

Analysis of Topics in Storybooks for English Learning

Final Dissertation on Early Childhood Education

Andrea Tarramera Valverde

Early Childhood Education and Primary School Teaching (major in English)

University of Vic - Central University of Catalonia

Professor: Mireia Canals

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Abstract

This research is a case study that has as its main objective to discover and analyse the topics that appear in storybooks for English learning. The study has been carried out through the analysis of the storybooks used in Early Childhood Education. Besides, a focus group was carried out with professionals of education (7 Preschool teachers and an English teacher) to discuss about the topics that appear or are treated in storybooks in early years. Finally, different class observations were done to gather information about teacher's management of topics during storytelling with 4 groups from P3 to P5. The results of this study are presented in this final dissertation.

Keywords: Early Childhood Education, storybooks, English learning, topics.

Resum

Aquesta recerca és un estudi de cas que té com a objectiu principal descobrir i analitzar els temes que apareixen als contes utilitzats per a l'aprenentatge d'anglès. L'estudi s'ha realitzat mitjançant l'anàlisi dels contes utilitzats amb l'objectiu de fomentar l'aprenentatge de la llengua anglesa a l'Educació Infantil. A més a més, es va realitzar una taula rodona amb professionals de l'educació (7 mestres d'Educació Infantil i una mestra d'anglès) per tal de debatre sobre els temes que apareixen o es tracten en els contes utilitzats durant l'etapa 3-6. Finalment, es van portar a terme diverses observacions amb 4 grups des de P3 fins a P5 per recopilar informació sobre la manera de gestionar i tractar el temes durant la narració de contes. Els resultats extrets de l'estudi es presenten en el present treball.

Paraules clau: Educació infantil, contes, aprenentatge de l'anglès, temes.

Table of contents

1. Introduction.....	8
2. Justification.....	9
3. Theoretical framework	10
3.1. The introduction of English in Early Childhood Education	10
3.2. The use of storytelling for English learning.....	12
3.2.1. Defining storytelling	12
3.2.2. Reasons for using storybooks.....	13
3.2.3. Characteristics of storybooks in early childhood Education	16
3.3. Criteria for selecting storybooks.....	18
3.3.1. Topics in storybooks	21
4. Methodology	28
4.1. Method and Paradigm.....	28
4.2. Tools.....	28
4.2.1. Reviewing existing storybooks	28
4.2.2. Focus group.....	28
4.2.3. Class observations	30
4.3. Contextualization of the school	31
4.4. Participants.....	32
P3.....	32
P4.....	33

P5 A.....	34
P5 B.....	34
Teachers' profile	35
5. Results	36
5.1. Analysis of topics in storybooks for English learning	36
5.2. Focus group results	39
5.3. Observations results	45
Real observations	45
Hypothetical observations.....	46
6. Discussion	48
7. Conclusions	53
8. References	55
9. Appendices.....	58
9.1. Appendix 1: Document inviting teachers to participate in the focus group	58
9.2. Appendix 2: Teachers' guide focus group	59
9.3. Appendix 3: Focus group transcription.....	63
9.4. Appendix 4: Class observations.....	83
9.4.1 Real observations.....	83
9.4.1. Hypothetical observations.....	89

1. Introduction

The introduction of English into Infant Education in Catalan schools has experienced an important growth. Although English is not compulsory at this stage, an increasing number of schools have decided to implement programmes for teaching English at this age. Moreover, there are indeed lots of resources and ways that can help children to learn the foreign language as well as to develop positive attitudes to language learning. Storytelling is an example as stories are frequently claimed to bring many benefits to young learner classrooms. However, the selection of storybooks requires an ability to evaluate stories and to discriminate between those that meet our learners' needs and those that do not. For that reason, when talking about criteria for selecting storybooks, topics play an important role.

The research question of the study aims to determine and analyse which are the topics that appear in storybooks for English learning. Therefore, several objectives are posed: to analyse the topics in storybooks for English learning in Early Childhood Education, to carry out a focus group with different teachers of the school to discuss those topics and finally, to develop several class observations through the creation of an observation grid to know how topics are managed during storytelling. The sample taken for this study is composed of four groups of Early Childhood Education from P3 to P5 and eight teachers from Sant Joan School. The school was chosen because it was the one where I did my internship so the connections I had with them made it easier to develop the practical application.

Firstly, the reasons why I decided to choose this topic for this project are reflected in the justification section. With more extension this dissertation presents a compilation of theories and studies of the main important researchers that contribute to verify my research question. Next, you can find a brief description of the study itself: its methodology, a description of the tools used as well as the contextualization of the school and the participants. Followed by this information, the analysis of the three tools is presented. Straightaway, the discussion can be found at the end of the study. Consequently, the conclusions close this final dissertation. Last, but not least, there is the references section, in which all the books, articles, and sources used for this project are mentioned, and the appendices section, where there are the transcription of the focus group, the class observations and some documents needed for the research.

2. Justification

Children's literature is something that has always been present in my life and has somehow evolved. Starting with the active listening to stories as a child, the role that storytelling had during my internship, and finally until becoming a subject throughout the degree at the university and thus, one of the essential tasks as a future teacher.

Perhaps all of these factors along with personal interests concerning storytelling and the use of it in Early Childhood Education have been key factors in choosing the topic of this study. I have always thought that the use and narration of stories is an essential tool for teachers in early years because when we read a story to children, besides, to share a pleasant time with them, we encourage the learning and the acquisition of basic skills for their development such as oral communication, vocabulary acquisition, active listening, the imagination or the creativity among others. However, when making a choice it is important to take into account aspects such as the topics, the format, the style, the complexity, the extension, the purpose, etc. to remove the maximum benefit to this experience. For these reasons, from the beginning I was very clear that I wanted to develop the final degree project about some issues related to children's literature. In this sense, and after contemplating several options I decided to focus on the analysis of the topics in storybooks for English learning as it was a topic hitherto unknown to me and I thought that developing this study would mean learning in depth about this aspect of the stories and besides, it would be of great help to me for my future teaching.

3. Theoretical framework

3.1. The introduction of English in Early Childhood Education

The introduction of English into Infant Education has experienced an important growth. However, not everyone indeed share the same opinion as there are several perspectives about the second language acquisition in Early Childhood Education.

Taking as a starting point the introduction of a foreign language at this stage, there's no doubt that age is a common topic in that field and as Muñoz (1998) stated: "it is one of the most important internal variables, notwithstanding the crucial roles played by aptitude, intelligence, and motivation, among other personal learner characteristics" (p.16). For that reason, age itself has very often been the main object of research and discussions in many studies that have focused on second language acquisitions, above all in naturalistic contexts, but also in formal or school contexts.

In relation to this factor, it has long been supported that children are better learners than adults in terms of second language acquisition to support the idea of introducing language learning in the early years. To follow this idea, Lennerberg (1976) posited the idea of The Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) about first language acquisition and based on the differences observed in children and adults when recovering from brain damage. According to Lenneberg, "between the ages of 2 and 13, there exists a period within which potential functional and biological linguistic development needs to be activated for normal development to occur. Otherwise, the capacity for language learning would be lost or incomplete" (as cited in Muñoz, 1998, p. 17). Following the same point Cameron (2001) also defined the Critical Period Hypothesis as "the name given to the idea that young children can learn a second language particularly effectively before puberty because their brains are still able to use the mechanisms that assisted first language acquisition" (p.13). Moreover, according to the author this theory held that older learners will learn language differently after this stage and, particularly for accent, can never achieve the same levels of proficiency.

While some studies offer support for the Critical Period Hypothesis, other studies provide evidence that there is not such cut-off point for language learning. Attending to that perspective, Midgley (2017) argued that although it's often thought that it is better to start learning a second language at a young age, this is not necessarily true. He remarked that "the best age to start learning a second language can vary significantly,

depending on how the language is being learned.” (Younger is not always better when it comes to learning a second language section, para. 1)

To conclude, Midgley (2017) also claimed that “if we are able to provide lots of exposure to rich language use, early childhood is better. If the only opportunity for second language learning is through more traditional language classes, then late primary school is likely to be just as good as early childhood.” (Younger is not always better when it comes to learning a second language, para. 16)

Linked with the last statement, many advantages are claimed for starting to learn a foreign language in the early years. Despite the fact as it has been explained that there are different perspectives regarding the introduction of a foreign language at this stage, this section focuses the attention on the advantages or benefits of starting young with foreign languages. First of all, when we talk about early start we mean what is the most appropriate age for a child to start learning a foreign language. Álvarez (2010) pointed out that by introducing foreign languages, in the case of English, children can benefit from it as it favours various skills such as critical thinking, mental flexibility, and creativity. In agreement with this idea, it is true that at this age children are incredibly open to the world and the stimulus that surrounds them. Koutsompou (2013) shared the idea of Alvarez by saying that “it helps children to become familiar with the culture which produced the language, become more open-minded and encourages the child to want to learn more and more about the language.” (p.8)

Another advantage that can be found although not less important is the improvement of the child's communicative capacity. Álvarez (2010) explained this idea by saying that teaching an L2 at an early age can encourage the improvement of pronunciation and intonation of the language being studied. In other words, children who begin studying an L2 at an early age have more opportunities to develop pronunciation and intonation very similar to that native to that language. However, as Alvarez (2010) revealed it's important to remember that at this point, children not only develop their ability to communicate in a language other than their own but also begin to see language as a phenomenon in itself and perceiving the language and objects that make it up as independent of each other, also checking that there are many ways to refer to an object. In addition to this last concept, Cameron (2001) believed that “children often seem less embarrassed than adults at talking in a new language, and their lack of inhibition seems to help them to get a more native-like accent.” (p.1). Besides, Cameron (2001) reported that this lack of inhibition means that children do not care if they make mistakes because they are more interested in communicating with others.

Finally, as foreign language teachers “we need to adjust the way we think about the language we teach and the classroom activities we use [...] because if we want children to develop certain language skills, we need to ensure they have experiences in lessons that will build those skills”. (Cameron, 2001, p.1)

3.2. The use of storytelling for English learning

Arva (2018) in the *Storytelling revisited* stated that “storytelling engages children because it is an exciting, appealing, intimate and entertaining activity.” (p.12). For that reason, it is recommended by Kang Shin and Crandall (2016) to young learners of English because “it is an authentic form of communication, introduces new cultures to children, teaches them in an entertaining way and develops critical thinking skills” (as cited in Arva, 2018, p. 15). They state that storytelling is authentic because it is part of all cultures. In fact, it has been used to pass down culture and cultural values from generation to generation.

Besides, the use of storytelling for English learning, especially, in Early Childhood Education has been claimed as storytime is one of the cornerstones in the life of a kindergarten group and therefore storytelling is an important part of the work of the teacher: storytelling or reading, which centres on the sound of the teacher, can ensure a whole-group experience and a relaxed environment. But at this point, what does storytelling really mean?

3.2.1. Defining storytelling

Many experts in the field of storytelling have contributed to defining what storytelling is. As a result of that, this section focuses on some of the key definitions when it comes to explaining what we understand when it is talked about storytelling.

To start, Camps-Canals, Canals-Botines, and Medina-Casanovas (2018) developed the idea that “storytelling represents the art of explaining a story, the term itself appeals to everyone. Storytelling allows oneself to express freely and creatively through ideas. A common cultural word represents every single moment of every single part of a lifetime.” (p.11)

In addition to this definition, Arva (2018) stated “stories for young learners of English may be published in several types of books: they can be stories rewritten for coursebooks, graded readers or authentic books such as picture books.” (p.16).

She focused on picture books, which are also called storybooks, real books or even real picture books or, finally, authentic children's literature.

Cameron (2001) in his book "Teaching languages to young learners" also defined it by saying "storytelling is an oral activity, and stories have the shape they do because they are designated to be listened and, in many occasions, participated in". (p.160)

Finally, a statement by the National Storytelling Network defined storytelling as "an ancient art form and a valuable form of human expression. Because story is essential to so many art forms, however, the word "storytelling" is often used in many ways. *Storytelling is the interactive art of using words and actions to reveal the elements and images of a story while encouraging the listener's imagination.*" (What is storytelling, n.d.)

3.2.2. Reasons for using storybooks

Stories are frequently claimed to bring many benefits to young learner classrooms. For that reason, many authors have developed different arguments about why the use of storybooks provides multiple and varied benefits.

To begin, Ellis and Brewster (2014) in their book "Tell it again! The storytelling handbook for primary English language teachers" stated that stories are a useful tool in linking fantasy and the imagination with the child's real world as they enable children to establish and forge connections between their everyday lives at school but also at home. In agreement with these two authors, Wright (1995) also described storytelling as the resource to help children to understand their world and to share it with others. In that sense, "driven by the need to understand and live with the complexity of daily experience, children hunger stories" (p.3).

Secondly, motivation plays an important role when talking about reasons for using storytelling. According to Wright (1995) children are always willing to listen to stories if the right moment is chosen because as Ellis and Brewster (2014) described "stories are motivating, challenging and enjoyable and can help develop positive attitudes towards the foreign language, culture and language learning." (p.6). Moreover, Arva (2018) stated that the reason why picture books are appropriate and motivating for an audience between three and six years is that they are often rhyming, repetitive, cumulative and humorous, and tell stories about topics children are familiar with. A further advantage that Arva (2018) explained is that they can serve as a link between the children's home and the kindergarten. In her words "shared reading is something

they are usually used to doing at home, thus playing an important role in first language acquisition.” (p.18). In addition to these statements, Ridpath (2013) in the article “Why picture books are important” developed the idea that storybooks help to show children that reading is important, especially in a world where everything moves so quickly and adults are always rushing around and busy. As the author explained “the fact that a grown-up will take the time to read a book aloud to a child sends a positive message about reading as well as about the relationship” (Why picture books are important, para. 15)

At this point, other concepts regarding the use of storytelling can emerge. For instance the use of storytelling can also help teachers to introduce new concepts. In that sense, Barreras (2010) suggested the idea that listening to stories is a natural way of acquiring language. As she argued, children learn to deduce what happens next, to deduce the meaning of words from the context or visual aids. In terms of language learning, Ellis and Brewster (2014) linked this idea with the fact that children enjoy listening to stories over and over again. In their words “this frequent repetition allows certain language items to be acquired while others are being overtly reinforced. Many stories contain natural repetition of key vocabulary and structures [...]. Repetition also encourages participation in the narrative, thereby providing a type of pattern practice in a meaningful context as well as to provide an ideal introduction to the foreign language as they present language in a repetitive and memorable context” (p.6). The introduction of a new language through storytelling can benefit the children’s language awareness. In other words, “stories help children become aware of the general “feel” and sound of the foreign language.” (Wright, 1995, p.5).

At this stage, it should be taken into account that in most cases all of these processes and learning are possible when there is a context. As it is reported by Barreras (2010) literature has a social and emotional value, which is a vital part of its role in the development of children’s language learning skills and literacy. Quoting Barreras (2010) “listening to stories in class is a shared social experience” (p.33). That is why storytelling provokes a response of laughter, sadness, excitement, and anticipation, which can encourage the child’s social and emotional development. Also, during storytelling there is always a sort of interaction between the reader and his/her listeners so she/he can ask for the listeners’ collaboration to say what happens next, for instance. Consequently, Ellis and Brewster (2014) stated that by exposing children to language in varied, memorable and familiar contexts, can also allow teachers to

introduce or revise new vocabulary as well as to enrich their thinking and gradually enter their speech.

Another reason that can benefit children is the active listening they practice when listening to stories. "Children want to find meaning in stories, so they listen with a purpose. If they find meaning they are rewarded through their ability to understand, and are motivated to try to improve their ability to understand even more." (Wright, 1995, p.5). It means that the learning of a foreign language has an intrinsic interest or value for children because they listen to understand what it is telling. In contrast, Barreras (2010) developed the idea that storytelling is an activity to develop the child's understanding as he/she is in the silent period in which he/she is just receiving and making sense of input but he/she is not able to speak in the second language properly.

Moreover, the information gathered by Elis and Brewster (2014) explained that storybooks can develop children's learning strategies. According to them, some of these strategies are: listening for general meaning, predicting, guessing the meaning, hypothesising, training the memory, reviewing and self- assessment as well as developing study skills, for example, making, understanding and interpreting charts and graphs, learning to use and making dictionaries and organising work when they reach the enough language awareness to do it. In line with these strategies, in particular, the authors went further and stated that storybooks can develop the child's skills through different via:

- Visual clues (high-quality pictures and illustrations that support children's understanding)
- Audio clues (sound effects, onomatopoeia)
- Their prior knowledge of how language works
- Their prior knowledge of the world.

Finally, Grey (2005) proposed 3 new reasons to teach the English language by using the literature that has not been mentioned so far: To start, he considered that literature and culture are linked. For that reason, from literature children can approach other worlds, other cultures, countries, and traditions. In this sense, it also plays an important role in the acceptance of other cultures. Secondly, the fact that stories and narratives are not initially written to be used in classrooms makes them different from teaching materials, "so that they become genuine texts that maintain the naturalness of the language in a real context" (as cited in González-Martín, Querol-Julián, 2014, pp.106-107). Finally, he considered that the recreational aspect of literature is important to

keep motivated students who will feel more interested in the knowledge acquired. Attending to this perspective, Ridpath (2013) also believed that picture books encourage joy in reading.

In short," the use of picture books in early childhood second language acquisition is twofold: they can be either supplementary materials to reinforce language in a memorable context or the basis of the language learning curriculum." (Arva, 2018, p.18)

3.2.3. Characteristics of storybooks in early childhood Education

"Storytelling is an oral activity, and stories have the shape they do because they are designed to be listened to and, in many situations, participated in." (Cameron, 2001, p. 160). Based on this statement, it is clear that there are certain characteristics associated with storybooks in Early Childhood Education.

To start, Cameron in his book "Teaching languages to young learners" made a selection of the most common features that can be found in storybooks. "The first, obvious, key organising feature of stories is that events happen at different points in time; they occur in a temporal sequence. The other key organising feature of stories is their thematic structure. There is some central interest factor that changes over the timescale of the story." (Cameron, 2001, pp.160-161). In other words, it is usually to find that the structure of the story is typified as the resolution of a problem: an opening often with a formulaic in fairy tales, the introduction of characters, the description of the setting, the introduction of a problem with a series of events that lead to the resolution of it and finally, the closing usually accompanied by a moral.

