

IMPLEMENTING FAIRY TALES TO FOSTER LEXICAL COMPETENCE

**IMPLEMENTING FAIRY TALES AS A DIDACTIC TOOL TO FOSTER THIRD  
GRADERS LEXICAL COMPETENCE IN THE EFL CLASSROOM**

**IMPLEMENTAR LOS CUENTOS COMO UNA HERRAMIENTA DIDÁCTICA PARA  
FOMENTAR LA COMPETENCIA LÉXICA EN ESTUDIANTES DE TERCER GRADO,  
DENTRO DE SALONES DE INGLÉS COMO LENGUA EXTRANJERA**

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## IMPLEMENTING FAIRY TALES TO FOSTER LEXICAL COMPETENCE

## Abstract

This research project aimed to explore the impact of the use of fairy tales and Game-Based Learning on third-grade students' lexical competence from a bilingual school located in Bogota, Colombia. The authors found student's difficulties at the moment of expressing simple ideas because they lack vocabulary in English as a foreign language. Regarding this matter, fairy tales and games were considered helpful tools that would enhance and boost students referential and inferential components of the Lexical Competence. In order to develop this study, it was necessary to implement class observations, video recordings, and questionnaires. In addition, teachers designed ten classes where the participants were able to develop different types of lexical associations after being exposed to fairy tales and games in the foreign language. In short, the students improved their lexical competence by making connections not only between sounds, spelling, and representation of the words but also in Spanish since it is their native language. Thus, this paper attempted to analyze and identify the role of fairy tales and games in the improvement of students' vocabulary learning.

*Keywords: fairy tales, Game-Based Learning, lexical competence, inferential component, referential component.*

### Resumen

Este proyecto de investigación tuvo como objetivo explorar el impacto del uso de los cuentos de hadas y el aprendizaje basado en juegos en la competencia léxica de los estudiantes de tercer grado de una escuela bilingüe ubicada en Bogotá, Colombia. Los autores encontraron las dificultades de los estudiantes al momento de expresar ideas simples porque presentaban falta de vocabulario en inglés como segunda lengua. Con respecto a este asunto, los cuentos de hadas y los juegos se consideraron herramientas útiles que mejorarían e impulsarían los componentes referenciales e inferenciales de la competencia léxica de los estudiantes. Para desarrollar este estudio, fue necesario implementar observaciones de clase, grabaciones de video y cuestionarios. Además, los docentes diseñaron diez clases donde los participantes pudieron desarrollar diferentes tipos de asociaciones léxicas después de estar expuestos a cuentos de hadas y juegos en el idioma extranjero. En resumen, los estudiantes mejoraron su competencia léxica al hacer conexiones no solo entre los sonidos, la ortografía y la representación de las palabras, sino también en español, ya que es su lengua materna. Por lo tanto, este documento intentó analizar e identificar el papel de los cuentos de hadas y los juegos en la mejora del aprendizaje del vocabulario de los estudiantes.

*Palabras clave: cuentos de hadas, aprendizaje basado en juegos, competencia léxica, componente inferencial, componente referencial.*

## **Chapter I: Introduction**

Regarding Language Teaching contexts, we considered pertinent to examine how fairy tales and games have been useful tools to foster students' lexical competence in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes, especially when it comes to young learners. Mikešová (2006), states that the inclusion of literature (fairy tales) contributes to a good classroom atmosphere, since reading stories allows the teacher to introduce or revise new vocabulary, and it is easier for children to acquire it. In addition, fairy tales as a teaching tool catches children's attention, interest and increments their curiosity, since it enables children's imagination. Other authors such as Barreras (2010), Lazar, (1993) and Lepin, (2012) found that fairy tales provide entertainment and many new topics to discuss with children. Likewise, they are fun and have a rich vocabulary. The authors also support the inclusion of literature into a foreign language class, claiming that it provides wonderful source materials for eliciting strong emotional responses from students. Moreover, these fairy tales combined with Game-based learning would be an effective strategy that allows young learners gather multiple lexical forms of English as the target language. In brief, it is important to analyze and see the impact that fairy tales and games may have regarding children's capacity of communicating ideas; but also, in the ability to represent the world using their acquired knowledge.

The purpose of this research project was to implement fairy tales with children in order to foster the lexical competence in English as a foreign language (EFL) class of third graders in a bilingual school. The analysis follows a qualitative action approach, using surveys and field notes as part of the needs analysis. In this research project, an array of studies would serve as a background for the theoretical framework, followed by the research design in which, the type of study, instruments and the description of the population will be detailed. Finally, the data analysis and the implications will be useful for further research after showing the findings, since teachers,

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researchers and EFL community might be interested in our research project and implement it with different purposes.

