



Universidad de Valladolid



**TRABAJO FIN DE GRADO**

# **LOS CUENTOS COMO RECURSO EN LA ENSEÑANZA DE LA LENGUA INGLESA EN EDUCACIÓN PRIMARIA**

**(Una semana con Beatrix Potter)**

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## **TITLE:**

“LOS CUENTOS COMO RECURSO DIDÁCTICO EN LA  
ENSEÑANZA DE LA LENGUA INGLESA EN EDUCACIÓN  
PRIMARIA”

“THE TALES AS A DIDACTIC RESOURCE IN THE  
PROCESS OF TEACHING ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN  
PRIMARY EDUCATION”

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## **RESUMEN**

La utilización del cuento en el aula de Educación Primaria es un recurso didáctico primordial para la enseñanza y el aprendizaje de la lengua inglesa.

Sus ventajas son muchas: motivación, desarrollo de la imaginación del niño, estimulan su curiosidad, favorecen la comprensión de la lengua, afianzan el vocabulario y las estructuras gramaticales, favorecen el conocimiento de otras culturas, potencian el disfrute y el placer por la lectura.

El trabajo incluye en la primera parte una breve exposición sobre las consideraciones metodológicas en la enseñanza de la lengua inglesa en E.P., un apartado sobre a inclusión del cuento como recurso didáctico en el Currículum y un extenso epígrafe sobre la importancia del cuento en el aprendizaje de la lengua inglesa.

En la segunda parte se expone la metodología empleada y en la última parte se presenta un proyecto interdisciplinar sobre la utilización de los cuentos de Beatrix Potter en la enseñanza de la lengua inglesa en 3º de E.P.

**Palabras Clave:** Cuento, Historias, Recursos Didácticos, Lengua Inglesa, Educación Primaria, Aprendizaje, Proyecto Interdisciplinar.

## **ABSTRACT**

The use of the tales in Primary Education is a primordial didactic resource for the process of teaching-learning of the English language.

There are many advantages when telling tales to pupils: they motivate them, develop their curiosity, make their understanding of English easier, reinforce the vocabulary and the grammatical structures, benefit the knowledge of other cultures and potentiate their enjoyment and the pleasure of reading.

In the first part the project includes a brief exposition about some methodological considerations in the teaching of English language in Primary Education, one section about the inclusion of tales as didactic resources in the Curriculum and an extensive epigraph about the importance of tales in the learning of English language.

In the second part we find the methodology used and in the last part we find an interdisciplinary project about the use of the tales of Beatrix Potter in the teaching of English language in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of Primary Education.

**Key Words:** Tale, Stories, Didactic Resources, English Language, Primary Education, Learning, Interdisciplinary Project.

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# **I. INTRODUCTION**

One of the most important legacies that the humans have transferred to coming generations is the literary creation and one of its most important manifestations is the creation of tales.

The tales are part of the folklore and also of children's lives since they are only babies. Parents get their kids off to sleep by telling them tales. Tales are a very important part of children's lives so they are essential and necessary.

The importance of tales is something that nobody questions in the childhood. Children love tales and listen to them once and again even when they don't know how to read yet; they like listening to them always told in the same way, without variations, even learning their sentences by heart.

There is no need of looking for a concrete purpose when reading a tale; the simple fact of reading and enjoying while doing is already enough justification. Moreover, apart from the pleasure of reading, tales help children to learn to read and write and also to communicate in the mother tongue by using grammar and vocabulary appropriately.

So if traditional tales are so important in children's lives as well as in their learning of the mother tongue, why don't we use them in the process of teaching English Language? Furthermore, why don't we use tales of the folklore or of the Anglophone tradition to learn English?

The main aim of this final project is to answer these questions by using a line of research which joins both the tradition (traditional tales) and the pedagogical innovation (its innovative use in the process of teaching English Language).

# **II. JUSTIFICATION OF THE PROJECT**

From an educational point of view, the increasing relevance of the knowledge of the English language in our society, and the certainty that our students will need to use this language in their social and professional future, have led to a significant progress in teaching methodologies as well as in the economic and personal means that have been substantially increased in Primary Education for the last years.

From a grammatical approach, focused on grammar and vocabulary learning, English language learning has evolved into a teaching approach which seeks for communication and understanding of the English language. In order to attain this, students' motivation and interest must be achieved. Teachers have to –must– select topics, materials and resources depending on

the students' communicative needs and level. As it will be explained in this essay, the selection of stories plays a significant role as a remarkable didactic resource.

We will try to show that stories are not just a complement, but a valuable channel to facilitate and boost students' involvement in the learning of a foreign language.

The pages of a tale offer a wide range of possibilities both for the teacher and for the learner. They motivate students and make them develop a taste for understanding and speaking the language.

Many pedagogues have emphasized that “the best moment for learning is when the student is in a hardly stressful situation. What's better than the relaxed atmosphere created by a story to achieve this aim?” (Hearn, 2005, p. 130).

The present essay is structured as follows: the first section shows the theoretical contribution of pedagogues and education specialists on the tale as a didactic resource, as well as its inclusion in the Curriculum for Primary Education; the second section deals with the methodology used in the development of the present essay, and finally, a didactic unit has been designed by myself: an ambitious multidisciplinary project for the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of Primary Education (P.E.) based on the stories by the British writer Beatrix Potter.

### **III. OBJECTIVES**

- To analyze the reference frame of the process of teaching and learning English Language in Primary Education.
- To research which the **theoretical frame** is, that is the main contributions of specialists and authors in Pedagogy regarding the inclusion of tales when teaching English in the schools.
- To do research into the use of this resource to include it in the Curriculum of Primary Education.
- To demonstrate through the observation in the classroom if the tales are a valid didactic resource to teach English language.

- To elaborate an interdisciplinary project by using the tales of Beatrix Potter for the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of Primary Education and research the real possibility of developing it in the classroom.
- To do research into the advantages of increasing the use of the tales in other subjects taught in English: Science, Drawing and Painting and Physical Education.

## **IV. THEORETICAL AND LEGAL FRAME**

### **IV.1. METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS ON TEACHING AND LEARNING ENGLISH IN PRIMARY EDUCATION**

It is beyond doubt that children learn much faster than adults and that they absorb any kind of information quickly, especially oral information since it is the most natural and effective means of communication. Therefore, teachers have in their hands the opportunity to coordinate all the tools and resources needed in order to teach the language in a constructive and meaningful way in a period when children learn easily.

There are multiple and varied benefits of early language learning. Cummings (1994) or Genesse (1994) highlight:

- To raise learners' self-confidence when they are aware of their own learning process and apply it to other fields.
- To develop linguistic and metalinguistic competence.
- To reinforce skills to learn languages and the oral communicative ability increasing the range of topics to talk about.
- To encourage creativity.
- To enhance cognitive development of children and their learning skills.

#### **IV.1.1. Which methodology should be followed?**

When teaching a language we must teach how to communicate, leaving apart the study of grammar as the core of the learning process. Students are able to learn the past ending before being able to use the tense and even use it in a conversation before the tense itself has been explained (Pérez Cabello, 2009).



The knowledge of a language requires a long learning process. Although the language must be learnt and used in different situations, the time in Primary Education is limited. That is why the learning of a foreign language should start as soon as possible and an adequate methodology must be employed; a productive methodology which increases children's communicative ability in a foreign language.

The teacher must create a context similar to that of a linguistic immersion, that is, make the English classroom a space for children to use the language while they are learning it; it is necessary to joint comprehension and production from the very beginning (Pérez; Roig, 2004).

It has been proved that a traditional methodology based on the learning of rules and formulae as well as on the imitation and repetition of patters, is not efficient. Instead of this methodology, form has been replaced by sense in current methodologies, a less repetitive way of teaching which has placed students at the centre of the teaching-learning process.

The main purpose will be helping children communicate in English from early stages, learn things using English, interact with their classmates, and use different strategies according to the different features of the students. The teacher will try to make the English learning process a rewarding, easy and useful task for the children.

Therefore, we need:

- The most productive methodology possible –as we have already mentioned– in view of the very short time available in an English lesson.
- A longer time exposure, which means the elaboration of an interdisciplinary project where English language is to be used in other areas of the curriculum.

Learning a language allows the speaker to communicate with others, understand what they are conveying and foster contact with other realities. From this perspective, the language is therefore not understood as an abstract system, but as a means for learning in different social contexts and with different purposes.

“Its learning not only helps develop the children's cognitive abilities, but it also develops other capacities such as the emotional and that of forging social links and integration” (Pérez & Roig, 2004, p. 21). Respect for other cultures and the appreciation of their differences is also achieved through the learning of English.

### **IV.1.2. Main conditions in the English learning process**

- **English is not the language used by students**, even though it is present in every social sphere. That is why the learners' initial competence in this language is limited or virtually zero. Therefore, the teacher must not only improve it (as happens in their mother tongue), but create it.
- **The time** devoted to the teaching of English in Primary Education is extremely limited. Foreign languages are only taught from 3 to 5 hours a week, depending on whether the school is a bilingual or linguistic one or not. Within this short time, students must achieve the ambitious objective of being able to communicate in English within the classroom and in other communicative situations. Therefore, an effective, productive didactic proposal with the appropriate resources to facilitate students' learning must be developed (Pérez & Roig, 2004).

