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Creating a Multimodal and Holistic Learning Experience with Catherine Rayner's *Augustus and His Smile*

Annett Kaminski

Abstract

This article reports on a unit of work based around a picturebook that was designed and delivered by a student teacher as part of the teaching practice component of her Master's thesis. The unit consisted of ten sessions which introduced a class of eight- to nine-year-old primary school children in Germany to Catherine Rayner's *Augustus and His Smile.* As part of these picturebook lessons, the English language learners engaged in a variety of cross-curricular activities based on a multisensory approach, such as singing, doing an obstacle course and drawing pictures, conducted mainly through the medium of English with creative writing in German. The analyses of both the aesthetic features of the picturebook and the student teacher's observations suggest that the use of a picturebook can create a meaningful context in the English language classroom: it enables learners to enter the world of the picturebook and experience the language used in the text. The alternative reality of the storyworld simulates real-life encounters and provides a rich, holistic and contextualized learning environment, reminiscent of language acquisition in a natural setting. It is suggested that this fosters English language development by facilitating engagement, by experiencing language through different modes and by encountering it in new contexts.

Keywords: ELT; picturebook; multimodal features; reflective teaching practice

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Introduction

It has been suggested that picturebooks fulfil many good practice principles for primary ELT (Shin & Crandall, 2014; Pinter, 2006; Edelenbos, Johnstone & Kubanek, 2006). Firstly, they can offer a contextualized learning environment for young learners (YLs) who are still developing abstract thought (Piaget, 1959). Peritextual features, such as the front and back covers, endpapers, title pages and illustrations accompanying the main verbal text, offer visual representations of the storyline that is customarily read aloud and would otherwise only be accessible aurally. Secondly, picturebooks are likely to appeal to a young learner's inclination for pretend and imaginary play (Vygotsky, 1978) by evoking real-life experiences, which simultaneously provide children with opportunities to recall actions and language – enabling them to replay and understand situations in their daily environment.

Furthermore, picturebooks develop young learners' multiple literacies and can further enhance these via mediation in the classroom (Ellis, 2018; Bland, 2013a). The verbal and visual text that may complement each other, extend and elaborate on the storyline or even mutually counterpoint each other (Nikolayeva & Scott, 2006) can be used to challenge the young reader cognitively. For example, gaps or missing pieces of information about the characters or plot, that are created in open and ambiguous literary texts, such as postmodern picturebooks, leave room for interpretation and invite learners to contribute to the construction of the story (Bland, 2013a & b). During their quest for answers to 'puzzling reading secrets' (Bland, 2013a, p. 32), young learners engage in genuine problem-solving. As they process the pictorial and verbal text of a picturebook, they search for meaning and may also negotiate such meaning during booktalk in the classroom. This develops both their visual as well as literary literacy, which involves enjoying the aesthetic nature of a literary text. Through the characters' problems that spark different emotions, learners may relive frustration, anger and joy and learn how to deal with these (Ellis, 2018; Mourão, 2012). Picturebook read-alouds also offer the opportunity for YLs to reflect on and discuss characters' motives for their actions, and as they discover the underlying composition of plot and conflict, they develop their academic thinking skills (Ghosn, 2004). YLs can additionally develop their emotional literacy as they try to understand

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characters' feelings based on their visualized body postures or facial expressions. They may learn more about everyday life in different cultural contexts and expand their intercultural literacy. They may also encounter animals and plants, thereby expanding their own nature literacy (Ellis, 2018).

Importantly, exposure to picturebooks has also been suggested to aid linguistic development in so far as learners become aware of phonological, lexical and grammatical patterns (Fleta, 2017), which are highlighted through literary devices, such as rhyme, alliteration or onomatopoeia, and are therefore easier to notice. Thus, the reading of a picturebook seems to create an age-appropriate and holistic learning environment, and it is not a surprise that it can be increasingly found in recommendations for use in primary ELT.

However, if the picturebook can potentially serve so many purposes for teaching YLs, how can we ensure that our teaching enables this in practice? In this respect, it is not only the read-aloud of the picturebook that is noteworthy, it is also the wider context of its use as part of the cycle of preparation, core and follow-up activities (Cameron, 2001). On the basis of observations in primary ELT classrooms, it has been suggested that especially the last phase, follow-up activities – during which the text may be revisited and samples of language recycled and used in new contexts – is often cut short or not varied enough, particularly with regard to longer texts, such as picturebooks (Kaminski, 2016). This raises the question of how the engagement with a picturebook during a read-aloud can be extended to make use of its full learning potential by organizing a variety of activities that allow for multisensory and cross-curricular learning and afford a prolonged holistic language learning experience. This paper aims to propose how this can be facilitated and it reports on ten sessions based around the picturebook *Augustus and His Smile* with a Year 3 class taught by a student teacher (Vockenberg, 2014). Written consent to refer to the student teacher's unit of work, as documented in her M.Ed. thesis, has been obtained for the purpose of this study.

