

The Effect of Narrating Picture Books in Promoting English Vocabulary to Japanese Preschoolers

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Abstract

This semi-quasi-experimental study aimed to identify the effects of narrating picture books in promoting vocabulary learning and retention in preschoolers in the English as the second language (ESL) setting. The research has conducted in an English medium preschool in Shizuoka prefecture, Japan. The researcher used twenty children aged 4-6 years old, ten as the experimental group and ten as the control group. Three picture books; Peanut Butter and Jelly: A Play Rhyme by Nadine Bernard Westcott, The Berenstain Bears and the Spooky Old Tree by Stan and Jan Berenstain, and Just Grandma and Me by Mercer Mater, were carefully selected to narrate during the intervention. A total of 15 sessions were taken to complete the study. During the intervention, flashcards were used to highlight the five focused vocabulary of Peanut Butter and Jelly. In The Berenstain Bears and the Spooky Old Tree, five repeatedly appeared words were chosen for the evaluation process. Five words of Just Grandma and Me were neither repeated nor flashcards have been used, thus regular story narration. Pre, post, and delayed post-tests were executed to collect data. The results show that narrating storybooks significantly impacts vocabulary learning and retention. Further, the use of flashcards focusing on the story's keywords helps children retain vocabulary more than repetition and just narrating.

Keywords: Narrating; Storybooks; Vocabulary; Learning; Retention

1. Background

Education is one of the vital aspects of Japan's national identity and a source of pride for Japanese citizens. The country's high-quality education system has constantly won international honors. The importance of the holistic development of children has led Japanese students to accomplish mastery in multiple academic disciplines—their performance in science, math, and engineering for decades. The school system also exemplifies the values of justice, harmony, and social equality. According to the OECD (The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development), Japan ranks highly among wealthy nations in providing equal opportunities to students of all socioeconomic backgrounds (Sophia Chawala, 2021).

Responsibility is divided between three government authorities at three levels: national, prefectural, and municipal, for educational administration and policy development. *Monbu-Kagaku-shō*, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT), oversees all phases of the education system, continuing or lifelong, learning from early childhood education to graduate studies. MEXT guarantees that education in Japan meets the 1947 Fundamental Law of Education standards, which specifies that the country provides education to all its citizens "that values the dignity of the individual, that endeavours to cultivate a people rich in humanity and

creativity who long for truth and justice and who honor the public spirit, that passes on traditions, and that aims to create a new culture" (Chhawala, 2021).

Japan has faced issues and challenges in its English education system for decades. In a 2021 survey, Japan dropped to 78th in global English proficiency out of 112 countries, squarely in the "low proficiency" band. (EF English Proficiency Index 2021). It is the 13th position out of 24 countries in Asia. Japan has a moderate proficiency compared to other developed countries around the world. Japan seems torn between remaining loyal to tradition and to keep up with globalization as a mostly homogenous country.

Nevertheless, in recent years, the government has been making efforts toward significant improvements. Beginning in the 2020 academic year, teaching English became mandatory at elementary schools. In the third and fourth grades, pupils will go through "foreign language activities" for 35 hours per year. Approximately three to four lessons a week, while fifth and sixth graders will study the language 70 hours a year (Sawa, 2020).

Early childhood education is important for many reasons. According to UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), "Early childhood care and education (ECCE) is more than preparation for primary school. It improves a child's social, emotional, cognitive, and physical skills in order to build a solid and broad foundation for lifelong learning and well-being. ECCE has the possibility to nurture caring, capable and responsible future citizens." Many studies have been carried out to show the importance of early childhood education in developing young children's total personality, including language development.

In this increasingly diverse society, there is a growing appreciation of the value of speaking more than one language. Learning another language and embracing other languages and cultures is a great way to prepare young children to succeed in every aspect of their adult lives. Hence, early childhood is a vital stage in second language acquisition. Early bilingualism affects children's language and cognitive development as well.

Language learning and acquisition are two concepts that are still being in a discussion by researchers around the world. However, Krashen (1981) describes language acquisition as a subconscious process that occurs mainly when using language for communication purposes, while learning is a conscious process that happens through explicit instruction.

In the first half of the 20th century, there was an opinion that bilingualism and second-language acquisition during the early stage of life confused children and interfered with their ability to develop normal cognitive functions of young children. But those ideas were dramatically revised with the study done by Peal and Lambert that showed a general superiority of bilinguals over monolinguals in a wide range of intelligence tests and aspects of school achievement (Bialystok, 2017).

