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## **USING PICTURE BOOKS TO SUPPORT ENGLISH WRITING DEVELOPMENT IN THAI PRIMARY EDUCATION: STAKEHOLDERS' INSIGHTS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Writing remains one of the most challenging skills for Thai learners of English as a foreign language (EFL), largely due to teacher-centered instruction and limited opportunities for meaningful writing practice. Traditional methods often fail to foster creativity and confidence, resulting in low writing proficiency among primary students. To address this issue, picture books have been proposed as an innovative pedagogical tool; however, research on their application in writing instruction, particularly in Thai primary education, remains limited. This qualitative study explored stakeholders' perspectives on integrating picture books into English writing instruction for Grade 5 students. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with six participants, including an educational supervisor, an academic teacher, two English teachers, and two parents. Interviews were conducted in Thai using a semi-structured guide, audio-recorded with consent, and analyzed thematically. Findings revealed five key themes: (1) positive perceptions of picture books as engaging and age-appropriate; (2) improved student motivation, confidence, and creative writing skills; (3) pedagogical benefits such as contextual learning and reduced writing anxiety; (4) challenges including limited resources, time constraints, and lack of teacher training; and (5) recommendations for teacher development, resource support, and home-school collaboration. The study concludes that picture books are a promising tool for enhancing EFL writing instruction in primary education. However, successful implementation requires institutional support, teacher training, and policy-level integration to ensure sustainability and equity.

*Keywords: Picture books, writing skills, EFL learners,*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Writing is widely recognized as one of the most challenging skills for learners of English as a foreign language (EFL). Unlike listening or speaking, which allow for immediate interaction, writing requires learners to integrate grammatical knowledge, vocabulary, coherence, and creativity simultaneously. Thai students, in particular, have long struggled with English writing, as reflected in national assessment results that consistently reveal low levels of achievement in grammar, spelling, and text organization (Pinichwinyupab, 2020). Traditional teaching methods, which often emphasize rote memorization and teacher-centered instruction, provide limited opportunities for students to practice meaningful writing, thereby exacerbating the problem.

In recent years, picture books have emerged as an innovative pedagogical tool to bridge this gap. Picture books combine visual and textual narratives, offering rich contextual



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support that stimulates learners' imagination, facilitates vocabulary acquisition, and enhances comprehension (Kiefer et al., 2010; Murphy, 2009). When integrated into writing instruction, picture books not only provide models for narrative structures but also motivate students to express their ideas creatively. Prior studies have confirmed their value in supporting literacy development, yet most research has concentrated on reading skills rather than writing (Sari & Fitrisia, 2022). Few studies have explored the impact of picture books on Grade 5 EFL learners' writing ability, and much of the existing literature remains theoretical rather than experimental. Moreover, integration of picture books with structured writing approaches, such as Brown's process-oriented model, is rarely addressed (Bai & Sakulwongs, 2023). This gap underscores the need for empirical research that examines how picture books can be systematically incorporated into writing instruction to enhance both linguistic and creative competencies.

The present study was conducted to investigate the effects of using picture books on the writing ability of Grade 5 students in Thailand. While the main study employed a pre-test and post-test design to measure improvement in writing performance, additional qualitative data were collected from six stakeholders, including teachers, parents, the academic teacher, and the educational supervisor, to provide deeper insights into the implementation of picture books in the classroom. The broader research project employed a pre-experimental design to examine the effects of using picture books on Grade 5 students' writing ability. The quantitative results revealed a statistically significant improvement in writing performance at the .05 level and a high level of student satisfaction with English learning through picture books ( $\bar{x} = 3.70$ ). Building on these findings, the present qualitative phase was conducted to further explore the factors contributing to students' development and to gain deeper insights into stakeholders' perspectives. This study focuses exclusively on the qualitative findings, highlighting stakeholders' perspectives regarding the benefits, challenges, and practical implications of using picture books to enhance EFL writing instruction. By presenting these insights, the study aims to explore parents' perspectives on the use of picture books in English language learning, examine English teachers' views and experiences regarding the development of Grade 5 students' writing skills through picture books, and investigate academic and educational supervisors' opinions and suggestions on integrating picture books into the English curriculum and its policy implications.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Writing and Its Challenges**

Writing is widely acknowledged as one of the most complex skills in English language learning because it requires the integration of grammar, vocabulary, organization, and creativity (Byrne, 1988; Rogers, 2004). For Thai learners, writing remains a persistent challenge due to limited exposure to authentic writing practices and traditional teacher-centered methods that emphasize rote memorization. These constraints often result in low writing proficiency, as reflected in national assessments.