Keeping in the line of main characteristics, the language used in stories plays an important role. Cameron (2001) considered that children's stories contain uses of language that are considered typical of poetic to offer opportunities for foreign language learning. In that sense, repetitive story frame, the use of very familiar words as well as the use of pictures are other resources to take into account to incorporate in storybooks that support strongly children's understanding. On the one hand, to go in depth in language used in storybooks, Wright (1995) questioned if it is really necessary to simplify the language in stories so children can understand the meaning of them. "Children do not need to know all the word in a story to understand enough to enjoy it." (Wright, 1995, p.12). In agreement with Cameron, he pointed out that "their

understanding will be partly based on the words in the story, but of course, their understanding will also be supported by what you do as a teacher: the pictures you show, the mime you use, the preparation you make.” (Wright, 1995, p.12). On the other hand and linking these last ideas with the use of pictures, Arva (2018) stated that storybooks have a distinct visual appeal to the readers. She suggested that stories can be followed and understood without reading the text because the pictures, which are detailed and often spread over two pages, can tell the story themselves. However, she went further and defended the idea that not only the illustrations inside the book, but also the front and back covers can add to the story.

At this point and taking into consideration these contributions, González-Martín and Querol-Julián (2014) added that storybooks in the early years should also be motivating, fun, and interesting for children, whose stories and characters are capable of capturing their attention and making children feel empathy. Moreover, these types of stories must provide positive feelings towards children’s culture. In addition, the argument must be clear and structured. Finally, there should be a balance between dialogue and narration, as well as the repetition of grammatical and vocabulary patterns and the incorporation of new vocabulary. In consonance with these conceptions, Cameron (2001) climbed one more step and developed a series of resources that can help learn a language through storytelling. Some of them are the alliteration characterized by the use of words that have the same initial consonants. Another one is the presence of strong contrasts between characters or actions or settings that may well help children’s understanding of the story as a whole. Furthermore, Cameron also included the metaphor because as Bettelheim (1976) suggested “our early experiences with fairy stories map subconsciously on to our real world experiences, and become a kind of script for our lives.” (as cited in Cameron, 2001, p.165).

Until now there have been developed different characteristics taking into account the opinion of several experts in this field. However, it is important to keep in mind that not all good stories will be automatically good for language learning, so let’s move to think about what is involved in choosing and using stories not just for pleasure, but for language learning. To achieve this task, teachers should ask themselves three questions: Will the content engage learners? Are the values and attitudes embodied in the story acceptable? How is language used?

Referring to the first one, Cameron (2001) reported the following “a good story for language learning will have interesting characters that children can empathise with,

and the plot will be clear, but may have a surprise or twist at the end. (p.168). He also suggested the combination of pictures and text to form the story as a whole. That's why Arva (2018) defined that "the pictures are intended to help them decode the story through their meaning-making process and become active participants." (p.16). It means that, the role of pictures is usually indispensable in storybooks in Early Childhood Education, and for that reason; somehow it is needed to be big enough for everyone to see. Quoting Cameron (2001) and regarding the second question, "stories should be checked for values and attitudes that may not be appropriate" (p.168). Finally, as it has mentioned before the built-in repetition of words and phrases is one of the features of stories that is most helpful for language learning.

3.3. Criteria for selecting storybooks

"Selection requires an ability to evaluate stories and to discriminate between those that meet your learners' needs and those that do not. Although learning stories directly from other storytellers is the traditional method, you will learn most stories from books." (Dujmović, 2006, p.79).

The author in his research called "storytelling as a method of EFL teaching" explained that at the time of selecting stories as a method to learn, it is true that first teachers can make a distinguishing taking into account the type of book they want to use. On the one hand, he talked about those simplified storybooks especially for children who are learning English. In contrast, there are many authentic storybooks written for English speaking children which are also suitable for those learning English. As Dujmović (2006) exposed they have not been written specifically for the teaching of English as a foreign language so, the language is not selected or graded. The advantage of using authentic storybooks is that they provide examples of "real" language and help to bring the real world into the classroom. Moreover, the author explained the issue that "very often simplified stories represent a watered-down version of the English language and can deceive both teacher and learners about the true nature of language." (Dujmović, 2006, p.79). Authentic can also be very motivating for a child as they experience a strong sense of achievement at having worked with a "real" book. Furthermore, the quality of illustration is of a high standard, appealing to the young learner, and it plays an important role in aiding general comprehension. This conception denotes that the characteristics of illustrations are important features to think about when selecting storybooks. The information gathered by Brumfit, Moon, and Tongue (1991) appealed the crucial role that pictures play in storybooks to help children to understand the meaning of the story, particularly for those for whom English is a second language. As

they stated “good illustrations will enhance children’s understanding of the text, and promote lots of exciting discussions” (as cited in Barreras, 2010, p.38). Besides, in selecting stories for the classroom Morgan and Rinvoluceri (1983) considered the other two main criteria: if it is a story that the teacher would enjoy telling and if it is a story that pupils might find entertaining.

Keeping with Dujmović (2006) perspectives, he also claimed that teachers can choose from a wide range of storybooks: those that children are already familiar with in their mother tongue, such as traditional stories and fairy tales; picture stories with non-text, where the children build up the story together; rhyming stories; cumulative stories with predictable endings; humorous stories; stories with infectious rhythms; everyday stories; fantasy stories, animal stories, and so on. In the same line, Genesse (1994) focuses on the knowledge children already have of the story. For that reason, the author argued that choosing culturally familiar stories might be especially helpful because prior knowledge of characters and plots may make the stories potentially more comprehensible to the learners than unfamiliar ones. As Genesse (1994) exposed “if children already know the story in their first language they will be able to follow the English version of the same story” (as cited in Barreras, 2010, p. 38). Besides, the author considered that stories can also be chosen to support a cross-curricular teaching approach. In agreement with this statement, González-Martín and Querol-Julián (2014) stated that the use of this type of storybooks can allow children to pay more attention to the language itself, facilitating the decoding process.

Wright (1995) developed other criteria when selecting storybooks. He considered that there are many types of story to choose from and each offers a different kind of richness:

- Stories from the imagination: myths, traditional stories, fairy stories, legends, “tall” (unbelievable) stories, teaching stories.
- Stories from life experience: historical stories, new stories, teacher’s personal stories, the children’s personal stories

The National Geographic Kids Super Readers (2013) has also established other criteria based on the learning stage of the readers. It is a program for curious kids at every reading level that helps children to discover naturally about the world around them. As kids read each National Geographic Kids Super Reader, they cross off its picture on a free national geographic kids super readers poster that parents can download. Kids can have even more reading fun online, with lively book-related

activities, quizzes and games, fascinating excerpts, and sneak previews of upcoming books. For that reason, this program distinguishes four steps:

- Level 1 Co-reader for starting to read together
- Level 1 for starting to read
- Level 2 for reading independently
- Level 3 for fluent readers.

In the same line, another literacy program called Step into Reading (2017) offered five steps which each one includes fun stories and colourful art or photographs for children that start reading.

1. Ready to read (preschool - kindergarten) for children who know the alphabet and are eager to begin reading. It includes big types, easy words with rhyme and rhythm, and picture clues.
2. Reading with help (preschool-grade 1) for children who recognize familiar words and sound out new words with help. This step includes basic vocabulary, short sentences, and simple stories.
3. Reading on your own (grades 1-3) for children who are ready to read on their own. In this step, children can find engaging characters, easy to follow plots, and popular topics.
4. Reading paragraphs (grades 2-3) for newly independent readers who read simple sentences with confidence. The fourth step includes challenging vocabulary, short paragraphs, and exciting stories.
5. Ready for chapters (grades 2-4) for children who want to take the plunge into chapter books but still like colourful pictures. The last step includes chapters, longer paragraphs, and full colour art.

In keeping with the idea of children's stage, Barreras (2010) suggested that stories must be chosen depending on the age and the linguistic level of the pupils. Moreover, she considered that there must be a particular purpose when selecting a story so that it will carry the ideas the teacher wishes to focus on. Finally, and to sum up all the considerations when selecting storybooks, Moratinos and Herrera (2018) exposed that although many stories can be helpful, it is also important to consider aspects such as the format, the topic or theme, the style, the complexity, the length or the purpose, among other when choosing stories to remove the maximum benefit to this experience.

3.3.1. Topics in storybooks

At this point, it has been developed that there can be different classifications regarding the criteria for selecting storybooks. Nevertheless, taking into account that “picture books can scaffold and supplement content learning in several different ways, such as introducing new subject language in a meaningful context, reinforcing newly acquired language or providing visual stimulus for the subject and learning through games or creative visual art activities. The range of topics covered in picture books is wide.” (Arva, 2018, p.21)

This statement demonstrates that there is clear evidence that topics play an important role when talking about criteria for selecting storybooks. However, what are the topics that take place in children's literature? To begin with, it is important to clarify that when talking about topics it can be distinguished between those authors that develop a more general classification of them while others elaborate a more precise and accurate classification. On the one hand, authors like Barreras (2010) considered that storytelling is a powerful way of helping pupils to learn in all areas of the curriculum because according to Howe and Johnson (1992), the reason is that narrative is a universal way of organising events and ideas. As both authors claimed “stories can be chosen to consolidate learning in school subjects across the curriculum, which is appropriate to the pupil's cognitive level” (as cited in Barreras, 2010, p. 34). This can be carried out with several subjects at school. For instance, Howe and Johnson (1992) proposed some of them and thus, the topics that can be worked on:

- Mathematics: telling the time, numbers, and measuring.
- Science: animals, outer space, flowers, how seeds grow.
- History pre-historic: animals, traditional holidays, understanding the passing of time.
- Geography and the environment: shopping and shops in the local area, neighbourhood parks.
- Art and craft: drawing, making masks, making puppets.
- Music and drama: singing songs, playing instruments, miming, dramatizations.

Additionally and in agreement with them, Arva (2018) considered that the usual structured activities in visual arts, physical education, science, and music are also an ideal context for the process, as long as they also take place playfully and informally. This bears a strong resemblance to content and language integrated learning school as this methodology in kindergarten can support the topic-based syllabus, usually

covering the four seasons, holidays, and several fairy tale themes. Finally, in consonance with these experts, Ridpath (2013) remarked that the use of picture books can be useful to introduce complex concepts as well as to set the stage for introducing broader topics of study like art or history, or for illustrating an abstract concept.

On the other hand, authors like Hunt (2001), Bottigheimer (2020), Flynn (2020), Ray (2020), Aguilar (2019), and Garcia (2019) precised more and identified some of the topics that appear in storybooks for young learners. To start, Hunt in his book *Children's literature* (2001) sorted 10 topics around children's literature. Some of them are:

Censorship

Following Hunt's ideas (2001), people censor children's books, as it has been said, because they can. "As children's books are an expression of power-relationship, are mediated through adults. They commonly feel free to put their judgements into practice and control the books just as they control their children." (Hunt, 2001 p.255)

Hunt's study (2001) found that there were examples of children's books being of practical political implication. The *Snorri* is a Norwegian children's book written and illustrated by Frithjof Sælen. Published in 1941, during the Nazi occupation of Norway, it tells the story of the vainest little seal in the Arctic Ocean, the *Snorri*, who whiles away his seal-days delighting in his good looks. He's so self-absorbed that he fails to see trouble on the horizon in the form of *Brummelab*, a distinctly Soviet polar bear.

As a result, the history of children's literature worldwide is characterized by the struggle to control. For that reason Hunt (2001) stated that "children's books have been and will continue to be about control, and attempts at control will continue to be an accurate reflection of the intellectual acuity of the censors and the sensibilities of societies." (p.258)

Colonialism, postcolonialism, multiculturalism

Hunt (2001) identified that the study of these topics is closely related to the effects of texts that promote certain ways of thinking, especially in the classroom. An example of this is the *Watership Down*, a book of the English writer Richard Adams, published in 1972. Although the text is described as a children's narrative, the truth is that it is a reflection of society and human complexities, shown to through some characters that are rabbits. The book is a literary metaphor about human behaviour and ambition.

Even more fundamentally, the information gathered by Hunt pointed out that how the history of children's literature has been constructed is a result of colonialist thinking; the very language of comparison and value for example, the structures of archetypes are often invisibly colonial.

In contrast, authors like Flynn (2020) instead of labelling these types of topics as Hunt did, he chose to name such topics as animal stories because there is a long tradition of using talking animal stories to comment on political and social abuses. Perhaps and in the same line of Hunt (2001), he considered that the best example of the animal story being used to attack human civilisation is the *Watership Down* (1972) as the writer used the perceptions of the rabbits to defamiliarise aspects of human society.

Criticism and theory

Hunt (2001) shared the idea that in the field of children's literature there are some strong divisions as to what can be said about the subject and how it should be said. According to the author the first one is between those who believe that "real" children are irrelevant to criticism because they are too immature and inexperienced either to make a valid judgment or articulate one if they could, and those who think that the immanence of children, actual or implied, in the text marks the fundamental difference between children's and other literatures, and therefore its criticism. The second division is between those who study the subject academically and those who study it for a specific purpose. So, for that reason Hunt (2001) said that children's literature is "under-theorized".

Drama, film, media

In any literary educational system the drama has a somewhat ambiguous place. That's why Hunt (2001) in his book asked himself the relationship between studying a play as written text and studying it in performance. Linked with this reflection, it is interesting that, despite a long and robust tradition of drama performed by children and written for performance by them, "it is virtually unheard of for these plays to be read as text either by children or adults. (Hunt, 2001, p.266)

Moreover, Hunt (2001) declared that the primary difficulty of including film and television productions in this category is that, with rare exceptions, so little drama is produced specifically for children. The result is that "the vast majority of contemporary films ostensibly produced for a child audience in commercial cinema are more

accurately “family” films. That is to say, children are only a part of the audience, and so a complex double address is in operation.” (Hunt, 2001, p.267)

Fantasy

“Definitions and classifications of fantasy have amused academics and enthusiastic endlessly, but they can, on occasions, actually illuminate the texts.” (Hunt, 2001, p.270). As Hunt (2001) reported, all fiction could be called fantasy, as it necessarily presents a version of the world differing from pragmatic actuality. Beyond that, there are other “world” fantasies books in which magic intrudes into the contemporary world, dreams, and excursions into other, parallel worlds.

Based on Hunt’s theory (2001) the conventional explanation for the supposed preponderance of fantasy in children’s books is a romantic one: that children are in some way closer to the unknown, the unseen and the mystical. For Hunt (2001), even more, patronizing is the view that for children the distinction between reality and unreality is blurred, so therefore they scarcely have to suspend disbelief.

Folk-tale, fairy-tale, myth, legend

"The defence of the folk-tale, myth and legend, and especially the fairy-tale as a part of children’s literature is rarely more than the defence of the status quo, and is quite difficult in terms of concepts such as relevance, comprehensibility, suitability and approachability." (Hunt, 2001, p.273). However, according to Bottigheimer (2020) fairy tales are generally brief narratives in simple language that detail a reversal of fortune, often with a rags-to-riches plot that culminates in a wedding. In that sense, magical creatures regularly assist heroes and heroines to achieve happiness, and the entire story exemplifies a proverb. Also, in terms of the history and development of children’s literature, she considered that tales about fairies and fairy tales postdate the earliest writing for children.

Gender

“Gender is clearly an issue in this field. If we assume that there are any recognizable or at least culturally assumed characteristics of masculine and feminine genders, then we might expect to find distinctively feminine characteristics in children’s books.” (Hunt, 2001, p.278)

Historically and according to Hunt’s (2001) ideas, any assertion of the feminine in children’s books has been a relatively recent and sporadic phenomenon. Before

Alcott's *Little Women* the vast majority of books were concerned quite obviously with keeping women and girls in their subservient position and inculcating passive and domestic roles. The idea that the proper and desirable aim for any girl is a husband, which lurked within nineteenth-century books, still survives, little changed, in the mass of series books for teenagers. However, it can be argued that since 1900, children's literature began to construct gender in a way that rejected earlier constructions, and that this change was covert.

Literacy

As specified by Hunt (2001) literacy is defined, broadly, in two ways in both of which children's literature becomes involved. The first is "functional" literacy: how to read and write; how to decode the language. The second deals with far more than this; language in its contexts of use.

Fox (1993) also suggested that "concepts of literacy also involve storytelling: the relationship between the oral and the written is complex and reciprocal" (as cited in Hunt, 2001 pg. 282). So, stories and how children play with them both provide ways of bringing cultural literacy, both in terms of content and narrative structures and concepts.

Nursery and playground rhymes, storytelling

Children are told stories and they transmit songs, rhymes, and tales. In the West at least, they are the fulcrum of the survival of the oral tradition. In that sense, "the survival of nursery rhymes [...] is usually attributed to the fact they are rhythmic and participatory; the words are nonsensical, therefore it is their sounds, not their sense that matters." (Hunt, 2001, p.285)

As Hunt (2001) mentioned, the same kind of random selections from the culture surrounding the children that produced the nursery rhymes can be seen in action in the playground song and rhyme. These very obviously incorporate and distort fragments of contemporary popular culture; words from books, films, commercials, and popular songs are adapted to very ancient forms.

Picture books

It is sometimes claimed that the picture book is the one genuinely original contribution that children's literature has made to literature in general, all its other genres being merely imitative. If this is so, the traditional literacy hierarchy might then observe, this is

merely proof of the essential triviality of the form: Hunt (2001) asked what place there is a respectable literary system for what is usually a thirty-two-page text, often with minimal words, and intended for a scarcely literate audience? Further, what place does something essentially non-verbal have in a literary system at all? (p.288)

The answers are straightforward. The first is that reading picture books is an extremely sophisticated act. The second is that, with a minority of exceptions, the word-picture interaction is vital and fundamental. Whatever the audience, in Nodelma (1999) words "simple picture books are very often not read at "word speed" but at picture speed; each viewing of a picture is coloured by the previous viewing; an understanding the codes of pictures is conditioned both intertextually and extratextually: pictures teach their readers how to read them"(as cited in Hunt, 2001p.288). Similarly, Hunt (2001) introduced the idea that the pictures in a text for children must necessarily be simpler than those for adults.

