
The Sounds of Picturebooks for English Language Learning

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Abstract

Picturebooks have long been recognised to aid language development in both first and second language acquisition. This paper investigates the relevance of the acoustic elements of picturebooks to raise phonological awareness and to fine-tune listening. In order to enhance the learners' aural and oral skills for English language development, the paper proposes that listening to stories from picturebooks plays a most important role for raising awareness of the sound system of English in child second-language learners. To provide practical advice for teachers of young learners, this article describes the ways that picturebooks promote listening and speaking and develops criteria to select picturebooks for English instruction focusing on the acoustic elements of language.

Keywords: picturebooks, acoustic elements of language, phonological awareness, listening, reading.

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Speech Sounds Before Words

Age plays an important role in language learning. In recent years, there has been an increasing demand from parents and from educational authorities to start English in the early years (Rixon, 2015; Murphy & Evangelou, 2016). According to some researchers, young learners seem to be better at acquiring the speech sounds and the rhythm of the new language over those learners who start later. In Johnstone's words, starting early

. . . can bring children's intuitive language acquisition capacities into play. This may help them over time in acquiring the sound system, a grammar and possibly other components of language which have something in common if not everything in common with a native speaker's command. (Johnstone, 2002, p. 19)

According to Patel 'each language has its own set of distinctive speech sounds or phonemes, which native listeners learn implicitly as part of making sense of the sound stream that reaches their ears' (2008, p. 726). All languages contain words formed by syllables in turn made up of phonemes, and the conversations in all languages contain groups of words that express speakers' ideas through speech sounds. A baby's task is to fine-tune its listening over time so that it figures out the specific repertoire of speech sounds of the language they hear which 'includes the vowels, consonants and pitch contrasts of the native language' (Patel, 2008, p. 9). Moreover, as Kuhl (2010) points out, babies have learnt to discriminate the rhythm and intonation of their mother tongue much before they understand the meaning of words. However, moving from one's mother tongue to new languages offers both benefits and challenges. Young learners who encounter English as a new language at school must pay attention to the phonemes that make up English syllables, words and utterances in order to make sense of the continuous stream of speech from the speakers around them, despite the fact that:

. . . those who have learnt a language know a great deal about many other languages without realizing that they do. The learning of further languages generally facilitates the activation of this knowledge and increases awareness of it, which is a factor to be taken into account rather than proceeding as if it did not exist. (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 170)

Focusing specifically on English and Castilian Spanish to show how languages differ from each other in their phonetic systems, Table 1 shows in grey that 'several English consonants have equivalent or near-equivalent sounds in Spanish' (Walker, 2010, p. 130). The consonants in white are English phonemes that are absent as phonemes in Spanish,

suggesting therefore that Spanish native speakers will have to pay more attention to the pronunciation of these English consonants.

Table 1: English and Spanish consonant phonemes (Source: Coe, 2001, p. 92)

p	b	f	v	θ	ð	t	d
s	z	ʃ	ʒ	tʃ	dʒ	k	g
m	n	ŋ	l	R	j	w	h

As far as the vowel system is concerned, Spanish has five diphthongs and five pure vowels which ‘have a length roughly midway between that of the short and long vowels of English’ (Walker, 2010, p. 133). On the contrary, English has eight diphthongs and 12 vowels that are potentially difficult for Spanish native speakers. Table 2 presents in grey the English and Spanish vowel phonemes which are equivalent or near-equivalent and in white the English vowels which ‘are difficult for learners to hear, and even more difficult to produce’ (Walker, 2010, p. 133).

Table 2: English and Spanish vowel phonemes (Source: Coe, 2001, p.91)

i:	ɪ	e	æ	eɪ	aɪ	ɔɪ
ɑ:	ɒ	ɔ:	ʊ	aʊ	əʊ	ɪə
u:	ʌ	ɜ:	ə	eə	ʊə	

Furthermore, in addition to vowel and consonant pronunciation, one of the most difficult tasks for Spanish speakers is English prosody: pitch, tempo, volume, stress, rhythm and intonation. English is a stress-timed language, with stressed and non-stressed syllables: stressed syllables in English are more prominent ‘tend to be longer, to sound louder, to be produced with more energy and to carry intonation movements (Marks & Bowen, 2012, p. 21). Importantly, too, in English, vowels in stressed syllables are given their full value and not ‘reduced’ to /ə/ or /ɪ/ as they usually are in unstressed syllables.

