

# STORYTELLING WITH PUPPETS IN THE EFL CLASS. LEARNING NOUNS AND ADJECTIVES

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## **Abstract**

The present research aims to find out whether EFL young students can acquire vocabulary through storytelling or not. In order to do so, 20 students of 5 years of age were exposed to a didactic sequence based on one story for seven weeks, doing two lessons per week. The target vocabulary was related to size adjectives and items of clothing. To compare the children's vocabulary gains after being exposed to the story, three tests were carried out. A pre-test, to check their previous knowledge; an immediate post-test, to be aware of the words they remembered just after being exposed to the story; and a delayed post-test, to observe the items that children recognised two weeks after the didactic intervention. Results show that more than 55% of the participants identified the clothes, but not all the items were remembered by the same number of pupils.

**Key words:** vocabulary acquisition, very young learners, EFL, storytelling, puppets.

## **Resum**

Aquest estudi té l'objectiu de descobrir si joves aprenents de llengua anglesa, que tenen aquesta com a llengua estrangera, poden adquirir vocabulari a través de l'explicació de contes. Per tal de resoldre aquesta pregunta, 20 estudiants de 5 anys van ser exposats a una seqüència didàctica basada en una història durant set setmanes, fent dues sessions per setmana. El vocabulari que havia de ser après estava relacionat amb els adjectius de mida i els noms de peces de roba. Per comparar els guanys de vocabulari dels infants després de ser exposats a la història, es van realitzar tres tests. Un pretest, per veure quin era el coneixement previ dels infants; un posttest immediat, per ser conscients de quines paraules recordaven just després de ser exposats a la història; i un posttest diferit, per tal d'observar quins ítems recordaven els nens i les nenes al cap de dues setmanes de la seqüència didàctica. Els resultats mostren que més d'un 55% dels participants van reconèixer les peces de roba, però que no tots els ítems van ser recordats pel mateix nombre d'alumnes.

**Paraules clau:** adquisició de vocabulari, aprenents molt joves, EFL, contes, titelles.

## **1. Introduction**

In recent years, English has become an essential skill for any person who wants to have a successful career in a globalized society, so a considerable number of schools start to teach English at infant education. Although there is not solid research evidence that starting to learn English in advance provides a significant advantage in developing English skills, there is the popular belief that the sooner the better. Vocabulary acquisition is what English infant education teachers should focus on, because according to Al-Dersi (2013) "It is irrefutable fact that vocabulary plays an important role in the academic lives of EFL learners. This is because if foreign language learners lack a mature vocabulary, their other language skills suffer significantly." (p.72). That is to say, without vocabulary effective communication cannot be achieved. However, teaching vocabulary must be done through an engaging and motivating way. Storytelling is one of the most used tools to teach English to EFL young learners in a meaningful and comprehensible way.

The main objective of this research is to discover if very young learners can acquire vocabulary through storytelling. In order to do so, a didactic sequence based on the story "A costume for Carnival", which was created for this project, was carried out with two groups of 5 year-old children; three receptive vocabulary tests were done with a sample of those children, a pre-test before starting the didactic sequence, a post-test immediately after finishing all the sessions, and a delayed post-test two weeks after finishing the didactic sequence; and finally, all the sessions in which the target vocabulary was worked were recorded.

I chose this topic because I have been always interested in the use of stories to teach English to children. Moreover, since the school where I did my internship worked using this approach, I did not want to lose the chance to prove that stories are an effective way to engage children and to develop learners' language skills. Furthermore, very little research has been done on this topic, so as a future English teacher I wanted to go further and explore about the advantages of teaching English as a foreign language to very young learners through storytelling.

This project has been divided into four parts. First of all, the theoretical framework, where the main considerations and findings regarding teaching English and vocabulary acquisition through stories are exposed. Secondly, the study, which includes the research questions, an explanation of the school where the study was applied, and the presentation of the instruments to collect information. Afterwards, the results obtained in the study will be presented. Then, in the discussion the results and the findings of the

theoretical framework will be contrasted in order to solve the initial research questions.

Finally, the main conclusions of the project will be described.

## **2. Theoretical framework**

### **2.1. An early introduction to English**

Learning English at an early age is a growing issue in today's society. As English is considered an indispensable skill for the individual, personal and professional pursuits, a growing number of children around the world are starting to learn English at a very young age. People tend to believe that the sooner the better, even though there is no clear or solid research evidence that an early instruction in English provides an advantage in the long run. Garton and Copland (2018) state that under the appropriate conditions, an early start learning English can be advantageous, however, it is not always a guarantee of success. Lightbown and Spada (2013) expose that regardless of age, all language learners are able to learn a second language since they have already acquired one language, so they know how languages work. Though, older learners' cognitive maturity facilitates second language acquisition.

Munoz (2008) commented that there is no trustworthy evidence of the difference between children who started learning English earlier and children who started later after the same amount of exposure to the language; there seems to be a connection between the amount of exposure to the target language and the advantages in the long term. Along the same lines, Garton and Copland (2018) also state that three hours a week of second language teaching at pre-school will not suppose a long-term advantage over learners whose instruction in L2 started in late primary or secondary school. To reach long-term advantages, young children should be exposed to a bigger amount of time in the target language.

Despite no agreement among educational professionals, Garton and Copland (2018) state that there are some basic considerations when teaching English as a foreign language to young children. Firstly, teachers should focus on listening and speaking in the classroom. Secondly, the exposure that teachers give to young learners should be in the target language, as much as possible, and of a high quality. Nevertheless, L1 can be used when children need to be calmed down, to strengthen the emotional attachment between the child and the teacher, and to develop children's confidence in language learning. Moreover, Muñoz (2008) remarks that young students go through a silent period before they start using the target language, therefore teachers should not force children in case they do not use the target language or do not participate. Thirdly, classroom management and conditions need to be the appropriate ones to achieve the optimal learning, to promote student participation and to reduce disruptive behaviour. In addition, it is known by pre-school teachers that young learners' attention span is really



limited, for this reason Onu (2013) points out that combining several methods and alternating them during the English lesson is the best solution to boost learner opportunities to learn the language.

Introducing the language in a natural and playful way is an essential condition at an early age, in this way language will become useful and meaningful for children. Mourao (2014) suggests using songs, arts and crafts, games, puppets, stories, and role-plays to promote spontaneously learning. Teachers should be aware that the main aim when learning a new language is to be able to communicate. Therefore, language must be presented as a tool for learning, communicating, and it must be linked with children's real experiences and emotions, because the learner is not just a receiver of input, he or she needs to be involved in the class. Rius (2021) affirms that teachers should configure communication spaces in which children can experience with their own hands, by doing, by feeling while using the target language. Children must be in contexts where they can realize the usefulness of the language.

## **2.2. Storytelling and story reading for teaching English**

Young children's process of language learning must be done through engaging and funny activities. Learning should be promoted by kinesthesia and the connection of words with actions (Albaladejo Albaladejo, Coyle and de Larios, 2018). In addition, the authors affirm that songs and stories meet the previous requisites and are believed to facilitate vocabulary learning in young learners, as they are part of our communication system. Speakers of each language use songs and stories to share, tell, educate and teach to the younger speakers what they believe as well as they expose children to the language. According to these principals, Onu (2013) affirms that "Storytelling is a rich means of teaching a foreign language or a life lesson to learners, especially young ones. It is an ancient form of teaching, and great storytellers have confirmed throughout the time that it is a successful method" (p.136).

There are two types of approaches related to stories and the development of literacy skills, the storytelling and the story reading technique. Isbell, Sobol, Lindauer and Lowrance (2004) developed these two concepts pointing out that the difference is that in story reading, the teacher uses the book, which contains words and images, as a form of support and in storytelling, a story is told without the support of the book. Both approaches help children to develop language acquisition, literacy skills, listening and speaking abilities, and to reinforce the emotional attachment between the teacher and his or her students. It was observed in their study done with 38 students of 3 and 4 years

of age, that children who listened to a story being told to them performed better on retelling, in providing a setting, remembering characters in the story, and naming the moral in comparison to the children who listened to a story being read to them. Despite this, the children who listened to a story reading performed better when creating the wordless picture book story. Although the differences, they stated that both techniques are advantageous for the development of oral language and story comprehension. Moreover, Chomsky (1972) highlights the importance of adults reading aloud to young children, because he believes that it enhances children's vocabulary and syntactic complexity, without specifying which of the two techniques is more effective.

Storytelling has several beneficial aspects on children's language learning. In the first place, it allows teachers to teach moral aspects related to the foreign language's culture. It also promotes the development of interactive and communicative skills. Moreover, it develops young pupil's imagination, listening and writing skills (Onu ,2013). To ensure these benefits, storytelling must be adapted to the pupil's proficiency level, interests, needs, and especially age. Moreover, the teacher should read the story slowly, repeating the key vocabulary, and stopping every now and then to reinforce certain ideas. Furthermore, teachers must have in mind that young children's learning spans are very limited, for this reason, the best solution to maximize learner opportunities is combining a wide range of methods and approaches during English classes. Therefore, storytelling can be combined with follow-up activities to keep children's attention and to settle down the content studied implicitly in the storytelling. Moreover, Abdulla (2012), suggests that a good storyteller should use gestures, mimics, and his or her body to clarify the meaning and the message of the story.

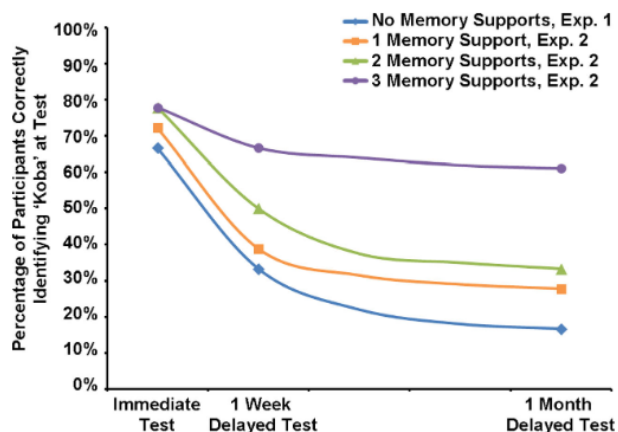
### **2.3. Storytelling for vocabulary acquisition**

Lexical acquisition is crucial when a second language is learned, because as Bowers and Vasilyeva (2011) defend, we need words to communicate. For preschool learners, the amount and the quality of the L2 input they are exposed to are related to vocabulary development. Learning words in L1 is a faster process than learning vocabulary in L2. Vocabulary is needed to learn a new language, because as Al-Dersi (2013) affirms, without vocabulary the four skills to acquire a new language (listening, reading, speaking and writing) cannot be developed. The more vocabulary students have, the easier they find it to understand the differences and similarities between the L1 an L2.

Children have a natural ease to learn new words. Yet, learning new vocabulary is as natural as forgetting what has been learnt as time goes on. Herman Ebbinghaus, a

German psychologist, developed a theory to explain how memory works, which is called *The Curve of Forgetting*. This is a pattern that theorized that humans forget learned information if it is not put into practice. So, the longer it takes since knowledge is acquired to its application, the less it is remembered.

Vlach and Sandhofer (2012) carried out a study with 162 children of 3 years of age, who spoke English. In the task, participants learned words incidentally. They had to measure a novel object, called “koba”, with other familiar objects. Only the novel object was given a noun (“koba”) and all the others were referred to as “toy”, “it”, “this” or “thing”. Once the measurement task was completed, three tests were carried out. One test was done immediately, another a week later and the last one a month later. In the test, the participant had to select the “koba” from 10 other objects. The researchers did two experiments, in the first, students did not have any memory support while doing the task and in the second experiment participants had three different memory supports. The supports were saliency, which consisted in telling the learners that the “koba” was special; repetition, the experimenter labelled the object repeatedly for six times; and finally, generation, the experimenter made the learners produce orally the word. Participants were divided into three groups, and each group of children had 1, 2 or 3 memory supports. The graph in Figure 1 shows the results of the three tests.



**Figure 1.** Vlach and Sandhofer (2012) tests results graph

It was seen that using 3 memory supports helped the long term memory. However, when memory supports were not used, young learners forgot words over time. Moreover, there was not a meaningful gap between the Experiment 1 and the Experiment 2 when using 1 or 2 memory supports. The percentage of students retaining the target word followed a curvilinear pattern, as *The Curve of Forgetting* does. The authors concluded that children, and adults, forget that information considered unimportant, which is an essential process to ensure the efficiency of the memory and to be able to learn new information.

