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FACULTAD DE FILOSOFÍA, LETRAS Y CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACIÓN

CARRERA DE LENGUA Y LITERATURA INGLESA

### Storytelling as a Strategy to Build up Vocabulary in Preschool Children at “Unidad Educativa *Santa Mariana de Jesús*” School

Trabajo Investigativo del Curso de Graduación previo a la obtención del Título de Licenciadas en Ciencias de la Educación en la Especialización de Lengua y Literatura Inglesa.

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## RESUMEN

La presente investigación monográfica fue llevada a cabo con el propósito de implementar a la historieta como una metodología útil para la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera entre niños de preescolar de cuatro años de edad. Aquellos profesores que nunca han puesto en práctica la historieta podrían enfrentar algunos problemas y tener un concepto erróneo acerca de su uso, aplicación, resultados e impactos en la enseñanza. Por esta razón, la investigación buscará establecer a la misma como estrategia para mejorar las habilidades comunicativas, enfocándose especialmente en el habla para de esta manera ayudar a los niños a producir el lenguaje espontáneamente. Además sugiere que los profesores utilicen materiales visuales y orales para captar la atención de los niños a fin de motivarlos en el proceso de aprendizaje y así obtener un resultado excepcional y duradero.

Finalmente, la investigación cubre los aspectos básicos de la historieta para su uso en el aula. Además, proporcionará algunos conceptos teóricos, análisis de datos, así como recomendaciones para los profesores cuando deciden aplicar la historieta como un aporte válido en el aula.

### **Palabras Clave:**

Historieta, niños, enseñanza, aprendizaje, adquisición, proceso, estrategia, habilidades comunicativas.



## **ABSTRACT**

The present monographic research was carried out with the purpose of implementing storytelling as a useful methodology for teaching English as a Foreign Language among four year-old preschool children. Teachers who have never used storytelling before may face some trouble and misconception about its use, application, results and impact on teaching. For this reason, the research will seek to set up storytelling as a strategy to enhance communicative skills, especially speaking, in order to help children produce the target language spontaneously. It also suggests that teachers use oral and visual aids to grab the students' attention in order to motivate them in the learning process and leave an outstanding and lasting result.

Finally, the research covers the basics of storytelling for its use in the classroom. It will provide some theoretical concepts, analysis of data, and recommendations for teachers when they apply storytelling as a valid input in the classroom.

### **Key words:**

Storytelling, children, teaching, learning, acquisition, process, strategy, communicative skills.



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Last but not least we thank God, our Lord, for giving us the wisdom, strength, support and knowledge in exploring these things, for His guidance in helping us surpass all the trials that we have encountered and for giving us determination to pursue our studies and to make our research possible.



## DEDICATION

This monograph is lovingly dedicated to my parents and children for inspiring me and being my support during all these years. They have given me the strength to go on. I love you so much.

- Karla

First, I want to thank my Lord, for being my strength. I also dedicate this work to that person who was with me during my childhood and adolescence and who unfortunately today is gone, my brother Danny. This work is also for my beloved family, my children and my husband, who have been my support to achieve this goal. Thanks to my parents, who with their words of optimism were always encouraging me to keep going. To each of you, thank you very much.

- María Fernanda



## INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, English is considered as a useful tool that can lead people to involve themselves as participants of the modern world. Some time ago, the learning process to learn English was based only on isolated words, phrases, grammar structures, etc. Considering the nature of human beings as storytellers, this research proposes the use of storytelling as an effective method to introduce English in context. Thus, children will be able to better understand the language and to transmit their knowledge with no fear in real-life situations.

The aim of this proposal is based on the insertion of English in the children's mental device since it is easy for them to acquire a second language and they can assimilate new knowledge faster than another person. Therefore, we should take advantage of it and use storytelling as a good strategy to help children accomplish the target teachers want to achieve.

There are many ways to expose storytelling during the teaching of children (the teacher underlined it, I don't know why). Furthermore, some of the stories present moral values beyond an entertained way to learn English language. Other ones show colors, shapes, feelings, etc. so in this way children are directly exposed to English in context where students' communication is more important than grammar structure or word order. Consequently, with a correct input and more practice, mistakes in the target language will improve later.



## CHAPTER I

### The Problem

Teaching English as a second language for the first time is a challenging task that requires patience, attention, creativity and above all dedication. Because it is not a simple task, this job has been done sometimes haphazardly, and methods and techniques for the teaching-learning process have been poorly employed or many times applied improperly. As a result, the quality of English language education has been negatively affected and children grow up with a misguided conception of learning English and often consider it more a hindrance than a help in their student career.

### 1.1 Storytelling

#### 1.1.1 Definition

Storytelling is the oldest form of education in existence. Craig Roney defines storytelling as:

“a process where a person (the teller), using vocalization, narrative structure, and mental imagery communicates with other humans (the audience) who also use mental imagery and, in turn, communicate back to the teller primarily via body language and facial expression. The communication cycle is ongoing, and in the process a "story" is created” (2).



### 1.1.2 Reasons for telling stories to children

According to Bea Ferguson, there are some reasons why storytelling is beneficial during the first years of children's lives. These are described below:

- **Development of their brains:** It is helpful if we start telling stories to children in the earlier years because they have a very high capacity to imagine things and be creative. Also, they are able to retain and remember most of the details in their minds.
- **To be communicative:** Communication can be opened up through storytelling. Attributes such as imagination, self-confidence, verbal development and participation are built.
- **Linguistic:** Storytelling helps to introduce new words within a natural, creative, and fun context. Children can express their own language with their own imagination.
- **Love for Reading Stories:** This is very important because telling stories to children introduces them to a love for reading in the future. Even children who cannot read already begin to show proficiency for reading.
- **Attention:** Storytelling helps children learn to concentrate and listen. It also causes children to be focused on the story and stimulates the left side of their brains which is responsible for memorization.
- **Original and Expressive Development:** Children can easily immerse themselves in the story. Their feelings can be exposed and this opens doors for expressing themselves through activities like creative drawing.



- **Telling their Own Stories:** Everybody has a story to tell, especially children who are natural storytellers. Storytelling allows them to be creative and feel free to tell their own stories since they are exposed to new vocabulary and sentence structures. Thus, children are able to enhance their thinking, and in this manner, start their own conversations and express themselves better.