They tend to come at equal intervals in time regardless of how many intervening unstressed syllables there are (see Figure 1):

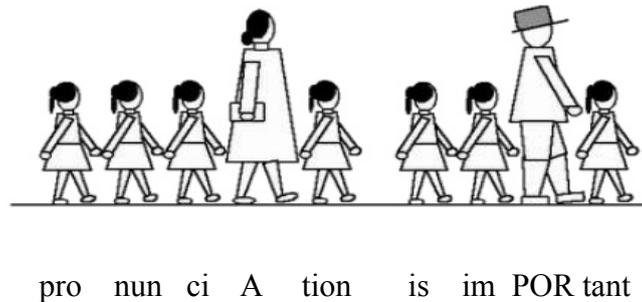


Figure 1: English, stressed-timed language (illustrations adapted from Prator & Robinett, 1985)

Spanish, on the contrary, is a syllable-timed language, which means that each syllable receives approximately the same length (see Figure 2).

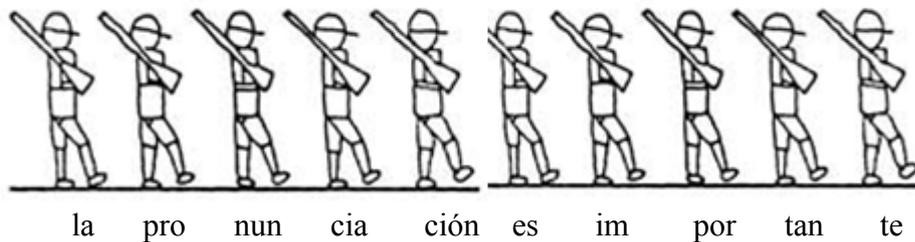


Figure 2: Spanish, syllable-timed language (illustrations adapted from Prator & Robinett, 1985)

To learn how to speak English as a new language implicitly at an early age at school, receptive skills such as listening and understanding are paramount (Long, 1996; Mackey 2007; Fleta, 2015). In order for non-native children to absorb the phonemes and prosody of English, teachers need to understand which phonological skills acquired for the mother tongue can be transferred into English and which ones are not equivalent in both languages and need to be learned. This is where picturebooks come into play, owing to the fact that they ‘rely on a combination of illustrations and narrative, with both being integral to the complete work’ (Machado, 2010, p. 283). They combine verbal and visual texts to tell stories and engage children, first, as ‘lookers’ and listeners, and later on as readers. According to Wright (2000, p. 3): ‘stories are the cornflakes of the classroom’ for they

contain all the ingredients for language and content learning. They are great sources of information, appeal to young learners' interests and help to develop the skills of listening, understanding, emergent reading and writing, and moreover, thinking. Picturebook shared-reading sessions help children to actively learn language through their ears and their eyes (Fleta, 2015, p. 140). Even though at the pre-literate stage young children are still unable to read the text in picturebooks, they are able to read images in their quest for meaning. For this reason, listening to stories being read in class while looking at the illustrations of picturebooks may play a significant role in early language learning.

Listening to the Acoustic Elements of English Through Picturebook Reading

Storytelling is an old form of teaching (Greene, 1996), and 'during book-reading and storytelling experiences, aural stimulation is provided by the reader/narrator's voice and visual stimulation is provided through illustrations, puppets, toys or similar resources' (Niland, 2007, p. 8). Listening to stories from picturebooks being read in class is among the most effective awareness-raising practices to teach *active* listening and to engage young learners in conversational interaction (Fleta, 2015). As Jalongo (2004) highlights: 'Listening to and talking about picturebooks is an effective way to transition into reading, because each requires the child to make meaning of a message and to understand vocabulary' (p. 22). Thus, shared picturebook reading helps learners to develop their listening and speaking skills and prepares the road for emergent literacy. Given its importance for raising phonological awareness, some authors have drawn attention to picturebooks 'that engage children to do delightful things with sound' (Jalongo, 2004, p. 56).

