

TEACHING VOCABULARY BY USING ILLUSTRATED STORIES IN THIRD GRADERS

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Resumen

El presente estudio busca observar el impacto de la aplicación de historias ilustradas como estrategia para enseñar vocabulario de la lengua inglesa a estudiantes de tercer grado en la institución educativa “Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe” en Dosquebradas RDA. Dicha estrategia consiste en que los estudiantes escuchen la historia leída por la profesora, mientras ella muestra las imágenes enfatizando en aquellas palabras previamente seleccionadas por la profesora y que se espera sean aprendidas en cada sesión.

Para lograr los objetivos del estudio, se designó una profesora y dos observadoras, quienes utilizaron la siguiente metodología, mientras la profesora leía la historia a los estudiantes, las observadoras tomaban notas a cerca de la actitud y el comportamiento de los niños frente a la actividad. Después de terminada la actividad de lectura, la profesora realizaba un ejercicio evaluativo, donde los estudiantes relacionaban las palabras aprendidas durante la clase con las respectivas imágenes que las representaban.

Durante los últimos diez minutos de cada sesión, la profesora realizaba un dialogo informal con los estudiantes para evaluar los resultados de la actividad. Este dialogo también fue observado.

Las preguntas que nos formulamos para desarrollar este estudio fueron las siguientes:

- ¿Qué nos dice la aplicación de historias ilustradas en la enseñanza de vocabulario para estudiantes de tercer grado?
- ¿Qué tipo de historias prefieren los estudiantes de tercer grado?

Para dar respuesta a estas preguntas se llevo a cabo una investigación de tipo cualitativo, y los instrumentos que se usaron para recolectar datos fueron, diarios de campo, encuesta, y diálogos informales. Los datos que se recolectaron gracias a los instrumentos fueron analizados para obtener categorías y dar respuesta a las preguntas formuladas, y finalmente estas categorías fueron discutidas con base en teorías desarrolladas por expertos que habían hecho investigaciones anteriores en este campo del conocimiento.

Abstract

The current study is based on the impact of the application of illustrated stories as strategy to teach English vocabulary to third graders at the school “Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe” in Dosquebradas RDA. This strategy consists of students listen to the stories read aloud by the teacher, while she points out the images emphasizing on the words previously selected by the teacher to be taught and learned during each session.

In order to achieve the goals of this study, the researcher used the following methodology:

While the teacher read aloud the stories, the observers took field notes about students 'attitude and behavior. At the end of the reading activity, the teacher implemented a survey, where the students related the images and words taught during the session.

At the end of the session, the teacher and students had a dynamic assessment to know the students outcomes.

Introduction

In this research project the reader will find aspects related to teaching English vocabulary by using illustrated stories. The content of this investigation conformed by four chapters which are explained briefly next.

In chapter one, rational and the statement of the problem of this study are included, the perspectives that the Ministry of Education had when it designed the “Programa Nacional de Bilingüismo”. Likewise, it mentions the importance of vocabulary instruction in foreign language learning through illustrated stories. At the end of this chapter, it establishes the questions and the objectives of this research project.

In chapter two, the reader will find the Literature review of our study that will support our thoughts about teaching vocabulary by using illustrated stories. Afterwards, the literature review in which studies related to vocabulary instruction and the usage of illustrated stories from other researchers is stated as well. Furthermore, this chapter is very important because it will give academic support when the discussion session is developed.

In chapter three, the reader will find which the type of the study of this investigation is, as well as the methods used to collect the data from the vocabulary instruction sessions developed with third graders. Additionally, the reader will be given an idea of how these vocabulary instructions sessions were carried out with the student's sample and how the data collected was analyzed.

To conclude, chapter four will illustrate all the findings resulted from this research process, moreover the theory that's supports all the data obtained through this study. This chapter also describes all the things that the researchers learnt from this investigation, another aspect that should be taken into account for further research.

CHAPTER 1

RATIONALE AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

According to the booklet of “Formar en Lenguas Extranjeras: Ingles” (2006) Colombia needs to be up to date with the current global economy. Namely, the country needs to adapt international standards in this regard. Thus, the Colombian ministry of education has emphasized the need to include at least one foreign language, other than Spanish; in that sense, English has become the main foreign language to teach in Colombian institutes (both, state and private).

Within the last five years, the Colombian Ministry of education has worked on the construction of the standards of English language teaching. Those standards have to be integrated into PEI (Proyecto Educativo Institucional), in all of the Colombian institutes, and in all of the courses. This state program represents the new perspectives that the government has in terms of teaching a foreign language, in this case English. Therefore, the traditional scheme of education is being restructured in order to highlight the importance of learning English as a means to get access to new technologies, to be part of the global economy and to get to know new cultures.

Based on the booklet of “Formar en Lenguas Extranjeras: Ingles” (2006), English teaching should follow a sequence to guarantee specific knowledge when every stage finishes. In this case study, third graders featuring A1 level of English According to Common European Framework of Reference for foreign language, the focal point at this stage is to guide learners through the use of the language.

Therefore, this research highlights the importance of vocabulary in the English learning process, vocabulary that is appropriate to the learners’ level and is also meaningful. For this purpose, it is important that teachers chose material that provides learners with meaning. We decided to choose illustrated stories to teach vocabulary, because we believe that stories are important not only in the mother tongue, but also in foreign language learning. As Kow (2006) declares, children enjoy listening to stories, they are familiar with narrative conventions, and they can make predictions about what will happen next. On the other hand, stories are an ideal introduction to foreign language as they present language in a familiar and memorable context. Stories can help students in learning and it could be funnier.

In our experience as students and then as researchers, we noticed that in foreign language teaching and learning, vocabulary instruction has attracted the least attention from teachers, most of them do not include direct vocabulary instruction in their lesson plans. Nevertheless, according to Brown & Tomlinson (1993), illustrated stories are an engaging option for teaching English vocabulary to children, since “illustrated stories can be understood only with the illustrations supplementing the written text”.

