TEACHING VOCABULARY WITH FABLES READING WITH PRIMARY LEARNERS IN
COMPLEJO EDUCATIVO LA JULITA FROM PEREIRA

JAIME ALONSO IBARRA POSADA

NATALY OSPINA FRANCO

CINDY TATIANA BUITRAGO

UNIVERSIDAD TECNOLÓGICA DE PEREIRA

FACULTAD DE BELLAS ARTES Y HUMANIDADES

LICENCIATURA EN LENGUA INGLESA

PEREIRA

2017

TEACHING VOCABULARY WITH FABLES READING WITH PRIMARY LEARNERS IN
COMPLEJO EDUCATIVO LA JULITA FROM PEREIRA

Jaime Alonso Ibarra Posada

Nataly Ospina Franco

Cindy Tatiana Buitrago

Trabajo de grado presentado como requisito parcial para obtener el título de Licenciado

En bilingüismo con énfasis en Inglés

Asesor: Ronald Alan Perry

UNIVERSIDAD TECNOLÓGICA DE PEREIRA

FACULTAD DE BELLAS ARTES Y HUMANIDADES

LICENCIATURA EN BILINGÜISMO

CON ÉNFASIS EN INGLES

PEREIRA

2017

Acknowledgments

I want to take advantage of this opportunity to thank to my mother Martha Rosa Posada who has always been a great support during my development and my integral formation as a member of the society, she has done so many things and has always been there as an unconditional support for me to strive until the end; also, I want to thank my professors in charge of developing my skills throughout five years of dedication to the licenciatura.

I want to thank my friends and family who supported me with the right help at the moment it was needed and for the moments that I shared during these years that I have been in the University. Finally, I want to express my most sincere thanks to my teacher **Carolina Bellot** who was the person who motivated me and helped me achieve the goal of accessing to the University and to a very special friend Oscar Bustamante who made it simpler for me to stay. I really feel thankful to these people that were an important to my life and I will never forget the experiences since they have marked my life.

Jaime Alonso Ibarra Posada

Thanks God

Cindy Tatiana Buitrago Pineda

TABLE OF CONTENT

Abstract

The following document describes the procedures of a classroom project implemented in one of the institutions in alliance with the *Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira* in the city of Pereira. This qualitative research was based on the presentation, practice and production with the use of backwards approach for the planning of the lesson. It was intended to determine the effectiveness of the use of fables as the content in EFL classes to teach English vocabulary and ethical and moral principles to children. The results show a high participation and understanding of the children for the topics exposed, but there were also weaknesses and difficulties with the use of L1 as well as attention problems.

Keywords

Fables, lesson, vocabulary, language.

Resumen

En el siguiente documento se describen los procedimientos para un proyecto de aula ejecutado en una de las instituciones en alianza con la universidad Tecnológica de Pereira en la ciudad de Pereira. Para esta investigación de tipo descriptiva, el procedimiento se basó en la presentación, la práctica y la producción junto con el uso de un enfoque inverso para la planificación de las clases. Se pretendió determinar la efectividad de la utilización de fábulas como recurso en las clases de inglés para enseñar vocabulario como también principios éticos y morales a los niños. Se obtuvo como resultado una alta participación y compresión de los niños frente a los temas expuestos, pero también se observaron debilidades y dificultades por el uso de la primera lengua como también problemas de atención.

Palabras Claves

Fabulas, lección, vocabulario, lengua.

Introduction

The present qualitative classroom project aimed to use fables as a resource in English classes for teaching vocabulary and values to contribute to the ethics of children. Considering these objectives, the project took into account concepts such as the comprehensible input, choral reading strategy, and scaffolding. Due to their relationship with the learning of a foreign language in children, these theories supported the results obtained.

The specific objectives that helped answer the general objective consisted of completing a series of classes based on words from Aesop to teach vocabulary related to colors, feelings, adjectives, values, among others.

Likewise, it was proposed to use tools for moral students that the ethical development of children

To accomplish the specific goals, the project used an approach based on presentation, practice and production with the use of a backwards approach for the planning of the lessons in a school in partnership with the Technological University of Pereira.

The methodology that was used for the project was qualitative, and the sources of primary information collection were the processes of observation, journals and instruments.

Justification

This project arises from our reflection about students' difficulties in learning vocabulary and our search for an alternative way to address one of the most serious obstacles to students' English learning – lack of vocabulary. Considering our experience learning English in public schools, we realize that they way English vocabulary was approached was one of our difficulties. Thus, this project was motivated by an interest in helping students learn English vocabulary by making use of their background knowledge, and at the same time introducing stories that help them to develop values.