Poetry

Concerning Hunt (2001) "poetry in its romantic conception is static, reflective, complex, concerned with language: the child reader, as constructed in this theory, is none of these things."(p.293). The corollary of this resulted by Hunt (2001) is that nothing written especially for an undeveloped audience can qualify as poetry, with the further deduction that anything written expressly for children must differ in significant ways from what is otherwise known as poetry.

The chronological history of children's poetry is largely in step with development in prose. Nevertheless, Hunt (2001) brought out that it might well seem that children's poetry lost its way at the beginning of the twentieth century.

School stories

Hunt (2001) supported that the school story is one of the most addictive of the genres specific to children's literature because as he affirmed: "school stories provide an enclosed environment where children are central; relationships and initiations can be explored within an ordered and ordering framework; options are comfortably limited and consequently schools remains an apparently natural and frequent setting for children's books." (p.300). Additionally and in agreement with the author, other experts in topics related to school stories such as Ray (2020) mentioned that school stories can provide a positive picture of one of the almost universal experiences of childhood and,

perhaps most important of all, show respect for intellectual and personal achievement, preparing readers to play a responsible role in society.

War

Hunt (2001) revealed that in theoretical and practical terms, rarely there have been a deep treatment or research of war in children's books although, in the nineteenth century, war was a natural part of the literature empire. Regardless, referring to the presence of war in children's literature it is important to search for the distinction between books that focus on child perceptions and books which are essentially adventures which edge around graphic horrors.

During this section there have been explained the detailed classification that Hunt proposed with some contributions that other authors developed in the field of topics in children's literature. Despite the wide range of topics that are covered, other professionals such as Garcia (2019) and Aguilar (2019) added new ones that have not appeared until now. They talking about topics related to family and feelings and emotions. Regarding the first one, Garcia (2019) exposed that stories can help to identify, differentiate, and manage emotions so that children can discover themselves and end up as adults with a good emotional foundation to face life's challenges and especially emotions like frustration and difficulties. Secondly, Aguilar (2019) recommended that children's books can be a good tool to address issues related to children's daily life such as a better understanding of family diversity. Nowadays, there are many types of families and as the range is so wide it is necessary a literature that is committed to the diversity of families and environments because literature should not show an idealized and unreal world, it must be a mirror of society.

4. Methodology

4.1. Method and Paradigm

The methodology used in this research consist of a case study as the principal aim is to identify and analyse which are the topics that appear in storybooks for English learning in Early Childhood Education. Thus, the case study is inside of what it is understood as the interpretative paradigm since only the reality of the centre, in this case the Sant Joan's school is analyzed.

This case study counts with the use of three different tools; the review of existing documents, in this case of the storybooks that the English teacher uses for English learning, a focus group to discuss about the topics that appear in storybooks in early years and several class observations to know how topics are managed during storytelling. These tools help in the analysis process to contrast the information from three different points of view.

4.2. Tools

4.2.1. Reviewing existing storybooks

First of all, a way of collecting data used in this research is the reviewing of storybooks that the English teacher uses for English learning. Reviewing existing documents helps to discover and analyse the topics of each storybook, how topics are presented and treated during the story, and other relevant aspects to take into account to carry on this project. Moreover, it is useful to contrast the topics that the English teacher previously established and found with the new ones that appear with the analysis as well as being aware of the topics that aren't used. Therefore, it is essential to consider all these aspects to make a proper focus group. This data collection method provides a good source of background information on the type of storybooks English teacher uses and discover some new topics that have not a place in English classes in the early years too.

4.2.2. Focus group

After analyzing the topics that take place in storybooks used for English learning, a focus group with some teachers of Early Childhood Education is organized to discuss the topics that appear or are treated in storybooks in the early years. A focus group is a gathering of deliberately selected people who participate in a conversation to discuss

some topics brought by the leader. In this case, eight teachers are invited to this focus group: the four referent teachers of P3, P4 and P5, and the support teachers of each level. The focus group requires them because although they are not English specialists, they are the ones who are in contact with the children daily. Moreover, they are very familiar with the process of learning through storybooks as storytelling is one of the most useful and used tools in the early years. The last participant of the focus group is the English teacher of Early Childhood Education and Primary Education.

The structure of the focus group is the following:

- 1. Presentation.** It is explained briefly what the study is about, which are the research objectives, and what are the expectations of the focus group as well as the structure of it.
- 2. The use of storytelling.** Several questions related to the use of storytelling in the early years are asked to identify if its use is one of the most important tools at this stage. Besides, questions related to the selection criteria of the stories are discussed. This first conversation helps to introduce the main topic.
- 3. Topics.** Teachers are provided with a list of the storybooks that the English teacher uses for English learning with the aims to discuss on it, share their knowledge and opinions on the different topics of each story and to realise the important role that topics play when talking about criteria for selecting storybooks.
- 4. Theory.** The following point talked about is the theory gathered some experts such as Wright (1995) and Hunt (2001) in terms of topics classification in children's literature. Issues related to their interpretations and points of view as teachers of the information given are discussed.
- 5. Storybooks.** 15 different storybooks are presented to the teachers. These storybooks are organised in four main topics: gender stereotypes, sexual identity, family, emotions and feelings, the death, and child sexual abuse. It is mainly expected to recognise their reactions in front of this kind of unusual topics and in addition to know what they think about the use of them in Early Childhood Education.
- 6. The use of storybooks and English learning.** Finally, several questions related to the criteria established when choosing storybooks for English learning are asked.

4.2.3. Class observations

Finally, the last data collection method used in this research is observation. Data was gathered by watching behaviour, interests, and teacher's management of topics during storytelling with 4 groups from P3 to P5: one group of P3, another one of P4, and the last two ones from P5. In total the 9 observations were always opened, so children were conscious that an observation was done for research purposes.

By doing observations, it allows the research to directly know how are treated the topics that arise in storybooks for English learning. However, before doing the several class observations, an observation grid made of 20 closed-ended questions or open-ended questions is created. All of them are related to the topic or topics that take place in each storybook. In this way, the observation grid enables to analyse and observe how the topic is introduced, if it is close to children, if the teacher prepares any type of activities before, during or after storytelling to work on it or if she receives any kind of feedback from children and so on.

Here, it is attached the table with all the questions related to class observations.

HOW TOPICS ARE MANAGED DURING STORYTELLING?

1. Does the teacher present the story before starting?

2. Does the teacher show and talk about the cover of the book?

3. Is the topic introduced before starting?

4. Is the story appropriate to work on the topic that has been chosen?

5. Is the topic close to children?

6. Does the topic appear in a clear way during the story?

7. Does the teacher connect the topic with children's experiences?

8. Does the teacher do activities before/during/ after the story to work on

the topic /topics that appear in it?

9. Does the teacher use any resource during the story to ensure that children understand it?

10. How is the relation between children and the teacher?

11. Does the teacher receive any feedback from children?

12. Are children involved in the story?

13. Does the teacher ask questions related to the topic during the story?

14. Are children interested in the topic of the story?

15. How much time is spent to tell the story?

16. Does the teacher use Catalan during storytelling?

17. Is the storybook big enough that everyone can see it?

18. Does the teacher use any resource apart from the book? Which one does she use?

19. Do children like the story?

4.3. Contextualization of the school

The school where the practical part of the dissertation is carried out is Sant Joan School. This public school is located in Berga, a town in the middle of Catalonia. Sant Joan covers schooling from P3 to 6th grade of Primary School. They understand the school as a space for growth and education, based on respect and tolerance, which transmits values to become responsible, critical and able to act in our environment. Keeping in this line, the school recognizes each child as the protagonist of their learning. That's why they try to learn, by keeping up the motivation, curiosity, and

imagination of children. The team of teachers take part in this process as guides and facilitators of their learning.

Regarding to language learning, Catalan is used as the vehicular language of expression and communication. In addition, the school reinforces its learning through immersion processes, as almost a quarter part of the students are from other countries. Spanish language teaching is introduced from the 1st level of Primary Education to achieve, at the end of the stage, an important command of the two languages. Talking about languages, the school made a change regarding English in preschool. In Early Childhood Education children started learning English in P4, but some years ago it was introduced in P3 using the communicative approach. The objective is that English becomes a language with a communicative purpose. During the first courses this language is introduced orally and, little by little, reading and writing are added. Stories, songs, rhymes, audiovisual materials, and ICT are the basic tools. Children have English for 1 hour each week, divided into two periods of 30 minutes. That's useful, because very young children cannot hold the attention for longer. Children feel like they have more contact with the English language, and this helps build the expected relationship between the children and the language.

One of the other changes that the school has experienced recently in Early Childhood Education is the use of "environments" as the methodology twice a week in the afternoons. The regular classrooms are turned into several environments in which children can learn autonomously with the help and guidance of the reference adult. This type of learning empowers the learner and makes him/her the leader of his/her learning process. Children can choose the environment they want to be each day if there is room available. At the end of the afternoon, the teacher asks the children what they have learned, if they have enjoyed, if something new or special happened, etc.

4.4. Participants

P3

It is a group of 25 children between 3 and 4 years old, 17 of whom have previously attended Kindergarten. Generally, they are a group that is very motivated, able to follow conversations, come up with ideas, and listen to their classmates. However, it is also true that they have a strong character, so they are children full of determination and stubbornness.

The acquisition of habits and routines is one of the main axes that the teacher focuses in the class. Also, different game options allow children to move and experiment according to their interests and needs. During the day several activities are carried out. Some of them include symbolic play, free play, oral expression, mathematical and language games. All the activities proposed are manipulative, seeking children's motivation and interests. Regarding the relationships within the group, it is important to remark that it is a very cohesive group; they consider each other by displaying a positive, cheerful, helpful, and respectful attitude. Although small groups are indeed formed according to their affinities and interests during the day.

Lastly, and referring to language learning. All the work is done to strengthen the oral language as there are children who have never had contact with the Catalan language before. Keeping in this line, English is introduced at this stage through different proposals related to storytelling and the use of ICTs such as bee bots, among others.

P4

This is a group of 21 children between 4 and 5 years old from different places: Colombia, Morocco, Spain, and Catalonia. A group with a desire to explore and experiment who constantly ask for learning, play, and work. In contrast, it is a very moving group, with a big personality and a very forged way of acting. In the classroom you can appreciate the presence of multiple personalities and ethnicities as well as a big diversity of social contexts and different rates and levels of learning. Besides, it is important to emphasize that it is a group where it is difficult to find moments of tranquillity, calm and listening, and for these reasons, the aspects related to class relaxation is one of the most important practices in the class. Another idea to note is that the distribution of the classroom is done in 4 tables organized in heterogeneous and cooperatives groups to enhance the teamwork and the individualities of each child. It is also important to talk about the relationships that are established between them. At this early stage we can see those children who are taking leadership roles, others who have not yet found their place in the classroom or others who are more autonomous.

Finally, regarding English learning, none of them have English as their mother tongue, and English is their third language. Even though some of the children can comprehend English instructions, not all of them can express themselves.

P5 A

It is a group made up of 18 children between 5 and 6 years old. It is a class full of energy. They show great motivation and interest in any project presented to them. The teacher focuses to work on oral language as we find children from different countries in the class and who therefore do not have Catalan as their first language. This work is useful to reinforce both oral and written language in different ways: On the one hand, it is carried out through circle time activities such as the good morning routine, and on the other hand, they also enjoy language learning through different language games. Another proposal related to language is what they call “conferences”; where each child with the help of his/her relatives investigates a topic he/she likes and presents it in front of the class group. Another point to note is that the classroom works on projects and the project they were carrying out is the “shop”, a motivational proposal to encourage the work of mathematics but also of reading and writing.

Referring to the classroom relationships, despite being a group of children with very different personalities and levels of learning, they respect one another, helping each other and working cooperatively. However, they are children who need moments of relaxation and calm to keep working. Finally, regarding English learning, although none of them have English as their mother tongue, in general the whole class can comprehend English instructions and use the learned vocabulary to express themselves in different situations.

P5 B

This is a group of 17 students between 5 and 6 years old. It is a calm group with very good behaviour, many good work habits, and great comradeship. However, at first sight we find two very different groups: On the one hand, a group that shows a lot of motivation and desire to learn, participate and make contributions in the classroom. On the other hand, in the second group, we find boys and girls with diverse, complex, and very important learning difficulties. They are students who need to be taken into account, as their attitude is very good, and they strive to improve, but they need a lot of help, support, and positive reinforcement from the adult.

Various methodologies are developed to work together with the other group of P5 to encourage children’s learning. Some of the most important are: the conversations to help children who have difficulty expressing themselves orally, mathematical games, what they call “the alphabet museum” to work on written language, the shop, project

works, lectures, or the story illustration among others. When it comes to classroom relationships, they enjoy working, learning, and playing and interacting with each other. However, it is true that when playing, small groups are formed according to character affinities, game preferences, etc.

Finally, in terms of English language teaching and learning, it is promoted orally through different resources such as storytelling or ICT. Besides, some children can comprehend English instructions.

Teachers' profile

As it has already said, eight teachers were invited to the focus group: the four referent teachers of P3, P4 and P5 and the support teachers of each level as well as the English teacher.

Referring to the Early Childhood group of teachers, it is a group made of 7 teachers, 6 with the Early Childhood degree, and one with the training of kindergarten technician (TEI). So let's clarify that none of them are English specialists. The age range of them goes from 30 to 55 years old approximately. In this sense, they all have a background of years of experience, knowledge, and anecdotes. However, some teachers have been in school for years, while others are in their first year at that school. Another point to talk about is that, as in any group, we find the presence of various personalities but all with the sweetness and tenderness that characterizes the Early Childhood Education teachers. On the other hand, a key idea to highlight is the continuous training of them and the fact that they go all in one, being a complementary team and, above all, being great connoisseurs of the stage 3.-6.

Lastly, talking about the English teacher, it should be said that despite being the English teacher in Early Childhood Education, she isn't an expert in the early years as she has a Primary Education degree. Finally, it is important to underline that for her is both her first year as an English teacher and her first year at that school

5. Results

5.1. Analysis of topics in storybooks for English learning

The review and analysis of the storybooks that the English teacher planned to work on English learning has helped the research to discover the topics of each storybook, how the topics are introduced as well as the ones that do not appear. For that reason, a table with all the storybooks and topics related to English learning has been created. Here, it is attached.

STORYBOOKS	TOPICS
Polar bear, polar bear, what do you hear? by Eric Carl	ANIMALS/COLOURS
Brown bear, brown bear, what do you see? by Eric Carl	ANIMALS/COLOURS
Giraffes can't dance by Andrae Giles	ANIMALS/FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS
Elmer the elephant by Eric McKee	COLOURS/FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS
The very busy spider by Eric Carl	ANIMALS/ACTIONS
I will never, not ever eat a tomato by Lauren Child	FOOD
Froggy gets dressed by Jonathan London	CLOTHES/ACTIONS
Monsters love colours by Mike Austin	COLOURS

Daddy's sandwich by Ruby Roo	FOOD
Mixed. A colourful story by Arre Chung	COLOURS
The old toy room, by Twinkl	TOYS
Seren's seasons, by Twinkl Carrot club, by Twinkl	SEASONS/WEATHER
Goldilocks and the 3 bears, by Twinkl	FAMILY/ADJECTIVES
Stop telling Fibs, by Twinkl	CLOTHES
Part of the party by Twinkl	FAMILIES/INCLUSION
The worst princess by Anna Kempt	GENDER STEREOTYPES
Izzy Gizmo by Pip Jones	FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS
Saving Easter by Twinkl	EASTER
Carrot club, by Twinkl	FOOD/SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

To begin with, it can be seen that there are 19 storybooks thought to be worked on from January until the end of the course. Storybooks thought to be used and worked with the four groups of Early Childhood Education; starting with the P3 group, passing through the P4 group, and ending with the two P5 groups. However, these stories are divided into different categories related to the topic or topics that take place in each of them. In that sense, we are talking about 14 different topics: animals, colours, feelings

and emotions, actions, food, clothes, toys, seasons, weather, family, gender stereotypes, inclusion, Easter and similarities and differences between equals.

Continuing with this point and retrieving one of the principal ideas related to the main objectives of storybooks analysis, the creation of this table helped to contrast the topics that the English teacher previously established with the new ones. Based on the idea that most of the topics found in the storybooks were agreed, it is true that, based on teacher's previous selection, other topics that could be worked on were set up, such as the inclusion in the *Part of the Party* storybook, the adjectives in the *Goldilocks and the 3 bear* or the similarities and differences between equals in *the Carrot club* storybook. So, as a result these topics were included in the list of topics as you see in the table.

Another important idea is that taking into account the chart and the list of topics: it was nearly found a different topic by storybook. However, there are indeed some topics that are repeated in more than one storybook in the same way that different contents or topics can be worked out from a story. In that sense, those topics that have the greatest weight and therefore are repeated up to 3 times are: animals, colours, feelings, and emotions. On the other hand, those topics that have a lower presence in storybooks used for English learning can be found. For example topics related to actions or clothes. Finally, some topics only appear or are repeated on one occasion. For instance: toys, weather, and seasons of the year, family and all those storybooks that talk about concepts and topics related to inclusion, gender stereotypes or differences and similarities between equals. However, it is also true that there can be found some storybooks that only can be worked on special dates or events. Topics related to Easter, and seasons are two examples of that.

Furthermore, taking a look at the table and keeping in mind that these storybooks and topics are planned to be worked on in the three preschool years, it is obvious that the range of topics covered in the different preschool courses are practically the same. Seeing that, it must be borne in mind that during early years children begin to discover and experiment with the world around them and, therefore, the activities of everyday life are one of the central pillars of the educational environment. As a result, it is no coincidence that most topics are related to the representation of the world around them.