In this increasingly globalized society, the ability to speak English is key to unlocking educational and professional opportunities and making a mark on the international stage. Yet, few in Japan are proficient in the language, despite taking roughly a decade's worth of English education. There is a clear solution, start while children are younger, during the early childhood stage. This was also suggested by a Japanese educator, Akira Murata. Japanese children will never be able to adapt to global society if the Japanese language is the only tool they use to communicate. Murata further suggested that "English education at nurseries or kindergartens can often be a piecemeal experience, like having a foreign instructor come in every once in a while," he also emphasized that it is not enough to develop a language and there should be a foreign instructor full time so that children are exposed to English on a daily basis. These kinds of kindergartens and nurseries are popping up here and there, and different strategies are used to develop language input. The most common ways are audio and video materials, games, and flashcards as language input, as those can be easily used even for non-native English speakers. Moreover, most early education centers still don't have a

foreign instructor to guide students in learning English, so those materials are easier for Japanese teachers to use.

However, Japan's attention to English education prior to the elementary school level is undeniably lower than in most developing countries in Asia. Many kinds of research related to English education have been carried out in Japan for elementary schools to university education. Still, it appears there wasn't enough interest in studying the English Language education of preschoolers.

Once upon a time, there lived many beautiful princesses, princes, and people who made our childhood magical, colorful, and enchanted. Storytime with grandma or bedtime stories brings the whole world to our doorstep in a fraction of a second. The world we made around storybooks is one of the best memories of one's childhood. Apart from that, storybooks are an indirect resource of language input which develops vocabulary capacity whatever the language they are read of.

The story's narrative structure with some dramatic expressions and vocalization helps young children to make mental images of the story and enhance the vocabulary retention of learners of all ages. Storybooks are one of the most important learning materials at early childhood education centers, including kindergartens, for Japanese language acquisition as well. Storybooks can also be used to develop English vocabulary for all age groups. Therefore, this study focuses on the English education of preschoolers, specifically narrating storybooks in vocabulary development and retention.

2. Methods

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The study is based on three theories of second language acquisition: Socio-cultural theory by Lev Vygotsky, the Monitor theory of second language acquisition by Stephen Krashen, and the cognitive development theory of Jean Piaget. (Figure 1). In socio-cultural theory, Vygotsky explains the importance of social interaction in the development of cognition (Mohammed & Yap 2010; Mohammed et al., 2016; Mohammed & Sidek, 2015; 2016; Sornasekaran et al., 2020; Argellan et al., 2019; Karuppanan & Mohammed, 2020).

He considered a child not as an individual but as a product of social interaction. Further, in his fundamental principles, he includes that language plays a central role in mental development. In his theory, he talks about the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), the difference between what a child can do independently and what he/she can achieve with the help of a capable adult. Furthermore, the theory refers to the term scaffolding, which means the support structure an adult/teacher gives a child to get to the next stage, gradually becoming a responsibility to the child/student.

The study uses Scaffolding through picture book narrating in order to support children in learning new vocabulary. So, the researcher acts as a capable person in the process of vocabulary teaching.

Monitor theory is one of the most influential theories of SLA, which was the first theory to be developed specifically for SLA by the linguist Stephen Krashen 1970s and early 1980s. He developed five hypotheses in his theory: the acquisition-learning hypothesis, the natural order hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, the input hypothesis, and the affective filter hypothesis.

The input theory is used in this study to see the vocabulary development of the sample group. The input Hypothesis relates to the acquisition, not learning, as there's no deliberate teaching of vocabulary occurs. It also focuses not on structure but on understanding the message. Acquisition best occurs when the learners receive second language 'input' that is one step beyond their current stage of linguistic competence; often termed as comprehensible input, or $i+1$. Piaget's cognitive theory highlights that language learning is a part of a child's cognitive development. He argued that

a child must understand a concept before he/she can acquire the language form which expresses that concept. Further, he said that language is dependent upon cognitive development.

As the study's sample group fits into the preoperational stage according to Piaget's cognitive stages, the study will only focus on this particular stage. During this phase, young children are able to think about things symbolically. Their language use becomes more mature. They also develop memory and imagination, which allows them to understand the difference between past and future and engage in make-believe. But they cannot yet grasp more complex concepts such as cause and effect, time, and comparison. The study will use the pictures and narrating strategies to trigger their imaginations to develop their memory of English vocabulary learning and retention.