There are three teaching strategies to assist language development: the direct instruction, the incidental, and the combination of both (Penno, Wilkison and Moore, 2002). The direct instruction method occurs when the teacher directly presents the words and their meaning to children, and makes them do tasks which involve classifying, producing sentences, or defining. The incidental approach involves presenting the words, which children should learn, within a verbal context that allows pupils to understand the meaning of the new words. The last method consists in combining the two methods. Storytelling develops under the umbrella of incidental instruction, as the vocabulary learnt through them is embedded in a meaningful context.

Listening to stories which contain new words helps children to acquire vocabulary. The meaning of the words included in the stories must be clear and suitable with the context, so children must be able to understand their meaning and to acquire the words after listening to them several times. Apart from the previous consideration, Penno et al. (2002), state that repetition is a key factor when exposing children to new vocabulary. The authors note that to take advantage of the fact that children are naturally interested in stories, these ones must include unknown words to the listeners, otherwise the repetition of the story will cause them boredom. So, incidental instruction is useful to boost children's language learning. Nevertheless, when young learners hear the vocabulary incidentally and the teacher provides a definition of it, pupils use the new words more accurately than when they just listen to the words.

Albaladejo Albaladejo et al. (2018) point out that given the reduced exposure to L2 in most EFL contexts, the use of appropriate tools such as storytelling provide children with meaningful input. Kirsch (2016) also remarks that while listening to a story, children are engaged with it and the vocabulary they listen to because they really want to understand the story. They feel captivated and interested thanks to the repetition, the rhythm, the visual imagery, the melody, and the gestures used while they acquire new vocabulary. Albaladejo Albaladejo et al. (2018) cite Krashen's opinions that through storytelling teachers provide comprehensible input for children, they understand the meaning of the words within their context. The authors also comment that, at the beginning of learning English as a foreign language, it is useful to use stories that are already known by children in their L1. In this way, they can make connections between the two languages. Moreover after her research about the teaching strategies and the children's language use during two storytelling lessons in a Year 6 class, where 80% of the students did not speak English, Kirsch (2016) concluded that repetition is needed to learn this vocabulary. After a period, this vocabulary is forgotten by children, so the storytelling should be

repeated, and also key structures and vocabulary should be repeated during teacher's performance in different ways. A wide range of oral strategies should be used when repeating the vocabulary and grammar chunks.

Teachers not only have to choose books which allow repetition, but they must be careful when selecting the words that appear in books and that learners must acquire. As Folse (2011) affirms, the taught words cannot be confusing, so the pronunciation and the spelling of them cannot be similar and the teacher must pronounce them correctly. Moreover, when teaching vocabulary using one story, the focus must be on one semantic topic, not on more than one. So, it is not recommended to teach colours words and animals words, for the first time, using the same story. In addition, the taught words must be adapted to the pupils' level and relevant for their day to day communication, they should feel the need of acquiring those words.

A part from considering the repetition and the word topic, the number of opportunities that children have to interact with the taught words is also relevant. Nation (2021) claims that between 3 or 5 minutes of interaction are needed for a child to learn a word. Therefore, during the storytelling, learners need several occasions to play using the acquirable words. To maximize the chances, post activities are appropriate to work with the vocabulary that appear in the stories.

As it was previously clarified, the storyteller must plan the story and study it to prepare the narration according to the listeners' language level. Likewise, he or she must bear in mind the arrangement of the space and the way that children will be able to interact with the story. The appropriate environment where to develop storytelling cannot be a class full of posters, with loud coloured walls, with noisy background sounds, etc. The space must transmit calm, concentration, and confidence to children. About how children should interact when telling them a story, Albaladejo Albaladejo et al. (2018) remarked after their research that children learn more amount of vocabulary when they listen to the teacher carefully, without moving, dancing or singing, but interacting orally. However, very few studies exposing the results and learning improvements of vocabulary with very young learners have been done so far, so there is a lack of research regarding the benefits of teaching vocabulary using storytelling to infant education students. Nevertheless, some studies and research have been done with older students. Onu (2013) exposed in a study carried out with first graders, different examples of storytelling lessons and the students' language learning after them. In one lesson, a short story titled "Freddie's a Greedy Frog" was told using flashcards to represent the vocabulary, and before, while and after the story some discussions and activities were carried out. The main aim of this lesson was to consolidate the vocabulary related to family members and

to revise some nouns of foods and drinks. The researcher stated that after the lesson a phrase that was repeated three times during the story, which was “Yummy, yummy for my tummy!”, was remembered and used by the children whenever they were hungry. Furthermore, they acquired the vocabulary related to family members.

One month after, the story “Roxy’s Day at Home” was played on a CD while the teacher was pointing to flashcards. Before the story, some games using the approach of Total Physical Response were used, and while and after listening to the story some questions and activities were done. In this case, the aim was to consolidate the lexic of the body parts. After her observations, the researcher pointed out that students could make predictions about the story plot, enjoyed the lesson, and acquired the vocabulary.

The general conclusions of these two successful lessons were that storytelling can be completely used to teach English; that when using realia to teach new vocabulary children assimilate them faster: and that when different activities and approaches adapted to pupils’ language level are combined in the same session, children do not get bored.

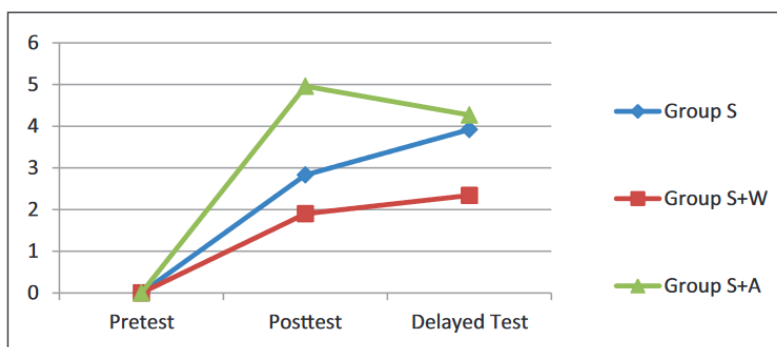
To discover if storytelling helped to improve young Iranian EFL learners’ English vocabulary knowledge and their interest were the research questions that Kalantari and Hashemian (2015) posed. Their study was done with Iranian low-intermediate learners of English who were between 10 and 14 years of age. Two groups of 15 students with the same language level were created: the experimental and the control group. Before starting the lesson plan, a pre-test was done to all the students to have data about their vocabulary knowledge. The lesson plan for the experimental group was formed by three parts: the preteaching, the while-teaching, and the postteaching. In the second stage the teacher told the stories with a Power Point, and in the two other stages activities and speaking situations related to the stories’ content were carried out. Once the lesson plan was finished, the participant’s vocabulary improvement was tested and compared. The results indicated that the experimental group learned more vocabulary than the control group; that the students from the experimental group did a higher vocabulary improvement between the results of their pre and post-test than the improvement that control group students did; and finally, that all the 15 students from the experimental group stated that after being taught using the storytelling method they had more interest in English and were more motivated than the other students’ group.

To learn 30 words and 10 marker sentences was the aim that Chou (2014) wanted to achieve by exposing 72 Taiwanese students, who were from 8 to 11 years of age, to five different stories about five international festivals. The pupils took an intensive course, in

which each festival lesson lasted 100 minutes. Every festival was taught through one story that included the acquirable vocabulary, a presentation on vocabulary and marker sentences done by the teacher, plus games and a song. To check children's learning, three different tools were used, a pre-test, a self-assessment questionnaire and a post-test. In both tests, the same 25 items were tested using four techniques (true/false, matching activities, anagrams with pictures and gap-filling with pictures). The pre-test was done before starting the course and the post-test was done after finishing all the lessons. The main conclusion the researcher had from the self-assessment questionnaire was that more than 80% of the young learners affirmed that singing and listening to stories related to the festivals were useful to understand the English vocabulary and to acquire it. When analysing the results of the pre-test and the post-test, it was observed that fifth graders achieved the best outcomes regarding the vocabulary learning, so the oldest ones showed the largest learning. However, when comparing the pre-test and the post-test results, in the post-test all the groups had a higher percentage of correct items than in the pre-test, so there was a clear improvement. In the matching test technique, meaning the part of the test that students had to recognize the item with its word, fourth and fifth graders achieved the totality of correct items, this means that all these students recognised the 100% of the items. So, it was discovered that the test technique and the grade level can influence on pupil's performance on vocabulary tests. The researcher conclusions were that students found learning through stories, games and songs motivating, funny and useful; and that when comparing the tests results, in the post-test students demonstrated that they had learned at least 30% more of the tested vocabulary than in the pre-test. Therefore, it was stated that teaching vocabulary through storytelling technique was successful.

When using storytelling in an EFL class different approaches can be used. Gao, Wang and Lee (2020) carried out a study to find out the effects of teaching English through storytelling alone, storytelling with word focus, and storytelling with activities on the vocabulary acquisition. The participants were 134 third graders from a Taiwan state school. The students, who had been studying English for two years, were divided into three different groups: the storytelling alone group (S), the storytelling with word focus group (S+W) and the storytelling with activities group (S+A). During the nine sessions nine stories were used, but only three of them were considered as target stories to measure the vocabulary learning. To check students word recognition, three tests were applied and the same 24 content words from the target stories were tested in each. A pre-test before starting with the sessions, a post-test immediately after, and a delayed post-test one month after finishing the stories.

Regarding the first research question the researchers wanted to solve, which was to find out the differences in word gain and retention among the three storytelling approaches; results showed large differences among the groups in the post and the delayed post-tests. First of all, the results proved the positive impact that storytelling had on the vocabulary acquisition. The students in the S+A group got the higher rate of vocabulary recognition in the immediate post-test, due to they participated in supplementary activities where the target words were repeated for two more weeks. Whereas in the delayed post-test Group S and S+W students demonstrated continuous improvements, Group S+A pupils showed lower rates. So, supplementary review activities did not suppose an advantage in the delayed post-test, while they benefited short-term memory. It was believed that those activities did not promote real interest for learning the language, and it was observed that students in this group were distracted during the lessons. Therefore, the two approaches that supposed higher vocabulary gains in a long term were Group S and Group S+W, but the storytelling alone method improved vocabulary retention better than the other two systems.



**Figure 2.** Gao, Wang and Lee (2020) tests results graph.

Another research question was sorted out, which was which storytelling approach had the most effective use of class time. The efficiency test that the researchers applied exposed that the Group S got the highest efficiency rate, 0.044 wpm, which was four times higher than that of Group S+A and twice higher than that of Group S+W. So, it was concluded by the researchers that the most efficient approach to maximise learner's vocabulary acquisition was the storytelling alone, although the two others had also a beneficial impact.

Regarding the fact that oral interaction promotes children's vocabulary and that, at the same time, they learn some content and morals, Isbell et al. (2004) remark that through storytelling, teachers can establish eye contact with children, which helps to teach moral aspects because an emotional attachment is created with this face to face connection.



To enhance this interaction between the storyteller and the children, some resources can be used, but the most recommended by the authors is the use of puppets.

#### **2.4. The use of puppets in storytelling**

For many teachers the puppet is a useful tool to engage children in speaking situations, because it is claimed that promotes children's interaction and helps them to connect to what is told by the teacher with themselves through the little figure. Moreover, Oltra Albiach (2015) states that using puppets makes the teacher's speech more comprehensible for all the students, therefore it is regarded to be an inclusive tool. Puppets are used in multiple and diverse situations as in drama, in the mediation of conflicts between children, and in storytelling among others.

In relation to the application of puppets in the storytelling, Bartan (2020) concluded after interviewing 72 preschool teachers, that educators strongly believe in the advantages of using puppets in storytelling because they help to keep children's attention, to acquire and remember the vocabulary and grammar chunks, to understand the plot, and to make the story more interesting. To achieve these benefits, teachers must be trained to be good readers and dramatize the puppet's voice according to what is being said.

