

# **STORYTELLING AS A TOOL TO LEARN ENGLISH IN INFANT EDUCATION**

**CHILDREN'S AGE AND TEACHER'S ROLE  
AS INFLUENCING FACTORS**

Final Year Project

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in English)

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*The food that we eat makes our bodies and the stories we hear make our minds.*

Andrew Wright

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## Abstract

Storytelling is presented as a cross-curricular, useful, and effective method in the teaching and learning process throughout the second cycle of Early Childhood Education. However, this methodology is particularly important in the foreign language area, the aim of which is to bring children closer and familiar with a new language. Nevertheless, there are differences in the use of this educational tool among the different courses of this cycle. Although this resource has been a widely researched area in the English learning, few studies investigate what these differences are, as well as what the role of the teacher should be when explaining tales and stories. Therefore, through this study it is intended to introduce the first steps towards research, presenting an overview of how narration is used in today's classrooms to subsequently provide a response adjusted to children's age and teacher's experience.

**Key words:** Storytelling, cross-curricular, teaching and learning process, Early Childhood Education, foreign language

## Resum

L'Storytelling es presenta com a un mètode transversal, útil i eficaç en el procés d'ensenyament i aprenentatge al llarg del segon cicle d'Educació Infantil. Tot i això, aquesta metodologia pren gran importància dins l'àrea de llengua estrangera, l'objectiu de la qual és apropar i familiaritzar als infants a un nou idioma. No obstant, s'aprecien diferències a l'hora d'emprar aquesta eina educativa entre els diferents cursos d'aquest cicle. Tot i que aquest recurs ha estat una àrea àmpliament investigada per a l'aprenentatge de l'anglès, hi ha pocs estudis que investiguin quines són aquestes diferències, així com també quin ha de ser el rol del mestre a l'hora d'explicar contes i històries. Per tant, a través d'aquest estudi es pretén introduir els primers passos cap a aquesta recerca, presentant una visió general de com la narració és utilitzada a les aules d'avui en dia per tal d'oferir, posteriorment, una resposta ajustada en funció de l'edat dels infants i de l'experiència del mestre.

**Paraules clau:** Storytelling, mètode transversal, procés d'ensenyament i aprenentatge, Educació Infantil, llengua estrangera

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# 1. Introduction

The Final Year Project entitled *Storytelling as a tool to learn English in Infant Education: children's age and teacher's role as influencing factors*, has been carried out during my 4th year of the Double Degree in Preschool and Primary Education (major in English) at the University of Vic – Central University of Catalonia. This work is part of the Final Year Project (MEI) subject and is divided into two parts which include a seminar on Research Methods and the development of the research, respectively.

“Once upon a time...” is the beginning of a sentence that allows children to travel to an unthinkable world. Déborah Chomski, linguist, educator, and writer said: "We are born and raised accompanied by stories. Stories to sleep, to eat, to play and to learn to be happy. The development of narrative thinking is part of children's thinking. And it is a component of the learning we do throughout our lives. Our experiences and our knowledge find in narration a very powerful form of transmission." (Chomski, 2018) Undoubtedly, stories help us —both adults and children— to understand the world, to ask ourselves questions and therefore, to search for the right answers.

Recently, the number of schools that start teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in early ages has increased considerably even though it is not a compulsory subject in these stages. As a result, both methodology and resources have changed to adapt to the new reality. During this process, it is seen that Storytelling has an essential prominence together with other resources, as it increases communication skills in English, improves listening skills, vocabulary, expressions and structures, and develops social and thinking skills. In addition, for English teachers, stories are a highly stimulating resource that allow involving pupils in their learning process in a foreign language. From this perspective, Early Childhood Education professionals must know how to apply the methodology of the Storytelling in their proposals for intervention with children.

## 1.1 Objectives

The objectives that are to be achieved with this work are the following ones:

**Objective 1:** To present the resource of Storytelling as an educational method.

**Hypothesis:** Storytelling is a very powerful tool in the educational field as children are very involved in the world of fantasy and imagination and so allows greater motivation towards learning.

**Objective 2:** To analyse the effectiveness of using this method as an educational resource in Kindergarten school, specifically in the learning of English as a foreign language.

**Hypothesis:** Storytelling is a very effective resource that allows children to learn different aspects of the language, such as grammatical structures, vocabulary and pronunciation.

**Objective 3:** To demonstrate that there are differences of application in the use of this resource in the respective ages of 3 and 5 years.

**Hypothesis:** The way that teachers apply it to both ages is completely different. With 3-year-old children, stories might be introduced in a visual way and through very short words since their world is very little, whereas with 5-year-old ones, stories might be introduced through phrases since children of this age have a wide vision of the world.

**Objective 4:** To analyse the role of the teacher as a Storyteller in Infant Education.

**Hypothesis:** Through Storytelling, the teacher has been able to transmit a series of knowledge and skills, both related to language and to the subject itself.

## **1.2 Justification of the research**

The beginnings are always hard and getting to what has been the definitive title of a study that would be with me for almost 11 months has not been easy. At first, many ideas related to the strategies to learn English came to my mind so I thought that maybe an interesting topic could be analysing the strategies that novice and expert teachers use when teaching English. But it ended up in a simple idea as Laura Domingo, one of the professors of the Seminar class, made me realize it was a very subjective topic and very difficult to carry out. Finally, after reading and rereading different articles —always trying not to distance from the initial topic— and having long conversations with my tutor, I found what would be my final proposal: I would focus on the role the teacher has when using one of the strategies to learn English. In this case, when telling a story. However, during the study I realized that the methodology the teacher uses when working with Storytelling in the different courses of Infant Education was much more important than his/her role in the classroom, so for that reason I decided that the role of the teacher should be secondary in my work.

One of the main reasons I have chosen to focus this final research on Storytelling and not on other strategies has been the fact of being able to do internships from the first course of my degree as it has allowed me to know an undeniable reality: stories are one of the most used resources in schools, whether in Infant or Primary stage.

Finally, the title of this research arises from the need to go in-depth in a topic where most of the studies that have been carried out basically show the importance of teaching a foreign language through Storytelling, but few refer to the way it should be applied in the different ages that this stage entails as well as the role of the teacher inside the classroom. And as a future education professional I am going to be, I consider of great importance to know what these differences are and what the role of the teacher is when telling a story.

## **1.3 Methodology and structure of the research**

All the information of this study has been collected, on the one hand, from the bibliographic research used as a basis and guide in conducting the work. However, I would like to highlight that in some cases the theories do not relate directly to the study but are necessary to understand the information that follows.

On the other hand, it has also been collected from the realization of methodological triangulation in relation to the practical part. This technique allows a better understanding of the research topic through a plurality of different approaches and instruments. These are a class observation, a questionnaire and a focus group.

Once these sections are described, there is the research study section in which I briefly describe the methodological approach I have used to carry out the study. Nevertheless, an unforeseen situation has appeared during the research and has caused some limitations in my work that are also explained in this section. Followed by this information, the results obtained from the research are presented. Finally, I conclude the study by stating some general conclusions.

## **2. Theoretical framework**

Below there are all the key contents for understanding this research and being able to answer the research questions: “How does the age of children influence in the use of Storytelling as a strategy to teach English?” and “How the teacher has to act as a Storyteller?”. These contents are grouped into 4 different blocks. First, we find a section that tells us about Storytelling in a general way. As a result of this first point, four different subsections appear: “How to select stories”, “The role of the storyteller”, “Storytelling phases” and “Digital Storytelling in Kindergarten Education”. The second section aims to explore the most important characteristics of children at these ages. In the same way, the following section presents the characteristics of the teachers throughout the years. Finally, the final section “The importance of Storytelling in Kindergarten school,” arises from the fusion of points 1, 2 and 3.

### **2.1 What do we mean by Storytelling?**

It is difficult to focus on a single and valid definition of the concept of Storytelling because, depending on the area to which we want to refer —communicative, marketing, political, educational or journalistic— we will find one definition or another. However, in this project I will just expose those definitions related to the education field, thus referring to Storytelling as a tool for teaching English in the Early Childhood period.

According to Grainger (1997, p.13), Storytelling is one of the first art forms that consolidates an integral aspect of human existence. Likewise, it is constituted as the most durable educational resource, since what is learned in this way is very hard to forget due to its creative form of communication, which leads to reflection based on both real and imaginary experiences.

Lockett (2011) defined Storytelling as a natural way to introduce English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Arva (2018), cited in Camps-Casals, N., Canals, M., Medina, N. (2018), complemented this definition by adding that apart from being an exciting and entertaining resource, Storytelling is an authentic form of communication, introduces new cultures to children, teaches them in an entertaining way and develops critical thinking skills.

It is also important to mention Rossiter (2002, p.3), who stated that Storytelling has special pedagogical values for the foreign language classroom, and he pointed out:

Stories as educational tools are effective because they are believable, rememberable and entertaining. The believability stems from the fact that stories deal with the human-like experience that we tend to perceive as an authentic and credible source of knowledge. Stories make information more rememberable because they involve us in the actions of the characters. In doing so, stories invite active meaning-making.

So from these definitions we understand that Storytelling is a very useful tool to explain what we want, using narrative and creativity to catch our student's attention and to work naturally in the learning of English in an environment of magic and discovery.

## **2.2 How to select the stories**

Sara Cone Bryant (1996), the author of several children's books from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, including *Com explicar contes*, defined: "A story is a work of art; its main utility for the child lies in the call to the eternal feeling of beauty, which constantly pushes the human soul to new curiosities, thus advancing it towards its harmonious development." (Bryant, 1996, p.20-21)

We can find many types of stories: nursery rhymes, burlesque tales, fairy tales, fables, etc., and many authors have contributed to defining which are the necessary factors when selecting stories when the purpose is to learn a new language.

Porcar (2002, p.109) mentioned two ideas that a Storyteller should keep in mind when selecting a story. The first one is related to the students, that is, if the story is appropriate for their level and there are opportunities for them to participate. On the other hand, the second idea is related to the stories themselves: is it a story that is too long? Is it related to the contents taught in the foreign language? Are the illustrations appropriate and fun?

Gilolmo (1988) stated in his article that as children attention span is very short in these ages, teachers must try to look for a single, clearly defined theme, with a well-developed sequential plot and a standardized characterisation, avoiding stories with long explanations or descriptions, flashbacks, subplots and other literary devices that break

the flow of a story. Moreover, they must ensure the brevity of the stories and gradually increase it on the basis of age.

However, Porcar (2002, p.109) added that the fact of wanting to tell very extensive and complicated stories should not be a cause for rejection since there is always the possibility of simplifying them, eliminating those irrelevant terms for their understanding and maintaining the vocabulary that is easy to exemplify with gestures, mimicry and images; changing the indirect style by direct style, using action verbs, changing very long and subordinate phrases to shorter and coordinated ones and replacing complicated verbs with better-known ones, among other possibilities.

According to Tobias (2008, p.5), there is another important factor when selecting stories and it is related to storyteller himself: "Choose your stories wisely. If you don't like a story, don't tell it, because the child will perceive that you are not enjoying, and neither will (s)he. Choose stories that have some relevance in the life of the child and about something you can learn and enjoy together."

On the other hand, Cameron (2001) also proposed several ideas that he considered to be taken into account when selecting stories. Here is a summary of them:

- The stories need to be motivating, fun and interesting for the children.
- Characters need to include fantastic beings and animals from wonderful worlds, who are able to gain their attention and empathy.
- Stories should provide positive feelings about their own culture.
- The argument must be clear and structured (formulation of a problem, different situations linked to each other and the resolution of the problem).
- There must be a balance between dialogue and narration, as well as repetition of grammar and vocabulary patterns, and include new vocabulary, but not in excess so that the story is understandable but does not discourage children.

Finally, Salaberri (2001, p.41) added that "for the purpose of teaching English as a foreign language, the following criteria must be used: inclusion of stories that learners know from their L1, stories where the content is easily predictable, including repetition of language, rhyme and rhythm, quality of illustrations, etc."

### 2.2.1 Factors that determine the choice of a story

Cone Bryant (1996) established three essential qualities that a story must have in order to succeed in children.

The first of these qualities is the **speed of the action**. Therefore, we find that in this type of narration no time is wasted on explanations or descriptions, but something is constantly happening, and every paragraph of the narrative is an event. In other words, the focus of the story is not on what the characters of the story think or feel, but on what they do.

The second quality is linked to **family things**. As Cone Bryant (1996, p.53) wondered, how can the imagination create a new world without an understanding of the old materials? Therefore, strange images in a story weaken children's interest and cause confusion in the spirit of the child. Instead, familiar images raise children's interest and satisfy their spirit.

Finally, Bryant (1996, p.53) told us about a **repetitive element** that, as the word indicates, consists of a certain number of repetitions throughout the story.

## 2.3 The role of the storyteller

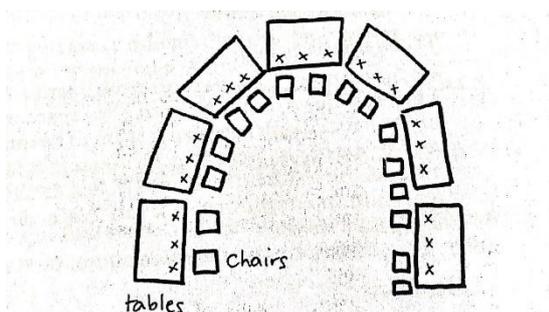
One of the main figures in using Storytelling is the presence of the storyteller, the person who narrates, tells and interprets the story. If we transfer it to the educational field, we will see that this person takes the role of the teacher and, therefore, it depends on him/her that the message and the contents that (s)he wants to work from the story reach all students correctly. Wright (2013, p.21) declared: "you must tell stories in your own way and that has to be a normal part of you."

Within this context, the difference between telling a story and reading must be clear. Eades (2005) contributed by saying:

When you read a story to children, you read the author's words. A good reader adds expressions and may edit them as (s)he reads but, essentially, it is a story told by someone who does not know your class and is not there, on that day, responding to thirty faces and thirty personalities. In contrast, when you tell a story you are responding, consciously and unconsciously, to your listeners. You will pick a story that seems "right" for that day and for that group of children. You

will also tell it in a way that seems to fit the mood of the moment, or the mood that you wish to create.

According to Krashen (1995) and his Affective Filter Hypothesis, the teacher has to provide comprehensible input, where the focus should be on the message and not on the form, as well as (s)he should not insist on the production of the students until they decide they are "ready".



**Figure 1.** Wright, A. (2013). *Storytelling with children*. Alan Maley: Oxford.

When it comes to telling a story, the teacher needs to create a right climate, keeping the silence from the beginning and trying not to interrupt the tale. Well, Bryant (1996, p.96) claimed that in that sentence might be necessary to add "whenever possible" because, naturally, there are exceptional cases and also exceptional children.

For that reason, the teacher has to try to get the children much closer to him/her than normal. If possible, in a U-shaped form, as shown in the image on the left. In this context, it is recommendable that the narrator be placed like this  and not this way  with regard to the semicircle.

This is partly because it is important for them to see you —and your book, if you are using one—, but also because it changes the relationship between you and between them (Wright, 2013, p.18). This way the teacher will create an atmosphere of mystery and curiosity for the children.

It is also important not to extend the semicircle too far, and not to sit children directly behind others or in a position that they cannot see the narrator's face well. Children need a physical proximity to reach a mental approach. (Bryant, 1996, p. 95)

And once we have done it all, we can begin to tell the story, with enthusiasm and in a dramatic and simple way.

### 2.3.1 How should the Storyteller tell the stories aloud?

How should stories be told? Such a simple question and with such a long answer.

As mentioned in the section 2.2 of the work —How to select the stories—, the teacher must know how to choose the stories that (s)he will explain to his/her students. Apart from this, the teacher must also know how to narrate and transmit all his/her knowledge of the story through extralinguistic components. In his article “El relato de cuentos en la enseñanza inicial del inglés como lengua extranjera”, Porcar (2002, p.67) ensured that “this fact is not easy and needs preparation [...], either through gestures and mimicry or with the help of images and other visual aids.”

In his book *Storytelling with Children*, Wright (2013, p.22-23) explained some of the factors when it comes to telling a story, and one of them is the voice. He affirmed that “the potential variety of the human voice includes pitch, volume, rhythm, softness/harshness, pace and pause. Making use of this variety depends on the story, the personality of the teller, and the listeners. [...] Of course we do not need to use all of these qualities all the time.” In that sense, voice modulations are necessary to express the feelings of the characters in the story and to avoid a monotonous tone that reduces the attention of the audience.