### **Statement of the problem**

After the observation made by the researchers, we could notice a need of vocabulary in third-grade students from the school where this project was carried out. This is a bilingual school, and teachers have the opportunity to teach English to their students through different subjects. That is why students have to think and produce knowledge in English all the time. However, during the observations carried out for the Needs Analysis, it was clear that students could not express their opinions or follow the instructions given in English. Based on this, we noticed that students required a strategy that helped them to develop and enrich their lexical competence, which is understood as the ability of using an amount of vocabulary in different contexts. This competence is also known as “the ability to use words in appropriate and effective ways in verbal interaction” (Garcia, 2007 p. 166). On the other hand, but not less important, the students demand to enhance their lexical competence, in order to communicate their ideas effectively through meaningful and encouraging activities, for instance games and fairy tales. In brief, students showed a lack of confidence when they spoke in English because they did not have enough vocabulary. Therefore, it was necessary for us to find strategies to foster students’ lexical competence.

This study focused on the English classes where students had to follow instructions given by the teacher, but also, they had to communicate their ideas to their classmates; all of these must be done in English as the target language. They did not know how to do it because they had a basic bank of words to understand and also to answer to what is demanded. Moreover, this project presents fairy tales and Game-Based Learning as strong strategies to foster the necessity of improving their vocabulary with a didactic and innovative methodology. It means that using a

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common activity such as reading stories, students would enhance their lexical competence and because of that, their possibility to communicate properly.

Firstly, the use of fairy tales and games may provide language context and meaningful teaching strategies to teach language features. According to Decarrico (2001), if learners lack vocabulary knowledge, they soon discover that their ability to comprehend or express themselves clearly is limited. We considered that fairy tales offered wide lexical features that would enhance the lexical competence. Regarding the approach, we used in our project, (Game-Based Learning) Pivec (2004) considers that it is a type of game activity that enables learning outcomes in a meaningful way while encouraging learners due to the accomplishment of goals. We decided to apply these concepts as strategies to implement in third graders English classroom, in order to foster students' essential part of their lexical competence. All in all, the use of common stories and games would allow children to acquire lexical features in context in an effective way.

In order to develop the following study, we proposed the following question and objective:

### **Objective**

To analyze the impact of fairy tales when fostering students' lexical competence.

### **Question**

What is the impact of using fairy tales in third graders' lexical competence?

### **Rationale**

Learning vocabulary in the early stages should be meaningful if it has a proper way of teaching. After observing the development of the selected group in class, we were able to notice the importance of having a broad lexicon in a bilingual school. We are interested in providing useful tools that ensure learning new words, in view of the fact that if learners have enough vocabulary to understand and be understood, they would be able to have a better EFL performance as a key for interaction in English as a foreign language. This research work would

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be a benefit for the young learners who are immersed in bilingual contexts, teachers who intend to provide tools for vocabulary learning, and the EFL community. For us, fostering fairy tales and Game-Based Learning would support not only the development of lexical competence in young learners, but also it would be a way to motivate and engage these students meaningfully.

Firstly, this research work would be relevant when it comes to students' language learning processes in bilingual contexts due to the immersion they will be exposed to. Learning languages in the early stages seems to be necessary since children are still building ways of communication. Genesee (2005), states that "The ability to distinguish between two languages early in development provides an important part of the foundation for building separate linguistic systems" (P.8). In other words, it is a significant part of children's progress when they are exposed to two different languages, due to the fact that they may be able to recognize and identify multiple forms of lexical competence. We consider that providing an environment where the participants are immersed in the target language might be a benefit for them, since their communicative skills would be enriched. In brief, the students would find many benefits regarding communication when they are exposed to lexical features in the EFL classroom.

In addition, teachers who are interested in finding resources to make vocabulary teaching effective may find this project useful. As we have mentioned before, teaching vocabulary is highly necessary especially in young learners. We, as EFL teachers and researchers consider that there may be challenges in the classroom that affect the children's learning processes. Since we were intended to implement fairy tales and game-based learning in order to boost learners' lexical competence, teachers who seek tools that help children acquire new lexical features in a different language would take into account the findings of this project. Moreover, this work would be a guide to overcome the challenges that teachers may find when trying to implement the tools



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previously mentioned. To sum up, researchers and teachers may find useful information regarding games, fairy tales and/or vocabulary teaching strategies in the EFL classroom.