Another concept regarding the topics is how those are introduced in the storybooks. It is a reality that children during these ages can't read on their own although some children from P4 and P5 are starting to do it. It means that the teacher's vocabulary,

attitude, and other resources to support the text are key points to ensure that children understand what it is telling. However, in children's literature, we must not forget the value of pictures, which has a very close relationship with the text, so that children can grasp what the story tells by reading the illustration, which is much more important than the letter in early stages. The pictures of these storybooks are very attractive allowing children to reinforce somehow the topic of the story. Nevertheless, it is also true that although all storybooks are full of these kinds of pictures, not everybody is always aware of the real topic that the story wants to transmit. The *Worst princess* and the *Part of the party* are two examples of that. Why? In the first one, we find the princess Sue that the only thing she wants is to escape from the tower and be able to experiment and live new things, but when Princess Sue's finally arrives to the Prince's castle, she discovers that he's not quite what she had in mind. For that reason, she decides to leave the castle and live new adventures with her friend the dragon. In that sense, this story is a feminist twist on the traditional princess tale that although some girls and boys can interpret as it is, others can consider it just a storybook about princesses and princes. The same happens with the *Part of the Party* story but with the topic of inclusion as the storybook centres on Karri, the Koala who wants to go to the Mummy and Daughter Disco in town but she lives with her two dads.

Lastly, with the analysis of the storybooks for English learning, this research has realised that some topics are very little discussed, such as those related to male and female stereotypes, family diversity, while others are not covered at all, such as sexual identity, death or child sexual abuse. The reasons are going to be clarified with the focus group results.

5.2. Focus group results

The focus group was carried out on the 13th of March in the P4 class as it is the class where takes place cycle meetings and other staff related to Early Childhood Education. It lasted approximately between 50 minutes and 1 hour. With their previous permission, all the discussion was recorded. During the focus group, a PowerPoint presentation was used to support the conversation as well as different storybooks previously selected and related to different topics. Besides, each participant had a kind of guide for the different parts of the discussion to give them security (see appendix 2 p.58). In that sense, some days before the focus group a document inviting them to participate in it was given. (see appendix 1 p.57)

Regarding the focus group, the fact that the 8 teachers were talking about the use of storytelling in Early Childhood Education and they were very familiar with the process of learning through storybooks made it easier for them to open and express their opinion. As mentioned in the section 3.2.2, the focus group was around 5 different points: the use of storytelling in early years, topics in storybooks, quotes regarding experts in that field, discussion about the use and treatment of different topics in storybooks, and the relation between the use of storytelling and English learning.

R, one of the teachers in P5 (R from now on), mentioned that storytelling is one of the most important tools at this stage as it allows teachers to work on oral language. Moreover A, the P5 support teacher (A from now on), stated that the use of storybooks can enable children to establish and forge connections between their everyday lives. I the P3 teacher, (I from now on), pointed out the idea of using storytelling as a strategy to break with the daily routine. The rest of teachers agreed with them and L, the P4 support teacher (L from now on) summed up those ideas by saying that storytelling is a very visual and attractive resource and through the use of it, teachers can work different contents differently than if they only work on them without any visual support. When questions related to the actions they do to give importance to this practice were mentioned, R and N, the P4 teacher (N from now on) explained the ideas that from P3 they carry out a very important activity with the families called "My favourite tale". In addition, last year they developed the library project in Early Childhood classrooms, to create a new space, the reading corner. How the teacher presents a story, tells it, treats it, cares for it, and unfolds all the magic around the stories are other comments that appeared during this discussion.

Talking about the criteria they follow for selecting storybooks, all of them introduced ideas related to the age of children, illustrations in stories, sizes, shapes, textures but none of them show an interest in the role that topics play when talking about criteria for selecting storybooks. After the role of topics was introduced, they specifically referred to topics they like and they feel safe as teachers to talk about as well as other issues related to daily life at school such us topics connected with conflicts within children and so on. That is when N remarked about the difficulty they have when making a careful selection because there is so much variety. Also, storybooks are very expensive to buy at school and therefore it is difficult to have a great variety of storybooks as their budget is not so higher. At this stage, they were all aware that selection requires an ability to evaluate stories and to discriminate between those that meet the needs of children and those that do not.

This first conversation was useful to introduce the main point of the research, topics in storybooks for English learning. For that reason, a document with a table of the storybooks classified by topics that the English teacher uses for English learning from P3 to P5 was given. It was expected teachers to discuss it and share their knowledge and opinion on the different topics that appear and above all, to realise the important role that topics play when talking about criteria for selecting storybooks. Regarding the table, the storybooks they talked about were *Elmer the elephant*, *Giraffes can't dance* or the *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, what do you see?* Storybooks they already knew. After checking the list of topics, A, presented her agreement with the English teacher. She thought that there were several topics to deal with. Besides, she remarked the importance of working on topics linked with feelings and emotions. L went further and stated the importance of introducing traditional stories and stories related to children's daily habits as the majority storybooks used during Early Childhood Education deal with topics that are part of their life. That's why teachers tend to look for what is closest to them. During this debate, I introduced the idea of using storybooks that children already know in Catalan for English learning. She stated this idea to help children to understand and reinforce the topic that appears in the story.

After taking a look at the table and once they shared their points of view referring to it, the following question was asked: What are the topics that you don't use in storybooks or the ones that you would not use? R faster answered by saying that she has never closed a topic. Neither do I, but, indeed, I don't like telling tales about death, only when the situation demands it N added. I contributed to this idea by adding that it usually happens because maybe as teachers they are not ready to answer the questions will come after telling the story. Parallel, A introduced the topic of sexuality as one topic teachers in the early years are not used to work on as these kinds of themes are not so common in the every day of the school.

The following point they discussed was the theory gathered by Wright (1995) and Hunt (2001) in terms of topics classification in children's literature. The members of the focus group talked about their interpretations of the information given and their point of view as teachers. On the one hand, starting with Wright's (1995) classification all agreed that none of them would have classified like that because when choosing storybooks they tend to specify more. However, in agreement with the author, they remarked about the use of legends and stories related to children's and teachers lives. On the other hand, Hunt (2001) sorted 10 topics around children's literature. They quickly rejected censorship, colonialism, postcolonialism, multiculturalism, criticism, and theory

topics as considering them not suitable in Early Childhood Education. Also, N and A made a comparison between drama, film, and media topics with the use of Disney storybooks versions and the use of “Una mà de contes”.

After discussing about the information gathered by Wright (1995) and Hunt (2001), the use and treatment of the topics that appear in some traditional tales were presented as most traditional stories relate traditional love topics, where male characters drag the action and female characters are seen as weak characters that need to be rescued by a brave prince. In addition, traditional popular tales usually establish a unique family model formed by the father, the mother, and children. R defended the use of them but always being aware of the reality and the message that these kinds of stories can transmit children, so she goes further and reflects with them about that however it is something she didn't do some years ago. E, the other teacher in P5 (E from now on) that for several reasons added later to the focus group, contributed to this idea that although it can seem contradictory to use these kinds of storybooks, children must learn and know these traditional tales but as R said always from the reflection of the different models and realities that can exist.

To exchange different points of view of the next section of the debate, 15 different storybooks organised in four main topics were presented: gender stereotypes, sexual identity, the family, emotions and feelings, the death, and child sexual abuse. It was mainly expected their reactions in front of this kind of unusual topics. When these topics were shown, they were not as comfortable talking about it as it implied talking and reasoning about concepts they were not used to work on. However, it is important to call attention to something that L stated, which is that they don't tell or explain these types of storybooks because those topics are still taboo in our society. In this line, I believed that as teachers, they need guidance in dealing with these issues to know how to use them. That is, although they can come up with an idea of how to transmit these issues that happen in our lives as well as those of children, maybe they need psychologists or people who advise them on how to deal with such sensitive issues.

With the introduction of these new topics the study realised that they already pay a lot of attention to topics related to feeling and emotions at school. Particular attention was paid to *Marecrits* storybook as it is a metaphor to represent the feeling of anguish in facing situations when children feel insecure about not feeling loved and sometimes not understanding the reaction of the other, in particular of their parents. Through the story, they extracted a very important reflection: to keep in mind that sometimes as adults they can go wrong and the most important thing is to be able to recognize it in front of

children. Other reflections that emerged from feelings and emotions topics were the difference between topics they dealt with when they went to school; stories about behaviour and about following rules. Instead, nowadays it can be found storybooks related to the dialogue and discussion. In the same line, the topic related to the family was introduced because nowadays there is a very wide family diversity that goes beyond the traditional family model. In this sense, N admitted that the storybooks they have at school follow the traditional model but for that reason when the story ends they reflect on the possibility that there can be other family models.

The following topics addressed were gender stereotypes and sexual identity. I talked about the social distinction that exists in the society that surrounds us. All of them provided examples of everyday situations and after discussing this issue they together concluded that storybooks have surely improved. A topic related to stereotypes was sexual identity. Regarding sexual identity, N thought they are starting to deal with it now, at least she had the feeling that she has not talked about it before. Besides, L provided possible reasons by saying that this is probably because children did not say it before, but now some children are starting to do this change since they are very young.

Finally, the death and child sexual abuse were the two topics that perhaps caused the most discussion about coping with these types of situations. One should pay particular attention to two important ideas that emerged: First, the idea that the topic of death has a little presence in the classroom because as N explained this type of story is not told every day at school, only when a situation arises. Second, regarding to child sexual abuse topic, *¡Estela, grita muy fuerte!* and *Clara y su sombra* are two storybooks to help adults explain to children how to prevent child sexual abuse. Regarding this topic, although they didn't do many comments as they didn't deal with within the classroom, all of them kept in mind these two stories to manage this topic as they considered them very useful and interesting to work on.

To conclude, several questions related to the criteria established when choosing storybooks for English learning were asked as it is possible to distinguish between those simplified storybooks, especially for children learning English and the authentic storybooks written for English-speaking children that are also suitable for English learners. As they have not been written specifically for the teaching of English as a foreign language, the language is not selected or classified. To deep in this concept, it was also explained the advantage of using authentic storybooks as they provide examples of real language and help bring the real world to the classroom while

simplified stories often represent a degraded version of English language and can mislead both teachers and students about the true nature of the language. Instantly, English teacher (ET from now on) agreed that it would be much better to use real stories although it is true that when she uses real books, she doesn't explicitly read what it is said, but the idea of the story is explained. Therefore, she doesn't like versioned storybooks because these types of stories don't have a plot or argument to explain. They are nearly flashcards to learn vocabulary. Furthermore, the following question was asked: Is there coherence between the stories in Catalan and English in order to complement topics or not repeat the? L affirmed that there should be although they don't do it because they don't have enough time to do it. Besides, N thought that using similar topics in both languages could help and reinforce children's learning.

The whole transcription in Catalan of the focus group is in Appendix 3 (p. 62).

5.3. Observations results

Doing observations was a good resource to directly know how were treated the topics that appear in storybooks for English learning. However as it has mentioned in 3.2.3 section before doing observations, an observation grid or template made of 20 closed-ended questions or open-ended questions was created. Nevertheless, while doing observations several doubts and problems arose: question number 9 was useless as it can be answered in the previous one. Moreover, to conclude each class observation it was added the last question as considering it useful and helpful to link children's interests with topics. It was: Do children like the story? Also, it was previously planned to carry out 9 observations with the four groups of Early Childhood Education. However, due to the situations we are experiencing during these weeks, only 3 observations were done before the schools closed. For this reason, the results of the observations are divided into two groups: On the one hand, you can find the 3 real observations that were carried out with the P4 and P5 groups: *The worst Princess, I will never not ever eat a tomato, Giraffes can't dance*. On the other hand, the rest of the observations have been developed and analysed using hypothetical results: *Mixed a colourful story, The old toy room, Froggy gets dressed, Seren's seasons, Elmer the Elephant, Polar Bear, Polar Bear, What do you hear?*

Finally, with these 9 observations, 10 topics are treated as different contents can be worked out from a story. These topics are: food, animals, breaking stereotypes, colours, toys, clothes, actions, seasons and weather, feelings and emotions. Besides, after reviewing the results of the observations, it has been seen that the questions can be grouped into 4 main categories: teacher's behaviour, children's behaviour, the information related to the topics and the resources teacher uses during storytelling. At this point it is important to take into account that each observation lasted between 15-30 minutes approximately depending on the group.

Real observations

The storytelling began always in the same way; children sat in a circle or on their chair and the teacher just introduces the title of the storybooks without telling children what the story was about and thus, without revealing the topic or topics of the story. Moreover, and related to the teacher's attitude, not in all observations she related the topic with children's experiences. For instance, she only did it in *I will never not ever eat a tomato* storybook where she asked them questions related to their tastes: Do you like bananas? In addition, during storytelling, the English teacher used different

resources to ensure that children understand what it was saying and thus, the topic or topics that were managed. In refers to asking questions, speaking in Catalan, and use mime. Nevertheless, the greatest strategy to enable children to understand it was the quality of pictures, which had a very close relationship with the text, so that children could grasp what the story told by reading the illustration. Nevertheless, it is also true that although all storybooks were full of these kinds of pictures, children were not always aware of the real topic that the story wanted to transmit them. *The worst princess* was an example. For that reason, although the teacher didn't prepare any kind of activities to work on the topics, she almost always asked questions during and after storytelling: Who remembers what did Lola eat? Do you think that the prince's attitude is good? Which animals have appeared during the story? Doing this, the teacher ensured the topic's work and she tried to begin a debate to work on specific topics. It is also true that by asking these types of questions, the teacher received a feedback from children. Regarding children's behaviour and interest in the topic and the story, it is true that as were topics close to them, they really enjoyed and paid attention to it, trying to guess what will come slide by slide. However, although almost all children like the chosen storybooks, they didn't always follow the whole story as the capacity to pay attention is not so long during the early years.

Finally and regarding to the important point of the observations, the stories were useful to work on the different topics. In this case, topics related to food, animals, and gender stereotypes. In contrast, it is also true that taking a look at the *Giraffes can't dance* storybook, although at the beginning it was considered a good resource to work on feelings and emotions, finally it didn't work. Children only paid attention to the animals and the actions they did for example: jumping, dancing, etc as the teacher dramatized it very well. As a result, although it is clear that the resources that can be used during storytelling, as well as the pictures that appear, are really important, it is also true that the value and the attention that the teacher gives to the topics during storytelling is a key point that helps children to be aware of them.

The whole class real observations grids are in Appendix 4 (p. 82).

Hypothetical observations

These hypothetical observations follow the same lines as the previous ones. It means that storytelling began in the same way as well as the resources used during it. Children's and teacher's attitudes were also nearly the same. In contrast, the topics were different as the storybooks were not the same. In that sense, the topics are

related to colours, toys, clothes, actions, seasons and weather, feeling, and emotions. However, to avoid repeating the same explained until now, the most important points are going to be highlighted: First of all, taking a look *the Mixed: a colourful story* storybook we can identify that the teacher introduced a new resource at the end of the story with the use of flashcards to review the colours. It was a story that children enjoyed as it was fast to read as well as there were concepts that children had already worked on before. An example was the concept related to what happens if we mix different colours. That's something they can experiment with in lights and shadows environment. The same happened with *the Old toy room* storybook as the teachers used the toys children had in the class to support the story. Other strategies that were used to hold up the topics were; pointing while telling the story and trying to imitate animals' sounds. It happened in *the Froggy gets dress* storybook as while the frog dressed up, the English teacher pointed out the clothes of herself and children. In *Polar Bear, Polar Bear, what do you hear?* The teacher tried to imitate the sounds. In that sense, children chanted the rhythmic word while the teacher invited them to imitate the sound of the animals make too.

Finally, we find a difference in *Seren's season* and *Elmer the elephant* storybooks. In both cases, the teacher prepared a kind of short activity to introduce somehow the topic and the story. Refereeing to the first one she began by asking children: What's the weather like today? Can you tell in which seasons are we? Asking these questions the teacher gave some clues about the topic. Moreover, refereeing to the second one, she started asking: Do you know this elephant? Who can tell me who this elephant is? It was a way to engage, motive, and create a good class atmosphere as well as to know what will happen next although they already know the story in Catalan.

To conclude with this section, it is really important to emphasize the storybooks and thus, the topics children liked the most. These were: animals, colours, feelings, and emotions. At first sight maybe it is not coincidences that are the topics that have the greatest weight and therefore repeat up to 3.

The whole class hypothetical observations grids are in Appendix 4 (p. 88).

6. Discussion

The use of storytelling for English learning, especially, in Early Childhood Education, has been claimed as storytime is one of the cornerstones in the life of kindergarten and therefore storytelling is an important part of the work of the teacher. In that sense, and taking into account the several research discussed in the theoretical framework as well as the analysis of topics, the several class observations and the teaching experts statements, let me present this discussion as a journey through some results on which are the topics that appear in Early Childhood Education.

One of the most discussed issues is the use of storytelling in the early years as a way to learn through it. As both P5 teachers claimed during the focus group, it is one of the most important tools at this stage as it allows teachers to work on oral language as well as can enable children to establish and forge connections between their everyday lives. That's why Wright (1995) described storytelling as the resource to help children to understand their world and to share it with others. So, that "driven by the need to understand and live with the complexity of daily experience, children hunger stories" (p.3). In addition to this, as children enjoy listening to stories, theoretically and according to Elis, Brewster (2014) and Barreras (2010) this frequent repetition allows certain language items to be acquired while others are being overtly reinforced. In contrast, not only concepts related to vocabulary and grammar items can be acquired because as it has been described with the analysis of English storybooks, a wide range of topics can be introduced and covered during storytelling. However, as L remarked in the focus group, teachers mainly manage stories related to children's daily habits. Consequently, the majority of storybooks used during Early Childhood Education deal with topics that are part of children's life. That's why teachers tend to look for what is closest to them so, just as Ellis and Brewster (2014) suggested, storybooks allow children to play with ideas and feelings and to think about issues that are important and relevant to them.

