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INTRODUCING CLASSICAL LITERATURE TO LEARN ENGLISH IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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Abstract

This research has as its main purpose to introduce classical English literature in early childhood education, to be able to record whether this literature can help children to learn vocabulary in a foreign language in an effective way or not. The study was carried out through a pre-test, a post-test, and a delay-test for the children before and after the different activities in which vocabulary is worked on through visual materials such as videos, stories with pictures, mime, and flashcards related to specific vocabulary that appears in the story. The findings are exposed in this final dissertation.

Keywords: English literature, second language acquisition, mime, learning vocabulary, preschool education.

Resum

Aquesta investigació té com a objectiu principal introduir la literatura clàssica anglesa a l'educació infantil, per poder registrar si aquesta literatura pot ajudar els nens a aprendre el vocabulari en una llengua estrangera de manera eficaç o no. L'estudi es va realitzar a través d'un pretest, un posttest i un últim test, passades unes setmanes, per als nens abans i després de les diferents activitats en què es treballa el vocabulari a través de materials visuals com vídeos, contes amb imatges, mímica i targetes amb imatges relacionades amb el vocabulari específic que apareix al conte. Els resultats s'exposen en aquest treball final de grau.

Paraules clau: Literatura anglesa, adquisició d'una segona llengua, mímica, aprenentatge de vocabulari, educació preescolar.

1. Introduction and Justification

This study was carried out with 5-6-year-old children from the FEDAC school in Vic to see how we could introduce classical English literature to children, and to see if it helped us to introduce, work and learn new vocabulary.

One of the reasons why I decided to work on this topic was to start introducing classical literature to infants, as they are used to work with children's literature. Using classical literature can help us to awake an interest in literature from an early age, since in these books we can find different aspects that can be very entertaining for children as well as instructive.

The study started by presenting to the class all the vocabulary that we wanted them to learn through a test. After the results, the story of *Hamlet* was explained, and it helped to contextualize the words that were shown on the pre-test. Following the different sessions, the same test was done to see if they learned some of the vocabulary. Later on, the latest test took part to observe the real acknowledgment that the children got working through classical English literature.

After having seen different works and having evaluated what I like most about the English language, I saw that one of the best options to work with children of this age range was listening, and since I like literature very much, I thought of introducing the English classics to the activities.

One of the main reasons why I have chosen to work on this topic is to start changing the literature that we present to children. They are always used to work with literature made specifically for them, but from my point of view, we can also work with classic literature, starting to introduce it in different ways to make it more enjoyable for children. In these classic books we can find betrayal, travels, romance, etc., aspects that can awake their interest in literature from an early age, and we can also find a background, which we can use in the future by treating it in different ways. In my case, I chose the story of *Hamlet*, a play that talks about revenge and anger, as well as using basic vocabulary, which children should learn first, e.g., mother, father, etc.

At the beginning of this research, I wanted to work with Cuisenaire rods and make the children order the story through sentences with previously worked images. But when I started with the activities, I realized that the time I had to carry out the different sessions was limited and I depended on the fact that some days children were still eating breakfast, when it was class time, and it also depend on their different learning rhythms.

Due to this disadvantage, I reorganized the activities so I could give more importance to finishing or reviewing vocabulary rather than changing or bringing new aspects to the activities. Therefore, I changed the reconstruction of the story, as I saw that the plot was very clear and known, to work on the vocabulary through mime, an aspect very often used with children of this age.

On the other hand, I asked myself: How can we begin to introduce classical literature to learn English vocabulary? A question that cannot be answered with a yes or a no, but it gives us the consideration to whether the materials and strategies used are the most appropriate for introducing this type of reading.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Children's English literature in early years

According to Papadimitriou, Kapaniaris, Zisiadis, and Kalogirou (2013), storytelling revolves around a specific theme and usually has a specific meaning. Stories are usually a couple of minutes long and may refer to, among other things, personal experiences and historical events, or they may provide information or guidance on a particular topic, which is why storytelling is an accepted and widely used approach in the English language teaching in the classroom. As Mourao (2009) explains, it represents a holistic approach to language teaching and learning, based on the understanding that learners need to interact with rich and authentic examples of the foreign language.

This is why Garvie (1991), defines the short story, in its broadest sense, as the carrier of life's messages. These stories play a vital role in the education of the young child, especially in the development of language. In turn, Garvie (1991) argues that the teacher, working with a 'bank' of stories rich in all kinds of literary genres and crossing a variety of cultures, can produce the kind of learning environment that not only stimulates and brings children to the height of their interest and enjoyment but offers potential for meaning without which language learning is rigid.

As we find in the Curriculum for the second cycle of Infant Education (2016):

"Literature, in all its manifestations, poetry, visual poetry, storytelling, picture books, theatre, cinema, music, etc., has an important role in the development of creativity and the acquisition of oral and written language. It encourages and awakens the playful and creative capacity and brings rapid results both in the appropriation of language and in the development of the whole child, in discourse and artistic play. That is why linguistic and creative play has a significant presence in the school." (p. 28).

But, as Dahl (2009) cited in Camps-Casals, Canals and Medina (2018), says, a story, a novel, or any narrative dedicated to children runs the risk of becoming an anesthetic if some central elements are missing, such as the freshness of language, narrative creativity, the element of surprise, intrigue, etc., all essential devices to attract the young reader's attention.

Smallwood (1988) recommends that selection criteria for children's literature for language learners include age-appropriate subject matter; simple language; limited use of metaphor and unfamiliar experiences; use of rhyme; unambiguous plot; realistic but simple dialogue; read-aloud readability; brevity; and good illustrations. As Vardel, Hadaway and Young (2006) agree, for them, the most important criterion in selecting books for ESL learners is their

appropriateness concerning age, interests, and maturity. Yet Cameron (2001) put forward many ideas that he considered should be taken into account when choosing stories, such as the stories should be motivating, fun and interesting for children, the characters should incorporate fantastic beings and animals from all over the world, a wonderful universe capable of gaining their attention and empathy, and the plot should be clear and structured (formulation of a problem, different situations associated with each other and resolution of the problem), etc.

On the other hand, it is necessary to use alternative activities, and storytelling is one of the activities that can be used to teach vocabulary to younger learners. As Cameron (2001) states, stories offer a completely imaginary world, created by the language, which allows learners to enter and enjoy while learning the language. According to Lathem (2005), we can use digital storytelling, which is defined as the combination of traditional oral storytelling with 21st-century multimedia and ICT tools, as it is a process that combines digital media to enrich and enhance written or spoken stories.

Still, we should keep in mind the most important advantages of storytelling, such as motivating and entertaining stories that can help develop positive attitudes toward foreign languages and language learning. They can create the desire to continue learning (Dujmović, 2006). And the reasons for using literature in the classroom, as Clandfield (2000) comments, literary texts are often rich in multiple layers of meaning and can be used effectively to discuss and share feelings or opinions, which is why we say that literature encourages interaction. Clandfield (2000), in turn, argues that literature is motivating because it is highly regarded in many cultures and countries. As a result, students can feel a real sense of achievement when they understand a highly respected work of literature. Moreover, literature is often more interesting than textbook texts.

2.2. Second language acquisition using storytelling

Some authors consider storytelling to be one of the most widely used and valuable methods in early childhood education, especially when learning a second language. Therefore, it is necessary to have books in the classroom so that children can touch, observe and experience. As Ellis and Brewster (2002) state, the use of "stories allows the teacher to introduce or review new vocabulary and sentence structures by exposing children to language in varied, memorable and familiar contexts, which will enrich their thinking and gradually enter into their discourse". And in turn, "listening to stories helps children become aware of the rhythm, intonation, and pronunciation of language". On the other hand, Bassnett and Grundy (1993) argue that literature is a high point in language use, as it arguably marks the highest skill a language user can demonstrate. Therefore, anyone who wants to acquire an in-depth knowledge of a language that goes beyond the utilitarian will read literary texts in that language.

To begin with, as Canals and Medina (2018) put it:

"One of the basic ways of learning a language in the early stages is through the use of stories. We can use them to teach both L1 and a foreign language, as they have motivational, literary, cultural, and higher-order thinking benefits. Reading and listening to stories help to increase vocabulary and improve all four skills. Stories often have a beginning, a middle, and an end, which is one of the reasons why they encourage learners to keep reading them to the end, to find out how the conflict is resolved." (p. 25).

In line with this statement, Krashen (1981) argues that through stories the language acquisition device is activated, and children find it easy to induce the elements of language from the data provided by the stories. And Dujmović (2006) adds that, while listening to stories, children develop a sense of structure that will later help them to understand more complex stories in literature.

Choosing the right book may be the most difficult, and most important, part of teaching literature. In a study on the growing popularity of using literature in the second language classroom, O'Sullivan (1991) observed that it is all very well to point out the advantages of teaching literature, but the key to success in using literature in the ESL classroom depends mainly on the works selected. If the selection is too easy, students will feel bored and the teacher will find it difficult to design enough activities. If the selection is too difficult, learners will feel frustrated and you will feel overwhelmed. On the other hand, Rodriguez (2004) states that thanks to the drawings, vocabulary comprehension is facilitated by clarifying the meaning of the words that are understood thanks to the image, thus avoiding translation.

It is necessary to comment that stories, as Rossiter (2002) says:

"they are effective as educational tools because they are credible, memorable, and entertaining. The verisimilitude comes from the fact that stories deal with human-like experiences that we tend to perceive as authentic and credible sources of knowledge. Stories make information more memorable because they involve us in the actions of the characters. In doing so, stories invite the active creation of meaning." (p. 1).

And Slatterly and Willis (2001) add that stories are useful in language learning for young people as they learn language unconsciously. Therefore, classroom activities should support this kind of acquisition. Stories offer children a world of supported meanings to which they can relate, as well as help them to practice listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

If we talk about why authentic literature is valuable for children, Ghosn (2002) tells us that literature can promote academic literacy and thinking skills, and prepare children for teaching in English, because carefully chosen children's literature allows children to develop their receptive language in an entertaining and meaningful context, and naturally invites them to repeat many of the predictable words and phrases, which they gradually appropriate and add to their language. On the other hand, Huck, Hepler, Hickman, and Kiefer (1997) state that literature plays an important role in all aspects of oral language development, since when young children are read to, their phonological production, that is, the number and range of sounds they produce increases significantly. And Xu (2003) argues that literature in English can provide learners with opportunities to master language structure through exposure to repeated and predictable language patterns.