### **1.1.3 Why is it helpful to use storytelling in the classroom?**

Storytelling is a helpful tool in the classroom because it engages students' attention, increases confidence, and develops two-way communication. This is implied by the word "interaction". Telling oral stories to young children also increases their imagination. While engaged in this activity, young children can manage their logical sense about space, rhythm, movements, sounds, and time. Additionally, repetition can be helpful. For instance, when a storyteller repeats a word, phrase or sound, children get a familiar pattern, prompting them to use their imaginations or simply predict what comes next in the story.

In addition, children can guess what the next part in the story is, which may support their critical thinking and help them become strong critical thinkers. It is advantageous to try to understand students' thought processes because it may also lead to greater understanding of our students' behavior. It may work not just when the teacher uses a well-known story but a made-up. In addition the end is opened and children can contribute with their ideas and the adults can learn from the children as they add fresh, authentic, and original concepts.





Consequently, the same story can be repeated as many times as children want in the same class period. On the other hand, children's lexicon is evaluated, and then praised, changed, or expanded as the case may be by hearing their stories.

Finally, stories inspire children to take into consideration the grammatical and logical order of the sentences. This helps them acquire language in a more natural way and to avoid learning English only through grammar rules in the future. It also encourages interaction with other people.

## **1.2 Description of the Problem**

Based on personal experience of the authors, it has been noted that children, adolescents, and even adults have a major problem communicating and expressing their ideas in a clear way in English when it is learned as a second language. The manner in which they tend to think and translate their thoughts before speaking is a result of incorrect teaching techniques during their first years of school. Consequently, when children grow up they can experience boredom and discouragement which are obviously counterproductive for language learning. In order to be able to enhance upon the effectiveness of English teaching over time, it is necessary to apply dynamic and stimulating methods in order to help children feel more confident and comfortable at the moment of listening to and producing the target language. Thus, through the present work, it will be shown that communicative skills, applied correctly, can



successfully foster the interest and use of the target language in preschool children.

### **1.3 Justification**

Storytelling has become an important part of people's lives and it can be used not only to encourage imagination and express emotions but also to contribute largely to student academic success. For this reason, the main goal of this research will be the reinforcement of teaching methods through stories that capture children's attention and integrate their listening and speaking skills without being forced to express language mechanically. Furthermore, the accurate use of audio-lingual sources will contribute to the development of comprehension and exploration of new words, and it will also expand the vocabulary of children who are beginning formal education.

Over the years, teachers have tried to increase children's listening and speaking skills through this helpful tool. However, the interference of the native language has been a great obstacle to accomplishing this purpose. For example, one issue with teaching a foreign language to non-native English speakers is the use of Spanish during English classes. Also, there is a lack of motivation that children have when using the target language in daily life situations. Therefore, the main objective for the teacher is to give children the appropriate environment to develop effective communication skills and to motivate them to learn and enjoy the subject. It is important to point out that preschool students between the ages of three and four have very limited



vocabulary and knowledge of many topics. They do, however, have the advantage of being like “sponges” that can absorb quickly and easily everything they hear and see. Accordingly, it is important to provide children with adequate learning tools so that they can take advantage of their learning capacity. In this way, they will feel comfortable and self-confident as they learn new things. Stories will remain in their minds and it will be easier for them to remember words and interact in a natural way with other children in the classroom. Therefore, because this activity is considered to be a fun and entertaining tool for children, English learning will certainly be enhanced along with various additional and carefully applied techniques.

## **1.4 Objectives**

### **1.4.1 Aim**

- To set up storytelling as a useful methodology in English learning and as a way to enhance communication skills of preschool children.

### **1.4.2 Specific Objectives**

- To enhance listening and speaking skills through the use of oral and visual strategies using storytelling.
- To increase children’s input in order to produce the target language in a spontaneous way.
- To establish storytelling as a reliable method among EFL teachers.



## CHAPTER II

### Literature Review

#### 2.1. The beginnings of storytelling

The beginnings of storytelling date from ancient times. One recent discovery that proves that storytelling has always been part of people's lives is a series of paintings found by a group of children in the Pyrenees Mountains in southern France in 1949. These paintings, which date back to between 15,000 and 13,000 B.C., narrate the story of the primitive people of that time through murals that show their hunting practices and the rituals they performed. It proves that stories and storytelling have existed essentially since the beginning of time.

In Mesopotamia the story of Gilgamesh, a Sumerian king who lived around 3000 B.C, was passed down by word during many years. The story changed many times until it was printed on clay and fired in 700 B.C. (Lockett).

Another example is the Bible which was written a long time after those events occurred. Part of the Bible narrates how storytelling was used by Jesus Christ during his preaching. When the disciples asked him: "Why do you speak to the people in parables?" Jesus answered: "Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them...." "This is why I speak to them in parables: Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand...." (Matthew 13:11, 13).

Therefore, the function of storytelling in the time of Jesus was to afford a way for



believers to comprehend and to pass down their knowledge to further generations, first just orally and then written in the Bible. Thus, Jesus taught his disciples about life through moral stories. In this way, storytelling has been used for centuries to entertain, to enhance people's creativity, and to communicate important life lessons.

Over the years, there have been many scholars, psychologists and researchers who have tried to find and explain, through theories and facts, the process of child language learning and acquisition. Many of these findings have been criticized while others have been met with great approval in the field of second language learning. Thus, over time the strategies and methods applied in the classroom have changed a great deal since the early days of studying language acquisition. There are many new techniques that have been shown to be effective for the teaching and learning of a foreign language.

Among the many methods employed for teaching English, storytelling is a useful, enjoyable, meaningful, attractive and interactive tool with which to teach English, especially to young children. As natural learners of everything they can hear, touch, and see, they are able to learn a second language more thoroughly and more easily than an older person. Consequently, there is great advantage to expose young children to active language interaction in their surroundings, to real life situations and to diverse teaching practices that make learning a significant, pleasant and lasting process.



## 2.2. Two influential storytellers

An important storyteller, Kathryn Wilkinson asked the question “Does listening to stories help children to learn difficult vocabulary? How much and what kind of exposure do children need to learn the meanings of new words?” (14). In this way, she refers to a modern strategy for teachers called storytelling.