### **Writing Process and Teaching Approaches**

The writing process typically involves pre-writing, drafting, and revising stages (Brown, 2001). Modern pedagogy emphasizes process-oriented approaches, encouraging



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learners to view writing as a recursive activity rather than a one-time task (Seow, 2002). Other approaches include the product approach, which focuses on accuracy and final output, and the genre-based approach, which teaches text conventions (Hyland, 2003). While these approaches have been widely discussed, their integration with innovative tools such as picture books remains underexplored.

### **Techniques for Teaching Writing**

Effective writing instruction incorporates techniques such as brainstorming, guided writing, and free writing to stimulate idea generation and reduce writing anxiety (Harmer, 2004). Visual aids, including picture prompts and picture books, have been identified as powerful tools for supporting language production, particularly among young learners (Wright, 1990). These tools provide contextual support and foster creativity, making them suitable for primary education.

### **Picture Books in Language Learning**

Picture books combine visual and textual elements, providing contextual support that enhances comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and creativity (Kiefer et al., 2010). They also serve as effective models of narrative structures that help motivate learners to express ideas through writing. Research indicates that picture books can improve engagement and writing performance by offering meaningful input and scaffolding (Lefevre, 2018; Pérez & Vargas-Daza, 2019). Wordless picture books, in particular, encourage independent storytelling and foster imagination (Maming & Irmayanti, 2019).

## **METHODOLOGY**

This qualitative study, part of a larger project entitled Effects of Using Picture Books on the Writing Ability of Grade 5 Students in Thailand, explored stakeholders' perspectives on using picture books as a pedagogical tool to enhance EFL writing.

### **Participants**

The participants consisted of six stakeholders who were directly involved in or affected by English language instruction at Ban Non-Tan School, located in Bueng-O Sub-district, Kham Talay So District, Nakhon Ratchasima Province, Thailand. They were purposefully selected to provide diverse viewpoints related to the implementation of picture books. The participants included:

1) One educational supervisor from the Primary Educational Service Area Office 5 (PESA5), located in Dan Khun Thot Sub-district, Dan Khun Thot District, Nakhon Ratchasima Province, Thailand, 2) One academic teacher at Ban Non-Tan School, in Bueng O Subdistrict, Kham Thale So District, Nakhon Ratchasima Province, Thailand, 3) Two English teachers from the same school, and 4) Two parents of Grade 5 students from the same school.

### **Research Instruments**

The research instruments comprised three sets of semi-structured interview guides, each containing ten questions, developed to elicit stakeholders' perspectives on the



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benefits, challenges, and feasibility of integrating picture books into English writing instruction. The guides were tailored for three stakeholder groups: (1) educational supervisors and academic teachers, (2) English teachers, and (3) parents of Grade 5 students.

### **Instrument Validation**

To ensure the quality of the instruments, the interview guides were validated by three experts in English language education and qualitative research. The experts evaluated the instruments for content validity, clarity, and relevance to the research objectives using the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC). The IOC scores ranged from 0.67 to 1.00. Only items with IOC values greater than 0.50 were retained. Revisions were made based on expert feedback before data collection commenced.

### **Data Collection**

Following the receipt of ethical approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee of Boromarajonani College of Nursing, Nakhon Ratchasima (COA No. 11/2568), data collection was initiated. The researcher visited locations mutually agreed upon with the participants to conduct the interviews. Prior to participation, all participants were provided with comprehensive information regarding the study's objectives and procedures, and written informed consent was obtained. Subsequently, in-depth interviews were conducted using a semi-structured format; each session lasted approximately 30–45 minutes and was carried out in Thai, the participants' native language, to ensure clarity and authenticity. With participants' consent, all interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim for subsequent analysis.