This didactic proposal must create communicative contexts where English is needed in order to communicate. Learning is achieved by communicating, the language is learnt when it is used and that is why teachers must create symbolic situations for children to speak in English. An ordinary life in the school is not enough.

### **IV.1.3. Needs/Requirements for teaching**

- Trained teachers who are aware of what they are asked for and of the aforementioned limitations.
  - Educational team cohesion and coordination.
  - A curricular frame developed not only by the teacher but by the management team, too; the whole school engagement is basic as well as the extension of the use of the English language to the families and society in general.
  - Motivation. Both boys and girls learn better while playing. Motivation is provided through games; that is why funny activities are so important and stories reading –as we will see later on— encourage motivation.
- 
- Comprehensive input and output are linked to language teaching. Within the classroom, the teacher should be sure that learners understand what they are listening to and speak in English from the very first day even if they do it at a basic level.

## **IV.2. LEGAL FRAME: STORIES AS A DIDACTIC RESOURCE IN THE CURRICULUM OF PRIMARY EDUCATION**

The Government Decree 40/2007 of 3<sup>rd</sup> May describing the curriculum for Primary Education for the Community of Castile and Leon. After analyzing the legal document in depth, we realize that the use of stories in Primary Education contributes to the achievement of the objectives set in the decree, as well as to the acquisition of basic competences.

We are going to analyze the objectives set by the Decree and how stories can help us reach it:

Section 4 of the Decree states the main objectives for Primary Education. Among them, *acquiring the basic communicative competence, at least, in a foreign language which will allow students to produce and understand simple messages and deal with everyday situations at a basic level*. Following these guidelines, stories do favour expression and comprehension of the English language, as we have seen in the previous analysis and will analyze in depth along this essay.

On the other hand, the introduction of the section devoted to *foreign language* is a declaration of intent on what this area covers. We have selected some statements related to the use of stories in the classroom.

- 1) *We must prepare students to live in an international, multicultural and multilingual world. It is necessary the settling of a European culture by means of the comprehension of customs and different ways of living.* There is no doubt about how reading literature from other countries brings cultures closer.
- 2) *The learning of a foreign language must contribute to the development of positive and receptive attitudes towards other languages and cultures.* Stories foster tolerance and respect to other cultures.
- 3) *A conscious use of knowledge, abilities and experiences in the languages known by the children is outstanding in Primary Education in order to understand and produce meaningful output based on speeches and texts (stories) with a clearly identifiable structure.*
- 4) *The lack of the use of foreign languages in their environment turns the school into the place to practice and learn the language.* For this reason, teachers must create a bilingual environment within the classroom being the reading of stories in English one of the most remarkable tools to fulfill this objective.

- 5) *The proceedings to achieve an effective oral and written communicative competence constitute the core of the Foreign Languages area. As we will see later on, stories favor written and oral learning.*
- 6) *The aim of the area will be the learning of discursive skills that might be used in various areas: being the literary among them. Stories and tales hold a privileged position in that field.*

The area contents are grouped in the following sections: oral language, written language, linguistic devices of the language and the socio-cultural dimension of the foreign language. Let's see how stories can be used in the classroom to foster the learning of the foreign language in each of the section:

- Section 1: *Listening, speaking and conversing* are the most remarkable aspects for this stage. Several speakers must serve as linguistic models so learners will be aware of differences and nuances that an environmental linguistic model provides. Storytelling by the teacher will let students to listen and practice pronunciation.
- Section 2: *Reading and writing*, the use of written language will depend on the learners' reading and writing skills: reading strategies, planning and producing written texts. In order to facilitate the development of a plurilingual competence, the curriculum includes some strategies and resources to practice reading and writing skills through several text types. Stories are one of these resources.
- Stories can also contribute to section 3: *Language knowledge*, which includes both linguistic contents, contents for reflection on learning and learning strategies to foster students' self-confidence on their abilities.
- Stories have much to say in the subject of section 4: *Sociocultural aspects and intercultural awareness*. Stories help learners learn about customs, features and peculiarities of English-speaking countries and appreciate the differences with their own culture which will facilitate intercultural communication.

Stories as a learning resource contribute to the development of basic competences, too:

- Directly to the *competence in linguistic communication*.
- To the *competence on knowing how to learn* as it improves communicative abilities since children realize they are learning better and that the strategy of using stories makes the learning process easier.
- When reading and understanding a story, the learner is aware of the relevance of the fact of being able to communicate in a different language so it contributes to the *personal initiative and autonomy* competence.

- It contributes to the development of the *digital competence* through the use of computers and whiteboards as complements to the storytelling.
- It also helps the acquisition of *social and civic competence* since it promotes the interest on and tolerance to different cultures.
- The use of narrative texts, such as stories, will bring oral and written culture closer, so the area also helps in the acquisition of the *cultural and artistic competence* through the use, appreciation and enjoyment of these texts.

We are going to mention some of the concrete objectives for the foreign language area as part of the Curriculum for this stage and we are going to see how the use of stories in the classroom contributes to their achievement:

- 1) *To listen and to understand messages* (stories foster aural comprehension);
- 2) *To recognize and use basic communicative strategies and*
- 3) *To express and interact orally in everyday communicative situations* (stories are used to improve speaking skills);
- 4) *To plan, organize and write texts* (stories are used to learn writing);
- 5) *To read and understand texts withdrawing general and specific information in order to develop learner's autonomy and a taste for reading* (reading stories just for the pleasure of reading);
- 6) *To value the foreign language and other languages in general as a means of communication and understanding between people from different places and cultures and as a tool to learn other contents* (stories as culture transmitter);
- 7) *To show a receptive and confident attitude towards the learning process and the use of the foreign language* (children learn easier when using stories in the classroom);
- 8) *To identify phonetics, rhythm, stress and intonation as well as linguistic structures* (stories are used to learn grammar).

### **IV.3. THE RELEVANCE OF STORIES IN THE TRAINING PROCESS AND IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING**

Stories have always been a vehicle to train cognitive, emotional and affective abilities. The pages of the tales offer never-ending possibilities for both the teacher and the student, while raising students' motivation and taste for the new language.

Stories are the most spontaneous and natural means of communication. Every teacher has used this resource when teaching a language. 'Once upon a time' are some kind of magic words that

immediately catch children attention. Oral tales are essential for learning English: kids listen to it carefully, understand what they are listening to, and acquire vocabulary and expressions repeated once and again in tales.

Tales are an independent cultural bridge towards the language used which lead us to a magic world where every dream becomes true --even that of teachers who dream on their students communicating in English (Pérez, 2009).

Therefore, there are plenty of reasons for using stories in the classroom. Let's make a briefly mention of some of them.

#### **IV.3.1.Reasons to use tales in the classroom:**

- 1) Tales motivate students and make them develop positive attitudes towards the English language and other cultures. New stories raise the children desire for learning and knowing.
- 2) Tales develop children imagination and creativity.
- 3) A fine selection of tales may help solve behaviour problems within the group or among individuals.
- 4) Stories nurture curiosity: if the teacher uses pre-reading activities, children's attention will be caught; they can use the linguistic formulae that usually appears in tales (*about this time, then, first, but, and, then, after, one morning, when...returned, now, my dears, said, once upon a time they were*) to teach the language. Another remarkable formula is that of repeating linguistic structures for the kid to consolidate them. When listening to these structures in the linguistic context of the tale, the children will consolidate them.
- 5) Verbal elements and images work together in stories to make comprehension easier. Children will enjoy illustrations.
- 6) Tales are playing activities and therefore, they give cause for many games and activities to learn English. For instance, when reading Little Red Riding Hood, the teacher can use the expression '*What....you have!*' Another activity is building words with *nut* and asking the children '*What did Little Red Riding Hood have in her basket?*' Some helpful images can also be used: *walnut, chestnut, hazelnut*.
- 7) Vocabulary games can also be played: *Goldilocks and the three bears* to work the parts of the house; beauty and personal hygiene with *The Beauty and the Beast* or *The Sleeping Beauty* (Pérez Cabello, 2009).

- 8) A country culture is transmitted through its stories; this is a very important thing since knowing other cultures from childhood favors tolerance within the classroom and towards other cultures.
- 9) The right tales can be used to work interdisciplinary contents: moral and civic education, education for peace, environmental education, equality, etc.

Other authors highlight different reasons to work with tales in the English language classroom (López, G., 1996):

a) Psycho-affective: Tales are a source for fun and pleasure for children. We all have heard a child asking for listening to the same story again, and realize how interested he/she was in the story. If we get to raise children motivation towards the story in English, we will be fostering a positive attitude towards the foreign language and towards that language learning.