The language in picturebooks helps to develop the so-called 'fifth skill, *thinking in English*' (McRae, 1991, p. 5), which is considered paramount to developing language awareness and text interpretation. The ultimate goal of picturebooks is to activate thinking and to provide meaning through the combination of illustrations and the acoustic elements of language since both modes of presenting the information help young learners to develop an understanding of the plot and to make indirect and unconscious language learning meaningful. When children listen to a picturebook story during circle time and at the same time look at the illustrations, they develop an understanding of the story; they have access to the acoustic elements of the language, stress and intonation patterns, as well as to the

grammatical patterns of the language. Moreover, during teacher-child interaction with picturebooks, infants and toddlers acquire basic understandings about literacy, they 'learn to hold the book right side up, to begin at the beginning and turn the pages one at the time' (Jalongo, 2004, p. 95).

According to Cameron, when foreign language learners are read stories in class, they get the meaning of the words from the book illustrations and through the context:

Children listening to a story told in a foreign language from a book with pictures will understand and construct the gist, or outline meaning, of the story in their minds. Although the story may be told in the foreign language, the mental processing does not need to use the foreign language, and may be carried out in the first language or in some language-independent way, using what psychologists call 'mentalese'. (Cameron, 2001, p. 40)

Many author/illustrators are aware of the correlation between language and pictures and they explore with sounds when they create their works. Nikola-Lisa, a children's author, emphasises that there is an inseparable relationship between sound and meaning in his books. He explains that when he gets an idea, it often comes with a melody or with some other strong acoustic pattern:

I try to use sound both as a foreground image and as a background acoustic device. Writing is never done exclusively on one level. When I look at my writing in *Storm*, I cannot separate sound and meaning easily. They go hand in hand. (Nikola-Lisa, 1991, p.169)

In the same vein, Pie Corbett in *Talk for Writing* emphasizes that:

Writing poetry involves the meaning and the sound – the music of the words. Sound is part of the physical quality of the writing. The poet listens to the sound as well as the meaning. A good poem takes delight in making music with words. (Corbett, 2008, p. 4)

In order to enhance phonological awareness, teachers can choose picturebooks with poems, nursery rhymes, finger plays, refrains or songs. They all help children '[become] aware of the similarities and differences in a language and their patterns, tones, tempo and beat, loudness, softness, the *sources* of the sound as well as the sounds' (Bruce & Spratt, 2013, p. 105). In sum, picturebooks help children become aware of how language is composed of words and that words are made of syllables, and these in turn, are made up of phonemes. The next sections explore the affordances of picturebooks to raise phonological awareness, focusing on the acoustic elements: phonemes, rhyme, rhythmic refrains, onomatopoeia, alliteration, homophones, homographs, poetry and songs.

The Sounds of Picturebooks

The aim of this part of my article is to explore the sounds of a selection of picturebooks that assist in raising phonological awareness and acquiring English prosody. In some picturebooks, the illustrations support the words and show what the text tells. Here I am not considering the affordances of the visual texts in picturebooks, rather, the verbal text is the focus. I consider picturebooks that can be used by educators at segmental and supra-segmental levels with the purpose of clarifying the crucial role that acoustic elements of picturebooks play in language learning; describing the ways that picturebooks promote listening and speaking; and finally suggesting effective ways of linking picturebooks with young learners second-language learning. To that end, firstly, picturebooks dealing with phonemes, the smallest units of speech that make up English, are presented (Walker, 2010, p. 199), secondly, other acoustic elements of language are considered. The selection of picturebooks and activities I present here have been used with young Spanish learners, in foreign language classes.

