory	Superior
2	Superior	Above Average	Superior	Superior	Superior
3	Superior	Superior	Superior	Superior	Superior
4	Superior	Superior	Superior	Superior	Superior
5	Superior	Above Average	Superior	Superior	Above Average
6	Superior	Superior	Superior	Above Average	Superior
7	Above Average	Superior	Above Average	Superior	Superior
8	Superior	Superior	Above Average	Superior	Superior
9	Superior	Satisfactory	Superior	Below Average	Superior
10	Superior	Superior	Superior	Superior	Superior

To get students' detailed responses and supplement the data, students were further interviewed (See Appendix A for interview questions).

The chart shows that four out of five students thought that they completely involved in

the read aloud program from the beginning to the end. Mark gave himself a “satisfactory” comment. When asked the reason, he explained: “

The story sounded pretty interesting at first. But when it was read for the third time, I felt bored. I thought I already knew what it’s about and I couldn’t concentrate on it anymore.”

All the five students thought they could sound out and recognize the new vocabularies. When asked: “which strategy do you think is most helpful,” Cecilia noted: “

I like the robot game. We were asked to act out ‘stroll, run and walk’ like robots. We have to listen to the teachers to do the actions otherwise we would lose.”

Spencer said: “

I think the repetition helps a lot. We read the book for three times. The new vocabularies became impressive gradually.”

All the five students thought that dialogic reading helps them to comprehend the text. Mark offered: “

At first I thought Mr. Fox is a good guy and he wants to invite Mrs. Goose to have a dinner! But when the teacher asked us whether it’s a trap or not, I thought it’s possible.”

Spencer explained: “

The teacher asked us to pay attention to the settings. I gradually realized that Mr. Fox led Mrs. Goose from street to the deep, dark woods and finally to his kitchen, which made me feel that the danger was coming.”

All the five students thought that Chinese facilitated their understanding. Cindy mentioned: “

I had no idea about what ‘warn’ is even though the teacher explained it in English. But

when she told me the meaning in Chinese, I suddenly understood the word.”

All the five students thought that they learned a new way to express invitation. Cecilia said: “

‘Would you care to do...’ is a way to offer invitations. Just like ‘let’s...’ or ‘join me’. This way is more advanced. It’s for adults to use.”

Alex said: “

We learned many ways to offer invitations. But they are much easier than this one. English is fun. Why does it have so many different expressions that deliver the same meaning.”

Three of the five students thought the illustrations were helpful. But Mark and Cindy had different opinions. Mark offered: “

The illustrations make me feel confused. I don’t know what the little geese are doing. Do they follow Mrs. Goose? How could they know what happened between Mr. Fox and Mrs. Goose? I don’t know.”

Cindy also expressed the same doubts: “

Are the little geese outsiders? Are they watching the movie? The format looks like a movie.”

All the five students thought the story is interesting. Alex noted: “

This is the most engaging English story I ever read before. Could we have more stories like this? I don’t want to read the silly stories again.”

Spencer explained: “

The story has a horrible ending. But it’s interesting and out of my expectation. I love it.”

Discussion

The author conducted the case study for 2 purposes: first, to examine whether the adapted native picture books work for primary ELLs in urban China and second, to what extent the adapted curriculum helps students to improve their language skills.

To examine whether the current read aloud program is appropriate for the ELLs, the author first conducted an initial interview first. It shows that the students have high expectations to the read aloud program. But ESL picture books aren't chronologically age-appropriate and fail to meet their needs of plots, topics and even illustrations. It also shows that the ESL story books are challenging in the linguistic sense but only on the vocabulary level. When the primary ELLs are on the way to be more advanced learners, the stories couldn't provide an access to more complex grammars.

Then the author spent 3 classes, each for 45 minutes observing an adapted read aloud program and collected the teacher's and students' responses afterwards. It's found that through appropriate adaptation, students could approach the native picture books. It can be observed from their participation and replies. When the author asked them what the story was, all of them were able to restate the story in Chinese

But the author found the curriculum played a limited role in improving the students' speaking skills by the following examples. When the 4 language skills—speaking, listening, reading and writing were examined, their speaking was severely delayed. They relied mainly on Chinese to communicate with the teacher and classmates. Sometimes they spoke English only when required. When asked: “what's Mr. Fox doing” in the dialogic reading, Mark said: “他在做饭,” which means “he's cooking.” When further requested: “could you please answer

me in English? He is..." Mark was able to say: "He's cooking." Mostly, they gave the teacher one word answers. When asked: "If you were Mrs. Goose, what would you do," Cindy replied: "call the police." When requested to complete the answer, she said: "I don't know how to say."