Tales train imagination and help develop creativity.

b) Discursive-linguistic: The repetition of direct, concrete and simple grammatical structures within a fixed context make understanding easier and acquisition possible. It is the same with the vocabulary of the tale whose reiteration makes it get fixed on their minds. We will focus on this matter later on.

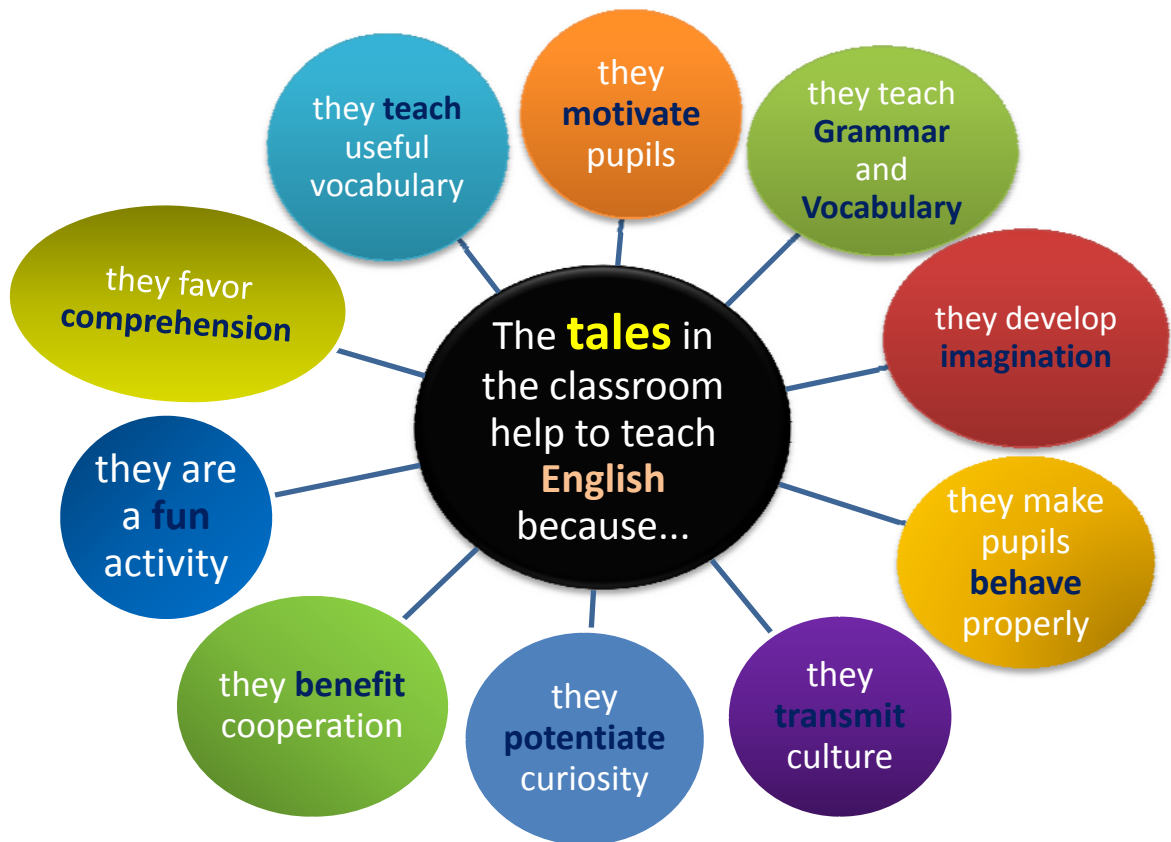
c) Psycho-cognitive: Stories develop the ability to concentrate. They also reinforce the conceptual development of the children when practicing size, form, time, etc.

d) Socio-cultural. Stories bring the language socio-cultural knowledge of the story closer to the children.

We can also add some other reasons stated by Brewster (2008, p. 187):

- Children can feel personally involved in a story as they identify with the characters and try to interpret the narrative and illustrations. This helps develop their own creative power.
- Fantasy and imagination are linked to the child's real world, they provide a way of enabling children to make sense of their everyday life and forge links between home and school.
- Listening to stories in class is a social experience. Storytelling provokes a shared response of laughter, sadness, excitement and anticipation which is enjoyable and can help build up confidence and encourage social and emotional development.

- Storybooks cater for different learning styles and develop different “intelligences” that contribute to language learning, including emotional intelligence.



*Graphic 1: Benefits of the tales in the process of teaching English language*

#### **IV.3.2. Which tales should be chosen in Primary Education? Choosing a tale**

First of all, stories must belong to the Anglo-Saxon culture. This is basic for a linguistic immersion to be achieved in the classroom. Children feel the need of learning about the culture whose language is being studied.

These are the five premises to choose a story (Hearn & Garcés, 2005):

- 1- It should respect every child culture and believes;
- 2- It must be suitable for their age and interests, and language must be appropriate to their knowledge. They should be able to understand it even if their English level is limited.
- 3- It must show a situation and a development so as to satisfy children’s curiosity. It will be more interesting if there are surprising or comic elements.
- 4- Children must never feel frustrated due to an unfinished plot.



- 5- Children must be able to repeat key structures. For example, when reading *The Three Little Pigs*, the wolf says “*I’ll huff and I’ll puff and I’ll blow the house down*” several times. This grammatical structure is fixed on their minds easily and with no effort.

Illán expresses the same opinion when he states that before choosing a story, the following aspects have to be taken into consideration:

- 1) Whether the book is original or adapted and simplified for children.
- 2) The book’s relation to the curriculum (school, family, Christmas, etc.); the content must be relevant, interesting and meaningful.
- 3) Whether the book provides attractive visual support to help students understand content.
- 4) Preferably books using repetitive structures requiring repetition. Through this, students develop memory skills and build oral confidence.
- 5) The length of the story and organization of ideas.
- 6) Its relation to the target language and culture (Illán, 2007).

Stories can be analyzed according to:

- A) Content: every day actions (such as *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, *Don’t Forget the Bacon o Having a Picnic*); stories about animals; traditional stories (*The Little Engine that Could*); fairy tales; about folklore (*Irish Folktales*) or fantasy; interdisciplinary, behavioural, personal growth, etc. (*The Little Engine that Could*).
- B) Design: with a small text, or even no text, or just a selection of pages, or showing three-dimensional images...
- C) Narrative features: they can be selected according to their rhyme or repetitive structures, to an outstanding sense of humor, to work phonetic resources, etc.

It is extremely important that the teacher know the texts in depth so as to make the most of this didactic resource. Some learning cards might be used for the stories selection (*see Appendix 1.1*).

Besides this learning card, teachers can develop, and save on their computers to keep a database with new titles, other cards depending on the aims to be achieved through the story; i.e. a card related to grammatical aspects (*see Appendix 1.2*).

These cards will help teachers choose stories according to the learning needs to be accomplished.

### **IV.3.3. Using tales to develop linguistic skills**

#### **a) Learning vocabulary**

The story is a means of learning new words; children learn actively, that is, not learning them by heart but understanding them within its literary context.

Teachers —helped by students— can prepare different resources to favor the learning process; for example, flashcards showing the character's face or other elements from the story with its meaning written underneath, or grammatical structures showing different tenses. Children will feel agents of their own learning process when preparing the cards.

Several games can be played with flashcards made from the pictures of the stories: guessing which card is missing; naming which is in front of, behind, on top or at the bottom; kids can march with them on their heads and repeating their content; playing hopscotch...; playing Snap; using the alphabet and a dice they can create words selected from a story; in groups, asking questions about the cards being the prize the performance of the story (dramatization).

Learning vocabulary does not have to be boring or repetitive. Plays created from the stories are very useful when learning vocabulary: for instance, mime and recitation. If we get to accompany it with some movement, even it is just a slight one, we will get the vocabulary to be acquired.

#### **b) Learning grammar**

The pleasure of reading a story a second time is an advantage to learn grammatical structures.

The structure can be explained in advance or while reading. For example, interrogative sentences can be introduced using Beatrix Potter's stories, with characters such as *Peter Rabbit* or *Benjamin Bunny* or vocabulary related to food such as: bread, carrots, milk, blackberries, pears, lettuce, cakes... as follows:

Teacher: *Oh! The Benjamin Bunny likes carrots. And you, Laura (addressing to a student), do you like carrots?*

Laura: *Yes.*

Teacher: *Yes, I do. Yes, you do.*

Following this example, grammatical aspects such as questions, countable and uncountable nouns, pronouns, and so on can be practiced. Vocabulary can also be reviewed with flashcards, toys or, in this case, even real food.

Learners can write the structure in pairs and then draw the piece of food they have to say.

A different way of practicing grammar could be role changing: students can act as teachers and ask questions to their classmates.

### c) **Learning how to speak**

Speaking is the most difficult task in language learning and that is why it is essential to show the children the advantages that communicating in a foreign language have. In order to speak, you **first need to listen** and tales are a great teacher's ally. Some didactic proposals are:

- 1) Listen and repeat sentences from a tale by passing on the information to a classmate (this game is usually called the telegram). Listen and order the scenes of a story.
- 2) Listen and distinguish sounds or words (teacher asks them to raise their hands when listening to certain words).
- 3) Listen and spell some words from the story.