Body and facial movements are another aspect to consider because “we communicate through our bodily and facial movements as much as —or even more than— we do by the words we use.” (Wright, 2013, p.23). Through them, the narrator can accompany the emotions of the characters and make the children empathize with each of the scenes in the story.

Time is another important factor because long stories can be a problem for children's attention. Therefore, the teacher must prepare the story beforehand so that (s)he can have a complete control over the time, as well as the story and its characters. (Wright, 2013, p.24).

To complete the story, the narrator may have supporting objects, whether puppets, pictures, costumes, masks and realia. Soames (2010) suggested that, in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom, the word realia means “using real items found in everyday life as an aid to teach English. Using realia helps to make English lessons memorable by creating a link between the objects and the word or phrase they represent.” In conclusion, the use of these resources is a good opportunity to learn in a more engaging way that will make easier to keep children's interest.

## **2.4 Storytelling phases**

Telling stories is not a spontaneous act but rather complementary. Storytelling is a process that requires a lot of preparation by the storyteller concerning the story (s)he wants to tell, the materials s(he) will need to use and the planning of activities that will allow students to understand the story in a more significant way.

It is for this reason that several authors have stated the need to establish a series of phases when it comes to Storytelling and activities related to it, two exercises that are carried out in parallel during the Storytelling process in order to achieve the same goals. In the same vein, Philipps (1997, p.7) mentioned: “the activities should be simple enough for the children to understand what is expected of them. The task should be inside their abilities: it needs to be achievable but at the same time sufficiently stimulating for them to feel satisfied with their work. The activities should be orally based.” Therefore, we can identify three moments: before Storytelling, during Storytelling and after Storytelling.

### **2.4.1 Before Storytelling**

In this phase it is very important that the storyteller knows very well the story (s)he is going to explain, whether by heart or read the authors words. Both options are perfectly valid, offering pros and cons and, as Bryant (1996, p.92) said, everyone who loves children know these differences. With few exceptions, they listen much more carefully to an explained story than a read one. In addition, Amengual (2015, p.19), citing Cone (1997), stated that it is preferable the assimilation of facts instead of the memorization, since the latter takes away all the spontaneity of the story. Therefore, the teacher must know all the details of the story to the point of make it hers and explain it as if it was a personal experience.

As Wright (2013, p.31) mentioned, there are several possible purposes in using activities before the story: getting the children’s attention, focusing their minds on the content, arousing their predictive skills and give them a task to fulfil.

On the one hand, helping children to predict what the story might be about helps them to have ready possible meanings and language, and this increases the likelihood of understanding the gist of the story when they hear it. Moreover, developing children’s natural ability to predict is the development of a life skill and thus, has importance beyond the individual story and indeed beyond language teaching. (Wright, 2013, p.32).

However, all these activities should be introductory to the content, so that children can become familiar with it, but at the same time they must also be an introduction to the language, so that children can review all the vocabulary that they have previously acquired or new vocabulary related to the story that it is presented.

#### **2.4.2 During Storytelling**

In these early ages, active listening plays a key role in using Storytelling so that children can understand and retain the most important information of the story. In this context, the storyteller needs to be able to keep all children involved in the tale, even those who, for one reason or another, lose their interest in the story. This can be achieved through gestures, tone, rhythm and modulation of the voice according to the characters that appear in the story. Wright (2013) made his contribution offering a wide range of activities that require the participation of all children, such as picture cards, mime activities, tell the story wrongly, encourage them to repeat some parts of the story or throw a ball and continue the story. These activities are very effective because they also help the teacher to check students' understanding.

Moreover, pictures have a central role in stories. Cameron (2001) stated that "the role of the pictures in combination with the text to form the story as a whole should be considered. If the pictures are indispensable, as it is often the case, there will need to be enough copies or there will need to be made big enough for everyone to see".

#### **2.4.3 After Storytelling**

The focus of this phase is still checking understanding, so for that reason most of the proposed activities revolve around this goal. As Ellis & Brester (1991) stated, in this phase one must go a step further and promote activities in which the student can review, revise and consolidate the new knowledge learnt through its implementation. For this reason, Salaberri (2001, p.25) assured that role playing, theatre and projects are very good choices to achieve our goal.

## **2.5 Digital Storytelling in Kindergarten Education**

### **2.5.1 ICTs and Kindergarten Education**

As Romero Tena (2006) stated: “We belong to the information and communication society, and whether we want it or not, in this society we have to live and teach. We must be aware of the need to educate children in and with them.”

On the other hand, López Escribano (2007) also added that “Technology is already part of our culture and some children will find for the first time the text written through television, the computer or the mobile phones, tools that are part of popular culture in our country. The school cannot be external to this phenomenon and must offer experiences and training in these new means to handle information.”

In that sense, it is clear that we cannot deny or evade this phenomenon, so the school has to take full advantage of this resource and all the possibilities it offers in the learning process of a foreign language. Additionally, ICTs must be implemented in the teaching practice in order to train digitally competent citizens in the technological era in which we live. Moreover, the sooner we implement it the better as there are no studies that demonstrate that ICTs have a negative effect on Kindergarten Education, despite the disconformity of many teachers.

Similar researches were conducted, in previous decades, regarding the impact of television on children. However, there is no clear evidence that the use of technology has detrimental effects on children, and the positions that promote “censorship” as a solution to the problem of misuse, do not seem to be the most appropriate. (López Escribano, 2007).

### **2.5.2 Digital Storytelling**

As pointed out in the previous section, we are currently living in a society where new technologies are the main communication media and, for that reason, advances in that field offer the opportunity to create a new form of Storytelling, namely Digital Storytelling.

There are many definitions of Digital Storytelling. According to Zisiadis (2013), Digital Storytelling is defined as “the combination of traditional oral Storytelling with 21<sup>st</sup> century multimedia and ICTs tools.” (Papadimitriou, Kapaniaris, Zisiadis, & Kalogirou, 2013, p.390). For Pedersen (2008), Digital Storytelling is “a relatively new form of art that uses

music, image, video and Storytelling to create stories about life, work and human experiences that are shared through the Internet.” Finally, the International Organization for Digital Storytelling defines Digital Storytelling as the modern counterpart of the ancient art of Storytelling.

In short, taking into account the pedagogical value that books and ICTs offer us in Early Childhood Education, rejecting a technique as powerful as Digital Storytelling is not an option. In fact, this tool helps teachers to catch children’s attention to boost their learning process.

### **2.5.3 What does it offer us?**

There are many advantages to Digital Storytelling within the educational field. First of all, it is an engaging and motivating tool for children that promotes an in depth understanding of the text and encourages them to become competent in terms of technical aspects of the language. Moreover, studies reveal that children gradually increase their desire to experiment with the language and make changes when they are involved in Digital Storytelling. (Papadimitriou, Kapaniaris, Zisiadis, & Kalogirou, 2013, p.390)

On the other hand, it is a tool that offers interactivity between students since Digital Storytelling is often performed in small groups and sometimes this interactivity is hard to achieve through traditional methods. (Robin, 2011). In addition, in collaborative environments, it has also been found that students “develop enhanced communications skills by learning to organize their ideas, ask questions, express opinions, analyze and synthesize a wide range of content, and construct narratives”. (Bid, 2009). Finally, Digital Storytelling increases the chances for students to be engaged in problem solving and to get familiar with technology through practice and experimentation. (Papadimitriou, Kapaniaris, Zisiadis, & Kalogirou, 2013, p.390)

However, it is important to emphasize that making use of these new technological advances does not have to be synonymous with the exclusion of traditional methods, but the teacher must know how to coexist with one another and use the type of method that best fits the needs of all children.

## 2.6 Characteristics of children in these ages

When all children first arrive at what is going to be their school for many years of their life, they are loaded with a series of qualities that the teacher must know and be able to enhance. Mur (1998), in his article "How to Introduce English into Early Childhood Education", explained that students do not reach Early Childhood Education without knowledge, but they carry with them a set of skills that are deeply rooted and that will help them in their learning process. For this reason, the teacher must take advantage of each of these skills, both in his native language and in the learning of new language. In addition, studies show that during the first six years of life, children develop many of the capabilities that will eventually mark their future. Here are some of them:

First we find that at this stage children learn by observing, discovering, experiencing, manipulating, etc. In addition, they are at a stage where they have a great capacity for invention, whether of different words or games. Precisely, we must remember that the playful exercises used in the classroom play a central role in Early Childhood Education and thanks to them children learn the language in a meaningful way. (Mur, 1998)

Another characteristic of infants in these stages is the great capacity for the use of the imagination and for this reason, "language teaching should deal with real life, but always keeping in mind that imagination and fantasy are part of children's reality". In fact, Reilly & Ward (1997, p.8) complemented this definition by adding that at this stage children often have an imaginary friend, and they sometimes find hard to separate both fantasy and reality because the fact of fantasizing and imagining is a fundamental part of being a child. And for this, when the teaching of the language begins, the teacher must stimulate that creative imagination of the student so that (s)he feels the need to use that new language to share his/her ideas. In this way, children will acquire the ability to relate and talk. (Mur, 1997)

Apart from the imagination, it is also found that creativity is a very present topic in Kindergarten stage. Thanks to it, various aspects of the child's personality can be deduced, so the teacher can offer a more individualized response, thus adapting to the characteristics of each of them. Therefore, it is very important to educate in creativity if we really want to educate independent people in their thinking, and one way of doing this is through play.

At this age, games are an innate way for children to interact with the world around them. As Wright (2013) said: "Games offer participants confidence in themselves and their abilities." In addition, many studies claim that games bring many benefits in terms of child

development, whether cognitive, physical, motor, social and emotional or intellectual. Authors such as Chateau, Piaget, Vygotsky and Freud, among others, noted the importance of playing in the development of the child, and Chateau (1958) stated that games are an essential aspect in the development of the child as they are linked to the development of the child's knowledge, affectivity, motor skills and socialization. In other words, what this author is trying to explain is that games are the engine of child's life in these early ages.

On the other hand, Piaget (1956) established a relationship between the development of leisure activity and the development of cognitive stages children pass through. In his theory he claimed that games are part of child's intelligence because they represent the functional or reproductive assimilation of reality according to each evolutionary stage of the individual.

In addition, if we offer a context rich in stimuli in this non-compulsory stage, children could likely have the chance to increase their vocabulary through games. However, we should bear in mind that sometimes they do not need to understand exactly the meaning of every single word in order to comprehend the whole message. Mur (1997) explained this idea in a section of her article, emphasizing that intonation, gestures, facial expressions and context play a crucial role as all these elements make possible for children to deduce sentences and words that are unknown for them. She also affirmed that the moment in which children begin to face a new language is very important as they can use these skills for the interpretation of new sounds, words and structures.

## **2.7 Characteristics of the teachers throughout the years**

The role of the teacher has required a very important transformation throughout the history of education. If we look back to the last century, the main aim of the teachers was to ensure that students scored well in exams. In addition, the traditional teacher assumed (s)he was the only one who knew about the world, and the learning was based on memorization and mechanisation. Nowadays, we live in a technological era where technologies acquire a fundamental importance. As a consequence, the way of learning has changed and, therefore, the way of teaching must be adapted. This means that both teaching figure and teaching methodologies have to be adapted to the way of conceiving knowledge. In that sense, it is crucial to keep in mind that technology and information alone do not guide, assist and advise students; therefore, the role of teachers in digital

education is more important today than ever. Steve Wheeler, specialist in e-learning and distance education at Plymouth University (UK), pointed out:

The teacher will never be replaced. A computer has no emotions or the ability to inspire a good teacher. But we have to ask ourselves what are the new skills and competences that teachers and students need to develop in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and whether we are preparing them for the future or the past. The classroom has become obsolete in a world where students absorb most of the information through social media or the internet and in which the hierarchical role of teacher-student no longer works. (Wheeler, 2017)

In that sense, many teachers have decided to renew themselves to continue to prepare pupils for the world. However, many contrary reactions have caused a rejection to these changes due to the technologization of life and schools. According to Wolff, Bogert, Jarodzka and Boshuizen (2015), expert teachers are more vulnerable to these changes. Bereiter and Scardamalia (1986) defined an expert teacher as “a teacher with at least five years of teaching experience, and especially a person with a high level of knowledge and skill, which is not acquired naturally, but requires special and constant dedication”. Therefore, it is understood that any teacher with less than 5 years of experience is considered a novice teacher. According to Sánchez and Mayor (2006), this kind of teachers “have problems with their role, with their subject, with discipline and order. On the contrary, experts are more concerned about the development of their students.” Marcelo García (2009) justified these problems by pointing that “the first years of teaching involve a period of stress and intensive learning in unknown environments, in which the novice teacher must acquire professional knowledge, face many difficulties and learn to maintain, at the same time, his/her balance.”

Continuing with the evolution of the teacher’s figure throughout the years, it has been observed that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century great importance has been attached to the management of educational classrooms as a condition for learning. According to Wolff, Bogert, Jarodzka and Boshuizen (2015), classroom management is defined as a multi-faceted skill set encompassing the structure and atmosphere of the classroom space, the instructional choices of the teacher, the pedagogical and practical knowledge driving these decisions, and the stream of interaction and exchange occurring inside and outside the classroom. Notwithstanding, they all remarked again in their articles that some differences between novice and expert teachers have been found within this field.

Firstly, a common and fundamental characteristic of experts is their highly developed knowledge, including crucial differences in how information is processed, how

knowledge is organized, and how such knowledge and information interact (Glaser, 1987). In that sense, considering that the principal “workplace” of the teacher is situated in the classroom, experts can detect and recognize relevant information faster than novices, and generally process visual information more efficiently. This allows them to perceive and process important details that novices often fail to see (Chi, 2006; Reingold & Sheridan, 2011). According to Fuller (1969), that is because novice teachers are particularly concerned about maintaining order in class, and often fear losing control.

On the other hand, experts process new information differently from novices because they can assimilate new information in relation to prior experiences of similar events. Their richly developed awareness of what is happening is an awareness gained through experience. Experts have developed a sophisticated ability to make observations, recollect and link these to past experience, and phrase interpretations of their observations as predictions about what may arise. Novices rarely make predictive statements, probably because they do not have enough prior experience to recognize the spatial and temporal patterns that support formulating observations as predictions about the consequences of events. Similarly, Burden (1990), cited in Wolff, Bogert, Jarodzka and Boshuizen (2015), also referred about an early stage of survival and exploration where personal and professional problems dominate due to a poor knowledge of the teaching world.

## **2.8 The importance of Storytelling in Kindergaten school**

Many authors consider Storytelling to be one of the most widely used and highly valued techniques in Early Childhood Education, especially in the second language learning. At this age, children are able to transform anything fantastic into a real thing through their imagination. Therefore, there must be books in the classroom so that children can touch them, observe them and experiment with them. Below it is mentioned some of the compelling reasons that different authors provide in order to focus the work.

To start with, as the Second Cycle Childhood Education Catalan Curriculum (Decree 101/2010 DOGC No. 116) points out, it is seen the importance attached to stories at this stage. In the Communication and Language area it is specified: “Use of books, also in multimedia format, to imagine, to inform, to have fun, to be well.”, “Use of strategies to approach reading (...), “Use of strategies to understand (...) adopting a positive and respectful attitude towards languages.”, “Monitoring and understanding of stories, tales (...) as a source of pleasure and learning.”

On the other hand, if we focus on the importance of books for learning a foreign language—in this case English—, González-Martín and Querol-Julián (2016) proposed the following reasons:

- Literature and culture are linked, since through this literature children travel, knowing other distant or even imaginary cultures, making them recognize and accept their authenticity.
- As it is not a material created for the classroom, it makes it more real and genuine, maintaining the authenticity of the language.
- Literature facilitates the learning of vocabulary and structures in a specific context, which is very useful for understanding and memorization.
- The playful aspect that books offer is a great source of motivation for the student.
- It is very important to make the selection of texts correctly so that the children maintain interest in learning.

In addition, both authors emphasized in that latter point by mentioning that the use of known tales in their L1 allow students to put more emphasis on the language and its comprehension, thus facilitating language acquisition.

Wright (2013) also made his contribution to this field, in which he presented three key ideas. In the first of one, he emphasized that Storytelling is a very enriching technique as it generates enthusiasm, interest and motivation for learning. However, it is important that the storyteller knows how to choose appropriately the stories (s)he will explain in relation to the age and interests of the children.