Concerning one part of the theoretical framework, where it was mentioned the certain characteristics associated with storybooks in Early Childhood Education, all the authors agreed with the idea that not all storybooks that can be found at school share the same characteristics as many stories lack some of these common features such as the plot. In the same line Wright (1995) also talked about the idea that children listen with a purpose so that they want to find meaning in stories although it is not necessary to simplify the language in stories. Besides, Arva (2018) discussed the role of pictures

and teacher's actions as considering them other resources to take into account to incorporate in storytelling that support strongly children's understanding. Through the data collected during the focus group and the several class observations, it could be observed that the teacher followed the same style as the several authors proposed. The English teacher agreed that it would be much better to use stories that have not been written specifically for teaching English as a foreign language because the language is not selected or graded and they provide examples of "real" language and help to bring the real world into the classroom. It is important to highlight that referring to this point, during storytelling, the English teacher did not explicitly read what was written in the storybook, but the idea of the story was explained. Therefore, as she explained during the discussion she doesn't like versioned storybooks because these types of stories don't have a plot or argument to explain. As she emphasized they are nearly flashcards to learn vocabulary.

To deep in the information gathered by the authors and the data collected, during storytelling the English teacher incorporated mime, real materials, and the use of pictures to support strongly children's topics understanding. It means that, the role of pictures is usually indispensable in storybooks in Early Childhood Education, and for that reason; somehow it is needed to be big enough for everyone to see. Nevertheless, it is also true that although all storybooks were full of these kinds of pictures, not everybody was always aware of the topic that the story wanted to transmit and talked about. As it was explained in the section 4.1 the *Worst princess* and the *Part of the party* storybooks were two examples of that because while in the rest of storybooks was easier for children to understand and grasp the topics, in these two ones appeared topics that children were not used to them: gender stereotypes and family inclusion.

In addition to this, the information gathered by Elis and Brewster (2014) explained that storybooks can develop children's learning strategies such as predicting, guessing the meaning, hypothesising, training the memory, reviewing, and self- assessment among others through different via. As example we can find the use of visual clues, the audio clues, or their prior knowledge of the world. This is what happened during the class observations; In *Polar Bear, Polar Bear, what do you hear?* The teacher tried to imitate the sounds and invited them to repeat the sound the animals make too. The *Elmer* storybook is another example of that because the teacher asked questions before starting to try to identify children's previous knowledge as it was a story the already knew.

Another research interest was knowing about which learning criteria can be followed when selecting storybooks. After reading some articles and books about this issue, it has been concluded that there are many criteria to think about when choosing storybooks. On the one hand, as has been explained before, Dujmović (2006) distinguished between those simplified storybooks especially for children learning English and authentic storybooks written for English-speaking children. Moreover, Genesse (1994) and González-Martín and Querol-Julián (2014) claimed that teachers can also choose between storybooks that children are already familiar with them in their mother tongue. However, according to Wright (1995) there are many types of stories to choose from: stories from the imagination and stories from life experience. In consonance with this issue, the National Geographic Kids Super Readers (2013) and the literacy program called Step into Reading (2017) also established other criteria for selecting storybooks based on the learning stage of the readers. Finally, the quality of illustration, the style, the topics, the format, the complexity, the length, the purpose, the age, the linguistic level of children or even if the teacher would enjoy the storybook while telling it are other criteria that authors such as Brumfit, Moon and Tongue (1991), Moratinos and Herrera (2018), Morgan and Rinvolucrí (1983) and Barreras (2010) considered when choosing storybooks.

Considering all these perspectives and talking about the criteria they follow for selecting storybooks during the focus group, teachers introduced concepts and ideas related to the age of children, illustrations, sizes, shapes, textures but none of them gave especial attention to issues related to topics. In agreement with Dujmović (2006) the English teacher showed an important interest in the use of real storybooks for English learning. Furthermore and in consonance with Wright (1995), Morgan and Rinvolucrí (1983) and Genesse (1994) teachers remarked the use of legends and stories related to children's and teacher's lives as well as stories children already know in Catalan. Besides, they proposed stories that they like as teachers. Keeping these ideas in mind and deepening in the main purpose of the study, with the focus group it was clear that at first, nobody showed an interest in the role that topics play when talking about criteria for selecting storybooks. Nevertheless, when they take into account this issue, their selections specifically refer to topics they like and they feel safe as teachers to talk about as well as other issues related to daily life at school such as topics connected with conflicts within children and so on. To go in-depth of the different classification authors developed concerning topics in children's literature, it is important to highlight teacher's perspectives during the discussion.

On the one hand, authors like Barreras (2010) and Arva (2018) considered that storytelling is a powerful way of helping pupils to learn in all areas of the curriculum and thus, to consolidate learning in school subjects. In agreement with the authors and although in Early Childhood Education there is not a definite schedule characterized by too many subjects, teachers reported that any time is good to explain stories and therefore this methodology encourages children's learning as it can help children to identify English as something of their every day at school.

On the other hand, and regarding the 10 topics sorted by Hunt around children's literature and the contributions carried out by other experts in that field. It is important to highlight that during the focus group teachers quickly reject censorship, colonialism, postcolonialism, multiculturalism, criticism, and theory topics as considering them not suitable in Early Childhood Education. However, examining these declarations with the information gathered by Flynn (2020) and the analysis of the storybooks, it could be identified that although Hunt named topics in children's literature such as colonialism, postcolonialism and, multiculturalism, Flynn (2020) labelled these kinds of topics as animals because animal's characters were used to criticize human actions. An example of it is the *Part of the Party* story as the storybook centres on Karri, the Koala who wants to go to the Mummy and Daughter Disco in town but she lives with her two dads. So, as a result it is obvious that keeping in mind these ideas, teachers should rethink their statement because animal's storybooks are usually one of the most common topics in the early years. In addition and keeping with the examination of the teacher's statement, it could be said that somehow they censorship some storybooks to use in Early Childhood Education. Why? Because there are some topics that teachers are not used to working on and in some way they refuse to use them as they don't feel enough comfortable to do it. We are talking about topics related to death, sexual abuse, sexual identity, and gender stereotypes. However, it is relevant to call attention to something that L stated, which is that they don't tell or explain these types of storybooks because those topics are still taboo in our society.

Continuing with the same point, and making a comparison between Hunt's topics and the ones that teachers use in the early years, there share some similarities as well as there can be found some differences. First of all, the comparison teachers do between drama, film, and media topics with the use of Disney storybooks versions and the use of "Una mà de contes". Furthermore, regarding the topics associated with fantasy and myth or legends, although the English teacher doesn't use these kinds of storybooks for English learning, the rest of Early Childhood Education teachers use legends or

fantasy stories to tell children. Besides, topics related to gender are still present during these years. Historically and according to Hunt's (2001) ideas, any assertion of the feminine in children's books has been a relatively recent and sporadic phenomenon as most traditional stories relate traditional love topics, where male characters drag the action and female characters were seen as weak characters who need to be rescued by a brave prince. In that sense, all agree with the use of traditional stories but always being aware of the reality and the message that these kinds of stories can transmit children.

In 5th place, topics linked to nursery and playground rhymes, storytelling, and picture books have a great weight in the early years. Children are told stories and they transmit songs, rhymes, and tales. In the West at least, they are the fulcrum of the survival of the oral tradition. (Hunt, 2001, p.285). Finally, literacy, poetry, war are other examples of topics that doesn't appear in storybooks for English learning. In contrast, and despite the wide range of topics that are covered, other professionals such as Garcia (2019) and Aguilar (2019) added topics related to family and feelings and emotions. Regarding the first one, Garcia (2019) exposed that stories can help children to identify, differentiate, and manage emotions. Secondly, Aguilar (2019) recommended that children's books can be a good tool to address issues related to children's daily life such as a better understanding of family diversity. In consonance with these two authors, teachers during the discussion gave especial attention to topics related to feelings and emotions. In contrast, although they are aware that there are many types of families, the storybooks they have at school deal with the traditional one.

To conclude with this section, some topics appear in storybooks for English learning that the experts do not incorporate in their classification: colours, actions, food, toys, seasons and weather, clothes, Easter, similarities and differences, and gender stereotypes are examples of that.

7. Conclusions

To conclude this research, I could firmly defend that a wide range of topics can be introduced and covered during storytelling. So, afterward, I could answer my research question about which are the topics that appear in storybooks for English learning in Early Childhood Education. Apart from that, I could also determine the research objectives proposed at the beginning of this study. First of all, I could describe and analyse the storybooks and thus, the topics the teacher used for English learning in the early years.

Secondly, I could carry out a focus group with different teachers of the school to discuss the topics. Finally, I could develop different class observations through the creation of an observation grid to know how topics were managing during storytelling.

So giving responses to the research question, first of all, it is important to talk about the criteria teachers follow for selecting storybooks. In that sense during the focus group, none of the teachers gave special attention to topics as all of them introduced ideas related to the age of children, illustrations in stories, sizes, shapes or textures except the English teacher that shown an important interest to the use of real storybooks for English learning. Deeping in the aim of the study, the stories used at school deal with topics that are part of children's life that's why teachers tend to look for what is closest, relevant, and more important to them. It refers to 14 different topics: animals, colours, feelings and emotions, actions, food, clothes, toys, seasons, weather, family, gender stereotypes, inclusion, Easter and similarities and differences between equals. At this point, there are indeed some topics that are repeated in more than one storybook in the same way that different contents or topics can be worked out from a story. As a result some topics have the greatest weight in storybooks for English learning; animals, colours, feelings, and emotions while others have a lower presence in storybooks such as actions or clothes. Finally, those topics that only appear in storybooks one time are found. For instance: toys, weather, and seasons of the year, family and all those storybooks that talk about topics related to inclusion, gender stereotypes or differences and similarities between equals.

Seeing that, it must be borne in mind that during early years children begin to discover and experiment with the world around them and, therefore, the activities of everyday life are one of the central pillars of the educational environment. As a result, it is no coincidence that most topics are related to the representation of the world around them.

Lastly, with the analysis of the storybooks for English learning and the focus group, this research has realised that there are topics that are very little discussed, such as those related to male and female stereotypes, family diversity, while there are others that are not covered at all, such as sexual identity, death or child sexual abuse.

Doing research is not as easy as it can be thought. At the beginning of the research I was unsure and very nervous in front of a topic at that time so unknown to me because doing research means a lot of things. First of all, it means asking yourself questions about a specific topic and after that, to be able to find the answers to these questions. For that reason, it also means to collect as much data as possible and thus, to interpret and analyse it. In that sense, it is true that at the beginning, I had problems finding information related to the topics that appear in children's literature. During the research has appeared different limitations that have somehow harmed the study when developing the practical application. To start, it was very difficult for me to know what storybooks and thus which topics the English teacher used in Early Childhood Education as at the time I wanted to take a look and analyse them, the teacher was changing them and making a new choice. Also, due to the global pandemic we are experiencing during these months for Covid-19, schools were forced to close when I had not carried out all the observations. This led me to make hypotheses about the possible results I would have obtained from the other class observations, based on the real observations I was able to develop and the way the English teacher managed English classes and storytelling in general.

To conclude, this research has allowed me to investigate and to expand my knowledge on my own. Moreover, the opportunity to share moments, debates, and experiences with professionals and children has developed a personal enrichment that will contribute to my future labour as a teacher.

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9. Appendices

9.1. Appendix 1: Document inviting teachers to participate in the focus group

Els contes són un dels recursos més utilitzats a les aules d'infantil ja que ofereixen la possibilitat de treballar diversos temes, continguts i aptituds. En aquest sentit, m'agradaria posar en context el meu Treball de Final de Grau. Aquest tracta sobre l'anàlisi dels temes que apareixen en els contes que s'utilitzen per l'aprenentatge de l'anglès a Infantil. Per aquest motiu, us convido a participar en aquesta dinàmica per poder parlar i debatre entre totes quins són els temes que apareixen en els contes que utilitzeu tant en el dia a dia a l'aula com per l'aprenentatge de l'anglès. D'aquesta manera, em permetrà establir unes conclusions entre allò que diuen els teòrics i allò que es porta a terme a les aules d'Infantil.

Per començar, durant aquesta conversa us faré algunes preguntes generals relacionades sobre l'ús dels contes a Infantil i seguidament, aprofundiré en qüestions més específiques relacionades amb els temes dels contes que utilitzeu. Paral·lelament, us presentaré informació que diuen alguns teòrics sobre aquest tema i us mostraré alguns contes per poder parlar i reflexionar sobre ells: si són llibres que utilitzaríeu a l'aula, o no, per quines raons, etc. Finalment, ens fixarem de manera més detallada en algunes qüestions relacionades amb l'aprenentatge de la llengua anglesa i l'ús dels contes.

La taula rodona és portarà a terme el dimecres 11 de març a les 12.30h del migdia a la classe de P4 i durarà una hora aproximadament. Hi participaran les mestres d'Infantil des de P3 fins a P5; Isis, Concep, Neus, Laura, Rosmari, Elisa i Aida, i també l'especialista d'anglès, la Laura.

Moltes gràcies per avançat,

Andrea Tarramera

9.2. Appendix 2: Teachers' guide focus group

STORYBOOKS	TOPICS
1. Polar bear, polar bear, what do you hear? by Eric Carl Ós polar, ós polar, què sents?	ANIMALS/COLORS
2. Brown bear, brown bear, what do you see? by Eric Carl Ós bru, ós bru, què veus?	ANIMALS/COLORS
3. Giraffes can't dance by Andrae Giles Les girafes no poden ballar.	ANIMALS/EMOCIONS
4. Elmer the elephant by Eric McKee Elmer l'elefant	COLORS/EMOCIONS
5. The very busy spider by Eric Carl L'aranya molt ocupada	ANIMALS/ACCIONS
6. I will never, not ever eat a tomato by Lauren Child Mai, mai menjaré un tomàquet	MENJAR
7. Froggy gets dressed by Jonathan London Froggy va vestit	ROBA/ACCIONS
8. Monsters love colours by Mike Austin Als monstres els encanta els colors	COLORS
9. Daddy's sandwich by Ruby Roo L'entrepà del pare	MENJAR
10. Mixed. A colourful story by Arre Chung	COLORS

Barrejats. Una historia de colors	
11. The old toy room, by Twinkl L'antiga sala de joguines	JOGUINES
12. Seren's seasons, by Twinkl Carrot club, by Twinkl Les estacions de la Seren	ESTACIONS/TEMPS
13. Goldilocks and the 3 bears, by Twinkl Goldilocks i els 3 óssos	FAMÍLIA/ADJECTIUS
14. Stop telling Fibs, by Twinkl Deixa de dir mentides	ROBA
15. Part of the party by Twinkl Part de la festa	FAMÍLIA/INCLUSIÓ
16. The worst princess by Anna Kempt La pitjor princesa.	ESTEREOTIPS DE GÈNERE
17. Izzy Gizmo by Pip Jones Izzy Gizmo	EMOCIONS
18. Saving Easter by Twinkl Guardant la Pasqua	PASCUA
19. Carrot club, by Twinkl El club pastanaga	MENJAR

- **Estereotips femenins i masculins:**

Rínxols d'ós: És la nit de carnaval al bosc i la família dels ossos es prepara per a la festa. Tot va bé fins que el pare s'enfada perquè el petit ós es vol disfressar de Rínxols d'os. Diu que això no pot ser, que un os no es pot disfressar amb faldilles i cuetes als cabells. Un llibre divertit on tota la família participa en la resolució d'un "conflicte" que en realitat veiem que no és!

Un tigre amb tutú: El tigre protagonista té una passió: el ballet. Li encanta posar-se el tutú i ballar, però la gent s'espanta quan veu un tigre, i el seu somni es complica una mica. Un conte sobre l'amistat, els somnis, ser nosaltres mateixes i la importància de l'amistat

- **Identitat sexual:**

Ara em dic Joana: Nen o nena? Només cadascú sap què és i com se sent, i davant d'això, el més important de tot és l'amistat. Una història commovedora, dolça i tendra sobre ser un mateix.

Cua de sirena: Alguna cosa o L'altra. Blanc o negre. Carn o peix. Nen o nena, humans o sirena ... Com si només hi hagués dues opcions!

El meu fill princesa: parla del transvestisme en els infants, un fet encara ara difícil d'acceptar sense estranyesa. Escrit amb ànim d'oferir als nens i als adults una eina per parlar de l'amistat incondicional.

- **Família:**

Amb la tango són tres: Aquesta història va succeir al zoo de Central Park de Nova York. Tango va ser la primera pingüí amb dos pares. Una família diferent que neda, salta, juga a l'estany i és feliç.

Paula tiene dos mamás: Totes les persones són iguals i alhora molt diferents. A les famílies els passa una cosa semblant, hi ha famílies amb una mare i un pare, altres només amb un pare o amb una mare. Aquest llibre explica la història de Paula que té dues mares i en la qual aprèn que l'única veritablement important és l'afecte.

La nena amb dos pares: La Berta està molt contenta perquè a l'escola hi ha una nena nova. Es diu Matilda i a totes dues els agrada el mateix! Només hi ha una cosa que les diferencia: la Matilda té dos pares. Es mor de ganes de conèixer-los. Segur que a casa seva tot és molt diferent!

- **Emocions i sentiments:**

El buit: La Júlia té un gran forat i no li agrada gens. Per això, tracta d'omplir-lo i tapar-lo de moltes maneres diferents per tal que desaparegui. Ho aconseguirà? La vida és plena de trobades. I també de pèrdues. De vegades aquestes pèrdues són insignificants, com perdre un llapis o un paper. Però n'hi ha d'altres que poden ser importants, com perdre un projecte, la salut o una persona estimada. El buit és un llibre que ens parla de la resiliència, o la capacitat de sobreposar-se a l'adversitat i trobar-hi un sentit.

Marecrits: Aquest matí la meua mare em va cridar de tal manera que vaig sortir volant a trossos” diu un petit pingüí. El crit de la mare provoca que el petit pingüí es trenqui en diferents trossos que van a parar a llocs diferents. Els peus del petit pingüí, desorientats, comencen a caminar sense rumb, i al vespre arriben al desert de Sàhara, on la mare ve a buscar-los. A poc a poc la mare ha anat recollint les parts desmembrades del petit pingüí i les ha cosit com si fos un ninot de peluix. El desmembrament del pingüí és una metàfora per representar el sentiment d’angoixa davant la inseguretat de no sentir-se estimat i no entendre de vegades la reacció de l’altre, en concret dels pares.