Phonemes and picturebooks

Many picturebooks that focus on specific English phonemes may be used for raising phonological awareness. Figure 3 presents some titles that focus on some specific phonemes that Spanish native speakers need to learn.

Phoneme	Picturebook
/v/	<i>Move Over, Rover!</i> (Beaumont & Dyer, 2006)
/ʃ, dʒ, p/	<i>Sheep in a Jeep</i> (Shaw, 1986)
/z/	<i>Whose Toes are Those?</i> (Elias & Strum, 1992)
/θ, ð/	<i>The Tooth Book</i> (Seuss, 2000)
/h/	<i>A House is a House for Me by Mary</i> (Hoberman & Fraser, 1978)
/ɑ:, ɜ: /	<i>Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day</i> (Viorst, 1972)
/ʌ, æ/	<i>Just Like Dadd</i> (Asch, 2015)
/j, w/	<i>Yo! Yes?</i> (Raschka, 1990)

Figure 3: Picturebooks that feature specific English phonemes

A picturebook like *Yo! Yes?* by author/illustrator Chris Raschka (1990), is particularly useful to practise sounds that are rare in some children's mother tongues. For instance, the sound /j/ in 'yesterday' /'jes.tə.deɪ/ and the sound /w/ in 'we' /wi/, are both mispronounced by Spanish speakers. For example, /w/ in 'we' is often pronounced as /gui/. The text of *Yo! Yes?*, some of which is presented below, would particularly help non-native English speakers with the pronunciation of the phonemes /j/ and /w/ and also become a good source to practise intonation of interrogative and exclamatory utterances during the first stages of reading.

Yo! Yes?
Hey! Who?
You! Me?

(Raschka, 1990)

Young learners of English can explore the quality of speech sounds by paying attention to 'tricky' sounds for non-native speakers. After reading *Yo! Yes?* aloud in class, the teacher can emphasize the sounds /j/ and /w/ in initial position by noting the different lip and tongue positions. To practise the palatal and bilabial English approximants /j/ and /w/, children can play the 'Basketball' game with paper balls, and throw a ball into a box when they hear the sounds /j/ or /w/ from a list of words beginning with these two

phonemes. Complexity can be added to the game if words containing these phonemes are included.

Rhyme and picturebooks

Children seem to enjoy rhythm, rhyme, and repetition and titles in Figure 4 are examples of picturebooks which make explicit use of rhyme in particular.

Ants in Your Pants (Jarman & Parker-Rees, 2011)
Need a Trim, Jim (Umansky & Chamberlain, 2000)
Giraffes Can't Dance (Andreae & Parker-Rees, 2012)
Goodnight Moon (Brown, 2007)
Chicka Chicka Boom Boom (Martin & Archambault, 2012)
Orange, Pear, Apple, Bear (Gravett, 2007)

Figure 4: Picturebooks with rhythm, rhyme and repetition

The author-illustrator Emily Gravett (2007) plays with rhyme in *Orange, Pear, Apple, Bear*, 'Rhyme, which takes the ear to the sounds at the ends of words, helps children to hear patterns and distinguish between those that sound the same or different (Bruce & Spratt, 2013, p. 22).

Emily Gravett uses a verbal text with only five words rearranged and repeated throughout the picturebook. The punctuation and the word order change the meaning of the combined words.

Orange
 //
 Pear
 /
 Apple
 //
 Bear
 /
 Apple, pear
 // /
 Orange bear
 // /

(Gravett, 2007)

By using repetition and the rhyming of three words (pear, bear and there), Gravett creates an enchanting tempo and spoken rhythm which engages children's attention and stimulates speech processing and language comprehension. 'There are many words in the English language which sound similar and rhyme, but will look quite different when written down' (Bruce & Spratt, 2013, p. 106). Gravett's picturebook provides an opportunity for children to hear and see these words in a very appropriate context.