Once the story is told or during the development of it, teachers must try to take advantage of the students' interest to originate speaking situations and promote interaction to make students talk about the story. Without the presence of the puppet, there are only interactions between the story and the listener, the story and the teller, and the teller and the listener. Nevertheless, Kim, Pyun and Lee (2018) point out that when there is a puppet two more interactions come out, the one between the teller and the puppet and the interaction between the listener and the puppet. For this to happen, the puppet must have a main role in the storytelling and be used clearly, doing the appropriate movements to support the speech and not to distract, speaking when it is necessary and reacting in accordance with what the teller is telling. So, the puppet should have a dynamic role and act as a support of the story.

Mujahidah, Damayanti and Afiif (2021) discussed in their extensive literature research the benefits of using hand puppets in a storytelling activity. The main advantages of using this kind of tool in storytelling are that children are engaged with the activity, they listen actively, their language skills are developed, their imagination increases and their ability to recognize vocabulary is promoted. Concerning this last advantage, a hand puppet is effective because it is a tangible representation of the new vocabulary that appears in

the story, so the image of the puppet and its accessories must symbolise visibly the vocabulary that teachers expect to be learned.

## **2.5. Gender stereotypes in stories**

Gender stereotypes are understood as the traits and behaviours that the society considers as females or males. Children learn to classify actions, roles, things, behaviours, etc. into one of the two genders by interacting with the environment and observing what the people around them do. Since stories are considered a tool to present the world to children, children are also exposed to gender stereotypes when they listen to stories. Chung and Huang (2021) described in their study with 54 children from two state kindergartens in Taiwan, that when children are three years old, they show gender stereotyping related to activities, actions, games, colors, toys, and clothes. When they reach five years old, they start to develop gender identity and feel themselves more similar to children with the same gender. As they grow up, they broaden gender stereotypes to more areas, as career choices or sports to practise, for instance. The more they learn about the dichotomy between male and female stereotypes, the more rigid they become with their beliefs and considerations about what is acceptable to do and like as a girl or a boy.

Recently, the educational community has become more aware of the impact that stories can have on the perception of gender stereotypes that children have. Research has shown that stories say what is acceptable to do for boys and girls; influence children's perceptions on colors, toys, behaviours, and clothes; and contribute to activating gender knowledge. However, what Abad and Pruden (2013) pointed out in their literature review was that storybooks are a potential tool to break gender stereotypes by exposing children to atypical stories in which both, boys and girls, can like the same toys, colors, or sports, have the same behaviours, and be the main characters in the story. Consequently, they can influence future career goals and aspirations, by making children consider that there are no occupations and activities just for men or women.

In their research, Chung and Huang (2021) exposed children to atypical stories, in which characters had a different role from the one which is stereotypical for their gender, and discussions to contribute to reducing their gender stereotypes. After doing it, they concluded that some of the young learners involved in the stories, activities and discussions changed their beliefs and showed a more equal opinion on what boys and girls can do. Despite the fact that half of the children answered that both, boys and girls, can play with all the toys, feel the same emotions, wear the same clothes, have the same

jobs, etc., they finally chose one of the genders, the traditional stereotyped, to associate with each activity and not both. So, the researchers, highlighted that changing children's beliefs regarding gender stereotypes is not an easy nor fast task, it requires doggedness and cooperation with their families. Otherwise, what they learn in the school will not match to what they observe in their daily lives.

One important aspect when deciding which book is useful or not to challenge gender stereotypes, is how the presented content is related to the main character and the gender, male, female or neutral, of this character. Seitz, Lenhart and RübSam (2020) developed one study in which they used stories to present unknown words to children, they were pseudowords, to see if they associated the words to female or male gender. In their first experiment, the researchers presented unknown words within a gender stereotypic context with a non-gendered protagonist, and a non-stereotypical context with a clear gendered protagonist. In their second experiment, unknown words were presented within gender congruent and incongruent stories. In each story, the unknown words were associated with the main protagonist. Finally, children were asked to rate the word (male, female or gender-neutral) and to say if they were interested in using that unknown thing or doing that activity. The investigators concluded the study with three findings: the first one was that female protagonists and feminine contexts led to female ratings, and that the male protagonists and masculine contexts led to male ratings; secondly, children showed a higher interest for that unknown objects or activity if they matched their gender; and finally, young learners associated the words with one or other gender mainly because of the gender of the protagonist, so if the unknown word was presented in the story started in with a female character, the child associates this word with the female stereotypes.

Therefore, if teachers have the willingness to tell stories with the purpose of breaking gender stereotypes and, at the same time, teach English, they must take into account that the gender of the characters will influence how children acquire and perceive the new vocabulary.

### **3. Study**

#### **3.1. Research objectives**

The aim of this project is to find out if storytelling is a useful tool to teach vocabulary to very young learners who are studying English as a foreign language. Therefore, the following research question and subquestions were posed:

R.Q. 1. Can EFL young learners acquire vocabulary through storytelling?

R.Q. 1.1. Which is the difference between their prior knowledge and the post-test results?

R.Q. 1.2. Which is the difference between the post-test and the delayed post-test results?

R.Q. 1.3. Which is the difference between the prior knowledge and the delayed post-test results?

#### **3.2. Contextualization of the school**

The study was carried out in a state school in a medium sized town. The school offers early childhood and primary education. There are two group classes for each school year, but 3 and 4 year-olds are mixed in four multilevel classes. However, English is taught in homogenous age classes.

In the early childhood stage, English is taught through storytelling. Multiple intelligences are taken into account when planning the activities, as the English teacher of the school considers that, in this way, everybody has the same opportunities to learn, feel engaged with the content and boost their skills. The youngest students of the school do one session of 45 minutes of English per week, 4 year-olds do two sessions of 45 minutes per week, and 5 year-olds do one session of 45 minutes and one session of 1 hour per week. Moreover, every nine weeks all the students participate for two days in the “Let’s play” environment, where the teacher tells one story and then children, who are arranged in multilevel groups, play freely in the different spaces, such as the hospital, the house, the baby’s corner and the supermarket.

### **3.3. Participants**

In order to complete this study, a didactic sequence was carried out with fifty young learners, divided into two groups. The learners were between 5 and 6 years of age. At the moment of the study, they had been studying English since they were three years old.

Despite applying the didactic sequence to all the students of both classes, A and B, only 10 students per class, 5 girls and 5 boys, were tested in order to have a homogenous sample of participants. The principles when choosing the students were that they did not speak English at home nor take extracurricular classes. Students with special educational needs were excluded from the tests, although they participated in the didactic unit like all the other students. Moreover, it was a requirement to have a range of English levels within the tested students. The 20 tested students had different mother tongues, as Catalan, Spanish, Ukrainian, French, Amazic, or Panjabi.

### **3.4. Methodology and instruments**

As the main aim of this study was to discover if the storytelling is a useful tool to teach English to very young learners, a didactic sequence based on storytelling with a puppet and related post activities were planned. The story was created with the research aim in mind and its vocabulary was conformed by words that children had not worked on in any other didactic unit before. After finishing the story, the receptive vocabulary was tested.

#### **3.4.1. Didactic sequence**

The didactic sequence was based on the story “A costume for Carnival” and the post-activities were related to the content of the story. The didactic unit was carried out in eleven sessions. The structure of the sessions was always the same: the lesson started with the greetings to Mr and Mrs Clown, then the story was told, one or two post activities were developed, and finally children said goodbye to Mr and Mrs Clown puppets.

For the storytelling, two visual supports were used: the puppet of the main character “Sky” and miniature clothes made of *felt*, and flashcards with images of the puppet “Sky” and all the *felt* complements. These two supports were combined among all the sessions. Seven post-activities were designed and repeated during the seven weeks that the intervention lasted. In these post activities real clothes, which were like the ones used in the story, were also used.

The story was specifically created for the research and it had an easy and repetitive structure. Its title was “A costume for Carnival” and a puppet called “Sky” was the main character. Sky was neither a male or female character, during all the didactic unit its gender was not told. The name “Sky” or the pronoun “it” were used all the time. The content of the story was related to clothes and the use of adjectives “short” and “long”. Grammar structures such as “What do you like?”, “I like” and “I don’t like” were also repeated during all the story. The vocabulary worked through this story were the clothes, precisely the dress, the tie, the socks, the gloves, the crown and the belt, and the adjectives were equally used with the different pieces of clothing.

As it was previously told, seven post activities were designed and applied. The post activities were related to the clothes vocabulary and the use of the adjectives “short” and “long”. Therefore, real clothes like the ones used in the storytelling (size and colour) were used in some of the post activities.

Activity	Description
Let's put on!	The teacher calls students one by one and asks them "What do you like?", then the students must answer by saying "I like" and the noun of the piece of clothing they like, which are the clothes from the story. Then the kid can put on that real piece of clothing.
Hide and seek	The teacher hides one of the real clothes and students have to find it. Then the student who finds it can hide it again.
Touch and guess	The teacher covers one student's eyes with a mask and makes him or her touch one of the real clothes. Then the student has to guess which piece of clothing is by saying its name in English.
A dialogue with Sky	The teacher uses the puppet "Sky" to talk with the students and make them stick one of the miniatures of <i>feltra</i> to the puppet.
Memory game	The memory game was formed by 12 cards. In each card there is the image of one of the real clothes, so there are two cards for each piece of clothing. The teacher puts them facing down on a cloth on the floor and asks the students to come one by one and try to find a matching pair.
Classification of short and long	The teacher places two paper boxes, one short box and one long box. On each box there is a rectangle representing the long and short size. The teacher asks the students to drop the clothes miniatures of <i>feltra</i> in the correct box.
Paper puppet	Students make a paper puppet of Sky and play with it by saying all the pieces of clothing that Sky wears. They take home this craft.

**Table 1.** Description of the activities.

### **3.4.2. Tests**

The principal objective of the study was to check the vocabulary learned by 20 5 year-olds after being exposed to storytelling and participated in post-activities related to it. Three tests were carried out to check the receptive vocabulary. A pre-test was done a week before starting the didactic unit, a post-test was done immediately after finishing the didactic unit, and a delayed post-test was done two weeks after finish the unit. In the three tests, the same 20 students were tested and the same test was used. The tests allowed the researcher to analyse what students knew before the didactic unit and what they learned after being exposed to the story and post-activities.

In the tests, the receptive vocabulary was assessed. The receptive vocabulary refers to those words we recognize when we see or heard them, which is believed to be larger than the productive vocabulary, as Al-Dersi (2013) argues. The same process was developed for the three tests. Students were called one by one to an isolated space, separated from the class where all the other students were playing. In the room, there was a table, and the student and the tester sat face to face. On the table, there were the same *feltra* miniatures and the long and the short version of the pieces of clothing that appear in the story.

The students were told in Catalan to select the miniature of the piece of clothing that the tester asked for. In spite of the fact that the explanations were in Catalan, the words to be tested were said in English. The tested words were the ones that were more repeated during the story, so the pieces of clothing that “Sky” liked. The concepts were tested in the same order they appeared in the story. Each phrase, so the adjective and the noun, was repeated three times during the story and then more times in the activities. The tested phrases were:

- Long dress
- Short tie
- Short socks
- Long gloves
- Short crown
- Long belt

After the researcher said the phrase of the piece of clothing that the student had to pick up, four possible answers were considered. The first one, was to pick up the correct one; another possibility was to pick up the correct piece of clothing but the incorrect size; the third possible answer, was to pick up an incorrect piece of clothing but the correct size;



and the last possibility, was to pick up an incorrect piece of clothing and the incorrect size.

A grid was designed to mark all the students' answers:

<b>Instruction:</b> Long dress				
<b>After giving the instruction:</b>				
Gives the long dress.	Gives the short dress.	Gives a long piece of clothing. Which one?	Gives a short piece of clothing. Which one?	Observations.

**Table 2.** A sample of the grid used to test the participants.

### 3.4.3. Recordings

Despite the fact that in the story the tested vocabulary was only repeated three times, during the post activities these words and phrases were continually used. Thus, since the vocabulary was tested, all the sessions were audio recorded to keep track of the number of times that each word from the tested vocabulary was said during the didactic unit. The recordings were authorized by the school considering the parents' permissions. This data will be used to compare the results of the tests with the exposure children had to each of the words.