This project might be a benefit for the group we have selected, and probably other researchers in the EFL community might be interested in this topic in the future. First, as lexical competence is at the core of communicative competence development (Caro, 2017), we should adjust the way of teaching vocabulary in bilingual classrooms, which is not about showing forms and meanings. In this case, and as mentioned before, we intend to implement fairy tales due to the wide vocabulary they have to offer. Purposely, it is believed we can relate Game-Based Learning and lexicon acquisition, the former may provide improvement in the development of language skills while supporting motivation (Pivec, 2004), and the latter presents lexical competence as part of communication. We aim to provide vocabulary-learning tools that help our participants feel free to express and use the target language in the EFL classroom.

To summarize, young learners should learn vocabulary in meaningful ways. As teachers, we consider Game-Based learning a useful strategy to increase learners' interest while teaching vocabulary through fairy tales. Language activities based on games offer environments where learners are able to explore alternatives without hesitation or fear of taking risks, they might be determined to achieve a goal instead. It is necessary to provide environments that let students improve their lexical competence, especially in early stages as their communicative skills are still in progress.

### **Chapter II: Literature Review**

For teachers, it is important to explore multiple ways to make learning processes significant and successful. Learning vocabulary should be meaningful, as fostering the use of fairy tales and games in EFL classrooms, would support the development of lexicon especially with young

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learners. Having said this, the principal objective of this review is to define the main concepts in this research project. It is important to clarify that these three constructs are Lexical Competence, Game-Based Learning, and Fairy Tales as a didactic tool. In addition, this chapter not only shows the definition of the concepts, but it also presents the relationship between them, taking into account the differences and similarities that they may have. The first part is the connection between Lexical Competence and Fairy Tales. Secondly, the relationship between Lexical Competence and Game-based Learning. Finally, the connection between Fairy tales as a didactic tool and Game-based learning.

### **Lexical Competence and Fairy Tales**

To start with this theoretical construct, in this section we aimed to explain and describe the main construct used to develop the study, which was Lexical Competence and its relationship with fairy tales as a didactic tool. The objective of this section is to analyze the impact of fairy tales to promote lexical competence in young learners. In order to present the information, first of all there is a definition of Lexical Competence. Secondly, a summary of the main ideas about fairy tales and, finally the connection among these two concepts.

Lexical Competence helps learners to develop their communicative skills as long as they understand the usage of the words. According to Caro (2017), “Lexical Competence can be defined as the sufficiency and capacity of having vocabulary knowledge, being able to associate syntactic, semantic value, functions and forms of the words” (p. 7). The same author, (Caro 2017), highlights the importance of lexis as an essential feature in the creation of communication, prioritizing lexis over grammar. In order to help learners, develop the capacity to communicate in a foreign language, this competence should be at the center of language classrooms. Caro (2017) also argues that Lexical Competence not only allows the learner to comprehend the main characteristics of the words such as, form, meaning and use, but also to apply that knowledge in a

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real communication context. According to the previous ideas, Lexical Competence offers the possibility to improve the communicative competence by knowing the main characteristics of the structure of the words.

On the other hand, it is important to mention the main characteristics of a lexically competent person. Based on Miller (1978), those aspects are “pronunciation and spelling for writing language, syntactic categorization, meaning and pragmatic constraints” (p. 3). In other words, the first item refers to the knowledge about the stress features and also the right way to combine the alphabet letters to have as a result new word. The second item is related to the categorization and organization of the words to create sentences or phrases, taking into account a variety of elements such as, noun, verb and prepositions. The third item, as it was mentioned before, is associated with the specific definition of the words and how they are combined with other meanings. The last one is the learners’ ability to contextualize the whole word in any situation. In brief, a person who is able to develop those three aspects will have a better understanding of the words by being able to use them in any context.

Another important construct of this study is fairy tales. This concept should be taken as an essential didactic tool in the EFL classroom since it provides meaningful learning and students tend to be interested in this kind of activity. Browns (1996) defines them as “the word used to describe any small supernatural being with magical powers” (p. 6). Fairy tales could be used to enrich students’ target language and culture since it provides an understanding of the target group’s perception of their environment and their relationship with it. In addition, fairy tales offer a variety of language contexts in which students can develop, expand and refine vocabulary. Children enjoy listening to fairy tales considering it motivating and fun, besides creating the desire of communication, exercising the imagination and providing a rich resource for education

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about human society. Through Fairy tales, teachers can engage learners since they bring the opportunity to enrich the learners' foreign language in a fun way.

