Educational Innovation Research, 2026, Volume 4, Issue 7
https://bbwpublisher.com/journal/EIR
Online ISSN: 3029-1852
Print ISSN: 3029-1844

Research on the Application of Picture Books in Kindergarten Language Teaching Activities

Yue Liang*

Xinjiang Hetian College, Hetian 848099, Xinjiang, China

Author to whom correspondence should be addressed.

Copyright: © 2026 Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY 4.0), permitting distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is cited.

Abstract: As high-quality educational carriers for kindergarten language teaching, picture books feature a narrative style integrating pictures and text. They can adapt to the stepwise language development rules of preschool children and conform to the cognitive characteristics of children's language acquisition. Starting from the language educational attributes of picture books and the developmental needs of children's language, this paper systematically explores the application value of picture books in kindergarten language teaching. It sorts out the educational functions of picture book teaching from multiple dimensions, including children's language competence cultivation and thinking expansion. Teaching implementation paths for picture books are formulated in line with children's age-related developmental characteristics, so as to provide theoretical references for the optimized implementation of kindergarten language teaching activities and support the coordinated development of children's language literacy and language thinking.

Keywords: Picture books; Kindergarten; Language teaching; Preschool children's language development

Online publication: July 26, 2026

1. Introduction

Language education serves as a core component of the preschool education system in kindergartens and lays an important foundation for fostering children's communication competence, thinking ability and comprehensive literacy. Language acquisition in early childhood has unique stage-specific characteristics, and conventional language teaching modes can hardly fully meet children's cognitive needs for visualization and fun-oriented learning [1]. With their distinctive pictorial and textual narrative form, standardized language system, and complete narrative structure, picture books highly match the educational goals of kindergarten language teaching and have become vital resources for current preschool language instruction. Based on the stage characteristics of children's language development, this paper explores the language education advantages of picture books, investigates their application value and implementation strategies in kindergarten language teaching, and provides support for enriching teaching forms and improving the teaching quality of kindergarten language courses.

2. Language educational characteristics of picture books

Picture books realize language educational functions through the coexistence of pictures and texts. Pictures and texts form a complementary and symbiotic narrative relationship, lowering the comprehension threshold of text-only reading and fitting the cognitive reception rules of young children. The textual system of picture books is professionally screened in the field of preschool education. Vocabulary and sentence patterns match the cognitive hierarchy of children's language acquisition, and concise and standardized written language can offer children standardized samples for language imitation. The narrative structure of picture books forms a complete, logically closed loop. Plots advance following a gradual narrative logic, and intact storylines can guide children to build basic cognition of linguistic logic. The content of picture books focuses on daily and childlike scene themes, matching children's scope of life cognition. Visualized carriers reduce the cognitive difficulty for children to understand and express language, and continuously promote the steady improvement of children's language perception ability.

3. Stage-specific needs of children's language development

Language acquisition of preschool children follows a stepwise developmental rule. Cognitive levels and life experiences at different ages determine the core developmental priorities of children's language perception, expression and application. Children in junior kindergarten classes are in the budding stage of oral language development. Auditory perception develops first, and the recognition and output of simple words and short sentences constitute the core of language development at this stage. Children show stronger receptivity to visualized and contextualized linguistic information. The language system of children in middle kindergarten classes gradually improves. Their ability to organize complete sentences independently keeps rising, and the initiative and coherence of language expression increase step by step. Children begin to try to describe what they see and their inner feelings through language. Children in senior kindergarten classes possess basic linguistic and logical thinking and become more sensitive to semantics, context, and emotion in language. Their developmental demands for language creation, logical expression and in-depth understanding keep emerging, laying core foundations for subsequent written language learning.

4. Application value of picture books in kindergarten language teaching activities

4.1. Consolidating children's basic language expression competence

Children's daily language expression scenarios are mostly limited to fragmented daily communication, and their oral output generally suffers from monotonous vocabulary and scattered sentences. Preschool language education takes language expression training as its core foundational component. Picture book texts receive professional refinement, and neatly arranged word collocations together with normative sentence patterns offer standard language learning samples for young children. Continuous contact with high-quality picture book texts helps children build up a rich reservoir of vocabulary tied to daily life and specific contexts, while children adjust inappropriate expressions and discontinuous speaking habits in oral communication [2]. Story scenes constructed in picture books match the range of children's cognitive experience. Immersive perception of story plots arouses children's internal motivation for expression, and pushes children to turn acquired language knowledge into spontaneous oral output. Such practice strengthens children's fundamental ability of language expression, and meets the demand for oral language acquisition among children in different age groups [2].

4.2. Cultivating children's reading literacy of language

Visual perception, character recognition and semantic comprehension develop together to support the growth of children's early reading competence. Single training focused on character recognition fails to fit the formation rules of children's reading literacy. Picture books carry the integrated form of images and texts, and images deliver direct explanations for textual implications to lower the difficulty for children to grasp abstract word meanings. Children establish the matching relation between texts and scenes, semantics and emotions in the process of joint reading of images and texts, and construct individual modes for reading perception. Sustained reading of picture books enables children to identify textual details and core story information, and promotes the perception and interpretation of language content. Repeated contact with picture books helps children maintain stable reading behaviors, strengthens children's understanding of language texts, and supports the gradual formation of systematic language reading literacy for children.