One of our reasons developing this project is that as future teachers we need to contribute to the objectives of the national standards of producing citizens who can communicate in English. This takes into account one of the objectives presented by the Ministry of Education in the *Guía 22: Estándares básicos de competencias en lenguas extranjeras: inglés,* which is that English is expected to help the country participate in worldwide communication:

"Lograr ciudadanos y ciudadanas capaces de comunicarse en inglés, de tal forma que puedan insertar al país en los procesos de comunicación universal, en la economía global y en la apertura cultural, con estándares internacionalmente comparables (…)" (Fragment 1) Ministerio de Educación Nacional (2006)

Colombian elementary school English teachers' failure to adequately teach vocabulary can seriously hinder the accomplishment of this objective because as stated by McCarthy, "without words communication could not take place, regardless of grammar and pronunciation" McCarthy (1990). Clearly, students need to learn vocabulary to develop their communication skills. Every year the company *English First* (EF) applies a test to rank seventy-two countries in terms of citizens' English proficiency. EF reaches its scores from information gathered by means of English tests accessible for free from the internet. A country can participate in the ranking if at least four hundred people take the online test. In 2016 Colombia was ranked in the forty-ninth position. Ten years after the guide for teaching English (*Guía 22)* was implemented in Colombian schools, students' performance still is far below what is expected by the Colombian Ministry of Education.

This seems to indicate that alternative strategies for teaching vocabulary are needed. We observed that the English teacher in our school used a traditional pedagogy that emphasized explicit teaching of decontextualized grammar. We also noted that the children studied fables in the subject *Etica,* and this provided us with an additional motivation for our project. In view of this, our project proposed to teach vocabulary by means of fables, taking into account the ideas of Parse (1998) who states that teaching a topic using short tales is to "integrate the unfamiliar

with the familiar". Therefore, fables were selected because they were already familiar to the children and because this would permit them to apply their L1 knowledge to tasks in English.

Finally, one of the ideas that motivated us to select Aesop fables, was Deltor's (2001) findings that working with fables in a language classroom can serve as a mean of promoting students' ethical and moral development. She states that children "construct literacy" and learn to understand metaphors as and to translate these into real life ethical issues.

Considering Deltor's findings, we decided to use Aesop's fables to expose students to high ethical principles, considering that they come from low social strata and are often affected by social problems that can lead to disruptive behaviors.

The in-service teacher in charge of the group stated that this group was made by selecting children that other teachers were not able to manage due to their behavior. This explanation made us think about the opportunity to contribute to their learning by exposing them to the moral lessons of Aesop's fables while teaching English at the same time.

Objectives

Teaching objectives

General

Use fables as the content in English Classes to teach vocabulary and include morals to contribute to children ethics**.**

Specific

To implement a series of nine classes based on Aesop's fables to teach vocabulary related to colors, feelings, adjectives, values among others

To use fable stories to teach morals that contribute to children's ethical development.

Learning objectives

General

To learn new vocabulary and improve basic reading skills through the exposure to fables stories.

To discuss the morals of fables to make children reflect and learn about values.

Specific

To associate at least five words, from each of nine classes, with their meanings and to use them in written and spoken language

To discuss the ethical and practical implications of the morals of fables in the daily life to help them develop their ethical formation.

Literature review

Many authors highlight the importance of using stories for teaching, not only linguistic aspects but also life scenarios and lessons of ethical principles. For this project, two studies were relevant as they use fables as a tool to teach language and demonstrate that it is possible to improve reading comprehension skills. First, a quantitative descriptive study by Andrade & Correa (2011), and second a qualitative study by Gonzales & Mendoza (2015). Both studies show the effectiveness of fables as a tool to improve comprehension skills although approached in a different way.

In Colombia during the year of 2011, in the city of San José de Pragua, Andrade and Correa made a descriptive research to find how effective it is to improve children's reading comprehension in their mother tongue by reading fables. Initially, they made a diagnostic test to the target population which were 22 students from third grade of elementary school. The results of the diagnosis showed a poor reading comprehension of texts and lack of motivation towards the habit of reading. For this reason, their objective aimed to help students overcome these two difficulties. To accomplish their objectives, they designed a set of ten classes based on reading fables as the main input for language learning. The methodology they implemented used a pre-test (diagnosis) and post-test to collect the information and a descriptive analysis of the results. Their findings showed an increase by 27% of correct answers on the post-test compared to the low scores obtained by the children in the pre-test. Finally, they conclude that fables as a reading input facilitates reading comprehension; they help teachers improve teaching resources and children were encouraged to continue with the reading habit.

Andrade & Correa (2011) presented their results by means of statistical analysis which is a precise way of presenting information, Gonzales and Mendoza analyzed it qualitatively.

