EXPLORING HOW GIANNI RODARI'S APPROACH CAN BE USED IN WRITING IN A FOREING LANGUAGE LEARNING

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ABSTRACT: Writing in a foreign language has always been challenging for new learners, mostly young ones. So, the study looks at the approach Gianni Rodari provides in the book *The Grammar of Fantasy* and what experts say about it. The goal is to see if the approach would be useful for children's foreign language learning, focusing on writing. An activity is carried out in an English class of a Primary school following the Catalan Curriculum, to see the viability of the activity. Therefore, the Catalan Curriculum and motivation topics are also researched. For retrieving data from the exercise, some questions are asked to the pupils. The evidence collected from the questions is then added to the information from interviews carried out with knowledgeable people about Gianni's work. The data collected helps to see how engaging the activity can be and how well it is received by the students. The results show that Gianni Rodari's approach could be useful for foreign language writing settings, asserting the need for some adjustments or aids for the method to be really successful.

Key words: Foreign language, writing, Gianni Rodari, *The Grammar of Fantasy*, motivation

RESUM: Escriure en una llengua estrangera sempre ha sigut difícil per a nous aprenents, sobretot els joves. Per tant, aquest estudi mira l'enfocament que Gianni Rodari proporciona en el llibre *La Gramàtica de la Fantasia* i que en diuen els experts. L'objectiu és veure si l'enfocament pot ser útil per l'aprenentatge d'infants d'una llengua estrangera, enfocant-nos en l'escriptura. Una activitat és dur a terme en una classe d'angles en una escola primària seguint el Currículum Català, per veure la viabilitat de l'activitat. Per tant, el Currículum Català i la motivació també s'investiguen. Per recol·lectar informació sobre l'activitat, algunes preguntes és fan als alumnes. L'evidència recollida de les preguntes s'ajunta després amb la informació de les entrevistes que s'han fet amb persones coneixedores de la feina de Gianni. La informació recollida ajuda a veure com d'atractiva l'activitat pot ser i com és rebuda pels estudiants. Els resultats ensenyen que les idees de Gianni Rodari poden ser útils per situacions d'escriptura estrangera, afirmant la necessitat d'alguna modificació o ajuda perquè el mètode sigui realment exitosa.

Paraules clau: Llengua estrangera, escriptura, Gianni Rodari, *La Gramàtica de la Fantasia*, motivació

RESUMEN: Escribir en una lengua extranjera siempre ha sido difícil para nuevos aprendices, sobre todo los jóvenes. Por tanto, este estudio mira el enfoque que Gianni Rodari proporciona en el libro La Gramática de la Fantasía y que dicen de ello los expertos. El objetivo es ver si el enfoque puede ser útil para el aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera de niños y niñas, enfocándonos en la escritura. Una actividad se lleva a cabo en una clase de inglés en una escuela primaria siguiendo el Currículum Catalán, para ver la viabilidad de la actividad. Por tanto, el Currículum Catalán y la motivación también se investigan. Para recolectar información sobre la actividad, algunas preguntas se hacen a los alumnos. La evidencia recogida de las preguntas se junta después con la información de las entrevistas que se han hecho con personas conocedoras del trabajo de Gianni. La información recogida ayuda a ver como de atractiva la actividad puede ser y como es recibida por los estudiantes. Los resultados enseñan que las ideas de Gianni Rodari pueden ser

útiles para situaciones de escritura extranjera, afirmando la necesidad de algunas modificaciones o ayuda para que el método siga realmente exitoso.

Palabras clave: Lengua extranjera, escritura, Gianni Rodari, *La Gramática de la Fantasía*, motivación

1. Introduction

Gianni Rodari has been a name that had been said many times in educational fields. Even more lately, with his 100th anniversary. Many people talk about him, but how to implement his approach and techniques? Are they usable for any situation? That is why this research project focuses on him and the book *The Grammar of Fantasy*.

This research project deepens into the book and how to implement activities in class. The application of it was done in the Catalan context, therefore a school following the Catalan Curriculum. However, the activity takes place in the English class setting. Therefore, seeing if the activities could be used for foreign language learning. Also, asking for experienced people's opinions on Gianni Rodari and his approach.

One research question was posed at the beginning of the project: *Is Gianni Rodari's approach to teaching useful for English as a foreign language learning?*

2. Theoretical framework

This final dissertation is focused on Gianni Rodari and his work in the educational field, such as his work as a teacher and his work as an author. From all the books he has written, we will be specifically focussing on the book *The Grammar of Fantasy* (1973) which reflects his knowledge of creating stories and his teaching.

2.1. The work of Gianni Rodari

Gianni Rodari has been a decisive figure in educational fields, a name that has been pronounced with admiration many times. Gianni Rodari was a journalist, writer, and pedagogue. Nevertheless, as Cariolo (2020) writes, "known and appreciated above all as an author of fantastical narratives" (p.130). Rodari did copious work with children and in the newspapers. Still, his greatest works were addressed to children's use and enjoyment.

He started to write stories for children in 1948, inspired by the stories he was creating for the children in his surroundings (Bassa, 1980). In 1962, he published "Manuale per invennintare favole" in an Italian newspaper to inspire children and families to create their own stories and explain to the world how he was creating them (Bassa, 1980).

Bassa (1980) states that when he read Gianni Rodari's books, it was the first time he could see so many ideas he wanted to see in a children's book but had never seen until that point. Gianni Rodari brought a new point of view and air to classrooms. He brought laughter and creativity.