The Multimodal Aesthetic Dimensions and Language Learning Potential of Picturebooks
As a multimodal text, the picturebook conveys meaning in several different ways. However, it is not the only literary format to do so. Most communication can be considered multimodal, in

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the sense that meaning is not only transmitted by use of a single mode but more often than not several different modes, such as sound, music, image, gesture and movement (Jewitt & Kress, 2003). However, unlike the traditional game *Simon Says,* for example, that can be used as a Total Physical Response (TPR) activity creating a synergy of sound and movement, the picturebook combines several modes to create an aesthetic experience. In the primary ELT classroom, the picturebook is customarily experienced through sound (the teacher reading aloud the text) and image (e.g. peritextual features that are visible with teachers holding the book open in front of them). This can be further enhanced by the teacher pointing to and eliciting comments about the depiction of objects and characters on the page as they are mentioned during the read-aloud. Alternatively, YLs can be asked to perform actions which illustrate what is happening, e.g. if a character knocks on a door, young readers are all invited to knock on their desks. Therefore, sound is supported by image, movement or gesture. Furthermore, the verbal text may feature rhyme or onomatopoeia creating extra sound effects, which can also be used to invite learners to join in the performance. Sound effects are often also visualized in the picturebook through changes of font size and direction of print, for example. YLs who are already sensitized to print will notice these and can therefore use them for comprehension, and teachers can guide this process by moving their index finger along the text whenever appropriate. It is this multimodal character of picturebook sessions that provides beginners with scaffolding for processing chunks of authentic language.

Recordings of picturebook read-alouds with Portuguese learners of English, for example, revealed that five-year-olds construct knowledge about the storyline on the basis of peritextual features, such as the cover page, endpapers, dedication pages as well as illustrations, which enabled them to make predictions about the narrative in Portuguese (Mourão, 2013). Similarly, nine-year-old primary school children in Germany made correct predictions about the plot during an initial encounter with Donaldson and Scheffler's picturebook *The Smartest Giant in Town* after the pages were turned and before they listened to the teacher reading the text on the double-page spread. Predictions were communicated in German, which was the shared classroom language. This indicated that they had used the visual representation of the storyline

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in order to understand the plot (Kaminski, 2013).

It seems, however, that multimodal features can only be helpful for the comprehension of stories if they are linked to and support verbal information. Data collected in a study with 8- to 11-year old learners indicated that multimodal features of story apps can distract YLs if the stimulated interaction does not lead to a better understanding of the plot, and the effect of such multimodal features must therefore be seen as counterproductive (Brunsmeier & Kolb, 2017). This implies that the teacher needs to select picturebooks that exhibit a strong interrelatedness or connectedness between picture and word, whether complementary or counterpoint. Furthermore, the teacher needs to be aware of multimodal features that can guide readers' comprehension and make use of them during their presentation of the text. This requires the teacher to analyse the particular picturebook and scrutinize it for multimodal aspects that can serve as entry points for understanding, or 'a way into the story' (Cameron, 2001, p. 163). This aesthetic-linguistic analysis of a picturebook can then inform the design of preparation, main and follow-up activities.

The purpose of preparation and main activities seems obvious and therefore one can probably expect many teachers to invest time and effort when planning them. After all, a read-aloud session will be more successful, and learners will be more engaged if they are motivated and interested in what is to come. They will also understand key vocabulary because it has been revised or is conveyed through a picture, sound or synonym. However, once a text is known to the learners, the initial excitement might seem to have disappeared, and consequently, teachers find it difficult to dwell on the story for too long in case they lose learners' interest. It is therefore the follow-up activities that are more easily at risk of being cut short and undervalued. This is problematic for English language acquisition, because, as mentioned, YLs are pre-occupied with processing multimodal features during the first story encounter in order to grasp the basic plot. This means that we cannot expect them to take in and reflect on the many facets that picturebooks provide the reader, ranging from linguistic information, such as new and familiar words, to intercultural information or intertextual references, for example. The picturebook format offers more than can possibly be discovered and reflected on in a single reading.

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For one of these many layers of a picturebook, namely rich authentic language, the lack of repeated encounters with the text means that teachers may make ineffective use of this rich learning resource in the primary ELT classroom context. Recordings with young children of five years of age revealed that they started to reproduce language from the picturebook during repeated read-alouds (Mourão, 2013). This has also been observed with primary school children aged between eight and ten years, whose verbal contributions in English grew with each joint performance of an action story, a song and a chant (Kaminski, 2019). Revisiting the picturebook and its language can therefore be assumed to encourage memorization not only of individual words but also of multi-item sequences.

This seems especially noteworthy when one considers that chunks of language can be regarded as the building blocks for fluent and idiomatic L1 use (Pawley & Syder, 1983). The analysis of 19 texts comprising 100 to 800 words (taken from *The London Lund Corpus of Spoken English*, the *Lancaster-Oslo-Bergen* corpus of written texts and two versions of *Goldilocks)* showed that they consisted of prefabricated language to a large extent, that is 55% on average, with the proportion for written texts being smaller (52%) and for oral texts higher (59%) (Erman & Warren, 2000). This further implies that prefabricated language is a vital consideration for ELT.

