

Action Research on the Integration of Primary English Picture Book and Textbook from the Perspective of “Five Education Simultaneously”

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“Five education” is pivotal for students’ all-round development. However, primary English teaching currently faces challenges including the superficial implementation of “Five education”. This study employed action research to explore practical methods for integrating English picture book with textbook to implement “Five education”. Through two rounds of iterative action research, a three-stage activity-based teaching path was developed and refined, enabling the progressive infusion of “Five education” objectives across the learning cycle. Findings demonstrated that this integrated approach—particularly when supported by strategies such as picture book background videos and audio-edited narrative connections—effectively deepened the implementation of “Five education”, mitigated student reading fatigue, and significantly improved students’ reading fluency and labor initiative, thus provided a replicable practical paradigm for realizing “Five education simultaneously”.

Keywords: “Five education simultaneously”, picture book and textbook, action research, integrated teaching

Introduction

“Five education simultaneously” means that teachers integrate moral education, intellectual education, physical education, aesthetics education, and labor education into subject teaching practice at appropriate teaching times (General Office of the Central Committee, 2019), and it is the core path to realize students’ all-round development (Du, 2023). Current research on “Five education” in primary English mainly concentrates on the textbook itself, with limited studies utilizing resources beyond the textbook. English picture book, characterized by their rich content selection, vivid character portrayals, engaging narratives, and implicit cultural

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values (Wang & Aona, 2017), can effectively compensate for the textbook's constraints, such as limited length and singular contexts. Furthermore, it provides students with opportunities to encounter diverse cultures. As Tian and Fussell (2024) observed, individuals with bilingual and cross-cultural backgrounds demonstrate greater proficiency in integrating resources across varied information environments. The integration of picture book and textbook offers a specific carrier for cultivating students' cross-cultural cognitive abilities, thereby facilitating the organic infusion of "Five education". Therefore, this action research aims to implement the "Five education" through the integrated teaching of English picture book and textbook.

Research Process

Identifying Problems

In current primary and secondary English teaching, "Five education" is frequently treated as a superficial add-on or label (Liu, 2015). As Wang (2022) noted, a common teacher practice involves abruptly elevating thematic significance at the end of the class. This approach not only leaves students feeling perplexed but also creates an impression of artificiality and detachment. This indicates that many teachers lack clarity regarding specific methods for gradually infusing "Five education" while teaching language components.

Analyzing Problems

The core issues stem from the scarcity of suitable teaching materials and the absence of a structured hierarchy for integrating the five educational elements within the instructional process. Firstly, textbook is constrained by length and contextual thinness. Teachers often need supplementary resources to achieve greater depth and sophistication in their lessons. Picture book, with its rich and coherent semantic frameworks, can effectively mitigate the textbook's limitations and support the development of students' subject core competencies (Ding & Xu, 2023). Secondly, teachers often misconstrue "Five education" as merely a concluding embellishment. This misunderstanding results in a lack of systematic design for "Five education" objectives and the failure to layer and infuse these objectives progressively throughout each teaching stage. Consequently, this action research intended to address these gaps through a three-pronged approach: analyzing the educational elements within textbook units, identifying and supplementing with educationally-oriented English picture books, and implementing progressive and interlocking teaching activities.

Determining Research Questions

Based on a comprehensive literature review and teachers' interviews, the central research question was formulated as: "How to effectively realize 'Five education' in primary English classrooms through integrated teaching of picture book and textbook?"

Formulating Action Research Plan

The study involved 43 students from Class One, Grade Five of a primary school in southern China. These students possessed foundational English listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills and had prior exposure to English picture books.

The textbook used was published by Educational Science Press. For each target textbook unit, teachers selected the most appropriate English picture book based on thematic alignment with the unit, consideration of students' learning context, and adherence to three key principles: (a) consistency of thematic scenarios, (b)

relevance of functional language, and (c) equivalence of language difficulty. The specific pairings are detailed in Table 1.