According to Wilkinson, children acquire vocabulary principally outside of the classroom; for instance, when they watch a movie, listen to conversations, or simply listen to storybooks. In doing these activities, children are already learning a language due to the continuous repetition of target words. Wilkinson also points out that “reading stories to children, either as a class or on an individual basis, has the potential to greatly increase a child’s vocabulary repertoire” (18). Therefore, children are able to learn from the environment where they live and also use the acquired words for their own lexicon later. On the other hand, parents are considered teachers too, because they are seen by their children as role models and this can contribute to what the children learn during their childhood.

It is also worth mentioning the contributions of Diane Wolkstein who was the promoter of some ideas of storytelling in society. One of these stories was “Saturday Morning Tradition” that was developed at the foot of the Hans Christian Andersen statue in Central Park. “Ms. Wolkstein was part of a storytelling revival movement that had its beginnings in the 1960s, paralleling the folk music revival” explains Paul Vitello. Furthermore, Jimmy Neil Smith said



that she was exceptional because she was involved in her community in a variety of reading activities. Wolkstein told some interviewers that there was no margin for error. Because it was just a park, people could decide if they wanted to stand there listening to the stories or leave and go somewhere else. Consequently, it confirms the idea that it is important to take advantage of a child's openness to learning.

### **2.3. Total Physical Response Storytelling**

All the experiences and thoughts mentioned above have to do with Total Physical Response Storytelling (TPRS). This method is currently being implemented by teachers to make learning a foreign language fun. According to a book written by Ann Marie Taulbee, teachers who use this technique present storytelling as a good strategy for learners to acquire the target language in a different way. In this way students do not get a grammatical structure in a tedious and a boring manner, but implicitly. Thus, Taulbee says that the strengths of this method include long-term retention of vocabulary, enhanced listening and speaking skills, and reported higher retention rates in language programs across the country (1).

TPRS does not give the learner grammatical rules, for example, teaching the indirect article. The process of learning the correct use of grammar is involved in the stories that are being told. On the other hand, some teachers believe students must know grammatical points to reproduce the target



language while others defend that language production is more important than knowing grammatical rules.

In addition, critics of TPRS notice that the direct grammar is only exposing students to basic levels, making storytelling too basic for higher levels. Indeed, language acquisition theory differentiates language-learning as meticulous input and language acquisition as an unconscious process. “Learning” concentrates on the form and on memorization but not on the context of meaning. In contrast, “acquisition” is the insertion of new words in a spontaneous way. An example of acquisition will be a baby who learns his or her native language without taking formal classes. By hearing his or her surroundings, the baby knows what he or she is being taught in a natural manner and has exposure to enough input to interpret the meaning of words. As linguist Noam Chomsky said “humans are equipped with a Language Acquisition Device” (qtd. in Taulbee, 9). Taulbee also states that “Piaget [who is a psychologist,] found [in his investigations] that the left hemisphere [of the brain] is responsible for language production while the right hemisphere enables physical responses to occur, suggesting that infants decode speech through movements before verbal communication is ready to take place” (12). For teachers, the desired outcome is that their students transmit the learned language in comprehensible and reliable speech.





## **2.4. Advantages of storytelling in the EFL Classroom**

- Grammar rules are set aside. Students get the language in a meaningful and natural context.
- It has a low cost. The teacher can serve as the transmitter of the story, making-up the story that is being told.
- It helps to develop understanding and pronunciation.
- Repetition is a valuable part of storytelling.
- It represents a colorful and attractive way to capture students' attention.
- It improves the relationship between students and teachers.

## **2.5 Disadvantages of storytelling in the EFL Classroom**

- If the storyteller does not have the requirements (e.g. fluency, clear tone of voice, use of gestures appropriately along with the story) the results will not be the expected.
- Students may become passive listeners when stories are used excessively.
- When the stories do not permit students to participate by doing, it means students should immerse themselves in the story in other ways. (e.g. focus on another character, figure out what comes next, or create the story while the teacher tells the story.)
- There is a need to spend time finding or making-up a story that fits for the level of the students.



## 2.6 Krashen's Monitor Model

In the middle of the 50's, Noam Chomsky revolutionized the linguistic field with controversial ideas and thoughts which resulted in the influence and creation of Stephen Krashen's Monitor Model in 1982. His research in Second Language Acquisition was a consequence of unsatisfactory "language teaching methods based on behaviourism" (Lightbown and Spada 36) that ruled at that time. As a result, Krashen's model was described through five hypotheses.

First, in the Acquisition-Learning hypothesis there is a contrast between these two terms, acquisition and learning, as different processes that must be understood separately. Acquisition makes reference to an unconscious process that takes place during the early years of a child's life. This is somewhat akin to the way a child picks up his or her first language being unaware of it but just knowing that this is necessary for communication with other people around. Undoubtedly, all this development goes unnoticed since a child doesn't know and doesn't care about grammar rules, he or she just does it. As Krashen better explains "... [they] have a "feel" for correctness. Grammatical sentences "sound" right, or "feel" right, and errors feel wrong, even if we do not consciously know what rule was violated" (10). On the contrary, learning refers to the act of picking up a second language. This process is closely related to the manner a person learns a second language in a conscious way, being aware of rules and limitations that the same language has. Accordingly, some second language theorists have point out that acquisition is for children while learning is for adults,



in a more structured way, consciously and already knowing his or her first language. However, Krashen refutes this claim by saying that older people can acquire a second language because it does not disappear in adolescence. “This does not mean that adults will always be able to achieve native-like levels in a second language. It does mean that adults can access the same natural “language acquisition device” that children use” (Krashen 10).

Second, the Natural Order hypothesis suggests that the acquisition of a second language can be foreseeable and follows a given order that the speaker is sometimes able to recognize when producing the utterance. At his point, it is important to emphasize that many of the “grammatical morphemes and functional words” (Krashen 12) articulated at the moment of speaking are not acquired in the same way or at the same time. For instance, according to Lightbown and Spada:

The language features that are easiest to state (and ... to learn) are not necessarily the first to be acquired. For example, the rule for adding an –s to third person singular verbs in the present tense is easy to state, but even some advanced second language speakers fail to apply it in spontaneous conversation (37).

Third, in spite of what the Acquisition-Learning hypothesis claims, the Monitor hypothesis suggests that there is a relation between the terms acquisition and learning in second language learning. According to Krashen, the



acquisition comes along with the initialization of articulation and it is responsible for a spontaneous use of language. Likewise, learning has the purpose of monitoring or editing the utterance making just slight changes to what the “acquired system” has already produced (15). All this monitoring only occurs under three conditions: “when the speaker/writer has plenty of time, is concerned about producing correct language, and has learned the relevant rules” (Lightbown and Spada 37).