Having these concepts clear, it is essential to establish two main connections among Lexical Competence and Fairy tales. First, fairy tales allow teachers to keep young students' attention. According to Lee (2003), "To keep audience alert and interested, the development pace of fairy tale events such as wedding or murdering. The fast tempo makes the language classes entertaining and enjoyable. As a result, students' attention would keep focusing on learning" (p. 35). Based on the previous quote, it is evident that through fairy tales students can develop lexical competence in the way they are identifying the functions of the words in a variety of situations. Second, it allows students' development of associations among words using fairy tales. Fromkin (1998) proposed that "semantically related words such as "doctor" and "nurse" are located in the same part of the lexicon and once the "path" to that section has been taken, it is easier to trace that way a second time". From that idea, teachers can take advantage of it since these sorts of stories bring the possibility not only to learn the meaning of the word but also to make associations between them, giving the chance of learning more vocabulary at the same time.

This section presents some definitions of Lexical Competence from different points of view and relevant aspects to consider, such as the influence of fairy tales in young students' lexical competence. Taking into account the characteristics of the Lexical competence, it is evident how fairy tales can be used as a tool to promote a different learning process, considering fundamental aspects such as pronunciation, context, association of the words and different ways to combine them. It is also important to have in mind how the implementation of fairy tales can help teachers to develop a meaningful class since students feel motivated with this kind of activity. Having the previous ideas in mind, it is clear that Lexical Competence and Fairy Tales are two important

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concepts that should be considered by teachers in a classroom at the moment of teaching young learners.

### **Lexical competence and Game-based learning**

Fostering Lexical competence in third graders in the EFL class can be a real challenge since they do not have complete management of their L1 lexical competence. However, in the process, students can develop not only their mother tongue but also L2 lexical competence too. Moreover, Game-based learning (GBL) and Lexical competence can be used as the main elements in the students' learning processes providing an attractive and interesting way of learning. In this paper, we will present first the concept of game-based learning and second, how Game-based learning could help to strengthen lexical competence in the EFL environment. Finally, we will take into account some characteristics of the concepts we previously mentioned.

First of all, game-based learning avoids traditional ways of learning and implements new ideas to catch students' attention. As Boyle says "Games offer a unique structure to complement traditional teaching strategies and infuse teaching with energy, spark innovative thinking and provide diversity in teaching methods. Games make learning concepts more palatable for students and supply learners with a platform for their creative thoughts to bounce around" (2011, p3). This means that game-based learning is a tool in which students can learn in an interactive and innovative way. Besides, games have the potential to provide experiences that help to connect skills and content to cross-curricular meaningful situations, helping students develop skills that they can apply in real-world contexts (Bunz, 2016). Finally, Game-Based Learning could allow learners to have fun while gaining knowledge. In short, GBL is a fundamental tool that can be used by teachers in class, since students enjoy playing but at the same the same time, they are building new concepts.

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Secondly, talking about a connection between Game-Based learning (GBL) and lexical competence, game-based learning (GBL) is a tool in which students can enhance, explore and enjoy different topics or issues. In this case the lexical competence, where they can apply it in real contexts in a relaxed atmosphere, and the most important, enjoying the learning process. As Huyen and Nga said, “regarding the effectiveness of games, interviewed teachers reported that their students seemed to learn new vocabulary more quickly and retain it better when it was applied in a relaxed, real and comfortable environment such as while playing games” (2002, p 11). Additionally, it is fundamental to apply the words in a real context, to make the learning more meaningful for students in an EFL class. As Marconi states: “Most approaches to word meaning fail to account for an essential aspect of our linguistic competence, namely, our ability to apply words to the world”. (1997, p23). In summary, game-based learning balances the subject matter with the gameplay, making students feel in a relaxed atmosphere motivated to use their imagination and enjoying while learning.

On the other hand, there are some characteristics in the implementation of game-based learning in the lexical competence. The first is that game-based learning (GBL) could allow students to use their mother language L1, supporting the improvement of the linguistic competence and communicative competences which are components of the lexical competence. Secondly, while applying Game-Based Learning the teacher focuses on the game and, at the same time the teacher has the opportunity to provide feedback and to answer all the questions students could have. On the whole, teachers and students will take part in the process to enhance the learning competence through game-based learning without leaving behind the feedback and the questions students may have.

As a conclusion, this section presents game-based- learning as a tool to enhance lexical competence in the EFL classroom. Considering the points of view previously given, game-based

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learning provides innovative ways and different atmospheres for students, applying what they learn in real contexts and making the process more meaningful and fun. Thus, it is clear that third graders' students can learn while they are playing and even better, they could be able to learn faster than students who learn through regular classes.