Finally, Widdowson, (1975) cited by Lazar (1993), argues that literature broadens linguistic awareness because asking students to examine examples of sophisticated or non-standard language (which may appear in literary texts) makes them more aware of the rules of language use. In turn, other good reasons for using literature in the classroom are that, as Amengual (2015) explains:

"Stories develop children's imagination and capacity for expression, as they allow them to translate fantasy with words and veins that reflect some of their emotions in the characters of the story, thus understanding, that they not only feel them but that they are common to people. At the same time, it allows them to increase their vocabulary and improve the structuring of sentences, which makes it easier for the child's mind to sequence actions, ordered temporally." (p. 14).

On the other hand, Amengual (2015) also comments that stories are a very important resource because they help develop the child's language by providing new vocabulary and grammatical structures that the child can understand and internalize to learn to imitate. And for all these

reasons, we can consider that stories are a very appropriate tool that favours the maturation process of the child's personality and overall development.

2.2.1. Mime

Nowadays there are countless methods and techniques for teaching English as a foreign language and, according to several researchers, one of the most effective is drama. Fleming (2006) and Munther (2013) agree that by introducing drama into the classroom, the learning method becomes learner-centered, thus, as Wilhelm (1995) states, making the learners part of the learning process. This only works through the active cooperation of the learners, while the teacher becomes a mere facilitator.

On the other hand, Desialova (2009) argues that drama stimulates pupils' thinking and imagination, as it constantly requires them to imagine and develop the ability to think more effectively allowing them to use a language that is outside their everyday needs. In turn, Katz (2000) states that when students engage in drama, they develop higher-order thinking skills such as: inventing, generating, speculating, deducing, analyzing, selecting, refining and judging.

Finally, as Maley and Duff (2001) mention, drama can also be used to teach structure and vocabulary, as it is characterized as an effective technique for revision and reinforcement. As Özbek (2014) also argues, drama allows children to add emotions to their learning process, so that "participants in drama cannot easily forget what they have experienced in the drama class" (p. 49) because by acting out their words, pupils make their own. To all this, Phillips (1999) agrees that with children of this age it is essential to use mime and gestures to facilitate the understanding of vocabulary and to motivate them toward new learning. Nor should we forget that it is very important for capturing their attention and, in addition, they have a lot of fun.

2.2.2. Learning vocabulary using storytelling

According to Kurniawan (2014), many possible factors contributed to the effectiveness of stories in vocabulary learning. The factors were related to the selection of stories, the use of story aids, and the repetition of words during storytelling. And Dujmović (2006) announces that listening to stories allows the teacher to introduce or review new vocabulary and sentence structures by exposing children to language in varied, memorable, and familiar contexts, which will enrich their thinking and gradually enter into their discourse.

As Brown (2004) discusses, appropriate literary selections allow students to learn new and illustrated vocabulary in context, provide repetition of keywords and phrases that students can master and learn to manipulate, and provide a sense of accomplishment at the end of the study. Getting to the last page of a well-read book is a pleasure, and students feel a sense of achievement when they have mastered a literary work written in English, whether it is *The Cat in the Hat* or *Ulysses*. And Ghosn (2002) reiterates that literature presents natural language, language at its best, and can foster vocabulary development in context.

Rodriguez (2004) confirms that verbal repetition is related to the articulation of a word after hearing it, which is a substantial process in language acquisition, both in the development and learning of a second language. However, repetition is important as a learning tactic, which forms the basis of memory. Children learn new vocabulary and expressions through repetition, a technique that enables them to study the input without the need for description.

To conclude, Ellis and Brewster (2002), cited by Mart (2012) state that children enjoy hearing stories over and over again. This frequent repetition allows certain elements of language to be acquired while others are reinforced. Many stories contain natural repetition of key vocabulary and structures. This helps children remember all the details, so they can gradually learn to anticipate what will happen next in the story. Repetition also encourages participation in the storytelling.

3. Study

Through this study I want to show that we should not only explain and work with children's stories, classic stories can help us to work on different aspects, apart from the incorporation of new vocabulary, which is where I wanted to start.

Working with the basis of the classic story of *Hamlet*, adapted to the age group, I incorporated new vocabulary, contextualized and, at the same time, incorporated by the children themselves, as they were given total freedom to interpret the different words through mime so that they, themselves, would relate the word to the movement they had thought of.

By looking at vocabulary knowledge before and after the activities, we can see if the children have acquired the words correctly. In this way, we know if we can work with different and more complex literary works.

3.1. Contextualization of the school

The school where I carried out the different activities of the study was the FEDAC School, located in Vic. It is a charter school and defines itself as a Catholic denominational, mixed, Catalan, family school, innovative and open to the surroundings. It trains boys and girls from 3 to 16 years old, therefore, it is classified as a school institute, formed by two lines except for specific courses, which are formed by only one or three lines and is accepted as an inclusive school.

It is located at the gates of the old center of the city, being a school that actively participates in the educational and cultural activities that take place. It is a center of centenary tradition in which they have adapted to the new times with the incorporation of the pedagogical methodology that promotes active, cooperative, and meaningful learning, and are committed to the progressive incorporation of project work and learning spaces and new technologies in the classroom.

Speaking of languages, being an inclusive school, we can find a great variety of cultures and languages, so they try to give them the maximum exposure to the language of the country so that they can understand everything that is said during the classes. Even so, English is implemented from the age of three, with a minimum exposure that increases with age, not only in English language classes but also in the daily routine.

The school is organized as an educational community that, through the active and responsible participation of each of its members, aims to train people with the capacity to become seriously involved in achieving a more fraternal, tolerant, and committed society.

The study was carried out with 28 children aged 5-6 years, divided between the two P5 classes. Within this group, we can find children whose first language is neither Catalan, Spanish, nor English, as well as some who do, and on the other hand, there are also children with special needs such as autism.

3.2. Objectives and Research question

The question on which I wanted to base my research on was: How can we begin to introduce classical literature to learn English vocabulary? I, therefore, formulated some appropriate objectives.

Most of the objectives I wanted to achieve are related to the acquisition of new English vocabulary, the main purpose of this study, through classic literature. To meet this objective I use flashcards, so that the children, at the end of the sessions, should be able to identify the different words through these images and, in turn, know how to reproduce them orally. Another very important aspect, apart from acquiring and being able to verbalize the words, is that the children must understand them, so reading and watching the story through the video must help the children to understand the meaning of the vocabulary.

3.3. Methodology and Tools

The study is carried out through the evolution of the children after carrying out the different sessions of activities prepared to get to know the history and understand its most characteristic vocabulary.

To be able to observe this evolution, three equal tests are carried out, one before the sessions, to see the previous level of the children; another one the week after finishing all the sessions, to see the knowledge they have acquired; and another one weeks after the sessions, to be able to know if the children remember and know the vocabulary they have worked on.

The material used during the different activities and tests are flashcards with images and the written word, to work on the most relevant vocabulary of the story we will work on, which is *Hamlet*. And on the other hand, this story will be presented through a book and a video, with which we will contextualize all the vocabulary we want the children to know. At the same time,

we will also work through mime so that the children can make their representations of the vocabulary, and thus, review and finish acquiring them.

3.3.1. Pre-test

In order to keep track of the learning acquired through the different sessions, I decided to do one first test to see what knowledge the children had. This small test was carried out in pairs, to avoid the shyness or discomfort of being alone in front of a teacher.

They were presented with all the flashcards, both words that we would work on in the activities later on, and words that they already knew but did not appear in the story. I leave the different flashcards in appendix 1.

With the flashcards displayed in a flat area where they could all be seen I presented the activity to each of the groups as they came in. The test consisted of me saying orally all the words that were displayed in front of them, and they had to point to me, stand on top of me or tell me in some way which of the flashcards was the one I had said. I made it clear, at all times, that if they didn't know the word or weren't sure, nothing would happen, it was simply so that I would know which of the words I said they knew.

To keep track of the children's knowledge I created a grid, which, when carrying out the first test, I decided to divide into "Knows", "Does not know" and "Search it by the sound of the letters", as the children learn the alphabet by the sound of each letter, not by its name.

3.3.2. Presentation of the story and explanation with a video and flashcards

In the first session, which took place one week after the pre-test, the story around which all the following activities would revolve was presented. The story chosen was Shakespeare's Hamlet.

The first activity consisted of introducing the story to the children, asking them if they knew it, had heard of it, etc. and then we started to read the story, which can be found in appendix 2. This presentation gave us the possibility to contextualize the vocabulary that we wanted to work on later and for the children to make sense of the meaning of the word being worked on.

Once the story had been told, we asked the children to tell us what they had understood, to explain what happened in the story in their own words, so that we could review and clarify the

aspects that we thought had not yet been acquired. In order for the children to understand the plot of the story, we showed them a video in which the story is told. With the images, it was much easier to follow and the vocabulary was more easily understood, as the children were able to put words to gestures, movements, objects, etc.

Finally, we introduced flash cards, especially using the characters they had met through the story to work on the vocabulary around them. For example, when we talk about Hamlet, we know that he is the king's son, who is a ghost because he was poisoned. When the children made these relationships, we showed them the different flashcards that corresponded to each of the words, so that they could relate the vocabulary to the images. Therefore, during the first session, we only showed the most relevant words in the story.

3.3.3. Recalling vocabulary through images

Throughout the second session, we will work on all the other worksheets. But first, in order to remember the context in which we worked on the vocabulary and so that the children could start the session concentrated, we played the video of the story of Hamlet again.

Starting from the story and remembering what was talked about in it, we started working with the flashcards, asking the children to tell us what they saw in the image, translating it into English, and asking them to tell us if it appeared in the story, where and why. In this way, the children were able to contextualize the words and, in turn, know what they meant. This session was simply based on introducing all the vocabulary they had already seen during the pre-test and the first session through the introduction of the story.

As there were many words, this activity alone took up the whole session, but, on the other hand, it helped us to remember them all, as each one of them transported us to other words. For example, when we took out the flashcard for the emotion "sad", we knew that Hamlet was sad, but asking why, led us to the words "poison", "father" and "king", among others. Therefore, we took advantage of each of the words to be able to remember and pronounce these and other English words, thus helping the internalization of the vocabulary.

3.3.4. Representation with mime

For the third session, we carried out an activity with mime, which allowed the children to put into action, thought up by themselves, each of the words worked on through the worksheets.

Before starting the activity, we asked the children if they knew what mime was. From there, we introduced them to the concept. They had to know that in mime, nothing can be said, and it is only expressed through movement. We then explained to the children that, together, we would have to gesticulate the words that were shown, deciding how to represent all the vocabulary we had worked on. At the same time, it is a good strategy to observe whether all the children understood and had internalized the meaning of the words.

This activity gave us the necessary dynamism so that the children did not fall into the monotony of listening and repeating. At the same time, it helped everyone to participate and feel integrated in the activity.