Secondly, he claimed that if our goal as teachers of these early ages is to help children to become familiar with a language different from their own, stories are a good technique to generate greater awareness of this new language. In that sense, Wright (2013) claimed that without realizing it, when the child hears the same word or expression repeatedly throughout the story, he or she directly introduces it into his or her vocabulary. Therefore, we can say that repetition is a good tool that helps children to internalize words and/or expressions and subsequently be able to produce output. In addition, this is closely linked to pronunciation and intonation as children learn to pronounce words through repetition and imitation of the teacher.

Thirdly and lastly, Wright (2013) agreed with González-Martín and Querol-Julián's (2016) idea that culture and language go hand in hand, and he added:

Stories are a distinctive manifestation of cultural values and perceptions. They invite reflection on values and culture. For example, there are many variations for each story depending on the place or culture in question. This characteristic becomes especially important in language classes as children can relate the language to stories of the culture itself and thus cause the listener to have a meaning, beyond purely linguistic learning.

Nevertheless, González-Martín and Querol-Julián (2016, p.106), citing Grey (2005), proposed 5 reasons why we should introduce English in Early Childhood Education through stories. There are summarized in the following points:

- Literature and culture are linked since through literature children approach other worlds, other cultures, countries and traditions. In this sense, it plays an important role in accepting cultures different from one's own.
- 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 language in a real context.
- It is very useful to introduce vocabulary and structures in a context, thus facilitating their memorization and understanding.
- The playful aspect of literature is important to keep students motivated, who will feel more interested in the knowledge acquired.
- The selection of texts will be crucial to ensure that children feel interested in knowing other texts.

In short, it is seen that most of the mentioned authors, with their contributions, once again reveal the importance of Storytelling in these ages. In addition, all authors come to very similar conclusions, emphasizing the direct link between culture and language.

### **3. Research study**

This study aims to provide a detailed overview of how children's age influence when working with Storytelling as a resource to learn English in Kindergarten school. The study is focused basically on P3 and P5 grade, having 51 children in total, as it was considered that the comparison between the first and the last grade of the second cycle of Infant Education would be the easiest way to find clearly all the differences.

To tackle the issue, the study has been carried out through a methodological triangulation, a technique that has allowed me to better understand the research topic through a plurality of different approaches and instruments. These are the questionnaire, the observation and the focus group.

As the main objective of this research is to know and describe the differences of application in the use of this resource in Kindergarten school and the role of a teacher inside a class, this research belongs to the interpretative paradigm as I just wanted to know and analyse the reality of the school where this qualitative work has been done, without altering it during the fieldwork. Wilson (1971) affirmed that the main purpose of the interpretative paradigm is that humans are the protagonists of their own reality, without the necessity of being imposed external constructions, such as social and cultural norms or rules.

Everything stated in this project is ruled by the Deontological ethics that implies the preservation of the individual's anonymity, according to Organic Law 3/2018, 5th December, related to Data Protection and digital rights and Organic Law 25/207, 18<sup>th</sup> October, in relation to the preservation of data related to electronic communications and public communication networks according to the Spanish Law.

#### **3.1 Contextualization of the school**

The school where most part of the research —observations and focus group— is carried out, is FEDAC Pineda. It is part of the private foundation Les Dominiques de l'Anunciata-Pare Coll, a Christian educational foundation that includes 24 schools around Catalonia. This state-assisted school is located in Pineda de Mar, a village of 28.000 inhabitants in the Maresme area.

The school has 248 students, in which 89.2% have a Spanish nationality whereas a 10,8% have a foreign nationality. The school also has 16 teaching staff members and 6 services staff members that work together in order to provide a successful educational project. The main objective of the school is to provide the student with a comprehensive education through responsible, meaningful, critical and dialogical education, taking into account the human and Christian values based on the charism of their founder Pare Coll.

In regard to the linguistic project, they work the 3 languages alike —Catalan, Spanish and English— with a certification that accredits it. In addition, in order to work more individually and improve oral and written skills, the school participates in the Conversation Auxiliary Program (PAC). This means that they have an official conversation assistant that works with children from P3 to 6<sup>th</sup> grade twice a week. The school also carries out various actions to consolidate the use of the English language as theatre in English, participation in e-twinning projects, preparation for the Cambridge exams and extracurricular activities. Finally, in Kindergarten Education children are exposed to the English language 3 hours a week. One of these 3 hours is used to learn other subjects such as Technorobotics.

## **3.2 Data collection tools**

As explained in the Research Study section, three qualitative instruments were designed in order to obtain the data collection needed for the study: an observation grid, a questionnaire and a focus group.

Both questionnaire and observation grid have been designed and carried out in English, but the focus group was done in Catalan as the sample was composed by Catalan speakers and the complete understanding of the questions was essential to obtain authentic conclusions.

### **3.2.1. Observation**

Observation as a data collection tool consists in observing a certain situation in order to obtain data that will help us to answer the research question. According to Whitehead (1967), “to know how to observe is to know how to select.” Hence, it is very important to select an object or a theme so as observation will not lose interest.

According to this author, there are two types of observation:

- Internal or participant observation, in which the observer obtains information (usually verbal) from the observed subject through an interaction with him/her.
- External or non-participant observation, that consists in collecting meaningful information from the observed subject without interacting with him/her and, therefore, without him/her noticing it.

In this study, external or non-participant observation has been used. The instrument was chosen because “the observer can devote his full attention and make notes as the phenomena of the observation itself originates. The main drawback is that it cannot be performed without knowledge of what will be observed, and this can negatively influence the validity of the results.” (Whitehead, 2005).

The main aim during the classroom observations was to see, compare and analyse the development of a Storytelling class with 3-year-old and 5-year-old children at school FEDAC Pineda. The sessions were on Monday and Friday morning for one-hour class and on Tuesday and Friday morning for the other one, and children were always in their reference classroom. An observation grid was designed in order to document what was being observed during the sessions (see Appendix 1). The items that were considered in the design of the observation grid were divided into three blocks. The first block was focused on 5 items about before Storytelling. The second one consisted of 6 items centred on during Storytelling and the last section consisted of 1 item focused on after Storytelling. Finally, at the end of each observation sheet, a section called “Other observations” was created in order to expand any item or explain others that were not mentioned before.

I proposed myself to do a total of 10 observations in order to have a considerable sample and to be able to draw the most real conclusions but unfortunately, I just could carry out 7 observations in a period of 6 weeks due to the COVID19 pandemic. In front of this unexpected health crisis, I had to look for a solution and I realized that the director of Pineda Kids&Us language school explained a live tale twice a week through the academy Instagram account. I didn't think it twice and I took advantage of the situation. This way, I could finish my observations. Pineda Kids&Us language school is not part of the formal education but is an independent academy in which they have developed their own method to teach English to children from 1 to 18 years old. In that sense, this method goes beyond the work plans stipulated by the Catalan Department of Education.

### **3.2.2 Questionnaire**

In order to carry out my study, a questionnaire addressed to English teachers from different schools of Catalonia was designed. A questionnaire is a research instrument consisting of a series of questions for the purpose of gathering information from individuals and provide a number of different opinions regarding the main topic.

The sample of participants is of 12 Catalan-speaker teachers who mainly teach English at Catalan schools. The questionnaire was sent to 15 Early Years English teachers, but only 12 filled it out. To select the sample, schools that start with the learning of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) from the very beginning of the second cycle of Kindergarten School were searched. Almost all participants (58,2%) were from Pineda de Mar (Maresme), 25% from Manresa (Bages) and 16,8% from Blanes (La Selva).

As for the design of the questionnaire, it consisted of 17 questions, which 11 of them were multiple choice questions and 6 of them were open-ended questions. These types of questions were presented because it was thought that could be an easy and quick way to answer by teachers and easy to collect data for me. The questionnaire was structured in 3 parts. First, the opening questions to gather information about the name of the school and its location. Secondly a middle section with questions to explore the topic and how teachers use Storytelling in their lessons. Finally, there were 2 open-ended questions to express their own opinions regarding the questions raised. The questionnaire was sent by "Google Forms".

The table of the results can be seen in the Appendix 2.

### **3.2.3 Focus Group**

According to Marczak and Sewell (2011), a focus group is a group of interacting individuals having some common interest or characteristics, brought together by a moderator, who uses the group and its interaction as a way of gaining information about a specific or focused issue. As for the study, the focus group was designed to contrast and complement the results obtained through the questionnaire.

The focus group was done on the 10<sup>th</sup> of March in FEDAC Pineda teaching staff room. Four people were invited to this focus group: the teachers responsible for P3, P4, P5 classes —the latter also teaches English in the 1<sup>st</sup> grade of Primary— and the English teacher of Kindergarten School, who is also the coordinator of the Kindergarten stage.

Although P3 and P4 teachers do not have any contact with the English language, their presence was very important because they are the ones who are daily in contact with the children. Here it is a brief description of each group class.

P3 class is a group of 25 children, 8 boys and 17 girls, most of them safe, calm and emotionally stable, with great curiosity and interest in exploring and discovering the environment around them. As for the class group, it is a heterogeneous group since most of them are at different maturation levels and that is why their concerns are also very diverse and, as a result, most of the time they prefer to play, explore, observe and manipulate on their own. However, they are at an age where they need a lot of different stimuli, so they can't stay long doing the same activity. Gradually, it is seen how through every day and repetitive situations related to their personal experiences, they refine the knowledge of the environment. In addition, their movements become more and more coordinated, allowing them to begin writing.

P4 class is formed by 25 children, specifically by 9 girls and 16 boys. As for the class group, it is a very participative group that has a great ambition to learn and, as a result, there is always a warm and affective climate in the classroom. They gradually begin to form small groups, determined by common interests. For that reason, we can say that their relationships with peers are growing and last longer. However, they are still quite self-centred and dominant in their relationships. Little by little, they begin to feel independent but may still be insecure when they face unknown situations. As the P3 group, 4-year-old children also have difficulties in maintaining the attention for a certain period of time and therefore, they need to change activity continuously.

Finally, P5 class is formed by 26 children, specifically, by 12 boys and 14 girls. Unlike the other classes, it is a group with a lot of energy and uncontrolled movement. However, it is noticeable that they have a great desire to participate, to learn and to experiment, although sometimes they develop competitive behaviours. They like to play with children of their age, and they develop friendly and collaborative relationships. In addition, they show attitudes of protection towards the littlest ones. Finally, they have a quite complete language in terms of form and structure.

Before its realization, teachers were asked if the conversation could be recorded in order to do a much more exhaustive transcription that can be seen in the Appendix 3 section.

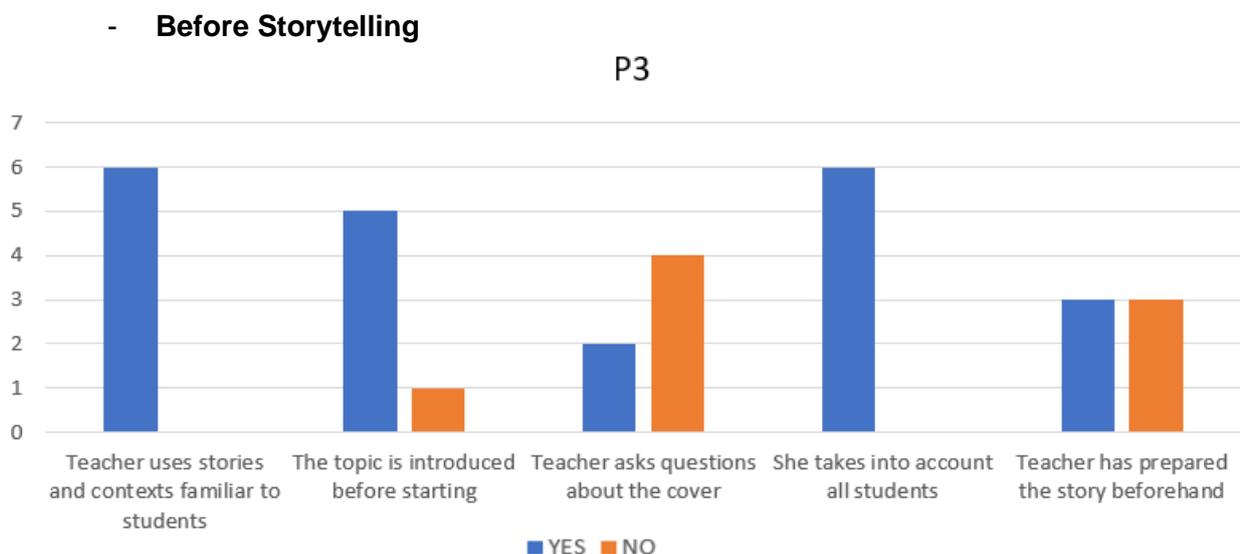
### 3.3 Data analysis and results

The following section provides a description and analysis of the data collected in the research. To do so, the three parts of the study —observation, questionnaire and focus group— will be examined separately in order to facilitate its analysis.

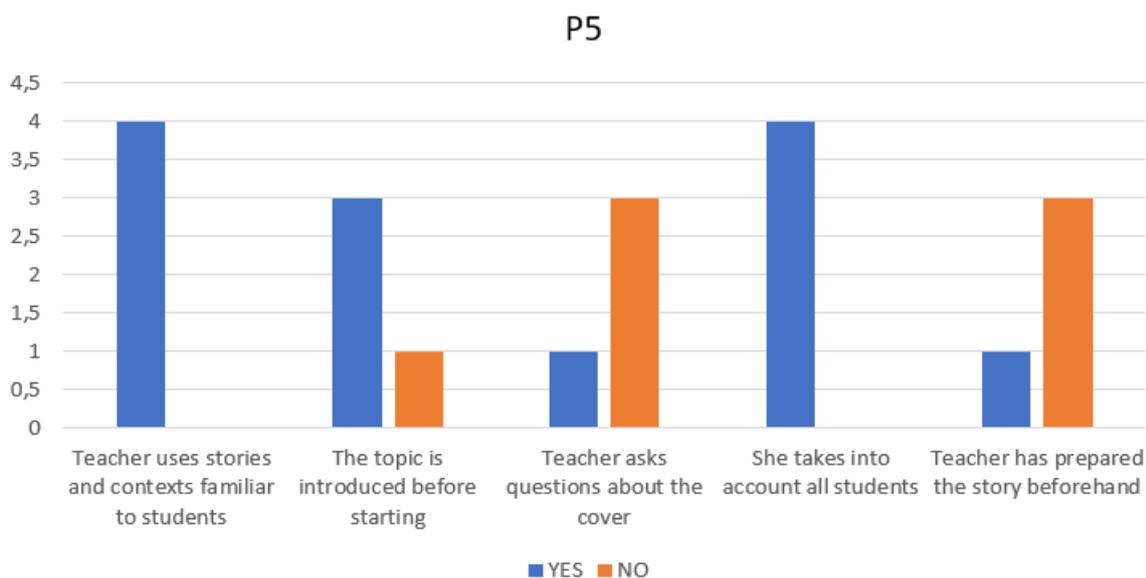
#### 3.3.1 Observation

The results obtained through classroom observations are shown by using graphs as it is considered to be a more visual way to see the differences in application of Storytelling in both classrooms. A total of 10 observations were done, six of them in P3 and the other four in P5. Of these 6 observations, three of them were stories explained through digital support and just one was explained in a traditional way. The other two were explained through Kids&Us Instagram account due to the COVID19 health crisis, so it is considered a mix of both because children saw and listened to the story through a mobile screen, but the story was thought to be explained in a traditional way. As for the 4 observations done in P5, two of them were stories explained using the Digital Interactive Whiteboard support, one of them was explained in a traditional way and the remaining, explained through a social network, was a mix of both techniques.

As mentioned in the Data Collection Tools section, the observation was divided into 3 main blocks. The first one centred on before Storytelling, the second on during Storytelling and the last block on after Storytelling. It is for that reason that the results are also divided into that three parts in order to analyse each item better.