A class:

Dress	Tie	Socks	Gloves	Crown	Belt
76	70	50	55	74	51
Long dress	Long tie	Long socks	Long gloves	Long crown	Long belt
50	2	12	45	11	45
Short dress	Short tie	Short socks	Short gloves	Short crown	Short belt
11	42	46	4	46	11

**Table 3.** Recordings results from A class.

B class:

Dress	Tie	Socks	Gloves	Crown	Belt
82	66	59	60	68	67

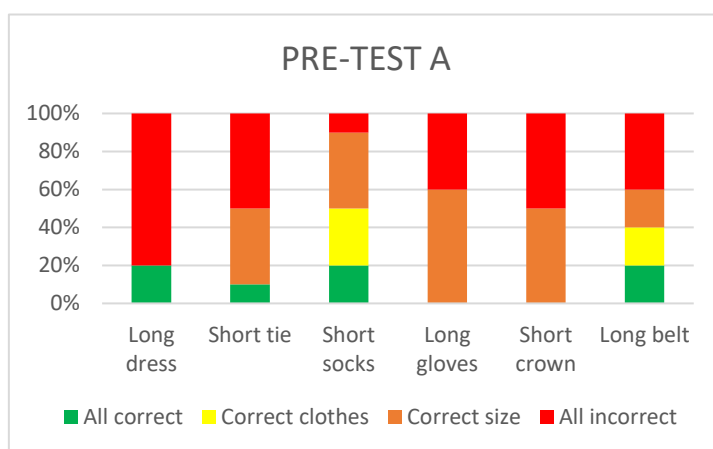
Long dress	Long tie	Long socks	Long gloves	Long crown	Long belt
46	1	12	49	11	41
Short dress	Short tie	Short socks	Short gloves	Short crown	Short belt
11	39	51	4	49	11

**Table 4.** Recordings results from B class.

## 4. Results

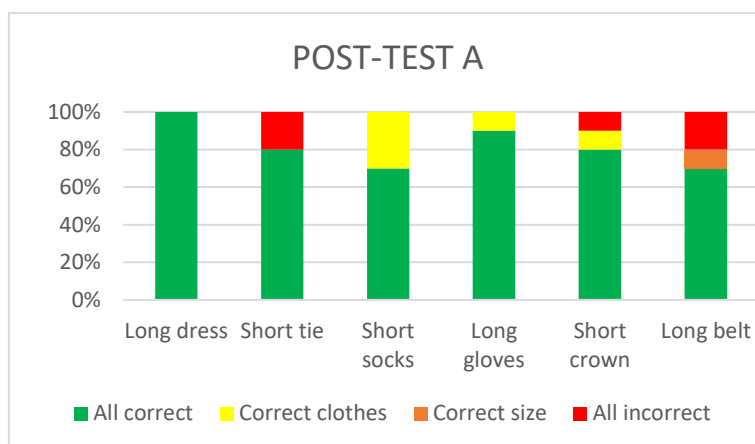
In this part of the project the results of the tests and the recordings are presented. In order to show all the collected data, the results of the three tests (pre, post and delayed post) of A class will be presented in relation to the amount of exposure of vocabulary they received. The same will be done with the tests results of B class. Then the results of the 20 students will be joined and the answers of the pre-test, the post-test and the delayed post-test will be compared.

### 4.1. A Class Results



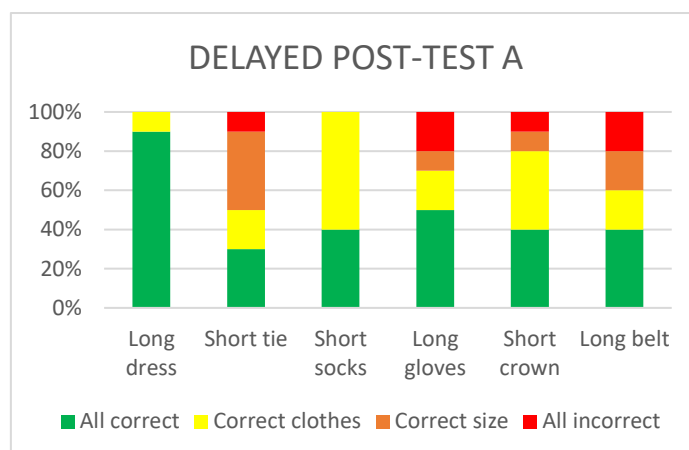
**Figure 3.** A class pre-test results.

As it was mentioned, the answers given by the students from A class will be exposed in relation to the number of times they listened to the target vocabulary. Figure 3 shows the vocabulary that learners knew before starting the didactic sequence. The results suggested that the clothes vocabulary was unknown by the children and also the adjectives, because even though some concepts as “long dress”, “short tie” or “long belt” were correctly answered between 10% and 20% of students, they selected these same items when they were asked to select other clothes. So, they randomly selected the different clothes. Only the “short socks” were answered correctly by 20% of students and not selected at any other moment. So, it seemed that these two children knew what the concept “short socks” meant.



**Figure 4.** A class post-test results.

Figure 4 shows the results of the test that was immediately done after finishing the didactic sequence, and in this test 50% of the students answered impeccably all the questions. “Long dress” was the concept that was recognized by 100% of the students, which was also the first piece of clothing that appeared in the story. The students listened to this phrase 50 times during all the sessions, it was the most repeated concept during the story and the activities. So, it coincides that the word the children acquired the most is the one they listened to more times. The concept “long gloves” was the second most known, 90% of the students recognized it and 10% of children recognized the piece of clothing but no the size. The concepts “short tie” and “short crown” were correctly selected by 80% of students, and the “short socks” and the “long belt” were answered without error by 70% of the students. The rest of the students who did not answered correctly the “short socks” and the “long gloves” chose the incorrect size, but they identified the clothes that corresponded to “socks” and “gloves”. Regarding the times that students listened to the phrases, they varied between 42 and 46 times, and the concept “long gloves”, which was the second best selected was repeated 45 times. “Short tie” and “long belt”, were the clothes that were not identified between 20% and 30% of the students, and they were repeated 42 and 45 times respectively. Thus, in the case of “short tie” there is a connection between the number of times it was listened to and the percentage of students who acquired the concept, since it was the least repeated concept and the second concept with the highest percentage of wrong answers.



**Figure 5.** A class delayed post-test results.

Figure 5 shows the items that children remembered after two weeks. As in the post-test, “long dress” was the most acquired phrase by the students. The second most acquired item was “long gloves”, which was correctly identified by half of the participants, 20% of the students selected the short gloves and the remaining 30% selected other clothes. “Short socks”, “short crown” and “long belt” were the third most acquired concepts, since each of them was perfectly answered by 40% of the participants. However, there were some differences among them regarding the other answers. With the “short socks” the remaining 60% corresponded to the answers in which children selected the socks but not the short ones, but the long ones. The next item with less incorrect answers was the “short crown”, in which 40% of the answers represent those students who selected the long crown, and the remaining 20% was equally divided in the answers in which children selected another short piece of clothing or different sized clothes. About the concept “long belt”, 20% of the participants selected the short belt, 20% selected other long clothes and finally 20% of the students chose different sized clothes. Finally, the least acquired phrase was “short tie”, as only 30% of the students identified the correct piece of clothing, 20% of the participants chose the long tie, 40% of the answers represented those pupils who chose other short clothes and there was 10%, so 1 pupil, who chose a different item of the contrary size.

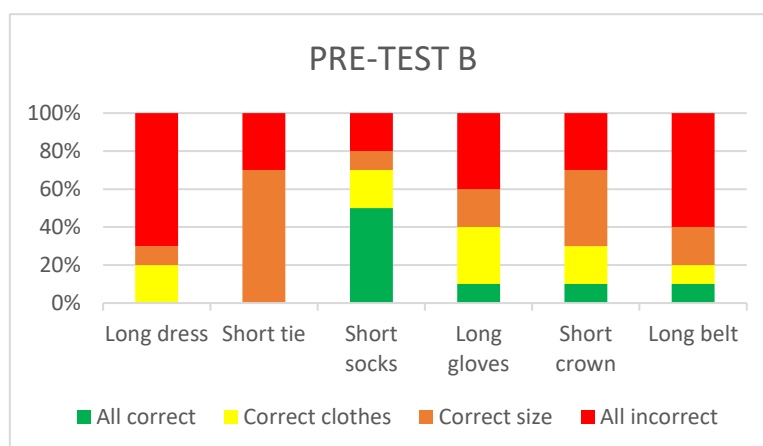
In the delayed post-test, it can be seen that the exposure children received corresponds to the order of the most to the least acquired concepts. The most repeated phrase was “long dress”, which was the most acquired concept; then the second and the third most remembered phrases were repeated 46 or 45 times; and finally, the least acquired concept, which was “short tie”, which was the one with the least exposure, it was said 42 times.

The percentage of participants who identified the clothes but not the size increased between 10 and 30% in the delayed post-test, which means that the words for clothes

were learned much than the adjectives accompanying them. The recordings demonstrated that the clothes nouns were repeated more times than the phrases (adjective + nouns), as the number of times they were said varied between 76 and 50 times, whereas the most said phrase the children were exposed to was repeated 50 times.

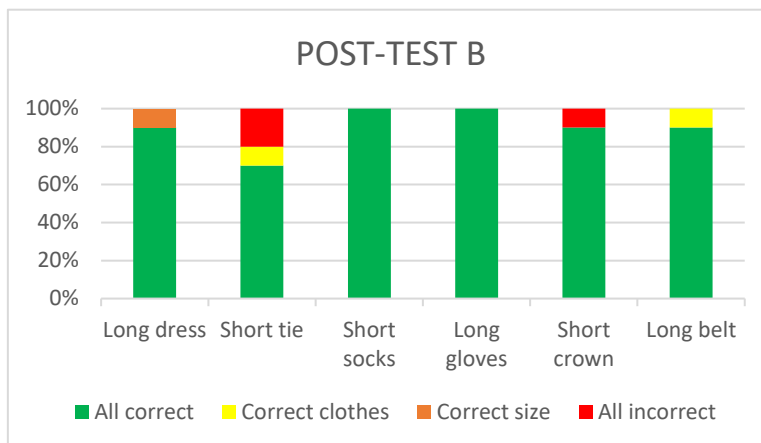
By observing the answers one by one, it was noticed that if a concept was not acquired in the post-test it was not acquired in the delayed post-test. In addition, 50% of the students who demonstrated to have had acquired all the vocabulary in the post-test where the ones who showed to have forgotten less in the delayed post-test. On the contrary, 50% of students who did not identify the total number of clothes precisely in the post-test were the ones who had the worst results in the delayed post-test.

#### 4.2. B Class results



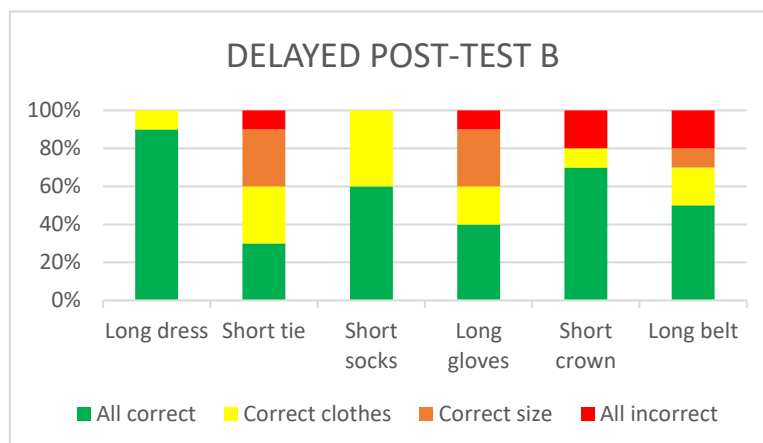
**Figure 6.** B class pre-test results.

In this section, the results given by the students from B class will be contrasted with the vocabulary exposure they received. Figure 6 shows the vocabulary that this group of participants knew before starting the didactic sequence. As what was observed with the previous group, the results suggested that the target vocabulary and the adjectives were not known by the children. Because nobody correctly selected the “long dress” or the “short tie” and the items “long gloves”, “short crown” and “long belt” were correctly selected by one student. However, the “short socks” were identified by 50% of the class and 20% identified the correct piece of clothing but not the size.