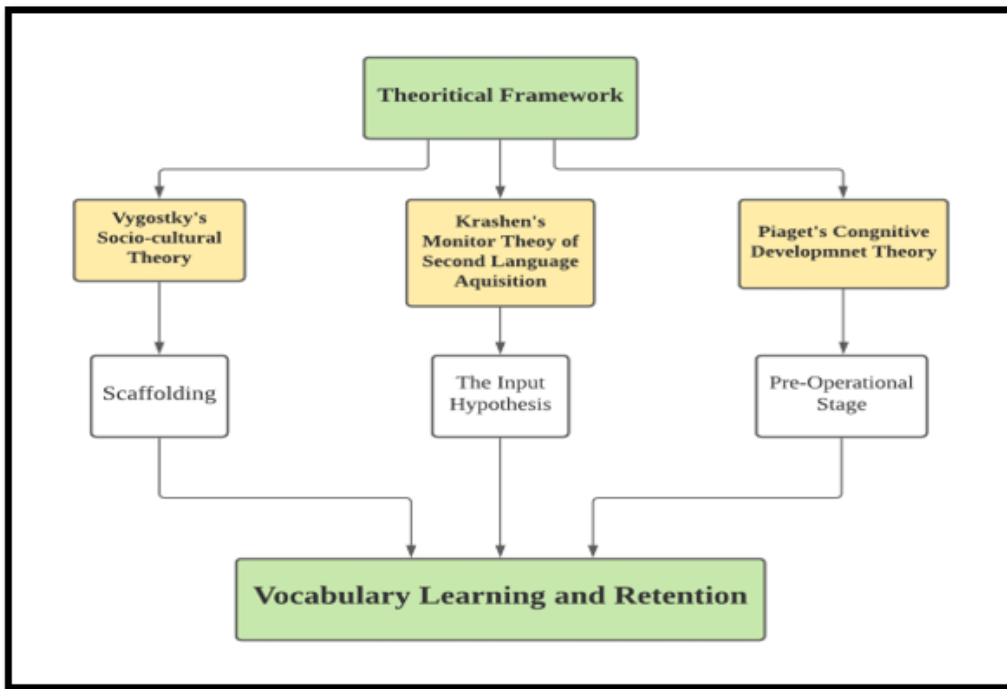


Figure 1: Theoretical framework

3. Conceptual Framework

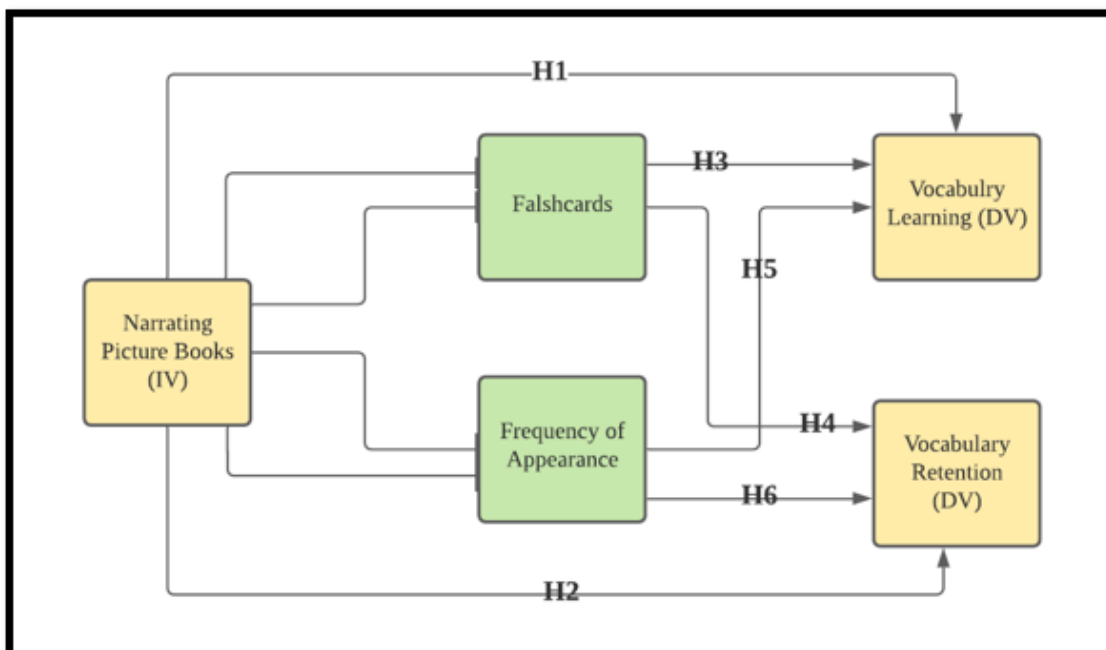


Figure 2: Conceptual framework

Figure 2 describes the conceptual framework of the study. The independent variable or the input of the study is narrating picture books. In this study, the researcher uses 4 English picture books to see the direct and indirect connection of the independent variable to the dependent variables.