### **Data Analysis**

The qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework. The process involved multiple stages: (1) familiarization with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report. To enhance trustworthiness, coding was cross-checked, and representative quotations were selected to illustrate the emerging themes.

## **RESEARCH RESULT**

The qualitative findings were derived from semi-structured interviews with six participants: 1) One educational supervisor from the Primary Educational Service Area Office 5 (PESA5), located in Dan Khun Thot Sub-district, Dan Khun Thot District, Nakhon Ratchasima Province, Thailand, 2) One academic teacher at Ban Non-Tan School, in Bueng O Subdistrict, Kham Thale So District, Nakhon Ratchasima Province, Thailand, 3) Two English teachers from the same school, and 4) Two parents of Grade 5 students from the same school. Data were analyzed by using content analysis, and five key themes emerged as shown in



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Table 1

Table 1 Summary of Qualitative Findings

| Theme                            | Key Insights                                                                                                        | Supporting Evidence (Participants)                                                                                |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Perceptions and Attitudes     | Picture books are engaging, age-appropriate, and promote meaningful learning.                                       | "Picture books are not only for fun but part of real lessons." (P1); "They fit children's natural learning." (ES) |
| 2. Impacts on Students' Learning | Improved motivation, confidence, and creative writing skills. Students enjoy storytelling and produce longer texts. | "My child came home excited to retell stories." (P1); "Even shy learners wrote their own stories." (T2)           |
| 3. Pedagogical Benefits          | Support contextual learning, reduce writing anxiety, and integrate skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing).  | "Pictures help students connect words with experience." (T2); "They reduce fear of writing." (AT)                 |
| 4. Challenges and Limitations    | Limited materials, time constraints, and lack of teacher training; resource inequality in small schools.            | "Books are not level-appropriate." (T1); "Rural schools face budget constraints." (AT)                            |
| 5. Recommendations               | Provide training workshops, budget support, and home-school collaboration for sustainability.                       | "Workshops for creative writing activities." (T2); "Reading together at home helps learning." (P1)                |

### 1. Perceptions and Attitudes Toward Picture Books

All participants expressed positive attitudes toward using picture books in English writing lessons. They perceived that picture books make English learning more enjoyable, relatable, and effective. One parent explained that "*picture books are not only for fun but are integrated as part of actual English lessons*" (P1), while another added that "*pictures help children understand vocabulary and sentence structures without relying on translation*" (P2). Teachers shared this enthusiasm, emphasizing that "picture books motivate students to write and express their own ideas confidently" (T1). The academic teacher viewed the approach as "*aligned with the competency-based curriculum and Active Learning principles*" (AT). Likewise, the educational supervisor commented that "*this approach suits young learners' natural way of learning through images and stories*" (ES). Overall, participants viewed picture books as valuable instructional tools that promote student-centered and engaging language learning.



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### 2. Impacts on Students' Learning

Participants reported significant improvements in students' motivation, confidence, and writing ability. Parents observed that their children became more eager to learn and apply new vocabulary. *"My child came home excited to retell the story from class"* (P1). Another parent added that *"he began writing simple sentences using words from the story"* (P2). Teachers confirmed similar changes, noting that *"students now use a wider range of vocabulary and construct more complete sentences"* (T1). *"Even shy learners started creating their own stories inspired by the pictures"* (T2). The educational supervisor emphasized that *"students demonstrated not only linguistic growth but also improved logical sequencing and creative thinking"* (ES). These findings indicate that picture books enhance both language proficiency and higher-order thinking.