It has been suggested that foreign language L2 learners can access chunks of language quickly and are also able to recycle and recombine them in new contexts, once they have been memorized (Hooper, 1995; Wray, 2008). It has also been proposed that English second language acquisition is based on the memorization of exemplar-based language and abstraction of regularities (Ellis, 2002), similar to children acquiring their first language (Tomasello, 2003; Bybee 2010). Within this argument, it follows that teachers need to create a learning environment where young learners are encouraged to build a solid base of prefabricated chunks that they can rely on for their own language use.

Thus, it is the challenge of designing intriguing and varied follow-up activities that appears to be the key to young learners' acquisition of English language word strings and the appropriation into their own language repertoire – follow-up activities that capture learners'

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imagination and invite them to revisit the text or parts of it and to reproduce language chunks first in similar situations as the one in the picturebook, then in new situations. In Catherine Rayner's picturebook, for example, Augustus the tiger is busy climbing trees, creeping under bushes, swimming and dancing, which are activities that can be simulated during the read-aloud first and later incorporated into an obstacle course in the gym. The English language sessions with *Augustus and His Smile*, reported on in the following section, aimed to create such a learning environment. The focus was on providing an extended exposure to the picturebook in order to highlight its many aspects as well as to recycle its language in new contexts during cross-curricular activities.

Methodological Framework: Reflective Teaching Practice in Primary ELT

For the purpose of this study, an aesthetic-linguistic analysis of the picturebook and its potential for the young learner ELT classroom will be complemented by an analysis of the actual teaching experience reported on by a student teacher as part of her M.Ed. thesis. Teaching-based Master's theses within the M.Ed. programme at the University of Koblenz-Landau (Campus Landau) in Germany provide student teachers with the opportunity to gain first-hand experience in integrating ELT into the primary classroom while making active use of their theoretical knowledge of teaching YLs gained at university. The underlying rationale for these teaching-based M.Ed. theses is to bridge the gap that many new teachers seem to face once they enter the real world of classrooms (Tarone & Allright, 2005) and to overcome the often-perceived practice-theory divide (Sato & Loewen, 2019) by combining theoretical and practical elements for student teachers' final university assessment.

This is based on the understanding that theory and practice are not opposed but inform each other: while theory 'provides insights' to reflect upon and discuss (Ur, 2019, p. 451); there are aspects of teaching that 'can only be learnt through extensive classroom experience' (Ur, 2019, p. 458). Thus, teacher education not only needs to encourage student teachers to read and articulate their views on theory, but also on their experiences in the classroom. It has been suggested that in order to actively 'engage *with* and *in* research' (Xerri, 2019, p. 195, emphasis in original), teachers need to have 'technical competence to find answers to the questions they

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might have' (Xerri, 2019, p. 196). Therefore, student teachers need to be able to learn how to conduct research in their own classrooms.

As part of a 20-week teaching-based M.Ed. thesis project, student teachers in their fourth and final year of study at the University of Koblenz-Landau (Campus Landau) develop a unit of work around a picturebook if they decide to write their final assessed thesis on ELT. Based on their classroom observations and in cooperation with the class teacher, they select an appropriate picturebook and, informed by their own literature review regarding teaching English to young learners, they devise a unit of ten English language lessons including preparation, core and cross-curricular follow-up activities. The students' teaching practice is complemented by a research element inspired by action research and reflective teaching (Burns, 2010; Farrell, 2015). They keep a teaching diary, which is analysed, alongside other documents, such as learners' drawings, completed worksheets, recordings of learners' joint performances as well as field notes from observations. The student teachers identify, discuss and reflect upon critical incidents and finally, draw conclusions for their future teaching.

For her M.Ed. thesis on the use of *Augustus and His Smile* in primary ELT, a student teacher aimed to investigate the extent to which this picturebook can create learning opportunities within an approach to primary ELT that aims to integrate English into other subjects (Vockenberg, 2014). The project was carried out in a small town in Rhineland-Palatinate in the southwest of Germany where, according to the curricular guidelines of the federal state, primary French and English language teaching is to be incorporated into other subjects of the curriculum in all the four years of primary school (Ministry of Education, Women and Youth, 2004; Ministry of Education, 2017). Fifty minutes per week are allocated to foreign language instruction and supposed to be provided either as one or separate sessions (Ministry of Education, 2017). The scheduling of lessons is managed by school administration and depends largely on the availability of qualified staff, which means that schools organize language teaching provision in different ways. According to a brochure for parents / caregivers and teachers, ELT should be integrated into German, mathematics or arts lessons, for example (Ministry of Education, Science, Youth and Culture, 2010). This particular unit on *Augustus*

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and His Smile took place in Year 3 classes consisting of 16 learners aged between eight and nine years. The YLs had been taught English for almost three years, although it cannot be established if the lessons were held regularly at all times, since primary-school teachers often teach many subject areas, and this allows them to allocate time to various subjects flexibly. The student teacher was informed by the class teacher, however, that learners were not used to being taught lessons wholly in English.