On the other hand, this study has two dependent variables: vocabulary learning and vocabulary retention. The researcher intends to determine the direct effect of narrating picture books on vocabulary learning and vocabulary retention. Moreover, the impact of the two mediators of the study, flashcards, and the frequency of appearance of the target vocabulary, will also be measured in the experiment.

The connection of the six hypotheses to the independent and dependent variables is clearly shown in Figure 2.

3.1 Hypothesis

To achieve the objectives of the study, the research proposes six hypotheses as follows:

H1 - Narrating picture books have a significant impact on vocabulary improvement in Japanese preschool learners.

H2 - Narrating picture books have a significant impact on vocabulary retention in Japanese preschool learners.

H3 - Use of flashcards has a significant impact on vocabulary learning

H4 - Use of flashcards has a significant impact on vocabulary retention.

H5 - Frequency appearance of the target vocabulary has a significant impact on vocabulary learning

H6 - Frequency appearance of the target vocabulary has a significant impact on vocabulary retention.

3.2 Research Design

There are two main research designs, qualitative and quantitative. This quantitative study uses a quasi-experimental method, as shown in Figure 3 above. To conduct true experimental research, three fundamental components should be involved: randomized sampling, control group, and intervention or experimentation. As this research does not use a randomized sample, it comes under quasi-experimental research, which involves a controlled and experimental group and an experiment.

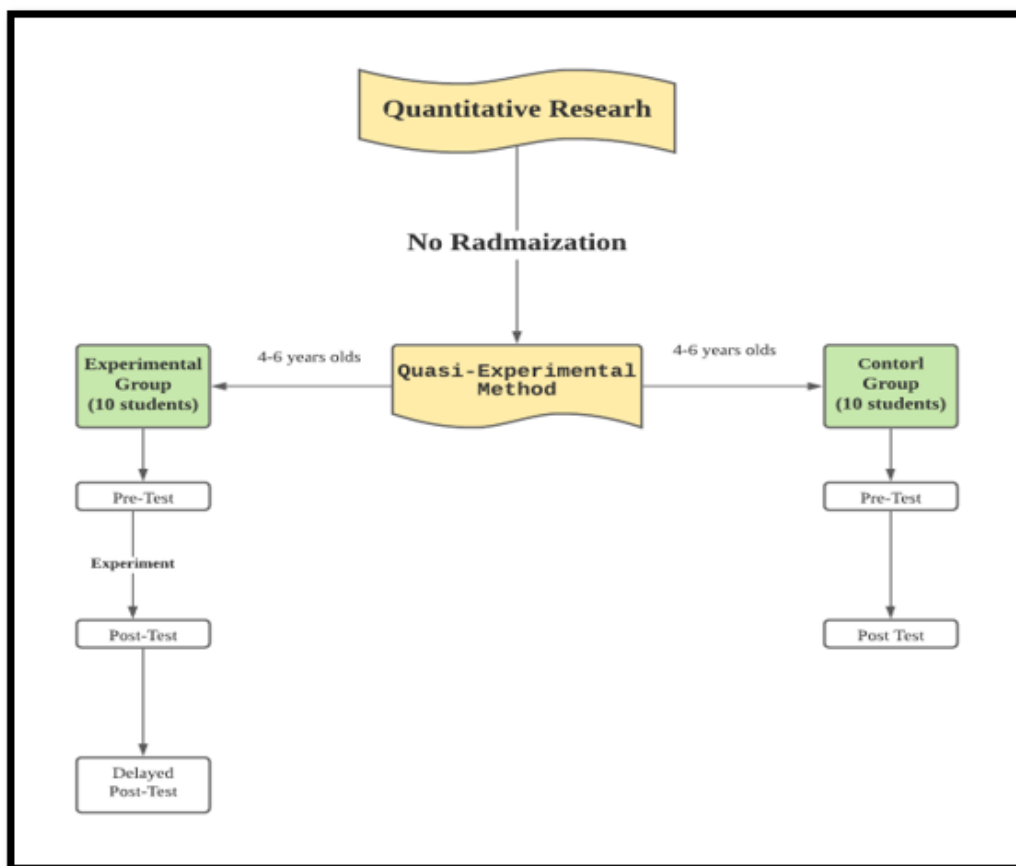


Figure 3: Research Design

3.3 Population

The total population of the study is 28 preschoolers of age 0-6 in English medium childcare and English institute in the city of Hamamatsu, Shizuoka prefecture, Japan.

3.4 Sampling Technique

As the research is based on narrating picture books and vocabulary learning, a sample of 20 children of age 4-6 has been chosen as participants of the research. Ten regular children will participate in the experimental group, and ten regular and irregular children will participate in the control group. There was no random sampling as the available number of students in the childcare service is the sample number.