The main purpose of English language teaching is to get children communicate in English and that is why teachers provide students with several linguistic expressions and formulae for the learners to use them. For example:

- 1) Asking for permission, asking a classmate for something.
- 2) Greetings and farewells.
- 3) Routines (to start and finish the lesson or to give instructions during an activity).

In Primary Education –especially in the first courses–, it is important for children to follow the routines they have learnt in pre-primary education. Routines help learn the language in a systematic way and foster the linguist self-confidence of the child who is able to predict what the teacher is about to say. When teachers use a routine (a sentence or a gesture) before starting reading a tale, they will avoid distractions and will encourage children's attention. (Pérez Cabello, 2009)

Children must learn how to speak, but they must learn to do it properly, using the right **pronunciation** which can be worked through stories. Which activities may be useful?:

- 1) To learn English sounds: prepare a poster with the phonetic representation of words belonging to the tales' titles, characters or outstanding elements.
- 2) Rhymes or tongue twisters from tales and games help achieve a fine pronunciation.
- 3) To build words from the tales by using individual sounds from the alphabet.

#### **d) Learning how to write**

Children will learn to write the following items thanks to stories:

- a) Words (to learn new vocabulary while consolidating handwriting and spelling).
- b) Sentences (to review and consolidate grammatical structures).
- c) Texts (they can create their own texts to foster their creativity).

#### **IV.3.4. How to tell a story in English**

Generally, English teachers only use literary texts to work reading skills and the texts to be used are those from coursebooks. Owing to the lack of time and the fact that they have to attach to a curriculum, teachers cannot work with English stories to prepare their own materials to complement and support the coursebook.

The tale, besides being used –as we have seen– to help us learn grammar, can also be used for its own purpose: reading for pleasure. Children do love listening to stories, just for the pleasure of listening. Stories are also a never-ending source of information about the language itself; they offer a linguistic richness in their expressions and an aesthetic sensitivity in their words; besides, storytelling is a good introduction to oral communication through fine intonation, voice modulation, and so on (Perera & Ramón, 1995, as quoted by Ramón, 1996).

Telling a story is not easy. When we listen to a professional storyteller we realize how a difficult task it is. A tremendous display of enthusiasm is required to tell or read a story. We will communicate this enthusiasm to children who will be hanging on listening to the story. When representing a story, body is as important as voice to make it look real. “Voice, pauses, rhythm, volume and tone are absolutely necessary; body, facial expression and movement are essential” (Hearn & Garcés, 2005).

Adapting reading rhythm to listeners’ curiosity, attention and reactions is as important and essential as acting with your body and gestures, especially when the public is a very young one.

It will also be helpful to establish a special routine when telling a story: use the same time of the day; devote some minutes every day to the story (story time); teachers may use some pieces of a costume (a hat, a cloak, a magic wand...); children may sit on a semicircle on the floor in front of the whiteboard, whenever it is used, or around the teacher, if no technology is being used and there is only a book on his/her hands, which will be more than enough. Creating the same atmosphere every day will bring students closer to reading.

As we have already seen, teachers can tell a story just for the mere pleasure of learning the story or for working some of the aspects mentioned above. The way of telling the story will vary depending on the purpose of the reading activity.

When we are using a story as a resource to learn English, three stages can be distinguished:

- a) **Before listening to the tale:** vocabulary will be reviewed. For instance: when working Little Red Riding Hood, we should review vocabulary related to parts of the body (eyes, face, teeth, ears, nose...), family (mother, grandmother, daughter...), clothes (coat, cloak, hat, pyjamas ...), items of food that Little Red Riding Hood carries in her basket (bread, honey, apples...), animals that she finds in the forest (birds, deer, squirrels, foxes, wolf...), etc.

We can play the game ‘*Simon says*’ for children to practice this vocabulary: “*Simon says point to your eyes*”.

When working with an unknown story, teachers must nurture learners’ curiosity before starting reading by promising them a fantastic story.

- b) **During the tale:** We must be sure that children understand what we are telling them. Some questions such as ‘*Which colour was Little Red Riding Hood’s coat?*’ are very helpful. A whiteboard to display the characters can be a helpful tool to facilitate comments and questions.

We are now listing the storytelling techniques stated by Brewster (2008, p. 197):

- If possible, have children sat on the floor around you, making sure everyone can see you and the illustrations and can hear you clearly.
- Read slowly and clearly. Give your pupils time to relate what they hear to what they see in the pictures.
- Make comments about the illustrations
- Encourage your pupils to take part in the storytelling by repeating key vocabulary items and phrases.
- Use gestures, mime, facial gestures to help convey the meaning.
- Vary the pace, tone and volume of your voice to build suspense or surprise.
- Pause where appropriate to add dramatic effect or to give children time to relate what they hear to what they see, and to assimilate details in the illustrations.
- Disguise your voice for the different characters.
- Make sound effects where possible.
- Ask questions to involve children: What do you think is going to happen next?
- Do not be afraid to repeat, expand and reformulate.

- c) **After the tale:** once the story has been heard, it is important that children are able to repeat it. They can work in groups or plan a short dramatization. Children do not mind listening to the same tale once and again, so they will both enjoy themselves and fix grammatical and lexical structures on their minds. A funny, educational activity is a *picture dictation* (Hearn; Garcés, 2005). Continuing with the previous tale, learners will draw a picture of a character (such as the wolf) and add the teacher's instructions: "*Draw two big black eyes*"; *Draw a big nose*".

In order to reinforce the learning process, some activities as the following ones can be used:

- *True or False* sentences (children rise to their feet if the sentence is true).
- Listen to some sentences from the story and guess who says each.
- Retell the story leaving some details and ask the children to complete it.
- Ask the children to order a sequence of images.
- Puzzles or crosswords with learnt vocabulary.

#### **IV.3.5. Dramatization of stories**

Almost every tale can be dramatized (role play) if it is adapted by the teacher to the group level and characteristics.

Every child must take part in the dramatization; if there are not enough roles, the performance will be repeated until all of them have played their parts.

Children really enjoy preparing a play: set, clothing, performance; and we will be surprised of how easily they learn their roles. Sara Phillips states that "Drama is not only about the product (the performance) but part of the process of language they use by involving their personalities (Phillips, 2010, p. 5)". Motivation, as we have already explained, is basic for the learning process; that is why dramatization can be of great help for the English language teacher.

As we have seen, didactic applications of stories in the English language learning and teaching process are enormous. Although we have selected some of them, the list seems to be endless. If teachers 'squeeze' the tale they will find: vocabulary, grammar structures, enjoyment, the pleasure of reading and learning about other cultures and traditions, and interdisciplinary contents, etc. Besides, teachers can link the stories to other subjects, and that is why stories can be used in other subjects such as Science, Draw and Painting or even Maths.

## **V. METHODOLOGY**

### **V.1. STUDY OF REFERENCES**

The first stage of this essay was a detail research of information and the access to bibliographic resources (books and articles from specialized teaching magazines) both in English and in Spanish. The libraries of the University College of Education as well as the Public Library have been extremely helpful to compile the necessary material to undertake this project.

Dialnet, the scientific articles database, has provided us with the complete specialized online articles needed.

Fistly, some general essays on English language didactics were studied to prepare the most general part of this essay. Then, more concrete essays on the topic itself –the use of stories in the English teaching process—have been read. A wide bibliographical selection, which has been already referred to along the text, is quoted at the end of this essay.

Reading and studying the bibliographic resources has offered us a comprehensive learning of the topic and of the significance that all the authors and specialists who have studied tales have given to the use of stories in the foreign language teaching process.

### **V.2. INTERVIEWING TEACHERS AND STUDENTS**

Once we have finished with the theoretical basis of our study, we have considered very interesting for the project to know the opinion “in situ” of teachers and pupils about the use of tales in the class. We consider it interesting and an innovative contribution, the introduction of the interviews done to English teachers and students about some aspects related to the use of tales in the English teaching and learning process.

We have decided to make a direct interview to 25 pupils of the 3<sup>rd</sup> age of Primary Education of a public school as well as to 10 teachers of three schools because it is an easy method to be controlled. So through the direct interview we have guaranteed the answers to our questions.

The teachers’ interview was answered by ten English teachers from State and State-subsidised schools from the city of Soria.

The students’ interview was hold by Primary Education 3<sup>rd</sup> graders during this academic year traineeship.

A copy of the questions orally asked to the teachers and children is included in the appendices of this essay (*see Appendix 2*).