3.3.5. Post-test

Once all the sessions were finished, we did the same post-test as we did before starting the activities. This post-test showed us whether the children had acquired the vocabulary through the different activities presented earlier. To record the children's knowledge, we used the same grid we employed in the pre-test.

3.3.6. Delay-test

Finally, after a few weeks without the children having had any contact with the vocabulary worked on in this study, we carried out the same test again.

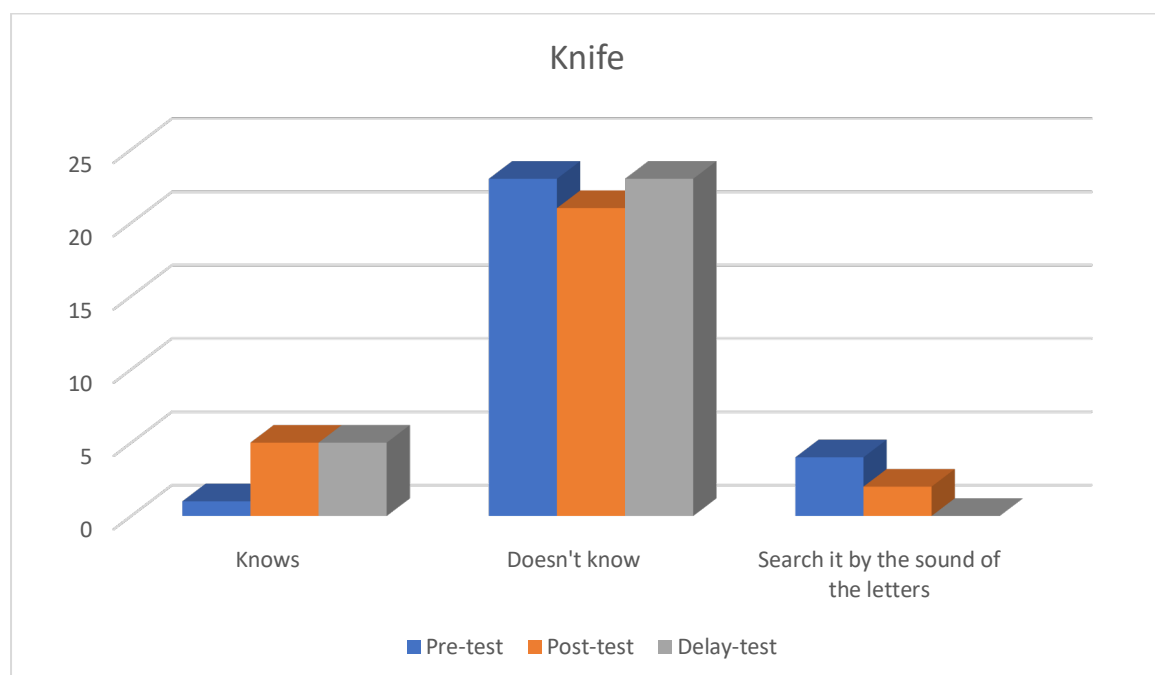
This test allowed us to observe whether the words had been acquired, as they were not as fresh as in the test immediately after the activities. Therefore, we could see that some of the children had not yet fully acquired the vocabulary but, even so, there was a great improvement compared to the pre-test.

4. Results

Once the results of the different tests have been obtained, we can observe the differences in the children's knowledge of the vocabulary worked on. We discuss below the three grids and the words to be highlighted in this study. But before starting with the results of the two tests carried out after the activities, I would like to comment on different aspects that happened during the different sessions.

To begin with, as we can see in the first grid of the pre-test, most of the children do not know the chosen words, except for the last four, "happy", "sleep", "dog" and "cat", as this is a vocabulary they have worked on during their English classes at school. On the other hand, we can see how some of the children are guided by the sound of the first letter of the words they are told orally since at school they teach the letters by their sound, but as we know, in English the letters do not sound the same as in Catalan, so the children were confused when choosing the flashcard corresponding to the word they were told orally. The table and the graph representing it can be found in appendix 3.

In order to see if the work through the classic literary story would work to acquire the vocabulary, I added a word that we would not work on during the different sessions, "knife". Through the different grids, and the children's expressions of confusion when the word was said to them, we can see that there has been no notable acquisition of this word, so we can see that the work through classic literature is important for acquiring vocabulary.



One week after the pre-test, we conducted the first session. During this session, in which we presented the story through the written story and the video, I observed that only with the first reading the children had not understood much of the thread of the story, so we went over it with them, giving the children the leading role and letting them explain what they had understood, always detailing or clarifying aspects that had not been detected. Once the thread of the story was understood, we showed the video that helped the children, through images, to understand what had happened in the story. To end the session, we reviewed the story through the flashcards with the different characters, in this way we made it clear what the role of each one of them was, and everything they carried out, using the different flashcards, the most relevant ones in the story, showing the images so that they could begin to relate the image with the word.

Moreover, during the second session, before starting the exhaustive work on each of the words with the flashcards, we went through the story with the flashcards of the characters, just as we finished the first session. Seeing that they liked so much to relate the characters to what was happening in the story, I used the same method to introduce each of the words, but they contextualized the words from the beginning without my asking them to do so. At one point I saw that not everyone was paying attention so I decided that when I finished talking about the word, I would have them shout it out, which they loved, and it caught their attention so much that we were able to finish the session with great vocabulary knowledge.

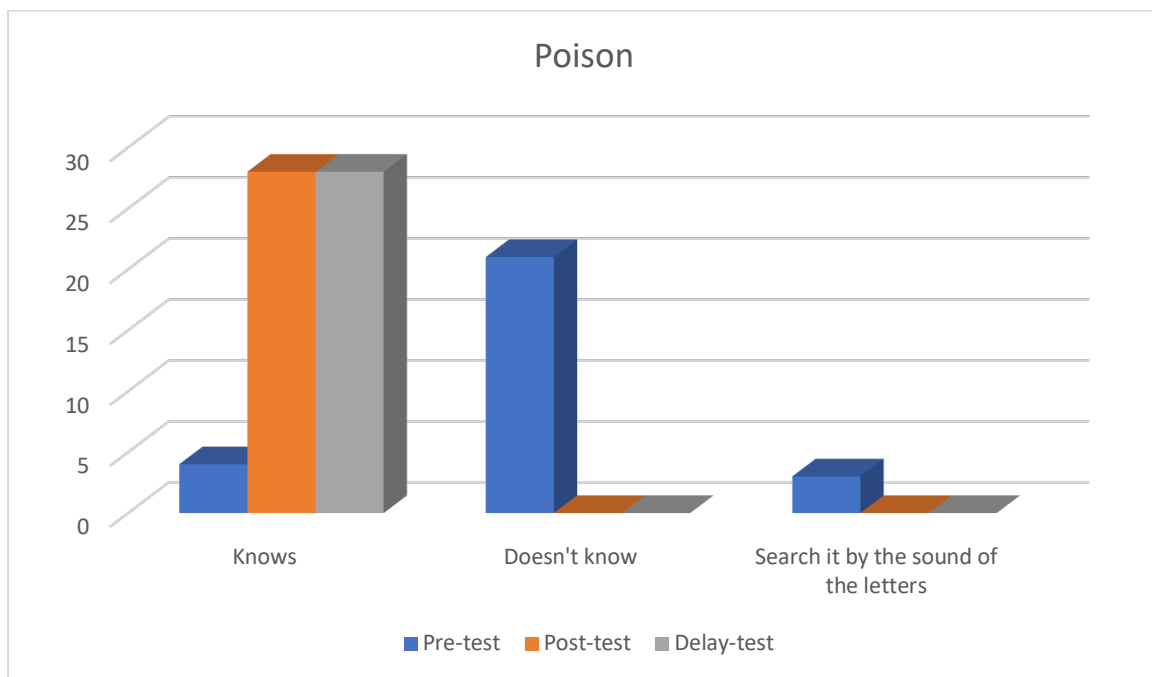
During the last session, when I explained that we would work through mime, they were very lost, so I had to make a short explanation about what it was about, explaining that during this class we could not talk, only make gestures with our hands, face, etc., which they loved and motivated them a lot. One of the small drawbacks is that I got them very excited, and during the word changes I had to get their attention more than once, but nothing out of the ordinary. During this session, it was clear that they had internalized the vocabulary very well, as they were able to express it very well through mimicry.

If we talk about the results of the following tests, to begin with, in the post-test we observe how acquired the vocabulary has been, after carrying out the different activities to work on it. The results of the test can be found in appendix 4, together with the graphic.

Mainly, we see how much more the words are known, they no longer need to search by letters. At the same time, we see words that stand out above others, such as "poison", "sword", and "marry", among others. These words were worked on with more enthusiasm as they have a

higher level of difficulty. On the other hand, they are words that are used frequently in the story, which I saw that they knew and remembered in detail.

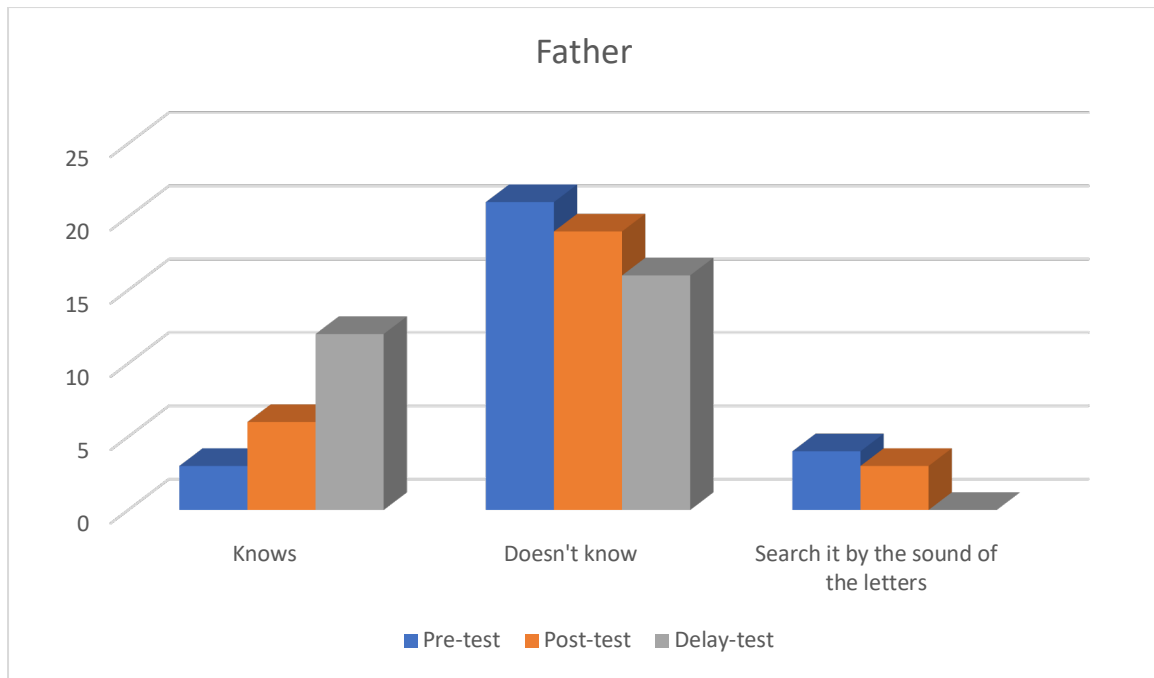
Above all, "poison" was one of the star words, which from the very first moment was engraved in the minds of all the children, in such a way that, during the beginning of the different sessions, in which the events of the story of *Hamlet* were reviewed, when the time came to explain how the characters died, what happened with the drink, etc., they said it in English, using the word perfectly in context.