Table 1

Matching of Textbook and Picture Books

Textbook	Picture Book	Educational Connotation
Unit 2 His hobby is drawing	<i>A New Hobby</i>	Try new hobbies, explore potential, and cultivate artistic innovation
Unit 3 I can swim very fast	<i>Alf Saves the Day</i>	Understand hobby-ability differences, respect others' hobbies, and encourage role exploration
Unit 4 Can you do my homework	<i>Tortoise and His Friend</i>	Use abilities to help others
Unit 6 At the weekend	<i>Zob is Bored</i>	Plan time independently and try diverse activities
Unit 7 Do you want coffee or tea	<i>Dining with Dragons</i>	Learn ordering and calculation, and help solve problems
Unit 8 Let's have both	<i>The Street Party</i>	Respect dietary preferences and learn menu design
Unit 10 Different tastes	<i>Everyone Loves Lunchtime but Zia</i>	Respect food cultures and build cultural confidence

Two Rounds of Action Research

The First Round of Action Research

(1) Implementation and Tracking

Weeks 2 to 6 constituted the first round of action research. Integrating Units 2, 3, and 4 of the textbook with selected picture books, the primary objective was to implement moral education, intellectual education, and physical education objectives. Instruction followed the three stages of the activity-based approach, progressively infusing “Five education” objectives (detailed in Table 2).

Table 2

Practice Path of “Five Education” at Each Stage

Stage	Teaching Objectives	Path of “Five Education”
Learning and understanding	Acquire and sort out language and cultural knowledge, and initially perceive educational themes	-Physical education: “I say, you do”; rhythmic exercises -Aesthetics education: Appreciate song rhythm, covers and illustrations -Intellectual education: Learn and apply vocabulary, grammar, reading strategies; extract key information -Labor education: Sort out characters' labor process -Moral education: Analyze plot and character emotions; perceive author's intention
Applying and practicing	Express and communicate, and deepen theme understanding	-Physical education: Analyze sports spirit; role-play -Aesthetics education: Connect aesthetics with language -Intellectual education: Integrate information; visualize thinking -Labor education: Understand labor spirit; develop labor emotions -Moral education: Compare plots/emotions between textbooks and picture books; judge values
Transferring and creating	Connect with reality, and solve practical problems	-Physical education: Formulate exercise plans -Aesthetics education: Make illustrations or arrange music -Intellectual education: Cooperate to solve practical problems -Labor education: Experience labor; enhance labor identity -Moral education: Externalize in practice

(2) Observation and Discovery

Using Unit 3 *I can swim very fast* as an illustrative case, the unit centers on the theme of hobbies and abilities. It employs dialogues to introduce the hobbies and abilities of characters Mike and Xiaoling, aiming to help students understand individual differences in interests and the importance of patience and enthusiasm. The paired picture book, *Alf Saves the Day*, also explores hobbies and abilities, narrating the story of Alf, a football enthusiast who discovers his limitations in offensive skills (dribbling, passing, shooting) but ultimately finds value as a goalkeeper, conveying themes of self-awareness and accepting imperfection.

The lesson aimed to help students grasp foundational language knowledge, extract core information from both textbook and picture book, and establish a basic understanding of hobbies and abilities.

Consequently, the teacher designed diverse activities within the learning and understanding activity stage. First, the “I say, you do” game, which integrates knowledge learning and sports cognition, was used to activate relevant sports vocabulary. Then, students listened to the textbook recordings to match characters with their respective hobbies and abilities. After observing the cover of the picture book, they predicted the possible predicament of the protagonist Alf. During intensive reading of the picture book, students were guided to sort out the reasons why Alf was not good at offensive skills and his emotional changes. In this process, moral education goals were incorporated, and videos or action demonstrations were used to help students distinguish football terms, so as to understand the physical knowledge.