For this study, the student teacher's account of her teaching experience as documented in her Master's thesis was analyzed. A thematic analysis of all chapters in which the student teacher presented her reflections on her teaching practice was carried out. The chapters were divided into 24 separate sections, which corresponded roughly to the student teacher's paragraphs and each addressed a particular incident or problematic situation within her story-based teaching unit. Statements that characterized the essence of each section were collected and then coded to identify aspects that appeared repeatedly and could constitute prevalent themes. It was assumed that any issue that was raised several times in the student teachers' evaluation of her teaching experience could be regarded as more salient and would therefore have a more prominent effect on her future decision-making as a teacher. This approach is inspired by phenomenological research traditions that focus on how people cope with major transitions in life (Smith, Flower & Larkin, 2009), such as starting teaching in a classroom. In line with this, studying a student's account of teaching experience and her understanding of it can provide insights into aspects that student teachers learn through their classroom experience and layers of knowledge not acquired during the course of university studies.

Analysis of *Augustus and His Smile* – A Multimodal Teaching Resource

Augustus and His Smile was first published by Little Tiger Press in 2006 and tells the tale of a sad tiger, who, in search of his smile, creeps under bushes, climbs up to the top of the trees, crosses high mountain tops, swims to the bottom of deep oceans, prances through the biggest desert until raindrops start to fall from the sky and make him dance. Looking into a puddle and seeing his reflection, he finally finds his smile and realizes that it is the happiness he experiences while looking at the world that makes him smile. The story is simple and yet touches on a very

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fundamental human trait: the need to be at peace with oneself and the world. In this way, the picturebook, although written for children aged between three to five according to the publisher's website, also speaks to the older child and even the adult reader. Primary teachers can assume that most children will at some point have experienced sadness as well as a lack of self-esteem and will be able to relate to the main character, Augustus, which makes them likely to be genuinely interested in the story and have increased curiosity and attention levels.
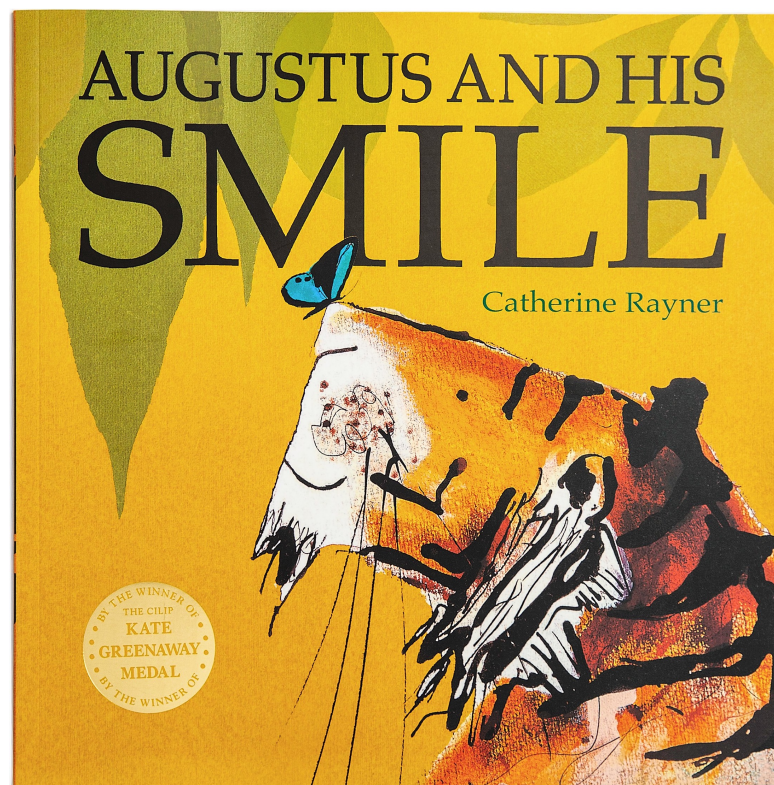

Figure 1: Cover page of *Augustus and His Smile* (Rayner, 2006)

The simplicity of the plot is reflected in the illustrations of the 32-page picturebook, which was awarded Best New Illustrator in the Booktrust Early Years Awards in 2006 and also shortlisted for the Kate Greenaway Medal. Rather than elaborating on the many plants and animals that can be found in the jungle or the ocean, the illustrations focus on two or three aspects on each double-page spread and complement the verbal text throughout the book. On the cover page, for example, the reader can see a smiling tiger with a butterfly on his nose in the foreground and

green leaves in the background (see Figure 1). This image encapsulates happiness that derives from an individual in harmony with their environment. The endpapers show black animal footprints on an orange background, inviting speculation if these are the tiger's and where he might be going. They are a precursor to Augustus's journey to find his smile. Then, the first double-page spread presents the reader with a tiger without a smile – very much in contrast to the cover page and in line with the verbal text: 'Augustus the tiger was sad. He had lost his smile'. The illustration together with the printed words prompt the question as to why the tiger is sad and thus generate interest in the reader.

Some of the peritextual and linguistic features highlighted above can be used in preparation for reading aloud: young learners need to be given time to look at these pages and to speculate about the plot in the language of schooling. If the teacher recasts their ideas in English, then YLs can revise or be introduced to key words of the plot.