**Figure 7.** B class post-test results.

The results of the post-test can be observed in Figure 7. The most acquired concepts were the “short socks” and the “long gloves”, which were correctly identified by 100% of the participants. Children were exposed to the concept “short socks” 51 times, which was the most repeated concept of all. “Long gloves”, was the second most repeated concept, which was said 49 times by the researcher, also the concept “long dress” was repeated the same number of times. So, there is a correlation between the most acquired concepts and the exposure children received of those words. The items “short crown”, “long dress”, and “long belt” were correctly identified by 90% of the participants and were repeated 49, 46 and 41 times, respectively. In the case of the “short crown” and the “long dress” the remaining 10% of the participants selected other clothes, but with the item “long belt” the participant who did not select the correct piece of clothing, selected the belt but the short size. The “short tie” was the item with the less percentage of correct answers, representing 70%, 10% of answers were from who selected the long tie and the remaining 20% of answers were from participants who chose other clothes. Regarding the exposure of this item, it coincided that it was the concept which was repeated less times, only 39, and the least acquired one.



**Figure 8.** B class delayed post-test results.

In Figure 8, it can be observed that, as what happened with the results of A class, the correct responses decreased and the answers in which children only identified the correct clothes increased. The “long dress” was the most acquired concept, which was correctly identified by 90% of the participants. The second most acquired concept was the “short crown”, precisely selected by 70% of the students. The answers of the “short socks” were divided into two groups, the first group of the students who identified the correct clothes, which was 60% of them, and the second group of participants who only identified the correct piece of clothing but not the size, which represented the remaining 40% of the answers. Then the “long belt” was identified by half of the participants, 20% of them selected the short belt, 10% chose another long piece of clothing and 20% picked up different clothes and size. Finally, the least remembered concepts were the “long gloves” and the “short tie”, which were correctly identified by 40% and 30% respectively.

Whilst in the results of A class there was a correlation between the most remembered items and the number of times they were said, in this case the relation was less clear. The only relation that could be established was that the least repeated concept was the least remembered concept, which was the “short tie” and it was said 39 times. However, it was seen that the most acquired concept, “long dress”, was the fourth item with the most exposure; and the second least remembered item, “long gloves”, was the second most repeated, it was said 49 times. Yet, if the comparison is done between the acquisition of the target vocabulary and the times the clothes nouns were said, some relations can be found. The two most repeated clothes nouns, which were dress (82 times) and crown (68 times) coincided with the two most identified clothes.



### 4.3. A+B Classes results

In this last section, the aim is to observe the differences among the three tests, in which the results of both classes are joined, to compare the evolution of children’s knowledge regarding the acquisition of the target vocabulary. In Figures 9, 10 and 11 the answers that students gave in each test can be observed.

Since the three research questions were focused in comparing the answers of the three tests, the differences will be presented organized following the research questions. First of all, the differences between the pre and the post-test will be shown, then the post and delayed post-test responses will be compared, and finally, the answers of the pre and the delayed post-test will be contrasted and the research questions will be answered one by one.

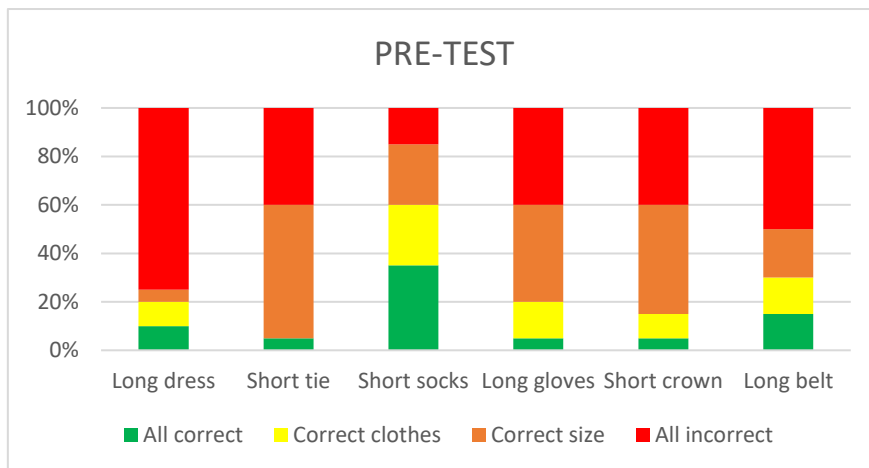


Figure 9. Joined pre-test results of A and B classes.

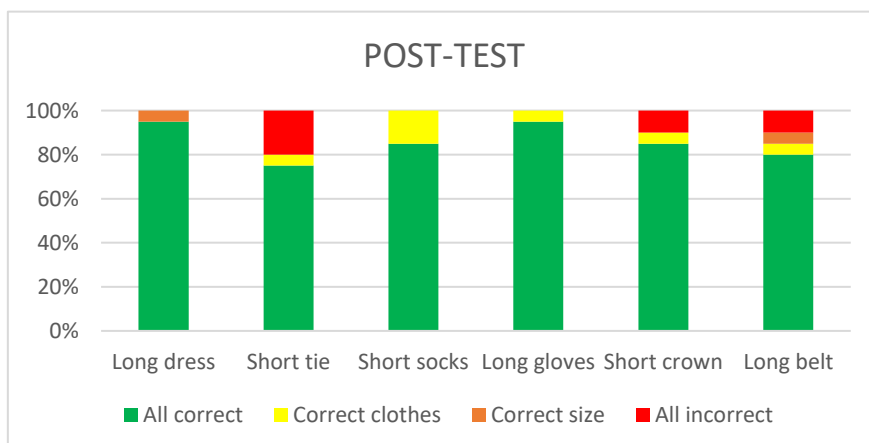
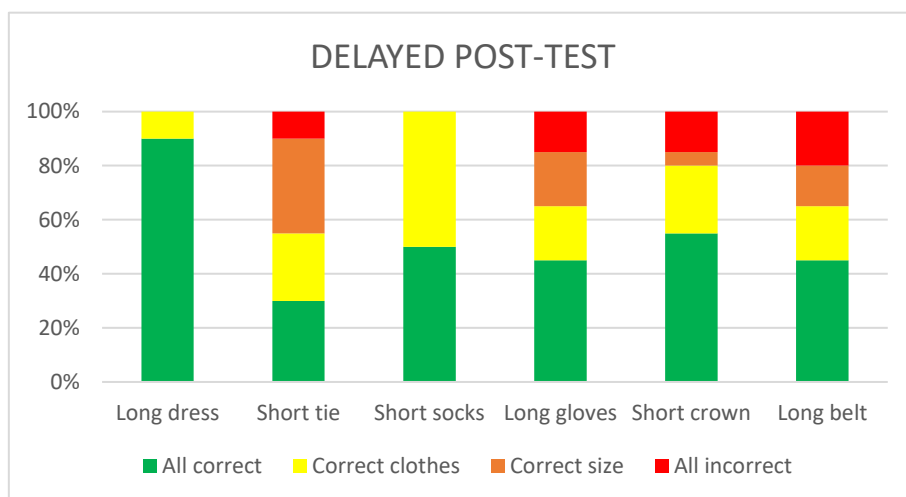


Figure 10. Joined post-test results of A and B classes.



**Figure 11.** Joined delayed post-test results of A and B classes.

R.Q.1.1: Which is the difference between their prior knowledge and the post-test results?

The first tested phrase, which was “long dress” was correctly answered by 85% more of the students in the post-test than in the pre-test, in which only 10% of the students got it right. In the post-test, only one student answered incorrectly, by selecting a long piece of clothing that was not the dress. Therefore, there was a significant improvement between the two tests, since in the pre-test 75% of the young learners responded mistakenly, and in the post-test nobody chose an incorrect size and piece of clothing.

“Short tie” was the second tested concept. In the post-test, 70% more of the students selected the correct piece of clothing than in the pre-test, 5% more of the participants chose the correct piece of clothing but not the size, and there was 20% less of the all incorrect answers. Unlike the previous item, “short tie” was wrongly answered by 20% of the students in the post-test, it was the concept with more incorrect responses.

The third tested concept was “short socks”. This is the concept that experienced the lowest improvement, just 50% more of correct answers, since in the pre-test 25% of the students already knew this word. Then, in the post-test 10% of students selected the long socks, and it was observed that those students who selected the long socks in the pre-test acquired the meaning of “short”, since they selected the “short socks” in the post-test. So, the 15% of the participants who chose the long socks in the post-test had chosen different clothes and size in the pre-test, which meant that they acquired the meaning of the word but not the adjective meaning.

The concept “long gloves” was the one with the highest improvement: 90% more of the students chose the correct piece of clothing and 10% less of students chose the correct piece of clothing but the incorrect size in the post-test.

The fifth tested piece of clothing was the “short crown”. In the post-test 80% more of the students answered correctly, 5% less of them selected the long crown, and 30% less of the students responded wrongly.

Finally, the “long belt” concept was answered without error by 65% more of students in the post-test, and there was a reduction of 40% of the all incorrect answers.

#### R.Q.1.2: Which is the difference between the post-test and the delayed post-test results?

The general tendency of the delayed post-test results was that there was a decrease in the complete correct responses, an increase in the answers in which children chose the other size of the clothes, in the answers in which children chose the correct size but not the correct clothes, and also in the complete incorrect answers.

Regarding the results of the “long dress”, this was the less forgotten concept by the students, since in the delayed post-test just 5% less of the students chose the correct piece of clothing, 10% more of the students selected the short dress, and nobody chose long clothes or short clothes. So, this was the concept with the highest percentage of exact correct answers, representing 90% of the delayed post-test answers.

The “short tie” concept was correctly answered by 45% less of the students in the delayed post-test than in the post-test. Although it was not the item with the highest decrease, it was the concept less remembered by the participants. 20% more of the pupils chose the long tie, 35% more of the participants chose different short clothes, and 10% less of young learners selected different sized clothes. This is the only item that had a decrease of all incorrect answers, and the one with the highest increase of the children who chose other short clothes. Five children out of the seven who chose other short clothes, chose the “short crown” and the remaining two children selected the “short belt” instead of the “short tie”.

The third asked vocabulary item was the “short socks”, this was the third least forgotten concept. In the delayed post-test, 35% less of the students selected the correct piece of clothing and 35% more of the pupils chose the long socks. In the last test, the percentage of the answers was equally divided, 50% of the pupils chose the correct *feltra* miniature

and the other 50% chose the long socks. As the “long dress”, this was the piece of clothing that was identified by all the children.

The “long gloves” concept was precisely selected by 50% less of the students than in the post-test, representing the highest decrease of all the vocabulary items. In the delayed post-test, 20% of the answers represented the students who chose the short gloves, and there was 15% more of all incorrect answers. In this question, the difference between the all incorrect answers in the post-test and in the delayed post-test was the largest, as nobody responded incorrectly in the post-test and 15% of the pupils chose different sized clothes in the last test. So, 35% of the students did not remember what a glove was, since 20% of the answers corresponded to those children who selected other long clothes.

About the “short crown”, this was the second most remembered item by the students. The percentage of correct answers decreased a 30% and the all incorrect responses increased only a 5%. In the last test, 20% more of students selected the long crown and only one student chose another short piece of clothing, which was the “short tie” in the delayed post-test.

The last item was the “long belt”. It was correctly answered by 45% of the students in the delayed post-test, which is a 35% less than the post-test. The 45% of the participants who selected the “long belt” also got it right in the post-test. Regarding the incorrect answers, 15% of the students chose other long clothes and 20% of the participants selected other short clothes. There was 10% more of students who selected all incorrect answers, who in the post-test had answered correctly. This item had the highest percentage of all incorrect answers, representing 20%.

### R.Q.1.3: Which is the difference between the prior knowledge and the delayed post-test results?

Observing the Figures 9 and 11 it can be seen at glance that there was an increase of the all correct and correct clothes answers and a decrease of the correct size and all incorrect responses in the final test. In all the questions, more than 55% of the students showed that, at least, they had acquired the clothes words.

The item “long dress” was the most acquired concept as in the delayed post-test 80% more of the students selected the correct piece of clothing than in the pre-test and only 10% of the pupils chose the short dress. In spite of the fact that in the pre-test there was

also 20% of answers in which children chose the long dress, the two participants who selected the long *feltra* miniature in the last test were not the same students.

The concept “short tie” was correctly answered by 25% more of the students in the delayed post-test than in the pre-test. Whereas in the pre-test nobody had selected the long tie, in the post delayed post-test the 25% of the participants chose this option, in which they demonstrated that they had acquired the meaning of the clothes word but not the meaning of the size adjective. The two other possible responses represented the 45% of the answers, and they were chosen by those students who also had gotten it wrong in the pre-test. This was the item which had the second lowest improvement.