- **La mort:**

La estrella de Lea: Lea està molt malalta, morirà. És un camí difícil per a ella i per a tots els que l’envolten. En aquest llibre realista però ple d’esperança, vivim la malaltia i la mort de la Lea amb el seu gran amic Bruno , la seva mamà , la seva professora i el seu companys de classe. Un conte sobre la mort.

El camí de la Lua /El camí d’en Dan: dos contes il·lustrats, adreçats a infants a partir de 4 anys que han patit la mort de la mare o del pare, a les seves famílies i als seus educadors.

Donde esta güelita Queta?: és un recorregut de la pèrdua d’aquelles persones que estimem.

- **Abús sexual:**

Clara y su sombra: Clara tiene miedo por la noche. Hay algo oscuro que la inquieta: una sombra oscura y pegajosa que no la deja descansar. Además, ¡le ha quitado la sonrisa! La sigue por todos lados desde que empezó a jugar con ese amigo tan amigo de la familia".

¡Estela, grita muy fuerte!: A l’Estela li agraden moltes coses. Fins fa poc també li agradava jugar amb el seu oncle Anselm, però últimament la porta a l’habitació i li fa coses que a ella no li agraden gens. La Conxita, la seva mestra, li va ensenyar un truc meravellós per quan passi alguna cosa que no li agradi o algú vulgui fer-li mal: “Crida ben fort, Estela!”

9.3. Appendix 3: Focus group transcription

M (mediadora), R (mestra de P5), E (mestra de P5), A (mestra de suport P5), N (mestra de P4), L (mestra de suport P4), I (mestra de P3), C (TEI P3), T (totes les mestres).

M: Com ja sabeu el meu TFG tracta sobre l'anàlisi dels temes que apareixen en els contes per l'aprenentatge de l'anglès. Per començar, durant aquesta taula rodona us faré algunes preguntes generals relacionades sobre l'ús dels contes a Infantil i seguidament, aprofundiré en qüestions més específiques relacionades amb els temes del contes que utilitzeu començant amb al graella que teniu davant. Paral·lelament, us presentaré informació que diuen alguns teòrics sobre aquest tema, en concret Wright i Hunt i us mostraré alguns contes per poder parlar i reflexionar sobre ells: si són llibres que utilitzaríeu a l'aula, o no, per quines raons, etc. Finalment, ens fixarem de manera més detallada en algunes qüestions relacionades amb l'aprenentatge de la llengua anglesa i l'ús dels contes.

M: D'entrada, és el conte un dels recursos que més utilitzeu a les vostres aules per treballar diferents continguts?

R: Sí, és una eina molt important.

M: Són imprescindibles els contes a infantil?

T: Sí i tant.

M: Per quina raó?

L: Primer perquè és un recurs visualment atractiu pels infants que serveix per treballar molts continguts.

A: També es poden sentir molt identificats.

R: L'ús dels contes a infantil també és un recurs per treballar el llenguatge oral que és tant important en aquesta etapa.

M: Com a mestres quines són les accions que feu per donar aquesta importància a l'ús del contes com a recurs d'aprenentatge a l'aula?

R: D'entrada, a P3 hi ha una activitat molt important amb les famílies que és "El meu conte preferit" i després l'estona que hi ha cada dia destinada a la lectura de contes.

L: Jo penso que la manera com la mestra presenta un conte fa que els infants vegin que allò és important que no només es basa en seure en un lloc i escoltar el conte. Si com a mestra els hi expliques amb una mica d'intriga, desplegant tota aquesta màgia que hi ha al voltant dels contes, ells ja saben que allò és important. Si la mestra dona importància al conte, el conte tindrà importància per els infants. Si per contra la mestra no ho fa, aquesta màgia es perd.

I: A més a més, el respecte a l'hora de mirar-lo, de guardar-lo, de tenir-ne cura.

A: De tractar-lo bé.

N: També l'any passat vam fer les biblioteques a l'aula, vam crear un espai nou, el racó de lectura. Per tant és un espai més tranquil on es treballa concretament els contes i amb els contes.

M: Creieu que qualsevol moment és bo per explicar contes?

T: Sí.

I: A més a més, jo crec que va molt bé quan la dinàmica que estaves fent potser no funcionava del tot, és a dir, d'alguna manera, és una manera de trencar amb el que estaves fent i crear un moment màgic, de calma, de recull per tal que ells puguin estar millor.

M: Utilitzeu algun altre suport a l'hora d'explicar contes?

L: Sí, alguna titella, algun teatret tot i que és molt maco ensenyar el conte.

I: A més amb tots els contes que hi ha.

A: Incloure alguna cançó entre mig del conte.

L: Canterelles. L'altre dia amb els de P3 el simple fet que durant el conte dels tres porquets i el llop, jo els hi vaig fer "No, no, no, no passaràs. Els hi vaig fer una mica de canterella que me la vaig inventar i llavors quan ells van haver de reproduir el conte, van fer la meva canterella i només ho havien escoltat un cop. De fet, va ser una de les poques coses que van reproduir igual que jo vaig fer a l'hora d'explicar el conte.

M: A l'hora de triar contes utilitzeu algun criteri específic? És a dir, l'hora de triar contes, es poden seguir diferents criteris com ara l'edat dels lectors, la situació o

moment en el que es llegirà el conte, el tipus d'història que es vol explicar, la complexitat, l'extensió o bé els temes.

I: Si, l'edat i la il·lustració.

L: Jo la il·lustració. No puc triar un conte que a mi visualment no m'atregui el que veig.

N: L'any passat que vam fer la proposta de les Biblioteques, també ens vam fixar en qui hi hagués diferents tipologies de contes: uns més d'imatges, de histories, de poesia.

R: Exacte. Que tinguessin l'oportunitat de veure molts contes, inclús quan preparem la maleta viatgera de contes, intentem que hi hagi diferents tipologies d'il·lustracions, de lletres, de format, de mida, de textures.

I: La maleta viatgera també penso que és un recurs molt important per apropar els contes a aquelles famílies que potser a casa no tenen l'oportunitat de donar aquesta importància a la lectura o no tenen l'opció d'arribar a llibres bonics.

M: Els temes els teniu en compte a l'hora de seleccionar contes?

L: Sí i segurament hi ha situacions en que no expliques un conte perquè potser penses que aquell tema no és l'adequat.

N: Exacte.

A: També ens basem molt en si aquell tema t'agrada a tu com a mestra.

M: Per tant, creieu que és difícil triar contes o fer una selecció que sigui ben acurada en funció del que es vol treballar?

N: Fer una selecció acurada potser sí perquè hi ha molta varietat. A més, a l'escola comprar contes és molt car i per tant, és difícil comprar-ne molts de varietats diferents i que tots siguin atractius

M: Per tant, com podeu veure la selecció requereix una capacitat per avaluar històries i discriminar les que satisfan les necessitats dels infants i les que no. A continuació us mostro una graella amb diferents contes classificats per temes per l'aprenentatge de l'anglès. És una selecció que ha fet la Laura, la mestra d'anglès per treballar els contes des de P3 fins a P5. Per una banda, tal i com veieu hi ha el títol del conte i per altra banda, el tema o contingut que es treballa.

M: Coneixeu algun d'aquests contes?

T: Sí.

M: Quins coneixeu?

N: L' Elmer.

I: Les girafes que no poden ballar.

L: Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What do you see?

M: Què us semblen els temes que apareixen? Afegiríeu algun tema? En trauríeu algun? Per tant, fent una classificació general, de quina manera classificaríeu per temes els contes que utilitzeu a l'aula? Faríeu una classificació semblant?

A: Sí, penso que apareixen diversos temes i que això fa possible que es tracti tot. A més a més, avui dia és tant important treballar el tema de les emocions i en aquests contes aquest tema apareix, les famílies, etc

I: Crec que potser el fet que els contes siguin en anglès de vegades impedeix que els infants puguin arribar a entendre el tema que es tracte en el conte. Una manera d'ajudar-los podria ser tenir el mateix conte però en català perquè pugin fer aquesta comparació. Per exemple a P3, si tu expliques el conte de les girafes no poden ballar, no ho entendran gaire però si a més a més tens els suport en català els ajudaria a adquirir el vocabulari.

M: Creieu que són temes habituals a les aules d'infantils i per tant també durant les hores d'anglès?

T: Sobretot emocions.

L: I potser també hàbits quotidians.

M: Per tant en aquesta graella potser afegireu els hàbits quotidians?

T: Sí.

A: També els contes tradicionals i populars.

L: Crec que no els hem de deixar d'explicar per més que ara els analitzem i pensem que hi ha algunes qüestions que no acaben d'agradar.

N: Penso que també és important que els infants coneguin aquests contes.

A: No s'han de deixar de banda.

M: I per quines raons penseu que són els temes que més es tracten a infantil?

L: Perquè a infantil acabes fent el que és més proper per ells. Treballes els hàbits en el dia a dia, per tant un conte d'hàbits se'l sentiran molt més seu que no pas un conte que expliqui qualsevol altre cosa tot i que també se'l poden sentir seu. Però al final tendim a buscar allò que és més proper per ells.

N: A més en el cas de les emocions també et permet que ells es pugin obrir més, que puguin explicar que els hi passa, com es senten, explicar conflictes del pati o de l'aula, alguna situacions que els fa estar tristos i que segurament els hi és més fàcil un cop explicat el conte.

I: Que poden veure que no només els hi passa a ells.

M: És a dir, que pugin tenir un referent en el qual es poden identificar voleu dir?

R: Sí, i aprenen molt a verbalitzar l'emoció que tenen a dins. El monstre de colors mateix, veus que verbalitzen molt com es senten en algunes situacions que potser abans els hi costava més o simplement no ho feien.

N: A més, ara que hi ha tants infants nouvinguts, els contes d'imatges, és a dir, de més vocabulari també els utilitzem molt amb aquests nens que no coneixen la llengua.

R: Sí, van molt bé, són un bon recurs.

M: Quins són els temes que no utilitzaríeu a infantil o no utilitzeu?

R: Jo personalment, tancar un tema mai ho he fet .

N: No però si que és veritat que jo contes sobre la mort, no em ve mai de gust explicar-ne.

L: No fins que et trobes que es dona la situació.

N: Sí, llavors utilitzar aquests tipus de contes et serveixen com a recurs per parlar sobre el tema, però explicar un dia un conte sobre la mort perquè si no és habitual.

L: Sí perquè a tu com a mestra també et pot generar neguit perquè penses quines preguntes sortiran després d'això, i jo com a mestra estic preparada per donar resposta?

A: Inclús, molts temes de sexualitat o d'on venen els nens .

L: Tot i això, si ens fixem en els contes infantils, aquestes temes ja costen més de trobar potser.

A: No són temes tan habituals i diaris, és a dir, són temes que els has d'anar a buscar per un motiu concret però que es poden treballar igualment.

M: Quan parlem de temes poden distingir diferents tipus de classificació, aquelles que són més generals i aquelles que són més específiques. Vosaltres heu fet una primera classificació més general pel que fa als temes que apareixen en els contes d'infantil. Alguns experts en literatura infantil com Andrew Wright (1995) o Peter Hunt (2001) han fet també una classificació:

M: Segons Wright (1995) hi ha molts tipus d'històries per triar. Cadascuna ofereix una riquesa diferent.

- Històries de la imaginació: mites, històries tradicionals, històries de fades, llegendes, històries (increïbles), històries d'ensenyament.
- Històries de l'experiència de la vida: històries històriques, històries noves, històries personals del professor, històries personals dels nens.

M: Alguna vegada us heu parat a pensar que a l'hora de classificar contes i històries per temes, també podem parlar d'aquest tipus de classificació?

T: No.

M: Us ha sobtat?

N: Sí perquè potser aquest tipus de classificació avarca temes més generals i no tant específics. Nosaltres a l'hora de triar contes especifiquem més.

L: Sí perquè potser no és una classificació tant per infantil perquè de fet per exemple històries històriques, quants cops expliquem històries històriques a educació infantil?

M: I llegendes per exemple n'expliqueu alguna?

L: Llegendes sí, la de Sant Jordi per exemple.

M: I com a mestres expliqueu històries personals? perquè Wright a l'hora de fer aquesta classificació parla d'històries de l'experiència de la vida: en concret d'històries personals de vosaltres com mestres o d'històries personals dels infants.

R: Sí, vivències nostres.

A: O a vegades anècdotes del cap de setmana, com ha anat, que m'ha passat,...

R: O de quan érem petites.

N: Sí, això els hi agrada molt.

I: És com un modelatge per ells.

E: De fet, moltes cops ells mateixos moltes vegades t'ho demanen: I tu què has fet el cap de setmana?

M: I segurament a ells també els hi agrada molt explicar les seves històries personals. Creieu que és important parlar d'històries o contes relacionats amb la vida dels infants? I que ells ens expliquin les seves pròpies històries?

R: Clar perquè ells expliquen molt, i també penso que és una manera d'estar a prop d'ells. Ells estan molt contents quan ens expliquen allò que els hi ha passat.

M: Per tant, creieu que igual d'important són les dues?

T: Sí, i tant.

M: Per altra banda, Peter Hunt (2001) fa una descripció de la literatura infantil i classifica els temes que apareixen d'una manera molt diferent:

- Censura
- Colonialisme, postcolonialisme, multiculturalitat
- Crítica i teoria
- Drama, cinema, mitjans de comunicació
- Fantasia
- Conte popular, conte de fades, mite, llegenda
- Gènere
- Alfabetització

- Rimes bressol i parc infantil, narració de contes
- Llibres de fotografies
- Poesia
- Contes escolars
- Guerra

M: A simple vista, és evident que les coses han canviat i que segurament la classificació actual que fariem distaria molt d'aquesta. Tot i això, què us ha semblat aquesta tipus de classificació de contes pel que fa els temes? Hi ha algun que us hagin sorprès?

L: Sí, sobre tots els contes relacionats amb el coloniasme, censura, etc. En canvi de la guerra si perquè amb tot el tema dels refugiats s'estan fent molts contes i és una manera de treballar sobre el tema.

R: Amb això doncs vols dir que els temes han anat canviat?

M: Sí, aquesta classificació demostra que els temes de la literatura infantil evolucionen i canvien segons l'època i el país. Segurament nosaltres toquem temes que en altres països no tocarien o al revés perquè potser tampoc són temes tan propers per a nosaltres com a mestres i per als infants.

M: D'aquesta classificació, quins temes utilitzaríeu o utilitzeu a l'aula i quins descartaríeu? Per quina raó?

E: Jo descartar el colonialisme i la censura.

I: Potser són temes que descartaríem perquè són conceptes que per a ells són abstractes

E: També els de crítica i teòrica.

N: El cinema tampoc el tractem gaire. Només en algunes ocasions quan els mateixos infants porten algun conte de Disney.

A: Potser en aquest sentit alguna cosa que s'assembli que utilitzem és una mà de contes.

L: Sí això mateix, com a recurs visual.

A: Tots els altres temes potser si que es poden tractar o tractem a infantil.

M: Ara us ensenyaré un seguit de contes que segurament coneixeu i m'agradaria debatre amb vosaltres què penseu sobre els temes que es tracten de manera més o menys explícita. Algun d'ells són: La Ventafocs, la Blancaneus, la Bella Dorment, la bella i la Bèstia, la caputxeta vermella, la rínxols d'or, els tres porquets.

M: Què penseu d'aquests contes tradicionals? És veritat que la majoria dels contes tradicionals parlen de temes relacionats amb l'amor romàntic i tradicional, on els personatges masculins arrosseguen l'acció i els personatges femenins són més aviat personatges secundaris i febles que necessiten ser rescatades per prínceps valents. A més a més, també podem trobar contes de tradició popular que estableix un model o nucli familiar únic format per el pare, la mare i els fills. Creieu que utilitzar aquestes contes a l'aula ajuden o perjudiquen als infants a crear un model masculí i femení erroni que no té res a veure amb la realitat? O un model de família única?

R: Jo són contes que segueixo explicant però és cert que ara faig una reflexió al final de la història que potser no feia anys endarrere.

M: Que aneu més enllà del conte voleu dir?

R: Sí, abans explicava el conte i em quedava tan tranquil·la però ara quan explico aquests tipus de conte si que vaig amb la idea de fer una reflexió i així els infants també donen la seva opinió. Tot i això, tampoc penso que un conte pot arribar a distorsionar la realitat dels infants.

N: No, tot i que és cert que el model és sempre el mateix: models familiars únics, princeses que necessiten ser salvades pels cavallers, etc. Ara és quan surten contes diferents i a més a més, som més conscients a l'hora d'utilitzar-los i explicar-los.

R: Clar. Jo el conte de la Ventafocs sempre l'explico però faig aquesta reflexió i els pregunto: Ho trobeu bé això?

E: Jo penso que són els contes de tota la vida però els que si hem de fer és reflexionar sobre ells perquè tenim molts models i realitats diferents en una aula i això s'ha de treballar per poder incloure-les totes.

I: A mi un dia em van explicar que el conte dels tres porquets no l'expliquem bé. Que realment el llop s'ha de menjar al porquet petit que fa la casa de palla i s'ha de menjar al porquet mitjà que fa la casa de fusta per ganduls i no haver treballat. Tot i això nosaltres l'expliquem que es continuen salvant i no tenen cap mena de repercussió el fet de no haver treballat i haver-se esforçat menys que el porquet gran. Realment vaig

pensar que tenien tota la raó i que era veritat perquè realment és un tema que no t'hi pares a pensar fins que algú t'ho diu, és a dir, han de morir el porquet petit i mitjà però d'alguna manera per no traumatitzar als infants acabem ensucrant el final del conte i a vegades s'ha de ser una mica més realista.

R: El mateix passa amb els contes d' Andersen, que són molt tristos i a vegades m'he inventat els finals.

I: Però també va bé perquè la vida és dura.

R: Tens raó ja no ho faré més de canviar el final.

L: Tot i això, també penso que és maco inventar-se els finals dels contes o que els infants proposin finals diferents i alternatius.