Alvarez (2009) gives fair characteristics of Gianni's work; he offers a different path for writing, compared to the stiffness of the usual writing in schools, he gives meaning and pleasure to the writing tasks that have to be done, along with giving reading a vast part in the process being tightly linked with writing. The above mentioned would be some of the reasons why Gianni Rodari is such a fascinating person to research and why to use his approach in schools. Offering meaning and pleasure to the tasks is something worth trying in schools, particularly in a second language context.

Bassa (1980) lists three main characteristics that describe Gianni: firstly imagination, secondly how easily he connected with children making them laugh and finally, how he made topics that are considered relevant, more instinctive and accessible to everyone, stimulating and having a bit of critical spirit.

Benetton (2019) also adds that Gianni Rodari "shows how children can be extremely able and skilled, if given the conditions in which to flourish" (p.64). By implementing his approach, we can help our students to thrive in their education. Additionally, Benetton (2019) affirms "liberate the child in the truest sense, making the most of his readers' imagination and creativity to help them secure their freedom, in a spirit of lifelong education" (p.64). As we can see, Rodari has worked in a thought-provoking field that we want to deepen.

2.2. The Grammar of Fantasy: An Introduction to the Art of Inventing Stories

The book Grammar of Fantasy, written in 1973, has been republished and edited several times, making it a reference book for many teachers and parents. As Gianni Rodari (2020)

writes in the book, it was written thanks to a conference that took place in Reggio Emilia in 1972, recording all the conversations that happened. Described also as a summary and recollection of his notes on how he was building his stories and what tricks he used to give life to words, telling us all his secrets (Gianni Rodari, 2020). The writer gives us examples of how to get started, create, and play from that point on.

Rodari (2020) says there are millions of ways to do it, but he only shows a few ways to create stories for children and some techniques to help children to produce them effortlessly.

We can identify *The Grammar of Fantasy* organized into 45 chapters where every chapter explains a technique he used with some examples and rules to understand it better, the first one being an introduction. The ideas are thought to be engaging and motivating for the students, making them have a good time and discover new things through the activities. Rodari (2020) stated the children might have discovered the pleasure of creating from scratch.

A few of his approaches are built on someone else's ideas, such as in chapter 22, where he talks about Vladimir Propp and his point of view on changing traditional stories.

The approach Gianni used was quite versatile. As Cuenca and Carmona (2012) said, "pair work or group work, which facilitates communication between the students" (p.45), being able to choose which activity is best for the class. Some of the chapters are more focused on written expression and others are targeted for oral delivery, or the task would make more sense and could have better results in an oral format than in a written one.

In this book, Gianni Rodari focuses on creating (inventing), imagining and creativity. It sounds arduous to do, although we have to focus on the simple things to start. As De Bono (2015) clarifies, the term "creative" is having, as a result, an idea or final product that was not there already; as simple as that. Having this statement in mind, De Bono (2015) also talks about creative thinking and how it can be used on purpose instead of as a mysterious talent that only some people have. Making the children aware of that fact can boost their confidence and help them have creative ideas to solve problems in other areas of school and even their lives.

With Gianni Rodari's book and ideas, we can show that writing does not have to be boring or scary as many students think. Our goal is to show them the contrary, as Álvarez (2014) says, writing can be creative, dynamic, interesting, and instructive. As teachers, we are here to help the students navigate this new world of creating.

2.3. Gianni Rodari and the Catalan Curriculum

In this project, one of Gianni Rodari's approaches is going to be taken to a primary school class set in Catalonia. Therefore, we must know what the Catalan Curriculum says about EFL learning to see if the proposed activities would be suitable from the Curriculum point of view.

Due to the fact of this project only being a final dissertation, we can't tackle all the different fields in foreign language learning. Therefore, we will only be focusing on the written area of the EFL learning in the Catalan Curriculum.

We can see in the Catalan Curriculum (Generalitat de Catalunya, Departament d'Ensenyament, 2017) that the EFL written projects must have a clear contextualization of their aim, how the activities are going to be addressed and why so children can understand why they are doing what they are asked to do. Accordingly, in the establishment of our activity, we will have to be aware of it and clearly explain why we are asking them to do it.

Moreover, as Alvarez writes (2009), trying to express clearly, what you want to communicate requires widening the possibilities of the use of language. When working with imagination and creativity, as Gianni focuses on, is mandatory that the ideas are clearly stated. Thus, it can help the students in their fluency and clarity. As well as helping with the idea of clear context and message.

The Curriculum (Generalitat de Catalunya, Departament d'Ensenyament, 2017) also states that, in the children's process of writing, abounding things are involved and must be reflected, such as the previous knowledge the children have of the topic, their familiarity of the linguistic structures and type of text they have to write about. In the process of preparing our activity, we must make sure that what we are asking of the students is in their knowledge and they feel comfortable writing about the topic, we will make sure to provide as much help as they need to complete the task.

Focusing on writing and the English language, we must take into consideration the help the pupils will need. Álvarez (2009) highlights that for the writing process we need a referent person, someone that knows how to establish a relationship with the language and be an example of how to use it; writing is an important learning experience, and we need someone to show us how to use it and be there to help in the process.

As the Catalan Curriculum (Generalitat de Catalunya, Departament d'Ensenyament, 2017) states, we must consider that the quality of the written final product is tightly linked to the knowledge the person has about the topic and how to write about it. We are not trying to evaluate the students' final results to give them a mark or sort of ranking. We are just trying to see if the activities would be suitable for their EFL learning. However, we must consider this point and be aware that, the results we will have in return might not be the most eloquent ones.