Goswami (2001) points out that 'many of the language games, linguistic routines and nursery rhymes of early childhood act to emphasise segmental phonology by increasing the salience of syllables, onsets and rimes' (p.7). Language play entices all ages (Crystal, 1996) and picturebooks like this one enable children to play with language. In addition to language, Emily Gravett plays with concepts (colours, shapes, fruits) and experiments with punctuation to change meanings. While reading this picturebook, teachers can use a clear easy-to-see way of marking word stress with circles to highlight the number of syllables, and the rhythm by paying attention to the punctuation for chunking (/) and for pausing (□).

Ghosn (2013) considers that 'the simplest way to revisit the story is for children to read the story chorally' (p. 148), and Gravett's picturebook is suitable for shadow, shared, choral, paired or echo reading sessions using beats for syllable counting. As such, children are given much needed practice in emergent and early reading skills through the use of high-quality reading material (Jalongo, 2004). Although choral speaking sessions differ from normal speech, they offer children opportunities to practice the quality of sounds, word and sentence stress, intonation patterns and also the importance of pausing while reading. Reciting the text may also help children to sound more native-like due to the well-established rhythmic patterns of the verses reflecting the stress-timed nature of English. Thus, implementing choral speaking in the classroom or during group presentations would help children to achieve rhythm, stress and the intonation patterns of English prosody, 'because it demonstrates how meaning is made through text, and how intonation, stress, and patterns of spoken language are related to punctuation and to the words on the page' (Gibbons, 2015, p. 153).

Rhythmic refrains and picturebooks

The picturebooks in Figure 5 include rhythmic refrains and repetition of the same patterns. These refrains can be used to teach chunks of language; first, the *verbatim* phrases may be

repeated mechanically like formulaic language, to be later absorbed and processed by the learners. There are various ways of doing this: the teacher can invite children to join in to repeat the refrains they hear in books to experiment with the rhythm of the text while reading, or the teacher reads most of the book and children repeat the refrain, or asks the boys and girls take turns to read different sections.

The Enormous Potato (Davis & Petričić, 1996)

The Doorbell Rang (Hutchins, 1989)

Don't Forget the Bacon (Hutchins, 2002)

Walking Through the Jungle (Lacome, 1995)

The Elephant and The Bad Baby (Vipont, 1969)

Figure 5: Picturebooks with rhythmic refrains

This type of picturebook gives teachers an opportunity to change pitch and tone and allows them to change the volume of their voices while reading the story to evoke children's emotions such as fear, joy, intrigue, etc. As Jalongo (2004) stresses: 'when reading aloud to children, remember that your voice is an important tool. It can be used to differentiate among characters or emphasize an important story element' (p. 57). For example the rhythmic refrains in traditional fairytales like *The Gingerbread Man*: 'Run, run, as fast as you can. You can't catch me, I'm the Gingerbread Man'; or the wolf in *The Three Little Pig*: 'Little Pig, little Pig, let me in! I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house down'. *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* story, in Figure 6, offers the possibility to experiment with three levels of voice pitch: high, in-between and low. To associate the voice with the given character, picturebooks often use different font size to make the level of sound pitch evident to learners, as here in *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*:

Who's been sitting in my chair? (high pitch)

Who's been sitting in my chair? (in-between pitch)

Who's been sitting in my chair? (low pitch)

Rhythmic refrains, like the one above, are one of the most salient parts of the story. They are predictable and memorable and help learners to improve pronunciation and

intonation, understanding intonation as: ‘the “music” of the English language which allows the meaning of words to be changed by speaker depending on how they are spoken’ (McDonald, 2013, p. 55). By joining in with the repetitive refrains during rereading, children practice pronunciation, intonation, pitch and rhythm, which are the building blocks for both listening and speaking, ‘Returning to the identical text again and again enables children to glimpse the structure of language – and of the story itself – to build a foundation for subsequent experiences (Jalongo, 2004, p. 102).

Onomatopoeia and picturebooks

Onomatopoeia is ‘the naming of a thing or action by a vocal imitation of sound associated with it, as in *buzz* and *hiss*’ (Machado, 2010, p. 281). The picturebooks in Figure 6 are a small selection of picturebooks which include an explicit use of onomatopoeia.