The last one, the delay-test, shows us whether the vocabulary has really been acquired, since, as we have explained, it is carried out weeks after the last session. The results of this test can be found in appendix 5.

The results show that most of the children have definitely acquired the vocabulary worked on during the different sessions, even though, compared to the post-test, the results are not as good, most of the children know the words, some more than others.

One striking example is the word "father", one of the words most worked on during the different tests, that we can see how the children who do not know it predominate, even though they have increased their knowledge at the group level.



5. Discussion

Through the research of different authors who have studied the use of books to work on the vocabulary of a new language, I decided to choose the story of *Hamlet* as the main basis of my study, and as a resource from which to extract the vocabulary to learn, since, as defined by Garvie (1991), the story is the bearer of life messages and plays a fundamental role in the development of children's language.

I chose this English classic because, as Mourano (2009) says, the books we should work with should be rich and authentic to the foreign language, as *Hamlet* is. In turn, Dahl (2009), quoted in Camps-Casals, Canals and Medina (2018), comments that, in order to attract the attention of the young reader, the book should contain some central elements such as the element of surprise, intrigue, etc., aspects that are not lacking in the chosen story. Like Cameron (2001), he explains different aspects that I have to take into account when choosing the story of *Hamlet*, among which is the fact that the story must be motivating, interesting for children, and must have a clear and structured plot, as in *Hamlet*, since the problem of the senseless death of the king is exposed, an attempt is made to unmask the murderer, and in the end, the enigma is solved but almost everyone dies along the way.

On the other hand, when it came to choosing the story to work on, I decided to present it with different audiovisual media. In the beginning, the story is presented in story format, and once we have introduced it, we have the video representative of the story, since, according to Latham (2005), digital storytelling is a process that combines digital media to enrich and improve written or spoken stories. Also, thanks to the visualization of the story, and the review during the different sessions, it was evident how the children knew in perfect detail the whole storyline, some even better than the vocabulary worked on.

If we focus on aspects such as knowing how to reproduce words orally, Ellis and Brewster (2002) state that listening to stories makes children aware of rhythm, intonation and pronunciation while reading. Like Widdowson (1975), quoted by Laxar (1993), who tells us that literature broadens linguistic awareness, and that is why, as the children went through the story during the different sessions, they came to reproduce the words orally when they were working, that is, when they were telling the thread of the story, as they were used to listening to it in English, some of the words were said in the new language. At the same time, as Huck, Hepler, Hickman and Kiefer (1997) state, literature plays an important role in phonological production, as the range of sounds increases, which we can see with the word "cut", as most of them confused it with "cat", as they sounded very similar orally, but when they worked on

the former with literature, they began to differentiate them. Repetitive and contextualized listening helps us a lot in cases of confusion and, above all, in the acquisition of new words, since, as Xu (2003) argues, English literature helps learners to learn structures and words through exposure to repeated and predictable linguistic patterns.

As Brown (2004) discusses, when we choose an appropriate piece of literature, with repetitions and key phrases that can be mastered, we provide a sense of accomplishment at the end of the study. So much so that, looking at the change in the children's faces during the different tests, we can observe how throughout the tests they comment that some of the words are easier, or that they know them, or they also run to look up the word to demonstrate their knowledge.

Moreover, Rodriguez (2004) confirms that verbal repetition is a substantial process in language acquisition, as it is the basis of memory, and that is why at the beginning of each session the story was reviewed with the flashcards of the characters, which led to different vocabulary flashcards. And, in turn, Ellis and Brewster (2002), quoted by Mart (2012), state that children like to listen to stories over and over again, so that during some sessions, when there was time to spare, the children always asked to watch the video of the story again, which they were not refused. This repetition of the story with the flashcards helps us a lot to review and make clear the vocabulary that had not yet been acquired, as they had loved the story, and working with the flashcards without a context did not interest them, so asking them to explain the story, showing the vocabulary flashcards while telling the story and, in turn, having them repeat the word in English, helped them to remember the vocabulary.

Another very important part of the study for the acquisition of new vocabulary, as we work through flashcards, is to be able to identify the words through the pictures, since, as Rodriguez (2004) states, the pictures facilitate the understanding of the vocabulary, clarifying the meaning and thus avoiding translation. That is why, working with complex vocabulary at such early ages, images are a great help, and through the results of the tests we can see how the flashcards have been able to distinguish more throughout the sessions, as sometimes the images can be a little confusing, but together with the work and the contextualization of these we can differentiate them and acquire the vocabulary more efficiently. A very striking example is the flashcards for "brother" and "friend", which looked similar and made them confusing, but through the activities and the work of the two, we can see the difference in the knowledge of these two words between the post-test and the delay-test.

Finally, Amengual (2015) talks about the importance of storytelling as a resource to help develop language and provide new vocabulary and structures to internalize the meaning of words. One technique used in this study, which is highly valued, is mime. As Fleming (2006) and Munther (2013) agree, drama makes learning learner-centered, it makes them part of their learning project, as Wilhelm (1995) states. Thanks to this, the children put, by themselves, an action in the representation of each of the words worked on, and by orally exposing a word, they remembered that action, and as Özbek (2014) says, drama allows for the addition of emotions, which makes the words difficult to forget because they make them their own, then, they represented it and, in this way, we could know their knowledge. And as Maley and Duff (2001) mention, theatre is characterized as an effective technique for review and reinforcement, which is why it was carried out in the last session.

6. Conclusions

As a conclusion of this study, we can say that, thanks to the different tests, we have been able to observe that through classic literature, which was worked with flashcards and other visual and auditory materials, and mime, it is possible to introduce and, at the same time, work on vocabulary in English.

However, a couple more sessions would have helped the children to finish acquiring the range of words, as well as being able to squeeze in the whole hour of the English language area, as for scheduling reasons the lunches ran longer than usual, leaving less time for the sessions and, in turn, limiting the activities to be carried out due to time limitations.

Nevertheless, through the different sessions conducted with different materials to contextualize and work on the chosen vocabulary, we can see from the results how the five-year-old can understand the meaning of most of the words and, in turn, identify them through the flashcards, as the thread of the story used to contextualize the vocabulary was known and understood very quickly. This more than helped the children to be able to give an understandable meaning to the actions in the explanatory video.

On the other hand, it was helpful for the children, from the beginning, to be able to see the words written on the cards, as they were learning the letters through the sounds, which gave them some confidence to continue with the tests and not get stuck or judged on their knowledge. At the same time, some of them were even able to explain orally what they were pointing to, with the help of the letters, which helped them to recognize and differentiate them when they presented them orally.

Therefore, thanks to the results observed and obtained, we can corroborate that working on English vocabulary through literary classics such as Hamlet helps children to obtain and understand the chosen words.

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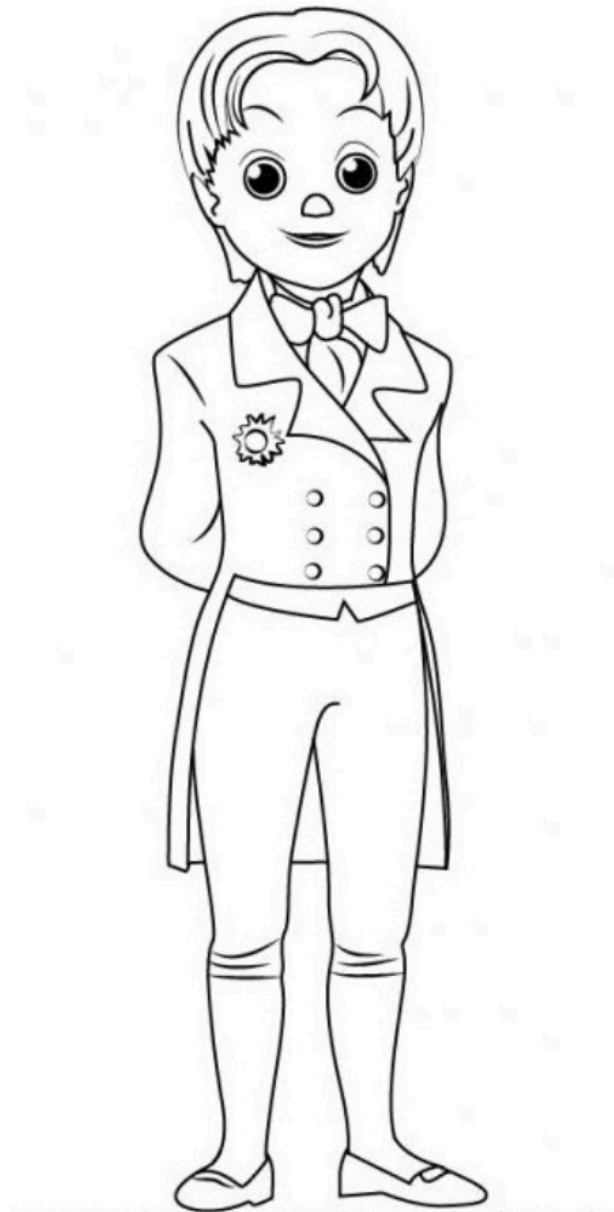
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8. Appendices