Using a similar methodology but with a different approach, in a 2015 study in the city of Bogotá, Colombia, Gonzales & Mendoza's qualitative project sought to find how to strengthen students' reading comprehension using readings of fables in the mother tongue. The target population were students from 8 to 10 years old from socioeconomic strata 1-2 from two public schools. Initially, they made a diagnosis test that could help them identify issues in the reading skill. Through the implementation of videos, field dairies, photographs, surveys among others, they found that students had difficulties retaining information, responding to post reading exercises, and they had lack of motivation for the habit of reading. To accomplish their objectives, the researchers implemented

A) **Diaries** in which students reflected on what was learned in the class

B) **Individual contracts** in which students had all their activities

C) **Text grids** a way to self-evaluate their linguistic progress by recognizing their performance in the reading.

D) **Triangulation** in which they analyzed the different sources for findings and co-related the results.

They found that students were able to recognize main and secondary ideas of the texts, unknown words, and words related to the texts among others. Furthermore, they were able to make summaries of the stories and even make fables from their imagination. Finally, they conclude that teaching with fables help students to easily recognize elements of the fable

such as characters, summarize stories, and relate the morals of the readings with their context; thus, improving their reading comprehension and extending their knowledge about anything exposed to them.

These two studies highlight the importance and effectiveness of reading fables in teaching, their results suggest that even though their methodology was different, their results were similar. Despite the fact that they taught in Spanish, for our project in which the main target is to help students learn vocabulary in a foreign language, these two studies show how the type of input can help improve students' reading skills and how it can facilitate teacher's tasks.

Conceptual framework

Comprehensible input

One of the objectives in our project is that children acquire vocabulary in the target language by reading the texts of fables in English. However, the words included in fables can be something children do not know, especially because the texts are in English. They can use visual aids that facilitate the understanding of the message, but they will not understand text unless the vocabulary in the fables can elicit children to comprehend the message. Krashen (1987) explained that it is essential to understand messages to acquire a foreign language. Fables can be easily understood because of the type of words that appear in the text – Known animals, true cognates, and even unknown words that students can understand without explicitly knowing the meaning, this is called Active and passive vocabulary.

Active vocabulary and passive vocabulary

Active vocabulary is defined as the known words in a language and can be used in different language situations, Students are able to recognize its meaning and have a mental image of what the word is or means. This is essentially the purpose of teaching vocabulary – help students be aware of the words they know in the target language

On the contrary, passive vocabulary refers to the words that are not known but can be inferred due to the context of the text. This type of vocabulary refers to the words students are able to recognize but they are not able to produce; some other authors define this knowledge as receptive vocabulary. In texts of fables, there are words children do not know but they can "guess" or easily get the meaning without explicitly knowing it and students can find it challenging.

The input hypothesis and it's relation with fables texts

Krashen states that students' progress in the acquisition of a language when they understand input that is slightly more advanced than their level of proficiency. He called this the "i+1" where "I" represents the interlanguage and "+1" represents the next level of language acquisition. Some children find English as something challenging from for them as texts of fables have words they can barely understand but they can make an effort to understand. If a student is able to overcome little difficulties in their learning, the will consider this as significative and therefore will memorize the information.

Teaching vocabulary

Teaching vocabulary is one of the objectives of the project, and teachers' failure to teach vocabulary shows that it is necessary to look for alternatives to make it easy for students. Research

shows that some teachers do not know the best practices to teach vocabulary or where to start making emphasis on word learning. (Berne &Blachowicz, 2008). In fact, we start from the idea that teachers can use fables as an alternative to the process of teaching vocabulary to children. However, it is not only necessary to know the "What" but also "how" to teach, and it becomes important to know that teaching vocabulary to children is different from adults as the methods vary. Regarding this, Alqahtani (2015) says:

The teachers should be concerned that teaching vocabulary is something new and different from student's native language. They also have to take into account that teaching English for young learners is different from adults. The teachers have to know the characteristics of his\her learners. They moreover need to prepare good techniques and suitable material in order to gain the target of language teaching

This allows us to acknowledge that teaching vocabulary involves students' stage of learning, and it is important for the teacher to know those aspects to ease learning.

Definition of reading

As one of the objectives of the project is to help students get more vocabulary by reading, it is necessary to recognize that reading plays an important role in the development of the linguistic skills related to reading. Goodman (1988, p.2) defined reading as a process in which the reader creates meaning from the text. Additionally, this author explains that the reader is looking to comprehend a text, and this implies a cognitive demand; therefore, it is a psycholinguistic process. This notion supports the idea that reading helps students to develop their linguistic skills

(especially vocabulary) as when they read, they are not only looking for understanding, but using cognitive processes that allow them to decode meaning in the foreign language Smith (1971, p.52).

Choral reading

In our project, the participants read the text by following each word teacher pronounces and gesture the does. These two actions will elicit children understanding as the teacher is scaffolding their comprehension by making the body gestures. Vygotsky (1978) explains that the zone of proximal development is where the learner, being assisted by the teacher is able to reach the next stage of learning.