The third item was the “short socks”, which was the item with more correct answers in the pre-test, and the third one with the highest quantity of perfect responses in the delayed post-test. The increment of the all correct answers was the lowest, 15% more of students selected the exact item. 25% more of the participants chose the long socks in the delayed post-test. Like the results of the “long dress”, the percentage of the participants who chose different short clothes and different long clothes was 0%.

In the delayed post-test the phrase “long gloves” was correctly chosen by 45% of the students, which is 40% more of correct answers, 20% of the participants chose the short gloves, 20% chose other long clothes, which were the “long belt” or the “long tie”, and 15% selected other different sized clothes.

The next to last item was the “short crown”, the second most remembered concept and the one that had the second largest increasing of all correct answers, which was represented by 50% of more correct answers in the delayed post-test. In the delayed post-test, there were 15% more of answers in which students chose the long crown, which suggested that more students acquired the meaning of the word, but not the adjective meaning, than in the pre-test. The percentage of students who chose other short clothes decreased a 40%, the only student who selected a different short piece of clothing was someone who also had chosen a long different piece of clothing in the pre-test. Regarding the participants who chose different clothes and size, this percentage decreased a 25%.

The last tested item was the “long belt”, and the increment of all correct answers was represented by 30% more of students who chose the precise piece of clothing than in the pre-test. About the participants who chose the short belt, there were 5% more of students in the last test. Those students who did not select any of the two belts, the long and the short, selected the long crown or the short tie.

To conclude this section, after comparing the results of the different tests, four aspects can be highlighted:

1. Those students who had not acquired the concept in the post-test, neither did so in the delayed post-test.
2. In the delayed post-test, it was observed that in each tested concept, between 10 and 50% of participants acquired the meaning of the clothes word but not the meaning of the adjective.
3. The items “long dress”, “short crown” and “short socks” were the most remembered phrases in the delayed post-test.
4. The items “short tie”, “long gloves” and “long belt” were the least remembered phrases, and students used to mix up these items when they did not select the correct one.

## **5. Discussion**

As it was exposed before, the aim of this study was to find out if EFL young learners can acquire vocabulary through storytelling. In this section, the three sub research questions proposed at the beginning of the study will be answered according to the results obtained in the analysis of the tests and to what had been found and stated in other studies of the field.

Considering the results of the different tests done before and after the storytelling sessions to check children's knowledge of the vocabulary, it can be stated that learning vocabulary through storytelling is possible, as more than 55% of the tested participants remembered the target vocabulary two weeks after listening to it. When listening to the story children felt engaged and captivated with the plot, the rhymes, the dialogue of the characters, and the new words; and this made them actively interact with the character and the content of the story while repeating and acquiring the target vocabulary. The recordings enabled to write the previous affirmation, since children's voices were heard and it was noticed how after the sixth session children started to get involved in the story, demonstrating that they were able to produce the vocabulary, to retain the words and phrases, and to participate in the telling of the story through this incidental way of teaching. The same perceptions were found when Chou (2014) analysed the answers that students gave to the self-assessment questionnaire, which were that young learners enjoyed learning through listening to stories and considered this tool really helpful to understand the English vocabulary and to acquire it. Despite the fact that in this study children did not have the opportunity to share their thoughts, by listening to their interventions through the recordings it could be noticed that they were interested in the story and the vocabulary used in it. Moreover, like what happened in the study conducted by Onu (2013), apart from learning the vocabulary, which will be explained in detailed in this part, children also kept repeating some easy structures while the story was told, such as "Sky what do you like?" or "No, I don't like". However, whereas in Onu's research, children kept repeating one of the story's sentences in other moments and contexts, in this study children did not include these learned sentences to other moments.

In the coming paragraphs, this research question will be fully discussed by answering the other subquestions, which analyse more precisely the tests results and give an accurate picture of the receptive vocabulary acquired by the students after participating in the storytelling sessions.

When comparing the results of the pre-test and the post-test, it can be stated that the storytelling with a puppet approach was useful to teach students the target vocabulary, since each target phrase (adjective + noun) was acquired by, at least, 75% of the participants. The improvement gap between the pre-test and the post-test was between 50% and 85%. At least 75% of the students were able to identify the concept that the researcher said with the correspondent *feltra* miniature, which was seen the six times the story was told with the puppet and also in the post activities. As what was found in Chou (2014) project, the answers of the post-test had a significant higher percentage of correct items than in the pre-test, so the improvement was clearly observed after exposing students to the vocabulary within a story. Moreover, in this research we used the matching test technique, the one that had the best results of students in Chou's research. So, it may be taken in consideration that the type of testing approach influenced the excellent responses of children.

The organization of the lessons allowed the researcher to tell the story in every session and to work the target vocabulary in different activities, so the taught words were continually repeated. As what was exposed in Gao, Wang and Lee (2020), combining the storytelling with several post activities was advantageous for the short term memory, as the increase in knowledge was appreciated in all the tested words. The maximum number of participants in the pre-test who selected correctly one piece of clothing was 7, representing 35%, and in post-test the maximum was 19, representing 95%.

The most remembered words in the post-test were the "long dress" and the "long gloves". Regarding the fact that Onu (2013) determined that the words which were taught using Realia were the most acquired ones, this correlation can be also applied in the current study. Although all the clothes were represented with its real element, the dress and the gloves were, in the real life, so long that the dress was two meters long and the gloves reached children's shoulders, so the real object clearly represented the meaning of the word and also the meaning of the adjective. However, the tie, the socks, the crown and the belt did not represent that clear their size, since their sizes were not that exaggerated to make it clear that they were long or short. The least remembered item was the "short tie", answered correctly by 75% of the students in the post-test, and the second least remembered one was the "long belt", selected correctly by 80% of the students in the second test. A reason to this can be attributed to what is exposed in Folse (2011), which is that children tend to retain more those words which are closer to the vocabulary they use in their daily life. So, whereas the tie and the belt are clothes that children normally do not wear, the dress, the socks, the gloves and the crown could possibly form part of their wardrobe. Moreover, during the days the story was told there were some students



who wore dresses, crowns, gloves and of course, socks. Therefore, they had the opportunity to connect the new vocabulary with their own clothes.

After analysing the results of the post-test and the delayed post-test, it could be observed that there was a notable decrease in the number of correct answers. While in the post-test the minimum of correct answers in each item represented 75%, in the delayed post-test the minimum was 30%. Whereas in the delayed post-test the item "short tie" was correctly answered by only 30% of the participants, and the concepts "long gloves" and "long belt" by 45% of the students, in the post-test the percentages of correct answers were 75%, 95% and 80% respectively. Moreover, in the delayed post-test the number of all incorrect responses increased in the items "long gloves", "short crown" and "long belt" between 5% and 15%. Also the percentage of students who chose the correct size but of other clothes increased between 5% and 35%. In addition, more young learners showed to have acquired the meaning of the clothes words but not the meaning of the adjectives, given that the percentage of participants whose selections were like that increased between 10% and 35%.

It was also observed that a significant number of students did not recognize the correct size of the clothes, Folse (2011) provided a possible justification. He stated that when teaching vocabulary to very young learners, whose first language is not the taught one, just words of one semantic field should be presented at a time. Otherwise, if different semantic group words are taught together children find difficulties to learn them or to differentiate which word represents the item and which modifies its characteristics.

About the fact that whereas in the post-test a larger number of children selected the corresponding clothes than in the delayed post-test, it was read in Gao, Wang and Lee (2020) that the same happened when comparing the positive results between the post and the delayed post-test of their research. By comparing the results of the three different storytelling approaches, they concluded that the students who worked the vocabulary through the storytelling plus several activities could recognize more vocabulary items in the post-test, as they were exposed to a big amount of exposure the last days, than in the delayed post-test. So, complementing the storytelling with activities benefits the short term memory, but not the long term one. Therefore, it was suggested that activities may not contribute to acquire and retain the vocabulary, since those students who participated in that group were distracted while listening to the storytelling. The natural storytelling approach showed the best results, as those children recognized more words in the delayed post-test than in the post-test, so the improvement was not stopped.

In the delayed post-test the number of students who did not identify the word clothes with its *feltra* minuatire increased significantly, which means that during the two weeks between one and the other test they forgot some of those words and their meaning. In their experiment, Vlach and Sandhofer (2012) discovered that since the last moment when children were exposed to the vocabulary, they started to forget that information their brains did not consider important. So, according to *Ebbinghaus Curve of Forgetting* when the time goes on, children's memory forgets naturally those words that were not used anymore. Therefore, because the target vocabulary was not used anymore during the two weeks between the post-test and the delayed post-test children did not retain some of them. It was also noticed by the researcher that when doing the post-test nobody hesitated to choose the clothes they were told, but in the last test some of them asked "What does it mean?" or "Is this the correct one?".

Considering the answers of the delayed post-test, it can be determined that after listening to the story and participated in the activities, most of the children acquired the target vocabulary. In the following paragraphs the four types of responses children could have in the test will be classified in two groups: correct or incorrect. The correct answers comprehend those in which the participants selected the exact clothes and when they selected the correct piece of clothing but the other size. The incorrect answers will be the ones in which children selected a different piece of clothing from the one asked for.

Six were the target items that appeared in each test and these could be divided into two groups, the most and the least acquired by the children. If the focus is on the percentage of students who selected correctly the clothes in the delayed post-test, the items "long dress", "short crown" and "short socks" were the most recognized clothes by the students, representing 100%, 80% and 100% of the answers respectively. The items "short tie", "long gloves" and "long belt" were the least recognized clothes, representing 55%, 65% and 65% of the answers respectively.

But if the focus is on the increase of those percentages between the pre and the final tests, there are some changes. The items that had the biggest increase of correct answers, so the ones that children acquired the most compared to their prior knowledge, were the "long dress", the "short crown", and the "short tie". Whereas the "short tie" was one of the least identified items, the difference of the correct answers in the pre-test and in the delayed post-test was the third highest, representing an increase of 50%. Therefore, the items with the lowest increment of correct answers were the "long gloves", the "short socks" and "the long belt". The fact that the "short socks" only was recognized

by 40% more of the students is due to the fact that in the pre-test, it was already identified by 60% of the students, which was the piece of clothing most recognized by the students in the first test.

As Nation (2021) remarks acquiring new vocabulary in a foreign language is time consuming, and even more when those learners are very young children, in this case, repetition is absolutely important and large amounts of input are presented. So far, the three clothes that experienced the highest improvement were exposed, now, the focus will be on the times children listened to those items from the researcher's voice. Since the didactic sequence was applied to two different classes, the number of times each phrase was repeated was not the same. For this reason, the average of both classes was calculated to establish relations between the amount of exposure children received and their outcomes in the results. The phrase "short socks" was said 48'5 times, the "long dress" 48 times, the "short crown" 47'5 times, the "long gloves" 47 times, the "long belt" 43 times and the "short tie" 40'5. As it could be seen, the difference between the quantities was not that wide to establish that there was a clear connection between the most listened words and the retention of them, since although that the "long dress" was the most repeated concept and also the one with the highest increase, the "short tie" which was the third with the highest improvement was the least repeated. However, if the focus is on the times each noun was said there is a correlation between the ones that were more repeated and the ones with the biggest improvement. The words "dress", "crown" and "tie", which had the most significant improvement, were repeated between 68 to 79 times; and the words "gloves", "socks" and "belt" were repeated between 57'5 to 59 times. Thus, the amount of the exposure was not the only influential factor, other factors may have influenced the acquisition and retention of words, which could be student's own interests, the language skills of each child, the relevance that those words had in relation to their style when dressing up, how the real clothes represented the different items, or the times they could interact with the different pieces of clothing during the activities.

## 6. Conclusion

In this section the main findings will be exposed to conclude the research. This project aimed to discover through receptive vocabulary tests if children can acquire and retain vocabulary thanks to storytelling.

The first conclusion that can be exposed from the whole project is that storytelling is a teaching tool that children enjoy. Young learners connect with the foreign language by feeling engaged with the story and their characters, at the same time they are exposed to new vocabulary and grammar chunks. Bearing in mind that repetition is a key aspect when incidentally teaching, using storytelling allows it, since children like listening to the same story one time after another without being bored. Progressively they become more active in the process of telling the story by interacting with the teller and the character, in this case the puppet, by using the language. The strategy of using a puppet and miniatures of the target vocabulary enabled to represent physically those clothes and the meaning of those adjectives, so every time that children were exposed to the target words, these were represented by objects.