**Graph 1.** How before Storytelling phase is applied in P3



**Graph 2.** How before Storytelling phase is applied in P5

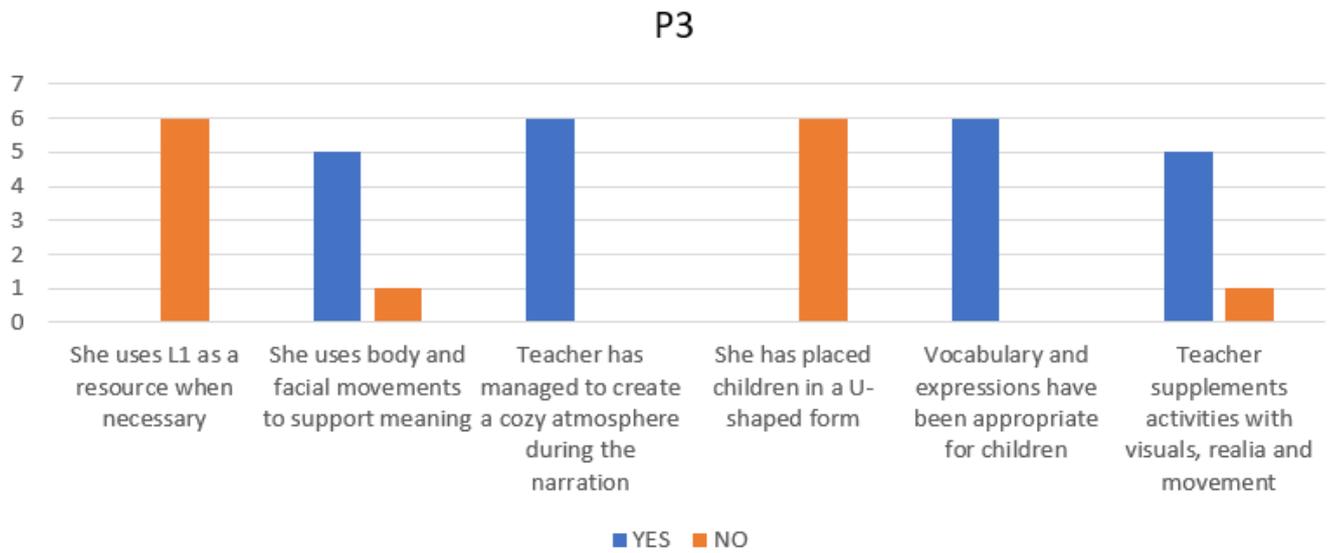
As the data graph shows, considering that the number of observations done in P3 is higher, there is not so much difference between both classes regarding before Storytelling phase.

As for the first item, it is seen that in both classrooms the teacher uses stories that children are familiar with, either because they are related to their class project or because there are stories that children already know in their mother tongue, such as the Three Little Pigs in P3 or the Gruffalo in P5.

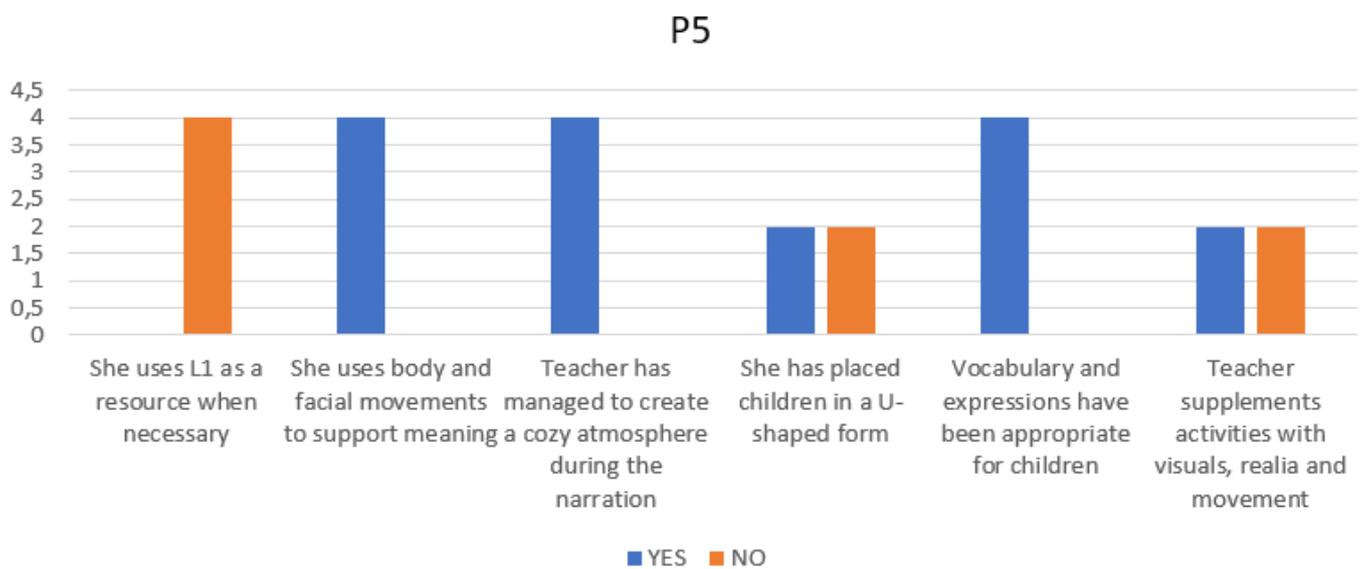
Regarding the second item, it is observed that on many occasions the teacher introduces the topic before starting. Realia is the most used resource to do so. The third item is whether the teacher asks questions about the cover of the book before reading it. As can be seen in graphs 1 and 2, the book cover is hardly given importance, but as mentioned at the beginning of the section, most of the stories have been explained through digital support and we should consider that there exist many stories in very different formats, and it can happen that some of them do not have a cover to present the story.

As for the next item, that is, *Teacher takes into account all students*, it is clear that in both courses the teacher does her best to catch all students attention. Finally, as the graphs 1 and 2 shows, it could be said that the teacher prepares more the story beforehand in P3 than in P5. However, I would like to highlight again that, although in FEDAC Pineda school they use a mix of Digital Storytelling and traditional one, the first one has a greater weight. Therefore, the results are very common in a context where a teacher is not the narrator.

- During Storytelling



**Graph 3.** How during Storytelling phase is applied in P3



**Graph 4.** How during Storytelling phase is applied in P5

As for the first item, it is observed that in both classrooms the teacher does not switch into Catalan on any occasion. She always makes herself understood through body and facial movements or realia.

Related to this previous item, the second one is about the use of body and facial movements to support meaning. As graphs 3 and 4 show, it is clear that they are very important tools to enrich meaning. Moreover, when it comes to Digital Storytelling, the teacher always stops the video when she considers it necessary and also makes use of these supports. In other words, it does not matter how the story is explained, body and facial movements are always present in the Storytelling, either more or less frequently.

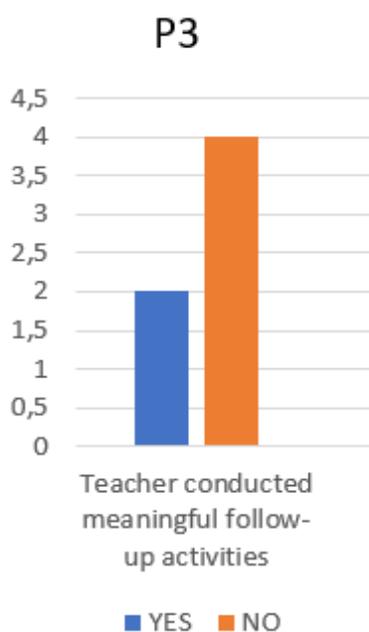
The following item is about the atmosphere the teacher creates during the narration. As children at these ages have an innate love for listening to stories, they are always quiet, paying attention to the story. Besides, if someone gets distracted, the teacher always does her best to get the child back to the story.

The fourth item is whether the teacher places children in a U-shaped form during the story. If the story is told using the Digital Interactive Whiteboard, children usually sit on their chairs, but if it is the teacher who explains the story, they usually sit down on the floor in front of her. It is true that sometimes there have been fights because children who sat on the front got up and the ones who were at the back could not see the images of the story.

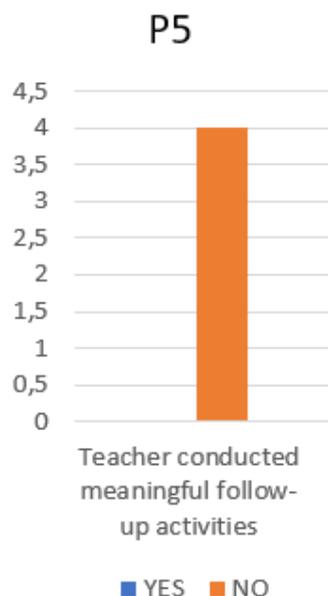
The last item is about if vocabulary and expressions have been appropriate for children. As graphs 3 and 4 show, in both classes the teacher has always made sure that the vocabulary was appropriate for children's age. Even so, gestures and realia have been of great help to support meaning.

As for the last item of this section, it is observed that although in both classes the teacher uses visuals, realia and movement to support and enrich meaning, these supports are more used with the littlest ones.

- After Storytelling



**Graph 5.** How after Storytelling phase is applied in P3



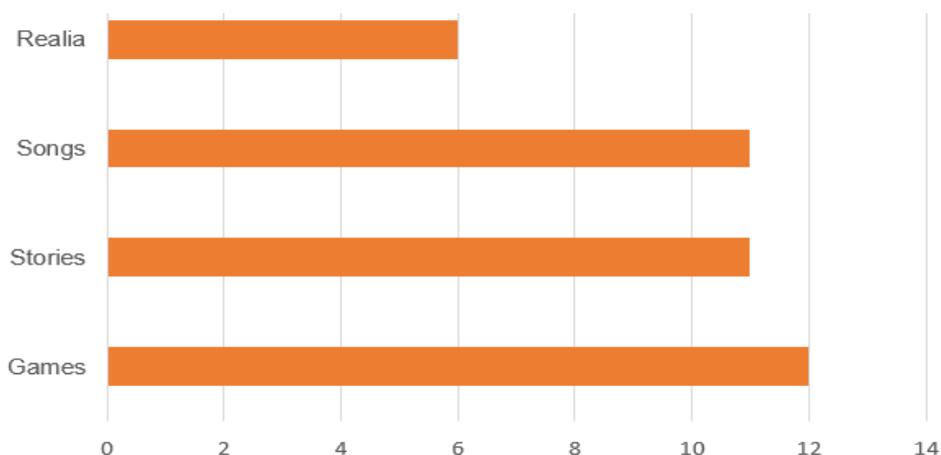
**Graph 6.** How after Storytelling phase is applied in P5

As can be seen in graphs 5 and 6, meaningful follow-up activities are not so frequent in the school. In P3 they only did two activities, both related to the Three Little Pigs story. As an example, in one of them, children had to classify the flashcards of the piglets' houses according to the order of their appearance in the story. In the other activity, the teacher dressed some children up like wolfs and some others pretending to be piglets. They played the scene where the wolf was knocking on the door to get into the piglets' house, but the three brothers wouldn't let him in. Then, children who were the wolfs pretended to blew piglets house in.

### 3.3.2 Questionnaire

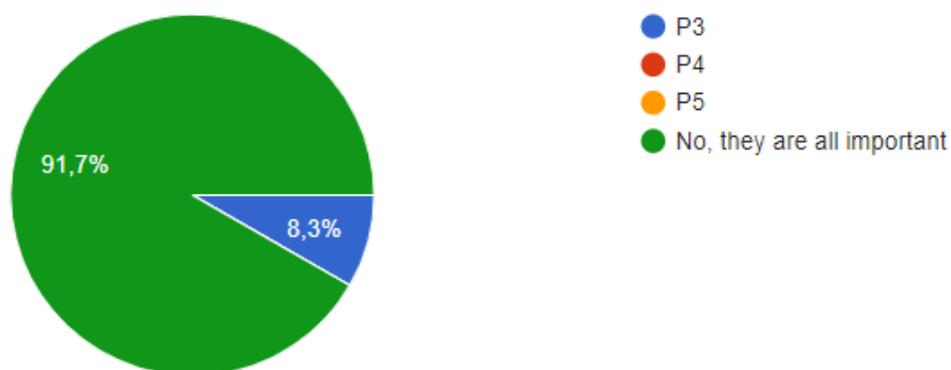
This section presents the results of the questionnaire answered by 12 Kindergarten English teachers. The data collected from multiple-choice questions provides quantitative data as it has been used to calculate percentages whereas the open-ended questions from the questionnaire provide qualitative data. Next, the most relevant information is selected in order to highlight the main aspects teachers think about the main topic. The whole questionnaire can be seen in Appendix 2.

The first question *How do you teach English in your classes?* is formulated to have an overview of which resources are mostly used in teachers' English lessons.



**Graph 7.** Most frequent resources used to teach English in Infant Education

As can be seen in graph 7, games are the most common resource when teaching English, followed by stories and songs. Realia is the less frequent one, only used by half of the teachers. Regarding the question *Is there any class in the second cycle of Early Childhood Education where Storytelling plays a major role than the others?* and *Could you tell me why?*, most of the teachers appreciate and recognize the opportunities and advantages that stories can offer since a great majority of the participants (91,7%) agree that Storytelling is equally important in all ages. Just one teacher (8,3%) considers that P3 is the class in which Storytelling plays a major role.

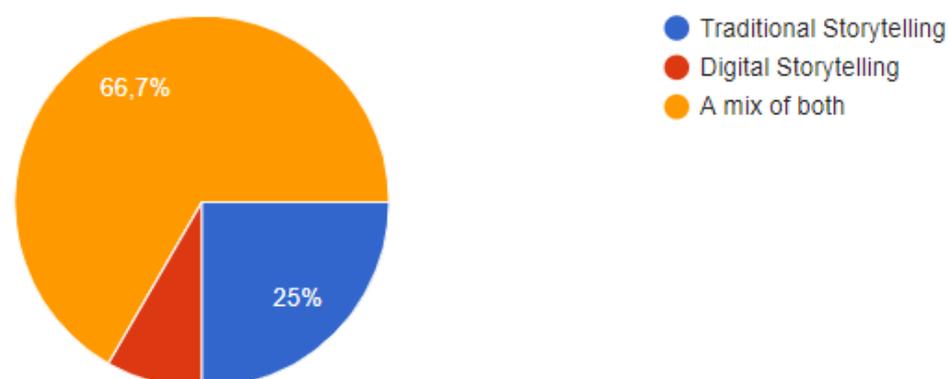


**Graph 8.** Pie chart that indicates which is the most important class according to teachers to work with Storytelling

Concerning the second question, a great variety of answers were obtained. Four of them agree that children love stories at whatever age, as it is a way that they can be relaxed and listen to a foreign language. Two other participants concur in that oral comprehension is always important. Another participant states that family don't explain stories in English to children, so as teachers it is very important to give children that kind of input at school. Some other participants refer to Storytelling as a way to tell children all sorts of content, from less to more complex, using the excuse of a simple tale. And the last participant gives a complete answer, pointing out that Storytelling is important in the three classes and in the same way, as stories create magic and a sense of wonder because when you tell a story, children sit enthralled, with mouths open and eyes wide. She also points out that stories teach us about life, about ourselves and others. Thus, Storytelling is a way for kids to develop an understanding, respect and appreciation for other cultures, and can promote a positive attitude to people from different lands and religions. In addition, she highlights some of the benefits that Storytelling can provide.

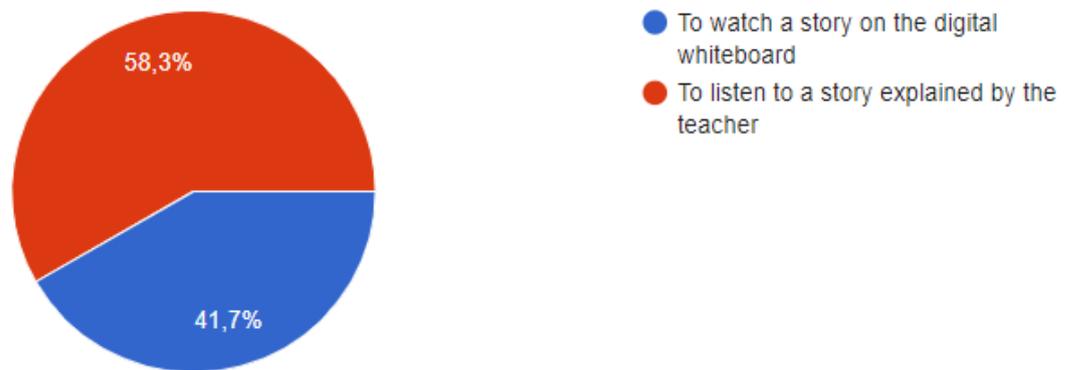
- There are many games you can play with inspired by a story.
- It raises the enthusiasm for reading texts to find stories, reread them, etc.
- It initiates writing because children will quickly want to write stories and tell them.
- It enhances the sense of community in the classroom.
- It improves listening skills.