Fables definition

Fables are just a category of storytelling, which takes advantage of the ease of the narrative style to help student understand complex concepts of the daily life. Ayala (1982) defined fables as people's thoughts represented through characters, images and various literary resources such as personification, simile and metaphor. In this view, Dominguez (1969) converges explaining that fables have the tendency to explain things and its nature, to the common men's life throughout time.

Fables have an easy reading structure which is common for stories - Context, conflict, climax, closure, and conclusion (moral) – and it becomes simple when a student is able to find this pattern implicitly in the text. Moreover, the student will not only find a patter, but also characters that represent the real life.

Why to teach fables?

Fables are simple for reading

Fables are simple for children since it contains a predictable story sequence, familiar words, real life animals, and an expected end. (Ellis and Brewstwer 1991: p.9) state that it can be easier for learners to understand since the language included in a fable is easier than other texts.

They are an input for language learning

Telling stories to children make them activate several language skills as they can be reading, listening, writing as they find new words in the stories. In general terms, students can find new words in the reading while teacher reads, and they can infer the meaning by looking at teacher's gestures.

They help children understand complex concepts from real life situations

(Brumfit, Moon and Tongue 1991 p.185) explain that one of the benefits of using fables is that children at this age enjoy expanding their knowledge about experiences by relating fables with the everyday life which contribute to their formal education in ethical principles. This also helps them think critically about life issues

There are animals and characters that are common for students

In a fable, it is usual that characters are animals, and most of them are real life animals that they have seen in the zoo, in television, or in books. Genesee (1994 p.147) state that stories that include familiar characters are helpful since it makes it more comprehensible to learners than unfamiliar ones.

They help children build ethical principles

Deltor (2001) mentions that through the integration of the learning of the fable, and the relation with the daily life, students can grasp ethical issues that can help them reflect about their own values.

Aesop fables

These fables were written by a greek slave named "Aesop" who is the main author in the collection of fables, numbering approximately 725 fables which are known for containing animals or insects e.g. foxes, grasshoppers, frogs, cats, representing human-like situations. Therefore, Aesop is characterized to have a large collection of stories that are addressed to children.

Why Aesop fables?

As fables vary depending on the culture, it was necessary to choose a general input as we wanted to show that it is possible to study fables to most of the children. Therefore, Aesop fables are the most known stories among children as they appear in different sources such as in books, television, audios, etc. Not only due to this reason, Aesop fables are addressed to children as they are intended to instruct children in moral values and teachings of life that can help children be aware of life scenarios.

Methodology

In this section of the project the key concepts discussed in the conceptual framework are related to descriptions of the procedures that were carried out.

Context

The institution where practitioners implemented the project, was *Complejo Educativo La Julita*, which made an alliance with the Licenciatura en Bilinguismo (LLI) program from the *Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira*. This school is in the urban area of Pereira, Risaralda and follows the standards of teaching English in Colombia "Guía 22, El Reto". The institution´s strata in general is lower-middle class and the school type is academic; this means they teach the traditional subjects for basic learning. The classroom's layout where students had their English classes, is large with limited illumination from outside; it is equipped with a white board and desk for the teacher and for students. It is to be noted that the classroom has a HD TV that could be used for playing the videos in the presentation stage. Like other public institutions, this institution does not have an English teacher for elementary courses; instead only one teacher is in charge of guiding all the subjects of the course.

Setting

The practitioners implemented the classroom project in one of the schools in alliance with the English program from the UTP which is: *Complejo educativo La Julita* where there are few English teachers, about two or three in elementary schools. There is always a teacher in charge of each group, and this teacher is also in charge of teaching all subjects, including English. The English curriculum of this public school is based on the implementation of *La Guia 22*, proposed by the National Education Ministry, and the Common European Framework for languages reference (CEFR) implemented by the Council of Europe. Using this guide, the teachers learn how to teach and assess their students according to their background, interests, and needs and according to their level.

Participants

It is necessary to differentiate the participants' roles and how they interacted in the project. These consist of students and practitioners.

Students

The target population of the project was a group of third grade students whose ages ranged from 8-10 years old. These participants are part of a public institution and consequently the English classes are based on *El Reto,* which is inspired by concepts presented in the CEFR. Being third graders, the students are assumed to have an English proficiency of A1, as measured by the CEFR. Students come from different socioeconomic backgrounds and their behavior reflects something of the social problems of their communities.

Practitioners

There were three implementers who took the role of observers and teachers of the English Course. The practitioners are part of the *Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira* in the *Licenciatura en Bilingüismo con Enfasis en Inglés*, at the time coursing ninth semester.

Design

The Design of the Project was based on two key pedagogical concepts, which are: the backward approach, and Presentation Practice and Production (PPP). In the backwards approach goals related to vocabulary were set to prepare the lesson starting from the goals for example, the targeted words from the fable. This methodology helps the practitioners to set the learning goals

in vocabulary before implementing the classes and with an effective procedure it can lead to the expected outcomes as pointed out by MC Tighe and Wiggins (1998).