As aforementioned, the importance of teaching vocabulary in the early stages is evident, considering the fact that people today depend on their language skills to function in complex and economic worlds. Pikulski and Templeton (2000) suggest that “one of the greatest tool teachers can give students for succeeding in education process and their life, is a great deal of vocabulary and the skills for using those words”.

According to The American Heritage Dictionary (2000), vocabulary is the sum of words used by and understood by students. However, it seems important to point out that in almost all cases there are some differences in number of words that an individual understands and uses. In this sense, Pikulski and Templeton (2000) explain that the terms “use” and “understanding” need clarification, for instance, people refer to expressive vocabulary when they speak or write; and receptive vocabulary when they listen or read.

On the other hand, Allen (1983) suggests that learning vocabulary requires more than a dictionary; “Vocabulary is a cultural phenomenon as well as a linguistic one”. She points out that student must learn the social meanings of words in a foreign language, not just the equivalent word in their native tongue. She also declares that students’ success in learning vocabulary depends to a certain extent on the number of senses used in the classroom. Furthermore, Allen (1983) states that not all classroom time should be spent pronouncing words; interactive activities related to vocabulary are important and even essential.

Description of the project

In short, the purpose of our study was to implement, teach, evaluate and report the impact of the application of the illustrated stories on the teaching of English vocabulary. Additionally, in this study the reader will be given an idea of how these vocabulary instructions sessions were carried out with the five students of third grade and how the data collected was analyzed.

RESEARCH QUESTION

What does the application of illustrated stories tell us about vocabulary range of third graders?

SUB QUESTIONS

What type of stories do third graders prefer?

MAIN OBJECTIVES

To realize the impact of the use of illustrated stories in third graders in their vocabulary range.

To increase the vocabulary range in third graders.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

To evaluate the students' progress periodically in terms of meaning.

To select the material whose characters are known to them. To realize what kind of illustrations are appropriate according to the children's **profile**

Relevant Definitions

Vocabulary

Pikulski and Templeton (2000), cite the American Heritage Dictionary to define vocabulary as “the sum of words used by, understood by a particular person or group” In this paper we are concerned with extending the sum of words that are used by and understood by students.

Illustrated stories

They are stories that contain illustrations to provide meaning and information beyond the print. (Royer and Cable, 1976)

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Vocabulary

In order to involve the term vocabulary in this project, it is important to define and to evidence its relevance in language learning process. For that reason, Pikulski and Templeton (2000), provide the following definitions.

Pikulski and Templeton (2000) cite The American Heritage Dictionary to define vocabulary as "the sum of words used by, understood by, or at the command of a particular person or group." In this paper we are concerned with extending the sum of words that are used by and understood by students. According Oxford Dictionary of Current English (2001) vocabulary is "all the words that a person knows or uses". Taking into consideration these two definitions, it seems important to point out that in almost all cases there are some differences in the numbers of words that individual understands and uses; the terms "uses" and "understands" need clarification. For example, the major way in which we "use" vocabulary is when we speak and write; the term expressive vocabulary is used to refer to both since these are the vocabularies we use to express ourselves. We understand vocabulary when we listen to speech and when we read; the term receptive vocabulary is used to refer to listening and reading vocabularies. Meaning or oral vocabulary refers to the combination of listening and speaking vocabularies, and

literate vocabulary refers to the combination of our reading and writing vocabularies.

For the first five years or so our lives, we are not excepted in the process of acquired a meaning and oral vocabulary words that they understand when they hear them and that they can use in their speech. During this period, children have essentially vocabularies. Most children acquire reading and writing skill upon entering school. They need to acquire a basic knowledge of how printed words relate to spoken words. Being able to translate or transcode print into speech allows children to use what they know about meaning oral vocabulary for the literate vocabulary. Therefore, for very young children, their meaning vocabulary is much larger than their literate vocabularies.

The acquisition of decoding skills leads to rapid expansion of literate vocabularies by allowing children to transcode their meaning vocabularies into their literate vocabularies. We tend to have a larger group of words that we use in reading and writing than we use in our own speech. This is because written language is more formal, more complex, and more sophisticated than spoken language. Young children naturally learn to communicate through those words that are used over and over again in our communications they are important to both our meaning and literate vocabularies.

Taking into consideration vocabulary instruction, Ehri (1994) strongly suggests that high-frequency words should be introduced without written context so that

students focus on their visual composition that they should be practiced several times in materials that are at an appropriate level of challenge.

Pikulski and Templeton (2000), state there is no question that people who have large speaking vocabularies generally tend to have large listening, reading, and writing vocabularies; likewise people who are limited in one of these aspects are likely limited in other aspects as well. We have seen that this close relationship does not exist in preliterate children. Also, some children who develop large reading vocabularies may not use that vocabulary in their writing without teacher's help and guidance. However, in the years during which children develop as readers and writers, there is an increasingly high relationship among all four aspects of vocabulary listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Gough and Tunmer (1986) have pointed out that vocabulary development is both important and ignored. Vocabulary is the "missing link" in reading language instruction in our school system. Because vocabulary deficits particularly affect less advantaged and second language children, Gough et al. (1986) argue that such "deficits" are fundamentally more remediable than many other school learning problems.

Gough and Tunmer (1986), cite Nagy and Herman (1987) and Sternberg (1987), who argue that much vocabulary acquisition results from literacy and wide reading rather than from direct instruction. However, Becker (1977) refute that is obvious

that a great deal of vocabulary acquisition occurs before children become literate, and before they are reading books that introduce unfamiliar vocabulary.

Prior knowledge and Reading

Reading skill is a receptive skill. It is a way in which people extract meaning from the written discourse. According to Harmer (2001) Understanding a piece of discourse involves much more than just knowing the language. In order to make sense of any text people need to have “pre-existent knowledge of the world.” Such knowledge is often referred to as schema. People carry in their head mental representations of typical situation that they come across. When they are stimulated by particular words, discourse patterns, or context, such schematic knowledge is activated. They also are able to recognize what they see, because it fits into patterns that they already know.