At times, the font size and direction of the printed words further highlight the verbal text. On opening the next double-page spread, for example, the reader does not only see the tiger stretch from the left-hand down to the right-hand corner, the word 'huge' also appears in capital letters and in much larger font size. It is indeed a 'huge tigery stretch' that Augustus performs before he embarks on his journey, and learners are therefore provided with two different visual entry points to decode the verbal text. In a similar manner, readers' attention is drawn to the lines of the mountain tops through the zig-zag direction of the printed word that follows on opening 5. And, on openings 9 and 10, the printed word is arranged in the direction of the falling rain as well as being accompanied with onomatopoeia ('pitter, patter, drip, drop, plop').

Although the verbal text is not extensive and there are only one or two sentences arranged on each double-page spread (except for spread 12 where there are three), the language of the story is not simplistic. The verbal narrative features chunks such as 'crept under a cluster of bushes', 'birds that chirped', 'scaled the crests of the highest mountains' and 'splashed with shoals of tiny, shiny fish'. These multi-item sequences contain some lexis that is not frequently used, especially in beginners' English language classrooms and primary ELT coursebooks. However, a partial understanding can be reached by either pointing at details in the illustrations

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or by adding sound effects (as for the bird's chirping), and therefore YLs can still experience strings of words that are beyond their current language competence without losing interest in the basic storyline. Some of these items could be highlighted and focused on in repeated encounters with the text so that learners can further increase their lexical range.

Regarding the syntactical structures of the verbal text, there are subordinate clauses and participle constructions, e.g. 'He found birds that chirped and called, but he couldn't find his smile (opening 4)' and '…where the snow clouds swirled, making frost patterns in the freezing air' (opening 5). Conjunctions such as 'but' mark contrast and are taught early in English language programmes, hence should not create problems, especially if they occur within the meaningful context of the storyline that is supported by illustrations and if the teacher pauses in order to mark the beginning of a new idea. The same can be assumed for the question words 'where' and 'when', and also the present participle form. The latter coincides with the progressive form, which has also been found to be acquired early by users of English as a first language as well as by learners of English (Lightbown & Spada, 2006).

Overall, *Augustus and His Smile* displays numerous multimodal features that can be utilized by English language teachers to attract young learners' attention and ensure that they can follow the story and gain a basic understanding of the plot even after the very first read-aloud. This recent Little Tiger Press recording (2020) features Catherine Rayner reading the picturebook aloud: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a-FBhbYtedU

Description of the Student Teacher's Story-based Unit of Work

The unit of work with the picturebook *Augustus and His Smile* consisted of 10 sessions of approximately 50 minutes each and was designed to create links to other subject areas, as stipulated in the curricular guidelines for Rhineland-Palatinate (Ministry of Education, 2017). The various cross-curricular activities around the picturebook generated a story-based ELT programme for YLs in a Year 3 class, similar to what has been suggested by Ghosn (2013), with different session clusters focusing on different subject areas: English (two sessions), German (two sessions), arts (three sessions), physical education (one session), music (two sessions). Whereas the first two sessions were allocated for preparation and core activities, the remaining

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eight sessions were dedicated to follow-up activities that enabled learners to revisit the whole book twice more and to experience language from the book in new contexts through hands-on activities in English. The following account of activities and the children's learner response is based on the student teacher's observations and reflections collected in her teaching diary and analyzed in her thesis (Vockenberg, 2014).

Preparation activities. The student teacher, who had only observed the class but not taught the group of 16 primary-school children previously, started with a more structured preparation activity to ensure that the learners were focused and attentive. Rather than using the cover immediately, she displayed enlarged photos of an ocean, fish swimming in the sea, a desert, mountains, frost patterns, a beetle, a tiger as well as a shadow of a tiger on the board, and informed the children that these were items in the story they were going to listen to. The learners responded either in English or German, and the student teacher repeated all the words in English with the class. She closed the preparation phase by asking learners to predict what the story might be about – preparing them not only for language but also raising their interest in the content of the picturebook.

Core activity. The learners sat in two semi-circles to ensure visibility and the student teacher began reading, holding the book in front of her. After the first sentence 'Augustus was sad', she asked her learners why they thought he might be sad, which, according to the student teacher, seemed to generate genuine interest in how the story might continue, because her learners stayed alert throughout the read-aloud. She continued reading, encouraging her learners to ask questions and make comments. There were reportedly many verbal responses from the children, which suggests that her learners did not have any problems with understanding the basic storyline.

Follow-up activities. After the first encounter with the picturebook, the student teacher organized activities that focused on linguistic aspects moving from receptive understanding to productive use. Key vocabulary introduced before the read-aloud was practised using two games. First learners had to 'fly swat' the picture illustrating the word or phrase that they heard the teacher say, and then they had to say what was missing from the board after closing their

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eyes and the teacher removing one picture. Once learners confidently reproduced these key items, they were introduced to their written form and asked to create a dictionary page for the picturebook by cutting out, matching and sticking on pictures and labels.