It is important to mention that the backwards approach connects with the PPP that is a teaching model mentioned by different authors in the foreign language field, for instance Jack and Richards (2001) and Harmer (2009) who highlight benefits such as being conscious of what they learn, it is simple to implement, and learners find it easy to understand. These two concepts are important to have an established structure for the lesson in the different stages.

In the presentation, each topic was introduced by handing out the text of the fable and presenting a short video of the fable on the TV. In the practice, the practitioner in charge of guiding the class presented the reading by making students read out loud and by following the reading by asking students to look over the text to identify similar and difficult words. Additionally, the practitioner encouraged the reinforcement of understanding by writing the target words on the board and explaining their meaning in l2 and l1. Finally, in the production part the pupils can elaborate their own language product by using what was learned in the previous stages of presentation and practice, this information was gathered by implementing the assessment procedures as the cloze tests, and matching exercises.

Development and implementation

The purpose of the project is to demonstrate the viability to implement fables in reading to foster the vocabulary learning. The material that students will use is based on the famous story teller Aesop, who has a big variety of stories and fables that are useful for the type of population. Due to the co-relation with previous knowledge and relation to context, students can relate fables

to their cognitive structures, especially of the range of age and their language level that they will learn. As practitioners, we implemented this project to develop in our students the ability to use more their second language, reading stories and that has a moral for them. There will be 9 sessions which took place 2 days per week and 1 hour per each day.

Materials and Resources

The primary content of the lesson was fables taken from Aesop stories. There were different readings for each session and different morals to focus on. To develop the lesson, the video beam is a primary need since it is where the video will be played for the presentation stage. Besides, the use of computer and speakers are elements for the listening input. In the practice stage a reading for each student, approximately copies 30 to 35 copies were needed. Finally, students used color pencils to resolve the activity proposed on each class to collect the information for the vocabulary assessment.

Assessment procedures

The instruments used to obtain the results and measure the achievement of objectives were journals, observations, and assessment forms (artifacts).

Journals

In the journals the practitioner that was in charge of guiding the class made a reflective paper considering the important aspects from the class thinking about the things that went well and what did not go well. Considering the objectives from the course, the practitioner stated the

difficulties while implementing as well as the learning opportunities that were effectively accomplished.

Observations

In the observations the practitioner in charge registered all the elements from the class, date hour, topic of the moral of the lesson. In this way, the implementers can obtain the specific and real information of what happened in the classroom without interpretation of behaviors or responses.

Assessment forms

In the assessment procedure we highlight the use of cloze tests which is a technique in which the students are asked to supply the words that have been removed from a passage to measure the ability to comprehend a written piece. Since the study is focused on primary graders, the assessment tried to be as simple as possible. In general, different strategies will be used to collect the information such as matchings, selecting the correct words workshops, and being the cloze tests the most important ones. The assessment criteria were based on the demonstration of the learning objectives of the lesson and the completion of the items of the cloze tests. Ex:

WORKSHEET
Identify the feeling according to the image:

The lion is _____

The mouse is _____

To grade students in their assignments, they did not receive quantitative grades. Instead, they received images of a happy, and sad face. On the other side, for the practitioners each face represents a scale from 1 to 5 depending on the level of understanding. An example of the rating scale is shown as follows:

For students		For practitioners	
		5	(scored all the items)
	I accomplished the lesson objectives		I fully understand the lesson objectives, I demonstrate my ability to use the words learned in the lesson

			(did not score all the items)
		4	I understand the lesson objectives and I learned the words, I can use them with effort and Identify them.
		3	(partially scored the items) I am in the way to become knowledgeable on how to use the words and what they mean.
	I learned but I need improvement in the lesson objectives	2	(did not accomplish most of the items) I need to reinforce the topic and identify the best way to learn for me. I start to understand the topic and use the words related to the readings.
		1	(did not accomplish the items) I need to reinforce the topic and identify the best way to learn for me. I will try my best according to the reinforcement activities.

Source: Own creation

Vocabulary assessment

There are different types of assessment to evaluate the learning progress and the language development. The implementation of vocabulary games such as crosswords, fill the gaps, matching exercises, and letter soups evaluate the learning of goals. An example of each of the vocabulary games is as follows

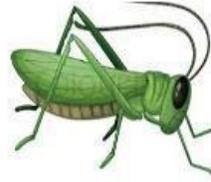*Cloze tests*:

The lion feels _____

The mouse feels _____

The mouse is _____

Matching exercises

Match the word with the correct image

Ant

Spring

Winter

Letter soup

Letter Soup

Peacock, fox, yellow, green, red, blue, orange, brown, white and black

P	e	a	c	o	c	k	i	s	o	m	l
e	j	d	m	r	t	f	o	l	r	j	b
v	w	h	i	t	e	h	r	n	a	i	l
g	i	q	b	b	l	u	e	t	n	q	a
r	a	f	o	x	e	q	d	x	g	w	c
e	w	d	m	i	n	z	u	l	e	y	k
e	b	y	o	t	b	r	o	w	n	s	r
n	u	r	h	r	g	f	r	c	o	q	j
k	c	a	l	s	b	y	e	l	l	o	w
n	a	s	g	k	t	i	l	g	z	l	e

The collection of artifacts was registered by photos of the activities the children develop in each class and homework, this are the artifacts.