The following conclusions can be withdrawn from both interviews:

### **Teachers' interviews**

- 1) Teachers think tales are part of the English class (especially those of the coursebook) and they find them useful for improving students' academic performance and for the creation of a playful, motivating atmosphere in the classroom.
- 2) However, tales are mainly used for reading:
  - a. 4 of the interviewees devote from half an hour to an hour to reading stories a week.
  - b. 3 teachers prefer students to read the stories at home.
  - c. 3 teachers alternate reading at school and at home.
- 3) Most of the times, stories and activities used are those from the coursebook.
- 4) All of them state that there is a Story Corner in the classroom or in the school library where children can read or borrow English books.
- 5) They admit that books from the Story Corner are not usually used in the classroom, just occasionally.
- 6) Interviewed teachers admit that stories could probably be 'exploited' deeper (than how they do it now) and that more activities could be carried out. But they state that they would need some more time and dedication. Only one of the teachers thinks his work with activities and stories is enough.
- 7) Dramatization is not one of the favourite activities of English teachers. Only 2 out of 10 interviewed teachers have ever used dramatic activities in English with children. They argue that those activities are too difficult to carry out and that the same aims can be achieved by other means.

All the teachers agree on the following aspects:

1. Stories are a resource which offers lots of didactic possibilities, even though they do not exploit them, and offers many advantages, highlighting its motivating power.



2. Phonetics, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, structures and so on could be worked through stories. They admit that they should work more these items through stories.
3. An increased presence of stories can be found in the didactic units of recent coursebooks as well as more activities related to reading.

### **Students' interviews**

18 children from 3rd grade Primary Education were interviewed. The drawn conclusions were as follows:

- 1) Children like reading stories in English and they raise their self-confidence in the learning process and their self-esteem when they understand what they are reading.
- 2) They like the Reading Corner placed in the English classroom but they do not bring books home.
- 3) Almost every tale they read is one of their textbook.
- 4) They learn about some Anglo-Saxon cultural aspects through stories (for instance, about festivals such as Halloween or Christmas).
- 5) They are not aware of learning grammar with the stories.
- 6) They value stories because they are not part of their daily routine.
- 7) They prefer listening to tales rather than reading them.

### **V.3. CLASSROOM OBSERVATION**

In our brief teaching experience during last year Practicum I, we could see how the English language teacher worked with stories in the classroom. The students belonged to 2<sup>nd</sup> course of Primary Education and we would like to highlight two of the activities where stories were used and which we found remarkably interesting:

1<sup>st</sup>) The **Synthetic Phonics Model** used by the teacher focuses on teaching vocabulary through the sounds and not by spelling. The teacher worked with some tales from the series *Read Write Inc.* to reinforce green and red words; green ones follow the rules, that is, each letter is read as in the alphabet, while red ones are read in a different way. How can they be distinguished? The aforementioned tales followed this structure:

- Green and red words from the story are displayed at the beginning of the book. The teacher read them, focusing on its pronunciation before starting the story.

- Then, children read the story in groups of three. Every child read every page of the story.
- After reading it, they completed some worksheets to consolidate what they have learnt.

This activity can be used to work phonetics through storytelling-reading. Children's high motivation made learning much easier for them. Besides, the teacher got to raise learners' curiosity by using encouraging sentences such as: *This is a fun story, Let's see what is going to happen right now*

When understanding the story they were reading, children did quickly realize the usefulness of learning a foreign language what fostered their self-confidence and desire to keep on learning.

**2<sup>nd</sup>) Storytelling and activities with stories:** we will mention the activities used to work with *Goldilocks and The Three Bears*.

The aims to be achieved through this activity were learning vocabulary and reading comprehension.

#### Preparation<sup>1</sup>:

- 12 Picture cards with pictures of the characters and objects of the story (3 bears, 3 bowls, 3 chairs, 3 beds).
- 12 Word cards with vocabulary (big bear, middle sized bear, little bear; big bowl, middle sized bowl, little bowl; big chair, middle sized chair, little chair; big bed, middle sized bed, little bed).
- Class-sized poster of key sentences in the story with ten words missing.

#### Activity:

1<sup>o</sup>) In class: Groupwork of 5 students each. Teachers stick 12 Picture cards on the board. Each of them has been ascribed to a letter and the 12 Word cards have been numbered from 1 to 12. Children have to match them and write the numbers associated to each letter.

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<sup>1</sup> Material extracted from (Wright, 2004) (*see Appendix 3*).

2<sup>o</sup>) In class: Groupwork: Give out the ten strips with sentence. The children put them into the correct sequence on their tables.

Once upon a time there were  bears: a big Father ..... a ..... Mother Bear and a ..... Bear.

The bears lived in a ..... in the middle of the .....

One morning they made porridge for breakfast. Father Bear poured the hot ..... into the three bowls: a small ..... for Baby Bear, a middle-sized bowl for ..... bear and a ..... bowl for himself

#### Post-reading activities:

1. Children, helped by the teacher, invented another ending orally.
2. They draw pictures in their folders.
3. They wrote key sentences from the story using the learnt vocabulary.

We helped in this activity by preparing the flashcards with the opposite adjectives learnt before (thin-fat, small-big, hot-cold, etc.) but we worked with other characters from another tale (*Goldilocks and the Tree Bears*) to check if the children had understood them.

#### **3<sup>rd</sup>) Personal experience in “Las Pedrizas” (Practicum II):**

During the subject “Practicum II” coursed this year in the school in Las Pedrizas school in Soria we had to prepare a didactic unit whose main topic was the Past Simple. The tutor of the school encouraged us to include in our lesson plan some activities of this final project to check their effectiveness in the class.

In particular, we taught two sessions (1 and 2) which are included in this project in the part “Activities in the English Class” and the results were very positive and satisfying so this guaranteed our previous hypothesis in this report which stated that there are a lot of activities which can be carried out by using the tales when teaching English Language.

#### **V.4. PERSONAL CONTRIBUTION**

We consider that the usefulness of stories as a resource in the teaching of the English language has been proved throughout these pages. Tales should have an overwhelming presence in the classroom, as well as the use of didactic materials or the development of teachers’ own materials to work when reading stories in the classroom. Our opinion, stated on the previous

pages, is based on the reading of some references, on our brief teaching experience, and on our own reflections.

We now present a didactic proposal to work stories in the English, Science, Draw and Painting and Physical Education classroom.

# **VI. INTERDISCIPLINARY PROJECT**

## **“ONE WEEK WITH BEATRIX POTTER”**

### **VI.1. WHAT IS AN INTERDISCIPLINARY PROJECT?**

According to Cambridge Dictionaries Online (2013), a project is “a piece of planned work or an activity which is finished over a period of time and intended to achieve a particular aim”. A project is usually a long term exercise or study of a particular subject done over a period of time, especially by students.

In the context of CLIL learning, projects are “multi-skill activities focusing on topics or themes rather than on specific language targets” (Haines, 1989, p. 1). They are based on different tasks and works but are not replacements for other methods and resources (didactic units, activities, exercises, etc.).

An interdisciplinary project consists on the articulation between the different subjects with the purpose of getting students to acquire the basic competences about the specific knowledge of each subject.

In order to elaborate an interdisciplinary project, the teachers have to find connections between the topics which they are going to teach in their classes and the ones of other subjects, planning common activities and projects.

The main advantages of an interdisciplinary project are the following ones:

- 1) It promotes the cooperation between different subjects, avoiding the compartmentalization of the knowledge.
- 2) It can be defined as an innovative planned work which motivates the pupils.

### **VI.2. WHY HAVE WE CHOSEN AN INTERDISCIPLINARY PROJECT?**

In the bilingual section schools, children study several subjects in English Language apart from English itself, so we have considered that the elaboration of an interdisciplinary project would be useful to use tales in English as a unifying element of all the subjects. We have also tried to show through this project that literature –tales-, is not an exclusive resource of the Language classes as we will see in the following pages.

In this didactic project we are going to make use of the theory which has been analyzed previously. With this aim we are going to use the tales written by Beatrix Potter as well as to

show some different activities and some other didactic projects which have been designed to work in the subjects of English, Science, Physical Education and Drawing and Painting. This project will be developed during a whole week which will be completely dedicated to the English author. The main objectives of this practical proposal are:

- To get pupils to learn English through tales.
- To make children understand how important it is to communicate in English.
- To awaken interest of reading in children.
- To know a part of the traditional culture of England through Beatrix Potter's tales.

The choice of the tales of this author for the project is based on several reasons:

- She is a British writer in English language as well as an excellent illustrator.
- Her tales are considered as traditional stories which can result useful to get children to know the English culture.
- The characters of these tales are very charming and lovable so children will be motivated by their adventures.
- The drawings, done by the author, are wonderful and children will enjoy looking at them.
- These tales can be easily adapted by the teacher according to the academic level.
- Their characters are animals which live in contact with nature so these stories can be used in the subject of Science. Moreover, the characters can be designed in the subject of Drawing and Painting.
- The author's life will be useful for the children to have a general knowledge of the era when she lived.

### **Level of the course**

The project is thought for the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of Primary Education in a school of linguistic section although it can also be adapted to the contents of other academic levels. The subjects which are going to be included in this project are English, Science, Physical Education and Drawing and Painting.