3.5 Data Collection and Analyses

The data was collected by conducting pre and posts tests. Both control and the experimental group took a pre-test consisting of target vocabulary and related pictures. Then the experimental group went under the experiment of narrating three picture books, each book three times. The books which were used in the experiment are Peanut Butter and Jelly, The Berenstain Bears, and the Spooky Old Tree, Just Grandma and Me. When using Peanut Butter and Jelly, flashcards were used to illustrate vocabulary. When reading The Berenstain Bears and the Spooky Old Tree, the frequency appearance of the vocabulary was used to see the vocabulary retention. Just Grandma and Me was just read as a story narration to see vocabulary learning and retention. Both groups answered the post-test after the intervention. Data was collected to measure vocabulary learning, one of the study's dependent variables. Only the experimental group answered a delayed post-test three weeks after the experimental process to measure the learners' vocabulary retention.

The pre-test included three parts; each part had numbers 1-5 and five pictures as a matching activity. Five words from each book are carefully selected to match the age of the students. And the students listened to the teacher and matched numbers with the pictures. For example, the teacher said, "Number 1 – stick" twice, and the students listened and drew a line from number one to the matching picture. The intervention started with "The Berenstain Bears and the Spooky Old Tree," as it was Halloween month. The students acted out the story after three reading sessions finished, which was not initially planned during the process. The next session started with "Just Grandma and Me." The students listened and enjoyed the storybook narration in all three sessions and were actively involved in the narration. The final book was "Peanut Butter and Jelly," with many new words, but only five out of them were selected to test. Students enjoyed using gestures while listening to the play rhythm narration. All sessions were audio-recorded and used during the data analysis session to ensure all behaviors were considered during the analysis process. The post-test was conducted as same as the pre-test. At the end of the implementation sessions, students were given a chance to choose their favorite book out of three and draw a picture of their favorite page or incident. Drawings were collected for references as well.

4. Results

This chapter reviews the results of the quasi-experimental research done to examine the impact of narrating picture books on the English vocabulary development of Japanese preschoolers. The results were analyzed using JASP 0.16.1 Paired Sample T-test.

The experimental group consisted of 10 preschoolers aged between 4-6. The following table displays each student's scores in pre, post, and delayed tests.

Table 1: student's scores in pre, post, and delayed tests

Students	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Delayed Post-Test
E1	6	10	11
E2	10	15	15
E3	8	12	13
E4	13	11	9
E5	10	15	15
E6	5	12	11
E7	10	15	13
E8	10	15	15
E9	5	12	10
E10	13	15	13

E*- Experimental

Descriptive (Experimental Group Total Score Pre-test & Post-test)				
	N	Mean	SD	SE
post	10	13.600	1.897	0.600
Pre	10	8.600	2.591	0.819

Paired Samples T-Test (Experimental Group Total Score Pre-test & Post-test)			
Test of Normality (Shapiro-Wilk)			
		W	P
Post	- Pre	0.918	0.338
Note. Significant results suggest a deviation from normality.			

							95% CI for Mean Difference		
Measure 1	Measure 2	t	df	p	Mean Difference	SE Difference	Lower	Upper	Cohen's d
post	- pre	10.607	9	<0.001	5.000	0.471	3.934	6.066	3.354
Note. Student's t-test									

Preliminary data screening shows that scores began to deviate from normality but not sufficiently to warrant transforming the data, Shapiro-Wilks's test ($p > 0.037$)

The scores differ significantly, $t(9) 10.607$, $p < 0.001$, 95% C.I. {3.9, 6.0}, $d = 3.35$. the mean of the post-test ($M = 13.6$, $SD = 1.9$) was significantly higher than the pre-test ($M = 8.6$, $SD = 2.6$). The findings show that the students' scores improved on average 5.0 points ($SE = 0.47$ points) after the intervention storybook reading session.

To affirm all the findings and analyses, the pre-test and post-test results were analyzed and presented as follows.

Students	Pre-Test	Post-Test
C1	8	10
C2	6	6
C3	5	7
C4	10	8
C5	12	12
C6	6	5
C7	12	8
C8	3	3
C9	8	11
C10	11	8

C- Control* Table 2

Paired Samples T-Test (Control Group Total Score Pre-test & Post-test)													
							95% CI for Mean Difference					95% CI for Cohen's d	
Measure 1	Measure 2	t	df	p	Mean Difference	SE Difference	Lower	Upper	Cohen's d	Lower	Upper		
Pre	Post	0.419	9	0.685	0.300	0.716	-1.319	1.919	0.133	-0.494	0.752		

Note. Student's t-test.

