

## 児童英語教員養成課程における絵本を 活用した英語劇活動への取り組み

島田 美織

### Adapting storybooks to create English dramas for teacher improvement

Miori SHIMADA

#### **Abstract**

This paper focuses on the teacher-training practicum in the 2012 academic year, in which the author's university students designed an English drama for Japanese children aged six and seven. The main goals of the course were to raise skills to introduce English to young learners in an interesting way. Aside from regular lessons based on English textbooks and reference books, the author assigned her students to perform an English drama and conduct a mini-lesson in front of young children as a final course project. Consequently, it made the university students gain more confidence in speaking to their younger students in English as well as in presenting the English language to them as teachers. The article not only explains how the final drama activities were conducted but also examines feedback from teachers and students. Finally, the author suggests some ways to strengthen practicum courses for teacher-candidates.

本稿は、2012年度児童英語教授法クラスで最終発表として実施した大学生による英語劇活動についての考察である。この授業の主な目的は、学生達が6才児、7才児に英語を導入する際の様々なスキルを身につけるものであ

る。市販のテキストを使用した通常授業に比べ、児童英語教授法クラスでは、最終発表として英語劇とその内容に関するミニレッソンを実際の児童の前で行うこととした。この英語劇活動を通して、学生達は英語での指導に自信を深めることができた。本稿では、英語劇を作り上げる過程を詳述するとともに、最終発表後実施したクラス担任へのアンケート結果も紹介し、分析している。最後に、今後の児童英語教授法クラスにおける内容の充実に向けての可能性を探る。

## **1. Introduction**

Since the 2009 academic year, I have conducted teacher-training courses for students who wish to become English teachers to young children. In the beginning I assigned the students to do demo-lessons as a final project of the course in our classrooms; however, I also began to seek a way to give them an authentic teaching setting. Wishing to use what I thought was an ideal location, I contacted their affiliated preschool within the same campus, and my aspiration to offer the practicum students an authentic atmosphere for teaching became a reality. Because the students in 2012 were especially highly motivated, I had decided to incorporate some extra challenges: 1) the students create and perform an English drama instead of giving a regular English demo-lesson to their peers; 2) the students also offer an activity relevant to the play after the performance. In addition, in response to the request from the students, I agreed that they would do the same performance and a mini-lesson in a public elementary school after the semester ended.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1. Storybooks and drama**

Previous studies have revealed there were several positive effects of adapting storybooks and incorporating drama into English lessons for young children. Matsuka (2001) states that children are good at learning things holistically through materials such as picture books. Koda (2001) similarly states what children learned through materials with visual images will remain with them for a long time. She

introduces short skits based on the books The Letter by Arnold Lobel and Swimmy by Leo Lionni. As both stories have been translated and incorporated into Japanese official textbooks, they are already familiar to most Japanese children. Koda then claims it is possible to expand their imaginations and to help them retain new vocabulary if the stories are developed into a role-play or drama, a ‘fun’ atmosphere as Asama (2011) puts it. According to Gaudart (1990) and Via (1976), drama activities provide performers with real situations and roles so that they are able to learn a language in meaningful/communicative contexts. Stern (1980) also points out that drama activities particularly contribute to improving the oral language skills of L2 learners. Drama activities enable students to feel their way in creating their own parts and adapting them as they come up against others. The problem of not wanting to speak or, more often, not knowing what to say is practically resolved because the activity makes it necessary to talk (Maley and Duff, 1978).

## **2.2. Skills through drama activities**

Pre-service teachers not only have to gain language skills but also acquire other skills such as classroom management. Wallace (1991) introduces two ways to cultivate knowledge among teachers: one is to master a given corpus of ‘received knowledge’, and the other is to gain ‘experiential knowledge’ (p. 87). By interacting with their fellow students through drama activities, these teacher-candidates can experience the latter kind of knowledge. They would be able to learn how to encourage students and facilitate their learning attitudes.

## **3. Research questions**

In order to carry out drama activities, a few research questions arose.

- Does drama activity contribute to students’ English improvement/teaching skills?
- Does drama activity give university students more confidence as future teachers?
- Does drama activity create a cooperative atmosphere to learn together and enhance students’ learning attitudes?