### **Timing of the project**

The length of time which is going to be used in this project corresponds to a whole week (*Beatrix Potter's Week*). The schedule of a linguistic section school consists of:

- 5 sessions of English a week
- 4 sessions of Science a week
- 1 session of Physical Education in English (of the 3 weekly sessions)

- 1 session of Drawing and Painting a week

The activities which are scheduled for this week have to be adjusted to the previous timetable.

Below, the activities for each subject will be explained in detail.

## VI.3. ACTIVITIES OF THE PROJECT <sup>2</sup>

### 1. Activities in the class of English

#### *First Session: "Beatrix Potter and her tales"*

##### Objectives

- To get to know the characters of Beatrix Potter's tales.
- Grammar part: To ask questions with *Who...? / Where...? / What...?*  
To answer these questions properly.
- Vocabulary: To introduce the names of different relatives (uncle, aunt, mother, brother, sister, siblings, nephew, grandparents, etc.)

Duration of the session: 55 minutes

##### Preparation and development of the session:

- Presentation of the characters through the preparation of a **family tree** in the digital blackboard (or through a Power Point presentation). (*see Appendix 4*)
- To explain the relationship between the characters:
  - ✚ Mrs Rabbit is Flopsy, Mopsy, Cotton-tail and Peter's **mother**.
  - ✚ Flopsy, Mopsy, Cotton-tail and Peter are Mrs Rabbit's **children**.
  - ✚ Peter has three **siblings** who are Flopsy, Mopsy and Cotton-tail.
  - ✚ Mr Bunny is Mr Rabbit's **brother**. His **son**'s name is Benjamin.
  - ✚ Benjamin is Peter's **cousin**.
  - ✚ Etc.
- To ask questions about kinship to learn some vocabulary and the grammar structures to answer these questions. For instance:

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<sup>2</sup> All the tales which are included in this project can be utilized freely without violating copyright. They can be found in <http://www.gutenberg.org/>. The teacher will always use legal copies as well as the original books of tales.

- ✚ *Is Benjamin Bunny Peter Rabbit's cousin?*
  - *Yes, he is / No, he isn't*
- ✚ *Is Flopsy Mrs. Rabbit's daughter?*
  - *Yes, she is / No, she isn't*

## *Second Session: "The tale of Peter Rabbit"*

### **Objectives**

- **Vocabulary**: To learn some vocabulary related to the tale, i.e. *once upon a time, forest, garden, bunnies, lettuces, beans, carrots, naughty, rabbit, tale*, etc.
- **Grammar part**: pronouns (I, you, he, she, it, they), some Regular Past Simple verbs (lived, jumped, happened...) and some Irregular Past Simple verbs (ate, went...)
- To listen to the tale carefully and enjoy while reading it.

**Duration of the session**: 55 minutes

### **Preparation of the session**:

- To adapt "The Tale of Peter Rabbit" to the level in order to get children to learn some vocabulary.
- To create a Power Point presentation (*see Appendix 5*) of the tale with some brief notes of the author's life.
- To elaborate flashcards (*see Appendix 6*) with the vocabulary which appears in the story.
- To prepare an activity sheet to summarize the tale.

### **Development of the session**<sup>3</sup>:

#### ✚ **Activities before the story**

The main aim of these activities is to help children to understand the story. The activities which are going to be carried out in this session are the following ones:

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<sup>3</sup> The activities of sessions 2 and 4 are based on some activities of (Wright, 2004).



- **Showing new key words:** In order to get this, some essential words for the story will be picked out to show them to children through some flashcards.
- **Pictures:** The teacher will show the pictures of the original tale before proceeding to tell the story. Moreover, some particular questions about what is going to happen in the story can be formulated to children.
- **Objects:** sometimes they are called *realia* and they result very helpful to show them while the teacher reads the tale. In this story, there will be plastic food like bread, carrots, lettuces, beans, potatoes, water, peas, onions, etc.

#### ✚ **Activities during the story**

The main aim of these activities is to help children to understand the story. Which activities can be used by the teacher during this story?

- **Stopping and asking:** the teacher will stop reading to make sure that children understand what he/she is telling by asking questions, i.e. *Do you think that Mr McGregor will catch Peter Rabbit?, Has not Peter obey his mother?, Where has Peter lost his jacket?, etc.*  
It is very important that children participate in the story actively. The following activities will result helpful to the teacher to tell the story of Peter Rabbit.
- **Miming:** The children can mime at their desk or in a clear space in the classroom. For instance, the sentence of the tale *“A white cat was staring at some gold-fish”* can be mimed by each child using his or her fingers to represent the cat.
- **Using each sentence:** The teacher reads the tale and he / she says to the children that they must pay attention to the things that can be seen and the ones that can be heard. Later, the teacher will write some questions into the blackboard with the pupil’s help in order to work the Past Tense of the irregular verbs “to see” and “to hear” as well as the personal pronouns. For instance:
  - I saw a white rabbit
  - We saw a beautiful garden

- I heard some birds
- You heard the wind

### **Activities after the story**

The teacher will hand an activity sheet to children with some exercises regarding the tale: (*see Appendix 7*)

- **To order the sequences:** In the first sentence there will be 8 sequences of the tale and some disordered sequences which will correspond to each one of the pictures. Children will have to order them from 1 to 8 according to the story.
- **True or False:** The second exercise will consist of a “True or False” activity in which children will have to determine if some sentences are true or false regarding “The Tale of Peter Rabbit”. Here there are some examples:
  1. Peter had three little sisters.
  2. Peter didn’t go to Mr McGregor’s garden.
  3. Etc.
- **Gap activity:** There will be an activity in which children will have to fill the gaps with some missing words (verbs, nouns, adjectives...) provided in a chart.
- **Matching activity:** In this activity, children will have to match several sentences extracted from the text to their corresponding pictures.
- **Reviewing Who / What / Where...? :** In this exercise children will review the *Wh-Questions* through a multiple choice exercise in which they will get some questions formulated. There will only be one possible right answer from all the ones proposed.
- **Guessing the author’s name:** Pupils will have to remind the author’s name and complete the gaps with the missing letters.

Through these activities children will be able to demonstrate all the knowledge learnt in the lesson.

### *Third Session: “Dramatizing the tale of Peter Rabbit”*

#### **Objectives**

- To learn some concrete language and vocabulary.
- To learn how to communicate.
- To motivate pupils to get them to speak English.

**Duration of the session:** 55 minutes

#### **Preparation of the session:**

The steps which will be carried out in this session will be the next ones:

- ✚ To adapt the tale in an easy and short way by taking into account the level of the group of pupils (3<sup>rd</sup> course of Primary Education) so that the children are able to read it.
- ✚ To assign the roles to the pupils (in our adaptation of the story there are 8 characters so each one of these characters can be performed by 3 children in case that there is a class of 24 pupils).
- ✚ The teacher will read the play twice by using the appropriate intonation and gestures that children will have to use later in the performance.
- ✚ Children will dress up with easy-made customs previously prepared, i.e. earflaps made with cardboard for the rabbits, one beard for Mr McGregor, one apron for Mrs Rabbit, one beak made with cardboard too for the bird and some glasses for the narrators. Another choice would be to use the hand-made puppets to perform the story.

***Original story “The Tale of Peter Rabbit” (see Appendix 8.1)***

***Our adapted story to be dramatized “The Tale of Peter Rabbit” (see Appendix 8.2)***

## *Fourth Session: “The Tale of Benjamin Bunny”*

### **Objectives**

- ✚ To learn some new vocabulary (**nouns**: hat, onions, basket, fear, morning, bank, ears, pony, horse, wife; **adjectives**: scared, funny, old; **verbs**: infinitives: to lay down, to smell, to sleep, to raise, to go out, to eat, to tell off.
- ✚ To learn grammar structures like *Are they...? Yes, they are. / No, they aren't* or *Have they got...? Yes, they have. / No, they haven't*.
- ✚ To get used to some singular and plural forms.
- ✚ To enjoy while reading.

**Duration of the session:** 55 minutes

### **Preparation of the session:**

- ✚ To prepare flashcards with the appropriate vocabulary (*see Appendix 9.1*).
- ✚ To create a poster (*see Appendix 9.2*) by using the illustrations of this tale and the ones of the previous one which will be useful to go into detail about some grammatical structures. The poster will be projected on the digital blackboard.

### **Development of the session:**

- ✚ **Activities before the story**
  - **Muddled pictures** (*see Appendix 10*): The preparation of the story is easy. It consists of preparing a series of pictures of key moments in the story. The pictures can be photocopied for children to work in pairs. The steps to follow in this activity are the following ones:
    1. The teacher will show separate pictures from the story.
    2. He/she will ask the children to try to put them into the correct sequence so they have to put the pictures in the sequence they think the story will be in.
    3. After this, they will have to listen to the story to check if they were right or wrong.
  - **Ten key words:** In class, the teacher writes ten key words on the board in the order in which they occur. Children have to guess what is going to happen after this in the story by making a prediction. Finally, they

will discover if they got right or not. It doesn't matter if the children do not know some of the words because they will be able to extract them from the context.