### **Game-based Learning and Fairy Tales as a Didactic Tool**

Games and fairy tales can be useful elements in language learning; these two concepts are naturally engaging and entertaining, especially for young learners when teachers apply them in the EFL classrooms. Foreign language teachers are always looking forward to identifying different ways to make learning processes more meaningful, and teaching vocabulary is one of the most important goals, especially with young students. In this section, we will examine different definitions of Game-Based Learning and fairy tales as a didactic tool. We will analyze how games and fairy tales are related and how they can work together. Finally, we will take a closer look at the contrasts these two concepts may have.

Firstly, even though they are informal activities, games and fairy tales in a classroom may have positive educational outcomes. Games are usually considered activities for entertainment; however, Game-Based Learning can be defined as a type of gameplay with educational purposes and outcomes (Plass, Homer, & Kinzer, 2015). Games cannot only be applied in an educational context, but also promotes motivation and allows meaningful learning. According to Pho and Dinscore, "Game-based learning can be used in a variety of ways to enhance library instruction, and research across disciplines supports its effectiveness in the classroom. When designed with learning principles in mind, games can increase student motivation, engagement, and learning" (2015, p.4). Talking about fairy tales as a didactic tool for language teaching, they are considered part of literature that shows cultural material (Davidheiser, 2007). Learners need tools that let them learn in context, literature is definitely helpful because it offers not only significant

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vocabulary, but also cultural characteristics. Thus, Lepin (2009) states that a fairy tale is a story which involves folkloric features. Additionally, Talley (2015) affirms that fairy tales as a didactic tool is an element that enables attention and critical thinking. These tales basically provide learners the ability to boost attention and imagination. Therefore, according to the previous mentioned authors, Game-Based Learning is considered a game activity with educational intentions, and fairy tales are not only literature but also allow a didactic learning process.

Secondly, it is known that games and tales as informal activities or actions are entertaining and encouraging for learners. As Pivec (2004) states about games, motivation is high and young people would spend a lot of time playing, so that it is considered a contributing factor to effective learning. It is also said that Game-Based Learning allows learners to develop the necessity to use multiple skills in context. Plass, Homer and Kinzer (2015, p.260) also acknowledge the high level of motivation and engagement that learners develop naturally while playing. Likewise, according to Talley, fairy tales as product of a language contribute with motivation and engagement (2015), which is a positive impact on learning. Games and fairy tales can be connected in language learning in different ways: both are didactic, motivational and entertaining. Furthermore, teachers can provide a game-based classroom environment focused on literature. In fact, Game-Based Learning and fairy tales as didactic tools contribute with motivation, entertainment and can be connected to students' meaningful learning processes.

On the other hand, Game-Based Learning and fairy tales as didactic tools have features in contrast, for example active interaction and attention. The former highly enables social interaction, collaboration and competition (Plass, Homer, Kinzer, 2015, p. 276). The latter, despite the fact that is a product of social tradition, requires more concentration in order to avoid misunderstandings (Lepin, 2009). Specifically, teachers must be careful when exposing texts for their students, if the texts are too long or complicated, learners may lose interest. Regarding



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games, teachers would probably have to pay close attention to behavioral management (Bunz, 2016). Finally, game-based learning and fairy tales may differ in one way or another; a game demands competition and fairy tales demand concentration.

All in all, Game-Based Learning and fairy tales as didactic tools are helpful tools in learning processes and can be applied in educational contexts. GBL is considered strategy that has learning purposes, and fairy tales are part of literature that provide cultural features. These two elements are didactic, motivating and entertaining. Moreover, they provide environments where learners may feel engaged and explore different contexts and cultural features while acquiring new vocabulary naturally. Nevertheless, teachers have to be aware when trying to implement games and fairy tales in an EFL classroom, they would have to avoid behavioral issues and misunderstandings. In short, fairy tales and Game-Based Learning can work together in order for EFL students to enhance learning processes, making them more meaningful and keeping learners interested.

As a general conclusion about what was mentioned during this chapter, it is important to clarify each one of the concepts explained before and their relationship. Firstly, there is a relevant concept of the research project which is Lexical Competence. Some authors define it as the ability that a person has to communicate using all the knowledge related to the L2 and put it all together in order to express any idea (Caro 2017). Based on that, the Fairy Tales appear as a didactic tool; Browns (1996) expressed this concept as a variety of opportunities to see the world in different ways. They have a strong relationship because in order to create or form their own idea about the world, students require sufficient knowledge to define it; by using fairy tales, young learners would develop this ability. When the participants are exposed to the wide vocabulary that fairy tales offer, they would be able to extend their knowledge regarding lexical competence features. Secondly, we found a connection between Lexical competence and Game-

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Based learning. Huyen & Nga (2002) said, students should learn easier and would feel comfortable using the vocabulary learnt by the use of fairy tales. Finally, there is a connection between Game-based learning and Fairy Tales. Multiple authors cited in this literature review describe this relationship as a didactic way of teaching literature, emphasizing in their use without missing the attention of the students. It is important to take into account that young learners are naturally interested in games. To sum up, this project was based on three concepts working together for the students' sake regarding to the learning process when it comes to vocabulary in English as a foreign language.