According to Piaget (1976) children experiment the process of learning as knowledge construction rather than knowledge accumulation. Children construct knowledge, and transform them to fit to the cognitive structure.

Piaget (1976) claims children did not reproduce knowledge they received, but rather they constructed knowledge with the help of their prior knowledge. Thus, learning is not merely an act of receiving and reproducing information. It is a complex act of construction and reconstruction of knowledge. It is through the

developmental process of adaptation, assimilation and accommodation that a child constructs knowledge. Human beings gain knowledge through their experience and the mechanism of construction and reconstruction of knowledge.

Piaget (1976) also declares that all knowledge is rooted in one's prior knowledge and preconceptions. Consequently, learning is assimilation and accommodation of new knowledge into the existing prior knowledge and preconception. In this sense, the reader needs a previous world's knowledge and experiences in order to interpret and understand the new words in a second language.

In order to complement the Piaget's statements, it is necessary to cite Kow (2006), who declares that reading interpretation and understanding can be seen at two levels: linguistic and psychological. At the first level, the child is fully aware of the words and the language being used to create the story. On the second level, one sees an experience that may be equivalent to "pure magic". At this level, the conscious mind is put on hold and one escapes the reality of this stressful world. The imagination is given free restriction to a world that does not have to live by the rules of the world, and the mind decodes the words and encodes the meaning in pictorial form, equivalent to a running movie. At this level the interaction is seen to be a personal one. The running shows that one child sees is different from that of another. The images are built using the existing individual world knowledge, values and perceptions. Therefore it may be seen that the experience at linguistic level can be similar; however the interaction at psychological level is a very private one.

Ludic

Jimenez (1998) states that a ludic activity is a new pedagogical alternative, and it is a research proposition of application in scholar context and didactic tool, ludic activities enhance student's interest in foreign language learning. Words are not enough to teach a foreign language. Most activities for younger learners should include movement and involve the senses. It is necessary to have plenty of objects and pictures to work with, and to make full use of the school facilities and its surroundings.

Vygotski (1978), Piaget (1981), and Bruner (1980), cited by Cameron (2004) argue that meaning is the basis of the learning process. To be meaningful, this learning should be articulated both in a social context and in the daily life of the learner. In such supportive environment children will have the opportunity to construct their own knowledge in an active and creative way.

Cameron (2004) points out that general language learning principles and research have shown that young learners need the following models of language use to listen to, to notice and to assimilate; plentiful opportunities for repeated listening and plentiful opportunities to practice words, phrases and sentences. Taking this into consideration, children need constant questioning and redirection in order to process the information and make it their own. Repetition, in different forms, allows consolidation of knowledge and deeper understanding.

Vygotski, Piaget, Bruner; coincide that to give opportunities to learners to practice and construct their own and original words, and sentences is meaningful for language learning. Whereas, Cameron affirms that learners need to follow models, and teachers must create opportunities to assimilate them. That allows learners consolidate knowledge. On the other hand, Jimenez argues, that ludic is a pedagogical and didactic tool to enhance learners' interest in foreign language learning.

Ludic is an excellent tool for foreign language teaching, since learners enjoy learning, through the use of didactic materials such as: songs, music, short stories, and so on. Thus, the activities become meaningful for learners, which facilitate new knowledge.

Illustrated stories

The Curriculum Development Centre (2006), cited by Kow (2006), in the development of her study, defines Children's literature as "the material created for and widely read, viewed and heard by children that has an imaginative element." According to Kow (2006), illustrated stories are written by adults, therefore there is a tension between what an adult conceives to be children's literature and what the child conceives literature to be. On the one hand, children want to derive fun from reading a book. On the other hand, adults view the functionality of books as one

where there is a need for children's book to teach moral values, and particular language aspects such as new vocabulary.

According to Royer and Cable (1976) Illustrations are commonly placed in text books to explain the text and to provide information beyond the print. They looked at the exploratory function of illustrations. They also argue that illustrations enable readers to organize an assimilative context for more efficiently understanding of written language. Their research on the communicative value of illustrations suggests that illustrations can foster comprehension and learning. There are many factors to take into consideration like the children's physical, cognitive, language, and moral developments. In agreement with Royer and Cable (1976); Brown and Tomlinson (1993) declare that the term "picture book" refers specifically to a book whose story can be understood only with the illustrations supplementing the written text. On the other hand, Ellis and Brewster (1991), report that illustrated stories are often an ideal way of introducing students to new vocabulary in the foreign language classroom because illustrated stories promote learners imaginations and positive attitudes.

Selecting stories according to children profile

Babbley (2000) suggests to take into account some aspects before selecting a story for children. Books should provide enjoyment being a positive experience to them. Additionally, Sulzby (1985) states that children usually request favorite books and they feel identified with some characters. At first, children will tend to figure out the story based on the pictures. Through the repeated exposure to the story, they will recognize that the words contain the story and will show interest in the writing text. According to Sulzby (1985) children do not attend directly to the written text until relatively late in the process, at first, their attention to the print reveals itself in a refusal to read once they realize that they do not recognize the words.

Illustrations

The pictorial code is a more direct means of communication than the verbal code. Segun (1988) considers that picture books have a series of pictures which tell a continuous story. Such children will look at the pictures and tell the story in their own words. This helps to develop their imagination, to raise their perception, and to develop their potential. Art can help a young child to discover his own identity and cultural heritage. Thus the transmission of a message is not the privilege of written language alone. When words are used in books for pre-school children and beginning readers, these children understand the language and the

message better when there are many pictures. Illustration accentuates the cognitive function.

According to Wright (2006) pictures have been used for centuries to help students understand various aspects of foreign languages. The pictures have motivated the students, made the subjects they are dealing with clearer, and illustrated the general idea of an object or action which are particular to a culture.