In the following lesson, the picturebook was read aloud again but in a different setting. The student teacher was able to use the school's library where there was more room for the children to sit comfortably. Using German, the language of schooling, the student teacher asked the children two comprehension questions, 'Why does Augustus go on a journey?' and 'Why does he smile at the end of the journey?' To create a link to her learners' own experiences, she also added a personalized response question, 'What makes you happy again when you feel sad?'. This activity marks the transition to the next follow-up activity that was also conducted in German, as the learners had only just started writing individual words in English in Year 3. However, it was an opportunity to create a link to German and work on literacy skills in German too. The activity was designed to develop learners' understanding of the story further. They were given an opportunity to express their thoughts in a creative writing task by retelling the story using personal or third-person narration. The beginning was given: 'I am sad because ...' or 'Augustus, the tiger, is sad, because …'. The learners worked collaboratively, and before copying their work on an A4 page of paper for a wall display, they checked with the teacher who corrected their language errors.

Next, the learners produced a visual representation of the story in the form of a poster that illustrated Augustus's journey through the ocean, the desert, the jungle and the mountains. Step-by-step, learners were given instructions in English for different techniques for mixing colour and adding texture. The student teacher's instructions were accompanied by demonstrating each step at the front of the class and further supported by pictures representing the action (Figure 2). The learners worked in groups, were encouraged to label parts of their poster using the new words they had learnt and, at the end, they presented their pictures to the rest of the class in English, using formulaic sequences such as 'This is our picture' and 'There is / there are …' In the following lesson, the learners experienced Augustus's journey through

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re-enacting the physical actions, such as creeping, jumping, climbing in an obstacle course which the student teacher had set up in the school gym.

Figure 2: Visual presentation of instructions for artwork

For example, the learners climbed on and jumped down two vaulting boxes of different sizes, representing Augustus' path through the mountains, and walked slowly across large soft mats representing the desert. Large labels were used to create a link to the linguistic items that described the different environments and actions, e.g. 'bush', 'trees', 'ocean' as well as 'run like a tiger', 'move like a beetle' and 'swim like a fish' (Figure 3). At the end of the sports class, the learners worked in pairs, giving each other a back massage following the teacher's English instructions presented in a story format (Appendix 1).

The unit on the picturebook concluded with one more presentation of the story, this time read aloud by a highly proficient speaker in an audio recording. The learners were given pictures depicting scenes from the story and as they listened, they held them up, which provided a visual representation of the plot. These pictures were later arranged in chronological order on the board

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for reference and can be regarded as an additional mnemonic device for the singing activity that followed.
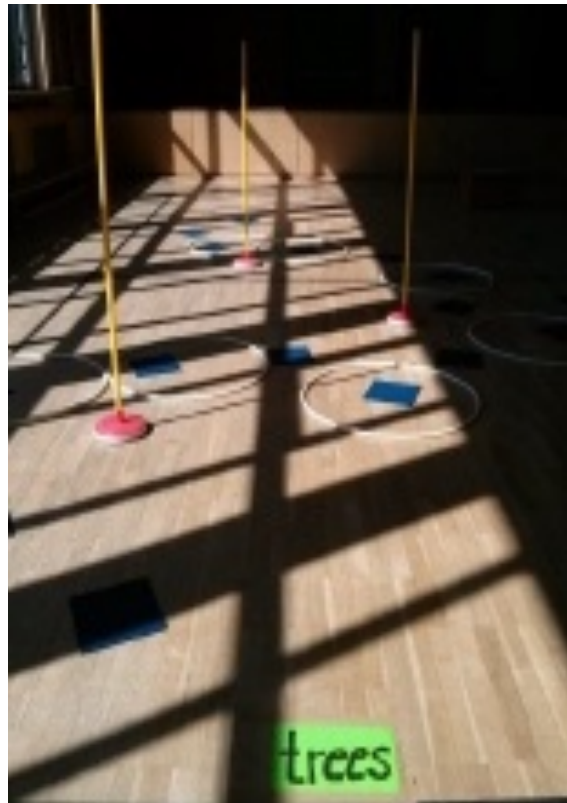

Figure 3: Obstacle course in the gym

After the teacher had presented the whole song *Augustus the tiger* by singing it to the learners, the lyrics were practised through rhythmic choral drills accompanied by tapping their thighs in time. Then, the learners were asked to hum the tune first, and again using castanets and egg-shaped shakers for percussion effects. Once learners were confidently following the tune, they were invited to sing. This musical rendition of the Augustus song that, once again, revisited the storyline and recycled lexical items, such as 'climbed up mountains', 'crept under bushes' and 'swam with the fish', marked the end of this unit.

Findings from the Analysis of the Student Teacher's Account

The thematic analysis of the student teacher's comments on her classroom experience with the picturebook were divided into 24 sections, of which 17 were based on self-observation and

seven were observation of her learners. For the former, the most prevalent aspects related to the student teacher's response to classroom circumstances and time management skills (mentioned seven and five times respectively). Regarding her learners, it was their engagement with the read-aloud and story-based activities in English that appeared most prominently and was mentioned five times. While some of these statements reflect the student teacher's feelings as a new teacher gaining valuable classroom experience, other insights can also inform experienced primary English teachers about potential difficulties when conducting a story-based unit with learners (Appendix 2, Tables 1 & 2).