In the question about which is the most commonly used resource by teachers in English lessons, it is observed that eight participants from the questionnaire (66,7%) point out that they usually combine both digital and traditional Storytelling. On the other hand, three participants (25%) claim that traditional Storytelling is the most used resource when teaching English whereas just one participant (8,3%) states that he/she usually works more with Digital Storytelling.



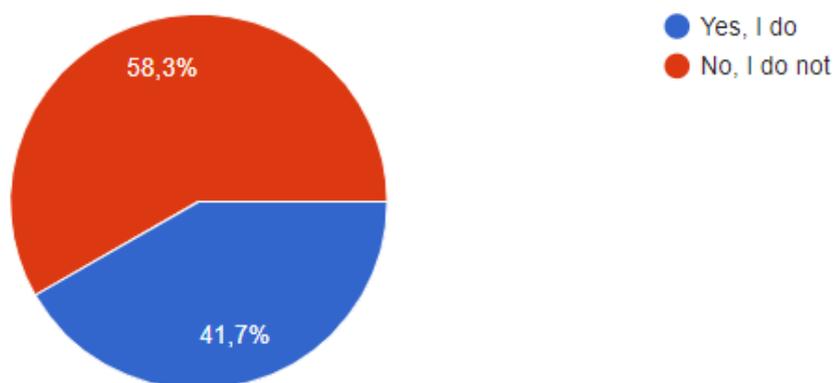
**Graph 9.** Pie chart that indicates which is the most used resource by teachers in English lessons

The following question aims to know if the answers to the previous question have any relationship with children's preferences. As can be seen in graph 10, it is observed that children's preference is to listen to a story explained by the teacher rather than to watch it on the digital whiteboard.



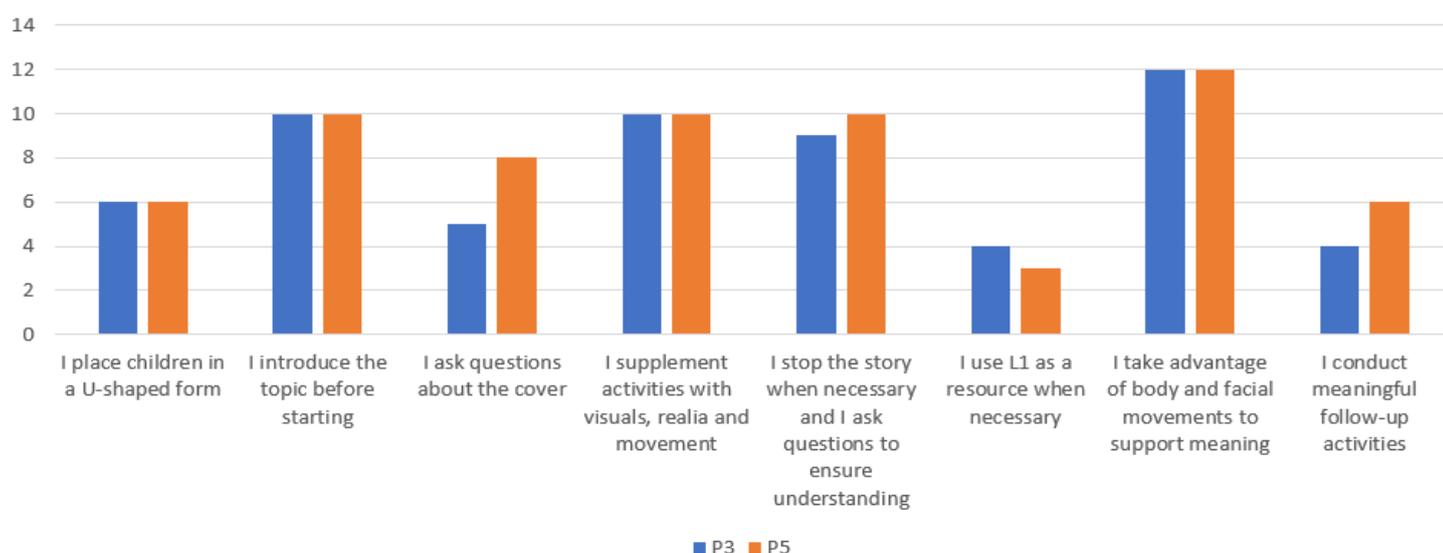
**Graph 10.** Pie chart that indicates which of the different ways of Storytelling do children like the most

As for the sixth question, *Do you think that 3-year-old and 5-year-old children show the same interest when listening to a story? Could you tell me why?*, the answers are quite varied. Five participants (41,7%) agree that both children show the same interest when working with Storytelling whereas the other seven participants (58,3%) do not agree. The ones who support that children show the same interest when listening to a story base their opinion on the way the teacher explains the story, always considering that the content is age-appropriate. "If a story is well told, kids of any age will follow it with enthusiasm." Nonetheless, the ones who do not support this opinion say that 5-year-old children understand more specific parts of it, while 3-year-old children understand it globally. Therefore, their attention span is higher.



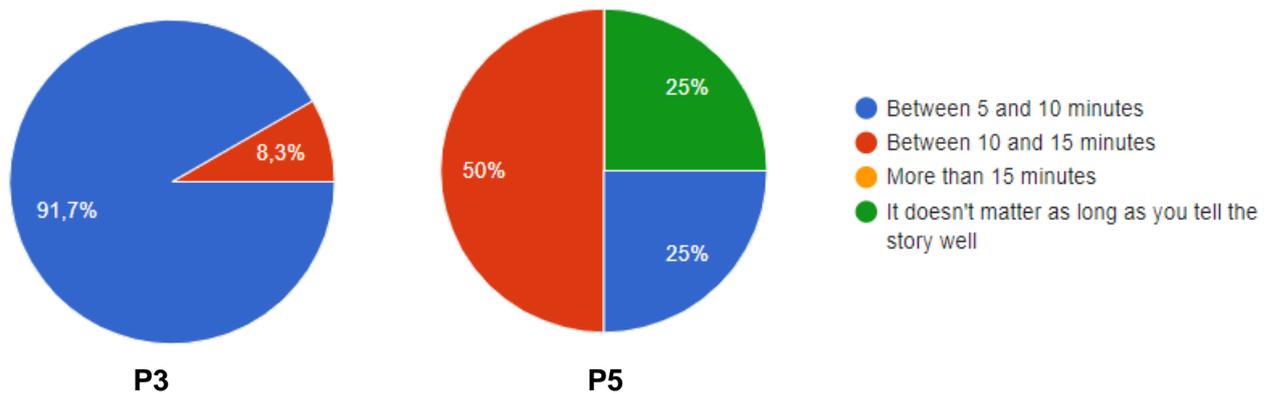
**Graph 11.** Comparison between P3 and P5 children's interest when listening to a story

The next question is pretended to be a comparison between the activities that the teacher carries out when telling a story in both P3 and P5. As the bar graph shows, there is not a clear difference between both ages, as the vast majority of answers show that teachers do the same activities with 3-year-old children than with 5-year-old ones. However, we can observe that oral skills are more promoted with 5-year old children, either to ask questions about the cover, ask questions to ensure understanding or conduct meaningful follow-up activities. In addition and according to the answers, it is more likely to switch into mother tongue language with the littlest ones.



**Graph 12.** Comparison between the way the teacher tells a story in both P3 and P5 classes

The following question is focused on what the length of a tale in both ages should be. Eleven participants out of 12 from the questionnaire reply that in P3 a tale should not last more than 10 minutes, while just one of them states that storytime cannot exceed more than 15 minutes. As for P5 class, six participants (50%) claim that with 5-year-old children a story can last a little bit more than with 3-year-old children but without exceeding the 15 minutes. Nonetheless, the other participants show disagreement. Three of them conclude that in P5 a story should last between 5 and 10 minutes. However, the other three participants state that it doesn't matter the time a story lasts as long as it is well-told.



**Graph 13.** Teachers considerations about the length of a storybook in both P3 and P5 classes

The last question, *Apart from the story extension and its respective vocabulary, what other differences do you see when telling a story to 3-year-old children and to 5-year-old ones?*, covers a great variety of answers. Generally, most of the teachers coincide that body and facial movements are crucial with the littlest ones to ensure understanding. Others agree that children's attention span is not the same with 3-year-old children than with 5-year-old ones. The rhythm of reading is another difference that three teachers out of twelve agree with, saying that 3-year-old children need a slower pronunciation in order to understand the story and learn new words.

Another participant refers to linguistic and communicative competences, stating that in P5 you can deal with many activities after telling the story where kids can communicate whereas in P3 kids' level communication is not as high as in P5, so it is not that easy for them to communicate in a foreign language. Finally, the supports teachers use when telling a story are another difference that four teachers agree with. In that sense, they believe that 3-year-old children need more extra support than 5-year-old ones.

### 3.3.3 Focus group

In this section, the most important information is categorized into 5 blocks in order to highlight the main aspects teachers said about the main topic. As mentioned in the Data Collection Tools section, the whole transcription in Catalan of the focus group can be seen in Appendix 3.

After explaining teachers the definition and the benefits of Storytelling according to different authors, I encouraged them to share their opinions. O, the teacher in P3 (O from now on), remarks that she totally agree with both authors, but she admits that Storytelling is not the main learning focus in the school. The English teacher (R from now on) specifies that stories, together with songs, are the most used resources in her English lessons. Moreover, she adds that she likes to work with the books that children bring from their homes. M, the teacher in P4 (M from now on) contributes to this idea by adding that when working on the class project, she always tries to introduce new concepts trough stories. However, the teacher in P5 (X from now on) recognizes that she would like to explain stories more often but she lacks of resources as she only knows the basic and best-seller ones.

As for the question on *How much do you think a story should last in these ages?*, we can observe some different opinions. O states that according to her experience, time is not so much important. She defends her opinion by adding that if the story is visual appealing for children and they understand the message, it does not matter if it lasts 5 or 10 minutes. However, it can happen that with a 2-minute video, children do not pay the same attention because the story is not as well told as the long one. Nevertheless, R, the English specialist, does not share O's opinion. She defends that in English, a tale cannot last quite a lot because children disconnect immediately. M agrees with R and she adds that in English visual supports are very important. No matter how much you use gestures or moderate your voice; you really need the image resource. Finally, she makes a very interesting rhetoric question: How are you going to teach children the different colours if you don't have an image of that concrete colour?

Talking about the differences that teachers see when telling a story traditionally or digitally, they all agree that both supports are interesting, but none is better than the other. The perfect combination would be a mix of them. The Digital Interactive Whiteboard indeed offers children a visually appealing world, but they are used to watch videos at home, either on television, tablet or on their parent's mobile phone. In addition, M contributes to this idea by adding that sometimes children make a distinction between video and tale, although sometimes a video is also a tale. R, as an English specialist, points out that she cannot imagine doing her lessons without the Digital Interactive Whiteboard as it offers her many resources such as videos, songs, games, etc. However, they all consider that although we should make use of both resources, what children like the most are the tales explained by the teacher. In this sense, the attention span and the element of surprise are the arguments in favour of traditional Storytelling.

They do not think that the role of the storyteller should always be the teacher in the educational world. Instead, they think that families, classmates or children of other grades can also adopt this role. Notwithstanding, I wanted to go in depth into this concept and I asked them if they have tried other ways to explain a story. Instantly, M explains how “El conte viatger” works in her classroom. It consists of a notebook in which the teacher begins to write the beginning of a story. She also makes a small drawing representing it. Every week, one child brings this notebook home and (s)he has to continue the story. This proposal works very well because it contributes to strengthen the relationship between parents and children. Moreover, it contributes to create a group-class feeling as children are the protagonists of their own learning. R adds that years ago, in P3 they did quite a similar project but instead of each child writing a part of a story, they had to explain a short tale to their families.

Finally, the question *Apart from the story extension and its respective vocabulary, what other differences do you see when telling a story to 3-year-old children and to 5-year-old ones?* has been one of the most discussed issues. O mentions that in terms of paying attention, there is no difference between them. She also adds that if someone disconnects from the story is because (s)he has not yet developed the language or because (s)he does not understand the story. However, she observes a difference in terms of comprehension as she mentions that with 3-year-old children it is better to stop the story and help them to catch the message while with 5-year-old children it is not necessary to do it because they reach the conclusions alone. X remarks that if she sees that someone has not got the message the first time, she tells the story again stopping in the parts that she considers important for them to understand. M contributes to this idea by adding that visual supports are more frequent in P3. They all agree that body and facial movements are another difference. However, in terms of classroom organization they do not see any difference.

As a way of conclusion and given the information extracted from the 3 instruments, it could be said that:

- There is no clear preference between traditional and digital Storytelling.
- Dialogues are not repeated with 5-year-old children. However, they are usually repeated twice with 3-year-old children.
- The teacher stops more the story in P3 to ensure understanding.
- The greatest use of onomatopoeias and Realia with the littlest ones.

## 4. Conclusions

The aim of this study was to get more information about one of the most used resources to teach and learn English in Kindergarten School and thus, to be able to see and analyse the differences of application in the different ages that this stage entails. For that reason, the main conclusions after conducting this research are revised in this section.

First, it should be said that as the sample of participants was quite small, I can't generalize the results obtained. In that sense, I have seen on a small scale that although the Storytelling resource is the same in the different ages of Early Childhood Education, there are differences of application, although they are minimal.

In general, the results indicate that stories are one of the most used resources by all participants in order to teach English in Kindergarten school. Additionally, teachers in the study have also recognized the advantages that this resource offers at an early age, coinciding with the ones Wright (2013) proposed. In that sense, one of the most mentioned advantages is that through stories, teachers can work any type of content and can improve many aspects of the language as pronunciation, sentence structure, etc. During my study, I observed that in both P3 and P5 classes children show a positive attitude towards learning when listening to stories because they are relaxed and receptive to learn new vocabulary. So, in relation to the effectiveness of the books, I could say that stories promote a rational and affective classroom climate as books have the capacity to change children's mood because they encourage them to make use of imagination and creativity as well as to empathise with unfamiliar places, people and situations. Therefore, I highlight the importance of selecting an appropriate story to work on new vocabulary.

As the way of placing children when telling stories is an important matter, the results reveal that teachers do not take into consideration this strategy in any of the classes. Though, these statements give a contradicted overview presented before by Bryant (1996), since she stated that it is very important not to sit children directly behind others or in a position that they cannot see the narrator's face well as children need physical proximity to reach a mental approach.

Regarding the way in which stories should be told, most of the teachers state to provide a similar point of view to Wright (2013). However, as I observed, children in P3 need more extra support as they are at the beginning of their English learning process. In this sense, gestures, visuals and realia are crucial tools to motivate children to learn because this way they can complete their comprehension at the same time that words can be

better understood. In addition, it is proven that these supports lead children's participation, make the story more visually appealing and consequently, they catch children's attention easily. As well, after doing this research I have seen the effectiveness of the repetition technique used only with 3-year-old children. As Wright (2003) stated, when the child hears the same words or expressions repeatedly over the course of the story, (s)he directly introduces it into his or her vocabulary. Therefore, it can be said that this narrative resource is a good way to exercise the memory of the child and encourage children's participation.

After this, I want to highlight that although I could not see so many follow-up activities after reading a story in the school where I carried out the practical part, the results of the questionnaire show that more follow-up activities are done with 5-year-old than with 3-year old ones. As one of the participants of the study stated, "in P5, you can deal with many activities after telling the story where kids can communicate. In P3, kids' level communication is not as high as in P5, so it is not that easy for them to communicate in another language." In that sense, keeping in mind that children's linguistic and communicative competences are different among 3-year-old and 5-year-old children, this also explains the fact that in P5 more questions about the cover of a book are asked, because they start to have more vocabulary. Covering the follow-up activities topic again, I do not consider them as a matter of great importance because a good tale already tells you everything. So, choosing a good ritual, creating a good class climate, reading the story twice if needed and commenting it, is enough. It is also true that there are many tales that allow us to do some work such as classify the characters according to their appearance in the story, draw some characters, etc. But a good tale already tells you which path to choose.

During my study, I also observed that when it comes to telling a story, the figure of the Storyteller plays a very important role as it is the transmitter between the story and the child. Another important aspect that I realised during this fieldwork is that all the problems novice teachers can face, according to Wolff, Bogert, Jarodzka and Boshuizen (2015), are not reflected when telling a story. In that sense, both novice and expert teachers can experience success on different levels. Hence, as I thought at the beginning, through this study I could see in general terms that the perception there may be between novice and experienced teachers when telling stories is much more subjective than objective.