I: Si és veritat, explicar els finals de sempre i demanar-los, i vosaltres com canviaríeu aquest final?

L: O demanar-los: Què creieu què va passar després?

A: De fet, hi ha aquells contes que en que pots anar triant el que va passant durant la història.

M: A més a més, també trobem alguns temes que no es tracten o es parlen tot el que caldria a l'educació infantil. Alguns d'ells són: els estereotips masculins i femenins, la identitat sexual, la família, les emocions i els sentiments, la mort o l'abús sexual. Per quina raó creieu que aquests temes es tracten menys?

L: Perquè encara són temes tabú en la societat

M: I no creieu que des de l'escola és un bon moment per començar a trencar amb aquests temes que són tabú?

N: Sí, s'hauria de fer perquè són temes molt importants.

I: Jo crec que com a mestres necessitem un acompanyament a l'hora de tractar aquests temes per saber de quina manera utilitzar-los. És a dir, nosaltres en podem fer una idea de com transmetre aquests temes que passen a la nostra vida i també a la dels infants però potser, no som bones transmissores. Potser necessitaríem psicòlegs o gent que t'assessori de com parlar d'aquests temes que poden ser delicats.

M: Parleu d'una formació prèvia?

T: Sí.

A: Jo crec que també caldria un acompanyament amb les famílies, és a dir, que des de casa comparteixin la mateixa visió del que estàs dient tu a l'aula perquè potser com a mestres ho enfoquem des d'una visió que a casa no comparteixen o que ho veuen totalment diferent.

N: Tractar el tema de l'abús per exemple crec que és un tema important a tractar tant des de casa com des de l'escola i potser és un tema que no tractem mai. A més a més, és cert que potser no donem les indicacions correctes, és a dir, potser els hi diem "farem un secret que no podeu dir a ningú" quan no hauríem de dir secret, sinó que hauríem de dir sorpresa o buscar una altre paraula més adient perquè realment la sorpresa és una cosa que a la llarga s'acaba sabent i el secret és una cosa que s'han de guardar i no poden dir. I són situacions o exemples similars que s'haurien de tractar a l'escola i no ho fem.

R: No ho fem per por, sinó per desconeixença.

I: No estem formades o preparades per tractar a l'aula segons quins temes.

L: L'any passat per exemple vaig estar a una escola on es va morir una mare d'un infant. Era una escola molt petita on tothom la coneixia i ens van oferir un assessorament i ens va anar molt bé. Ens van dur uns contes i ens van explicar com ho havíem d'fer, com havíem d'acollir a totes les criatures que estaven plorant per si elles també perdien un dia a la mare. Realment va funcionar molt bé i ho vam fer a través de l'EAP.

E: Realment són temes que al final cadascú ho explica a la seva manera.

L: A més a més, crec també depèn molt de les vivències que has tingut tu com a mestra i de sentir-te més o menys capaç de tractar aquests tipus de temes.

LA MORT

M: De fet, aquest conte, El camí d'en Dan explica la mort d'una mare i tracta les diferents fases del dol d'una persona fins que el Dan és capaç de recordar a la seva mare de manera feliç. Nosaltres com a persones adultes tenim diferents fases a l'hora d'acceptar la mort d'una persona, doncs el mateix passa amb els infants. També trobem el mateix conte però que es titula El camí de la Lua i tracta sobre la mort d'un pare.

M: El camí de la Lua /El camí d'en Dan: dos contes il·lustrats, adreçats a infants a partir de 4 anys que han patit la mort de la mare o del pare, a les seves famílies i als seus educadors.

N: És el que parlàvem abans, que són moments puntuals on necessites aquests recursos, és a dir, que no són contes que s'expliquen de manera quotidiana a l'escola.

A: Si no hi ha cap cas concret no expliquem aquests contes.

I: Sempre expliquem coses maques.

L: Exacte, perquè sembla que no hem de fer patir als infants.

I: Jo penso que no ho normalitzem i al final és una cosa que passa.

L: Però perquè no és un problema nostre, és de la societat.

I: No et plantejes aquest canvi fins que algú t'ho fa trontollar.

R: A vegades si que ens hem trobat amb infants que se'ls hi ha mort els avis i llavors si que és un tema que hem tractat i realment l'has de trampejar com pots. Jo prenc consciència que aniria bé tenir una bona formació, és a dir, conèixer tots els contes nous que han sortit ja que abans sempre s'utilitzaven els contes clàssics. Ara hi ha un ventall de contes fantàstics i molt bonics.

M: Sí en això estic d'acord ja que sempre s'utilitzen els mateixos contes per les mateixes situacions i a vegades no som conscients de la gran varietat de contes que tenim al nostre abast, és a dir, que hi ha món més enllà dels contes que s'han utilitzat tota la vida. De fet, quan seleccionava els contes i els vaig anar a buscar a la biblioteca, a la bibliotecària fins i tot li va sobtar trobar aquests contes ja que la majoria de famílies o mestres que anaven a buscar alguns recurs d'aquests tipus sempre seleccionaven els més antics per aquesta desconexió de nous contes que han sortit. Que tot i que són contes que estan molt bé, són contes que potser no estan actualitzats Ex: contes d'en Tom.

M: Aquest conte també tracta sobre la mort

M: Donde esta güelita Queta?: és un recorregut de la pèrdua d'aquelles persones que estimem.

E: Jo penso que quan ha passat a l'escola algun tipus de situació similar si que hem anat a buscar aquest tipus de contes. També és veritat, que sempre enfoquem la mort d'una persona gran i sempre és més fàcil d'explicar; l'avi ja ha fet la seva vida, el seu recorregut, ... però per altra banda, explicar que un infant de 5 anys s'ha mort costa moltíssim i és una tasca dura.

M: Parlant d'això que dius, aquest conte parlar sobre això mateix.

La estrella de Lea: Lea està molt malalta, morirà. És un camí difícil per a ella i per a tots els que l'envolten. En aquest llibre realista però ple d'esperança, vivim la malaltia i la mort de la Lea amb el seu gran amic Bruno , la seva mamà , la seva professora i el seu companys de classe. Un conte sobre la mort.

M: Realment és una situació que es pot donar. Però potser és allò que dèiem que no només caldria tractar la mort en moments puntuals sinó que ho visquessin com un fet natural de la vida ja que és habitual.

E: Jo penso que els infants, a vegades, ho normalitzen més del que nosaltres ens pensem. Ens fa més respecte parlar-ne a nosaltres com a adults que no pas als infants.

R: Sí, totalment d'acord perquè l'altre dia estàvem parlant sobre el projecte de les formigues i vam dir que hi havia algunes que es moririen i un infant va parlar sobre que es moririen com el seu avi que també és va morir. Per tant ells mateixos van passar de parlar sobre la mort de les formigues a la mort d'un avi amb total normalitat.

N: A una nena de la classe fa poc se li va morir l'avi i tot i que els pares em van dir que la nena havia anat a l'enterro tot, quan va arribar a l'escola com que ella no en va parlar, tampoc jo en vaig parlar o vaig treure el tema. És un tema que personalment costa parlar-ne per això que dèiem que és potser una mica tabú per nosaltres.

E: Jo sí que en parlo a la classe perquè penso que és una cosa que passa i que s'ha de normalitzar dintre del que sigui possible.

I: Però davant d'aquesta situació cal pensar: normalitzen parlar de la mort perquè nosaltres ho normalitzem perquè d'alguna manera no ho treballem com s'hauria de fer (parlem un moment i seguim amb la resta de coses) o ho normalitzen perquè és un tema treballat i assumit? Són dues qüestions totalment diferents perquè nosaltres també tenim molt clar que pot passar però realment quan passa et destroça perquè ho

ens preparat per aquest tipus de situacions. Si tinguéssim clar que en qualsevol moment algú es pot morir, potser després ho gestionariem diferent.

M: És a dir que d'alguna manera estiguéssim educats o preparats per afrontar la mort?

L: Sí. Tot i que penso que ja hem fet un canvi perquè quan jo era petita no es parlava de les emocions i ara ja se'n parla. Potser el següent pas ja serà parlar d'aquestes qüestions que són més dures per nosaltres.

E: Amb això hi hagut un canvi molt important en comparació quan nosaltres anàvem a escola. Ens feia pànic parlar de la mort.

M: Per tant, creieu que hi hauria d'haver com una vinculació entre escola i família?

L: Depèn, si la família t'ho demana tu pots ser receptiva i intentar ajudar des de l'escola tan com es pugui però, a vegades també és un tema de classe i l'has de treballar independentment de les famílies.

M: Parlant de sentiments i emocions aquí he seleccionat alguns llibres que tracten el tema.

EMOCIONS I SENTIMENTS

M:El buit: La Júlia té un gran forat i no li agrada gens. Per això, tracta d'omplir-lo i tapar-lo de moltes maneres diferents per tal que desaparegui. Ho aconseguirà? La vida és plena de trobades. I també de pèrdues. De vegades aquestes pèrdues són insignificants, com perdre un llapis o un paper. Però n'hi ha d'altres que poden ser importants, com perdre un projecte, la salut o una persona estimada. El buit és un llibre que ens parla de la resiliència, o la capacitat de sobreposar-se a l'adversitat i trobar-hi un sentit.

M: Opino que és un conte recomanable perquè és una manera de preguntar-se a un mateix "què em passa?" "per què estic així?" i també de demanar ajuda en situacions que no acabem d'entendre i no sabem el motiu.

M: Per altra banda, aquest conte de Marecrits el vaig trobar molt interessant. En resum parla sobre el perdó entre una mare i el seu fill. Parla sobre la impotència que a vegades poden sentir els fills en algunes situacions quan per exemple veuen que se'ls renya i ells realment no entenen que és allò que han fet malament.

R: Jo crec que parlar d'això és molt bonic però també molt necessari.

M: Mireu aquí ho explica: El desmembrament del pingüí és una metàfora per representar el sentiment d'angoixa davant la inseguretat de no sentir-se estimat i no entendre de vegades la reacció de l'altre, en concret dels pares.

E: És important tenir present que a vegades com a pares i mares ens podem equivocar. Moltes vegades podem tenir la sensació i el pensament de dir: que malament ho he fet això.

I: Sí i sobretot de reconeixeu-ho davant d'ells.

R: De fet quan ho fas, et sents més bé.

N: Ara pensava que quan érem petites nosaltres els contes tractaven temes de comportament, sobre seguir algunes normes o regles i en cas que no es fes hi havia unes conseqüències. En canvi, ara són contes on trobem un diàleg, una discussió i un per què.

L: Potser això passa perquè ara quan algú escriu un conte ja pensa que en traurà la gent que el llegeixi, és a dir, quina metàfora o quina moral hi ha darrera del conte.

M: Una altre tema que a debatre és els:

ESTEREOTIPS FEMENINS I MASCULINS:

M: Rínxols d'ós: És la nit de carnaval al bosc i la família dels ossos es prepara per a la festa. Tot va bé fins que el pare s'enfada perquè el petit ós es vol disfressar de Rínxols d'os. Diu que això no pot ser, que un os no es pot disfressar amb faldilles i cuetes als cabells. Un llibre divertit on tota la família participa en la resolució d'un "conflicte" que en realitat veiem que no és!

M: Un tigre amb tutú: El tigre protagonista té una passió: el ballet. Li encanta posar-se el tutú i ballar, però la gent s'espanta quan veu un tigre, i el seu somni es complica una mica. Un conte sobre l'amistat, els somnis, ser nosaltres mateixes i la importància de l'amistat

M: Aquests dos llibres si llegiu l'argument podeu veure que són contes que parlen sobre que no només les nenes porten llacets o els hi agrada el color rosa sinó que independentment que siguis un nen o nena et pots posar els complements que vulguis

i et pot agradar qualsevol cosa, és a dir, que no hi ha res establert exclusivament per nens i exclusivament per nenes.

L: Socialment hi ha aquesta distinció i rebuig a tot allò que potser socialment no està ben vist i tu com a mestra o mare ja ho pots treballar de la manera més correcta, que l'entorn social és el que té influència.

L: Avui ha passat a l'aula que per un simple fet de triar un color, tenien claríssim que el color lila i el color rosa eren colors de nena.

N: Tot i això, també depèn molt de l'infant i de l'entorn d'aquest perquè no tots tenen aquest pensament.

M: Tot i això, jo penso que des de l'escola aquest és un tema que treballeu molt per trenca amb aquests estereotips que socialment estan molt marcats.

L: Si des de l'escola ho tenim molt present però si des de casa aquest treball no està vinculat llavors en moltes ocasions no acaba funcionant. Àvia: vine que et posaré aquest llaç de color rosa que estaràs molt guapa sense demanar-li de quin color vols el llaç o simplement dir-li abans vols un llaç?

N: A les botigues fins i tot de roba de nens està molt marcada aquesta diferència. Ara més que mai. Per nenes tot és rosa amb purpurina, etc.. i amb les joguines passa el mateix, els anuncis, la televisió, ..

L: Opino que potser el que ha canviat cap a millor en aquest sentit han sigut els contes

M: Un tema relacionat amb els estereotips és la identitat sexual.

IDENTITAT SEXUAL

M: Ara em dic Joana: Nen o nena? Només cadascú sap què és i com se sent, i davant d'això, el més important de tot és l'amistat. Una història commovedora, dolça i tendra sobre ser un mateix. Parla de l'acceptació d'un mateix però també de l'acceptació dels altres perquè realment si no tens aquesta acceptació per part dels altres o de la societat, sobretot quan ets petits, costa molt verbalitzar en paraules aquest canvi.

M: Cua de sirena: Alguna cosa o L'altra. Blanc o negre. Carn o peix. Nen o nena, humans o sirena ... Com si només hi hagués dues opcions!

N: Aquests temes penso que comencem ara a tractar-los, almenys he tingut la sensació que fins ara no se'n parlava.

L: Segurament perquè abans els infants no ho deien, ara sí que hi ha infants que comencen a fer a aquest canvi ja des de petits.

M: Que hi ha més visibilitat voleu dir?

R: Sí i acceptació.

L: També penso que les famílies juguen un paper molt important. Potser aquells pares i mares que són més joves els hi és més fàcil acceptar-ho. A més a més, és important des de casa no reprimir aquests sentiments i sensacions que tenen a veure amb la identitat del teu fill o filla. Que prevalgui la felicitat abans que les aparences i allò que diran els altres.

I: El lloc on vius també influeix molt.

M: De fet aquest conte explica això mateix.

M: El meu fill princesa: Parla del transvestisme en els infants, un fet encara ara difícil d'acceptar sense estranyesa. Escrit amb ànim d'oferir als nens i als adults una eina per parlar de l'amistat incondicional. L'autora explica que el va escriure donat que no volia que es fiquessin amb el seu fill, o que el rebutgessin, pel fet d'anar a escola amb un vestit de nena. Ateses les conseqüències inimaginables que es deriven de l'assetjament escolar, el fet de parlar sobre l'acceptació pot ajudar a encarar aspectes bàsics com ara la compassió, qualitat que demana un esforç, atenció i compromís. La compassió que dediquem els uns als altres i el món sencer depèn d'uns i d'altres.

M: Una altre tema és la família, avui dia hi ha una diversitat familiar molt amplia que va més enllà del model familiar tradicional.

M: Utilitzeu aquests tipus de contes que no parlen del model tradicional de família?

L: Sí.

N: Els contes que tenim a l'aula que parlen sobre la família segueixen el model tradicional però per aquest motiu quan s'acaba el conte fas la reflexió sobre la possibilitat que hi hagi altres models.

R: Jo crec que hauríem d'invertir més en contes nous.

N: Si perquè realment tenim molt contes que parlen d'emocions però no en tenim de tots aquests temes dels que hem estat parlant fins ara.

L: Si fer-ne una demanada per temàtiques.

M: FAMÍLIA

M: La nena amb dos pares: La Berta està molt contenta perquè a l'escola hi ha una nena nova. Es diu Matilda i a totes dues els agrada el mateix! Només hi ha una cosa que les diferencia: la Matilda té dos pares. Es mor de ganes de conèixer-los. Segur que a casa seva tot és molt diferent! La protagonista s'adona que tot i que tinguin models familiar diferents la realitat que tenen a casa és absolutament la mateixa.

M: Amb la tango són tres: Aquesta història va succeir al zoo de Central Park de Nova York. Tango va ser la primera pingüí amb dos pares. Una família diferent que neda, salta, juga a l'estany i és feliç.

M: Paula tiene dos mamás: Totes les persones són iguals i alhora molt diferents. A les famílies els passa una cosa semblant, hi ha famílies amb una mare i un pare, altres només amb un pare o amb una mare. Aquest llibre explica la història de Paula que té dues mares i en la qual aprèn que l'única veritablement important és l'afecte.

M: Per últim, trobem el tema de l'abús sexual.

L: És el més complicat aquest.

R: És una tema que costa molt de tractar i de parlar-ne però que s'ha de fer perquè segurament hi haurà infants que en alguna situació similar agrairan poder-ne parlar a l'escola a partir d'un conte.

M: ABÚS SEXUAL

M: És un conte que tracta sobre com prevenir l'abús sexual

M: ¡Estela, grita muy fuerte!: A l'Estela li agraden moltes coses. Fins fa poc també li agradava jugar amb el seu oncle Anselm, però últimament la porta a l'habitació i li fa coses que a ella no li agraden gens. La Conxita, la seva mestra, li va ensenyar un truc meravellós per quan passi alguna cosa que no li agradi o algú vulgui fer-li mal: "Crida ben fort, Estela!"

M: Clara y su sombra: Clara tiene miedo por la noche. Hay algo oscuro que la inquieta: una sombra oscura y pegajosa que no la deja descansar. Además, ¡le ha quitado la sonrisa! La sigue por todos lados desde que empezó a jugar con ese amigo tan amigo de la familia". Se trata de un libro que pretende ayudar a los adultos a explicarles a los niños cómo prevenir el abuso sexual infantil.

M: És un tema molt important a treballar perquè realment la major part dels abusos sexuals infantils es donen en aquesta franja d'edat.

N: Sí, està bé perquè explica com reaccionar perquè és cert que moltes vegades els últims en saber-ho són les famílies.