Fourth, the Input hypothesis states that it has to do completely with acquisition, not learning. A person can only acquire when he or she has comprehended language that is “a little beyond' [of] where we are now” (Krashen 21). That means that we, as human beings, are capable of using all our linguistic competence to understand not just the word as itself but context as a whole. According to Lightbown and Spada, language must contain “i + l' [where] 'i' represents the level of language already acquired, and the '+ l' is a metaphor for language (words, grammatical forms, aspects of pronunciation) that is just a step beyond that level” (37). Indeed, as Hatch points out:

Our assumption has been that we first learn structures, then practice using them in communication, and this is how fluency develops. The input hypothesis says the opposite. It says we acquire by "going for meaning" first, and as a result, we acquire structure! (qtd. in Krashen 21).



Finally, the Affective Filter hypothesis emphasizes on diverse affective factors that have to do with success in second language acquisition. Krashen mentions those as variables which are separated into three types: motivation, self-confidence and anxiety, and are related to acquisition not learning (31). Thus, the success that a person has in the acquisition of a second language is directly related to his or her affective filter. For instance, if a student is having trouble in language learning it does not necessarily mean that his or her quantity of input is bad or deficient, but that his or her attitude for second language learning is not ideal. That means that his or her affective filter is high. The contrary happens with a lower or weaker filter where a person is able to look for input easily and all the knowledge will remain in his or her mind. Lightbown and Spada describe the affective filter as "... a metaphorical barrier that prevents learners from acquiring language even when appropriate input is available.... A learner who is tensed, anxious, or bored may 'filter out' input, making it unavailable for acquisition" (37).



## CHAPTER III

### Methodology

#### 3.1 Basic Methodology

This research is based on:

- a. Literary research: some books, journals, articles, and so on agree on the development of the language acquisition through storytelling.
- b. An interview with a teacher who has more than twenty years of experience.
- c. A survey of 20 English teachers.
- d. Personal observation.
- e. Implementation in a class of 28 preschoolers at the “Unidad Educativa Santa Mariana de Jesús” School.

All of these tools have been part of the investigation in order to understand how helpful storytelling is in the classroom as a strategy to incorporate a variety of new words in the children’s earliest years.

#### 3.2 Literature review

This monographic design proposal was based on the application of diverse oral and visual methods and techniques according to the children’s ages. Also, it was focused on their interests in order to accomplish comprehension and usage of vocabulary effectively. Some books from the bibliography were used in order to understand and apply a variety of learning theories during the process of acquiring a second language since children get knowledge in different ways.



The opinions given during an interview were useful at the moment for contrasting different experiences and ideas in order to avoid making mistakes and to enhance language skills during the use of storytelling. Finally, a survey was done in order to analyze how storytelling worked and how teachers used it in the teaching-learning process.

### **3.3 Interview**

For this research, we interviewed Mgtr. Clara Clavijo, who is an English teacher with more than 20 years of experience in teaching English to children and adults. Currently, she is working in the University of Cuenca, Faculty of Hospitality, Tourism School. The reason why Mgtr. Clavijo was interviewed was because she has been involved in the teaching-learning process for many years. She was the owner of an English teaching center, where she could apply all the techniques and methods that she considered of great importance in the children's learning. The 20-minute interview took place in her house on April 10, 2013.

### **3.4 Survey**

A ten-question questionnaire was part of this project. Twenty teachers of English of a variety of levels were polled. The questions included in this survey were about how often storytelling was used by them in their classrooms, if they considered this strategy as a good one, or if they would even consider this method to be part of their own classes. All the questions were based multiple-choice item.



### 3.5 Personal Observation

The observation was in the same classroom where the practice took place. The day we met, the students took an exam as a part of the last evaluation done in the school year. The topic was “The Vowels”. We observed that the teacher began the class asking each student the names of every single vowel. Then, seeing that he could not get the kid’s attention and that no answers were being given, he decided to use another method. It is important to point out that until that moment, he was only speaking in Spanish and there were not any instructions in English. After that, the teacher attempted a warm-up exercise using physical movements and singing in order to remind all the students the vowels names. At this point, the teacher used a couple of questions in English, (e.g. “What is this?” and “What is the name?”), indicating with his index finger the vowels written on the whiteboard. However, he immediately translated what he was saying into Spanish. Afterwards, he began to ask the students one by one the previous questions. The first child did not answer anything and just stayed quiet, moving his head to show negation. Later, the teacher called another child who did not answer anything either. This happened with all the rest of them except one child who could say four out of five vowels.

After half an hour classroom management began to fall apart. The teacher asked the students to behave, but most of them were not quiet. At the end of the “evaluation”, the teacher asked them to stand up for a review of the vowels. Along with the feedback, the teacher made motions with his hand, drawing





imaginary vowels in the air and naming them. One interesting thing was that at the end of the class, he told the students that they were going to play a game and he explained the rules of it straightway. So the children along with the teacher stand one behind another to form a train and while they were walking they pronounced the vowels repeatedly. Finally, the teacher asked children to take their seats and to repeat one last time the vowels written on the whiteboard by him.

### **3.6 Practice**

From the very beginning, the researchers used some animal puppets as a tool for teaching in order to capture the students' attention and make classes more fun and interesting for children. During the four weeks that the practice lasted, a daily feedback was done about animal names, colors, sizes and vocabulary related to emotional feelings. At first, it was difficult for the students to remember, but during the development of the class, the results were good. In each class, the puppets were shown. It was considered a warm-up in combination with another activity like the song "Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes" which broke the ice and made the students alert for the storytelling class.

The first week, the use of animal puppets aimed to present new vocabulary such as cat, dog, monkey, tiger, lion, frog, bee, pig, rabbit and fox. These animals were introduced through a story: "Hello, my name is cat. I am gray. I am a small animal". In the following days, it was observed that to remember the



names of the introduced animals and how they sounded, it was necessary that students repeat the new vocabulary.