If we have a look at all the graphics attached in the previous section, it is seen that a mix of both traditional and digital Storytelling is the key to teach English at an early age. Nowadays, we are living in a technological era where digital technology is transforming

every aspect of people's lives. In that sense, education should not stay at the edge of these changes and must promote the formation of these resources from the beginning, so that the student acquires basic skills in a digitally literate world. Indeed, it is observed that if the story adapts a digital form, teachers tend to stop the story more frequently with the littlest ones to ensure its complete understanding. On the other hand, P5 students already reach their own conclusions without stopping the story. However, we should bear in mind that traditional Storytelling offers us a series of benefits that digital Storytelling does not. Among them, the most important one refers to the teacher's figure, a person who knows better than anyone the group of children (s)he has in front of him/her and thus is able to modulate the pitch of the voice, repeat important words or expressions for the complete understanding of the story, adapt the rhythm of reading, etc. For that reason, I consider a combination of both resources the best methodology to teach English. However, even though ICTs are a tool that motivates children, during my observations I realised that teachers are not too much aware of all the advantages that this tool can offer to children as they always used the same digital platform when working with Storytelling.

Another difference found throughout this research is the length of a storybook. As children grow up, their attention span increases and consequently, they can be focused on the story for a longer period than 3-year-old children. That is also because 5-year-old children understand more specific parts of the story while the littlest ones understand it globally. That is literally what Gilolmo (1988) mentioned in his article.

Referring to the use of L1, it is observed that teachers tend not to use children's mother tongue when telling a story, whether to translate a difficult word or expression or to give some orders. Although the use of L1 in English lessons has always generated a great debate, the number of input children receive daily in English is considered crucial in the learning process: the more encounters with English the better. Additionally, it must be kept in mind that the time teacher spends using children's mother tongue, is time that is not spent in using English, so mother-tongue use deprives children of valuable learning opportunities. What is more, translation should not be considered as a valuable skill to practice. However, it is observed that with 3-year-old children, the use of L1 is used more often than with 5-year-old children. This is partly because some Infant School teachers have the sensation that L1 can help to aid motivation towards learning and alleviate frustration in this first contact with the foreign language.

To end up, I would like to highlight that although non-English language teachers have participated in the focus group, it has helped me to see that Storytelling is also extended

and applied to other disciplines. Though the differences observed are very different if the story is told in Catalan or English, I consider the opinion of the other teachers very important because it means that Storytelling could also be applied in a language immersion school.

In conclusion, the results show that Storytelling is one of the most used resources when teaching English in Early Childhood Education and all the participants that took part in this study recognized its educational and pedagogical value. However, it must be said that although the resource of Storytelling is the same, it is not applied in the same way in the different courses that this stage entails and, as teachers, it is essential to know these differences and thus, adapt them to the needs of each group of children.

This Final Year Project has led me to reflect on my nearby future as an English teacher. It has helped me to realise that Storytelling works really well when learning a foreign language as it is a fun and motivating tool that can help to develop a positive attitude towards the foreign language.

During the development of the study, I could not have imagined finding a huge amount of authors referring to Storytelling. Although I was aware of the importance of this field of knowledge in Infant and Primary Education, the project has been an opportunity for me to expand my knowledge and to put into practice some theoretical considerations that I have learnt about the topic in various subjects of my degree during these years. Even so, regarding the theoretical part, I would like to mention that as I wanted my work to be a gender-inclusive work, I had to use the *(s)he* form in order to include as many teachers and students as possible.

On the other hand, I would like to highlight some weaknesses and limitations that might have conditioned the results gathered. First, and as I have commented before, despite all the data collected, the number of participants is quite small to provide relevant data. Moreover, some of the participants did not answer all the questions and some of them did it with poor answers. For that reason, I think that in order to obtain more reliable results, the study should have been done with a larger sample of participants. However, due to the few contacts within the educational world and the fact that English is a non-compulsory subject in Infant Education, it has not been possible to enlarge the sample. Besides, the unexpected health crisis of COVID19 has also contributed to this fact. Moreover, I consider that the years working in teaching of each participant could have been included in the questionnaire. This way I could have obtained more detailed data of the participants in order to investigate further and see in a more detailed way if the years of experience of the participants really have some influence in the use of

Storytelling. Therefore, I think that a future line of study could follow this path because there are very few studies that talk about these differences so far.

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## 6. Appendices

### 6.1 Appendix 1: Sample of the classroom observation

COURSE:		YES	NO	OBSERVATIONS
1	Teacher uses stories and contexts familiar to students			
2	The topic is introduced before starting			
3	Teacher asks questions about the cover			
4	She takes into account all students			
5	Teacher has prepared the story beforehand			
6	She uses L1 as a resource when necessary			
7	She uses body and facial movements to support meaning			
8	Teacher has managed to create a cozy atmosphere during the narration			
9	She has placed children in a U-shaped form			
10	Vocabulary and expressions have been appropriate for children			
11	Teacher supplements activities with visuals, realia and movement			
12	Teacher conducted meaningful follow-up activities			

**OTHER OBSERVATIONS:**

## 6.2 Appendix 2: Questionnaire results

### Storytelling as a way to learn English

Dear English teacher,

My name is Eva Reixach and I am a 4th-year-student of the Double Degree in Early Childhood and Primary Education at University of Vic. As part of the requirements of my University degree, this year I am doing my final dissertation project under the title "How does the age of children influence in the use of Storytelling as a strategy to teach English?". For that reason, it would be very helpful for me if you could answer this type of questionnaire-interview. Taking advantage of the occasion, I would like to assure you that all responses will be kept confidential as there is no requirement for me to mention any names in my data analysis and discussion.

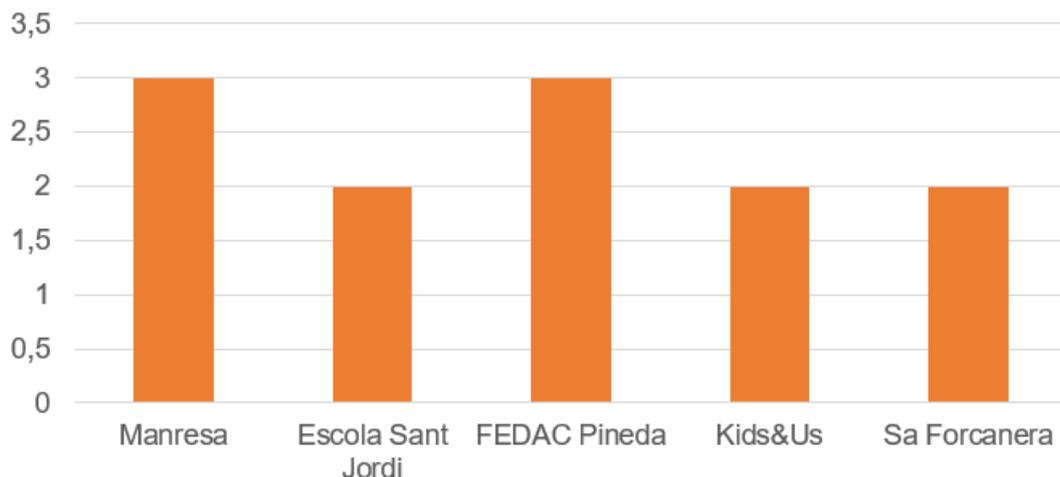
Thank you in advance,

Sincerely,

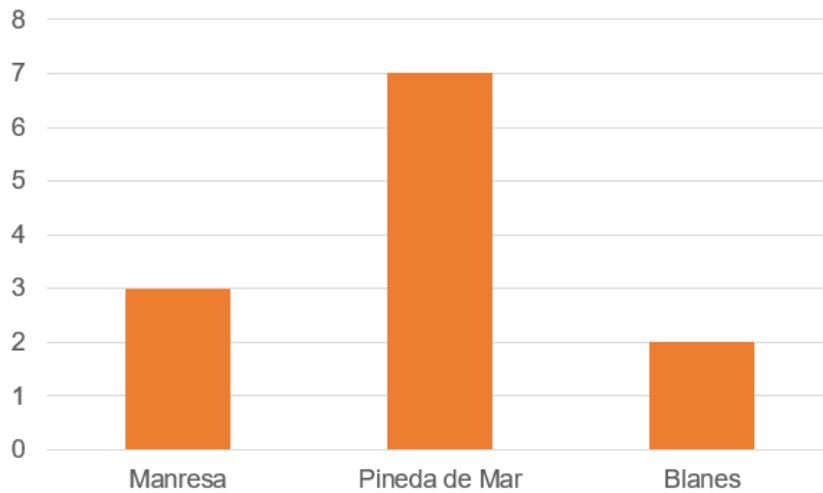
Eva Reixach

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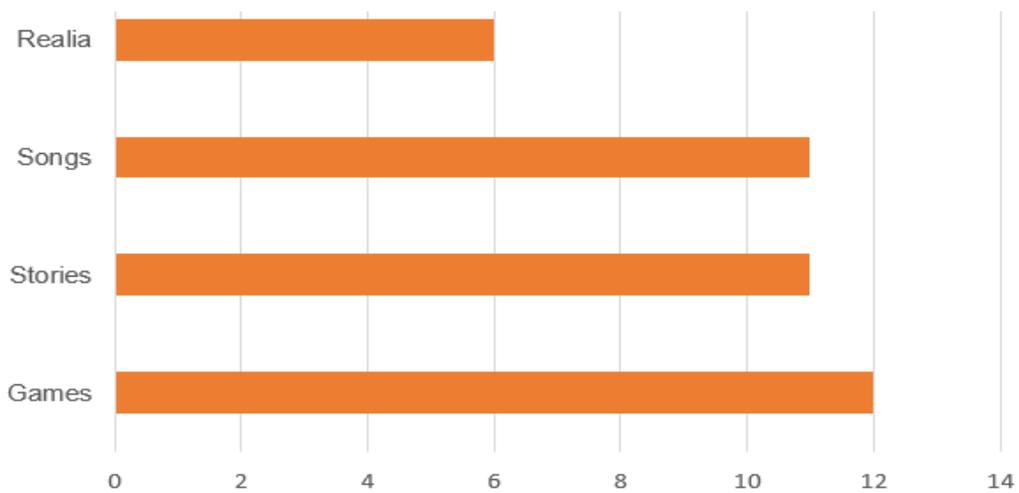
### Name of your school:



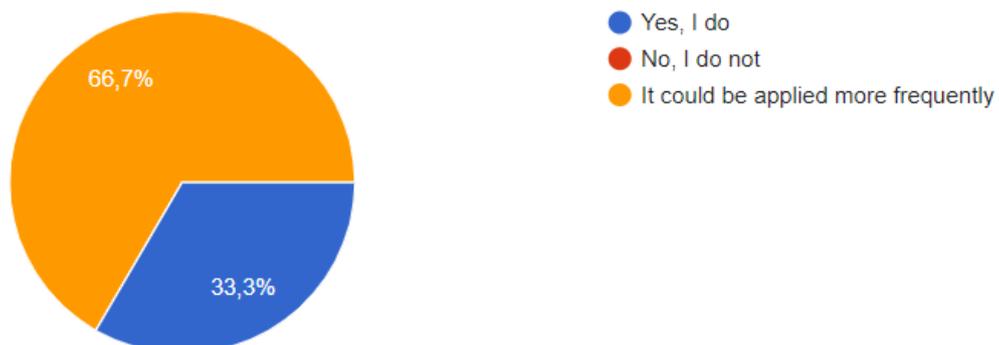
## Locality:



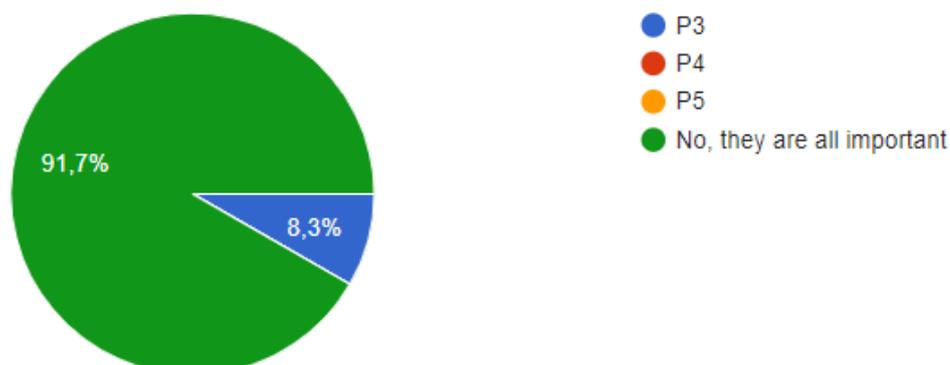
## 1. How do you teach English in your classes?



## 2. Do you think Storytelling is sufficiently applied in the school where you work?



3. Is there any class in the second cycle of Early Childhood Education where Storytelling plays a major role than the others?

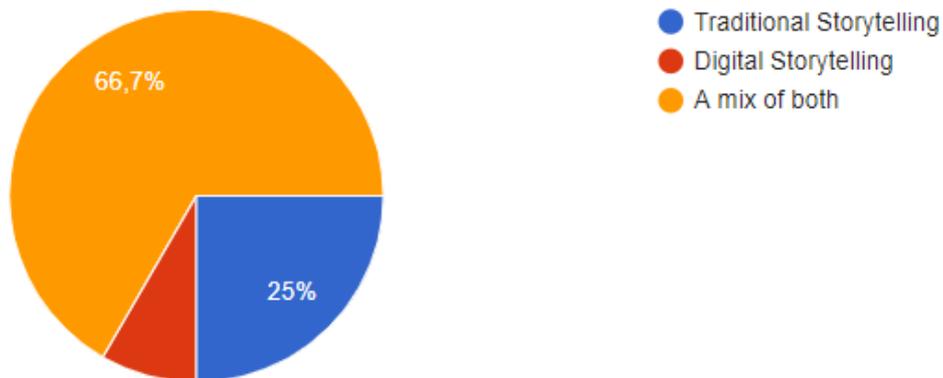


In relation to the previous question, could you tell me why?

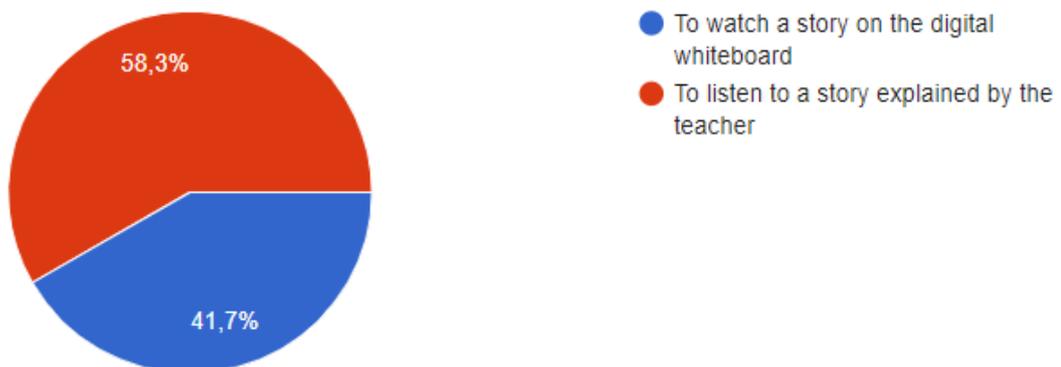
<b>Teacher 1</b>	Storytelling is an excellent resource to learn English.
<b>Teacher 2</b>	Oral comprehension is always very important.
<b>Teacher 3</b>	Families don't explain stories to the children.
<b>Teacher 4</b>	Because children love to listen to stories. It is a way they can be relaxed and listen to a foreign language.
<b>Teacher 5</b>	Because we use the same method with the 3 ages.
<b>Teacher 6</b>	All of them are important.
<b>Teacher 7</b>	Storytelling is important in all classes.
<b>Teacher 8</b>	Through storytelling we can work on many topics adapted to kids' ages.
<b>Teacher 9</b>	Because it is the way we've got to tell all sorts of content (from less to more complex, both grammatical and moral) using the excuse of a simple tale.
<b>Teacher 10</b>	Because children love stories.
<b>Teacher 11</b>	We should tell stories to all courses, adapting them to kids' ages and needs.
	I think storytelling is important in the three classes in the same way. It is used every day in the class in different ways. We think it is very important for them.  Stories create magic and a sense of wonder at the world. Stories teach us about life, about ourselves and others. Storytelling is a way for kids