I: Potser pel model aquests que parlàvem de complaure a l'adult, dels secrets...

M: Continuant amb el debat, aquí tenim a la Laura, l'especialista d'anglès i fent referència a això, al currículum hi trobem esmentada la introducció d'una llengua estrangera sempre i quan el context sociolingüístic escolar ho permeti, especialment en el darrer curs del cicle. Així doncs, la introducció de l'anglès a l'educació infantil a les escoles catalanes ha experimentat un important creixement. Tot i que l'anglès no és obligatori en aquesta etapa, un nombre creixent d'escoles han decidit implementar programes d'ensenyament de l'anglès a aquestes edats. Tot i així, és cert que hi ha molts recursos i maneres que poden ajudar els nens a aprendre la llengua estrangera i a desenvolupar actituds positives envers l'aprenentatge de les llengües

M: Per acabar amb la taula rodona, quan parlem de contes en anglès un altre criteri que podem tenir en compte és d'una banda, parlar de contes simplificats, especialment per a nens que aprenen anglès. Per altra banda, trobem contes autèntics escrits per a nens de parla anglesa que també són adequats per a aquells que aprenen anglès. Com que no han estat escrits específicament per a l'ensenyament de l'anglès com a llengua estrangera, l'idioma no està seleccionat ni classificat. L'avantatge d'utilitzar llibres de contes autèntics és que proporcionen exemples de llenguatge "real" i ajuden a portar el món real a l'aula. Les històries simplificades molt sovint representen una versió degradada del llenguatge anglès i poden enganyar tant a professors com a estudiants sobre la veritable naturalesa del llenguatge. L'autèntic també pot ser molt motivador per a un nen ja que té un fort sentiment d'assoliment per haver treballat amb un llibre "real".

M: Què en penseu sobre això? Hi esteu d'acord?

ET: A mi els contes versionats no m'agraden perquè són contes sense història i ja que expliquem contes almenys que tinguin argument perquè sinó no cal fer-ho i aniríem directament a utilitzar les flash cards per tal que aprenguessin el vocabulari.

M: Creieu que s'han d'adaptar els contes? Per què?

ET: No tot i que és veritat que quan utilitzo contes reals no llegeixo explícitament el que posa, però la idea del conte s'explica.

L: Jo crec que una cosa és la immersió lingüística que vam fer fa anys amb el català a l'escola, s'hauria de fer el mateix en anglès. Aprendre anglès en un context real, de gaudi, de joc que puguin utilitzar en el seu dia a dia.

M: Hi ha d'haver una coherència pel que fa els temes entre els contes en català i en anglès? Per tal que es complementi o que no es repeteixin, etc..

N: Jo crec que utilitzar temes semblants en les dues llengües pot ajudar i a reforçar l'aprenentatge.

I: Sí ja que pot ser molt enriquidor per ells i elles.

M: Creieu que s'hauria de posar en comú? Es fa?

L: S'hauria de fer però no es fa perquè el dia a dia a l'escola no ho permet.

E: Segur que no estaria malament que ho féssim.

M: Arribades a aquest punt, m'agradaria donar-vos les gràcies a totes per haver participat i haver compartit amb mi i les vostres experiències, vivències, punt de vista i reflexions sobre el l'ús del conte com a recurs d'aprenentatge a l'educació infantil.

9.4. Appendix 4: Class observations

9.4.1 Real observations

Observation 1

Storybook: I will never not ever eat a tomato

Topic: Food

Class group: P4

HOW TOPICS ARE MANAGED DURING STORYTELLING?

1. **Does the teacher present the story before starting?** Yes

2. **Does the teacher show and talk about the cover of the book?** Yes, but she only reads the title of the storybook.

3. **Is the topic introduced before starting?** Yes, because children already know what the story it about. It's the second time they listen to the storybook.

4. **Is the story appropriate to work on the topic that has been chosen?**
Yes because it appears different kind of food in it.

5. **Is the topic close to children?** Yes.

6. **Does the topic appear in a clear way during the story?** Yes.

7. **Does the teacher connect the topic with children's experiences?** Yes, the teacher asks children questions such as: Do you like bananas?

8. **Does the teacher do activities before/during/ after the story to work on the topic /topics that appear in it?** Yes, during and after the story asks different questions related to the topic and the storybook. As examples: What do you think what the girl is going to eat next? Who remember what

Lola has eaten?

9. Does the teacher use any resource during the story to ensure that children understand it? Yes, she asks questions and she also uses Catalan.

10. How is the relation between children and the teacher? It is quite close. They sit in a circle in front of the teacher. Almost all of them pay attention.

11. Does the teacher receive any feedback from children? Yes, they answer teacher's questions.

12. Are children involved in the story? Yes.

13. Does the teacher ask questions related to the topic during the story? Yes. Do you like peas? What does come next? What is this? Do you remember what does Lola said about tomatoes at the beginning of the story?

14. Are children interested in the topic of the story? Yes, all of them remember the story because they have already listened to it.

15. How much time is spent to tell the story? 25 minutes

16. Does the teacher use Catalan during storytelling? Yes.

17. Is the storybook big enough that everyone can see it? Yes.

18. Does the teacher use any resource apart from the book? Which one does she use? No.

19. Do children like the story? Yes.

Observation 2

Storybook; Giraffes can't dance

Topic: Animals / Feelings and emotions

Class group: P4

HOW TOPICS ARE MANAGED DURING STORYTELLING?

1. **Does the teacher present the story before starting?** Yes.

2. **Does the teacher show and talk about the cover of the book?** No, she only reads the title.

3. **Is the topic introduced before starting?** No

4. **Is the story appropriate to work on the topic that has been chosen?**
Animals: Yes / Feelings and emotions: Not at all.

5. **Is the topic close to children?** Yes.

6. **Does the topic appear in a clear way during the story?** Animals: yes
Actions: No

7. **Does the teacher connect the topic with children's experiences?** No

8. **Does the teacher do activities before/during/ after the story to work on the topic /topics that appear in it?** No

9. **What kind activities does the teacher prepare? Are they related?**

10. **Does the teacher use any resource during the story to ensure that children understand it?** Yes. She asks questions, she speaks in Catalan as well as she does mime.

11. How is the relation between children and the teacher? Children sit on their chairs and the teacher is in front of the class. Their behaviour is not so good.

12. Does the teacher receive any feedback from children? Yes.

13. Are children involved in the story? Not all of them.

14. Does the teacher ask questions related to the topic during the story?
Yes. As an example: what animals is this?

15. Are children interested in the topic of the story? Not all of them.

16. How much time is spent to tell the story? 15 minutes.

17. Does the teacher use Catalan during storytelling? Yes.

18. Is the storybook big enough that everyone can see it? Yes.

19. Does the teacher use any resource apart from the book? Which one does she use? No

20. Do children like the story? I'm not sure.

Observation 3

Storybook: The worst princess

Topic: breaking stereotypes

Class group: P4

HOW TOPICS ARE MANAGED DURING STORYTELLING?

1. **Does the teacher present the story before starting?** Yes.
 2. **Does the teacher show and talk about the cover of the book?** No, she just reads the title of the storybook.
 3. **Is the topic introduced before starting?** No
 4. **Is the story appropriate to work on the topic that has been chosen?** Yes.
 5. **Is the topic close to children?** No because they are not used no listen to stories related to this topic.
 6. **Does the topic appear in a clear way during the story?** Yes, the vocabulary and the pictures used are so good.
 7. **Does the teacher connect the topic with children's experiences?** No.
 8. **Does the teacher do activities before/during/ after the story to work on the topic /topics that appear in it?** Yes, once she has finished telling the story, she asks questions related to the topic in order to start a kind of debate.
 9. **Does the teacher use any resource during the story to ensure that children understand it?** Yes. She asks questions, she speaks in Catalan as well as she does mime.
-

10. How is the relation between children and the teacher? Children sit in a circle and they are in silence while storytelling.

11. Does the teacher receive any feedback from children? Yes, the answer the teacher's questions. In addition, when they see the slides and the pictures of the storybook they try to guess what is going to happen next.

12. Are children involved in the story? Yes, everybody pay attention. They have a good attitude. Their behaviour is good and they both ask and answers questions related to the story.

13. Does the teacher ask questions related to the topic during the story? Yes such as: Do you that that prince's attitude is appropriate? What does the princess prefer?

14. Are children interested in the topic of the story? Yes, however children are not aware of the metaphor of the story.

15. How much time is spent to tell the story? 15 minutes.

16. Does the teacher use Catalan during storytelling? Yes.

17. Is the storybook big enough that everyone can see it? Yes.

18. Does the teacher use any resource apart from the book? Which one does she use? No.

19. Do children like the story? Yes.

9.4.1. Hypothetical observations

Observation 1

Storybook: Mixed: a colourful story

Topic: Colours

Class group: P4

HOW TOPICS ARE MANAGED DURING STORYTELLING?

1. Does the teacher present the story before starting? Yes.
 2. Does the teacher show and talk about the cover of the book? No, she only reads the title of the story.
 3. Is the topic introduced before starting? No.
 4. Is the story appropriate to work on the topic that has been chosen? Yes.
 5. Is the topic close to children? Yes.
 6. Does the topic appear in a clear way during the story? Yes.
 7. Does the teacher connect the topic with children's experiences? No
 8. Does the teacher do activities before/during/ after the story to work on the topic /topics that appear in it? During storytelling the teachers invites children to guess which colour will appear. For example: If we mix yellow and red, which colour will appear?
 9. Does the teacher use any resource during the story to ensure that children understand it? No
 10. How is the relation between children and the teacher? Children show
-

their interest in the story. They pay attention and almost all of them are quite.

11. Does the teacher receive any feedback from children? Yes. They answer teacher's questions.

12. Are children involved in the story? Not all of them are involved in the story.

13. Does the teacher ask questions related to the topic during the story? Yes. For example: what colour is it?

14. Are children interested in the topic of the story? Yes.

15. How much time is spent to tell the story? 10 minutes

16. Does the teacher use Catalan during storytelling? No

17. Is the storybook big enough that everyone can see it? Yes.

18. Does the teacher use any resource apart from the book? Which one does she use? Flashcards at the end of the story to review the colours.

19. Do children like the story? Yes.

Observation 2

Storybook: The old toy room

Topic: Toys

Class group: P3

HOW TOPICS ARE MANAGED DURING STORYTELLING?

1. Does the teacher present the story before starting? Yes.
 2. Does the teacher show and talk about the cover of the book? No, she only reads the title.
 3. Is the topic introduced before starting? No
 4. Is the story appropriate to work on the topic that has been chosen? Yes.
 5. Is the topic close to children? Yes.
 6. Does the topic appear in a clear way during the story? Yes.
 7. Does the teacher connect the topic with children's experiences? Yes, she asks questions to know which toys children have.
 8. Does the teacher do activities before/during/ after the story to work on the topic /topics that appear in it? No.
 9. Does the teacher use any resource during the story to ensure that children understand it? Yes, she speaks in Catalan.
 10. How is the relation between children and the teacher? Children show their interest in the story. They pay attention and almost all of them are quite.
-

11. Does the teacher receive any feedback from children? Yes, when they see a new toy that appears in the story they say the name in Catalan. They also try to answer teacher's questions.

12. Are children involved in the story? Yes.

13. Does the teacher ask questions related to the topic during the story? Yes. Example: what toy is this? Do you have any one like this?

14. Are children interested in the topic of the story? Yes.

15. How much time is spent to tell the story? 20 minutes.

16. Does the teacher use Catalan during storytelling? Yes.

17. Is the storybook big enough that everyone can see it? Yes.

18. Does the teacher use any resource apart from the book? Which one does she use? Yes, she uses some of the classroom toys to support the story.

19. Do children like the story? Yes.

Observation 3

Storybook: Froggy gets dressed

Topic: Clothes and actions

Class group: P4

HOW TOPICS ARE MANAGED DURING STORYTELLING?

1. **Does the teacher present the story before starting?** Yes.
 2. **Does the teacher show and talk about the cover of the book?** No, she only reads the title.
 3. **Is the topic introduced before starting?** No.
 4. **Is the story appropriate to work on the topic that has been chosen?**
Yes for both topics.
 5. **Is the topic close to children?** Yes.
 6. **Does the topic appear in a clear way during the story?** Yes.
 7. **Does the teacher connect the topic with children's experiences?** Yes.
She asks questions like: Can you dress up by yourself?
 8. **Does the teacher do activities before/during/ after the story to work on the topic /topics that appear in it?** No.
 9. **Does the teacher use any resource during the story to ensure that children understand it?** Yes, she speaks in Catalan. She also use mime and point at their own clothes.
 10. **How is the relation between children and the teacher?** Children sit on their chairs and the teacher is in front of the class. Their behaviour is not so good.
-

11. Does the teacher receive any feedback from children? Yes, although their behaviour is not so good, some of them try to answer teacher's questions.

12. Are children involved in the story? Not all of them are involved.

13. Does the teacher ask questions related to the topic during the story?
Yes. For example: Who can tell me what is this while points a T-shirt?
What is doing Froggy?

14. Are children interested in the topic of the story? Not all of them.

15. How much time is spent to tell the story? 15 minutes.

16. Does the teacher use Catalan during storytelling? Yes.

17. Is the storybook big enough that everyone can see it? Yes.

18. Does the teacher use any resource apart from the book? Which one does she use? No.

19. Do children like the story? Yes.

Observation 4

Storybook: Seren's seasons

Topic: Seasons and weather

Class group: P5

HOW TOPICS ARE MANAGED DURING STORYTELLING?

1. **Does the teacher present the story before starting?** Yes.

2. **Does the teacher show and talk about the cover of the book?** No, she only reads the title of the storybooks.

3. **Is the topic introduced before starting?** No

4. **Is the story appropriate to work on the topic that has been chosen?**
Yes.

5. **Is the topic close to children?** Yes.

6. **Does the topic appear in a clear way during the story?** Yes.

7. **Does the teacher connect the topic with children's experiences?** No

8. **Does the teacher do activities before/during/ after the story to work on the topic /topics that appear in it?** Before starting the teachers asks: what's the weather like today? What season is it?

9. **Does the teacher use any resource during the story to ensure that children understand it?** She speaks in Catalan.

10. **How is the relation between children and the teacher?** Children sit on their chairs and the teacher is in front of the class. Their behaviour is not so good.

11. Does the teacher receive any feedback from children? No.

12. Are children involved in the story? At the beginning yes but at the end not everybody pay attention.

13. Does the teacher ask questions related to the topic during the story?
No

14. Are children interested in the topic of the story? Not all are interested.

15. How much time is spent to tell the story? 20 minutes.

16. Does the teacher use Catalan during storytelling? Yes.

17. Is the storybook big enough that everyone can see it? Yes.

18. Does the teacher use any resource apart from the book? Which one does she use? No

19. Do children like the story? Not everybody likes the story.

Observation 5

Storybook: Elmer the elephant

Topic: Feelings and emotions/ colours

Class group: P3

HOW TOPICS ARE MANAGED DURING STORYTELLING?

1. **Does the teacher present the story before starting?** Yes

2. **Does the teacher show and talk about the cover of the book?** No, she only reads the title.

3. **Is the topic introduced before starting?** No.

4. **Is the story appropriate to work on the topic that has been chosen?**
Yes.

5. **Is the topic close to children?** Yes because children already know the storybook.

6. **Does the topic appear in a clear way during the story?** Yes.

7. **Does the teacher connect the topic with children's experiences?** No.

8. **Does the teacher do activities before/during/ after the story to work on the topic /topics that appear in it?** Yes she asks questions related to the storybook.

Before: Who can tell me who this elephant is? Do you know him?

During: What colour is it?

After: How feel the elephant in the begging of the story? And at the end?

9. **Does the teacher use any resource during the story to ensure that children understand it?** Yes. She asks questions and she also speaks in

Catalan.

10. How is the relation between children and the teacher? Children show their interest in the story. They pay attention and almost all of them are quite.

11. Does the teacher receive any feedback from children? Yes.

12. Are children involved in the story? Yes because it is a story that they already know before but in Catalan.

13. Does the teacher ask questions related to the topic during the story? Yes.

14. Are children interested in the topic of the story? Yes.

15. How much time is spent to tell the story? 15 minutes.

16. Does the teacher use Catalan during storytelling? Yes.

17. Is the storybook big enough that everyone can see it? Yes.

18. Does the teacher use any resource apart from the book? Which one does she use? No.

19. Do children like the story? Yes.

Observation 6

Storybook: Polar bear, polar bear, what do you hear?

Topic: Animals and colours

Class group: P5

HOW TOPICS ARE MANAGED DURING STORYTELLING?

1. Does the teacher present the story before starting? Yes

2. Does the teacher show and talk about the cover of the book? No, she only reads the title.

3. Is the topic introduced before starting? No.

4. Is the story appropriate to work on the topic that has been chosen? Yes.

5. Is the topic close to children? Yes.

6. Does the topic appear in a clear way during the story? Yes.

7. Does the teacher connect the topic with children's experiences? Yes.
Maybe she asks questions related to which colours and animals they like the most.

8. Does the teacher do activities before/during/ after the story to work on the topic /topics that appear in it? Yes.
After: Can you tell me which the sound of the dog is? What animal barks?

9. Does the teacher use any resource during the story to ensure that children understand it? She imitates the sounds of the different animals as the story requires it.

10. How is the relation between children and the teacher? Children sit in circle. They behave well and are show interest of the animals that appear during the story.

11. Does the teacher receive any feedback from children? Yes.

12. Are children involved in the story? Yes, they try to guess which animal comes next as well as the try to imitate the animal's sounds as the teacher.

13. Does the teacher ask questions related to the topic during the story?
Yes: Which animal do you think that will appear? Can you repeat with me?
Do you like this animal?

14. Are children interested in the topic of the story? Yes.

15. How much time is spent to tell the story? 20

16. Does the teacher use Catalan during storytelling? No.

17. Is the storybook big enough that everyone can see it? Yes.

18. Does the teacher use any resource apart from the book? Which one does she use? No.

19. Do children like the story? Yes, they really enjoy it.