Descriptive (Control Group Total Score Pre-test & Post-test)				
	N	Mean	SD	SE
Pre	10	8.100	3.107	0.983
Post	10	7.800	2.741	0.867

The control group of ten preschoolers took the pre-test at the same time as the experimental group. And while the experimental group was going through the intervention, the control group didn't receive any input related to the vocabulary that was tested. Then the post-test was carried out on both groups at the same period of time. Further, a delayed post test was not carried out as no learning took place. The test results of the control group scores shows, $t(9) 0.429$, $p=0.68$, 95% C.I. $\{-1.3, 1.9\}$, $d= 0.1$, the mean of the post-test ($M=7.8$, $SD=2.7$) and the pre-test ($M=8.1$, $SD=3.1$).

To test each hypothesis, the results were analyzed accordingly. H1 which states that- Narrating picture books have a significant impact on vocabulary improvement in Japanese preschool learners, was accepted.

When comparing both experimental and control groups' pre-test scores, the experimental group ($M=8.6$, $SD=2.6$) and the control group ($M=8.1$, $SD=3.1$), the results prove that students of both groups have the comparatively same level of vocabulary capacity (SD difference= 0.5) before the intervention happened. And after the intervention, the experimental group showed a remarkable improvement in vocabulary with the post-test results ($M=13.6$, $SD=1.9$). However, the control group post-test results ($M=7.8$, $SD=2.7$) were not improved but somewhat dropped. This finding supports the idea that narrating picture books significantly impacts vocabulary improvement.

H2 - Narrating picture books have a significant impact on vocabulary retention in Japanese preschool learners was accepted by analyzing the scores of post and delayed post-test scores using paired sample t-test.

Paired Samples T-Test (Experimental Group Total Score Post-test & Delayed Post-test)											
							95% CI for Mean Difference		95% CI for Cohen's d		
Measure 1	Measure 2	t	df	p	Mean Difference	SE Difference	Lower	Upper	Cohen's d	Lower	Upper
post	- delayed	1.673	9	0.129	1.100	0.657	-0.387	2.587	0.529	-0.148	1.182

Note. Student's t-test.

Descriptive (Experimental Group Total Score Post-test & Delayed Post-test)				
	N	Mean	SD	SE
Post Test	10	13.200	1.989	0.629
Delayed Post Test	10	12.500	2.173	0.687

The scores of the post-test and the delayed post-test were analyzed to test the hypothesis, and according to the findings, $t(9) 1.68$, $p 0.13$, $d= 0.5$,. p -value is greater than the standard $p \alpha 0.05$ ($0.13 > 0.05$). There is a slight drop in the scores of the delayed post-test ($M=12.5$, $SD=2.17$) than the post-test ($M=13.6$, $SD=1.9$), but it is relatively higher than the pre-test ($M=8.6$, $SD=2.6$). So, it shows that after the intervention, the students learned new vocabulary and remembered most of them even after two weeks of the intervention. So, the results show that narrating picture books impacts vocabulary retention in Japanese preschool learners even if it is insignificant.

To analyze how flashcards have a significant impact on vocabulary learning (H3), the score of pre and post-tests of the "Peanut Butter and Jelly: A Play Rhyme by Nadine Bernard Westcott" were compared. The story contained several words that students weren't familiar with, but only five words were carefully selected to test the hypothesis. This hypothesis was accepted according to the findings below.

Paired Samples T-Test (Experimental Group Score of "Peanut Butter and Jelly" Pre-test & Post-test)												
							95% CI for Mean Difference		95% CI for Cohen's d			
Measure 1	Measure 2	t	df	p	VS-MPR*	Mean Difference	SE Difference	Lower	Upper	Cohen's d	Lower	Upper
Pre	-Post	-5.218	9	<0.001	88.989	-2.700	0.517	-3.871	-1.529	-1.650	-2.605	-0.659

Note. Student's t-test.

Descriptives (Experimental Group Score of "Peanut Butter and Jelly" Pre-test & Post-test)				
	N	Mean	SD	SE
Pre	10	1.400	1.174	0.371
Post	10	4.100	1.449	0.458

The results show the significance of using flashcard in vocabulary learning. The scores differ significantly, $t(9) -5.218$, $p < 0.001$, and the mean of the post-test ($M=4.1$, $SD=1.4$) was

significantly higher than the pre-test (M=1.4, SD=0.3). The findings show that the students' scores improved on average 5.0 points (SE – 0.47 points) after the intervention storybook reading session. This finding supports the idea that narrating picture books significantly impacts vocabulary improvement.

The same storybook scores as above were used to check the impact of flashcards on vocabulary retention. The results were as follows.