Secondly, it can be stated that post activities allowed and facilitated the repetition of the target vocabulary, which benefited the short term memory, as it was observed in the post-test results. The fact of supporting the story with miniatures and the games with Realia engaged the children with the activities and made them feel motivated to use the material. Moreover, it contributed to the fact that in the post-test children recognized each item with its word fast, as they had been playing and working with them previously. However, in the delayed post-test, which was done two weeks after the last session in which children were exposed to the vocabulary, the percentage of children answering correctly was reduced between 5% and 50% in comparison to the post-test. The long term memory was not benefited in the same way, which meant that despite the significant amount of exposure they had received, after fifteen days without being in contact with the target vocabulary, children forgot some of the clothes nouns and size adjective meanings. In addition, while in the delayed post-test children seemed to hesitate when having to select the clothes, in the post-test none of the participants did so. Therefore, apart from considering repetition, being constant is also relevant if teachers want students to retain the taught vocabulary as time goes on. As what is presented in *The Curve of Forgetting*, unless constancy is taken into account, children forget some of the words they have acquired before if they stop putting them into practice.

After carrying out the study and analysing the results of the three tests, it was interpreted that not only the amount of exposure influenced the acquisition and retaining of the vocabulary, but also other factors seem to have influenced the learned vocabulary. It was seen in the last part of the discussion section that, even though the amount of exposure of each word with the percentage of students who identified it coincided, the difference of times among them was not so big to determine that the number of times each phrase was said was the cause of the vocabulary acquisition. By observing how children interacted with the real clothes in the activities, it is advisable to point out that the most remembered clothes were the ones children liked the most, since the “long dress” or the “short crown” were the items that participants put on more times. In addition, the least remembered concepts, which were “long belt” and “short tie” are clothes that are not worn by young children, so they do not form part of the usual clothes of their own reality.

Another meaningful aspect found in the research was that in the last test, between 10% and 50% of the participants showed to have had acquired the meaning of the word but not the meaning of the adjective. Thus, some hypotheses can be made to provide an explanation to this. This could have happened because in the post activities the clothes nouns were continually used, but not the size of them, so as it was noticed in the recordings the noun of each piece of clothing was repeated more times than the phrase of adjective + noun. The fact that the meaning of adjectives is more abstract than the meaning of the clothes nouns could also have had a role. What is clear, is that an important percentage of children did not understand that the adjectives “short” and “long” modified the characteristics of the clothes, so they responded to the tester demands focusing only on the clothes words.

Finally, I would like to comment that as a pre-service teacher, I will keep in mind all the findings from this study. Teaching new vocabulary to children who are still learning and developing their language skills in their own language is not an easy task nor a fast process. Vocabulary acquisition is a process that requires repetition and constancy, and that must be done through engaging and motivating activities to allow the maximum number of students to connect to it. Storytelling enables all the previous considerations, but it is not a guarantee of success, the role the teacher and how the story and the supports are presented are also crucial to improve the language acquisition process of very young learners.

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## **8. Appendices**

### **8.1. Appendix 1**

The script of the story "A costume for Carnival":

Hello, my name is Sky and I need a costume for Carnival. I must decide what I would like to wear; can you help me?

Sky what do you like?

I like the long dress.

Sky do you like this dress?

No, I don't like the short dress. I like the long dress.

Sky what do you like?

I like the short tie.

Sky do you like this tie?

Yes, I like the short tie.

Sky what do you like?

I like the short socks.

Sky do you like these socks?

No, I don't like the long socks. I like the short socks.

Sky what do you like?

I like the long gloves.

Sky do you like these gloves?

Yes, I like the long gloves.

Sky what do you like?

I like the short crown.

Sky do you like this crown?

No, I don't like the long crown. I like the short crown.

Sky what do you like?

I like the long belt.

Sky do you like this belt?

No, I don't like the short belt. I like the long belt.

Sky what do you like?

I like the long dress, the short tie, the short socks, the long gloves, the short crown, and the long belt. I love my costume, now I'm ready for the Carnival!

## 8.2. Appendix 2

To prove that the didactic sequence was done, in this section, all the post activities will be explained in detail with its materials, learning aims, development, etc.

Storytelling
Development of the activity:
<p>The storytelling can be carried out using two resources, the flashcards or the puppet and the box with the clothes. To tell the story the teacher must know it by heart because there is no written support. The script of the story is basically a dialogue between the storyteller and the puppet to find out what the puppet likes and create its costume for carnival. Once the children are ready to listen to the story, the teacher reads the title of the story "A costume for Carnival", opens the box, puts the glove and the puppet head on and starts telling the story. The teller must take into account that there must be pauses to mark when the teller or the puppet speak and to produce different voices for each character. Depending on the number of times the children have listened to the story, they will participate more or less, so the teacher should accept children's participation during the development of the story. Moreover, if the children really know the story, she or he can be in silence at some moments and invite the children, with a hand or head gesture, to pronounce the missing word or to grab some of the clothes if the puppet is used.</p>
Aims:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To acquire the clothes vocabulary.</li> <li>• To understand the meaning of the adjectives "long" and "short".</li> <li>• To notice that the adjective precedes the noun.</li> </ul>

- To be exposed to simple grammar structures, which are “What do you like?”, “Do you like .....?”, “I like”, and “I don’t like”.
- To learn how to behave while somebody is talking.
- To improve their listening skills.
- To connect the celebration of the Carnival with the English language.
- To interact with the story and the puppet.

Material:

To carry out the storytelling we need the flashcards or the puppet and the box with all the clothes.



Space and time arrangement:

The storytelling should be done in an appropriate room where children can sit down on the floor with enough space. It cannot be a place where other teachers or students use at the same time. This room must have enough light, make students feel secure, transmit calm and be considered for children as a learning space where English language is used. Moreover, it must be a place where the only possible sounds are the voices of the teacher and the children, so it is recommended to carry out the storytelling where there isn't background noise.

In terms of the time, the storytelling should last from 5 to 7 minutes.

Students' arrangement:

Children sit down on the floor, it would be recommended to sit on a comfortable surface such as a wooden floor or cushions if possible. They sit in a circle and all of them must be able to see the teacher, who sits also in the circle but on a chair, and the resources she or he uses.

Teacher's role:

As in all the activities, the teacher is responsible for the development of the story and she or he must tell the story slowly, with a clear pronunciation and emphasizing the key vocabulary. Furthermore, it is suggested that the teacher speaks in English all the time even when she has to warn or call the attention of the students.

### Let's put on!

#### Development of the activity:

After the storytelling, in the same box where there are the miniatures of all the pieces of clothing that appear in the story, there are the real clothes in the same color. So the teacher takes the real clothes and puts them on the floor one by one saying its name. Then she or he calls students one by one and asks them "What do you like?", then the child says the noun of the clothes, if he or she remembers it, or points out the piece of clothing. The teacher says "I like the ...." and makes her or him repeat this phrase. Once the child has said the phrase and the name of the piece of clothing, she or he can put the piece of clothing on, show it to the classmates and then take it off. During this process, it is important that the teacher repeats clearly the structure "Put it on" and "Take it off".

#### Aims:

- To acquire the clothes vocabulary.
- To utter the clothes vocabulary.
- To make connections between the word and the real object.
- To learn simple grammar structures, which are "What do you like?" and "I like"
- To be exposed to some expressions, which are "Put it on" and "Take it off".

#### Material:

For this activity the real clothes which are the dress, the tie, the socks, the gloves, the crown and the belt are needed. They must be the same color as the ones used in the storytelling with the puppet.



Space and time arrangement:

This activity is carried out after the storytelling, so it is done in the same space. This space must be bigger enough to have one kid standing up with the real piece of clothing and all the others sitting down in a circle.

About the time, it will depend on the number of children the teacher calls to dress up. However, this activity should not be longer than 10 or 12 minutes, otherwise children start to be bored and misbehave, since their attention span is really limited.

Students' arrangement:

As in the storytelling activity, children sit down on the floor in a circle and then the one that chooses what he or she likes goes in front of the teacher, puts on the piece of clothing and stays in the middle of the circle to show to his or her classmates what he or she is wearing. Despite doing the activity with the whole group of students, each child has his or her moment to be dressed up and to interact with the teacher.

Teacher's role:

As in all the activities, the teacher guides the action and presents the language to the children by repeating all the structures and vocabulary. He or she must ask students to stand up from the circle, to choose one piece of clothing and to make them say the noun and the phrase “I like”. Nevertheless, the teacher must focus on the acquisition of the vocabulary not on the grammar structures, so if one student doesn’t pronounce the phrase it is not a problem, the teacher must not pressure any child.

### Hide and seek

Development of the activity:

This activity consists in hiding one of the real clothes in the room and making students find it. The first time the teacher tells the students to close their eyes and clarifies that he or she will hide one of the real clothes. When the students have their eyes closed, the teacher hides the piece of clothing and once it is hidden, she or he tells the students to open their eyes. The students can move freely around the class to find the object and the one who finds it must hide it in the next round. It can be done with the same piece of clothing all the time or by changing it every round.

The phrases that the teacher must repeat and say clearly are “Where is the ...?”, “Close your eyes” and “Open your eyes”.

Aims:

- To acquire the vocabulary of clothes
- To make connections between the word and the real object.
- To be exposed and understand simple grammar structures, which are: “Where is the ....?”, “Close your eyes” and “Open your eyes”.

Material:

To develop this activity you just need the real clothes.

Space and time arrangement:

This game is done in the same space as all the other activities, but the teacher must consider that for this activity the room must have different corners or places where to hide the clothes, because if it is too easy, children will be bored very soon.

<p>Related to the time, the teacher can decide to extend the activity depending on the students' motivation or interest. But it is not recommended to last this post activity for more than 10 minutes.</p>
<p>Students' arrangement:</p>
<p>In this game, students sit down in circle when they have to close their eyes and they move freely around the class when they have to find the clothes. The whole group does the activity.</p>
<p>Teacher's role:</p>
<p>During this game, apart from guiding the activity and using the language to expose children to the language content, the teacher must ensure that children do not cheat when they close their eyes, otherwise it will not be an attractive challenge for children to find the object.</p>

Touch and guess
<p>Development of the activity:</p>
<p>To carry out this post activity the teacher must follow three steps. First of all, he or she has to present to children each piece of clothing and let them touch all the clothes. Secondly, the teacher covers one student's eyes with a mask and invites him or her to touch the piece of clothing. Finally, he or she asks the student "What is this?" and the student answers with the name of the piece of clothing. If the child says the word in their mother tongue, it is not punished or considered a wrong answer, but the teacher says that his or her answer is correct and after that he or she pronounces the word in English.</p>
<p>Aims:</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To acquire the clothes vocabulary.</li> <li>• To make connections between the word and the real object.</li> <li>• To be exposed and understand the phrase "What is this?".</li> <li>• To boost their touch sense.</li> </ul>
<p>Material:</p>
<p>For this activity the real clothes are needed and also a mask to cover the students' eyes.</p>



Space and time arrangement:

This activity is carried out after the storytelling or another post activity, so it is done in the same space.

About the time, this activity can be repeated as many times as the teacher considers depending on the children's interest in doing this guessing game.

Students' arrangement:

As in the storytelling activity, children sit down on the floor in a circle and then the teacher moves around to give to one child the opportunity of doing the game of guessing and touch. Despite doing the activity with the whole group of students, each child has his or her moment to interact with the teacher and to manipulate the clothes. Therefore, when the teacher asks one student to touch and guess, all the other ones must be in silence without saying the answer or giving hints.

Teacher's role:

During this game, apart from guiding the activity and speaking in English to expose children to the language content, the teacher must ensure that children do not cheat when they do the action of touching and guessing. Moreover, he or she must guarantee to not use the same piece of clothing every time and that the students are in silence while one child thinks and touches to discover what is in his or her hands.