## **4. Procedures for developing an English drama**

### **4.1. Purpose**

The course encourages university students to use all four language skills—reading, writing, listening and speaking—while developing an English drama. In addition, the course provides students an authentic teaching setting when they perform a drama in front of preschoolers and elementary school students. In this way they could receive direct feedback from an actual audience.

### **4.2. Important steps**

In order to achieve the purposes of the course, university students are encouraged to reread some picture books they had previously studied, and discuss appropriate themes and stories from the selected books for drama-creation. Students then start developing the scripts and polish lines in English based on the story they chose. Finally, each student takes an equal part in performance and is responsible for another role such as props, music, etc., based on the student's talents. To make children react more to the performance, it is important for university students to ask direct questions during the performance as well as to do relevant activities after the play.

### **4.3. Preparation**

#### **4.3.1. Drama scripts and performing style**

Upon making drama scripts, university students selected a few picture books by Eric Carle that they had studied in their English Literature for Children class. They then arranged the story for performance and simplified lines in English. Students also decided on a performing style—drama, puppet play or shadow play—which would be appropriate for their young audience.

#### **4.3.2. Duration and time management**

As the audience is preschoolers or elementary school students who have little experience in English language, it is necessary for university students to listen to what the homeroom teachers say about the topic and story to choose for their play. Because preschoolers have a very short attention span, the total time for performance

and activity should be 30 minutes at most. In contrast, in elementary school each class period lasts 45 minutes, therefore, another extra activity can be added after the performance.

#### **4.3.3. Scripts**

Because many children have no experience in learning English, the lines should be simple and easy, and repetitive. In order to get children more involved, another approach that university students can try is to ‘sing’ lines with familiar tunes or to ask simple questions during the performance.

#### **4.3.4. Activities**

For preschoolers the activity should be a short one, something they could do during a cleanup time, and it should be based on the story of the drama. If a drama is considered to be an ‘active’ type including lots of singing and actions, the follow-up activity should be a ‘quiet’ one, and vice versa.

#### **4.3.5. Props and music**

Props need to be made bigger and use bright colors to attract children’s attention. In addition, they should be made with inexpensive everyday goods. Songs could be inserted in the drama or used as background music.

### **5. Methodology**

#### **5.1. Drama**

##### **5.1.1. Title**

Part I: White dog, white dog, what do you see?

Part II: Have you seen my pet?

##### **5.1.2. Original stories**

Part I: Brown bear, brown bear, what do you see? (Eric Carle)

Part II: Have you seen my cat? (Eric Carle)

##### **5.1.3. Duration of performance**

Part I: 10 minutes

Part II: 10 minutes

Activity: 5-10 minutes (preschool), 10-15 minutes (elementary school)

### **5.1.4. Stories**

Part I: White dog, white dog, what do you see?

With “white dog” as a starter, various animals appear one by one, greeting each other. Lines are sung to the tune ‘Twinkle, twinkle, little star’. (Please refer to Appendix 1)

Part II: Have you seen my pet?

Tom’s pet disappears, and he starts asking each animal he meets “Have you seen my pet?” (Please refer to Appendix 2)

### **5.1.5. Activities**

Preschool: Worksheet (individual work)

Match the animals (appear in the Part II drama) with the pictures of the places they met Tom.

Elementary school: Yes/No quiz (whole group activity)

Show ‘Yes’ side if the statement is true, and ‘No’ side if the statement is false.

(Please refer to Appendix 3)

## **5.2. Drama performance**

### **5.2.1. Schedule for preparations**

The preparation schedules for the two drama performances in 2012 were as follows:

*<Performance I in December>*

Starting date: October 6, 2012

Number of lessons spent for Performance I: 8 times (90 minutes for each class)

Hours of preparation outside the classroom: 7-8 hours

Preparation details:

Select picture books, finalize scripts, create relevant activities and worksheets (4 classes)

Decide roles, make props, choose music, practice (3 lessons, 5-6 hours outside the classroom)

Rehearse (once, 1-2 hours outside the classroom)

Feedback (lunch time of December 6, 2012)

<Performance II in February>

Starting date: December 13, 2012

Number of lessons spent for Performance II: 5 times (90 minutes for each class)

Hours of preparation outside the classroom: 7-8 hours

Preparation details:

Create relevant activities and animal quiz materials (2 classes)

Decide roles, make props, practice (1 lesson, 3-4 hours outside the classroom)