Appendix 1: Flashcards



PRINCE



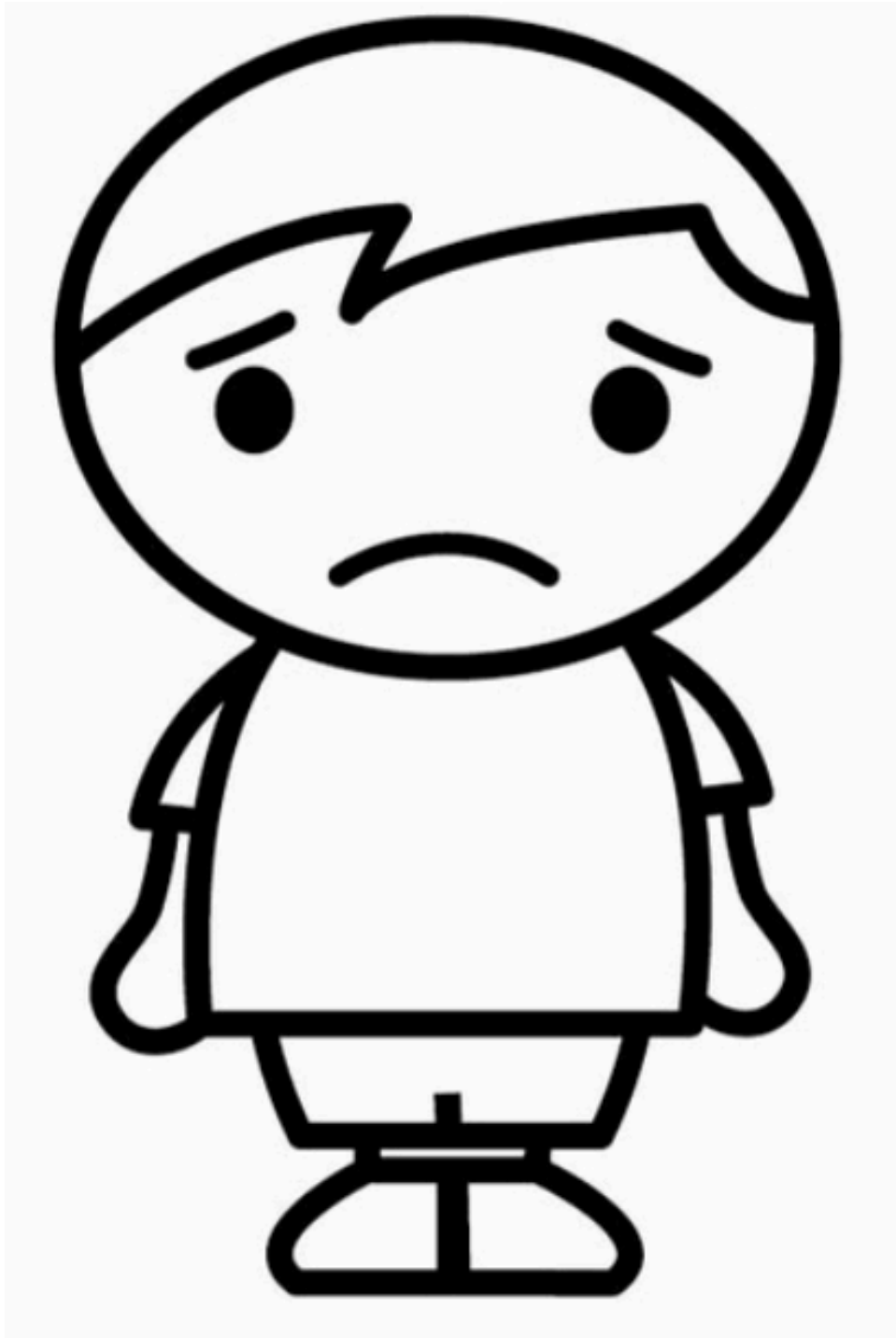
FATHER



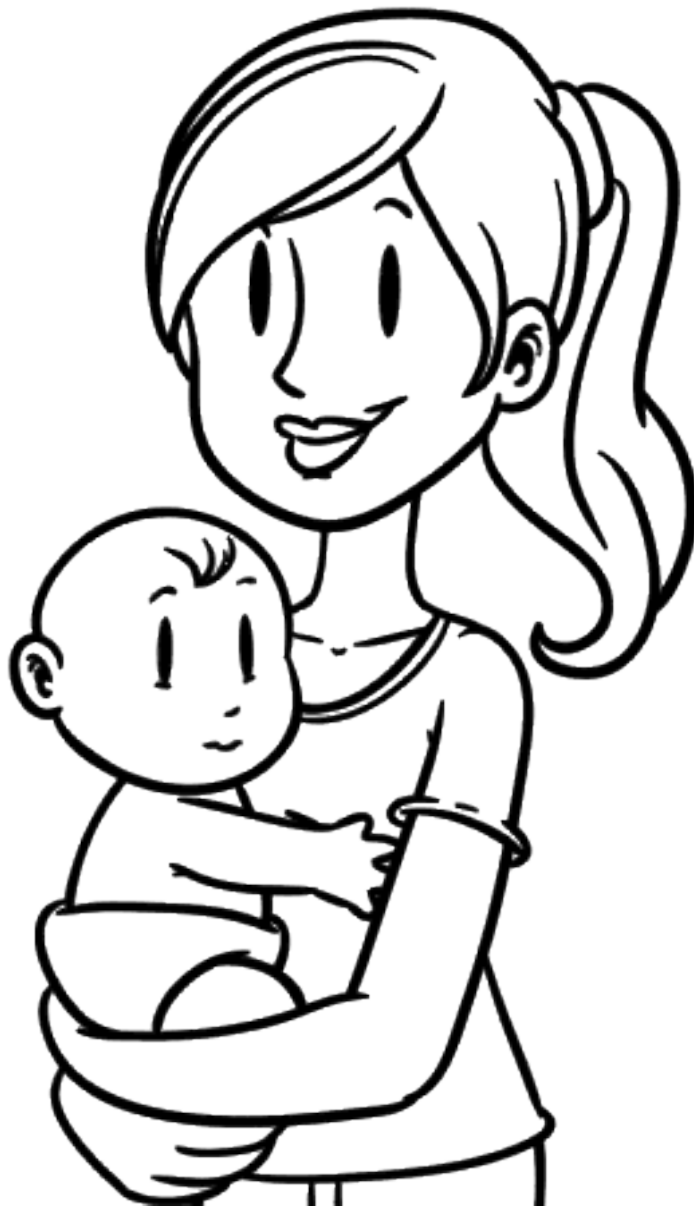
KING



DIES



SAD



MOTHER



MARRY



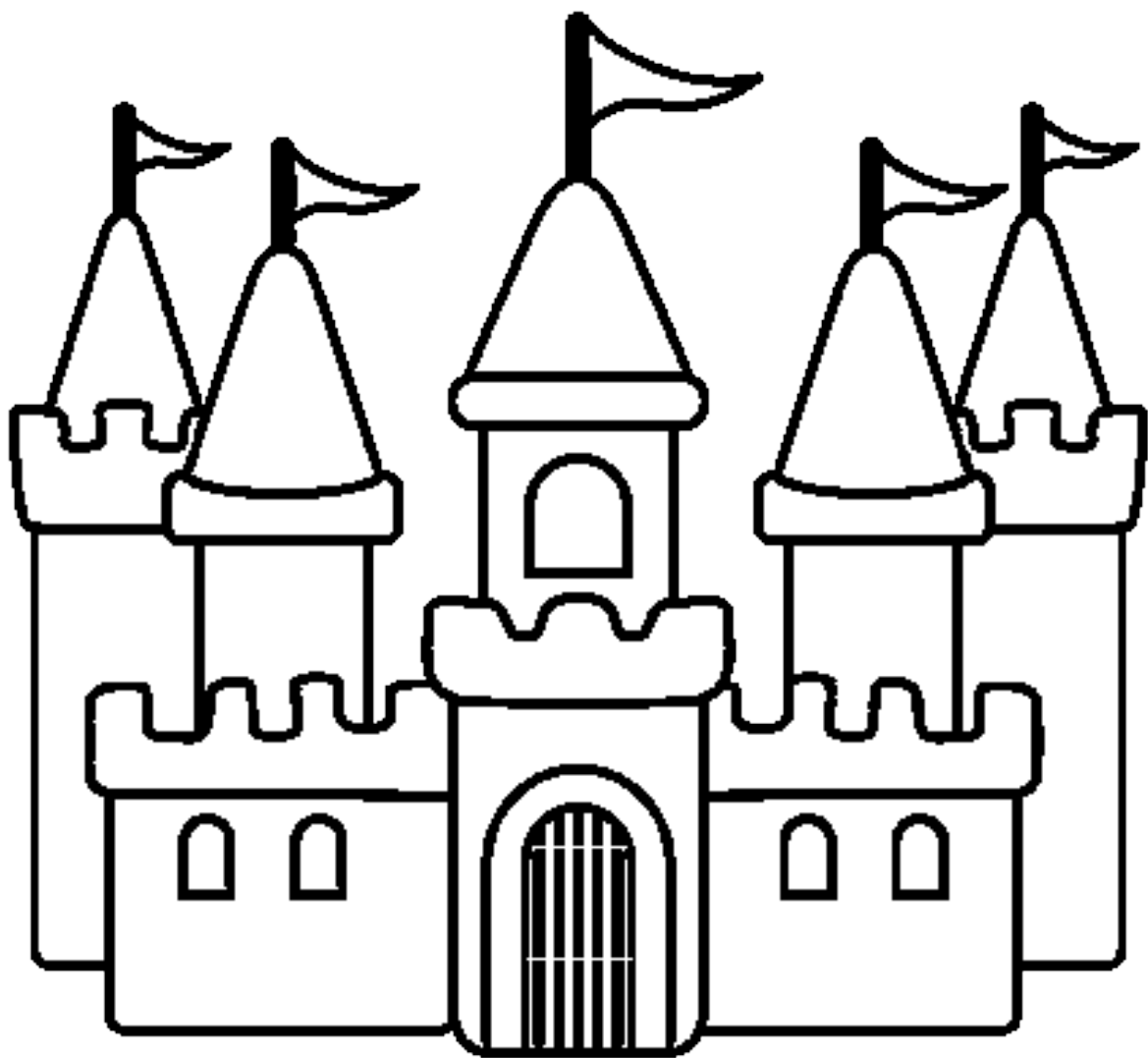
BROTHER



FRIEND



GHOST



CASTLE



KILL



POISON



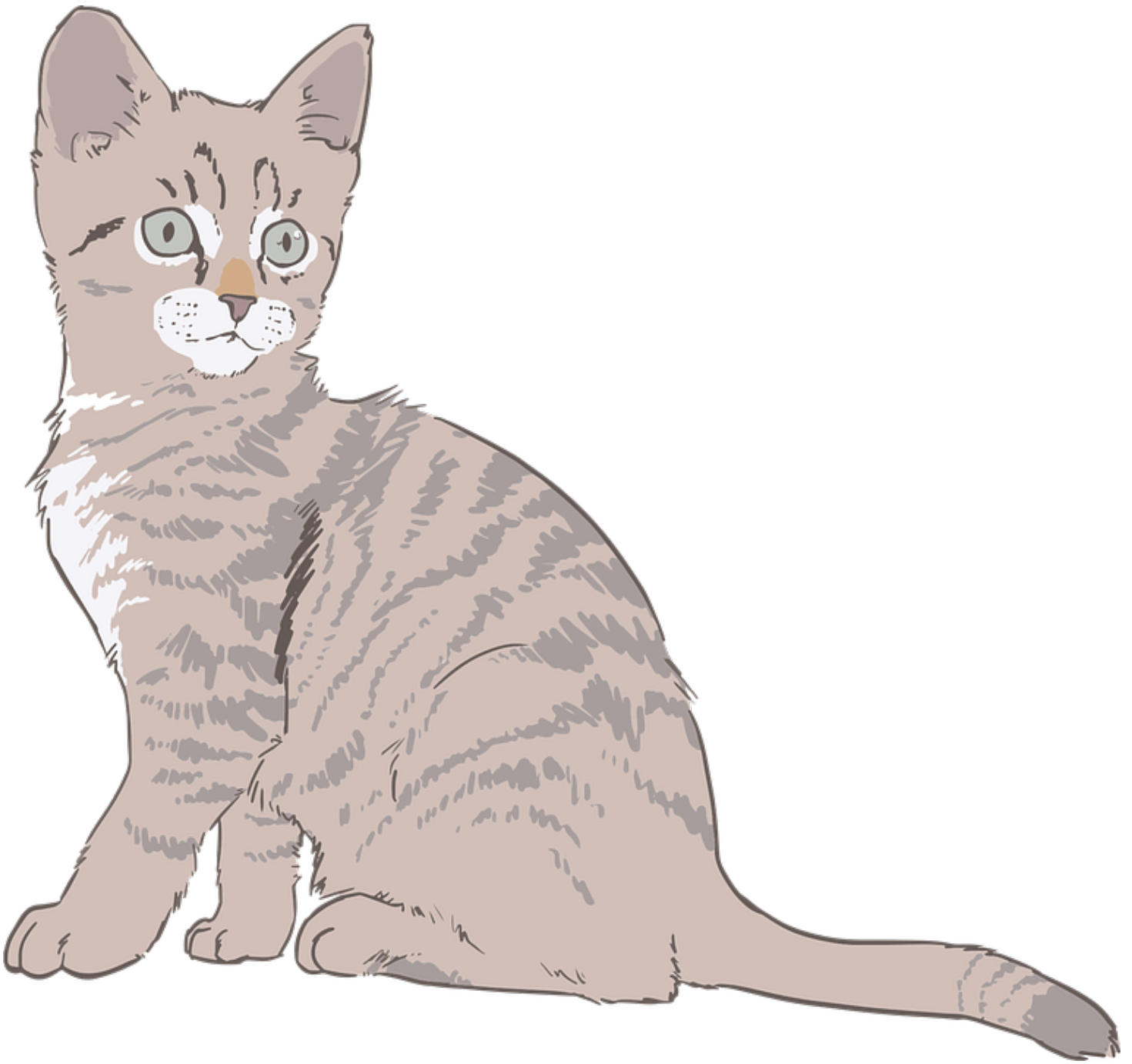
CONFUSED



ANGRY



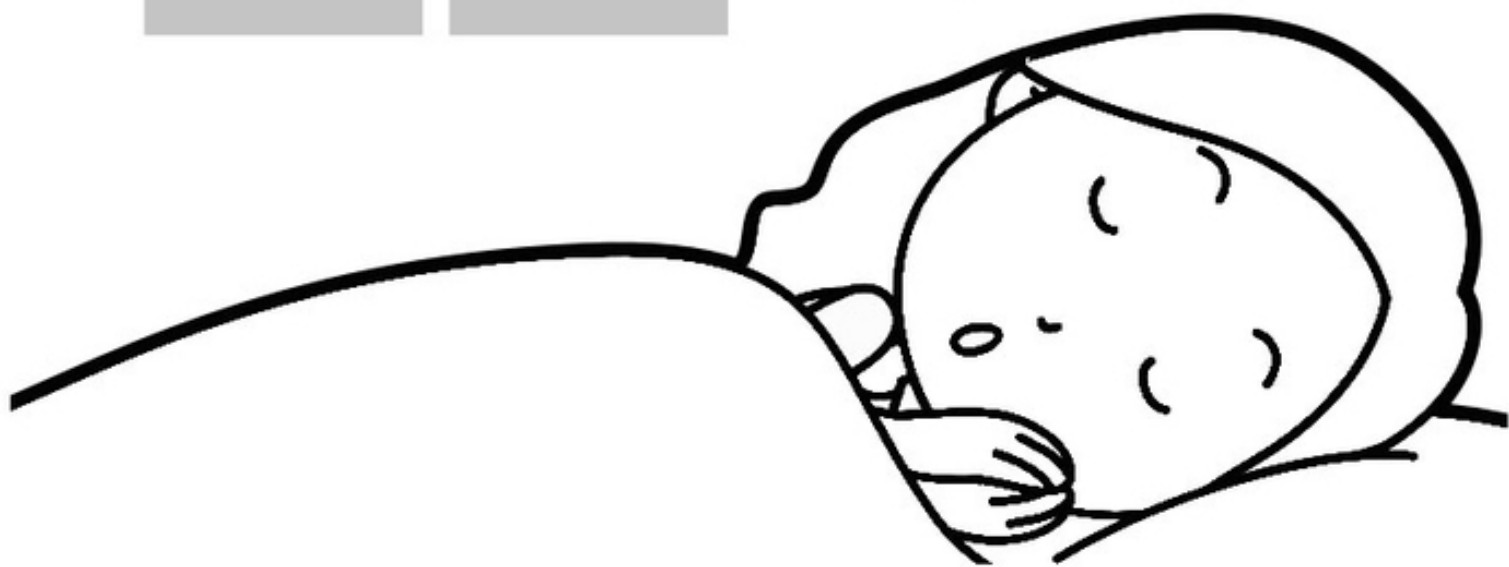
DOG



CAT



ZZZZZ



SLEEP



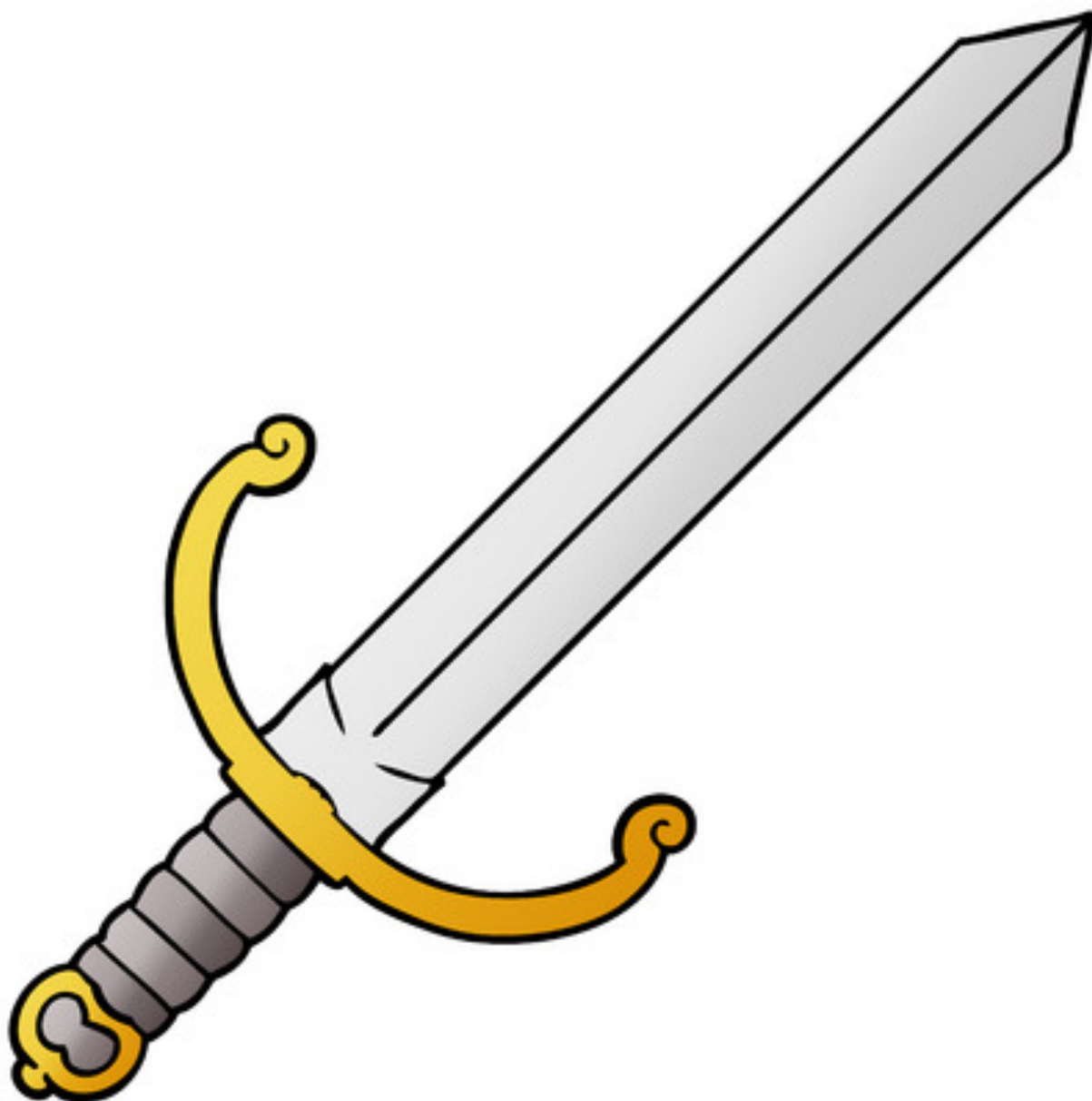
HAPPY



KNIFE



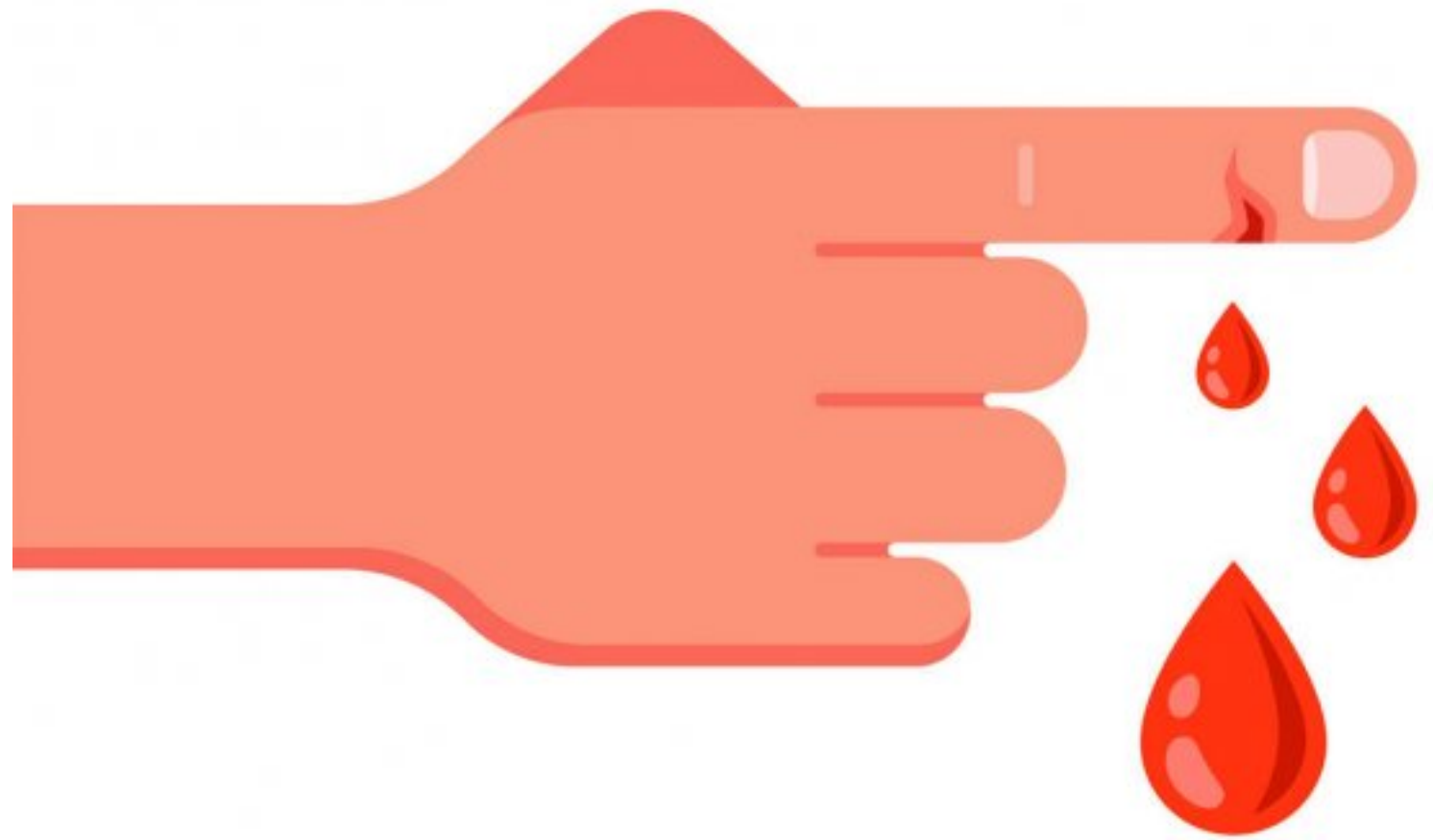
DRINK



SWORD



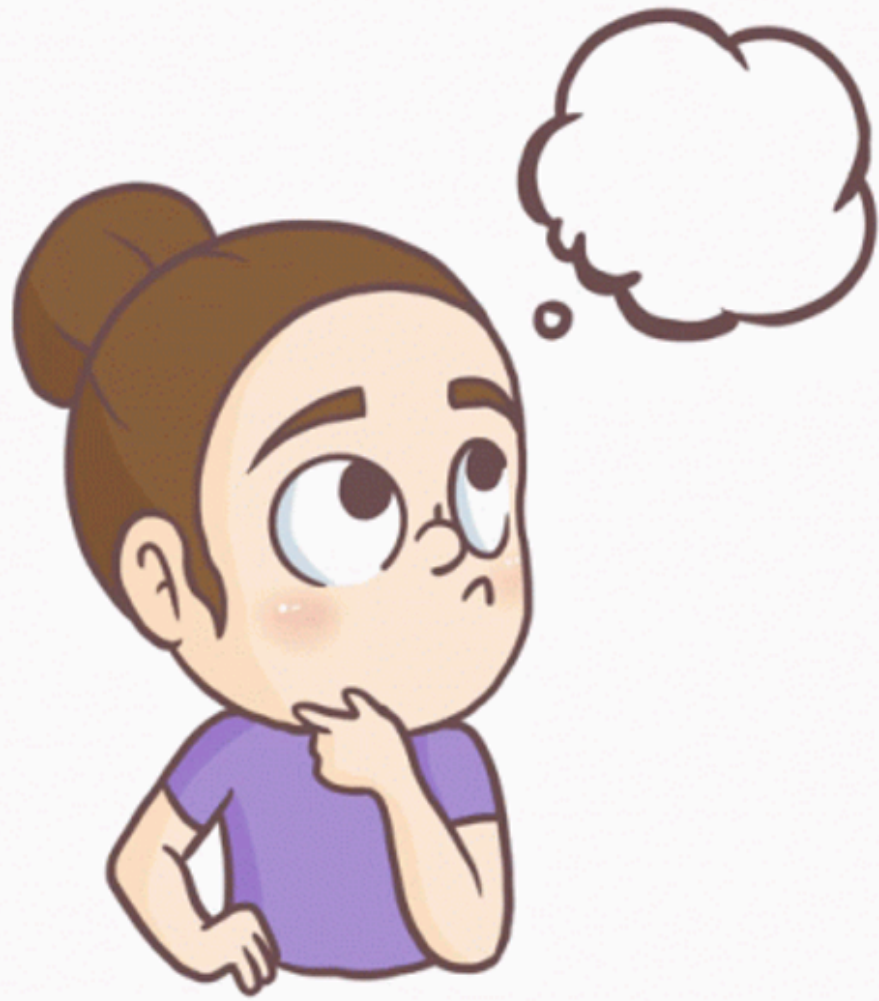