Transfer

Krashen (1960) consider that much of the influence of the native language can be very helpful, especially when the differences between two languages are relatively few, at least in some lexemes. The term interference implies no more than another term does, but there is an advantage in using transfer since it can be contrasted with positive transfer, which is the facilitating influence of true cognate vocabulary or any other similarities between the native language and target language. Transfer is not simply a falling back on the native language.

Krashen (1960) declares that” use of a first language rule is not real progress; it may be merely a production strategy that can not help acquisition. Krashen (1960) also claims that transfer may be a mere “production strategy” fail to recognize that cross-linguistic influences can be beneficial in listening or reading comprehension. According to Odin (1989) it is important to acknowledge that lexeme transfer can be and often is positive especially in the case of closely related language and especially during listening and reading comprehension. Sanchez and Garcia

(2005) report one can classify pair of words according to whether they are the same, similar o dissimilar in terms of both form and meaning. They also have found that these true cognates have powerful priming effects such that they activate the forms and meanings of the target words.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Type of the study

The project is based on qualitative research because we described the learners' perceptions and the impact of applying illustrated stories as strategy to teach vocabulary. Moreover, the instruments that we used to collect data such as, field notes, survey and dynamic assessment are all instruments used currently for qualitative research.

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), "Qualitative research" is multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials case study, personal experience, introspective, life story interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts-that describe routine and problematic moments and meaning in individuals'. Qualitative research for Cresswell (1998) is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting.

The literature provides some insight into the acceptance of an experimental prototype to perceive the singularity of the object of study. This ensures the transformation from the local to the global for explanation. Hamel (1993) characterized such singularity as a concentration of the global in the local. Yin (1989) stated that general applicability results from the set of methodological qualities of the case, and the rigor with which the case is constructed. He detailed the procedures that would satisfy the required methodological rigor. Case study can be seen to satisfy the three tenets of the qualitative method: describing, understanding, and explaining.

According to Yin (1989) the body of literature in case study research is "primitive and limited", in comparison to that of experimental or quasi-experimental research. The requirements and inflexibility of the latter forms of research make case studies the only viable alternative in some instances. It is a fact that case studies do not need to have a minimum number of cases, or to randomly "select" cases. The researcher is called upon to work with the situation that presents itself in each case.

Case studies can be single or multiple-case designs, where a multiple design must follow a replication rather than sampling logic. When no other cases are available for replication, the researcher is limited to single-case designs. Yin (1989) pointed out that generalization of results, from either single or multiple designs, is made to theory and not to populations. Multiple cases strengthen the results by replicating the pattern-matching, thus increasing confidence in the robustness of

the theory. Applications of case study methodology have been carried out in High-Risk Youth Programs by several researchers.

Our type of research is qualitative since we must interpret all of the opinions, ideas, behaviours and thoughts. It means all of the data which is recollected during the research in order to process and analyze it. We need a deeper understanding about social and human problem, which is related with educational content in elementary state school, based on a complex construction built by words and meaningful phrases, reporting detailed points of view of involved people and conducted in a natural setting.

As Yin (1989) concludes, a exploratory case study refers that anything is known about the matter at the beginning of the project. One has to begin with a vague impression about what should be study, and also it is not possible to make a detailed work plan in advance.

Context and participants

The participants for this Project were third graders at a state school in Dosquebradas, Risaralda. This school offers to the students one hour per week of English class. The sample in which we developed reading aloud through illustrated stories was made up by two females and three males, whose average age was eight years old. All of them participated in the five reading sessions we accomplished.

The institution, in which this research took place, belongs to a social zone of the 3 strata; this means, that the population attend this school in mixed. It is relevant to say that students who were part of the whole process, and were evaluated at the end of each session and at the end of the whole process.

The mission of the state school where we implemented our study is to prepare and educate children in order to construct their life project, which contributes to their academic and professional performance. In addition, this institution ratifies its leadership in the development of culture and knowledge.

There are rights in the PEI in which the religious believes, respect the rights of the others citizens, the democratic participation, and disciplinary and evaluative process were taking into account.

Role of the researchers

In order to collect the data, the researches are going to carry out the role as observers and as teachers. They are going to design and implement the lesson plans, whose content is going to involve five illustrated stories according to beginning level. These lessons are going to be performed by a pre-service teacher. At the beginning of the class, the teacher implements a pre-reading activity, showing to the children some flashcards with the images of the objects they are

going to find in the illustrated story they are going to read during each session, in order to familiarize them with the vocabulary. Then the teacher starts the reading aloud activity, to conclude, she implements a post-reading activity that consists in an informal conversation with the children, about the events and characters of the story. Meanwhile, the observers take notes of learners' behavior and response.

Instruments

Field notes and observations

In order to answer the research question, the instruments that we used to collect the data were three: field notes, surveys and dynamic assessment.

In the field notes we wrote the most important features that we observed during the sessions.

Field notes and observation are methods of collecting data simply by watching what people do. Field notes are the comments written to record what was observed. Observation is a special outing to watch people in various settings to note their behaviours.

The implementation occurs in five sessions one hour weekly. The observations are focused on students' response.

Survey

We used the survey as an instrument to measure the effectiveness of the strategy we were using to teach vocabulary, in this way we could know how many words they had learned in each session.

The act of examining a detailed investigation to determine and measure options, behaviours, or boundaries of particular group, which is usually done by asking to the children questions about the vocabulary presented during the session.

The implementation of surveys occurs at the end of each reading session. They consist of an exercise where the children should relate the words learned during the session with their respective image.

Dynamic assessment

Dynamic assessment refers to methods and approaches that are data-based, and allow for the collection of information about the learner's zone of proximal development through exploring the student's functioning while interacting with a more experienced collaborator. The purpose of assessment in this context is to develop and explore hypotheses about the nature of learning and methods for effectively facilitating the student's performance. Examples of assessment methods are offered to illustrate the process of dynamic assessment and how this can be applied in different educational situations even though research.