### **Chapter III: Research Design**

Over the years, several studies have been undertaken to foster students' second language focusing on the learning process in the different competences and skills either in reading comprehension, writing, speaking or listening. As Robinson states “A communicative view of the interactive nature of lexical negotiation requires that we focus as much on procedures as we do on the more narrowly defined declarative meanings which specialist words have” (1989, p.272). It is notable that for us teachers, it is important to analyze which is the best option to foster vocabulary in order to support the development of lexicon in young learners. Considering this, the principal objective of this research design is to present the main theory of the research project taking into account the type of study, the context and population, the data collection instruments, the ethical considerations and finally pedagogical implementation.

#### **Type of Study**

Firstly, in order to be clear on how this project was applied, it is necessary to clarify what a Qualitative research is and how this was applied in this project. Jackson, Drummond and Camara (2007) stated that “qualitative research is primarily concerned understanding human

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beings' experiences in a humanistic, interpretive approach” (p.21). This is an important reference to understand how the students' behavior during their EFL classes will show their learning process and the effectiveness of the proposed activities. Because they are humans, it is required to pay close attention to any reaction of the students during an activity and analyze if they are having progress in their lexical competence. Another important aspect to consider is what Lapan, Quartaroli and Riemer (2011) mention “Qualitative research designs must be open to change during investigations” (p.203); and this characteristic is relevant because we as teachers must be flexible and clever in order to adapt the classes to give students different options to enhance the ability in which they present some difficulties; in this case, their lexical competence. In brief, a Qualitative Research was carried out since it offers flexibility when it comes to findings related to learning processes.

Secondly, it is also important to understand what an action research is and the impact it had in this study. During this project, it was necessary not only to understand but also to analyze how the students react in each one of the activities designed to improve their lexical competence. Bassey (1998) mentioned that “Educational action research is an enquiry which is carried out in order to understand, to evaluate and then to change, in order to improve some educational practice” (p. 93). The concept of action research is applied in our research project in order to recognize how important it is to understand the necessity of the students, then evaluate the possible options that the teachers have to deal with this issue and finally, modify the methodology, topic, type of fairytale in order to reach the main goal of the project which is, in this case, to enhance students' lexical competence. In fact, actions needed to be taken into account in order for teachers to analyze the impact of the educational practices.

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### **Context and Population**

Talking about the context in which we developed our research project, the school was located in La Calera (Cundinamarca), it is a private bilingual school and its emphasis is “Teaching with excellence a commitment to the future” (George Washington School N.A). The students who were willing to participate in our study was a group of 5 students from third grade whose ages range from six to eight years old, the chosen group had an elementary second language level (A1) according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). (Council of Europe,2001). The students showed enthusiasm to learn English, but just if the topic caught their attention. They also presented a lack of vocabulary since they understood some words in English, but they were not able to produce a single sentence. Besides, the teacher had to speak English and translate the sentences to Spanish for the students’ better comprehension. All in all, it was notable the need in terms of vocabulary to produce complete sentences and the necessity of finding an entertaining topic for participants to get involved in the English class.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

The data collection procedures were an important tool to collect the necessary information for the project and evidence the results of the classes. Harrell and Bradley (2009) stated that "improving data collection techniques will enhance the accuracy, validity, and reliability of research findings... using these methods will help to achieve the goal of carrying out high-quality research with credible findings"(p.2). In other words, the use of data collection allowed researchers to find enough information to evidence the primary ideas. In order to provide accuracy validity and reliability in our research planning, we decided to implement three different data collection instruments: video recordings, class observations, and questionnaires. These instruments were selected by taking into account their characteristics and the needs of the project.

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This text is organized in three different parts, each one of them explains and describes the instruments and how they were used to gather information.