FIGHT



CUT



SAY



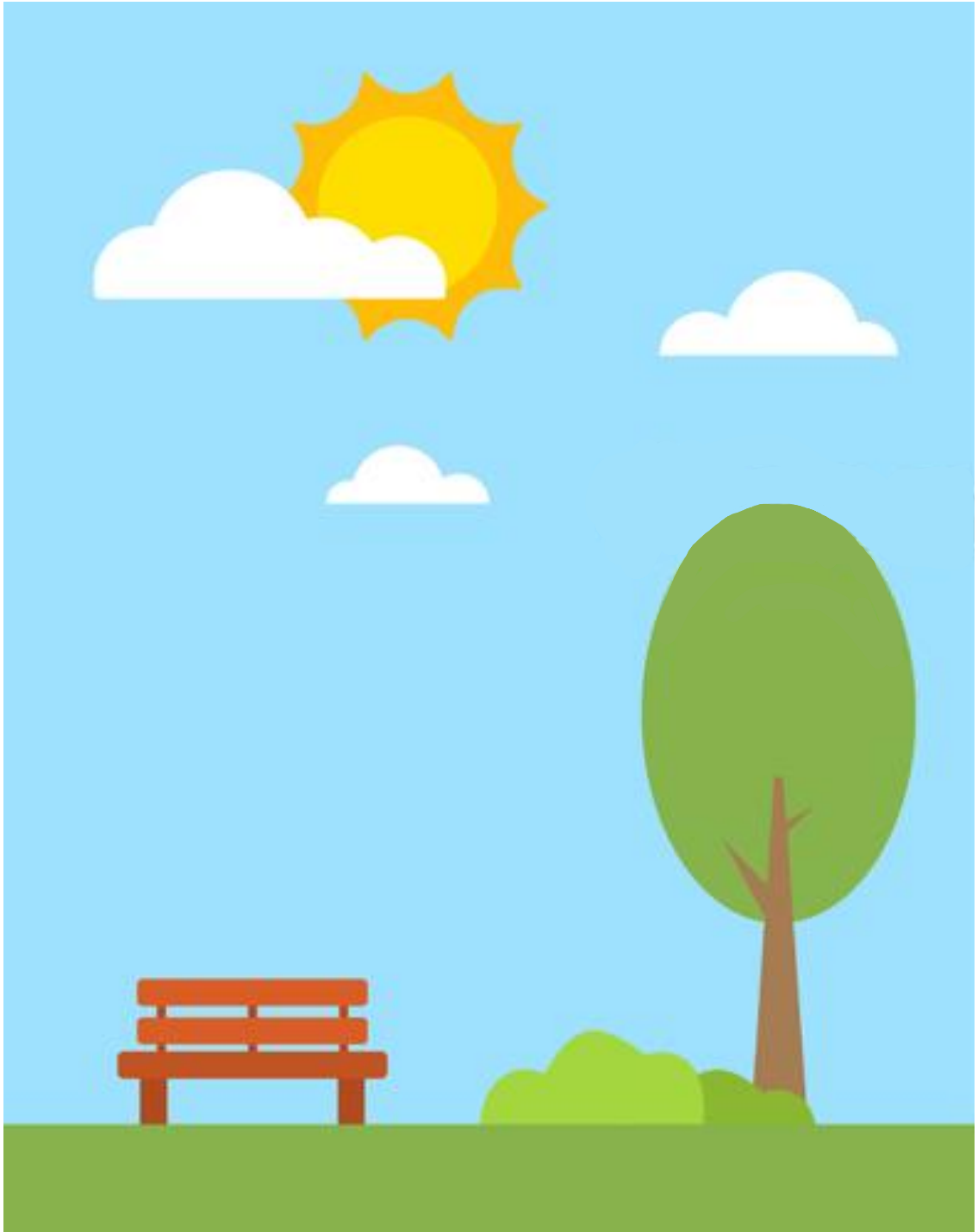
THINK



RUN



SEE



DAY



NIGHT

Appendix 2: Hamlet's story

Many years ago in Denmark, there was a prince called Hamlet.

One day Hamlet's father, the king, dies suddenly and Hamlet is very sad.

After this, Hamlet's mother, Gertrude, gets married again very quickly. She marries her husband's brother, Claudius, and Claudius is now the king!

'Aargh! How could you do this to me!'. Thinks Hamlet addressing his mother.

One night, Hamlet's friend, Horatio, tells him that there is a ghost in the castle. It is the ghost of Hamlet's father!

'Claudius killed me with poison! Hamlet, you must punish Claudius for me!'. Says the ghost of Hamlet's father.

Hamlet is confused. He doesn't know if he believes the ghost and he doesn't know what to do.

Hamlet now acts very strangely. He is mean and angry, and he upsets his girlfriend, Ophelia.

'Go away! Leave me alone!'. Hamlet says to his girlfriend Ophelia. 'Oh, he is so mean!'. Ophelia says to her brother Laertes.

Ophelia says to her brother Laertes.