<b>Teacher 12</b>	<p>to develop an understanding, respect and appreciation for other cultures, and can promote a positive attitude to people from different lands and religions.</p> <p>When you tell a story, there is a magical moment. Children sit enthralled, mouths open, eyes wide.</p> <p>Some benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are many games you can play with inspired by the story.</li> <li>• It raises the enthusiasm for reading texts to find stories, reread them, etc.</li> <li>• It initiates writing because children will quickly want to write stories and tell them.</li> <li>• It enhances the community in the room.</li> <li>• It improves listening skills.</li> </ul>
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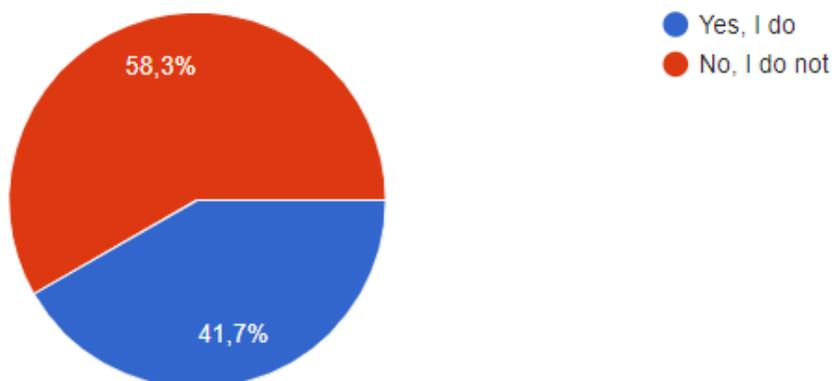
**4. Which of the resources mentioned below is more frequent to find in your classes?**



**5. According to your experience, which of the following options do you think children like the most?**



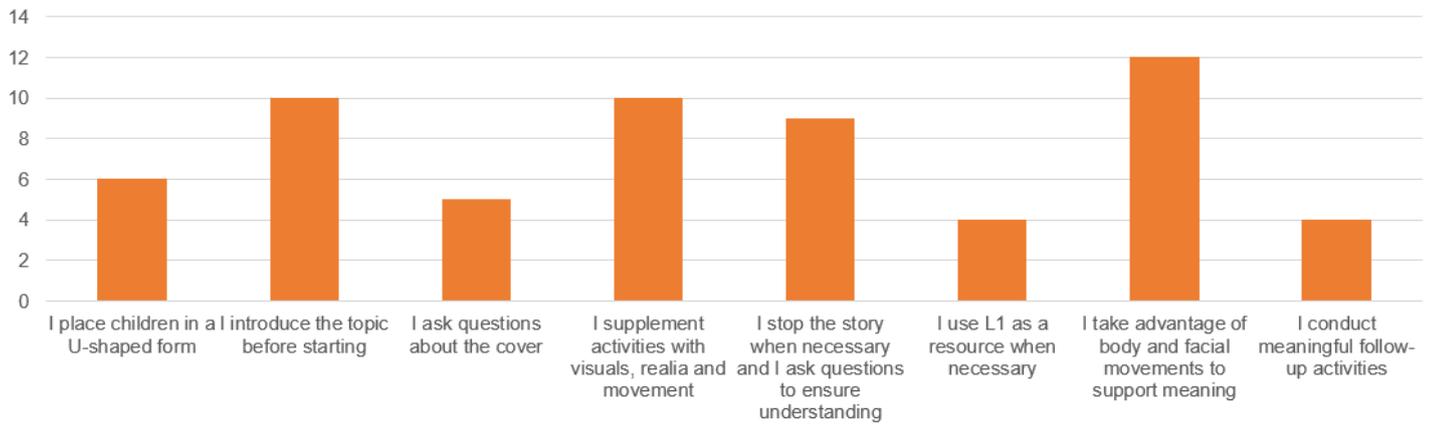
6. Do you think that 3-year-old and 5-year-old children show the same interest when listening to a story?



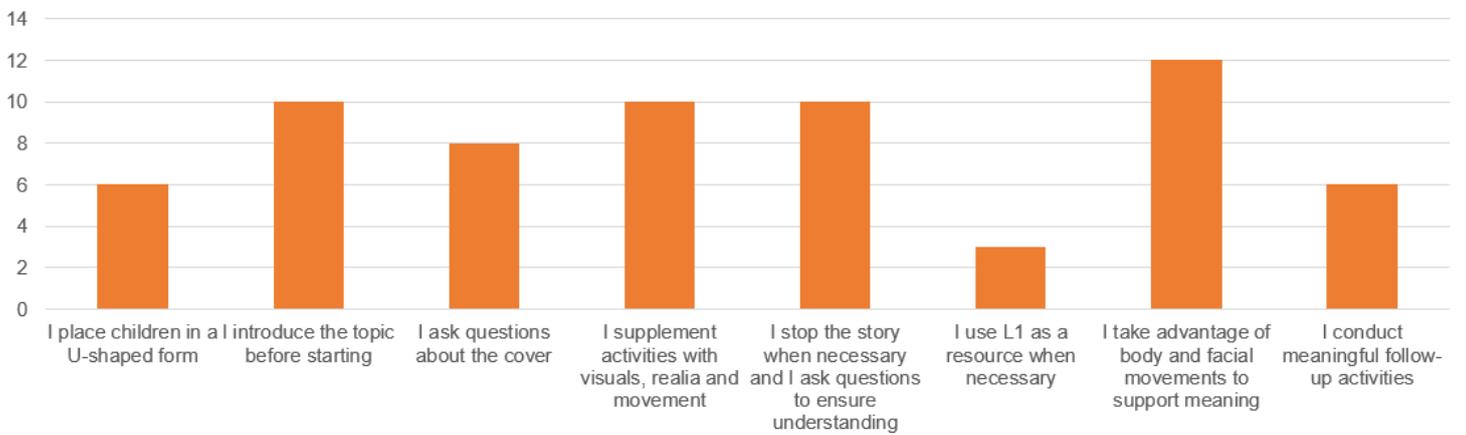
In relation to the previous question, could you tell me why?

<b>Teacher 1</b>	Yes, I do, they love stories, it doesn't matter the age. In my opinion, they prefer when is the teacher who explains the story, looking at their eyes and doing some theatre.
<b>Teacher 2</b>	If a story is well told, kids will follow it with enthusiasm.
<b>Teacher 3</b>	It depends mainly on the way you explain, and always considering that the content is adapted to the age. If both aspects are carried out properly, then the experience might be rich in all cases.
<b>Teacher 4</b>	Because they are in different years.
<b>Teacher 5</b>	They love listening to stories!
<b>Teacher 6</b>	5-year-old children are able to pay attention for longer.
<b>Teacher 7</b>	It depends on the age they pay more attention or less.
<b>Teacher 8</b>	Probably because 5-year-old children understand more specific parts of it, while 3-year-old children understand it in a global way
<b>Teacher 9</b>	Because the attention span of 5-year-old children is higher than 3-year-old ones.
<b>Teacher 10</b>	Because it is fun for them.
<b>Teacher 11</b>	Their interests are different.
<b>Teacher 12</b>	-----

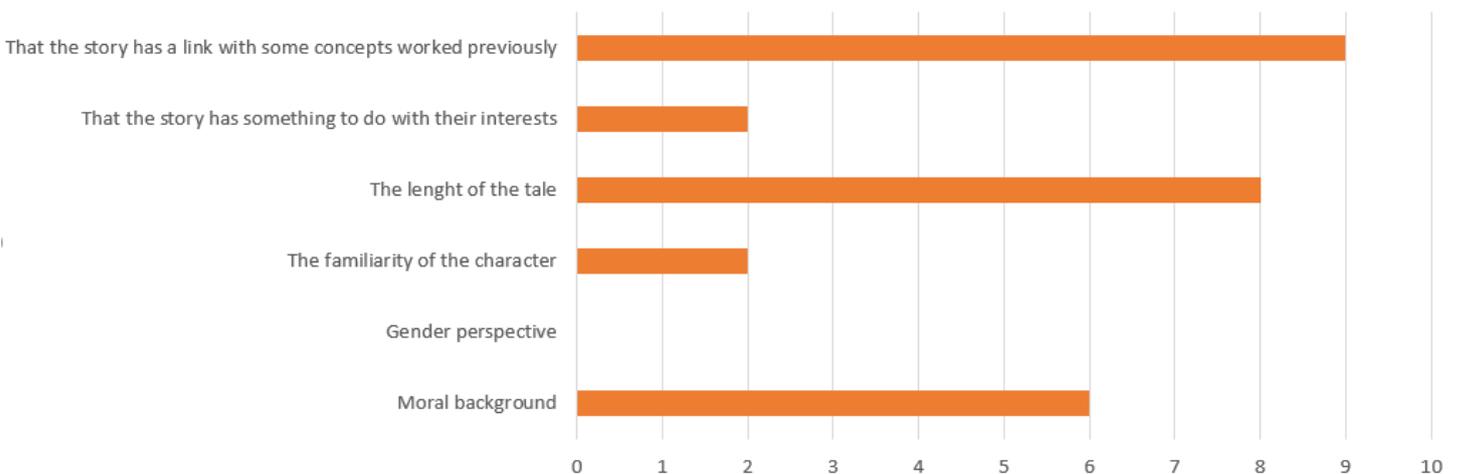
### 7. Which of the activities below do you carry out when telling a story in P3?



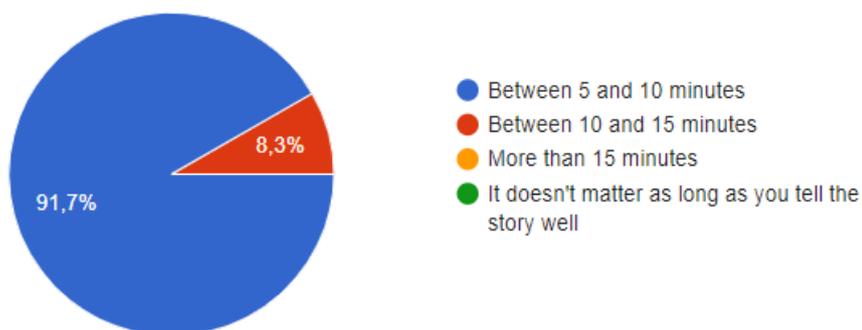
### And in P5?



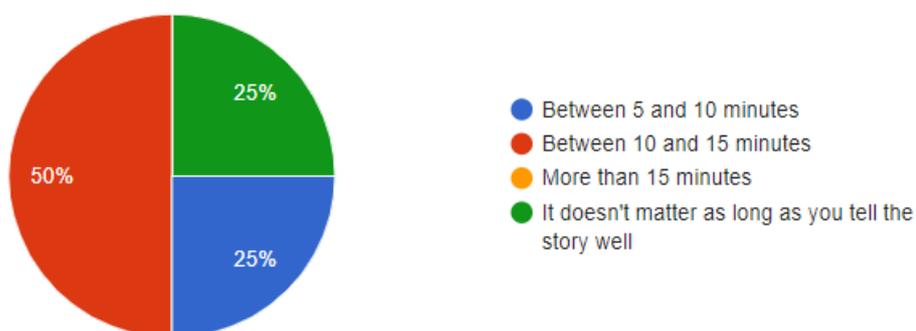
### 8. When using Storytelling as a resource to learn English, which criteria do you use to select a story in relation to the classes of P3 and P5?



**9. What do you consider it should be the length of a story book in P3?**



**And in P5?**



**10. Storytelling is strongly associated with language learning. Do you think it can be extended to other disciplines?**

<b>Teacher 1</b>	Yes.
<b>Teacher 2</b>	Any value can be worked through storytelling.
<b>Teacher 3</b>	I have no doubt about it.
<b>Teacher 4</b>	Yes.
<b>Teacher 5</b>	Of course! Through storytelling we can work on scientific, mathematic and emotional content.
<b>Teacher 6</b>	Sure.
<b>Teacher 7</b>	Probably yes, because it's related to creativity and imagination.
<b>Teacher 8</b>	Of course!
<b>Teacher 9</b>	Math, values.
<b>Teacher 10</b>	Emotional education too.

<b>Teacher 11</b>	-----
<b>Teacher 12</b>	<p>Children love listening to stories. They want to know more about their favourite characters and often try to emulate them. By telling stories that come with a meaningful message, you can inculcate qualities like wisdom, courage, honesty, etc. from an early age.</p> <p>As I said before, Storytelling can be used as a method to teach ethics, values and cultural norms and differences. Learning is most effective when it takes place in social environments that provide authentic social cues about how knowledge is to be applied.</p> <p>I don't have any doubt that it can be extended to other disciplines like maths, geography, music, and arts....</p>

**11. Apart from the story extension and its respective vocabulary, what other differences do you see when telling a story to 3-year-old children and to 5-year-old ones?**

<b>Teacher 1</b>	The production that children can do.
<b>Teacher 2</b>	In EI3 you have to use more your face and body and use L1 more than in EI5.
<b>Teacher 3</b>	More attention.
<b>Teacher 4</b>	The language structure, their attention span, body and facial movements...
<b>Teacher 5</b>	Body and facial teacher movements are more necessary with the youngest. With the oldest the teacher can use more difficult linguistic structures...
<b>Teacher 6</b>	The meaning of the story, the topic, the way to explain...
<b>Teacher 7</b>	The more use of realia and body movements in P3.
<b>Teacher 8</b>	With the littlest ones we need more body and facial movements to ensure understanding.
<b>Teacher 9</b>	The rhythm of reading; a 3y/o might need a slower pronunciation in order to understand it and learn the words.
<b>Teacher 10</b>	The attention.
<b>Teacher 11</b>	Linguistic and communicative competences.

	<p>In P5, you can deal with many activities after telling the story where kids can communicate. In P3, kids' level communication is not as high as in P5, so it is not that easy for them to communicate in L2.</p>
<p><b>Teacher 12</b></p>	<p>This age group loves to have fun, and this is a big clue for teachers wanting to tell stories to them. Having fun with stories usually means you have to tell with fun energy. Be energetic, tricky, silly, loving, appreciative and relaxed.</p> <p>If I have to say a difference could be the support that we use if with 5 years old children they are used to listening stories in English maybe just with some pictures, puppets and mime they can understand the story. With 3 years old children need more extra support. Also, you can make more questions and they can start to answer because they have more vocabulary.</p> <p>But in general, in my opinion, there aren't more differences.</p>

### 6.3 Appendix 3: Focus group transcription

*Me (mediadora), O (mestra de P3), M (mestre de P4), X (mestra de P5), R (mestra d'anglès)*

**Me:** Bé, abans de res moltíssimes gràcies per ser avui aquí. Sé que és un gran esforç el deixar les vostres feines de banda per poder ser avui aquí i espero que puguem passar una bona estona i aprendre les unes de les altres. Durant aquesta sessió es tracta bàsicament que exposeu i intercanvieu les vostres opinions respecte el tema que, com ja sabeu, gira entorn a l'Storytelling, que és l'art d'explicar o narrar històries.

Us voldria demanar també el vostre consentiment per enregistrar-vos la veu mentre es duu a terme aquesta tècnica de recollida de dades ja que em serà de gran utilitat a l'hora d'analitzar la conversa, evitant així doncs que se'm passi per alt cap detall. D'acord doncs, si us sembla bé començaré per una pregunta de caire més general.

Molts autors coneguts en aquest camp, com ara Ellis and Brewster (2002) o Wright (2002), ens ofereixen múltiples beneficis en relació als contes pel que fa a l'etapa d'Infantil, des d'aprendre nou vocabulari, apropar-se a noves cultures fins a desenvolupar diversos sentits com el de la imaginació, el de la creativitat o el de l'empatia, entre d'altres. Dita aquesta definició, penseu que a la vostra escola l'Storytelling és el focus principal de l'aprenentatge en l'etapa d'Educació Infantil?

**O:** A veure, potser no és el principal focus d'aprenentatge però sí que n'expliquem molt.

**M:** Sí, és un dels principals.

**X:** I a partir dels contes sí que és cert que pots treballar diverses emocions o valors.

**M:** I tot tipus de temes, sí, sí.

**Me:** Penseu que hauria de tenir més pes a FEDAC Pineda?

**X:** Jo crec que potser no coneixem molts contes que puguin servir-nos, no? O sigui coneixem els bàsics i alguns que veiem que ens van bé per treballar aquell aspecte que necessitem, però si coneguéssim contes que treballen cada aspecte potser sí que els utilitzaríem més. Vaja, aquesta és la meva opinió.

**M:** Jo penso que a banda dels contes tradicionals, en els projectes sempre intentem buscar contes relacionat amb cada projecte, ja sigui el projecte de la Índia o dels planetes, etc. Com a mínim jo sempre ho he fet així i ho he intentat relacionar sempre amb els contes ja que a través d'ells podem fer moltes coses.