During the second week, students started to use English when the teacher arrived. They did not wait for the teachers to say hello, but they greeted them using the target language. After that, one of the teachers showed the children an English book “The Lion King Story” while she asked “What do you see?” and gave them a cue such as “It is an angry lion (happy lion, sad lion).” Not everybody answered but some of the students answered excitedly “It is a happy lion” or “It is a tiger” or “It is a sad monkey” or whatever animal they saw. The teachers could see the students were more confident than at the beginning. The students were not afraid to talk or make a mistake. This motivated other students to do the same. While one of the teachers was telling the students a story, she took advantage of their attention and asked questions related to sizes and emotional feelings. Students answered correctly most of the time. Not every student was responding with the correct option, but it was obvious they had an idea of what the student teacher was talking about (animals, colors, sizes or emotional feelings).

During the third week, students said “hello” in a natural way because they knew it was an English class. At this stage, the teachers named the animals and asked the students how they sounded, their colors and their sizes. This was done to clarify any doubt or confusion in students’ minds. The teachers



made a relation between the names of the colors and the animals that were studied in the class. It was a useful activity because preschoolers loved to stand up and try to figure out what things they had close to them. It encouraged students' participation and a relaxing atmosphere in the classroom.

Finally, during the fourth week, the teachers made up and asked the students to perform a role play. For example, "I need a big monkey, a small cat, and a happy dog." After that, the teachers told the students a story about animals, so they knew in what scene they had to act. Every student was laughing and trying to anticipate what came next. It was indeed a fun time with the students because they used angry, sad, or happy expressions to illustrate their characters. The last day, the students received animal masks which they colored and wore. After that, one of the teachers asked "What animal are you?" Most of the students showed that they had confidence to answer while a few students, about five of them, were a little shy to talk.



## CHAPTER IV

### Results and Analysis

The goal of the present research was to accomplish a better understanding and comprehension of the use of storytelling in the EFL classroom. The results of the interview were based on the years of experience that the interviewee has had with children and adults while the results of the survey were based on quantitative analysis.

#### 4.1 Interview

Mgtr. Clara Clavijo has worked with children and adults of all ages. She considers it a great advantage to work with children because they can absorb English faster than older learners, and she can see satisfactory results in the production of the target language. The experience she has obtained throughout all these years was based on her own English teaching center for children, where she could experiment with storytelling as a strategy to build up the vocabulary of her young students. Therefore, the use of songs, visual aids, pictures, illustrations, and other props complemented the acquisition of the new language. She also advised the use of TV cartoons that capture the attention of all children and encourage them to try to reproduce what they have learned. Mgtr. Clavijo called on all the teachers to approach their students with these imaginary and fun characters to gain the confidence of their students and also to use cartoons to make the classes more dynamic and creative. In this way,



storytelling, being applied through these tools, will be of great importance in improving the children's listening and speaking skills.

The success of storytelling was supported by Mgtr. Clara Clavijo in an interview (see appendix 1). She thinks that this is a good method for teaching children and is a valid input. Within her experience in teaching English to children, she believes telling stories expands children's vocabulary in an original way. Thus, she argues that it is not just telling a story, but an imaginative and lively means of teaching and a way to stimulate children's minds to absorb all the information that the teacher gives them.

#### **4.2 Survey**

The main objective of this survey was to find out if school teachers used or considered storytelling as a helpful strategy during their classes, and how often they used it.

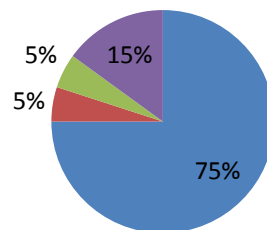
Furthermore, the survey was used to collect information about the use of "Storytelling" in the classroom (See appendix 2). We gave the survey to 20 teachers who worked with children between 4 and 7 years old in different elementary schools in the city. The results were the following:



### 4.2.1 Interpretation

#### 1) When you want to teach new vocabulary to your students, which of the following do you use?

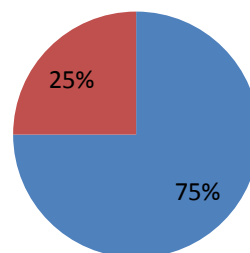
■ FLASHCARDS ■ REALIA ■ SONGS ■ STORYTELLING



1) Seventy-five percent of teachers (75%) mentioned that they used flashcards in their classrooms. Five percent of the participants (5%) said that they used realia. Five percent of the teachers (5%) used songs. Finally, a fifty percent of the teachers (15%) mentioned storytelling as their method when they taught new vocabulary.

#### 2) Do you use storytelling in your classes?

■ YES ■ NO

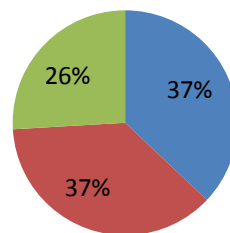




2) Seventy-five percent of the participants (75%) used storytelling in their classes. On the other hand, twenty-five percent of the teachers (25%) did not use storytelling in their classes.

**3) If your answer was yes, choose one of the options to indicate the amount of students that have difficulties in understanding new vocabulary.**

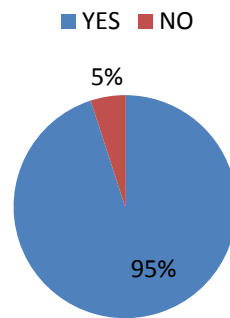
■ FEW ■ SOME ■ MOST OF THE STUDENTS



3) Thirty-seven percent of the teachers (37%) said that few students had problems when understanding new vocabulary in a story. Another thirty-seven percent of the educators (37%) mentioned that some students had difficulty when learning new vocabulary. Finally, twenty-six percent of the teachers (26%) said that most of their students had problems when dealing with new vocabulary when teachers tell them a story.

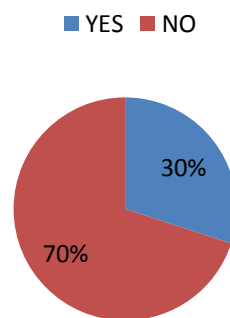


#### 4) Do you think that storytelling allows interaction between the teacher and the students?



4) Ninety-five percent of the teachers (95%) said they agreed that storytelling allowed interaction between the teacher and the students. On the contrary, a five percent (5%) mentioned that they did not think storytelling allowed interaction.