<p><i>Cock-A-Doodle Quack, Quack</i> (Baddiel & Jubb, 2007) <i>Dig, Dig, Digging</i> (Mayo, 2002) <i>Little Blue Track</i> (Schertle, 2008) <i>Hurry, Hurry!</i> (Bunting, 2007) <i>Moo Baa La La La</i> (Boynton, 1982) <i>Peace at Last</i> (Murphy, 2007)</p>
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Figure 6: Examples of picturebooks that use onomatopoeia

Peace at Last by author/illustrator Jill Murphy (2007) is a good example of a picturebook which uses onomatopoeia. It is an ideal teaching resource to raise young learners’ awareness and to make the reading of sounds visible, as well as to help children to learn to listen. Murphy links sounds and meaning underlying the acoustic elements of language, using onomatopoeia to convey the various noises that keep Mr Bear awake all night:

NYAAOW!

TICK-TOCK

CUCKOO!

DRIP, DRIP
HMMMMMMM
TOO-WHIT-TOO-WHOO

(Murphy, 2007)

Teachers can read the picturebook once and discuss with the children what sounds to make and what objects would make those sounds to add to the rereading of the story. Then, the teacher rereads the story allowing children to make the agreed sounds with the agreed objects. Moreover, children can play the 'Sounds in the bag' game for sounds discrimination. A set of objects, toys or pictures of objects is introduced in a bag and the teacher explains the sounds that they make. Then, the children take turns to take the objects out of the bag and reproduce the sound they make.

Alliteration and picturebooks

Some author illustrators use alliteration – the repetition of the same initial sounds in two or more words. Alliteration 'helps children to hear repetition of smallest units of sounds (phonemes) and to see the smallest units of sound in print (graphemes) at the beginning of words (Bruce & Spratt, 2013, p. 22). Figure 7 presents examples of picturebooks with alliteration.

<p><i>Princess Pigtoria and the Pea</i> (Edwards & Cole, 2010) <i>Some Smug Slugs</i> (Edwards & Cole, 1998) <i>Sheep on a Sheep</i> (Shaw & Apple, 2010) <i>Each Peach Pear Plum</i> (Ahlberg & Ahlberg, 1999) <i>The Worrywarts</i> (Edwards & Cole, 2003) <i>Animalia</i> (Base, 1993)</p>

Figure 7: Picturebooks that use alliteration

Animalia is an excellent example of a picturebook using alliteration. Graeme Base (1993) plays with language and intriguing pictures by breaking the borders of images to create a more dramatic effect, as animals seem to leap out of the images into the world of

the reader. Each page features an animal which is described using alliteration and pictures of animals and objects. Below are the alliterative words for initial sound identification of the letter 's' as /s/:

SIX
SLITHERING
SNAKES
SLIDING
SILENTLY
SOUTHWORD

(Base, 1993)

One common problem for Spanish speakers is the pronunciation of English consonant clusters beginning with /s/ in initial position. The tendency is to insert /e/ before the initial /s/ sound, so that 'state' becomes /estate/. The lexical items in *Animalia* which begin with consonant clusters such as 'slithering', 'snakes' and 'sliding' can help child learners practice avoiding the epenthetic /e/ by imitating the sound snakes make followed by another consonant /sl/ /sn/. To become more aware of different initial phonemes – especially consonants like /s/ and digraphs like /sl/ and /sn/ – children can play with the initial sounds of their names and find alliterative phrases from general vocabulary categories (parts of the body, animals, food, musical instruments, countries, sports, colours, items of clothing). Adding adjectives with the same initial sound would increase the complexity.

In addition, children can play the 'Guess what I've got in my bag today' game using a bag with objects that include those starting with the phonemes being practiced (e.g. yo-yo; yogurt pot; walnut; wand; watch). Children guess the objects in the bag and at the end of the game the teacher reviews all the initial sounds with an emphasis on the phonemes that have been featured in the shared picturebook.