### **Class Observations.**

As a way to collect information, one of the main instruments that were used throughout the project was class observation, in this case, field notes was used as an instrument to gather detailed information about the main aspects that needed to be covered in this part of the study. Marshall and Rossman (1989) define observation as "the systematic description of events, behaviors, and artifacts in the social setting chosen for study" (p.79). Based on the previous authors, this instrument was efficient to analyze a huge number of aspects such as behavior, attitudes, and communication among students. On the other hand, we could observe the time that students spent when they were developing the activities in order to take that information into account at the moment of planning a class. DeWalt & DeWalt (2002) said that "participant observation is the process enabling researchers to learn about the activities of the people under study in the natural setting through observing and participating in those activities. It provides the context for development of sampling guidelines and interview guides" (p.7). In other words, the class observation instrument helped to analyze the process of the students in a real context. By using this tool to gather information we could observe specific aspects about the class, students and their learning process. (see appendices A)

### **Questionnaires.**

To collect specific information, questionnaires were the most suitable tool. Abawi (2013) established that "questionnaire is a data collection instrument consistent of a series of questions and other prompts for the purpose of gathering information from respondents" (p. 10). By using this tool, at the beginning researchers could obtain detail data from the students through a variety of questions in order to know the way students learn better or what kind of activities they feel

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comfortable with. Also, questionnaires were applied during the development of the research, with the purpose to inquire about the process and to make the necessary modifications, finally to check the results after applying the project. It is relevant to mention that it was necessary to adapt the questions according to the participants' ages, the topic of the class and the students' comprehension level for a better understanding. For these reasons, we designed a different questionnaire per class and based on the fairy tale used, where students had to answer more specific questions about the vocabulary seen. As it was mentioned before, this instrument allows the researchers to follow the process of the project step by step, taking into account all the information that is possible to gather from applying the questionnaires. (see appendices B)

### **Video Recordings.**

Video recordings provided the project with a tool that could be used to reflect about the actions that came up in the classroom. Sadalla and Larocca (2004) argued that: "Video recording is suitable for studying complex phenomena such as teaching practice, full of liveliness and dynamism, which is influenced by several variables simultaneously. For them, video recording allows recording even fleeting and non-repeatable events, which are very likely to escape direct observation" (as cited in Garcez, Duarte & Eisenberg. 2011p. 423). This means that through video recordings it was possible to evidence actions that were not noticeable through any other resource. Another important advantage was that we could analyze the whole classroom without focusing the attention on a specific group of students to study their behavior, attitudes, interaction and the way each person was working. The analysis of information with this instrument allows teachers to get more detailed information about the environment of the class even when the teachers are not in the classroom.

**Ethical Considerations**

Having in mind that the population of this project was formed by 8-year-old children, it was important to think about the information that parents needed in order to know that their kids were protected. In addition, this topic is not only relevant for the family, the school where the students belong must have agreed and accepted the project and its purpose. Because of that, we used two different formats to inform the involved subjects about our objective; the first is Parents' consent and the second is School consent format. (see appendices C)

First of all, the Parents' consent format was really important to let them know that their children would be part of a project in which they were the center of interest. The population in this project was, following the laws, under the control of their parents and they have the complete responsibility to authorize or not the students' participation in our project. As Ary, Jacobs and Irvine argue (2018) "Any data of a student may not be available to persons outside the school unless written permission is obtained from the student or a parent/legal guardian" (p.56). In fact, it was necessary to have this permission to work with the students' information and also analyze the results that they have during all the sessions. In this project, we presented a format where the parents were able to see the main objective of the project, which was to analyze the impact that fairy tales have in their lexical competence, but also parents were informed about the instruments to collect data and the people that were carrying out the project.

Second, there was an important part of the process and it is the Directive's agreement of the study. To carry out a project in the institution, they had to know everything about it, the period of time when it was carried out, the main objective of it, the people that worked on it, and the specific population that would be part of it. According to Ary, Jacobs and Irvine (2018) "The consent must indicate the information that will be released, the purpose of the disclosure of the data, and to whom it will be disclosed" (p.57). In fact, to apply any research project, it was

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relevant to have the involved subjects' consent and make sure they knew all the information about how the study was developed.

### **Pedagogical Implementation**

In order to help learners, boost and increase their Lexical Competence as a complement of Communicative Competence, an approach had to be taken into account. The Lexical Approach is not only intended to promote learners' knowledge in vocabulary, but also to comprehend lexical features and uses, in this particular case, of English as a foreign language. According to Lackman (2011), the Lexical Approach provides tools for learners to be aware of lexical chunks, while being exposed to words in a context. However, it is suggested not to focus on individual words, learners might need to understand the "natural" structures of the foreign language rather than the traditional grammar structures or single words. Lackman (2011) also mentions three different types of chunks that might be necessary for learners to identify language variations and their structures: collocations, fixed expressions and semi-fixed expressions. In addition, it is considered that fairy tales as part of literature, are able to show cultural features, contexts and different vocabulary (Davidheiser, 2007). To conclude, the types of chunks mentioned by Lackman (2011), might be found in fairy tales. In fact, the Lexical Approach is an accurate way to support learners in need of improvement of their vocabulary as part of lexical competence during the EFL learning processes.