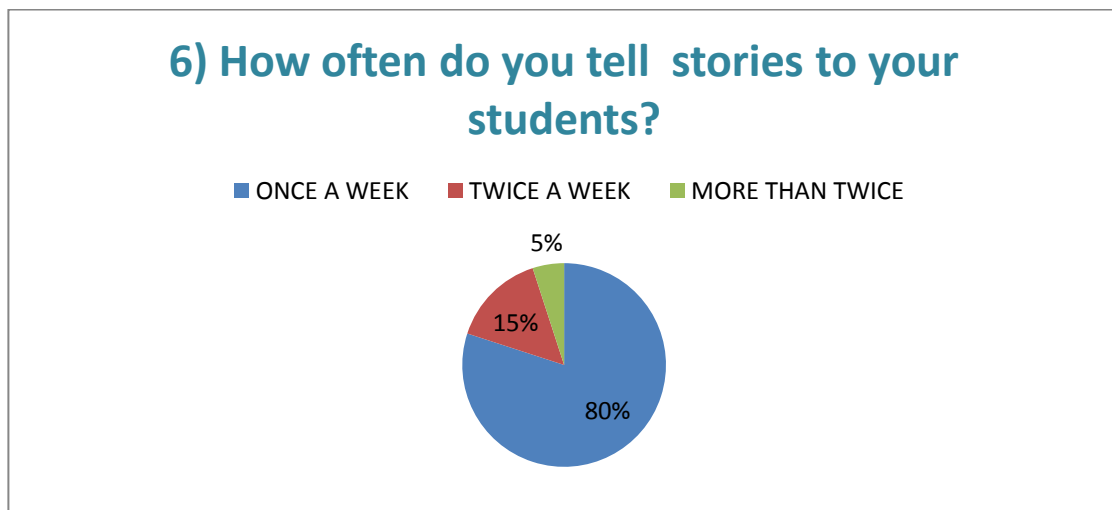
#### 5) Is storytelling a method used as part of the curriculum in the institution in which you work?







5) A seventy percent of the participants (70%) said storytelling is not part of the curriculum of the institution where they worked. On the other hand, thirty percent of the educators (30%) revealed they used storytelling as a method for the curriculum.

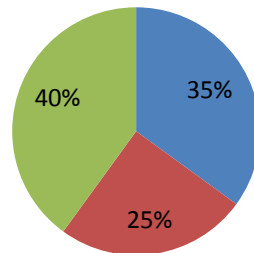


6) Eighty percent of the teachers (80%) mentioned they used storytelling once a week. Fifteen percent of the participants (15%) said they used storytelling twice a week, and only five percent of the educators (5%) mentioned storytelling was used in the classroom more than twice a week.



### 7) When you tell a story to your students, how much time do you spend on it?

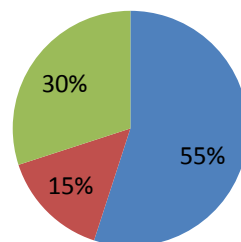
■ ABOUT 10 MINUTES   ■ ABOUT 15 MINUTES   ■ MORE THAN 15 MINUTES



7) Forty percent of the educators (40%) said that they spent more than fifteen minutes when they told a story to their students. Thirty-five percent of the teachers (35%) reported that they spent about ten minutes telling a story. Finally, twenty-five percent (25%) mentioned that they needed more than fifteen minutes for this activity.

### 8) After telling a story and asking some questions about it, how many students answer them correctly?

■ FEW STUDENTS   ■ SOME STUDENTS   ■ MOST OF THE STUDENTS

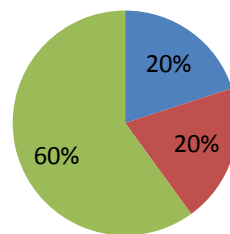




8) Fifty-five percent (55%) of the teachers reported that few students correctly answered the questions that were asked. Fifteen percent (15%) said that some students gave correct answers to those questions. Finally, thirty percent of the teachers (30%) mentioned that most of the students were able to answer the questions in a proper way.

**9) Choose one of the options to indicate the amount of students that feel motivated when listening to a story in the EFL classroom:**

■ FEW STUDENTS   ■ SOME STUDENTS   ■ MOST OF THE STUDENTS

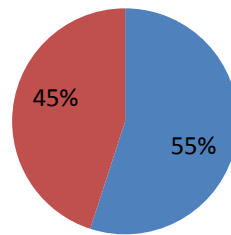


9) Sixty percent of the participants (60%) said that most of the students were motivated when the teacher was telling them a story. Twenty percent of the educators (20%) reported that few students paid attention during this activity. Finally, twenty percent of the teachers (20%) said that some students were engaged in storytelling.



### 10) Have you ever encouraged your students to make up a story and share it to the class?

■ YES ■ NO



10) Fifty-five percent of the teachers (55%) mentioned that they had, at least once, encouraged their students to make up their own stories. In addition, these stories had been shared with the whole class. On the other hand, forty-five percent of the participants (45%) established that they had never asked their students to make up their own stories.



## CHAPTER V

### Conclusions and Recommendations

#### 5.1 Conclusions

To conclude, we can point out that based on our previous experiences and the information obtained from an interview to Mgtr. Clara Clavijo about storytelling, this method is a good strategy to expand children's understanding and vocabulary. Furthermore, we consider it a useful, dynamic, and creative technique to teach English as a second language to children. Through the students' interests such as the use of visuals, short stories, illustrations, drama, and role playing, we can encourage students to interact with the language in a different way and make it meaningful for them. Using stories and well-known characters, children can make up stories and have imaginary friends that will help them to have a deep interest for the target language.

Besides, the analysis of the survey data shows that most of the teachers do not use storytelling as a technique to teach English language to their students. Instead, the usage of songs was the most common approach for teachers when selecting a method to teach the target language.

On the other hand, according to the research that was done at "Unidad Educativa Santa Mariana de Jesús" school, we can say that teaching English via storytelling does give positive results at the moment of teaching and evaluating children's performance. Since the children immerse themselves in the story that is being told, they show confidence when expressing what they have



learned. Based on our experience, it was wonderful to see the students learning the English language in a natural way during the time we spent with them.

## 5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, there are a number of recommendations that teachers should take into account at the moment of using storytelling as a method to teach English to children. The recommendations are the following:

- To choose stories no more than ten minutes long. It is better to tell two or three stories in the same amount of time instead of one long story.
- To select enjoyable books that can be read many times. This will help children to familiarize not only with the story but with characters and new words.
- To look for big colorful books, which are easy to understand. In addition it should have many pictures in order to catch the student's attention and support interaction, therefore avoiding boredom.
- To know about the story before reading it to the students. It will help the teacher to identify the timid characters, the heroes, and so on. Depending on the type of story, the teacher can try several tones of voice and can also change the pitch of his or her voice when it is necessary depending on the character.
- To try dramatic actions or funny voices depending on the situations in the story. Children will enjoy it and appreciate the effort.