**R:** També aprofitem els que els infants porten els de casa. Sí que és cert per exemple, que aquesta setmana passada que ha estat el dia de la dona no hem fet res, però hi una pila de contes pel tema de la coeducació. Aquest any, com ja saps, hem estat molt atabalats amb el tema del projecte interdisciplinari i no hem tingut temps per abordar aquest tema, però n'hi ha moltíssims.

**Me:** I vosaltres, R i X, com a especialistes d'anglès, creieu que els contes ajuden en l'aprenentatge d'una nova llengua en aquesta etapa o penseu que hi ha altres recursos, com ara les cançons, per exemple, que són més eficients?

**R:** Jo penso que no hi ha cap recurs més eficient que l'altre, sinó que s'han d'anar combinant els dos.

**X:** Ja ho has vist tu, Eva, que a les hores d'anglès sempre combinem aquests dos recursos principalment. A més que els infants estan molt atents, o sigui, focalitzen molt l'atenció.

**R:** T'ajuden molt a treballar vocabulari, a que aprenguin estructures claus dels conte a través de repeticions i dramatitzacions, a treballar la capacitat d'atenció, etc.

**Me:** Molt bé. Ara m'agradaria que miréssiu atentament un petit fragment dels següents vídeos.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JOWiPx5VRUU>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JCucskD9XWE>
- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WR4L\\_t6IAfc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WR4L_t6IAfc)

Penseu que tots 3 vídeos s'ajusten a la definició de Storytelling?

**O:** Sí.

**X:** Si, no?

**Me:** La manera en que totes 3 històries estan explicades, és apropiada per infants d'aquestes edats?

**O:** Jo penso que sí. A més, per exemple el primer vídeo que és un petit curtmetratge i que a penes abunden les paraules, la tasca del mestre és molt important. Potser el que veig menys apropiat és el segon vídeo, que veig massa diàleg.

**M:** Sí, massa diàleg. Una versió una mica lliure.

**Me:** Creieu que aquestes històries, en formats ben diferents, arriben de la mateixa manera als infants?

**R:** Sí.

**O:** Bé, hi ha algunes que són més atractives i que els hi arriben més i altres potser que no tant.

**M:** Si no són atractives desconnecten moltes vegades.

**X:** I si són molt llargues també.

**Me:** Per tant, quant creieu que ha de durar una història en aquestes edats?

**O:** Més que temps jo penso que visualment han de ser atractius els dibuixos perquè segons la meva experiència, a vegades els poso vídeos que duren 5 o 6 minuts i si la història els hi agrada i els dibuixos són macos, és que sembla que no hi hagi nens/es a l'aula!

**X:** Sí, això és veritat.

**O:** I en canvi altres més curts potser no els acaben d'enganxar.

**M:** I desconnecten ràpidament.

**X:** Sí, és veritat.

**O:** Les imatges i també el que s'està explicant és molt important que els enganxi.

**Me:** Llavors l'edat no influeix per a tu? Vull dir, el fet que siguin infants de 3 anys és sinònim a que poden estar atents el mateix temps que els de P5, per exemple?

**O:** Home, jo penso que l'edat si que influeix una mica.

**X:** Sí, una mica sí.

**M:** Perquè captin més coses, perquè retinguin més la informació. Però si la història és bona i el vídeo està ben fet, i tant que ho capten igual.

**Me:** Per tant, quina creieu que és més fàcil que l'infantil entengui l'acció que passa al moment així com la història en el seu conjunt?

**O:** No ho sé, depèn del moment també.

**R:** És que aquesta història dels 3 porquets, per exemple, és una història que ja coneixen en la seva llengua materna. Potser si fos una història que no coneguessin els resultaria més difícil d'entendre en format cançó.

**X:** Clar.

**O:** Però aquesta els agrada molt perquè fan el "toc, toc, toc..."

**R:** Perquè és molt típica.

**M:** Per què l'hem treballat en català, la història, vols dir?

**R:** Sí, clar.

**X:** Però el curtmetratge també els agrada molt. Quan vam fer el projecte interdisciplinari "Save the Planet" que els vam posar diversos curtmetratges, això els va encantar i estaven súper atents en silenci. A més jo després els feia preguntes i ho havien entès tot a la perfecció. A P5 eh això, clar no ho sé a P3.

**R:** I les titelles també els agraden molt!

**Me:** Relacionat també una mica amb els vídeos en formats diferents que hem vist anteriorment i, com bé sabreu, vivim en una societat on la tecnologia pren cada vegada un rol més important. Si ho traslladem al món educatiu, ens adonem que les pissarres digitals interactives (PDI) han substituït en moltes escoles a les pissarres de guix, augmentant així el nombre de possibilitats en relació al seu ús. A partir d'aquí, la meua pregunta és: com a mestres, quines diferències veieu entre un conte explicat de manera tradicional i un altre projectat a través de la pissarra digital interactiva (PDI) de l'aula?

**O:** Jo penso que lo bo és també comptar amb molts recursos, no? Jo també explico contes a vegades sense cap tipus de suport i faig el pallaso i realment acaben entenent-ho tot i seguint la història, però realment si tens més recursos a l'abast doncs, clar, la pissarra digital t'obre un món visualment que els hi és molt atractiu no, i llavors ja que ho tens també ho fas servir.

**M:** S'han d'anar alternant els diferents tipus de recursos.

**X:** Sí perquè també els agrada eh, que també tu com a mestre els expliquis una història. Vull dir els hi agrada moltíssim, estan molt atents.

**R:** I a anglès també. Imagina't fer l'anglès anys enrere sense tenir a l'abast les cançons i tots els recursos que la PDI ens ofereix. Perquè tot i que tu ho expliquis potser la teua pronunciació no és com la que fossis d'allà, i també t'ajuda a tenir...

**Me:** Agrada de la mateixa manera als infants?

**O:** A mi em sembla que els hi agrada més que els hi expliquem nosaltres, eh?

**X:** Sí, jo també ho penso.

**Me:** Per què?

**O:** Perquè estan molt acostumats també a estar davant de la televisió a casa, que els posin vídeos o que els pares els deixin el mòbil per mirar vídeos. Llavors sí, no et nego que no sigui atractiu, però estan molt acostumats a això.

**M:** I moltes vegades a mi em verbalitzen: M, posa aquell vídeo i no posa aquell conte. Tot i que sigui el vídeo d'un conte, diuen: "posa'm aquell vídeo". En canvi, "explica'm aquell conte". Els infants ho veuen diferent tot i que sigui el mateix, perquè a veure, si és el conte dels 3 porquets, segueix essent un conte igual si l'expliques tu que si s'explica a través de la pissarra digital. Però fan aquesta distinció entre vídeo i conte.

**Me:** I l'atenció, creieu que és la mateixa?

**X:** Jo crec que hi ha més atenció quan tu com a mestra els expliques el conte.

**R:** També entra en joc el factor sorpresa, que no saben què faràs.

**O:** Exacte, si faràs canvis de veu o si faràs el "pallasso".

**X:** Sí, exacte. Els tens captivats.

**R:** A mi el que m'agrada molt és inventar-me els contes. Per exemple, que anem a un bosc i comença a ploure llaminadures. O parlo d'ells com si fossin els protagonistes de la història: "Hem anat d'excursió tot i aquest nen de la classe s'ha tornat invisible." Els encanta!

**X:** Sí, sí, és això, l'efecte sorpresa és molt potent en aquestes edats.

**O:** Jo això també ho faig i vaig dibuixant a vegades a la pissarra mentre explico. "Hi havia una vegada, a la selva, un nen que era indi." I els dibuixo un nen indi. I vaig dibuixant cosetes que van sortint, algun personatge o alguna animal. També els agrada molt.

**Me:** Tenim assumit que el rol de l'Storyteller, és a dir, la persona que explica o narra una història, en el món educatiu és sempre el/la mestre/a. Què en dieu? Creieu que sempre és així?

**M:** No sempre, les famílies també poden venir a explicar contes.

**O:** I els infants també els poden explicar.

**M:** Anys enrere els grans de l'escola venien a explicar contes als més menuts. Es preparaven contes, feien màscares i titelles. Era un treball que ells feien durant tot el curs i quan acabava, ens ho venien a representar. Era molt "xulo". Ara per desgràcia ja no es fa.

**Me:** Heu provat altres maneres d'explicar històries a l'aula?

**M:** Fem el conte viatger que és una llibreta amb les pàgines blanques. La mestra comença inventant-se una història i cada setmana, aquest conte se l'ha d'endur un infant a casa i, amb l'ajuda de les famílies, seguir el conte. A cada pàgina hi ha línies perquè escriguin i també un quadrat perquè en facin un petit dibuix. Quan el dilluns arriba l'infant amb el conte fet, recordem tota la història des del principi. A hores d'ara, els infants ja se la saben de memòria i, a vegades, demano que l'expliquin ells sols. També he provat d'explicar-los el conte amb algun error. Ells mateixos ja el detecten de seguida, i això també és una forma molt eficient de treballar l'atenció.

**R:** A P3 es feia el conte viatge però enfocat d'una altra manera. Era un conte, com per exemple el de la Castanyera o el d'en Patufet, i se'l havien d'endur a casa i l'havien d'explicar ells a la família. Tot això ho expliquem a la reunió d'inici de curs i així els pares ja saben de què va.

**Me:** A banda de l'extensió del conte i del seu respectiu vocabulari, quines altres diferències veieu a l'hora d'explicar un conte dirigit a nens de P3 i de P5?

**O:** Bé, a veure, a nivell d'atenció jo no noto diferència. Tu a un infant li expliques un conte i ho capta de seguida. Si algú desconnecta una estona és per tema de llenguatge, perquè encara no el tenen gaire desenvolupat o els que acaben d'arribar, perquè encara no els arriba el conte. Però si els arriba, llavors bé. D'altra banda, a nivell de comprensió, si que és cert que hi ha algunes cosetes que els has d'ajudar a acabar-ho d'entendre. Contes molt tradicionals com són la Caputxeta Vermella o Els 3 porquets potser no cal tant, però si poses algun vídeo o curtmetratge i vas parant i preguntant a veure si entén la història, els has d'ajudar una miqueta cosa que a P5 això ja no passa, ja arriben a les conclusions. Potser inclús no cal anar parant el vídeo per veure si entenen el missatge.

**X:** No, a P5 no cal parar el vídeo.

**R:** I els contes que a vegades surten a la Pregària, alguns són massa llargs, i com que tu com a mestres tampoc te'l saps, el llegeixes i veus com els costa captar el missatge i inclús molts desconnecten de seguida.

**X:** Clar és que si estàs llegint un conte i no estàs per ells, sí que no hi ha atenció de cap de les maneres.

**O:** Això és veritat, també diuen que s'ha de llegir contes. Però per exemple quan a vegades algun infant et porta algun conte de casa, l'has de llegir perquè no te'l saps, veus que no estan igual d'atents que quan l'expliques. No sé si és perquè no hi ha

contacte visual, perquè el llegeixes... No sé perquè és però no estan igual d'atents que si t'emportes el conte al teu terreny.

**R:** I a vegades llegint t'has d'aturar perquè no saps què posa. A mi m'ha passat moltes vegades sobretot quan l'explico a través de la pissarra digital.

**M:** I en moltes ocasions jo m'he trobat que en els contes hi ha errors.

**R:** A més si llegeixes el conte no pots fer la entonació correcta.

**O:** Però és que jo he llegit en varis articles que és bo llegir-los contes, però realment no paren tanta atenció. I mira que ho he intentat...

**M:** És el que hem dit, que si llegeixes el conte no els mires a ells i per tant, no hi ha tant de contacte. Per això penso que és millor explicar-los la història i no llegir-la. (pausa). Bé, no, rectifico. Jo penso que són dues activitats ben diferents, una cosa és explicar un conte i una altra activitat ben diferent és llegir-los un conte.

**Me:** I, en relació a això que comentàvem sobre el vocabulari, creus que per exemple a P3 s'ha d'anar parant la història per explicar el significat o penses que pel context els infants ja ho entenen?

**O:** Jo no paro la història però si que si surt alguna paraula així més complicada, li poso un sinònim.

**M:** I sinó sempre tenir el recurs de la imatge. Per exemple, si a la història surt algun animal que fins ara no s'ha treballat i que no es freqüent en el vocabulari ni en el dia a dia dels infants, les imatges són un excel·lent recurs.

**X:** Clar, però normalment els contes que estan pensats per Educació Infantil ja tenen un vocabulari especial i no gaire complicat, llavors per ells és bastant senzill. I si hi ha alguna paraula que no entenen, almenys a P5 interrompen el conte i te la demanen. Llavors tu els poses un sinònim o un exemple i ja està.

**Me:** I això d'anar aturant la història i recapitular per veure si la segueixen, és adequat? O penseu que és millor que la història flueixi i al final, a través de diverses activitats, comprovar si realment l'han entès?

**X:** No, no, aturar-la no perquè perden la atenció.

**M:** No, jo no ho faig. Penso que és millor que acabin la història perquè moltes vegades tenen la intriga de com acabarà la història, si acabarà bé o malament.

**R:** Jo si és en anglès a vegades sí que l'aturo, és diferent en anglès. A vegades m'interessa que reforcin alguna paraula o que n'apreguin alguna de nova i llavors per això l'aturo.

**M:** (dirigint-se a la R) La primera vegada que veuen el conte l'atures o quan el reprodueixes una segona vegada?

**R:** Sí, la primera vegada.

**X:** No, jo els hi poso sencer i després els faig preguntes i el torno a posar ja parant en els llocs on m'interessa i vull posar èmfasi.

**O:** Sí, jo també.

**Me:** I els gestos i el moviment del cos creieu que també poden ser algunes d'aquestes diferències entre les dues edats?

**X:** Sí, a P3 és tot molt més gestual i a P5 potser no calen tant.

**O:** Sí, sí, totalment.

**Me:** I l'organització de l'espai és la mateixa en les dues classes?

**O:** Mira, jo quan explico una història que no necessito moviment, s'asseuen a les cadires. Si és un conte que han portat ells de casa els faig asseure al terra davant de la meua cadira i els vaig passant pàgina i quan és un conte digital els faig asseure davant la pissarra. Vull dir que també depèn del format del conte, vaig alternant.

**X:** Jo també.

**M:** Jo vaig variant també.

**Me:** És molt freqüent relacionar l'Storytelling amb l'aprenentatge de llengües. Creieu que es pot fer extensiu en altres disciplines?

**R:** Fins i tot a partir dels contes es poden treballar les matemàtiques i altres valors com la creativitat.

**M:** Jo penso que a partir dels contes es poden treballar tot tipus d'aspectes.

**R:** És com els projectes, que a partir d'ells podem englobar una gran quantitat de continguts que no necessàriament tenen a veure amb la llengua.

**M:** Sí, sí.

**Me:** I per acabar, penseu que el fet d'educar als infants a escoltar contes des del primer curs d'Educació Infantil és sinònim a que aquesta predisposició sigui innata al darrer curs d'aquesta etapa?

**Totes:** Clar, sí, sí.

**M:** Els contes es comencen a explicar des que son bebès.

**O:** Ja van agafant l'hàbit d'escoltar.

**X:** I quan veuen que portes a la mà un conte, sense dir-los res ja es van a asseure allà davant de la teva cadira.

**M:** Els encanten els contes, a totes hores, de tots els temes!

**Me:** I en relació a l'àrea d'anglès, costa més potser explicar contes pel fet que siguin en una altra llengua?

**R:** Jo crec que no, el que passa que han de ser contes molt curts, amb frases molt repetitives.

**Me:** I quin creus que és el temps màxim que pot durar un conte?

**R:** No, un conte en anglès no pot durar gaire.

**M:** Però en català tampoc pot durar tant eh.

**X:** Home, no els posaràs un conte de mitja hora.

**M:** Per exemple nosaltres que a vegades ens trobem per veure pel·lícules, desconnecten. Només es salven 1 o 2. Això vol dir que la durada és excessiva.

**R:** Algun conte en anglès que és molt llarg, l'hem anat dividint per sessions.

**M:** Jo penso que en anglès es necessita molt el suport de la imatge. Per molt que facis gestos, que moderis la veu, que facis teatre, necessites molt el recurs la imatge. Fins i tot per les cançons. Per exemple si els hi ensenyes una cançó sobre els colors, necessites tenir una imatge perquè entenguin el que realment vols ensenyar.