During the applying and practicing activity stage, the focus shifted towards internalizing language, analyzing the picture book’s deeper meaning, and deepening thematic understanding. Students performed physical education-oriented role-play to review the plot of the picture book. Then, a moral education discussion was held to analyze the reasons for Alf’s success as a goalkeeper and explore the possible consequences of giving up, guiding students to recognize their own strengths and accept their shortcomings. Finally, an activity combining intellectual and moral education—designing an ideal football team—was organized to help students understand the value of different positions on the football field and learn to respect individual differences.

The transferring and creating activity stage emphasized value internalization through creative problem-solving in real-life contexts. Students engaged in group discussions and provided suggestions for the scenario “My friend loves music but can’t sing very well”, thus realizing the character development objectives of respecting others’ preferences and encouraging diversified explorations.

In terms of students’ answers to questions in textbook, most students can use strategies such as mind maps and tables to extract information, achieving the intellectual education goal of summarizing and integrating information. From students’ performance in “I say, you do”, imitation, and role-playing, they can distinguish sports vocabulary such as “run fast, heading, dribbling” and fully analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the protagonist in sports in group discussions, achieving the physical education goal of combining physical education with language learning and understanding the importance of teamwork spirit. Finally, from students’ answers to the question “My friend loves music but can’t sing very well”, they can understand the differences between hobbies and abilities, respect others’ hobbies, and encourage others to find suitable roles through continuous exploration, achieving the moral education goal of this class.

(3) Reflection and Improvement

Teacher's feedback confirmed that the integrated picture book and textbook teaching largely achieved the preset goals. However, through classroom observation and post-class interviews, it was found that students have to read both textbook and picture book stories in one class, resulting in reading fatigue for some students. In addition, the transition between textbook and picture book content was abrupt. Some students reported difficulty keeping up with questions when the focus suddenly shifted to the picture book. Finally, the development related to moral education, intellectual education, and physical education primarily manifested in students' verbal responses rather than observable actions or deeper behavioral changes.

The Second Round of Action Research

(1) Implementation and Tracking

The second round of action research was conducted during weeks 7-13. Building upon the integration of Units 6, 7, 8, and 10 from the textbook with their corresponding picture books, the focus shifted towards deepening the objectives of moral education, aesthetics education, and labor education. Key improvement strategies implemented included: (1) making videos of the background clips of the picture book to reduce excessive reading load; (2) using audio editing technology to create a dialogue between the textbook protagonist and the picture book protagonist, enhancing the naturalness of the articulation of two teaching materials; (3) designing transfer and innovation practice activities to enable students to comprehensively apply knowledge through personal experience, thereby deepening educational objectives. Instruction continued to follow the three-stage activity-based framework for infusing "Five education" goals.

(2) Observation and Discovery

Taking the integration lesson in week 13 as an example, the discourse of the textbook Unit 10 *Different tastes* adopts the structure of general and sub-general, which begins with a general description of the different foods people around the world use to celebrate their birthdays, followed by specific examples from China, the United States, Brazil, and Iceland, and concludes with a question that guides the reader to think about their own food preferences for birthday feasts in their own regions. The author intends to introduce the diversity of birthday food cultures around the world, help readers recognize the unique ways of different countries in celebrating birthdays, broaden their cognition of different cultural customs, and guide readers to think about the similarities and differences between their own culture and other cultures, cultivating cross-cultural awareness. The picture book *Everyone Loves Lunchtime but Zia* tells the story of Zia, a young girl from Guangdong, China, who now lives abroad. She is embarrassed by the fact that the Cantonese lunches she brings are different from those of her American classmates, such as barbecued pork buns, chicken with black bean sauce, and intestinal noodles, and her classmates think they are special. Her parents prepare special lunches every day of the week, such as Rice Mondays to symbolise the reunion, and Barbecued pork buns Tuesdays to represent wealth. On her birthday, Zia shares her parents' special lunch with her classmates, who are impressed by the food and its meaning, and Zia feels happy and proud. The author intends to show children's inner world under cultural differences through Zia's story, and introduce the dietary meanings in Cantonese culture to enhance understanding and tolerance between different cultures.