We chose this instrument because we considered that it was an appropriate way to measure the children's progress at the end of each session. It consists of an informal conversation between the teacher and the children, about the events and characters of the stories. Besides, we applied the dynamic assessment to find learners' perceptions during the instruction of story telling strategies. These perceptions were related with the way learners felt during the activity; if they liked or disliked the activity, and if they were motivated with the stories or not.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Data from the methods revealed the information coded in the following themes:

The role of prior knowledge and positive L1 transfer on the acquisition of new English vocabulary

Data from observations revealed that children supported the development of new vocabulary presented during the session with their prior knowledge. That is, they connected the new knowledge with the experiential knowledge. The next excerpt from observations illustrates the issue previously stated:

D.T.3 says, “profe a mi me gustó la historia porque el “sandwich” se veía grande y rico.

M.V.3 si profe, los spaghe-ttis también. ¡Ay sí!, mi abuelita los hace con atún.

D.T.3 Profe yo me acuerdo del “refrigerator” porque se parece al de la cafetería.

In the above example children relate the images of sandwich, refrigerator and spaghetti from the story book with what they have seen in their everyday life at home and at school as well. This phenomenon occurred not only in the “Scooby-doo” session, but also in the “Lion King” and “Batman” sessions. In these cases, we noticed that the children not only learn new vocabulary by knowing the meaning of words and the equivalent in their mother tongue, but also they contextualize them, relating words with real situations of their daily life and their social setting.

This is evident when D.T.3 relates the refrigerator he sees in the illustrated story with the refrigerator he sees in the school's cafeteria.

In the case of M.V 3 we found that she relates the spaghettis of the Scooby doo story with the food prepared by her grandmother. When she sees the word spaghettis, she says: "ay profe, mi abuelita los hace con atún y le quedan muy ricos" relating the word with what she sees in her familiar setting. In the situations above mentioned, we also notice that the children speak properly because they know the meaning of words because of the similarities in both languages; English and Spanish, so they know what are they talking about. In this extract it is remarkable that children use their mother tongue words to remember some foreign language words, when they are similar semantically and phonologically. That is, children used long-time borrowings from their mother tongue.

The example bellow is another evidence of the children's usage of positive transfer as strategy to internalize words and understand the story.

The teacher points out the image of the elephant and asks:

S.D.1," What is this?"

S.D.1. says, "Elefante," and then, he says the word in English "elephant".

In this example S.D.1 remembers the name of the animals in English because of its similarity in his mother tongue. The student used positive transfer in order to connect what he knew (the Spanish word "elefante") with the new concept "elephant"

When the teacher points out the giraffe, and the zebra, S.D.1. says in Spanish, "jirafa and "cebra". Then, he translates the word into English. He uses the same strategy that he used with the word "elephant."

Nevertheless, when the teacher points out the parrot and the monkey, we noticed that he does not answer, he can not remember the names of "parrot" and "monkey" in English because he can not relate these words with other similar in his mother tongue.

On the other hand, M.M.1 uses her prior knowledge to connect the word "parrot" with the bird she has at home. When the teacher points out the image of a parrot, M.M.1 says: "ay! profe yo en mi casa tengo un loro que se parece al parrot". In this case, we noticed that she feels excited when she sees the parrot in the image, because it remain her the pet she has at home. In this sense, it is evident that she uses a previous world's knowledge and experiences in order to interpret and understand the new words in the foreign language.

The Impact of illustration Vs. Written text

Our analysis of the observations to the five participants in our study revealed that during the first session the children did not show much interest on the written text, either to the events of the story. However, they focused their attention mainly on the illustrations and on the characters. The following is an excerpt from the dynamic assessment, which evidences the low interest in the plot of the story.

Teacher: Bueno ¿y por qué Simba les rugía a los otros animales?

Students says nothing, they look at each other.

E.M.1. says, "profe, yo solo me acuerdo de los animales."

Teacher: ¿Y por qué se acuerdan de los animales y no se acuerdan de la historia?

M.M.1. Pues porque usted nos mostró muchas veces los dibujitos y nos repitió los nombres.

In this example, students understood the meaning of words from the images, instead of the plot of the story. it could be because the illustrations and colors attract the children attention, because through the sequence of the images they can understand the story and get their own interpretation of the events.

The following is an excerpt of the final survey, where there is evidence that children remember only the sound of the words and not its spelling.

Teacher: ¿Cual fué la historia que menos te gustó?

S.D.4. Guinipu [winnie the pooh]

Teacher: ¿Por qué no te gustó?

S.D.4. por infantil

Teacher: ¿Qué palabras en inglés recuerdas de esa historia?

E.Z.4. New, bib(big) liro.(little)

In this example, the data reveals that the children had difficulties to remember the spelling of the words. All of the answers of the children in the final survey were similar to the S.D.4's answers. They answered odd words which are not well written. In addition, at the beginning of the exercise, we found, that when the teacher shows only the image and without the written form of the words, and pronounces them several times; the children repeat the words with the correct English pronunciation. However, we noticed that when the teacher shows to the students the written form of words in other flashcards or during the story telling the children start pronouncing different, as if they were reading in Spanish. Therefore, in this case, it was evident that the fact of showing to the learners the written form of the words, distorted the pronunciation previously practiced for the children. Notice it in the following excerpt from the observation:

New [nEu]

Up [up]

Down [doun]

In our opinion, we consider that during the early stages of the foreign language teaching, it is recommendable to introduce the written form of the words when the children have internalized the words phonologically. It means that teachers should introduce literacy when the children have developed some basic listening and speaking skills in the foreign language.