Results

We classified each of the results according to student's responses, linguistic outcomes and professional development. They are divided as what went well and what did not.

Students responses

In this section we describe students' behaviors, attitudes, and reactions towards the implementation of the classes we implemented.

What went well

The children demonstrated motivation by cheerfully performing the tasks assigned without prodding and by asking questions about the vocabulary encountered in the lesson. Some of them spontaneously looked up the translations of words in their dictionaries

"I felt really good when they said, '¡ay! ¡Esto es re-fácil, vamos a ganar!'" (Journal 6)

"in a matching activity, one of the students said: Profe, cierto que el ruiseñor va con este (pointing at nightingale image) and the teacher replied 'yes'. After this, the student went jumping around while she returned to her seat" (Observation #3)

In regards this, Krashen explains in the affective filter hypothesis that motivation is a variable that facilitates the comprehensible input to activate the language acquisition device

(Krashen, 1982). It is also important to remark that students tried to overcome little difficulties to achieve general understanding of the readings (as looking for bilingual dictionaries to understand words). This can be explained by Krashen's (IBID) input hypothesis which states that children acquire language by being exposed "i+1" where they receive input corresponding to their next level of language proficiency.

We observed that students were able to express their opinions about the moral of fables giving examples and referring to their own experiences. Even though they participated using Spanish, they were able to say the morals of the fables correctly.

"In the lass section of the class, students were saying what they think about the fable, one student said: 'que los los niños temenos que aprender a prepararnos para el futuro'".
(Observation #1)

"During the last part of the class, children gave their opinions 'Profe, yo no sería tan tacaño' sasid one of the children. Another one said 'Profe que hay que compartir'"

"I was surprised by their comments about the lesson, some of them even told me experiences about their life" (Journal #8)

We concur with Gonzales and Mendoza (2015) who state that children show understanding of fables by giving examples of the morals from their own experiences. Not only because they can reflect based on the moral of stories but also because they can relate it to their real life (Brumfit, Moon and Tongue 1991 p.185)

What did not go well

Very often some students got distracted from the reading and from the videos as they were talking to other classmates, performing other tasks from other classes, or walking around.

"When watching the video for the second time, one kid started to jump around as imitating a rabbit, however this was not related to the video of the fable" (Observation #2)

"*during the time of reading, there were two children singing"* (Observation #9)

This suggests that their attention span was short. Students got distracted within six to ten minutes after any activity started. Children inattention is something normal and it can confuse teachers to make them think that it is problem of attention deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD) (Mahone, 2005).

Linguistic outcomes
What went well

We observed that students said words from the reading related to animals. It seems it was easier for them to remember those domestic animals they heard in the reading. They expressed this orally during activities.

*"During the teacher's elicitation: 'ay, ay, yo me acuerdo, ese es el **fox'**, and immediately asked, ¿el zorro profe?"* (Observation #8)

*"**turtle, turtle**, como las que vi en el zoológico"* (Observation #3)

"*I was surprised when one student said 'profe las **ants** de que color van?'"* (Journal #1)

With respect to this, Genesee (1994 p.147) state that fables include familiar characters that help children understand easily.

Children associated images from the reading and from the tests with their words in English. In a test we applied, most of the class correctly matched vocabulary words with their corresponding images (14 children of 18).

Children imitated the teacher's pronunciation when reading out loud. This may have made them feel confident to continue reading by themselves in English.

When instructed by the teacher, students wrote words that they remembered from the lesson.

"The children were following the teacher and they made mistakes of Spanish interference in pronunciation, but they managed to continue with the reading" (Observation #8)

"in a matching activity, one of the students said: 'Profe, cierto que el Nightingale va con este' (pointing at nightingale image) and the teacher replied 'yes'. (Observation #2)

"The teacher asked them write 3 words they had learned during the class, and before telling them he wrote: Lyon, Mouse, and sad. After this, he asked students to write different words, after this, most of the children had wrote words from the reading" (Observation #4)

This shows that students learned by imitating the teacher's pronunciation and by referring to visual resources. Therefore, they grasped the meanings of words. They also memorized words and pronounced them in English. Regarding these findings, we agree with Vygotsky's theory of Zone of proximal development. In this theory, he explains that children who follow a teacher's example gradually develop the ability to do it without help. This is illustrated when teacher pronounce words for children, who are then able to imitate the pronunciation. This is associated with the term "scaffolding", as explained in Ovando, Collier, & Combs, who state that:

"*Scaffolding refers to providing contextual supports for meaning through the use of simplified language, teacher modeling, visuals and graphics, cooperative learning and hands-on learning*" (Ovando, Collier, & Combs 2003, p. 345)

What did not go well

One of the challenges during the implementations was due to students' misconception that it is necessary to translate to understand the foreign language. Students were looking at their bilingual dictionaries to translate each word of the text to get its

"Students were translating words and asking their classmates for the meaning of words" (Journal #4)

"They asked me to say it in Spanish because they couldn't understand" (Journal #6)

It seems to have become habitual for children to refer to the native language to learn English. However, this was a challenge as our approach was communicative and the objectives of the class could not be accomplished when they translated everything**.** Nonetheless, teachers can take advantage of translation to make activities in which they can use dictionaries to help students learn new words quickly.

Professional growth

What went well

We felt that we had rapport with students. Sometimes they expressed that they wanted to stay in our classes even after the classes had finished; they remembered our names and they even wanted to take extra homework.

Something very rewarding is that some children said: "Profe, no se vaya, yo quiero seguir en su

clase" (Journal 8)

"Some students were even asking me to hand out more of the pictures to take home and color it"

(Journal 6)

We carried out discussions keeping the order or the class. This helped students to express their opinions about the morals of the stories without disruption. We guided students by asking questions for them to reflect upon the relation between the moral and their daily life.

"at the end of the class, teacher asked students to sit down and started making questions for

students to reflect: 'What was the moral? ¿La moraleja, niños?' '¿cómo van a usar eso en sus

vidas?'" (Observation #6)

"I asked students to tell me reasons why it was important to be prepared for the future and they

came up with very interesting and creative responses" (Journal #1)

Also, we followed the structure of the lessons we had planned with anticipation.

What did not go well

One of our challenges was to give clear explanations. One significant challenge for the practitioners was the instruction for the activities and the explanation for tasks. It was observed that practitioners had to explain several times for children to understand. It was also confusing for children.

"Profe, ¿cómo así?, No entiendo?" (Observation #3)

"The teacher was asking the students to repeat a verb in the story however they did not say

anything" (Observation 7).

This seems to indicate that we needed more practice and preparation with the giving of instructions. A good way of preparing instructions is to write them down as teachers are preparing their lesson plans (Woodberry and Aldrich 2000); this is something that we can improve throughout our practice as English teachers.

Conclusion

Using Aesop's fables in the foreign language classroom allows teachers to have interesting material that can contribute to children learning values as well as learning a foreign language.

By using Aesop fables throughout a set of nine classes, we aimed to determine if these could be an effective instrument to teach vocabulary, reading and values to a group of third grade children. Using observations, field diaries and instruments such as cloze tests, we determined that students gained linguistic skills such as pronunciation in English as well as the ability to grasp meanings of words through teachers' examples and visual aids. It was also evident that students felt motivated by the teachers' instruction using material related to fables and this helped create a cheerful environment where children felt enthusiastic about learning English. The reflective stage of the lessons was one of our strengths as we carried out successful sessions where students expressed the importance of morals in their lives and related these to values.

Even though we were expecting to implement the communicative approach, the main challenges we faced were students' failure to interact in activities requiring use of L2 and our tendency to use the L1 to repeat instructions, manage discipline and deal with situations in which students seemed confused. We also realized that it is very challenging for students to read by themselves at a very early stage of foreign language development and most of the time reading

only worked to help students relate images to words and show them how to pronounce them in English.

Questions for further investigation:

Due to limitations of our project, it was not possible to obtain definite answers to the following questions:

Is it possible to teach students to read functionally (with understanding) at an early stage of language development?

How can we diminish the interference of the L1 when implementing the communicative approach?

References

Alqahtani, M. (2015) the importance of vocabulary in language learning and how to be

taught.

Andrade, R. & Correa, R. (2011) Comprensión lectora de texto narrativo (fábulas)

Universidad de la amazonia.

https://edudistancia2001.wikispaces.com/file/view/COMRPENSION+LECTORA+DE+T

EXTOS+NARRATIVOS+(FABULAS).pdf

Ayala, C. (1982) La comprensión lectora a través del texto literario la fábula.

http://repository.uniminuto.edu:8080/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10656/4075/TELEC_Gonza

lezLeonorAlfonso_2014.pdf?sequence=1

Berne, J. I., & Blachowich, C. L. Z. (2008). What reading teachers say about vocabulary

instruction: Voices from the classroom.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228626576_What_Reading_Teachers_Say_Abo
ut_Vocabulary_Instruction_Voices_From_the_Classroom

Brumfit, C., Moon, J., &; Tongue, R (Eds). (1991). Teaching English to Children: From

practice to princile. London: Collins ELT.