4.3. Expanding dimensions of children's language thinking development

The advanced development of linguistic competence relies on the support of thinking ability. The integrity and logic of language expression are essentially external manifestations of the maturity of the thinking system. Picture books have complete storylines and rigorous plot logic, and the beginning, development, climax and ending of stories contain diverse logical relations such as cause and effect, progression and transition. The process of children interpreting and sorting out picture book stories can exercise the brain's ability to integrate, organize and deduce linguistic information [3]. Rich story themes and creative plots in picture books can break the limitations of children's daily thinking and inspire multi-angle thinking. The imagination, interpretation and continuation of picture book plots activate the dual development of creative thinking and logical thinking, continuously broaden the breadth and depth of children's language thinking, and realize mutual promotion between language expression and thinking development [3].

5. Application strategies of picture books in kindergarten language teaching activities

5.1. Selecting suitable picture books scientifically according to children's age gradient

Children's linguistic cognition and reception ability show distinct age stratification characteristics. There are prominent differences in vocabulary reserve, comprehension ability and aesthetic preference among children in different grades. The degree of matching of picture book materials directly determines the quality of implementation of language teaching activities. Picture book selection for kindergarten language teaching should comply with the laws of children's physical and mental development, and match corresponding picture book resources in accordance with the language acquisition goals of children in each grade. The cognitive system of young children is dominated by concrete perception, so picture books with rich images, simple plots and easy vocabulary are more suitable for their cognitive rhythm. Older children have basic capabilities of logical understanding and semantic interpretation, and picture books with rich connotations, diverse plots and standard language can meet their advanced language development demands. Accurate stratified material selection avoids the disconnection between picture book content and children's cognition, and guarantees the suitability and effectiveness of picture book-based language teaching. A scientific picture book screening mechanism enables teaching content to precisely match children's zone of proximal development, making language acquisition gradual and progressive. It prevents learning resistance caused by over-challenging content and low learning efficiency resulting from overly simple materials, and continuously consolidates the

foundation of children's stage-based language development [4].

For instance, language teaching for junior kindergarten classes can adopt enlightening picture books with bright colors, single-character images, and repetitive simple sentence patterns. The Very Hungry Caterpillar features simple scenes and combines numbers with daily objects, which fits the cognitive characteristics of junior kindergarten children and helps them accumulate basic vocabulary and perceive short sentences [4]. Language teaching for middle kindergarten classes can select picture books with coherent plots, diverse scenes and simple narrative logic. The Ant and the Watermelon builds stories based on daily teamwork scenarios, and its moderate language difficulty promotes children's practice of expressing complete sentences. Language teaching for senior kindergarten classes can introduce narrative picture books with emotional connotations and value guidance. No, David! delivers emotional meanings with stories about daily growth experiences, and the multi-layered narrative structure of the work promotes children's capacity to interpret language and organize logical expressions. Targeted selection of picture books builds a progressive framework for language learning content, and children from different class groups gain steady accumulation of language knowledge and advancement of language perception ability when reading matched picture book resources.

5.2. Conducting oral expression training using situations in picture book illustrations

Picture book illustrations carry direct, concrete and interesting visual features. Rich visual scenes lower learning barriers for abstract language knowledge and match children's cognitive characteristics built on intuitive thinking. Kindergarten language teaching builds immersive expression scenes based on unique pictorial contexts from picture books, and static illustrations turn into dynamic carriers for language learning. Visual perception in children arouses willingness to express. Characters, scenes, movements and emotional information inside illustrations supply sufficient content foundation for children's oral output. Sustained exposure within pictorial contexts pushes children to observe and describe actively, eases timidity and insufficient content during oral expression, and lifts fluency and completeness of children's oral expression. Continuous input of visual scenes reduces unfamiliarity and nervousness in children's language expression, guides children to capture details within illustrations, supports the transition from passive listening to active narration, and develops stable oral expression awareness in children [5].

Teachers construct expression scenes from illustrations of Guess How Much I Love You while arranging oral teaching activities for middle-class kindergarten children. Interactive plots of Big Hare and Little Hare inside this picture book hold strong attraction, and clear visual information of character movements and facial expressions provides reference for children's expression practice. Teachers guide children to observe body movements and emotional changes presented by illustrations, and encourage children to describe story scenes and character emotions according to pictorial content. Children organize language independently to form simple sentences with reference to pictorial details, and imitate emotional sentences constructed within illustration contexts. Observation and expression practice under immersive conditions strengthen children's ability to arrange oral language and enrich the vividness and integrity of children's oral expression. Situational oral training expands expression materials for children, supports stable links between pictorial perception and language output, and promotes gradual improvement of children's oral expression system.