One day a group of actors comes to the castle and Hamlet makes a plan. He asks the actors to change their play. The new play will show a king poisoned like Hamlet's father.

'With this play, I will catch the king Claudius.'. Think Hamlet.

When Claudius watches the play, he looks very worried and runs away. Hamlet sees him and he knows the truth.

Claudius is very worried about Hamlet now and makes a plan with Ophelia's brother, Laertes.

'You will fight him and we will put poison on the sword and in his drink too.'. Claudius says to Laertes.

Laertes and Hamlet fight. Laertes cuts Hamlet, but in the fight, Hamlet takes Laertes' sword and cuts him with it too!

'Here, Hamlet, drink this.'. Her mother Gertrude says.

'No, thank you, Mother. I'm not thirsty.'. Says Hamlet.

And then his mother drinks.

'No, don't!'. Claudius says when he sees it.

'It was him! He poisoned us all!'. Says Laertes.

Finally, Hamlet knows he must stop Claudius.

'Aargh! Have this and this!'

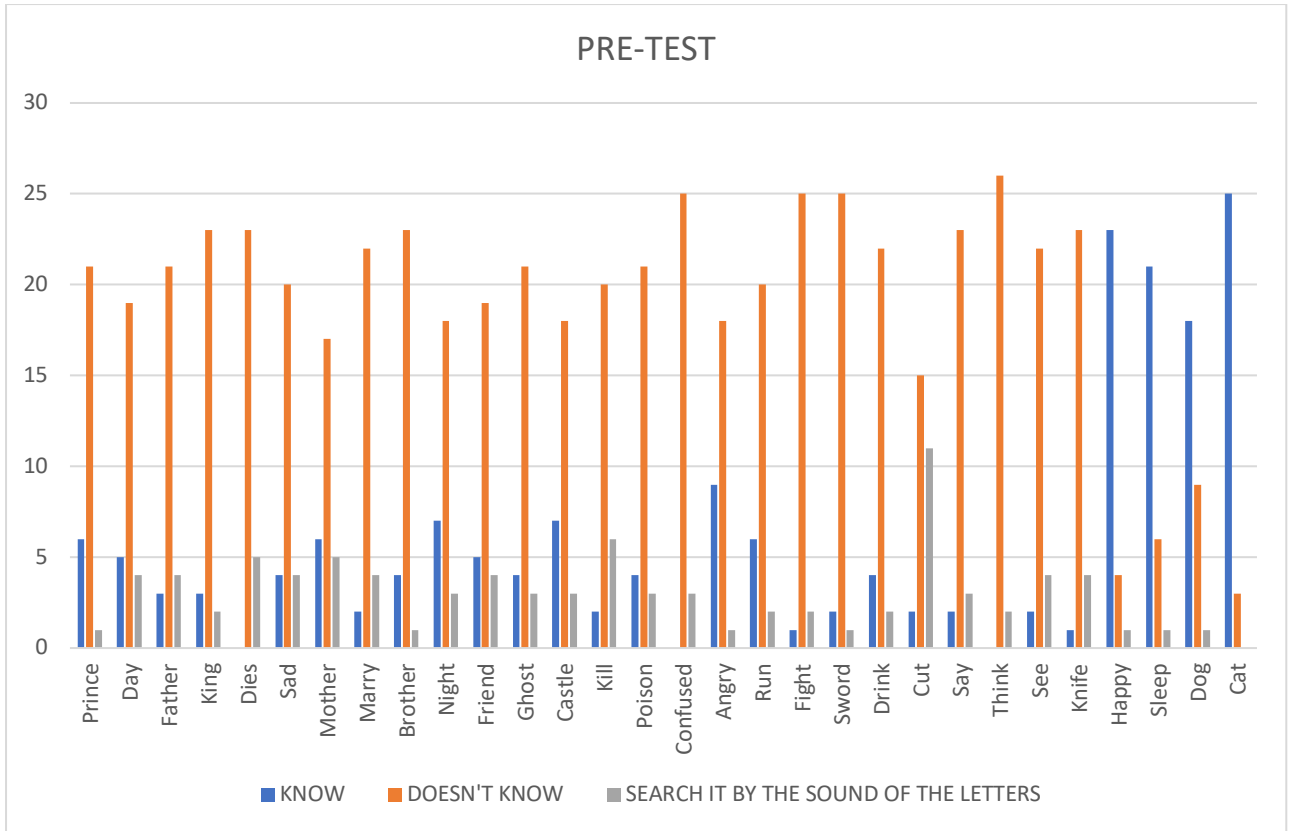
Hamlet poisons Claudius, killing him.

All the royal family is now poisoned and Hamlet tells his friend that there must be a new king.

'Goodbye, my prince.'. Says Horatio.

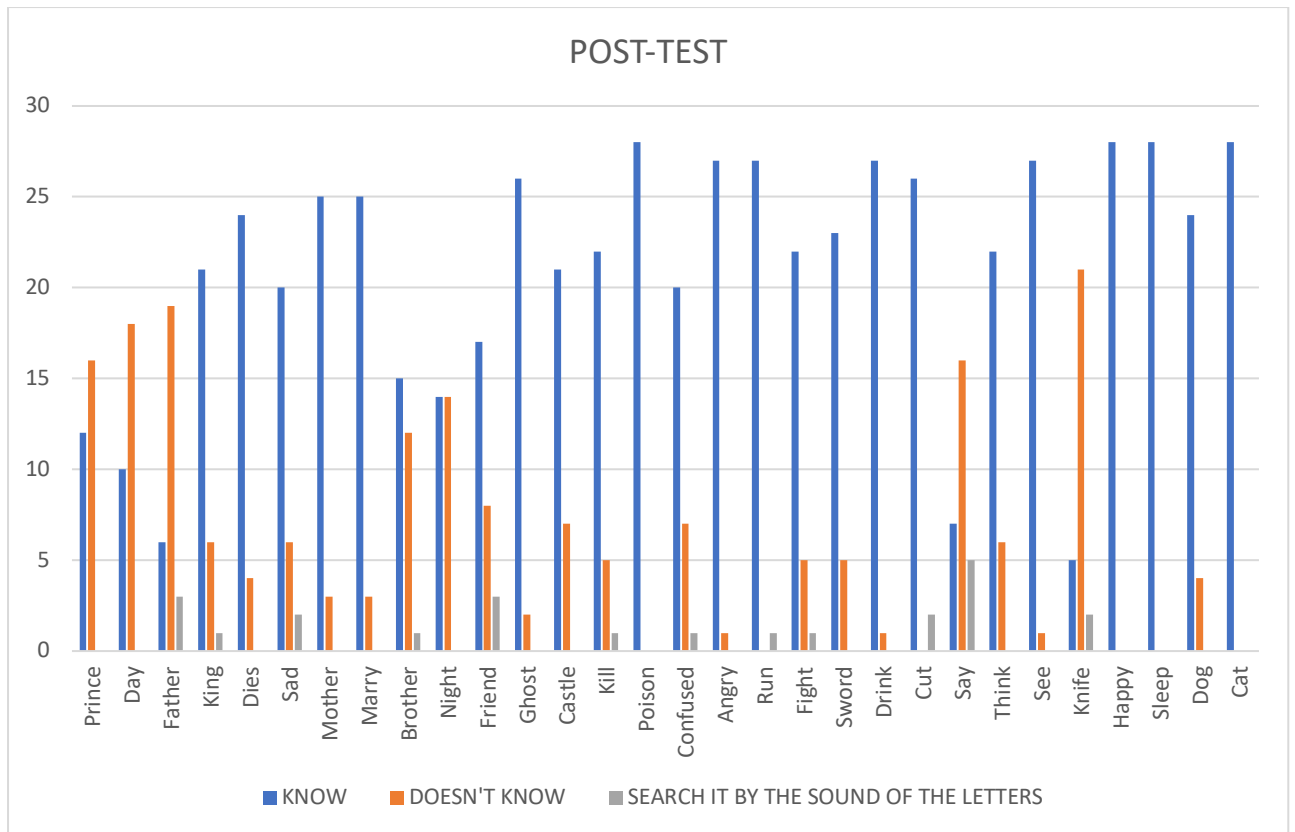
Appendix 3: Pre-test

	KNOWS	DOESN'T KNOW	SEARCH IT BY THE SOUND OF THE LETTERS
Prince	6	21	1
Day	5	19	4
Father	3	21	4
King	3	23	2
Dies	0	23	5
Sad	4	20	4
Mother	6	17	5
Marry	2	22	4
Brother	4	23	1
Night	7	18	3
Friend	5	19	4
Ghost	4	21	3
Castle	7	18	3
Kill	2	20	6
Poison	4	21	3
Confused	0	25	3
Angry	9	18	1
Run	6	20	2
Fight	1	25	2
Sword	2	25	1
Drink	4	22	2
Cut	2	15	11
Say	2	23	3
Think	0	26	2
See	2	22	4
Knife	1	23	4
Happy	23	4	1
Sleep	21	6	1
Dog	18	9	1
Cat	25	3	0



Appendix 4: Post-test

	KNOWS	DOESN'T KNOW	SEARCH IT BY THE SOUND OF THE LETTERS
Prince	12	16	0
Day	10	18	0
Father	6	19	3
King	21	6	1
Dies	24	4	0
Sad	20	6	2
Mother	25	3	0
Marry	25	3	0
Brother	15	12	1
Night	14	14	0
Friend	17	8	3
Ghost	26	2	0
Castle	21	7	0
Kill	22	5	1
Poison	28	0	0
Confused	20	7	1
Angry	27	1	0
Run	27	0	1
Fight	22	5	1
Sword	23	5	0
Drink	27	1	0
Cut	26	0	2
Say	7	16	5
Think	22	6	0
See	27	1	0
Knife	5	21	2
Happy	28	0	0
Sleep	28	0	0
Dog	24	4	0
Cat	28	0	0



Appendix 5: Delay-test

	KNOWS	DOESN'T KNOW	SEARCH IT BY THE SOUND OF THE LETTERS
Prince	14	14	0
Day	9	15	4
Father	12	16	0
King	16	12	0
Dies	18	10	0
Sad	18	10	0
Mother	20	6	2
Marry	23	5	0
Brother	17	11	0
Night	18	10	0
Friend	17	11	0
Ghost	21	7	0
Castle	23	4	1
Kill	22	6	0
Poison	28	0	0
Confused	21	7	0
Angry	28	0	0
Run	27	1	0
Fight	22	6	0
Sword	15	13	0
Drink	26	2	0
Cut	25	3	0
Say	8	18	2
Think	18	10	0
See	24	4	0
Knife	5	23	0
Happy	28	0	0
Sleep	28	0	0
Dog	28	0	0
Cat	28	0	0