- To ask the students to make predictions based on a set of pictures.
- To try not to be very strict with every single word of the text. Improvisation is an important part, especially when children try to interact by guessing what is coming next.
- To analyze the story and decide if there are parts that are not important to tell in order to avoid wasting time.
- To try to have as few distractions as possible either inside or outside of the classroom.
- Make eye contact with all the students.
- To make your students understand that you are expecting “silence” from them before reading the story. For example, the teacher can capture their attention by using a whistle which lets them to know the story is going to start and they need to concentrate.
- To review the new vocabulary at the end of the story and at the beginning of another class with the purpose of activating their minds with their new knowledge.

From everything that has been learned, we can conclude that the constant use of storytelling in the classroom helps children enhance their communicative competence. Likewise, teachers should take into account the correct use of the activity and how children respond to it in order to introduce different activities that contribute to competent and effective learning.



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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1

#### Interview Transcription

Good morning, this is an interview of an English professor, Mgtr. Clara Clavijo, who has had experience in the field of teaching English to a whole range of students of different age groups.

F.M: Why did you decide to become a teacher?

C.C: Well, there are many reasons. Actually, when I was 18 years old and I just got graduated, I became a medical student and at the same time, I also studied philosophy. And then, I didn't know which one to continue studying. But the next year, I finished the first year of philosophy and then I had to make a decision of what specialty I should take. So, I found out that there was the English specialty and I approved all the Basic English. Then, I had to take like literature, I can't remember exactly, but that's how I became a teacher. And because I was already in the second year, I decided to drop out from medical school and continue with the English career. I thought it was very interesting; I had background knowledge in the language, so for me it was easier actually. That's my background story.

F.M: How long have you been a teacher?



C.C: I've had been a teacher since I was 19 years old. I started teaching at Abraham Lincoln center. I started teaching since I was in the second year of my university. That would be about 24 or 25 five years ago already.

F.M: Do you think the teaching-learning process has changed through the time? If yes, what kind of changes have you experienced?

C.C: Definitely, there have been new trances in the teaching-learning process. When I started teaching, you know, there were like teacher's century activities. I had to prepare my classes based on my knowledge, based on the books. We were not been taking into consideration for the planning process, so it has changed. We actually used the traditional methods. I was back in 1983-1984, so it was before the teachers centered, so now we have the internet a lot. Now, for instance, in order to plan classes we have to take student's consideration through the planning process. We have to find out what population of the students are, what the background is, we also have to find out about the student's needs and interests. We also have, in order to teach and impart English; we really have to look for topics that are of the interest for students. It has changed a lot. What we're trying right now is to have student's centered activities rather than teacher's centered activities. Classes are focused more on the students rather than on the teachers. Now the teacher has to have a 10% of the talking while students should have the 90% of the rest of participation in the classroom.



F.M: Have you been a teacher of preschool children? How was your experience with them?

C.C: I've experienced teaching of certain students. I actually had an English teaching center for children from the age of 3 to 10. My graduate thesis was actually on the teaching-learning process as English teaching is from the age of 3 to 10. I wrote my thesis while I had my English teaching center, so it was a great experience. I didn't have experience in the school actually, that was a private school that I had. The experience was awesome, I really enjoyed teaching children. Everything that I thought them, they picked it up really, really fast. I consider that the most important right now is to teach children good pronunciation, good grammatical structures, you know. The results would be likely amazing because that's how students learn and even if they stop learning after a while, they will always pick it up while they retake English. So it's a wonderful experience. You can do a lot of activities with them; the thing is that you have to have a lot of different activities because they learn so fast. Also, the other thing that you have to consider when teaching children is the attention fact, so you have to have a wide range of different activities for children.

F.M: Do you consider yourself a risk-taker?

C.C: Risk-taker? In what sense?

F.M: About teaching children.



C.C: Yeah, there are so many things that you can do with children as I said before. One of the best things that I found with children is that you can never only stick to a classroom; you have to take children outside. While I had my teaching English center, we had visits to museums, I used to take them to the zoo, and you know, talk to them all the time in English. I also had teachers whose native language was English. And you know, all these fun activities created student's interest to learn the target language. You can do a lot of things; there are so many things to do. If you or anyone else would like to become an English teacher for children, there are a lot of things to do with them. And if you are a very dynamic and creative teacher, you'll never be bored, and your students will never ever become bored either.

F.M: What advantages and disadvantages you found in teaching preschool children?

C.C: Well, there are a lot of advantages. I loved teaching children and most of them are advantages, there are no disadvantages. I would never say there are disadvantages. Advantages because, I mean, when I think what I felt when I was teaching children is, you know, feel satisfaction that my students could produce something in the target language. You would know they were able to do something, to speak or produce the target language or they would be able to perform a role play activity or do a drama exercise within the classroom you know all these sort of things it's amazing you know, it's so, I get the emotional



when I talk about this because children are I guess one of the best groups that I had ever had when I...in my career as a teacher.

F.M: What is the last book you read to your students that you saw an improvement on the acquisition of vocabulary?

C.C: I wouldn't remember what exactly, you know, what book I exactly read since there are lot of books. One book, you know that was so interesting, so interactive and so exciting to listen to was the book, you know, the book of the characters from Sesame Street and that was for three, four and five year olds and there's a lot of music and you had those weird sounds by Big Bird and the Cookie Monster and things like that, you know. Those are characters that sound really good and you can see the characters themselves, the pictures, you know, that's the way to motivate students to...you know, pay attention to the professor, to the teacher when he or she is telling a story.

F.M: How long are you using storytelling as a strategy for improving vocabulary to your students?

C.C: Well, reading or doing storytelling, I mean it's all the time as I said before an input and in order to produce the language you have to use as much input as possible, because not only they're listening to the story, but they are also listening to the pronunciation, different structures, vocabulary, etc. That's a wide range of activities that work when storytelling.



F.M: What would be your advice for focusing on the development of storytelling in schools?