https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/collegeartslaw/cels/essays/younglearners/Terr
yFaulknerYL.pdf

Bruner, J. (2002). Making stories. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.

https://books.google.com.co/books?id=7p2ApsvrclcC&;printsec=frontcover&;hl=es&;so
urce=gbs_ge_summary_r&;cad=0#v=onepage&;q&;f=false

Detlor, T. (2001). Teaching With Aesops Fables. DOI : Scholastic Inc.

http://gec.kmu.edu.tw/~lc/ecorner/eBook/Teaching%20With%20Aesop%27s%20Fables.
pdf

Dominguez, M. A. (1969). Que es la fabula: Columba, Buenos Aires. Librería y Editorial

Renacimiento, S.A.

Dutcher, P. (1990). Authentic reading assessment. Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation,
2(6). Retrieved May 4, 2010

http://PAREonline.net/getvn.asp?v=-2&;n=6

Brewster. J., Ellis, G. and Girard. (1991) The storytelling Handbook for Primary

Teachers.London: Penguin. (p.9).

Estándares Básicos de Competencias en Lenguas Extranjeras: inglés. (2015). (Estándar N°. 22).

https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/1759/w3-article-115174.html?_noredirect=1

Genesee, F. (1994) integrating language and content: lessons from immersion (p.147).

http://carla.umn.edu/cobaltt/modules/principles/genesee1994/genesee1994.pdf

Gonzales, L. &; Mendoza, B. 2015 La comprensión lectora a través del texto literario la

fábula.

http://repository.uniminuto.edu:8080/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10656/4075/TELEC_Gonza

lezLeonorAlfonso_2014.pdf?sequence=1

Goodman, K.S. (1988) The reading process (p.2).

http://garfield.library.upenn.edu/classics1989/A1989R929100001.pdf

Harmer, J. (2009) How to Teach. 5th ed. Harlow. Longman.

Krashen, S. D. (1987). Principles and practice in second language acquisition.

Hertforshire: Prentice Hall International.

http://www.sdkrashen.com/content/books/principles_and_practice.pdf

Marco Común Europeo de Referencia de Lenguas (MCER) (2001).

https://cvc.cervantes.es/ensenanza/biblioteca_ele/marco/cvc_mer.pdf

McCarthy, M (1990): Vocabulary. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

http://catdir.loc.gov/catdir/sles/cam031/97042211.pdf

Mctighe, J &; Wiggins, G. (1998). Understanding by Desing.

https://www.ascd.org/ASCD/pdf/siteASCD/publications/UbD_WhitePaper0312.pdf

Milton, R. N. (2006) PhD, Dean of Nursing, California Baptist University.

http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0894318406286578

Ministerio de Educación Nacional (2006).

https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/1621/articles-312490_archivo_pdf_plan_decenal.pdf

Ministerio de Educación Nacional (2014), Programa Nacional de Inglés 2015-2025.

https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/1759/articles-343837_Programa_Nacional_Ingles.pdf

Ovando, C., Collier, V., &; Combs, M. (2003). Bilingual and ESL classrooms: Teaching
multicultural contexts (3rd ed.). (p.345). Boston: McGraw-Hill. Publishing Company,2003

Parse, R. R. (1998). The human becoming school of thought. A perspective for nurses and

other health professionals. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.831.4427&;rep=rep1&;type=p
df

Pereira, V. W., &; Rodrigues, S. J. (2014). Trabajo con fábulas en ambiente.

https://revistas.unal.edu.co/index.php/formayfuncion/article/view/47669

Richards, J. C. (2001) Comunicative Languaje Teaching Today: Cambridge University

Press. https://www.professorjackrichards.com/wp-content/uploads/Richards-Communicative-Language.pdf

Robson, M. (2013) The effect of teaching English,

https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/english-effect-report-v2.pdf

Short, J.C and Ketchen D. J (2005) Department of Management and Human Resources,

Utah State University, journal of management education, vol. 29.

https://huntsman.usu.edu/directory/cv/hanks_steven.pdf

Smith, F. Understanding Reading. A psycholinguistic analysis of reading and learning to

read. Holt Rinehart and Winston Inc., 1971

https://archive.org/stream/UnderstandingReading-FrankSmith/frank-smithreading_djvu.txt

virtual en la escuela: comprensión lectora y aprendizaje de conocimientos lingüísticos.

Forma y Función, 27(2), 135-156.

http://www.redalyc.org/html/219/21935715005/

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). Mind in society. Cambridge, M. A: Harvard University Press.

http://ouleft.org/wp-content/uploads/Vygotsky-Mind-in-Society.pdf

Woodberry, R. D &; Aldrich, H. E (2000). Planning and running effective classroom-based

exercises. The University of North Carolina at Capel Hill.

http://www.tesol.org/docs/books/bk_morethannative_325