

# Developing Early Literacy in Children Learning English in Primary School: Interactive Storytelling in Focus

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## Abstract

The current provision of foreign language learning for pupils in Years 5 and 6 in primary school is aimed at developing not only oracy but also equipping them with early literacy experiences (e.g., reading and writing). Such provisions should in turn provide a foundation upon which to develop communicative competence of a more comprehensive nature in pupils and also to better prepare them for the subsequent, more advanced learning of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in secondary school education. One outstanding challenge here is perhaps a lack of consensus amongst researchers, teachers and practitioners on how to prepare primary school pupils transitioning into secondary school education for formal EFL instruction. This paper addresses this issue by exploring language-based approaches to early literacy, drawing on the literature on both first (L1) and second language (L2) acquisition. In so doing, particular foci are placed on oral language interventions featuring interactive storytelling, followed by discussing approaches to effectively incorporating such activities in the Japanese English-as-a-foreign language context.

## 1. Introduction

Increasingly, across the globe, a number of children are being offered foreign language (FL) instruction in school settings. Furthermore, many countries are lowering the age at which primary school children begin FL learning as part of the curriculum (Murphy, 2014). Japan is no exception to this global trend and as of April 2020, Foreign Language (predominantly English) Activities (FLA), known as *Gaikokugokatsudō* in Japanese, are implemented nationwide as a compulsory area of study for pupils in Years 3 and 4, whereas English is taught as a formal subject to pupils in Years 5 and 6. While the primary objective of FLA lies in developing oracy (listening and speaking) in children through communicative activities that are closely linked to real-life experiences and other subject-matter areas in the primary curriculum, formal instruction in the later years is designed to

## **【Examples of ethical considerations】**

### **3. Method**

#### **3.4 Ethical considerations**

Parental consent was gained by distributing the information sheet via the participating schools. The schools and parents were all informed that neither their child(ren) nor their school would be identifiable in any research resulting from this study and all data collected would be accessible only to the named researchers involved in the study. Further, it was ensured that all parents understand that participation in the study was voluntary and they or their child(ren) may withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without their education being affected in any way.