Paired Samples T-Test (Experimental Group Score of "Peanut Butter and Jelly" Post-test & Delayed Post-test)											
							95% CI for Mean Difference		95% CI for Cohen's d		
Measure 1	Measure 2	t	df	p	Mean Difference	SE Difference	Lower	Upper	Cohen's d	Lower	Upper
Post	-Delayed	0.218	9	0.832	0.100	0.458	-0.937	1.137	0.069	-0.553	0.688

Note. Student's t-test.

Descriptive (Experimental Group Score of "Peanut Butter and Jelly" Post-test & Delayed Post-test)				
	N	Mean	SD	SE
Post	10	4.100	1.449	0.458
Delayed	10	4.000	1.414	0.447

To test the 4th hypothesis of this study, the post-test and the delayed post-test scores were analyzed. According to the findings, $t(0.21) p= 0.8$, and the mean difference of the scores is 0.1. Even though there is a 0.1 slight drop in the mean in the delayed post-test (M=4.0), it is significantly higher than the pre-test (M=1.4). The students continue to remember the newly learned vocabulary by listening to the story "Peanut Butter and Jelly, " narrated using flashcards. It can be proved by presenting the data analyzed by the scores of the storybook "Just Grandma and Me" by Mercer Mater. The story was just narrated as it is without using flashcards. The scores for the post-test and the delayed post-test are as follows.

Paired Samples T-Test (Experimental Group Score of "Just Grandma and me" Post-test & Delayed Post-test)									
							95% CI for Mean Difference		
Measure 1	Measure 2	t	df	p	Mean Difference	SE Difference	Lower	Upper	Cohen's d
Post	-Delayed	1.561	9	0.153	0.700	0.448	-0.314	1.714	0.494

Note. Student's t-test.

Descriptives (Experimental Group Score of "Just Grandma and me" Post-test & Delayed Post-test)				
	N	Mean	SD	SE
Post	10	4.500	1.080	0.342
Delayed	10	3.800	1.317	0.416

The finding clearly shows that the drop in the score (MD=0.7) is relatively higher when flashcards were not used. In this book, the students learn new vocabulary, but vocabulary retention is relatively lower than retaining when flashcards are used. So, according to the findings, the 4th hypothesis of this research, "use of flashcards has a significant impact on vocabulary retention," can be accepted.

The next hypothesis of the study is "frequency appearance of the target vocabulary has a significant impact on vocabulary learning". To test this hypothesis, "The Berenstain Bears and the Spooky Old Tree" by Stan and Jan Berenstain were read to the experimental group. Five words that were repeated in the story were chosen to test the hypothesis.

Paired Samples T-Test (Experimental Group Score of "Just Grandma and Me" Pre-test & Post-test)									
							95% CI for Mean Difference		
Measure 1	Measure 2	t	df	p	Mean Difference	SE Difference	Lower	Upper	Cohen's d
Pre	Post	NaN ^a							
-									

Note. Student's t-test.

^a The variance in Post is equal to 0

Descriptive (Experimental Group Score of "Just Grandma and Me" Pre-test & Post-test)				
	N	Mean	SD	SE
Pre	10	4.300	1.160	0.367
Post	10	5.000	0.000	0.000

Repetition has remarkably influenced vocabulary learning as all the students got full scores for the post-test (M=5.0, SD=0.0) while the pre-test (M=4.3, SD=1.16). The findings are evidence that the frequency of appearance of the target vocabulary significantly impacts vocabulary learning.

The final and the 6th hypothesis of the research to find out the effects of narrating picture books in promoting vocabulary learning and retention in preschoolers is "Frequency appearance of the target vocabulary has a significant impact on vocabulary retention."

Descriptive (Experimental Group Score of "Just Grandma and Me" Post-test & Delayed Post-test)				
	N	Mean	SD	SE
Post	10	5.000	0.000	0.000
Delayed	10	4.700	0.675	0.213

The results show a marginally drop in the score of the delayed post-test ($M=4.7$, $SD= 0.6$). However, it is still higher than the pre-test ($M=4.3$, $SD=1.16$). To see if repetition helps in vocabulary retention of the preschoolers, the study compares the delayed post-test results of the storybook "Just Grandma and Me" ($M=3.8$, $SD=1.2$) as the book didn't have any repeating vocabulary which was tested. There is a clear difference in the results with a mean difference of 0.9, which evidently shows that there is a positive impact of repetition on vocabulary retention. So, the 6th hypothesis, frequency appearance of the target vocabulary has a significant impact on vocabulary retention, also can be accepted, corresponding to the results of the study.

These findings clearly shows that narrating picture books have a great impact on promoting English vocabulary for preschoolers. Further, the research was carried out in Japan, so the results are applicable for Japanese preschoolers particularly.