The importance of selecting stories according to children's age, and preferences

We noticed that the selection of the story made a difference in the children's response to the vocabulary instruction. The type of the stories we selected were crucial to motivate the children to learn English vocabulary. One story that provoked a positive response and engagement from the children was the Batman story. We noticed that all of the children identified Batman. During this session all of the children showed interest in the activity; besides, they followed the sequence of the story carefully. While the Batman story seems to have engaged the children in rich thinking and discussion. On the other hand, the Winnie the Pooh story seemed to have disappointed them. Several children suggested their lack of connection and interest in that story arguing that stories like Winnie the Pooh are "for younger children". It means that Winnie the Pooh is not involved in fantastic adventures or great exploits as superheroes are.

The following is an excerpt of the dynamic assessment:

Teacher: "¿Cuéntenme niños, les gustó la historia de hoy?"

Students say, "si profe"

D.A.2. A mi me gustó porque tiene policías que le ayudan a Batman a coger a los malos cuando se roban la plata de la gente.

M.M.2. A mi me gustó la ciudad porque tiene edificios muy bonitos y muchas luces como si estuviéramos en Diciembre.

E.Z.2. Óigala! Si esas son las luces que alumbran la ciudad por la noche.

S.D.2. A mi me gustó porque Batman le ayudó a la gente a la que le habían robado y después metió los ladrones a la cárcel.

E.Z.2. "Profe" a mi me gustaría ser policía para atrapar los ladrones y llevarlos a la cárcel en ese carro tan bacano"

In the example above, it is evident that children comprehended some events and its sequences. They understood the plot of the story. Besides, the children knew the features of the main character, and the role he plays in the story. Moreover, they identified the “good” and “bad” characters of the story. It was evident when D.A.2. says, “A mi me gustó porque tiene policías que ayudan a Batman a coger a los malos”. In addition to that, it was evidence that children had different interpretation of the lights from the image seen in the Batman story when M.M.2 says, “A mi me gustó la ciudad porque tiene muchas luces como si estuviéramos en diciembre” ,and E.Z.2 says, “Óigala! Si esas son las luces que alumbran la ciudad por la noche”. At this point, it is relevant to mention that children have different psychological perception of pictorial forms. At this psychological level the interaction is seen to be a personal one. The running shows that one child sees is different from that of another.

The impact of images in vocabulary learning

Data from the observations and survey revealed that the children made connections between the image and the spoken word. In this sense, instructional material designed specially for children such as flashcards, posters, and illustrated stories made possible that the children made connections between the concept and the word that represents it.

The following is an excerpt from dynamic assessment:

When the teacher asks to the children if they liked the story. They answer:

E.Z.1. “Si profe, Me pareció muy bonita porque los animales tenían muchos colores y parecían de verdad, como los que uno ve en el zoológico”

Profesora. ¿Cuál fué el animal que más les gustó?

D.T.1. Me gustó el parrot, porque es el que tiene más colores.

Profesora: ¿Y por qué se acuerdan de los animales y no se acuerdan de la historia?

M.M.1. Pues porque usted nos mostró muchas veces los dibujitos y nos repitió los nombres.

In the above example, the child recognizes the images of animals and relates them with the animals he has seen in the zoo, but not all of them understand the plot of the story, it was evident when the teacher asked them, “Niños, ¿Por qué Simba les rugía a los otros animales?” children look at each other and nobody answer the question. It could be because the images only represented the figures of the animals as themselves, and not a sequence of events. Moreover, we noticed during the data analysis that the images from “the Lion King” story were not eloquent enough. Although the story was plenty of colorful images, these were not eloquent enough, in the sense that they did not reflect emotions, feelings or actions. For this reason, it was not easy for the children to follow the sequence of facts. Therefore, they had difficulties to understand the plot of the story. However, we can not deny that during the session the teacher emphasized on the vocabulary learning. She presented flashcards with the name of the animals; additionally she elicits from the children the words presented. After that, she read aloud the story emphasizing on the pronunciation of the words previously presented, and pointing out the images from the book.

In the following example from the Dynamic assessment, it is evident that images guided the students to understand the plot of the story.

Teacher. ¿Por qué les gustó esta historia?

S.D.2:” Porque era de Batman y de policías.

Teacher. ¿Y por qué les gusta tanto Batman?

E.Z.2: Porque es un superhéroe.

M.M.2: Porque cuida la ciudad de los malos.

Teacher. ¿Quiénes son los malos?

M.M.2: El joker.

Teacher. Ok, ¿Y que hizo él?

V.D.2: El robó plata.

Teacher.¿Y luego ¿Qué pasó?

S.D.2: ¿Batman lo agarró y lo llevó a la cárcel?

Teacher. ¿Están seguros?

M.M.2: No, Batman lo entregó a la policía y luego lo llevó en el police car a la cárcel.

This example reveals that children understood the story because its images were very explicit; the images describe characters intentions, actions, facts and consequences. Each picture book has its own style of art and language that reflects the culture and social values from which the story emerged. A discussion of these aspects can help the students to create their own versions of this kind of stories. Besides students start thinking about the story and they want to show what they know about it. Notice that in the example cited above, all the children wanted to participate and answer the questions formulated by the teacher.

DISCUSSION

The following two research questions guided the data collection and analysis for our study:

1. What does the application of illustrated stories tell us about vocabulary range of third graders?
2. What type of stories do third graders prefer?

Based on the first finding about prior knowledge and positive transfer the children support themselves in their prior knowledge to develop the new vocabulary taught during the reading sessions by using illustrated stories. We found that mother tongue can never be excluded in the foreign language process. We observed that the children connected the new English words with their social and familiar context; in other words, received knowledge is associated with the experiential knowledge acquired in their everyday life (Piaget, 1976). Opposite to that, Teaching foreign languages for most teachers have become a process of eradicating native language from the learners' mind in foreign language classrooms to avoid interference. However, no theory of foreign language acquisition that ignores the learner's prior linguistic knowledge can be considered complete (Ellis, 1993).

It was evident that learners needed to fall back on their mother tongue to internalise, and to remember words in the foreign language. Students used their

mother tongue in different ways; they take advantage of the similarities between some words of their mother tongue and the foreign language, not only semantically, but also phonologically (Sanchez and Garcia, 2005).