### 3. Pedagogical Benefits

All participants recognized picture books as effective pedagogical tools that encourage meaningful learning and creativity. *"Pictures help students understand the context of language and connect words with real-life experiences"* (T2). The academic teacher noted that *"picture books reduce writing anxiety by providing visual cues and clear story structures"* (AT). Parents observed that *"their children enjoyed writing more and felt proud of creating their own stories"* (P1). Additionally, the educational supervisor mentioned that *"picture books integrate listening, speaking, reading, and writing in a single activity"* (ES). These insights suggest that picture books foster both linguistic and emotional engagement, supporting integrated skill development and creativity in language learning.

### 4. Challenges and Limitations

Despite the positive outcomes, participants identified several constraints. Teachers mentioned *"a limited number of picture books and mismatches between book levels and students' abilities"* (T1). The academic teacher explained that *"budget limitations in small or rural schools hinder access to sufficient materials"* (AT). Meanwhile, the educational supervisor pointed out that *"some teachers still lack training in how to use picture books effectively"* (ES). These limitations highlight the need for greater institutional support, particularly in providing adequate resources and teacher professional development.

### 5. Recommendations for Improvement

Participants proposed multiple strategies to enhance implementation. Teachers suggested conducting training workshops on creative instructional design. The academic teacher recommended forming school networks to share resources and best practices, while the educational supervisor urged for policy-level funding and continuous support. Parents also emphasized home-school collaboration, suggesting that reading and discussing stories together would reinforce children's learning at home. These recommendations underline the importance of collective effort among teachers, administrators, policymakers, and parents in ensuring sustainable use of picture books in English education.



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In summary, the integration of picture books into English writing lessons enhanced students' motivation, confidence, and creative expression. It also encouraged teachers to adopt active, student-centered approaches. However, sustained success depends on adequate resources, teacher readiness, and institutional support to ensure equitable access and long-term impact.

## **CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

### **Conclusion**

The study revealed that integrating picture books into English writing instruction significantly enhanced Grade 5 students' motivation, confidence, and creative writing ability. Students demonstrated greater engagement, produced longer and more coherent texts, and showed improvement in vocabulary use and logical sequencing. Furthermore, picture books were found to facilitate contextual learning, reduce writing anxiety, and promote integrated language skill development. Despite challenges such as limited resources and insufficient teacher training, the findings confirm that picture book-based instruction is a promising and adaptable approach for improving EFL writing in primary education.

### **Discussion**

The results of this study align with prior research emphasizing the pedagogical value of visual narratives in promoting literacy and creativity (Pérez & Vargas-Daza, 2019; Abdullah & Yunus, 2019; Bai Xue & Sakulwongs, 2023). Stakeholders consistently reported that picture books engage learners emotionally and cognitively, bridging the gap between language input and meaningful output. This supports the constructivist perspective that learning occurs through active interaction and personal interpretation.

In the Thai EFL context, where traditional teaching remains dominant, the use of picture books encourages a shift toward active learning and student-centered pedagogy. Learners' increased willingness to write reflects reduced anxiety and improved self-efficacy, suggesting that visual scaffolding plays a crucial role in overcoming linguistic barriers. Nevertheless, practical challenges particularly limited materials and unequal access pose constraints to widespread implementation. Addressing these issues requires both pedagogical innovation and systemic support.

Overall, the findings highlight that picture books not only enrich the learning experience but also serve as an effective medium for developing core writing competencies, creativity, and 21st-century skills such as critical thinking and communication.

### **Recommendations**

To maximize the educational benefits of picture book-based instruction, several measures are recommended:

Teacher Professional Development: Organize workshops and continuous training on



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the design and implementation of picture book-based writing lessons, emphasizing creativity, differentiation, and formative assessment.

**Curriculum and Policy Support:** Educational authorities should incorporate picture books into English curricula and allocate funding to ensure equitable access to quality resources, especially in rural or underfunded schools.

**Resource Sharing Networks:** Establish school clusters or online platforms for sharing teaching materials, successful lesson plans, and collaborative research findings.

**Home-School Collaboration:** Encourage parents to engage in shared reading and storytelling activities at home to reinforce classroom learning and nurture children's writing interest.

**Future Research:** Further studies could adopt mixed-method designs or larger sample sizes to examine long-term impacts of picture book integration across different linguistic and cultural settings.

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