Rehearse (once, 3-4 hours outside the classroom)

Feedback and questionnaire (Afternoon of February 1, 2013)

**5.2.2. Schedule for the actual performances**

<Performance I>

Date: December 6, 2012

Time: 11:50-12:20, 12:25-12:55

Place: 'Blue' classroom, 'White' classroom

<Performance II>

Date: February 1, 2013

Time: 13:30-14:10

Place: Special classroom for learning

**5.2.3. Participants**

<Performance I>

Performers: five sophomores (All female students including one returnee student)

Audience size: 20 x 2 (classes)

Observers: two univ. teachers, two homeroom teachers from both classes

<Performance II>

Performers: five sophomores (All female students including one returnee student)

Audience size: Total 60 (30 each class)

Observers: two univ. teachers, two homeroom teachers from both classes

**5.2.4. Educational background of performers**

Five sophomore students, all English majors, were taking the following full-year courses: English for young learners I (basic course), English for young learners II (practicum), English literature for children, Introducing English to young learners.

They have demo-lesson experience once or twice in a classroom during their freshman year, and several times in a classroom and once or twice outside during their sophomore year. In addition, each student spends four days doing volunteer work in a local elementary school during spring break.

## 6. Results

### 6.1. Feedback from university students

#### 6.1.1. Questionnaire results

After each performance, the five university students filled in a questionnaire sheet (Q1 to Q8). On February 1, after the second performance, they also answered Q9 to Q12. The students also compared doing demo-lessons and drama performance and discussed their advantages and disadvantages. Their individual comments were written in Japanese; they were later translated into English by the author.

Question items *Please put ○ (good), △ (neutral), × (bad) for Q1~12	Performance 1 (in preschool) December 6, 2012	Performance 2 (in elementary school) February 1, 2013
Q1. Drama components and the story	○ 5	○ 5
Q2. Quality of performance	○ 4 △ 1	○ 5
Q3. Costume, props, sound effects	○ 4 △ 1	○ 3 △ 2
Q4. Duration and time management	○ 5	○ 5
Q5. Level of performance	— (Worksheet activity was conducted 'with- out' teachers' support)	○ 5
Q6. Was the story appropriate for student level?	○ 5	○ 5
Q7. Did the performance facilitate students' attention and utterances?	○ 3 △ 2	○ 5
Q8. Did students seem to understand the drama and show positive reactions to the performance?	○ 3 △ 2	○ 5



Q9. Do you think the drama activity enhanced your interests toward teaching?	○ 5
Q10. Do you think the drama activity improved your teaching skills?	○ 4 △ 1
Q11. Do you think the drama activity improved your English ability?	○ 3 △ 2
Q12. Did the drama activity enhance your learning attitude in the classroom?	○ 4 △ 1

### 6.1.2. Questions about the advantages and disadvantages of demo-lessons and drama performance

Questions : You did demo-lessons last year and drama performance this year as a final project of the course. What kind of pros and cons are there when doing both projects? Which would you choose for the final course project?

Advantages *Number of respondents	Disadvantages
<p><b>&lt;English drama&gt;</b>            -Everybody can be involved *(2)            -We feel relieved when doing preparations because we all work together (1)            -We could get an immediate idea of students' reactions (4)            -We could get a sense of achievement while developing drama activities (1)</p> <p><b>&lt;Demo-lesson&gt;</b>            -We could improve our English skills because demo-lesson is an individual form of presentation (1)            -We could improve our teaching skills (1)            -Students are able to focus more because they are attending an English 'lesson' (1)            -We could get an immediate idea of students' reactions (1)</p>	<p><b>&lt;English drama&gt;</b>            -Difficult to manage time for preparation because everybody has a different schedule (1)            -It is hard to determine if the students are really 'learning' (1)            -Everybody tends to rely on others (1)</p> <p><b>&lt;Demo-lesson&gt;</b>            -We get anxious because we have to do it by ourselves (1)            -We have to prepare all by ourselves, therefore, sometimes feel overwhelmed (1)            -We might spoil ourselves and tend to believe in whatever we do since we prepare everything individually (1)            -We doubt if children could really enjoy demo-lessons.(1)</p>

Final question:

Please mark ○ for your choice for final course project

(Demo-lessons—0 Drama—4 No answer—1)

## 6.2. Feedback from teachers

### 6.2.1. Questionnaire results

The author asked those teachers who observed the drama performance to fill in the bilingual questionnaire within two or three days after each performance. (Japanese translations are omitted due to space constraints.)