5. Discussion

This research aimed to identify the impact of narrating storybooks on vocabulary learning and retention of Japanese preschoolers using three different story books. Further, the study focused on the impact of using flashcards and repetition during the narration process. Based on the quasi-experimental research carried out, it can be concluded that narrating storybooks is significantly effective in English vocabulary learning and retention in Japanese preschool learners. Further, flashcards impact vocabulary learning, and retention greatly more than other methods used during the intervention.

The research finding related to the 1st hypothesis, which stated the significant impact of narrating storybooks on vocabulary improvement in Japanese preschool learners, aligns with the previous study done in Mississippi by Patricia Quinelato, 2019 on foreign language acquisition in Spanish – Portuguese context for preschoolers. Both studies focused on the participants' non-native languages, and still there is a higher reliability on the effects of narrating storybooks in novel word-learning.

Even though the study's findings don't show a significant impact of narrating picture books on vocabulary retention in Japanese preschool learners, the 2nd hypothesis is aligned and supported by the previously carried out study in Vietnam for Vietnamese preschool learners Tran Thi Thanh Thuy in 2018. And it also aligned with the study done by Patricia, 2019 for cognate vocabulary. However, there was zero possibility for the participants to hear those words again between the post-test and the delayed post-test. So, the results might change if the circumstances are changed.

The finding of the 3rd hypothesis that stated a significant impact of flashcards on English vocabulary learning aligns with the previous study done on Iranian elementary school students (Hashemifardnia A. et al. 2018). The researchers highlighted that colorful and eye-catching pictures could take the students' attention to focus and learn the vocabulary words. Gustavo Mendoza, 2016 also stated the positive impact of pictures in vocabulary learning through storybooks. Mendoza's research was carried out in Colombia for preschoolers.

Moreover, the finding of this research further established the positive impact of flashcards on vocabulary retention after analyzing the results of the 4th hypothesis. Also, repetition of target vocabulary helps students remember vocabulary in greater extension than just narrating a story. The

5th hypothesis of the study, which stated that the frequency appearance of the target vocabulary has a significant impact on vocabulary learning, is in alignment with a recent study done by O'Fallon, M., Von Holzen., K., & Newman, R. S. (2020). Their results support storybook reading with young children in vocabulary learning, and the study highlighted the importance of repeated exposure to novel vocabulary with or without additional elaboration. The results of the 6th hypothesis established the impact of the repeated appearance of words in the vocabulary retention of young learners. During the intervention, the students were enthusiastically involved in acting out one of the stories, "The Berenstain Bears and the Spooky Old Tree" by Stan and Jan Berenstain, which was not originally in the research plan. It showed that just within three times of narration, most of them already remembered the common phrases of the story that they acted out on their own with a little help from the teacher.

6. Conclusion

This research was carried out in an area where English is becoming more popular every day, so it surely benefits parents, teachers, private English institutes, kindergartens, and early childhood centers that want to enhance the English language skills of their children.

Even though many parents have limited knowledge and access to English as a language of communication, most of them can read and understand simple comprehensions. So, they could start by reading bedtime stories to their children. As the language in bedtime stories is not difficult to read or understand, that will be a good start for a kid to acquire more language skills in the process of growing up.

It is common to complain that drilling and repeating vocabulary in the classroom is not always fun, and many of the students don't remember the words after a few months. Suppose teachers can use picture books instead of drilling cards for vocabulary teaching. In that case, that will be beneficial for both teachers and students as the vocabulary will be taught through contexts and pictures simultaneously.

Every private institute in Japan has a curriculum designed to fit each level's needs. Under their curriculum with many textbooks, songs, and video lessons, they can also include picture book reading time to enhance vocabulary, comprehension skills, and value of literature. In addition, picture books motivate students to read more written genres in the long run.

It is common to see that many public kindergartens and early childhood centers with no teacher for English Language activities. However, as stated above, narrating picture books doesn't require many language skills. Even if they don't have a teacher for English, they can use picture book narrative during free playtime. The input will help in catching up with language quickly when the children start elementary school.

Further, this study addressed the geographical gap in using storybooks in English vocabulary development in Japanese preschoolers. It also provides evidence that story narration develops more vocabulary than songs and videos, as stories are based on a theme and delivered in sentences. Furthermore, the narrative styles and vocal dramatizing presentations make learning fun as it happens subconsciously without any pressure on young learners. As all ten students who participated in the experiment have no use of English in their day-to-day life at home, further research could address the effects of narrating storybooks in developing preschool children's listening and speaking skills. Further, since reading comics is a common habit of many young learners, an evolved version of the same study can be carried out to understand the impact of story reading on the development of four skills of English language in elementary school students in Japan.

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