C.C: I would definitely advice teachers to use props you know, props bringing some floating activities can actually let them to try to dramatize the story by themselves. They like doing that; children really enjoy doing that, you know, playing the character of the story and as I said visuals, illustrations, pictures and you can even have a puppet or other, the other one I can't remember exactly what. You can use puppets but they are not going to produce the whole story you know. If you get them to produce just, you know, basic information about what you told them, then it will be an achievement.

F.M: Have you ever considered publishing a storybook for children or adults?

C.C: Oh yeah, that has always been one of my dreams. I enjoy teaching them and yes, through my mastery, I will, you know, sit down and write a lot about children. There is a lot of information that I would like to share with teachers of schools or children's teachers. Hopefully, in a few years, I will probably have something about, about how to teach children.

F.M: What do you do when a pupil doesn't understand the target word while you are telling a story?

C.C: Ok, thinking ... about the rest, but u know. I can easily pin point a student who doesn't understand something, so, what I try to do is u know, go back to the



story again, try to mime, try to dramatize, try to use facial expressions, u know, body movements, so might student can understand, I think that's the way to make students understand what you are talking about. I've never use my native language, Spanish, I have never used it, I think to be able to understand through miming, dramatizing, role playing, things like that.

F.M: What did you do when a discipline problem arose? Did you consider the using of storytelling as a solution for that problem?

C.C: No, I mean you can never have like a group of twenty students, or twenty five students, or fifteen students, you know, sitting all the time if there's a discipline problem. It's because they need, children need to stand up, they need to move around, so I don't consider that as a discipline problem. I think that going back to the attention spam, I think students need to be you know...you have to have different activities. Students can have the opportunity, opportunity to stand up, walk around and move, that's what they need. Storytelling would not be a solution for solving discipline problem. I think discipline problems could be...they have to be analyzed again, you know, if I have somebody standing up and then walking around may be that student needs to go out for a minute or two, I mean, I think that's very complex and that needs to be analyzed carefully.

F.M: Did you feel frustrated when you were telling a story to your class and most of the students didn't understand or they didn't pay enough attention? How did you solve that situation?



C.C: Ok, yeah, as I said at the beginning, you have to call, call on the students' attention, try to create students' interest on what you're doing. If you start out by showing them different puppets or illustrations, create interest you know, once you do that everything ... you can bring in puppets and toys or things like that .... They like it if you bring the Cookie Monster to the classroom, a toy of Cookie Monster showing to them and trying to find out what they know, who the character is, obviously this belong to a long time ago, probably the character is not a trendy topic right now, but you know, actually use puppets or... or you know, illustrations. Right now, other character that I remember using was Barney, there was also very, very interesting, you know whatever cartoons you're using or there are on TV right now. You can actually attract the sense of attention characters and sort out by telling right now about it. So, yeah I mean , you really have to be creative , you have to be dynamic, and first of all, one of the things that I consider the most important is, you have to have patience for teaching. When you get patience for teaching, everything is fine and you can do so many things.

M.M: Thank you for your time. It was a pleasure to interview you Clarita.

C.C: Sure, anytime, anything I can do to help out, I'll be here, anytime.

The successful of storytelling was supported by the interviewee, Mgtr. Clara Clavijo, who thinks that this is a good method for teaching children, as a valid input. Within her experience in teaching English to children, she considers that





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telling stories expands children's vocabulary in a dynamic way. Thus, she argues that it is not just like telling a story, but to be a creative and dynamic teacher and to stimulate children's minds to absorb all the information that the teacher gives them.



## Appendix 2

### Survey

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey about “storytelling”. Your feedback is important to us in how we can better improve our research. This survey should only take about 3 minutes of your time and your answers will be completely anonymous.

**1. When you want to teach new vocabulary to your students, which of the following do you use?**

2. Flashcards
3. Realia
4. Songs
5. Storytelling

**2. Do you use storytelling in your classes?**

- Yes
- No

**3. If your answer was yes, choose one of the options to indicate the amount of students that have difficulties in understanding new vocabulary.**

- Few
- Some
- Most of the students.



**4. Do you think that storytelling allows interaction between the teacher and the students?**

- Yes
- No

**5. Is storytelling a method used as part of the curriculum in the institution in which you work?**

- Yes
- No

**6. How often do you tell stories to your students?**

- Once
- Twice
- More than twice.

**7. When you tell a story to your students, how much time do you spend on it?**

- 10 minutes
- 15 minutes
- More than 15 minutes.

**8. After telling a story and asking some questions about it, how many students answer them correctly?**

- Few students.
- Some students.
- Most of the students.



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**9. Telling a story to the students catches the attention of:**

- Few students
- Some of students
- Most of the students.

**10. Have you ever encouraged your students to make up a story by themselves orally?**

- Yes
- No

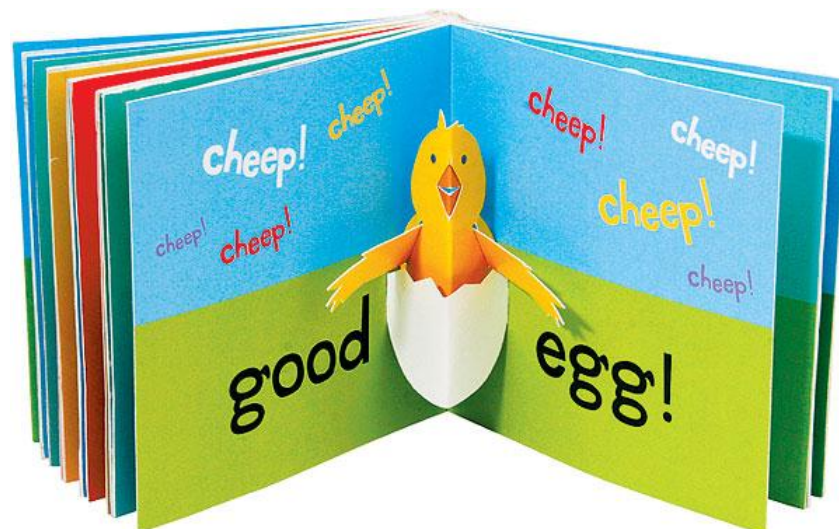


### Appendix 3

#### Pictures



At the beginning of the class, before introducing the topic, it is a good idea to start with a warm-up to activate the children's minds.



The books must be very colorful, with a lot of pictures and preferably with not many words in order to capture the students' attention.



It is important that after the reading of the story, the students participate actively through games, questions, and riddles in order to activate the new knowledge.





Children also learn by touching.