The Catalan Curriculum (Generalitat de Catalunya, Departament d'Ensenyament, 2017) also advises that we should plan the written learning of an EFL in a setting that the students can imagine and feel a part of it. Having into account that the fundamental goal of Gianni Rodari is to create and imagine new environments and stories, this point of the Curriculum might be a bit hard to follow. Despite that, the words and aim of the activity can be based on this information and be aware of the things that might feel near to them, so it is easier to relate and create from there.

We want our pupils to learn how to use the materials taught in class in their daily life, having to use them in different circumstances than the ones where it has been taught. As Álvarez says (2009), creativity is like a path that keeps on creating itself every day; it searches to put actions together and combine ideas and knowledge areas, which is more of an attitude than something you gain. Providing the children with this kind of training in the schools might make it easier and more comfortable for children to bring it out of the classrooms.

As we can see in the Catalan Curriculum (Generalitat de Catalunya, Departament d'Ensenyament, 2017), the enjoinment that children feel when they take part in engaging activities makes the topics and vocabulary they work on more memorable, therefore easier to remember in their lifetime. Consequently, we can assume that Gianni Rodari's approach would be well received in schools considering the Curriculum point of view.

As long as we also take into account the other items stated before, to make the activity accessible to the students' knowledge in their developmental stage.

2.4. Motivation

It is not only necessary to see what the Curriculum says, but it is also significant to look at the children and their needs. Cuenca and Carmona (2012) say, "One of the most important ingredients in learning to write in a foreign language is motivation" (p.45). Therefore, we must take into consideration how to motivate students if we want them to learn and use the new language.

Cuenca and Carmona have taken some of the proposals of Gianni Rodari's book, *The Grammar of Fantasy*. These authors (2012) have stated that the proposals of Gianni allow the students to look at language differently, building connections between words and ideas in a different way than the ordinary, exercising their imagination as a bonus. In the life of a student, there are lots of rules and schedules to follow, they do them repeatedly. Having something outside of the traditional activities is always engaging for them, and they have a different energy to do it. Accordingly, Gianni Rodari's proposals could be a favourable way to change things in their structured life at school.

As Marco López (2019) points out there are thousands of writing activities, but all of them are academic-oriented such as duplicating. Schools are only focusing on one kind of writing children might get bored with it. A variety of texts and methods of writing are needed so we can enrich our children's learning.

Cuenca and Carmona (2012) also state that, in their practical application, they do not say how much time would have to be used for the proposals because they know many factors in a class can make the activities go faster or slower it all depends on the setting you are in and the children you are doing the tasks with. This point of view helps us to see, that the class is the centre of the activities, and it must be considered on top of everything else. Even if the exercise is all explained and laid out for us, the energy of the class and the motivation of the students determine the success or failure of the activity.

We also must consider, as González (2018) says, that there are many different motivational and ease levels in the groups of students. For this reason, even if we try to motivate the children equally and do the same activities, some children might have it

easier to remember or excel in the task than others, it has nothing to do with how we structured the assignment.

Clark & Teravainen (2017) have done extensive research, "the findings highlight the importance of writing enjoyment for children's outcomes" (p.15). Consequently, the importance of finding different approaches to the ones we already use and having a variety of them used in class is mandatory. As we can see, it is more likely to achieve well academically if children are motivated for the task at hand.

In this section, several resources have been reviewed to see different reasons to use Gianni's creative writing in EFL classes. Hence, to know what, how and why to use an approach or other. Because, as Young (2019) says "writing *for* pleasure therefore presents children with a feeling of empowerment and that their writing has enriched their life and the lives of others." (p. 13). We want them to be confident and grow in their writing, perhaps having different approaches is the way to go.

3. Methodology

To make this research possible, we used two collection data techniques, some interviews and a practical application in a school. We will also triangulate the data with the Catalan Curriculum, to have a complete ide of the usefulness of the proposal.

3.1. Curriculum

One of the instruments used is the Catalan Curriculum. To see, to which extent, Gianni Rodari's approach would be suitable for English classes in this context. As we have seen in the theoretical framework, the information that was specifically looked at in the foreign language section was from written activities. This part being from page 35 to page 36 of the Catalan Curriculum document. In the next section of the research project, the results, we will analyse how and why the activities proposed by Rodari fit into the ideas that the Curriculum wants the teachers to follow.

3.2. Interviews

In order to know about Gianni Rodari's work we have contacted people to ask about their point of view of this proposal. We have contacted people that are distinguished for knowing about his work. Nine people have been contacted, and only four have answered the interviews. Therefore, only four replied interviews will be used for this research project.

A document with the questions (Appendices 8.1.) was sent to the people so they could find the best time to answer them, always being available for any questions they could have about the interview. The participants of the interview are three university professors (*A, B & C*), the woman that translated many of Rodari's books to Catalan (*D*), an editor of Juventud (*E*), a teacher and literature adviser (*F*), a literature mediator (*G*), the editors of the edition of Grammar of Fantasy that has been used for this project (*H*) and, lastly, a teacher and writer (*I*). As stated, there are different backgrounds among the people interviewed, consequently, many different points of view and opinions on the topic. We obtained heterogeneous information. All these people were selected because of their close relationship with Gianni Rodari or their knowledge of his life and work. For example, one of the university professors teaches a class in university and has a deepening section into Gianni Rodari's work and influence in education. She is one of the reasons why this research paper came to be.