- **Gapped story:** Another activity which is carried out before telling the story is a gapped exercise. It can be given to the children on a paper for pairwork or even put on the board for all the kids to see it. Pupils will have to read it and imagine what words might be missing. This task can be made easier by giving the children a list of words to choose from.

This is an example of a fragmented story which could be given to the pupils:

Cousin	Listened	Aunt	Bank
Wife	Horse	Morning	Sleeping

*One ..... a little rabbit sat down on a ..... He was almost ..... when he ..... to the trit-trot, trit-trot of a horse.*

*Mr and Mrs McGregor got on a cart which was pulled by ..... Benjamin was to his ..... 's house and he said to his ..... Peter that they could go easily to Mr McGregor's garden to find Peter's clothes because he and his ..... were not at home.*

**Original Story "The Tale of Benjamin Bunny"** (*see Appendix 11.1*)

**Our adapted story of "The Tale of Benjamin Bunny"** (*see Appendix 11.2*)

### **Activities during the story**

#### **a) Helping the children to understand the story**

While telling children the story, there are some techniques which can help them understand:

- To use some pictures (drawn on the board, flashcards) or even objects to make their understanding easier.
- To use mime to make the story more realistic.

- To use some sound effects like the *trit-trot, trit-trot* of the horse, the sound of the wind in the garden, etc.)

**b) Stopping and asking**

The story can be stopped whenever it seems appropriate in order to ask children what they think is going to happen next. We are going to use some grammar structures like: *Are Mr and Mrs McGregor at home?; Is the cat awake?* The children will answer by using the expressions *Yes, they are; No, they aren't.* This action can encourage children to predict what is coming next.

**c) Let's go deeper!**


This activity consists of stopping telling the story in some concrete parts to ask the children for more information about some aspects related to the story, i.e. what products extracted from gardens they eat at home, the name of the clothes that the rabbits wear, etc.

**d) Expressive lines**

The children will have to draw an expressive line showing what they feel about each stage in the story. An example when using a concrete sentence would be the next one:

.....------////////////////////////////////////

*Peter and Benjamin were eating lettuces calmly. Suddenly they heard some steps getting closer. They began running when they saw a big cat going towards them.*

 **Activities after the story: homework**

**a) Children's comprehension questions**

The children have to work at home after having listened to the story and write down unless three comprehension questions and their answers to practise grammatical structures already learnt: *Has he got...? / Was it there?* For instance:

- Has Peter got a cousin?
  - Yes, he has. / No, he hasn't.
- Was Peter jacket's in Mr McGregor's cottage?
  - Yes, it was. / No, it wasn't.

**b) Evaluating the story**

Children will be asked what they think of the story. There are some examples of questions which can be formulated and the teacher can even provide them some answers to circle the most appropriate one according to their personal opinion:

- Did you enjoy the story?
  - Very much
  - A bit
  - Not much
  - Not at all
- Did you understand the story?
  - Most of it
  - A bit of it
  - Not much of it
  - Nothing
- Which was the best part of the story?
  - It was when...
- Which was the worst part of the story?
  - It was when...
- Which was the funniest part of the story?
  - It was when...
- Which was the most exciting part of the story?
  - It was when...

## *Fifth Session: "The Tailor of Gloucester"*

### **Objectives**

- ✚ To listen to a tale
- ✚ To practise reading skills
- ✚ To develop the pleasure when reading
- ✚ To improve both comprehension skills in English: listening and reading

**Duration of the session:** 55 minutes

### **Preparation of the session:**

There will be a lectern fixed in the classroom and a copy of the book "The Tailor of Gloucester" (*see Appendix 12*).

### **Development of the session:**

- ✚ This activity for the 3<sup>rd</sup> age will consist of reading the whole tale "The Tailor of Gloucester" (the original version, not adapted). All the pupils will read an extract of the tale in turns.
- ✚ While the reading takes place, there will be some images and pictures of the tale being projected on the digital blackboard to make the understanding easier.
- ✚ It is not important that children don't know all the words of the story. The most relevant aspect is that they manage to read the tale in English being supported by the teacher who will help them through mime.

### **Activities after reading**

- ✚ At home children will do a brief summary of 3 sentences which are related to the tale.

## **2. Activities in the class of Physical Education**

*Session: "3, 2, 1... action!: Motor Tale"*

### **Objectives**

- ✚ To get used to some new vocabulary: prepositions (through, across, up, down, over, along)
- ✚ To imply children in the activity
- ✚ To learn and enjoy with this activity
- ✚ To develop the coordination and the equilibrium.



This activity consists of performing a short tale which contains a lot of words and repeated sentences in order that children can mime it while sitting in their seats.

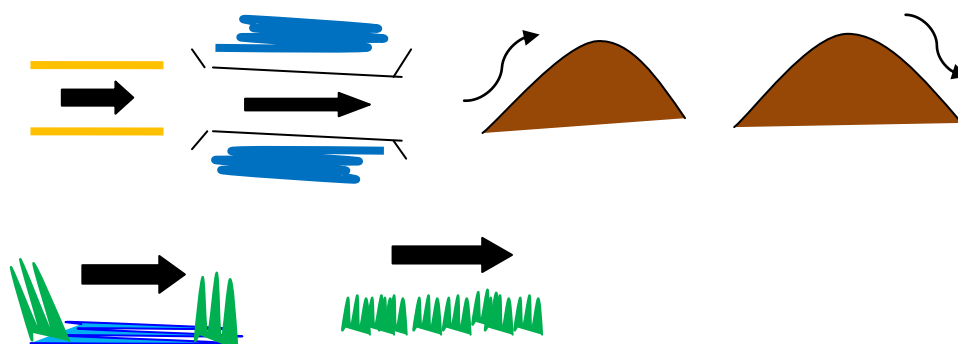
**Duration of the session:** 55 minutes

**Preparation of the session:**

This activity will be carried out in the gym of the school. The teacher will use a digital blackboard to show the tale “The Lion Hunt”, gathered in (Halliwell, 1994) that will have been previously adapted with the characters of the tales of Beatrix Potter that are known by the children.

**Development of the session:**

- ✚ First, all the pupils will sit down together in a semicircle on the floor.
- ✚ Then, the teacher will tell the tale by using illustrations or symbols on the blackboard.



*Figure 1: Scheme of the Motor Tale (see Appendix 22)*

The tale would be told in the following way:

*Peter Rabbit and Benjamin Bunny are going to eat lettuces to Mr McGregor's garden.*

*Off we go with them too!*

*First we walk **along** the path.*

Then we go **over** the bridge.

Next we go **up** the hill.

Then we run **down** the hill.

Next we walk **across** the swamp.

Now we walk **through** the long grass.

Wait a minute... whatever is this...?

It's got four legs! It's got a long tail!

It's got a big head!

Help! It's Mr McGregor! Quick!

Next, the teacher will move back by following the same path but more quickly and pointing each drawing meanwhile he/she is walking.

**Through** the long grass.

**Across** the swamp.

**Up** the hill.

The teacher will have to take into account that he/she is walking in the opposite direction.

**Down** the hill.

**Over** the bridge.

**Along** the path.

Home Mrs. Rabbit! Hooray!

✚ Next, the teacher makes the children to remain standing in order to retell them the tale again but following some other indications this time:

✚ Children will have to imitate the actions made by the teacher (*see Appendix 23*).

*Peter Rabbit and Benjamin Bunny are going to eat lettuces to Mr McGregor's garden.*

*Off we go with them too!*

**What the teacher says**

*First we walk along the path.*

*Then we go over the bridge.*

*Next we go up the hill.*

*Then we run down the hill.*

*Next we walk across the swamp.*

*Now we walk through the long grass.*

*Wait a minute... whatever is this...?*

*It's got four legs! It's got a long tail!*

*It's got a big head!*

*Help! It's Mr McGregor! Quick!*

**What the teacher does**

To make as if someone were stepping up by stroking his/her hands on his/her knees: left, right, left, right.

To walk around the gym to reproduce the resonant sound of a bridge.

Slowly! It's a steep hill!

Children walk slowly.

Speed up! Children run. The teacher allows them to run until the end of the gym and come back.

Splash sounds are carried out. Everybody put the hands up as if they were removing something sticky from their bodies.

High grass is separated with the arms by making snaps.

To "touch" both legs.

To touch the tale.

Next, the teacher will move back by following the same path but more quickly and pointing each drawing meanwhile he/she is walking.

*Through the long grass.*

Actions previously described are repeated but following the opposite way.

*Across the swamp.*

*Up the hill.*

The teacher will have to take into account that he/she is walking in the opposite direction.

*Down the hill.*

All the pupils sit down on their chairs again and they do the signal of victory with their hands.

*Over the bridge.*

*Along the path.*

*Home Mrs. Rabbit! Hooray!*

### 3. Activities in the class of Science

*First Session: "The Tale of Mrs. Tittlemouse"*

#### **Objectives:**

- ✚ To learn names of animals in English and some of their characteristics.
- ✚ To study the classification of the animals.
- ✚ To learn some new vocabulary related to animals.