<b>Question items</b> *Please put ○ (good), △ (neutral), × (bad) for Q1~10	<Performance 1> Respondents: One univ. teacher (American), two homeroom teachers in preschool (Japanese)	<Performance 2> Respondents: Two homeroom teachers in elementary school (Japanese)
Q1. Combination of Performance style and the number of performers	○ 3	○ 2
Q2. Duration of performance	○ 3	○ 1 △ 1
Q3. Duration of activity	○ 3	○ 2
Q4. Content of activity	○ 3	○ 2
Q5. Level of performance	○ 3	△ 2
Q6. Level of activity	○ 3	○ 1 △ 1
Q7. English level of univ. students	○ 3	○ 1 △ 1
Q8. Understanding level of elementary school students	○ 3	△ 2
Q9. Contribution of performance for enhancing English vocabulary of pre-school students	○ 2 △ 1	○ 1 △ 1
Q10. Skills of univ. students to encourage young students to be involved in performance/activity	○ 2 △ 1	○ 1 △ 1

### 6.2.2. Personal comments from the teachers

<Performance 1>

The college students and their teacher did an excellent job developing this idea and carrying it out. The preschoolers clearly enjoyed it as they were very attentive

throughout both activities, responding, and smiling. The costumes and props were homemade but very attractive, colorful, and helpful in conveying the meaning of the story. The college students were enthusiastic, confident, and seemed to be totally enjoying the experience with the preschoolers. Nice job!!!

The children really enjoyed watching the performance. They were a little overwhelmed in the beginning; however, they then began to be absorbed more into the performance. Because this was a one-time performance, I don't think the children's English improved. Even so, I saw they shared the English words they knew after the performance. It was a good opportunity for them to encounter English language. It would have been better if you could have told us how to do the worksheet. (It must have been difficult because of the time limitation.) Thank you very much.

Children were able to concentrate on watching because of appropriate storyline and time. There were some confusion about the worksheet; some animal illustrations look similar, especially a pig and a bear. The children were having difficulties to match these animals with the places. They were able to enjoy more since the performance provided the corner for children to participate actively.

<Performance II>

Thank you very much. The students were actively involved in the animal quizzes after the performance. It would have been better if you had told the story beforehand. In this way young students would have been able to enjoy English more.

Our students were lucky to watch an English drama although they were still 1<sup>st</sup> graders. It was a valuable experience for them. Thank you very much. Our children seemed to have been much absorbed in the performance because it had various actions and rich content. They did the worksheet well since they had good memories about the play. I'm sure you got really nervous. Lower graders can easily get into any kinds of activities, therefore, something to elicit children's further reactions must

be introduced. For example, if children responded too quietly, the performers should encourage them by saying “More! More!” The motivation of children will then be stimulated, and as a result, it would make the performance easier.

## **7. Discussion**

### ***7.1. Feedback from university students***

#### ***7.1.1. Questionnaire responses***

(Q1~Q8)

When comparing Performance I and II, the number of ○answers of Q2, 7 and 8 increased in Performance II. This is because the levels of performance and teaching skills of students improved after they practiced even more for Performance II. As for Q1, 4 and 6, all students marked ○for both performances. The students seemed satisfied with the drama components, time management and performance level for the audience as they had discussed them seriously and made enough preparations. The number of ○ for Q2 decreased, however, most likely due to the deterioration of props and unavailability of audio equipment in Performance II.

(Q9~Q12)

While most of the university students feel the drama performance enhanced their interests, skills and motivation toward teaching, two out of five responded that they did not see any particular improvement in their English abilities.

#### ***7.1.2. Personal comments of pros and cons on drama activities and demo-lessons***

The drama activities received double the number of positive comments compared to those of the demo-lessons. Among the positive comments, most frequent was that they could get direct feedback from the children. The university students also commented that they were able to feel a sense of achievement through the drama activities. Conversely, there were more negative comments for demo-lessons than for the drama activities. In addition, one student felt that she took easier ways for herself when working for demo-lessons. The same was true for drama activities; another student mentioned that she often relied on others when working on drama activities. There are some interesting contrasts in their comments: University

students felt uneasy doing demo-lessons because they were basically individual presentations. On the other hand, drama activities made them more relaxed because they all worked together. While one student responded that it was hard to determine if the audience was really ‘learning’ the drama performance, another student commented that she doubted if the audience could really ‘enjoy’ demo-lessons. Finally, four students voted for drama performance as a course final project.