The questions started with general information and questions about the relationship of the person with Gianni Rodari, his work and how did they get there. Little by little, the questions get more into the book at hand and their opinion of using it for EFL learning, such as if they see it useful for EFL learning and what activity they would use.

3.3. Practical application context

To see how this approach and ideas would be in class and how the students would react to it, we decided an activity of the book at hand would be chosen and brought to a primary school class.

The school where the activity is going to be held is a public primary school in Centelles, Catalonia. We know this school due to several activities we have already done with them, such as an internship of nine weeks and different English Day activities. We thought it

would be easier to do it with them because we already know the school, their project, the teachers and how they work. The school offers education from grade P3 to grade 6, following the Catalan curriculum. In this school, they start to study English in P3 for less than an hour a week, increasing as the students change grades, using as much English as possible in the class.

The activity is going to take place in 4th grade since the group is already known by the researcher, from the time of the internship in a previous year; and will make the session and handling the class easier. Having the activity in 4th grade also allows the researcher to see if the activity could be better for higher grades or lower grades, being 4th grade in the middle of the spectrum of levels.

The activity that is going to be carried out in the class is explained in chapter 2 of the book *Grammar of Fantasy* by Gianni Rodari. It consists of searching for a word and seeing what other words the letters of the first word inspire us. With all these new words, the children will have to write a story. We thought it would be a worthwhile activity to try because it will help the students to create with some help, it will not be a blank paper. Moreover, the words they will use for the written story are chosen by them. Therefore, they will probably feel more comfortable to write with them. After the activity, the children will be asked some questions to see what they think about the approach of the activity. As well, some questions at the beginning to see the starting point of their answers.

As the information's activity will be treated anonymously, we considered it would not be necessary to ask for the families' written consent for the activity, only the school's permit (Appendices 8.3.).

4. Results and analysis

This section aims to answer the research question of this project with all the data that has been collected. Therefore, first, we will look at the data collected and afterwards see if our purpose is achieved or not.

As we have stated before, nine people were contacted for the interview, and only four replied, *A, C, D* and *E*. Interviewee *E* did not answer all the questions, claiming they were

not of their experience. The only fruitful information we can obtain from the interview with *E* is that "*The Grammar of Fantasy* is a good way of giving freedom to creativity and imagination and have fun creating, that is what we want for all our children".

For the information of the next three interviewees a grid will be created to have a simplified overview of the answers they gave. All the replies are quite specific to the author's opinion, so the grid is going to be quite complete in the information given. Some interviewees share their opinions and thoughts in some questions, but also have their own opinion. In the grid it has been separated taking that in mind.

Also, the first questions of the interview are to get a bit of an overview of the person's life, work trajectory and relation with Gianni Rodari. Hence, we will be reviewing the questions starting with question number 6 where the questions start to get more into the topic of *The Grammas of Fantasy* and foreign language.

QUESTIONS	Interviewee *A*	Interviewee *C*	Interviewee *D*
Do you know well the book *The Grammar of Fantasy*?	Claim to know the book *The Grammar of Fantasy* considerably.		
What do you think about the book? And about the idees on it?	Agree on the importance of it for education and the people involved in it. New approach, helps to connect with children through games		
Focusing on the activity proposals to do in the class, do you think that they are still current?	Still motivating for children and widely useable, even after 50 years.		
Would you say that these activities are motivational enough for the children	Agree		
	These activities go to the essence of creating for the children.	The starting point of the activities is the children's knowledge and that is very interesting.	Maybe the knowledge of classical writing is not as common nowadays. Is not Rodari's fault, could be solved by changing characters from Rodari's time to our time.

Do you consider that there is something that we should take into account when we want to use the ideas in class?	*A* and *D* share the importance of listening to children and interests. Considering the topics discussed by adults and many literature structures. Children can see that even things that already exist or structured can help them create their new stories and even make the process easier for them	Teachers not having any prejudices and not being afraid of making mistakes, living with irony in the learning situations and using them for creating words and thoughts.	Shared with *A*
Do you think that the proposals would be a useful tool for foreign language learning? In what are you based on?	*A* and *D* agree that it would be possible to use the approaches for FL learning. However, it would have to be carefully tailored to the children's previous knowledge and age.	In the field of early childhood (their expertise field) it is not considered, therefore no answer	Deepens: not having enough exposure to the foreign language in the school and focusing on languages that might not be as important to the class. Nevertheless, that is a different topic outside of this project.
How do you think that it could affect to the writing of a foreign language learning?	Interviewees stated they were not experts in foreign language acquisition. They thought it could help the pupils, by being open-minded, to new words and bringing creativity to the class in general.		
	It would be difficult, but it could be interesting		Idea: use translation as learning from other writers and structures
What proposal do you think would be suitable for foreign language writing? Why?	Provide with examples of specific chapters of the book: 4, 10, 16 and 19	Expertise in early childhood and not primary. Natural writing would be emphasised at that age	Provide with examples of specific chapters of the book: 4, 12, 19, 28 and 34

Regarding the results of the activity in the class, is important to take into account that all 16 students were in class the day the activity was done. Therefore, we have 16 different texts and answers. The English teacher was also in the class to provide help and learn about the activity. After doing it in the class, the teacher was really interested in knowing about the activity and specified her enthusiasm for using the exercise again and even for higher grades in the school. She was drawn by the idea of being creative, giving different ways of writing and giving some way of starting to write, not only a blank paper to write in.