There are several important similarities between the mother tongue and the foreign language in some linguistic aspects. The most notorious similarities are form (written word and word's sound), and function (socio-cultural usage); these aspects can facilitate the foreign language teaching and learning, (Odin, 1989). In the case of the child who used the Spanish word "elefante"; he activates the form and meaning of the word "elephant" in the target language. On the other hand, Krashen (1960) declares that the use of this sort of true cognates is not a real progress; it is just a productive strategy.

It was evident that some of the children were inattentive most of the time to the written text, and to the plot of the story. They focused their attention mainly on the illustrations and teacher's body language because they do not have previous English knowledge. As Royer and Cable (1976) states that Illustrations are generally placed in text books to explain the text and to provide information beyond the printed words. Moreover, illustrations enable readers to organize an assimilative context for more efficiently understanding of written language.

Besides, Images are such eloquent and significant that a picture book can be understood only with the illustrations supplementing the written text (Brown and Tomlinson, 1993). Kow (2006), in the development of her study in an elementary

state school in Malaysia, with children between 6 and 8 years old, found that there is a tension between what an adult conceives to be children's literature and what the child conceives literature to be. Adults select stories thinking about its functionality for teaching. While children look for fun from reading a book. Based on these statements, one can conclude that teachers can select or design illustrated stories taking into account not only the book's functionality, but also children preferences. Therefore vocabulary like adjectives, nouns, actions, hyponyms, and opposites can be taught in a funny way. Furthermore, illustrated stories promote in learners imaginations and positive attitude (Ellis and Brewster, 1991). At this point, we found that during the reading session the children added extra meaning from their experiences to the stories, connecting and contextualizing them to their real experiences; thus the children felt comfortable giving their contributions to the activities.

In our opinion, as Babbley (2000) discusses; the kind of stories is crucial because they can motivate children in the sense that the learner's interest is related with the kind of stories teacher are using to teach English vocabulary. For example; Superhero stories like Batman inspire admiration and sympathy for the protagonist, and there is a feeling of satisfaction when virtue is finally rewarded. During this session all of the children showed interest in the activity; besides, they followed the sequence of the story carefully. It is evident that children comprehend some events, and its sequences taking advantage of the actions suggested by the drawings. Moreover, as Sulzby (1985) points out: by recognizing the features of

the main characters, and the role they play in the story; they gather the words, pictures, and events as a unit.

Our findings reveal that although the stories were read in English, which is not the children's mother tongue, the children could understand the main events and the plot of the stories, because of the eloquence of the images. Illustrations are commonly placed in texts to provide information beyond the print (Royer and Cable, 1976). At this point, it is evident the importance of the usage of material, designed specially for children such as flashcards, posters, and illustrated stories. Images are important tools for children because illustrations reflect emotions, intentions, and contexts that help students to identify specific situations in the story. Besides, they promote learner's imagination and positive attitudes (Ellis and Brewster, 1991)

In short, reading aloud illustrated stories to third graders develops their imagination, raises their perception, and develops their linguistic competences. Reading aloud is the shorter way to encourage children to read not only in the mother tongue, but also in the target language.

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The inclusion of everything about instructional implications deriving from this study is that the importance of incorporating reading aloud activities into the curriculum design because they develop in learners capacities to understand reading texts. In the case of third graders, illustrated stories are appropriate tools for teachers because with these stories they can design different effective activities for children, and in this way they can develop reading habits in learners. Illustrated stories are also a tool for learners because images represent and reflect actions, emotions, and places. Illustrations can replace some written words to facilitate children's comprehension because images are more direct means of communication than the verbal code.

On the other hand, the interaction between teacher and students during reading aloud activity, provide detailed descriptions of the story's characters and events. In the same way, post-reading dialogue between teacher and learners; and between learners each other, contribute to internalize the new vocabulary. Furthermore, it gives children opportunities to become active participants in reading experience by asking questions and giving opinions.

From our experience, we notice that there are some weaknesses in Colombian state institutions that interfere in the English learning process. First of all, teachers need training in English language and in methodologies to teach a foreign

language. On the other hand, the large amount of students in classrooms makes difficult the teacher performance.

RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

Reading aloud by using illustrated stories calls for research efforts in several areas. In the area of reading aloud comprehension, this study showed that there are supplementary activities before, and after the reading activity itself that help learners to recognize, contextualize, and remember the new English words. However, research needs to identify the appropriate time and frequency of those supplementary activities to guarantee the effectiveness in their application. This study also showed that the fact of selecting meaningful illustrated stories for learners determine the level of interest during the reading sessions, and thus the satisfactory outcomes. In this sense, it is important that research extend on this aspect taking into consideration that in Colombian context classes are too large, resources are not enough, and teachers are not trained enough in English language.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on this study we found that children used strategies to remember the new English words, such as supporting themselves in their prior knowledge, and transfer through true cognates. Furthermore, learners took advantages of the eloquence of the illustrations. Learners understood from the illustrations characters' actions, intentions, feelings, and context to follow the sequences of events of the stories.

We realized that in spite of the fact that they are beginners in English language, and they did not have English instruction in previous grades, they could learn most of the vocabulary taught by using illustrated stories, it means, it was not necessary to translate into Spanish to facilitate stories' comprehension because images support the mean events of the stories.

On the other hand, we can conclude that selecting stories according to children's profile and preferences is fundamental to increase their interest because when children listen to something interesting to them, the reading activities are more effective. The more children's participation, the more English vocabulary learning. Besides, another important aspect is that through illustrated stories teachers can transmit moral and social values to children because from these stories children can see that the virtue is highlighted, and the wickedness is penalized.