The moral education goals of this class were, on the one hand, to guide students to understand the similarities and differences between different cultures, and enhance cultural tolerance through comparing the food cultures of birthday banquets in different countries; on the other hand, to enable students to learn to accept themselves in cultural conflicts and establish cultural confidence through Zia's emotional changes. The aesthetics education goal was to appreciate the color, shape, and presentation of food through the illustrations of the picture book, describe food beauty with adjectives such as "colorful", "golden", and "shiny", and explore the symbolic meaning behind food, such as longevity noodles representing happiness, combining aesthetic experience with cultural connotation. The labor education goal was to cultivate the awareness of respecting labor and inheriting food culture by learning to make Cantonese dishes and personally experiencing the labor process.

In the learning and understanding activity stage, pictures were used to review food vocabulary, infiltrating aesthetics education; tables are used to sort out regional diets in textbook; audio clips were used to realize the natural introduction of content through the "connection" between textbook character Peter and picture book character Zia; videos were used to present the background to solve Zia's lunch dilemma, simultaneously perceiving cultural conflicts and infiltrating moral education; jigsaw reading was adopted to group process the plots from Monday to Thursday, and combined with blackboard design to appreciate the color, shape, and cultural meaning of food, considering both aesthetics education and moral education.

In the applying and practicing activity stage, the moral education goal was to cultivate students' respect and appreciation for different foods and their cultural meanings. Teacher organized students to discuss questions such as "How do you think Zia's classmates feel when they eat Cantonese food?" and "If you were Zia, would you feel proud of your lunches at the end? Why?" to guide students to think about the impact of Cantonese food culture on Zia and her classmates from different perspectives, help them understand that different food represent different regional cultures, and deepen their understanding of Cantonese food culture.

In the transferring and creating activity stage, the labor education goal was to enable students to personally learn and experience the production process of Cantonese dishes, and the moral education goal was to deepen students' understanding and identification with Cantonese food culture. Teacher made use of the campus food festival activity to organize students to select Cantonese dishes as research objects in groups. After class, students needed not only to learn how to make Cantonese dishes but also to search and understand the cultural meanings behind them. On the day of the festival, students sold the dishes they made in English, enhanced their identification with local food culture at the moral education level, and showed the beauty of the dishes through description and promotion at the aesthetics education level.

Students' feedback, such as sharing their experience of selling barbecued pork buns, reflects both their ability to apply knowledge and their pride in local culture. Teacher feedback indicated that the second round of action research effectively deepened the implementation of moral education, aesthetics education, and labor education objectives. Pre-test and post-test questionnaire data revealed students improvements in several areas: in reading fluency, increased from 19% to 46%; in comprehension, increased from 12% to 29%; and in taking the initiative to undertake labour tasks, increased from 26% to 59%. Furthermore, interviews and classroom observations suggested that strategies like creating picture book background videos and using audio editing effectively mitigated students' reading fatigue and improved the previously stiff transition between textbook and picture book content.

(3) Reflection and Improvement

The second round of action research effectively deepened the implementation of relevant education objectives, optimized teaching strategies to mitigate issues like reading fatigue and stiff content transitions through specific means. The technological manipulation and optimization of the material is consistent with the findings of related research (Tian et al., 2025), which posits that editing and formal innovation of texts through technology can significantly enhance content acceptability and dissemination.

Conclusion

The integration of picture book and textbook can effectively expand the depth and breadth of “Five education”. This study confirms that teachers can disassemble and infiltrate the objectives of “Five education” in the three stages of activity-based approach, and then design practical activities for students to apply the knowledge in their psychological feeling and personal experience. At the same time, making video clips of picture book story backgrounds and realizing the natural integration of textbooks and picture books through audio editing can significantly optimize students’ learning experience, providing an operable and effective practical paradigm for the implementation of “five education” in primary English classrooms.

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