Homographs, homophones and picturebooks

Homographs are words that are spelled in the same way but carry different meanings and homophones are words like sea/see, meat/meet or tail/tale which sound the same but which

have different meanings. Some words, like 'turn' as in 'turn around' or 'it's your turn' have both features in common and are known as homonyms. Figure 8 lists some picturebooks which include easily confused words used humorously:

<p><i>Which Witch Is Which?</i> (Hutchins, 1989)</p> <p><i>Amelia Bedelia</i> (Parish & Siebel, 2013)</p> <p><i>Me First</i> (Lester & Munsinger, 2013)</p> <p><i>A Chocolate Moose for Dinner</i> (Gwynne, 1987)</p> <p><i>Cat Tale</i> (Hall, 2012)</p> <p><i>Did You Say Pears?</i> (Alda, 2006)</p>

Figure 8: Picturebooks which include easily confused words used humorously

One favourite picturebook is *Did You Say Pears?* by Arlene Alda (2006) where the author introduces children to these features with great humor accompanied by colourful photographs. The language of the book is supported by photographs that illustrate the two different possible meanings for each word:

What better way to combine those interests than in a book that shows what words sound alike but have different meanings, and actually can look alike in a series of opposing photographs. In other words, a book of photographed homographs and homophones. (Alda, 2007, p. 35)

For homographs: a photograph of a trunk of a tree is paired with the trunk of an elephant and drinking glasses on a cottage table with a doll wearing sunglasses. For homophones, a little girl 'blew' out her candles under a bright 'blue' sky.

To raise awareness of the relationships between sound and spelling, children can play the 'Match the homophones' activity in Figure 9, for which they will need two lists of pairs of homophones ordered at random and match each word on the left column to a word that sounds alike on the right column.

eight	flower
rows	read
flour	rose
red	plane
plain	ate

Figure 9: Match the homophones activity

If more than two homophones are presented to children they can play the ‘Odd homophone out’ game and find which word is pronounced differently (e.g. their/there/tear/they’re).

Poetry and Picturebooks

Children’s poetry includes ‘nursery rhymes recited aloud, picture book versions of nursery rhymes . . . picture books based on songs, and stories told in verse’ (Jalongo, 2004, p. 52). Nursery rhymes are treasure troves that ‘acquaint young children in repeated pleasant patterns and with catchy rhythms such as “The Grand Old Duke of York”’ (Machado, 2010, p. 362). These rhymes are ‘mini-stories’ with rhythm and rhyme, easy to retrieve in memory which also enrich children’s vocabulary.

The Grand Old Duke of York

Oh, the Grand Old Duke of York,
 He had ten thousand men,
 He marched them up to the top of the hill,
 And he marched them down again.
 And when they were up they were up,
 And when they were down they were down,
 And when they were only half way up,
 They were neither up nor down.

(Traditional)

Reciting and singing nursery rhymes provides practice in different language areas and can help young learners to take the first steps to develop phonological awareness, 'Educators agree that a great deal of general evidence indicates that both early awareness of rhyme and nursery rhyme knowledge facilitate literacy acquisition' (Machado, 2010, p. 362). There are nursery rhymes to aid with English vowels e.g. 'Humpty Dumpty'; contrasting consonants e.g. 'Mary, Mary quite contrary'; word stress e.g. 'Hickory, Dickory Dock'; sentence stress e.g. 'One, two, buckle my shoe'; and alliteration e.g. 'See saw, Margery Daw'.