Finally, it is necessary that teachers develop reading skills in children's mother tongue, to facilitate the learning process in a foreign language. In this sense, illustrated stories contribute to develop children's linguistic competences.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1: Illustrated stories used to implement this study

The Lion King

The day begins. Simba and Nala start to roar. Simba roars the tall giraffes. Nala roars the busy monkeys. Simba roars the big elephants. They just trumpet back. Nala roars the young zebras. They just keep eating. Then Simba and Nala see Zazu. Zazu is napping high in a tree. Simba roars at Zazu. Zazu just keeps napping. Nala roars at Zazu. Zazu just keeps dreaming. Simba roars again at Zazu. Zazu just keep snoring. At last Simba and Nala both roar at Zazu. Good-bye, nap. Good-bye, dreams. Good-bye snores. “Go roar somewhere else!” shouts Zazu.

Batman

Batman is a superhero. He drives around the city at night in the Bat mobile. When he sees trouble, he springs into action!

The joker is using his laughing gas to make people laugh. Then they won't notice that he's taking all their money.'

Batman surprises the joker and his helper. The joker dares Batman to catch him.

Batman strikes quickly. He ties up the joker and his helper. So they can't get away.

Batman leaves the joke with the police and drives off into the night looking for other bad guys.

Scooby-Doo

One day Scooby-Doo and Shaggy hear a spooky noise.

Scooby and Shaggy open the closet door. "There's nothing in here but hat and coats," say Shaggy. They hear the noise again. They look in the basement. "I don't see anything down there," says Shaggy. "Like, there it is again" shouts Shaggy. Scooby and Shaggy open the refrigerator, and the noise gets louder there. "That's your tummy growling, Scooby" Shouts Shaggy. Then he eats a double- Decker spaghetti sandwich a few Scooby Snacks.

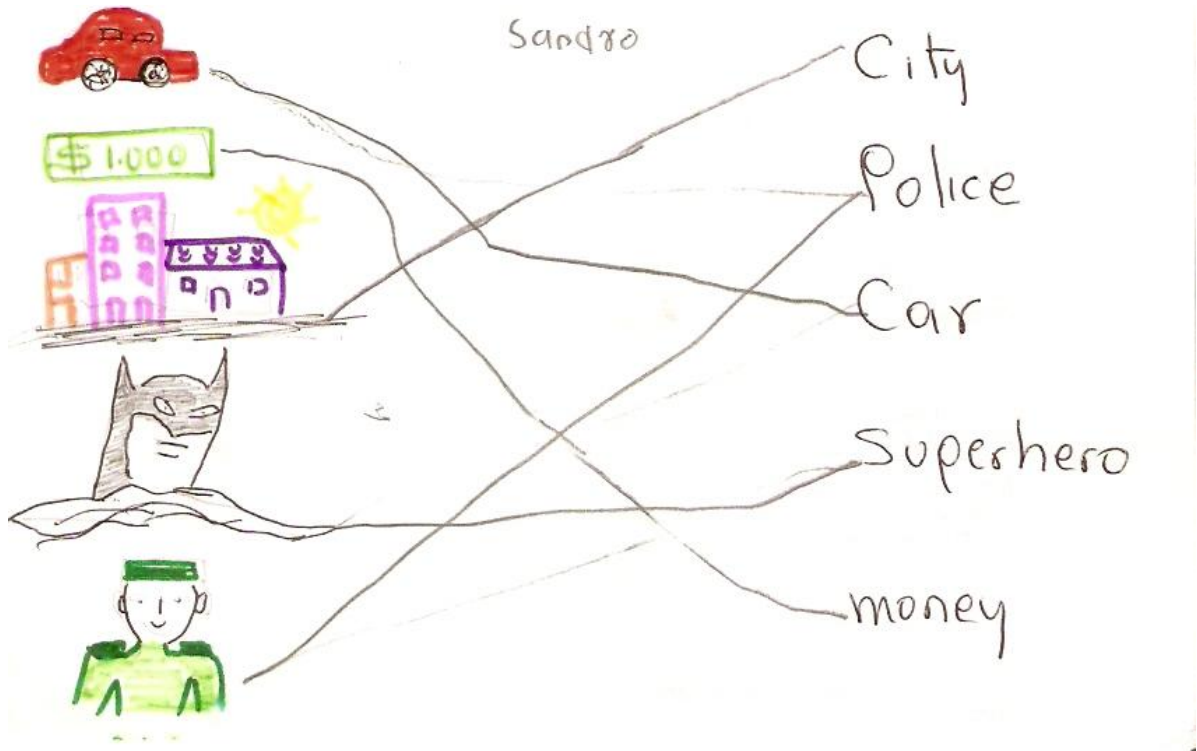
Winnie-the-Pooh

Winnie-the-Pooh is hunting for Pooh's empty honey jars. Pooh looks over a fence, and then under the bush. I found an old jar and a new jar he thought. Pooh crawls in one end of a hollow log. He crawls out the other end. Soon it starts to rain. Pooh hurry home. First he goes up the hill. Then he goes down the hill. Pooh pulls the wagon. Pooh is glad to be home. Outside it is wet. Inside it is dry. Pooh unlocks his honey cupboard. One jar is empty. One jar is full. "I can have a honey and butter sandwiches for lunch," says Pooh. And he does.

Bob's Busy Saw

Today is a busy day for Bob. What will he need to do her job? His saw! Zip, zip, zip-Bob trims a tree. He cuts through branches easily. If you need wood, Bob can do it" zip, zip, zip- he saws right through it. Bob cuts wood to build a fence, a picnic table, and a bench. All of Bob's jobs are finally done. Now it's time to have some fun! Nice job Bob!

Annex 2: Survey's formats



Interview

1 ¿Cuál historia te gustó más? *El león*

2 ¿Por qué te gustó? *Por que qbrion muchos animales*

3 ¿Qué palabras recuerdas de esa historia en inglés? *Parot layon cibramanque*

4 ¿Cuál fue la historia que menos te gustó? *El unicornio*

5 ¿Por qué no te gustó? *Por lo infantil*

6 ¿Qué palabras recuerdas de esa historia en inglés?

*new
pig
old*

Esteban Zapata E.