**Duration of the session:** 55 minutes

#### **Preparation of the session:**

- ✚ The teacher will project the tale on the digital blackboard.
- ✚ Pupils will be divided into groups and the teacher will provide each group one copy of *The Tale of Mrs. Tittlemouse*.

### **Development of the session:**

- ✚ The teacher will read quickly the original tale (*see Appendix 13*) on the digital blackboard by stopping in the names of the animals which appear on it: *mouse, beetle, spider, ladybird, bee, toad, creepy-crawly, butterfly*.
- ✚ After that, pupils will have to point the names of the animals in the book.
- ✚ The teacher will help them to classify all the animals into groups: **vertebrates** (amphibians, rodents...) and **invertebrates** (arachnids, insects...)
- ✚ Later on, he/she will explain the pupils the main characteristics of these animals.

### *Second Session: "The Tale of Mrs. Tittlemouse II"*

#### **Objectives:**

- ✚ To learn to work in groups efficiently.
- ✚ To learn to find information on the Internet.
- ✚ To summarize the searched information.

**Duration of the session:** 55 minutes

#### **Preparation of the session:**

- ✚ Pupils will go to the Computers Room.
- ✚ The teacher will have all the computers ready on this webpage:  
[http://www.sheppardsoftware.com/content/animals/kidscorner/classification/kc\\_class\\_again.htm](http://www.sheppardsoftware.com/content/animals/kidscorner/classification/kc_class_again.htm) (*see Appendix 14*).

### **Development of the session:**

- ✚ Boys and girls will look for some information on this webpage in groups.
- ✚ The kids will have to create a poster of a concrete group of animals (arachnids, insects, amphibians...) and will finally illustrate it with some pictures provided by the teacher.
- ✚ Poster will be exposed in the school as well as the materials elaborated by the children during all the week that the interdisciplinary project has lasted.

*Third Session: “What is an Alimentary Chain?: Examples in The Tale of Jemima-Puddle Duck and The Tale of the Flopsy Bunnies”<sup>4</sup>*

**Objectives**

- ✚ To learn what an alimentary chain is.
- ✚ To know who the producers and the consumers are.
- ✚ To learn to do an alimentary chain.

**Duration of the session:** 55 minutes

**Preparation of the session:**

- ✚ To prepare the illustrations of the tale on the digital blackboard.
- ✚ To elaborate a brief summary of the tale.

**Development of the session:**

- ✚ The teacher will explain what an alimentary chain is with basic examples on the digital blackboard: the Sun → Plants → Herbivore Animals → Carnivorous Animals / Omnivorous Animals → Mushrooms and Lichens
- ✚ Later on, he/she will tell both “The Tale of Jemima-Puddle Duck” and “The Tale of Flopsy Bunnies” briefly (*see Appendices 15 and 16*).
- ✚ With the help of the children, they all will try to do two alimentary chains including the illustrations of the tales (*see Appendix 17*).

*Fourth Session: “Places related to Beatrix Potter”*

**Objectives:**

- ✚ To know the places of England where Beatrix Potter lived and the English landscapes that she drew in her tales.
- ✚ To learn to place them on the map.
- ✚ To know the Geography of Europe.
- ✚ To know the cardinal points and place them on the map.
- ✚ To be able to orient in the plan.

**Duration of the session:** 55 minutes

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<sup>4</sup> The tales which were written by Beatrix Potter are not very sweet stories. Her characters live in nature and survive there. In her tales we can find animals which feed themselves by eating other animals.

### **Preparation of the session:**

- ✚ The teacher will prepare a map of the United Kingdom where he/she will place some important places. This map will be shown on the digital blackboard (*see Appendix 18*).
- ✚ The teacher will find on the Internet the webpage of the thematic park “The World of Beatrix Potter”.

### **Development of the session:**

- ✚ The teacher will project the map of England and point the places related to the author.
- ✚ The teacher will give a photocopy of the map to the children to point the places there.
- ✚ Then the teacher will show the pupils the webpage <http://www.hop-skip-jump.com/> about the thematic park “The World of Beatrix Potter”. Both the children and the teacher together will do a tour along the page.
- ✚ In class, children will sit down by pairs and the teacher will provide them copies of the plan of the park (*see Appendix 19*) so that they can find and point the characters that they know. For instance, here there are some indications that the teacher can give to the children:
  - *Jemima Puddle-Duck is in the middle of the plan.*
  - *Peter Rabbit’s Garden is on the left side of the plan.*
  - *Mr. McGregor is on the right side of the plan.*

## **4. Activities in the class of Drawing & Painting**

*Session: “Let’s make a book by ourselves”*

### **Objectives:**

- ✚ To acquire manual skills: to fold, cut and paint.
- ✚ To develop creative ability.

**Duration of the session:** 55 minutes

### **Preparation of the session:**

- ✚ The teacher will prepare colourful cardboards.
- ✚ Then, he/she will photocopy some pictures with characters of the tales.

- ✚ Later on, he/she will look for little ice-creams' sticks.
- ✚ Next, the teacher will prepare some sentences which will be written by children after their corresponding illustrations.

### **Development of the session:**

#### **a) Making a book**

- Children will cut the cardboards to create a “Z-shaped Tale” of one story of Beatrix Potter (*see Appendix 20*).
- Then, they will cut and stick the characters on the pages of the book.
- Later on, they will write three sentences of the board which are related to their characters.
- Finally, they will choose a title for their tales.

#### **b) Making a bookmark (*see Appendix 21*)**

- Pupils will cut a character of the tales out from the previous sheets.
- Then, they will colour the drawing.
- Finally, children will put a stick into the drawing with glue.

## **VII. ASSESSMENT OF THE INTERDISCIPLINARY PROJECT**

The teacher will use some activities to assess the pupils and know, in this way, if they have fulfilled the fixed objectives of the project:

### **1) Activities in a web of own creation (Google Site) (*see Appendix 23*):**

We have created a Google Site where there are several activities so that children can do them. This way, the teacher will check whether they have fulfilled the objectives of the project or not.

### **2) Activity Sheet (*see Appendix 7*):**

The activities which are included in the session 2 will be also used to check the knowledge achieved by the children in the sessions 1 and 2.



3) **Webpage [http://www.peterrabbit.com/au/fun\\_and\\_games](http://www.peterrabbit.com/au/fun_and_games) :**

Children will do some multiple choice exercises and other activities about Beatrix Potter tales in this webpage after having completed the previous activities. Children can access to this site by clicking the link.

These activities will be carried out in the Computers Room of the school and the teacher will guide pupils in the web.

## **VIII. CONCLUSION**

### **VIII.1. CONCLUSION OF THE INTERDISCIPLINARY PROJECT**

We have considered as necessary to include some specific conclusions about the interdisciplinary project as well as the general conclusions which will be described after this section. These are the obtained specific conclusions:

- The interdisciplinary project about Beatrix Potter is useful to unify subjects which are taught in English in the linguistic section schools.
- The activities which can be developed with the tales of this author are varied and they are not only useful to instil children the pleasure for reading but also to awaken their interest about the learning of English Language.
- Working through tales is a very interesting activity which offers the possibility of planning before-listening, while-listening and post-listening activities, fact which enriches the sessions highly.
- Pupils can also learn grammatical structures and useful vocabulary through the tales of Beatrix Potter as well as reviewing concepts previously learnt.
- Moreover, the use of the tales of the English writer as the central axis of the interdisciplinary project has contributed to approach children to the traditional English culture as well as to teach them to locate key places in the map of the United Kingdom.

### **VIII.2. GENERAL CONCLUSION**

After having finished the project, we ask ourselves whether the objectives which we pretended to get and which are exposed in the beginning of the report, have been fulfilled or not. We have reached the following conclusions:

- The use of the tales as a didactic resource in the teaching of English Language motivate pupils in their process of learning and makes them feel curious about learning and communicating in English.

- As it has been exposed previously, there are a lot of authors who consider as essential that English teachers use the oral and written stories in the teaching of English Language.
- The inclusion of the tales in the Curriculum of Primary Education contributes to achieve the objectives proposed in the decree as well as to the acquisition of basic competences.
- There are a lot of reasons to include the stories in the English classes: psycho-affective and cognitive (enjoyment, pleasure, motivation, creativity, concentration and conceptual development of the children); linguistic (acquisition of the grammar and the vocabulary, oral and written comprehension of the language), socio-cultural (knowledge of other cultures which help to increase tolerance).
- In spite of their obvious advantages, there are not too many teachers who use this resource in their classes, especially due to the lack of time to elaborate activities whose basis is the tale.
- Pupils enjoy with the tales and they consider that the activities related to them can help them to learn English.
- It is very important that the teacher chooses tales of the English literature to boost the approach to the Anglophone culture.
- As we have already seen, the programming of activities related to the tales that teachers can use are uncountable.
- The elaboration of an interdisciplinary project based on the traditional English tales which includes several subjects, help pupils to be interested and motivated in English Language.

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