For the activity, a template was created (Appendices 8.2.). There were some before activity questions, space for the activity and after the activity questions. Before explaining what the exercise was about, the students had to answer the questions from the before the activity section. The results of those questions are shown in the following graphic. Some of the students gave more than one argument in their last question, thus if adding all the different arguments they sum up to more than 16.
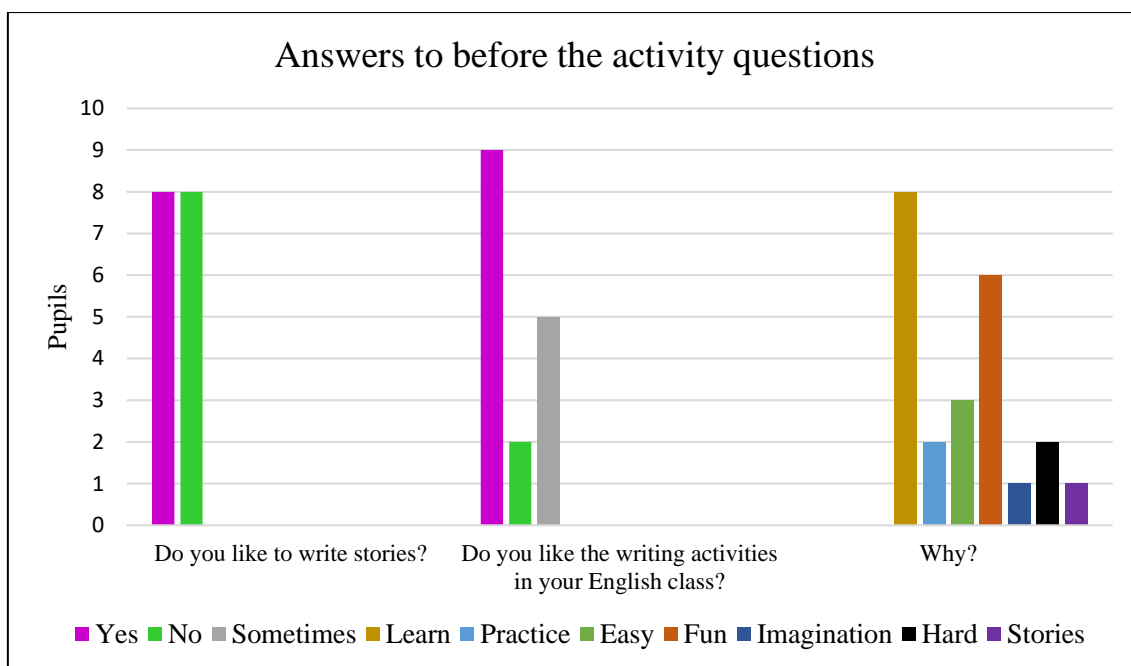
Graphic 1. Answers to before the activity questions

Once the first questions were answered, the activity was explained to them. We started with an example for all the class, so everyone would know what the activity was about and how to do it. After the oral example, all the class together decided the word to start with their individual story writing. We all started with one common word. Then individually, they had to come up with more words to have the mandatory vocabulary for

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their story. This way the students could come up with their vocabulary and have a more meaningful experience. From the first word *(Banana)*, the students had to come up with one word that starts with **B**, three words with **A** and two words with **N**. Hence, words were repeated in the different final products. A graph with all the words used and how many times they were used will be following.
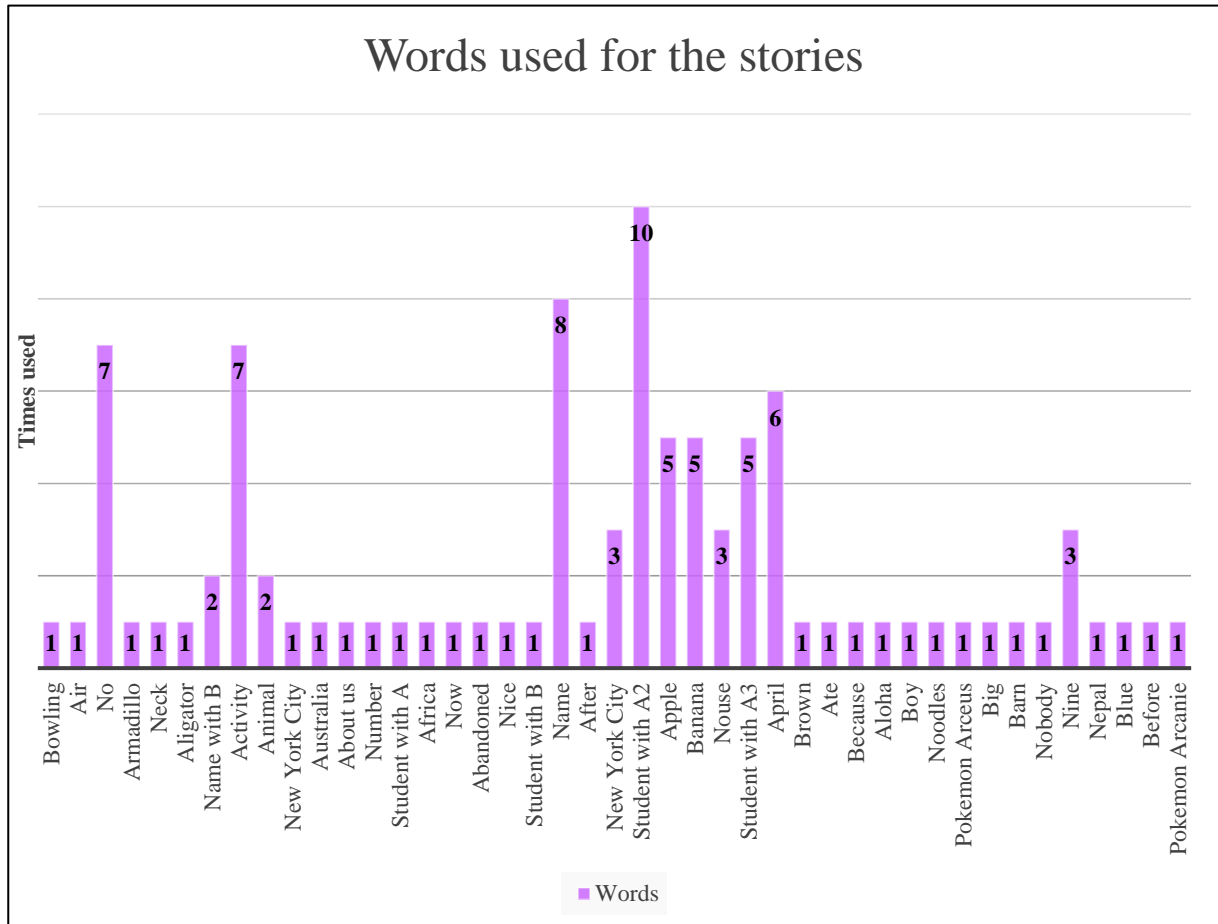
Graphic 2. Words used for the stories