### ***7.2. Feedback from the young learners’ teachers***

Looking at all the results of Performance I and II, most question items received ○ answers in Performance I, which took place in a preschool. On the other hand, there were some △ answers regarding Performance II in the elementary school. △ answers were recorded for Q2, 5 and 6 about performance and activity, and Q8, 9 and 10 about understanding, participation and vocabulary improvement of the student audience. Another fact is that although all teachers marked ○ for Q 8 in Performance I in preschool, both teachers in elementary school gave △ marks. Those teachers also commented that it would have been better if their elementary school students had been told the story in Japanese beforehand. Another comment says that the university students could have developed a better warm-up activity at the beginning of the lesson to elicit more reaction from the children.

### ***7.3. Summary of the results and implications for the future***

Although these university students thought that their performance contributed to the increase in participation and understanding of the student audience, the children’s teachers did not always feel the same way. The university students, therefore, tried to improve their teaching skills and make efforts to make the drama activity more understandable to the young learners. In order to achieve these future goals, when preparing activities, teacher-candidates need to carefully consider how their young students can truly learn and enjoy their lessons when they prepare activities. Therefore, an important role of the teacher-trainer is to make this a focus and provide guidance to the teacher-candidate during the development of activities in the practicum course.

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## Appendix 1. Script for Performance I

前半 *White dog, white dog, what do you see?*

※ *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star* のメロデーで歌う

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ボードの後ろから “Children, children, what do you see?”

Audience “We see a White Dog looking at me.”

White Dog “Bow-wow! I am a White Dog. I like running.”

Audience “White Dog, White Dog, what do you see?”

White Dog “I see a Pink Monkey looking at me.”

Pink Monkey “Yack-yack! I am a Pink Monkey. I like bananas.”

Audience “Pink Monkey, Pink Monkey, what do you see?”

Pink Monkey “I see a Black Sheep looking at me.”

Black Sheep “Baa. I am a Black Sheep. I like sleeping.”

Audience “Black Sheep, Black Sheep, what do you see?”

Black Sheep “I see a Purple Cat looking at me.”

Purple Cat “Meow. I am a Purple Cat. I like Kotatsu.”

Audience “Purple Cat, Purple Cat, what do you see?”

Purple Cat “I see a Yellow Duck looking at me.”

Yellow Duck “Quack-quack! I am a Yellow Duck. I like swimming.”

Audience “Yellow Duck, Yellow Duck, what do you see?”

Yellow Duck “I see an Orange Pig looking at me.”

Orange Pig “Oink-oink! I am an Orange Pig. I like rolling.”

Audience “Orange Pig, Orange Pig, what do you see?”

Orange Pig “I see a Red Bird looking at me.” ←ボードのすぐ後ろに入る

Red Bird “Tweet-tweet! I am a Red Bird. I like flying.”

Audience “Red Bird, Red Bird, what do you see?”

Red Bird “I see a Green Frog looking at me.” ←ボードの後ろに入る

Green Frog “Ribbit-ribbit! I am a Green Frog. I like jumping.”

Audience “Green Frog, Green Frog, what do you see?”

Green Frog “I see a Brown Bear looking at me.” ←ボードの後ろに入る

Brown Bear “Roar! I am a Brown Bear. I like fish.”

(この時もう Audience 側には誰もいない)

Audience (& ボードの後ろ) “Brown Bear, Brown Bear, what do you see?”

Brown Bear “I see a Blue Horse looking at me.” ←ボードの後ろに入る

Blue Horse “Neigh! I am a Blue Horse. I like racing.”

Audience “Blue Horse, Blue Horse, what do you see?”

Blue Horse “I see a White Dog, Orange Pig, Pink Monkey, Red Bird, Black Sheep, Green Frog, Purple Cat, Brown Bear, Yellow Duck looking at me.”