Adding sounds to picturebooks

Sound effects can be added to picturebook reading sessions to create a soundscape. Using different sources, children can add sounds made with the body (clap, tap, stomp, click, rub, thump); voice (whisper, whistle, hum, cough); common objects, homemade and real musical instruments or electronic resources (recordings, CDs) can be used during the picturebook reading to create a mood for the narration. Figure 10 presents a list of titles ideal to add sounds to during reading sessions:

<p><i>Emily Loves to Dance</i> (King, 2003)</p> <p><i>Slinky Malinki Open the Door</i> (Lynley, 1992)</p> <p><i>We are Going on a Bear Hunt</i> (Rosen & Oxenbury, 1993)</p> <p><i>A Lion in the Night</i> (Allen, 1985)</p> <p><i>Bertie and the Bear</i> (Allen, 1990)</p> <p><i>The Three Billy Goats Gruff</i> (Carpenter, 1998)</p>
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Figure 10: Picturebooks for sound effects

Teachers can discuss with children what sounds to make and how they can be used most effectively – should they be loud or quiet, fast or slow, long or short. Stories like *Three Billy Goats Gruff* retold by author/illustrator Stephen Carpenter work beautifully with instruments or adding sounds made with the voice or the body.

With selected percussion instruments (claves, maracas, drums, chime bars) or classroom objects (pencils or tapping sticks), children can participate during the reading

session by tapping the rhythm of the goats trip-trapping across the bridge and using the quality of volume (loud/soft, fast/slow), to make a lot of noise to represent the troll.

Songs and picturebooks

There is a close correlation between language, music and the brain (Patel, 2008). Music is a universal language and music and song have been used to tell stories throughout history. According to Jalongo, 'the song picturebook is a fusion of literature and art. Children respond to the language and lyrics as well as to the melody and the illustrations' (2004, p. 51). Singing and picturebook reading are among the most popular teaching resources with young learners (Machado, 2010).

Any story can be developed into a musical performance and fulfill the conditions for English language learning, and to support this picturebooks often come with accompanying music on CDs and or animations on DVDs or a companion site. Figure 11 presents a selection of titles of music and song picturebooks:

<p><i>Violet's Music</i> (Johnson & Huliska-Beith, 2004) <i>This Jazz Man</i> (Ehrhardt & Roth, 2006) <i>Zin! Zin! Zin! A Violin</i> (Moss & Priceman, 1995) <i>My Family Plays Music</i> (Cox & Brown, 2003) <i>Ah, Music!</i> (Alike, 2003) <i>Creepy Crawly Calypso</i> (Langham, Harter & Love, 2004)</p>

Figure 11: Music and song picturebooks

Creepy Crawly Calypso written by Tony Langham, illustrated by Debbie Harter and Sung by Richard Love (2004) features a band of mini-beasts as they play Caribbean calypso introducing musical instruments and numbers up to ten. It is a lovely picturebook that adds music and movement to learn the names of animals, verbs of movement and also onomatopoeia.

Some picturebooks contain text that can be turned into songs and help develop a variety of skills, such as:

- Aural skills when focusing on the sounds accompanying a particular song e.g. in such verses as ‘The babies on the bus went “Wah! Wah! Wah!”’ from song ‘The Wheels on the Bus’;
- Oral skills when focusing on quite difficult lyrics in songs like ‘Ten Green Bottles’;
- Fine and gross motor control skills in action rhymes like ‘Incy Wincy Spider’ and ‘Five Little Speckled Frogs’;
- Social interaction in action songs like ‘The Princess in a Tower’, which requires children to take on roles and work together.

Any story can be developed into a musical performance by adding homemade and real musical instruments to create cacophonous sounds to accompany the story. If children contribute with sound effects (singing, humming, shouting, growling, hooting) to the shared reading sessions, they become part of the story themselves.

Conclusion

After exploring a number of picturebooks here, I hope I have shown that some include the patterning of sounds (e.g. alliteration, rhyme), others pay attention to the words that evoke sounds (e.g. onomatopoeia), while still others emphasize further patterns of language such as rhythm. So in addition to teaching vocabulary, grammar patterns and content, the language in picturebooks also helps to tune learners’ ears to the sounds of English. I conclude that as far as the acquisition of language is concerned, the verbal text in picturebooks goes beyond the limits of the narrated story since shared book reading sessions can generate response and these in turn enhance language outcomes which benefit language use and, as a consequence, language learning.

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