Regarding the length of the stories, two stories were between 11 or 13 lines but said they did not have enough time to finish their stories. Most of the stories were around between 5 and 2 lines, having some stories with 9, 6 or even 1 line. The students with one line and one student with two lines only wrote the words one after the other, not trying to do a story. Some students knew how to link the different sentences and some others struggled with it. However, that is not something to take into account for this research project. Many of the children were asking how to write specific words or if what they were writing was good.

Concerning the after activity questions, the first question they had to answer was if they liked the activity or not, and if they had fun. Out of 16 pupils, 14 pupils said they had fun and 2 pupils said they did not. These two students replied to the after activity questions with all negative answers, thus it seems as if they did not understand the questions or were not feeling like answering correctly or thinking about the answers. For the next four questions a graphic has been provided to do the answers more visual.
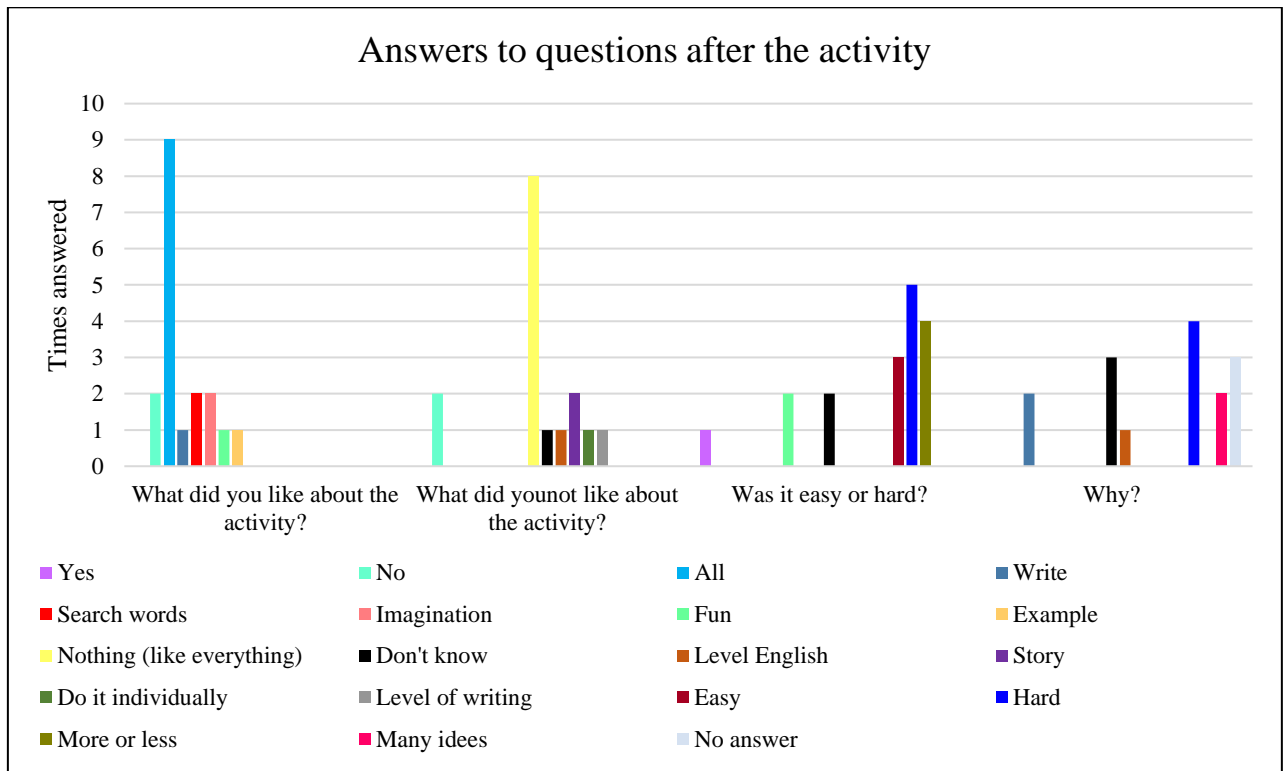
Graphic 3. Answers to questions after the activity

All the questions were tried to answer with all the class together so everyone would understand what they had to do and everyone had enough time to do so. With the first questions, it was possible, and everyone had time to ask questions if they had. However, for the questions after the activity, everyone wanted to finish and go home, some had not finished the text, and some did stay before time or things like this. Therefore, that section had a bit more complicated answers and it is not certain that everyone understood what they were asked or were thoughtfully replying. Moreover, the last question of the questionnaire is not going to be stated, because many pupils were not able to answer it and it would not be significant data, and also it was for the researcher to get a general idea of their activities not important data.