全員パペットを持って出てくる。Blue Horse は自分のパペットを後ろに隠しておく

## Appendix 2. Script for Performance II

後半 *Have you seen my pet?*

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最初のシーン

僕 (Risa) “Hello! I’m Tom. And this is my pet Charlie. Charlie, come here!” (Wash, wash, wash, wash.) “I’m washing my pet Charlie. Charlie, don’t move! Charlie!”  
(Wash, wash.)

Pet 逃げる

僕 “Wait!! Where are you going?” ←ボードの裏に回る

—場面変え：家の前全角—

僕 “Where is my pet?.....Oh, is this my pet?” 近寄る → “It is not my pet!”

“Have you seen my pet?”

Purple Cat (Ikumi) “Yes. I saw him swimming in the river.”

僕 “Thank you!”

Purple Cat “You’re welcome!”

—場面変え：川—

僕 “Where is my pet?.....Oh, is this my pet?” 近寄る → “It is not my pet!”

“Have you seen my pet?”

Yellow Duck(Hinako) “Yes. I saw him jumping in the pond.”

僕 “Thank you!”

Yellow Duck “You’re welcome!”



—場面変え：池—

僕 “Where is my pet?.....Oh, is this my pet?” 近寄る → “It is not my pet!”

“Have you seen my pet?”

Green Frog(Nami) “Yes. I saw him Sleeping in the forest.”

僕 “Thank you!”

Green Frog “You’re welcome!”

—場面変え：森—

僕 “Where is my pet?.....Oh, is this my pet?” 近寄る → “It is not my pet!”

“Have you seen my pet?”

Brown Bear(Ikumi) “Yes. I saw him running in the park.”

僕 “Thank you!”

Brown Bear “You’re welcome!”

—場面変え：公園—

僕 “Where is my pet?.....Oh, is this my pet?” 近寄る → “It is not my pet!”

“Have you seen my pet?”

White Dog(Natsuki) “Yes. I saw him eating in the ranch.” ※発音に注意

僕 “Thank you!”

White Dog “You’re welcome!”

—場面変え：牧場—

僕 “Where is my pet?.....Oh, is this my pet?” 近寄る → “It is not my pet!”

“Have you seen my pet?”

Blue Horse(Hinako) “Yes. I saw him singing in the zoo.”

僕 “Thank you!”

Blue Horse “You’re welcome!”

—場面変え：動物園—

僕 “Where is my pet?.....Oh, is this my pet?” 近寄る → “It is not my pet!”

“Have you seen my pet?”

Black Sheep(Nami) “Sorry, I don’t know.....”

僕 “Oh,no!! Where is my pet.....?”

—場面変え：家の前—

Pet(Orange Pig/Natsuki) は家の前（ボード前）で座って待ってる

僕 “Where is my pet?.....Oh, is this my pet?” 近寄る→ “Yes! it IS my Pet!!”

場面変え：最後のページ→後ろにいる人が全員出てくる

後ろにいた人 “You found him!!”

僕 “Yes, I found him!! Thank you!!!”

### Appendix 3. Activities following Performance II

#### < Silhouette quiz >

Animal silhouette	Questions	Answers
1 Horse	I am a cat. Yes or No?	No
2 Cat	I am a duck. Yes or No?	No
3 Pig	I am a pig. Yes or No?	Yes
4 Frog	I am a bird. Yes or No?	No
5 Monkey	I am a monkey. Yes or No?	Yes
6 Bear	I am a bear. Yes or No?	Yes
7 Duck	I am a frog. Yes or No?	No
8 Dog	I am a dog. Yes or No?	Yes
9 Sheep	I am a sheep. Yes or No?	Yes
10 Bird	I am a horse. Yes or No?	No

#### < Animal sound quiz >

Animal sounds	Questions	Answers
1 Oink-oink	I am a pig. Yes or No?	Yes
2 Yack-yack	I am a sheep. Yes or No?	No
3 Quack-quack	I am a cat. Yes or No?	No

4	Tweet-tweet	I am a bird. Yes or No?	Yes
5	Neigh-neigh	I am a horse. Yes or No?	Yes
6	Baa-baa	I am a dog. Yes or No?	No
7	Roar	I am a bear. Yes or No?	Yes
8	Bow-wow	I am a duck. Yes or No?	No
9	Meow-meow	I am a monkey. Yes or No?	No
10	Ribbit-ribbit	I am a pig. Yes or No?	Yes