It's also found that what the author assumed sometimes proved to be contrary to practice. The author assumed that the silent movie style format with bold and clear prints can contribute to students' comprehension. But the interview shows that the format hindered their understanding more or less.

Thus, the author came up with the following points to be noticed for the future researches.

First, the findings show that their second language output was rare in the study. It means that the students approached the story in a receptive way instead of a productive way. The finding corresponded with the ESL instruction system in China, which underestimates the importance of speaking and listening skills. So the question is how to increase speaking practice in the adapted read aloud program to better accommodate ELLs in China. Many props have been widely used in classrooms to develop students' speaking skills. For example, the formulaic expressions are pasted on the wall to inform students. Apart from the strategy issues, classroom management can also play a positive role to enhance students' speaking skills. For example, Angela ever regulated that students who spoke at least 10 English sentences in a class could earn the tickets out.

Second, teachers should consider all the elements of a read aloud program from a student's stand. It's usually easy to say but hard to do. For example, the author took it for

granted that the silent movie style format can engage students and promote comprehension. However, since some students have no experience of silent movies, it added them confusions instead of engagement. Sometimes what teachers think appropriate for students turns out to be the opposite situation.

Third, to prevent students from getting bored, teachers should set distinguished purposes for each reading. It shows that asking different types of questions only works for some students, not all of them. Some students are more easily to get distracted than others. Students can be assigned many activities to do after being read a story. For example, they can be asked to write an outline of the story after the second reading. Or they can be asked to write a self-statement from Mr. Fox's perspective.

Conclusion

To examine the feasibility of curriculum adaptation on native picture books for ELLs, the author conducted a case study in an English training institution in Beijing. Based on Walqui (2000)'s "amplify, not simplify," the lesson was designed to elaborate students' knowledge, the topic and the content of the story. Many techniques were used to help students achieve the goals that beyond their reach. The interview shows that all the five students achieved the academic goals with the scaffolding provided by the teacher. But it's also found that the curriculum played a limited role to improve students' speaking and listening skills.

Overall, the case study is successful to give ESL teachers in China some insights about why and how to adapt the native picture books for their students. Many researchers are needed to explore how to integrate the communicative approach into the adapted curriculum

in a more solid way.

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Appendix A

The interview was given one on one to get the precise information. All the interview questions were asked in Chinese and respondents' answers were reported in Chinese and then translated into English.

Initial Questions	
1	Do you like the read aloud program and why?
2	Do you like the stories and why
3	Could you understand the stories? What's the barrier that interferes your understanding
Final Questions	
1	Did you participate in the program from the beginning to the end?
2	Which vocabulary instruction strategy do you think is most helpful? And why?
3	Do you think the dialogic reading helps you to comprehend the text? And why?
4	Do you think that Chinese facilitated your understanding? And why?
5	Have you learned a new way to invite people? What's that?
6	Do you think the illustrations were helpful for your comprehension? And why?

7

Do you think the story is interesting? And why?

Appendix B

The interview was given to get the precise information. All the interview questions were asked in Chinese and respondents' answers were reported in Chinese and then translated into English.

Questions	
1	Do you think <i>This Is Not a Good Idea</i> have some advantages over the "The Magic Box" series?
2	What're the difficulties to adapt native picture books in classrooms?
3	What accomplishments do you think they gained in the class?
4	Do you think the adaptation contributes to their accomplishments?
5	Do you find anything that we could enhance to make the program better except for the explicit instruction you just mentioned?

Appendix C

The self-evaluation was given to get the precise information. All the interview questions were asked in Chinese and respondents' answers were reported in Chinese and then translated into English.

Students Self-evaluation	Below Average (1)	Satisfact ory (2)	Above Avera ge (3)	Superi or (4)
1. I participated in the program from the beginning to the end.				
2. I can sound out the new vocabularies.				
3. I can recognize the new vocabularies in the text.				
4. I thought over teachers' questions and tried to answer them.				
5. I think these questions help me to understand the story.				
6. I think Chinese helps me a lot to understand the story.				
7. I learned a new way to invite people.				
8. I can play out the story with the help of the teacher.				
9. I like the illustrations in the story and think they help me to understand the text.				
10. I think the story is interesting and I was motivated to read.				
Total the number of responses in each column				