After all the results have been stated, we can start to analyse the results and answer the question of the research project, considering the question of the research project is: *Is Gianni Rodari's approach to teaching useful for English as a foreign language learning?*

As De Bono (2015) clarifies when defining "creativity" we can see that even using things that they have around them, such as the names of the students in their class, they can create something completely different. As we can see from the answers of the children in the class, the exercise done in class was very appealing to most of them and they had lots of fun during it. Doing something different many students were not sure what to do or how to write words, but they were motivated enough that they wanted to know more and asked how to do it or write some words. This exemplifies what Álvarez (2014) said about how writing can be dynamic and instructive.

As the Catalan Curriculum (Generalitat de Catalunya, Departament d'Ensenyament, 2017) says the activity that was taken to the class was properly contextualized as a university project and of help for the research study, students knew that they were doing the activity to help with the project. Also having the prior example as a group to help the individual work afterwards.

Álvarez (2009) talked about the importance of having a referent person in the class that can do the correlation with the language and be an example of it. It proved to be very useful for the children seeking their help for searching or writing words. There were two referent teachers in the class, which allowed for a wider range of assistance.

In this case, looking at what the Catalan Curriculum (Generalitat de Catalunya, Departament d'Ensenyament, 2017) says, the previous knowledge of the children was reflected in the kind of words they used and searched for their story, there was no need for previous knowledge of the topic. However, the familiarity with the language structures was highly seen. They lacked confidence in the structures and understanding of it. Nonetheless, there was no need for prior knowledge of the structure, due to the fact of being imaginative writing does not require a strict structure, just the basic explanation of the facts happening.

In the Catalan Curriculum (Generalitat de Catalunya, Departament d'Ensenyament, 2017) we have also seen that the written final product is tightly linked to the knowledge the person has about the topic and how to write about it. The knowledge about the theme has

not been an issue. However, the comprehension of how to write about it has been something with which the students struggled at first. Once the reassurance of just writing a story however they wanted was established, most of the fear went away. As stated in the Theoretical framework, we were aware that the texts would not be the most eloquent ones. The students are learning, and we just want them to try and lose their fear of writing.

As Cuenca and Carmona (2012) said we can see how the activity brought to class was very versatile. With two different ways of obtaining results, with the group orally and the same activity individually writing the answer, facilitating the communication between them when doing it orally but also practising induvial tasks.

Cuenca and Carmona (2012) also talk about motivation and its importance. In the class, we could see all the smiles and interest in the activity that was taking place. Some children even stayed a bit over time to finish their stories because they did not want to leave without finishing. Some students have been able to use the vocabulary in a very unpredictable scenario and that made them more motivated in using different words. Also having to think about words starting with certain letters was an extra difficulty that they seemed to enjoy.

It was mentioned before how the English teacher was very excited to learn about the activity and even further with the book of Gianni Rodari. That is an example of Marco López's (2019) point of view on the kinds of writing activities being oriented to only academics. The teacher was very surprised by them and immediately wanted to know more ways of implementing such activities in class and more creative ways of doing writing activities or even other kinds of activities such as the oral part done in class.

Cuenca and Carmona (2012) also stated the time that was not specified for the activities giving green light to the person doing them. In our case, the timeframe was one hour, due to the timeframe of the classes in the school. Therefore, we had to do the activity in one hour. Many students were done in time and wanted to finish to go home. However, some students had to finish quicker than they wanted to or even stayed a bit overtime to finish. Not being their teacher and not seeing them again does not allow us to give them more time and finish it with ease, we were in a tight timeframe. However, we spoke with the English teacher, and the students might have some extra time to share the written stories

or even have time to finish them. That makes the activity even more meaningful and fun for the students.

Finally, González (2018) reminded us of the different levels of motivation and knowledge in a group of students and that was widely seen in the class. We could see many different levels in every aspect and lots of help had to be provided in different ways. Some students just asked how to write some words, others for whole sentences and some needed help with the full text. Motivation wise, some students were more interested in having a social event with their peers and making funny comments about the task than actually doing the task. Once they were helped to see that was not the time and given some instructions on how to continue, they had fun with the result.

To answer the question at hand, it would be safe to say that the approach of Gianni Rodari would bring a fresh way of doing to the class and some new motivation for written tasks in a foreign language. However, we have to be aware of the amount of help and time we provide the students with. For the amount of time that we had to do the activity maybe it would have had greater outcomes in a higher grade. Nonetheless, that does not mean that Gianni Rodari's approach can not be used in 4th grade. It can be used with a bit more help and time than in other grades. The most important thing to consider is the amount of knowledge they need to know beforehand and work with that. So, the experience is as pleasant as possible, and the children enjoy and learn at the same time.

5. Conclusions

The main aim of the research has been to see if the approach of Gianni Rodari could be useful in a foreign language learning context. Most of the people interviewed, despite not being experts on the topic of language acquisition, have said they think it could be possible to do so. They affirm that the proposals are engaging and interesting enough to want to use them, even in a foreign language. At the end of the interview, they were able to give specific activities to do with the children. Therefore, interviewees give their approval.