### Dialogue with the puppet

Development of the activity:

This activity must be done after the storytelling with the puppet. Once the storytelling is finished, the teacher uses the puppet, whose name is Sky, to interact with students one by one. The teacher makes the puppet look directly at one child and ask him or her to give one



piece of clothing. So, for example the puppet asks “Maria, can you give me the long belt”, and after asking that the child must stand up and stick the correct piece of clothing on the puppet. If the child asked doesn’t know which is the correct piece of clothing is, then the puppet can ask the other students to help her or him. After the child has stuck the correct piece of clothing, Sky says “Thank you” and the teacher can invite the kid to kiss, hug or give it five, so to interact with the puppet.

Aims:

- To acquire the clothes vocabulary.
- To understand the meaning of the adjectives “long” and “short”.
- To notice that the adjective precedes the noun.
- To be exposed to simple grammar structures, which are “Can you stick me the .....” and “Thank you!”.
- To interact with the puppet.

Material:

For this activity the puppet and the miniature clothes are needed.



Space and time arrangement:

This activity is carried out after the storytelling, so it is done in the same space. About the time, this activity must be done with all of the students one by one, but it must be dynamic to not get the others bored. Within less than 10 minutes this activity must be completed.

Students’ arrangement:

As in the storytelling activity, children sit down on the floor in a circle and then the teacher makes the puppet ask each child to go with it and stick the clothes. Despite doing the activity

with the whole group of students, each child has his or her moment to interact with the puppet and to work the vocabulary in a receptive way.

Teacher's role:

As in all the activities the teacher guides the action and presents the language, in this case he or she must use the puppet to interact with the children and perform a clear pronunciation to help students acquire the vocabulary. Moreover, he or she cannot pressure any child, so the teacher must transmit calm and confidence to the child who is interacting with the puppet.

### Memory game

Development of the activity:

The memory game can be done, as all the post activities presented, after the storytelling or another post activity. To execute it correctly this activity must be carried out in two rounds, so in two different sessions at least.

In the first round, the teacher puts one card of each pair facing down on a cloth, so six cards, and asks one student "Where is the .....?". The objective is not to find the matching pair but the image of the piece of clothing that the teacher is asking for and train students to connect the word with the image. The teacher will ask one student where one of the clothes is and he or she will have to turn one card and see if that is the correct one, if not the child will put the card facing down again and another student will come and turn another card. This process will be done until the image the teacher is asking for appears and with all the cards. Then the teacher asks for another image.

In the second round, so in the second session of the memory, the teacher puts all the cards, so twelve, facing down on a cloth and asks one kid to find a matching pair. The phrases that the teacher uses are: " Turn two cards to find a matching pair", "This is not a matching pair" and "This is the matching pair of .....". One by one, each student moves from the circle to behind the cloth, which is in the middle of the circle, to turn two cards and try to get a matching pair.

Aims:

- To acquire the clothes vocabulary.
- To make connections between the word and the image of the piece of clothing.
- To be exposed to and understand some expressions, which are “Where is the ....?”, “Turn to cards to find a matching pair”, “This is not a matching pair”, “This is the matching pair of .....
- To boost students’ memory.
- To improve children’s visual skills.

Material:

One pair of cards with the image of each real piece of clothing are needed for this game. In addition, a cloth is also needed to mark the space where the cards should be placed.



Space and time arrangement:

As in all the previous post activities, the children sit down on the floor in a circle and the teacher places in the middle of the circle the cloth with all the cards. One by one, students go behind the cloth and turn the cards. Despite doing the activity with the whole group of students, each child has his or her opportunity to find a matching pair or the image asked. It is important that everybody can see the cards to be able to recognize and remember where every image is.

About the time, this activity can be repeated as many times the teacher considers appropriate taking into account children’s interest and their willingness. Nonetheless, the activity must not last more than 10 or 12 minutes, because as I have been highlighting in all the document, after this time they can start misbehaving and feeling bored since their attention span is really short.

Students’ arrangement:

In this game, students sit down in the circle and they move to the middle of the circle and behind the cloth to turn the cards. It is necessary that when the child turns the cards the others can see which are the images of them, otherwise they are not going to use their memory to find matching pairs and will just turn the cards randomly.

The activity is done with the whole group, but each child has his or her opportunity to find a pair and everyone must pay attention during all the time to remember the position of the images.

Teacher's role:

During this game, apart from guiding the activity and keep repeating the key vocabulary of the clothes, the teacher must engage students in the game and keep their attention to guarantee that they are using their memory to find the clothes and the pairs.

### Classification of the short and the long clothes

Development of the activity:

This classification game can be done, as all the post activities presented, after the storytelling or another post activity. To execute it the teacher will display the long and short miniatures of the clothes used in the storytelling with the puppet on a cloth and next to it one short and long box. In each box there is a label with a short or a long ribbon, to make clear which box is for short clothes and which for long clothes. Once all the material is put on the floor, the teacher picks up one piece of clothing and asks one child "Is this piece of clothing long or short?", after that the student has to say "long" or "short". If the child doesn't know the answer, the teacher can ask the classmates for help. After answering whether it is short or long, the teacher says to the kid "Drop in the box" and the child has to put the element in the correct box. Despite the fact that this activity focuses on the meaning of the two adjectives, the teacher must also keep repeating the name of the different clothes.

Aims:

- To acquire the clothes vocabulary.
- To utter the words "long" and "short".
- To understand the meaning of "short" and "long".
- To classify the pieces of clothing in "short" and "long".
- To notice that the adjective goes before the noun.
- To be exposed to simple grammar structures, which are "Is this piece of clothing short or long?" and "Drop it in the box."

Material:

Two boxes labelled with a short and long rectangle and all the miniatures of pieces of clothing (the long and short ones) are needed.



Space and time arrangement:

As in all the previous post activities, the children sit down on the floor in a circle. The teacher places in the middle of the circle all the material, in a clear position to achieve that all the students can see the boxes and the clothes from their places. About the time, the teacher must ask each student to classificate one piece of clothing, so the length of the activity depends on the number of students.

Students' arrangement:

In this game, students sit down in the circle and they move to the middle of the circle and behind the boxes to classificate the clothes. The activity is done with the whole group, but each child has his or her opportunity to classificate the clothes.

Teacher's role:

During this game, apart from guiding the activity and keep repeating the key vocabulary of the clothes and remarking the adjectives. The teacher must ensure that students are paying attention during all the session, not only in the moments they have to classificate but all the time to keep acquiring the vocabulary.

### Craft "Create your puppet"

Development of the activity:

The craft is one of the last post-activities of this didactic unit based on the storytelling of "A costume for Carnival". Students are given one worksheet with the puppet face and its clothes

drawn and they have to color and cut them. As the children have to color the clothes with the same color of the puppet's clothes, the teacher only puts the colors needed, which are yellow, green, purple, pink, red and grey, to avoid the possibility that children color the clothes with other colors. Once students have cut all the clothes, they glue them to create the final costume of the puppet Sky and put one wood stick behind the paper puppet to hold it. Before starting coloring the worksheet, the teacher must clarify the actions and steps they have to do and show them one example of the finished craft to make sure that students know how the process of creating the puppet must end.

When children have the paper puppet created, the teacher shows the students the puppet and points to the different clothes and says its name and adjective. Then she or he asks students one by one to stand up and to show their puppet and name all the pieces of clothing with the correct adjectives. After this session, students take the craft home and the didactic unit "A costume for Carnival" is finished.

Aims:

- To create a paper puppet of Sky.
- To acquire the clothes vocabulary.
- To utter all the names of clothes and their corresponding adjectives.
- To improve the thin psychomotricity.

Material:

To do the craft the worksheets with the clothes and the puppet face drawn, glue, scissors, felty pens or wood colors, and wood sticks are needed.



Space and time arrangement:

Whereas all the other post-activities were developed on the floor, in this case children must sit down on chairs and tables of their size to work properly. It is recommended to have all the children together in the same table, or if there are two teachers the group of students

can be split into two tables and one teacher in each table. About the time, it depends on the pace of children, and maybe two sessions are needed to finish the craft.

Students' arrangement:

As in all the post-activities, the craft is done with the whole group at the same time, but each child must create his or her own paper puppet. If it is possible, it is better to do this activity with half of the group since it is easier for the teacher to help students and to watch out that they follow all the steps correctly.

Teacher's role:

During the creation of the paper puppet, the teacher must guide the activity, to show all the steps clearly and make sure that everybody comprehends them. He or she must help the students when they may need it. Moreover, during the creation craft he or she must keep repeating the key vocabulary and structures to expose children to the language.

### 8.3. Appendix 3

The grid used to test the students:

<b>Name:</b>				
<b>Class:</b>				
<b>Test:</b> Pre-test    Post-test    Post delay test				
<b>Instruction:</b> Long dress				
<b>After giving the instruction:</b>				
Sticks the long dress	Sticks the short dress	Sticks a long piece of clothing. Which one?	Sticks a short piece of clothing. Which one?	Observations.
<b>Instruction:</b> Short tie				
<b>After giving the instruction:</b>				
Sticks the short tie	Sticks the long tie	Sticks a long piece of clothing. Which one?	Sticks a short piece of clothing. Which one?	Observations.
<b>Instruction:</b> Short socks				
<b>After giving the instruction:</b>				
Sticks the short socks	Sticks the long socks	Sticks a long piece of clothing. Which one?	Sticks a short piece of clothing. Which one?	Observations
<b>Instruction:</b> Long gloves				
<b>After giving the instruction:</b>				
Sticks the long gloves	Sticks the short gloves	Sticks a long piece of clothing. Which one?	Sticks a short piece of clothing. Which one?	Observations
<b>Instruction:</b> Short crown				
<b>After giving the instruction:</b>				
Sticks the short crown	Sticks the long crown	Sticks a long piece of clothing. Which one?	Sticks a short piece of clothing. Which one?	Observations
<b>Instruction:</b> Long belt				
<b>After giving the instruction:</b>				
Sticks the long belt	Sticks the short belt	Sticks a long piece of clothing. Which one?	Sticks a short piece of clothing. Which one?	Observations



**8.4. Appendix 4**

These are the tables with each student's answers in each test:

	PRE-TEST					
Students	Long dress	Short tie	Short socks	Long gloves	Short crown	Long belt
Student 1	Red	Orange	Orange	Red	Orange	Yellow
Student 2	Green	Red	Yellow	Orange	Red	Orange
Student 3	Red	Green	Orange	Red	Orange	Red
Student 4	Red	Red	Green	Orange	Red	Orange
Student 5	Red	Red	Yellow	Orange	Orange	Red
Student 6	Red	Orange	Yellow	Orange	Red	Green
Student 7	Red	Orange	Green	Red	Orange	Red
Student 8	Red	Red	Orange	Orange	Red	Green
Student 9	Green	Red	Red	Orange	Red	Red
Student 10	Red	Orange	Orange	Red	Orange	Yellow
Student 11	Yellow	Orange	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Orange
Student 12	Red	Red	Orange	Yellow	Orange	Red
Student 13	Red	Red	Green	Red	Red	Red
Student 14	Red	Orange	Green	Orange	Yellow	Yellow
Student 15	Red	Orange	Yellow	Green	Green	Green
Student 16	Yellow	Orange	Green	Red	Orange	Red
Student 17	Red	Orange	Green	Yellow	Red	Red
Student 18	Red	Orange	Red	Yellow	Orange	Red
Student 19	Red	Orange	Green	Red	Orange	Orange
Student 20	Orange	Red	Red	Orange	Red	Red

	POST-TEST					
Students	Long dress	Short tie	Short socks	Long gloves	Short crown	Long belt
Student 1	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Green	Green
Student 2	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Student 3	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Student 4	Green	Green	Yellow	Green	Green	Green
Student 5	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Student 6	Green	Green	Green	Green	Red	Red
Student 7	Green	Red	Yellow	Green	Green	Red
Student 8	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Student 9	Green	Red	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Orange
Student 10	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Student 11	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow
Student 12	Orange	Red	Green	Green	Red	Green
Student 13	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Student 14	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Student 15	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green

Student 16						
Student 17						
Student 18						
Student 19						
Student 20						

	DELAYED POST-TEST					
Students	Long dress	Short tie	Short socks	Long gloves	Short crown	Long belt
Student 1						
Student 2						
Student 3						
Student 4						
Student 5						
Student 6						
Student 7						
Student 8						
Student 9						
Student 10						
Student 11						
Student 12						
Student 13						
Student 14						
Student 15						
Student 16						
Student 17						
Student 18						
Student 19						
Student 20						