5.3. Organizing children's creation and narration based on textual gaps in picture books

High-quality picture books avoid comprehensive display of story content, and set aside sufficient blank parts in texts and plots to support children's imagination and language creation. Blank parts in picture

books become valuable teaching materials for preschool language instruction. Unfinished plot segments release children's thinking limits formed by fixed story content. Children develop language thinking and creative capacity at the same time while completing independent thinking and plot supplementation[5]. Teaching plans built around blank parts of picture books change the single learning form of story appreciation, push children to move from passive acceptance of language information to active language creation, and lift children's grasp of language structures and narrative logic. Adjustable teaching space formed by plot blanks fits children's individual thinking features, values different cognitive angles and creative thoughts of children, offers enough room for children's creative language production, and promotes the growth of individual language ability.

Teachers adopt classic wordless picture books with rich plot blanks, including The Snowman, for language creation activities targeting senior kindergarten children. A series of pictures records interaction events between the snowman and the child, and many expandable blank plot segments exist among different picture frames. Teachers can guide children to sort out the main storyline based on existing pictures, and encourage them to supplement missing plots, dialogues, and scene details between images with life experience and imagination. Children can construct narrative logic independently and complete diversified linguistic creation practices including story continuation, plot supplementation and dialogue creation. Different children's thinking perspectives can generate differentiated creative content. Continuous creation training based on gaps diversifies the forms of children's language application and exercises their language innovation and logical construction ability. Long-term creation practice helps children master basic narrative logic proficiently, improves the autonomy and flexibility of language organization, and effectively breaks the limitation of templated language expression.

5.4. Developing diversified language practice activities extended from picture book themes

The complete thematic core and rich content system of picture books feature strong teaching extensibility. Simply explaining picture book stories cannot fully tap the language educational value of picture books. Kindergarten language teaching needs to break the single form of classroom lecturing and develop diversified after-class practice scenarios based on core themes of picture books. Diversified language practice scenarios extend classroom teaching effects and provide regular channels for children to apply language [6]. Children can reuse vocabulary and sentence patterns accumulated in class during thematic practice, so as to internalize and flexibly apply linguistic knowledge and achieve all-round improvement of comprehensive language competence. In-depth integration of classroom theoretical learning and extracurricular practice improves the closed loop of children's language acquisition, strengthens memory retention and application proficiency of linguistic knowledge, and enables language learning to move beyond single classroom scenarios and integrate into children's daily study and life [6].

For example, after finishing classroom teaching of Diary of a Worm, teachers can design a series of language practice activities based on its core theme of interesting popular science. Centered on the diary narrative form of the picture book, teachers can organize oral diary narration, story sharing and picture book drama performance. Teachers can guide children to record interesting life events and share orally in class from the narrative perspective of the picture book. Group cooperation can also be adopted, allowing children to divide roles to perform interesting plots in the picture book and independently design character dialogues and interactive sentences. Theme-extended practice activities connect language learning and practical application in daily life, enrich the scenario forms of children's language use, and continuously strengthen children's flexible

language application and team expression abilities. Diversified practice forms can take into account the expression characteristics of different children and comprehensively exercise their comprehensive literacy, including language application, communication, cooperation, and impromptu expression.

6. Conclusion

The in-depth integration of picture books and kindergarten language teaching can well adapt to the developmental rules of preschool children's language acquisition, and exerts positive promoting effects on cultivating children's basic linguistic ability, reading literacy and language thinking. The unique educational characteristics of picture books can remedy the uniformity weakness of traditional language teaching and build interesting and systematic language learning scenarios for children. Picture book selection matched with children's age gradient, situational oral training, creative content creation and theme-based practice extension can form a complete picture book language teaching system. Scientific application of picture books in language teaching activities can continuously optimize kindergarten language teaching modes and promote the long-term all-round development of children's comprehensive language literacy.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

[1] Cai XY, Wang XX, Huang X, et al., 2026, Embodied Nursery Rhyme Teaching Shows Preliminary Efficacy for Preschoolers' Language Aesthetic Ability: A Pilot Mixed-Methods Study From China. Frontiers in Education, 11: 1771415.

[2] Shan DY, 2026, Digital Storytelling in Kindergartens: A Practical Study on Improving Young Children's Language Expression Ability in Chinese Kindergartens. Journal of Sociology and Education, 2(3).

[3] Davis T, Schrodt K, McClain J, 2026, Enhancing Prekindergarten Narrative Skills Through Picturebook Art Exploration. The Reading Teacher, 80(1): e70055.

[4] Li YZ, Abduraim M, 2026, Practical Strategies for Enhancing Language Expression Skills of Middle-Class Preschoolers Through Gamification-Based Teaching. Education Reform and Development, 8(1): 51–57.

[5] Haen AC, Steffensky M, Bürgermeister A, et al., 2026, Instructional Talk in Early Science Education: How Teachers' Support and Children's Verbal Participation Shape Language Development and Learning About Materials. Early Education and Development, 37(2): 492–517.

[6] Ware JK, Daly N, Teokotai L, et al., 2024, Language Learning Using Pacific Picturebooks in an Aotearoa New Zealand Kindergarten. Australasian Journal of Early Childhood, 49(3): 264–277.

Publisher's note

Bio-Byword Scientific Publishing remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.