From the Catalan Curriculum's point of view, we have been able to see how the activities align with many of the conditions for teaching foreign language writing. Some of the

requirements demand more tailoring to the different groups than others. Still, they are doable. It has also been proven that the results of the pupils are not the most important thing. What is paramount is that they practice and get confident in their skills.

Regarding the activity in class and what to consider, we feel it has been quite a good experience. It is safe to say the children in the class had a lot of fun doing it and were motivated to do the activity. It is true that for some pupils, the exercise might have been hard to do or they did not feel comfortable enough. However, with guidance and maybe more sessions, they would be more comfortable. We must bear in mind that it was the first time they were doing such an activity and it's always scary when we are asked something new.

To sum up, the children are our focus. We have to tailor things to their comfort. Gianni Rodari's book is a tool that he created to share his knowledge always saying we did not have to follow blindly. As interviewee *D* said, he was always trying to adjust his stories to the environment where he was. He did a talk where interviewee *D* was the translator, and said that Rodari was changing the characters or places of his example stories to suit the environment the people in the space knew better. We have the tool of *The Grammar of Fantasy* and all the different ideas, but we have to tailor them to our setting, place and people.

6. Limitations and further research

6.1. Limitations

In this research project we want to highlight some limitations from the study. We must stress the fact that only one of the activities of Gianni Rodari's book was done. Therefore, we are talking from a narrow point of view. This could also be implemented in the practical application. It has only been done in one school, grade and class. The data collected is enough to take this study as a guide to bring Gianni Rodari into class. Everyone wanting to do so, should think about their class and context first. This research project is just a small sample.

Secondly, the interviews only represent the point of view of those people and not from other, maybe, more experienced people. Also taking into account that nine people were

contacted and only four replied. Moreover, the people than replied openly said they were not experts in language acquisition.

Thirdly, doing a final dissertation is not an easy task and many things are left in doubt. The thought of doing something wrong, or forgetting some important information, or even misinterpreting information is always there.

6.2. Further research

As further research for this project and proposal, it would be interesting to bring all the different activities of the book *The Grammar of Fantasy* to the classes and test which one would be best for what learning. I have only tested one activity in one grade, have a higher spread would be amazing. I would like to know if these approaches are well received by different groups of children and see how it impacts them in the long run. I find Rodari's proposals engaging, and it would enrich myself as a teacher and the children's learning.

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8. Appendices

8.1. Interview

ENTREVISTA SOBRE GIANNI RODARI

Benvolgut/da, primer de tot moltes gràcies per dedicar una estona en respondre aquestes preguntes. Si us plau, si tens qualsevol dubte només t'has de posar en contacte amb mi.

- Nom i breu currículum personal (4 ratlles): (per exemple: a què et dediques/dedicaves, des de quan, què et va motivar a dedicar-te professionalment a això...)

- Com vas conèixer les obres de Gianni Rodari?

- Per què et vas interessar per les seves obres?

- A ell l'has pogut conèixer? En cas afirmatiu, quina relació hi has tingut? Com el descriuries?

- Com ha influït Gianni Rodari en la teva trajectòria?

- Coneixes bé l'obra de la Gramàtica de la Fantasia?

- Què en penses d'aquesta obra? I de les idees que proporciona?

- Centrant-nos en les propostes d'activitats que proposa per fer a l'aula, creus que continuen sent vigents?

- Diries que aquestes activitats són motivadores pels infants?

- Consideres que hi ha alguna cosa que s'hagi de tenir en compte a l'hora d'implementar aquestes idees a l'aula?

- Creus que les propostes serien un recurs útil per l'aprenentatge d'una llengua estrangera? En què et bases?

- Com creus que podria afectar a l'escriptura d'una llengua estrangera?

- Quina proposta creus que seria més adient per a fer escriptura en una llengua estrangera? Per què?

De nou, gràcies pel teu temps i per col·laborar en aquest treball de fi de grau.

8.2. Activity in school

BEFORE ACTIVITY

- Do you like to write stories?

- Do you like the writing activities in your English class?

- Why?

ACTIVITY

AFTER ACTIVITY

- Was it a fun activity?

- What did you like about the activity?

- What did you not like about the activity?

- Was it easy or hard?

- Why?

- Is it a new activity or you had done something similar?

8.3. School authorization

UVIC Universitat de Vic
Facultat d'Educació,
Traducció i Ciències Humanes

AUTORITZACIÓ

En/ Na ...... *Carme Esquis Serra* .... com director/a o
responsable del centre/ entitat ...... *Escola Ildefons Cerdà* ....
....autoritza que es pugui realitzar la
següent activitat:
Writing with Gianni Rodari ....
....
amb la finalitat exclusiva de recollir dades per a la realització d'un Treball de Final de
Grau de l'estudiant *Raquel Arias Barnacond* de la Facultat d'Educació,
Traducció i Ciències Humanes de la Universitat de Vic.

Per la seva part, l'estudiant s'ha compromès a: "respectar els drets fonamentals de les
persones, siguin infants o persones adultes; demanar el consentiment de les persones
que col·laborin o participin en el treball; respectar l'esfera privada de totes les persones,
grups o institucions que participin o estiguin relacionades amb el treball; utilitzar la
informació obtinguda només amb finalitats científiques i donar compte dels resultats del
treball a les persones, grups o institucions col·laboradores".

....
Signatura

Generalitat de Catalunya
Departament d'Ensenyament
Escola Ildefons Cerdà
Centelles

Centelles , *4* de *maig* .... de 20*22*