Self-observation of teaching skills. Regarding her own expertise as a primary English practitioner, the student teacher repeatedly commented on problems with adaptation of her lesson plan in response to emerging classroom circumstances and time management. For example, the learners reportedly needed more time to create their posters in the arts class, and in the physical education lesson, it took the YLs longer than expected to reach the gym. With regard to response to classroom circumstances, the student teacher realized that more specific instructions for the creative task might have been helpful, as her learners found it difficult to make decisions about how to tackle the writing process. The song lyrics also required more repetition and practice and for a longer period of time. All of these critical moments, once recognized as such and reflected on, offered valuable insights to the student teacher about teaching YLs and their abilities, stimulated by actual classroom experience and reflective teaching practice.

Observation of learner response. According to the student teacher, her YLs displayed a genuine interest in the story, they seemed to focus their attention throughout the read-aloud, and they did not appear to be overwhelmed by the language of the picturebook or the linguistic demands of the follow-up activities. The student teacher noted that the learners contributed actively to the read-aloud by making comments. They were constructing meaning rather than communicating frustration about a lack of understanding. She also found that some of the learners decided to write key vocabulary rather than cutting out and sticking labels next to pictures, presumably because they were trying to make the activity more challenging for

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themselves. In the creative writing task, the learners did not only display a sound understanding of the storyline, some also seemed to interpret the text by adding explanations ('Augustus der Tiger ist traurig'/*Augustus the tiger is sad*. 'Er ist allein.'/*He is on his own*. 'Er hat keine Freunde.'/*He doesn't have any friends*.) and in their creative response, they appeared to mimic the poetic language of the original text (see Figure 4). During the cool-down phase at the end of the physical education lesson, the student teacher observed the learners repeating the instructions (unprompted) after her. They additionally demonstrated their interest and confidence in reproducing not only individual words, but even whole phrases.
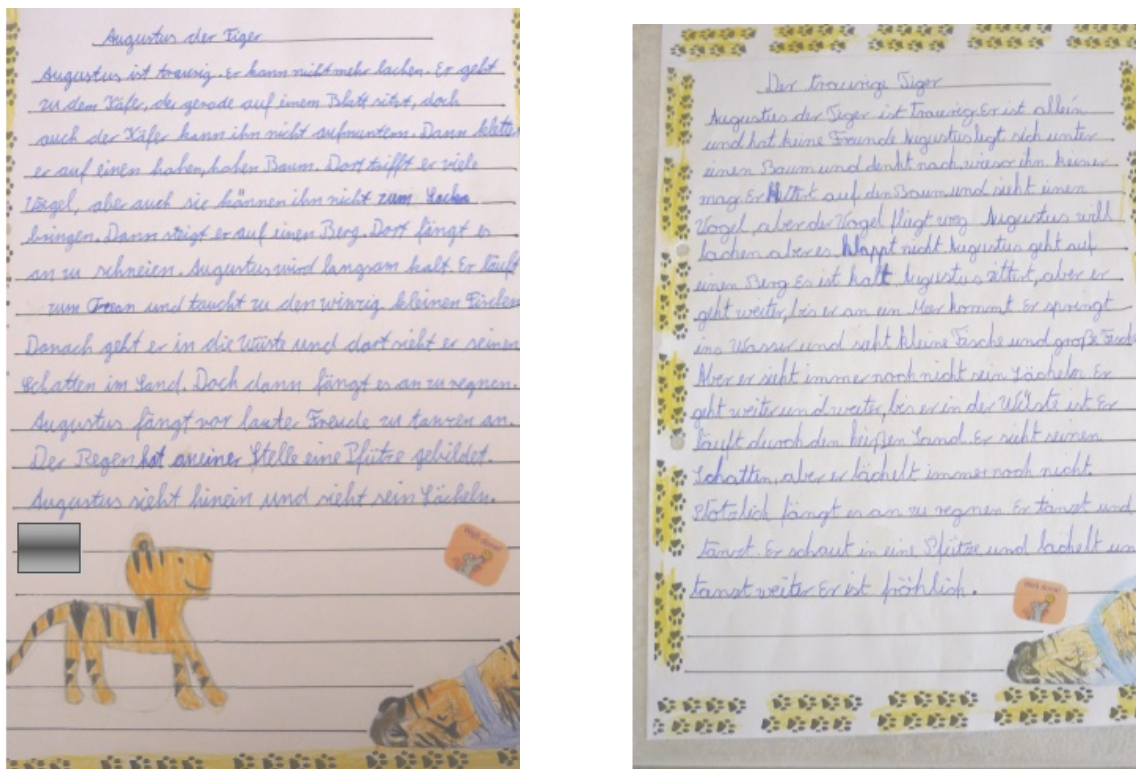

Figure 4: Creative writing in German

Discussion and Implications

This paper set out to explore how the sharing of a picturebook can be enriched beyond the first encounter by creating a multisensory and cross-curricular learning experience that taps into the many affordances that a picturebook can provide. The aesthetic-linguistic analysis of *Augustus*

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and His Smile showed that this literary format displays many multimodal features which can function as entry points for YLs of English. The description of the unit of work and the analysis of the student teacher's reflections also demonstrated that a multi-session ELT unit on *Augustus and His Smile* can provide learners with the opportunity to enjoy a picturebook in more depth and to experience its verbal, pictorial and acoustic narration via numerous encounters – thereby enabling pleasurable and rewarding exposure to English.

The student teacher's observations indicated that the range of varied follow-up activities enhanced the experience with a picturebook, both aesthetically but also linguistically. The learners experienced word strings from the story in new contexts that seemed to support memorization and reproduction, which can be a stepping stone to recycling this linguistic content for the learners' own personalized statements. This is particularly the case if sufficient opportunities are provided for using such newly acquired chunks of language after story-based English lessons.

It has to be noted that this project only involved one learner group and their response to a particular picturebook, and therefore it cannot be assumed that these findings can be generalized. It is also important to highlight that story-based units involving several lessons across different subject areas require a high level of coordination on the part of the teacher. Generalist primary-school teachers who teach several subjects may seem to be in a good position to organize cross-curricular activities, but they may also find it very challenging when faced with competing curricular demands in addition to limited time and resources.

Furthermore, the time frame of this particular M.Ed. thesis did not allow for more rigorous data collection and analysis. For example, recordings of classroom discourse would be a valuable source for triangulation of observational data collected in form of a teaching diary as well as for deeper levels of analysis. Classroom discourse could be used to investigate what impact various follow-up activities may have on learners' receptive or productive language use. One also has to acknowledge that there may have been additional aspects that were challenging or perceived as critical moments, but not specifically mentioned in the student teacher's thesis. Follow-up interviews with student teachers would counterbalance this limitation to some extent,

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but as researchers we can only investigate what our participants choose to tell us, whether in a written account or an interview.

However, the analysis of this student teacher's reflections suggests that teaching-based M.Ed. theses which encourage student teachers to craft and teach multi-session ELT units on picturebooks have affordances for their future professional development: first, by providing time and creative freedom for student teachers to gain experience with cross-curricular ELT activities around a picturebook (which teachers facing the daily demands on their time and heavy assessment often lack), and secondly, by encouraging them to consciously reflect on their learners' and their own actions in the classroom. The latter especially fosters reflective teaching practice, which is key for continuing professional development and can also form the basis for primary English teachers' own classroom-based action research.

Story-based units on picturebooks that are conducted and reported on by student teachers, such as in this project on *Augustus and His Smile*, can contribute to research on the use of children's literature in primary ELT, since the observations that our student teachers make with different year groups and different picturebooks provide us with multiple accounts of using stories in the primary ELT classroom. Just like pieces of a puzzle, once they are put together, they might reveal patterns which can better inform the world of primary ELT scholarship.

Acknowledgements

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Appendix

1. Cool-down at the end of the sports class

Augustus in the jungle

It was a warm and sunny day in the jungle. We had lots of fun.
- ➢ Rub your hands and put them on your friend's back.

We saw the beetles, sitting in the bush.
- ➢ Gently pinch your friend's back.

We saw birds sitting in the trees.
- ➢ Move your fingertips from the centre to the sides.

We saw tigers running over mountains.
- ➢ Tap with your fingertips quickly here and there on your friend's back.

We saw fish swimming in the ocean.
- ➢ Move your hands in half circles, from the centre to the sides as if swimming.

We paraded through the desert.
- ➢ Pat your friend's back with flat hands.

But suddenly it started to rain.
- ➢ Tap your fingertips and pretend it's raining on your friend's back.

And we jumped away smiling.
- ➢ Tap both your hands on your friend's back.
- ➢ Draw a smiley face on your friend's back.

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2. Table 1: Self-Observation

	Examples from the student teacher's extracts (translation)
Fine-tuning	Explaining a game by just giving one example was not enough. It needs more practice, maybe in the form of joint speaking (e.g. My name is … What is your name?).
	Keeping the same routine for repeating words as the class teacher can help to avoid confusion.
	It might be better to collect ideas for creative writing in form of a mind map so that learners can use it later.
	Giving a very open instruction for creative writing seemed to confuse learners.
	When doing artwork, it is better to tell learners to put some paper on their desk first so that they stay clean.
	Cards could be used that tell learners which equipment is needed for the different areas of the gym, so setting up of the obstacle course is well-coordinated.
	When teaching a song, many small steps are needed, with much more repetition and focus on clear pronunciation.
Time management	Getting the children to sit in a circle for the picturebook session took longer than expected because they did not understand at first that they all had to be able to see the book.
	Too little time was planned for artwork in groups. It took an extra lesson to finish.
	Getting to the gym takes a bit of time and needs to be taken into account.
	For the second run-through, I made sure learners waited a few seconds before the next child started the obstacle course.
	It might be better to sequence the work on the song lyrics over several sessions as the time for one lesson was very tight.

Table 2: Observation of young learners

	Examples from the student teacher's extracts (translation)
Learners' engagement	Learners understood the storyline and were able to retell the story in German. Many put up their hands and talked about the picturebook.
	Learners wanted to write down words in English instead of just sticking labels on paper.
	Learners were very eager to repeat words from the story in the game with the fly swat.

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| | When the text for the cool-down at the end of the PE lesson was read aloud a second time, individual learners started to join in by speaking quietly. |
| | One learner who usually needs precise instructions, was the only one to create a text from the perspective of the tiger. Another learner who usually has difficulties, used the past tense in her creative writing. |