Additionally, teachers can use Lexical Approach with any methodology, in this project, the idea was to implement Game-Based Learning. It is believed that games can be useful tools to encourage meaningful involvement in learning contexts, since highly engaged learners might be involved in problem-based learning processes by being players (Ke, Xie & Xie, 2015). Also, games provide multiple settings and contexts that can be connected to lexical features, which is key for this project since we aim to develop students' lexical competence through fairy tales.



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Engagement and motivation have a positive impact on learners, due to the fact that students make the effort to be focused while learning content through activities that let them have some fun (Vandercruysse, Vandewaetere & Clarebout, 2012). Shortly, Game-Based Learning and the Lexical Approach can be connected in language learning processes.

Moreover, as the main goal of the project was to boost learners' lexical competence through games and fairy tales, teachers took two hours a week to develop this project. In this space, teachers were free to choose the topics according to students' age and interests, teachers did not really have to follow the school's syllabus or textbooks. As the target group ages are between six and eight years old, it was considered appropriate to work on a different fairy tale for each class where the topics to be delivered were: farm and jungle animals, adjectives for physical appearance and emotions, body parts, values, actions, W/H words and food (see table 1). It was necessary for teachers and students to develop the previously mentioned topics during ten lessons, following Presentation, Practice, Production (PPP), (see appendices D). In most of the cases, Game-Based Learning was applied in the last stages of the classes, as a way to assess or encourage practice and production of the vocabulary learned. We designed a roulette that students had to spin, they found pockets with different questions and activities related to the fairy tale read in class. This methodology allowed researchers to provide a motivating environment while teaching vocabulary through fairy tales.

**Table 1: Timeline**

TOPIC	MAIN OBJECTIVE	FAIRY TALE	GAME
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## IMPLEMENTING FAIRY TALES TO FOSTER LEXICAL COMPETENCE

Course introduction	To introduce the students in the course.	Cinderella	Hot potato
Farm animals	To engage the students with the vocabulary of farm animals and all their characteristics.	The Red Barn	Roulette
Jungle animals	To identify the jungle animals and the vocabulary related with the context.	Jungle book	Roulette
Body parts	To recognize the vocabulary of body parts using it in a real context.	Little Red Riding Hood.	Roulette
Adjectives (physical appearance)	To identify the adjectives and use them in complete sentences.	Snow White	Roulette
Adjectives (emotions)	To establish a relation between the vocabulary and the meaning.	Beauty and the Beast	Roulette
Values	To experiment the values and be able to apply them in their own lives.	Pinocchio	Roulette
Actions	To describe the characteristics of the actions and use them in complete sentences.	Sleeping Beauty	Roulette

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Food	To categorize the food and use the vocabulary in the daily routine.	Hansel and Gretel	Roulette
W/H words	To identify the w/h words and use them in complete sentences.	The Three Little Pigs	Roulette

Table 1.

For us, it was relevant to take into account the research design selected for this investigation, and its implications. We used three main instruments (Questionnaires, class observations and video recordings). These ones helped us to have a better understanding of what happened during the application of the classes that we designed. It is important to highlight that it was required to have a consent format signed by the students' parents to avoid legal implications, and to respect students' privacy. Likewise, the students' participation was voluntary and without any compensation. In addition, we created 10 lesson plans and chose a different fairy tale per class according to the specific vocabulary we intended to develop and applying game-based activities to practice it. As a conclusion, we had to analyze the implications that our research project had.

#### **Chapter IV: Data Analysis and Findings**

The main objective of this research study is to implement fairy tales as a didactic tool to foster lexical competence in children between six and eight years old from a bilingual private school. Considering the objective of this study, we proposed the question: what is the impact of using fairy tales in third graders' lexical competence? The implementation of 10 lesson plans allowed us to find the main components of the lexical competence: Inferential and referential, which let us answer the research inquiry. According to a study by Marconi (as cited in Velasco, 2007) "lexical meaning comprises two different dimensions: referential and inferential lexical

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knowledge.” (p. 165) the ability of communication that a person has is completely connected with two main aspects; first, the opportunity that the person has to associate a concept (word) to an object in real life and second, the capacity of link several concepts in the same category. Furthermore, it was possible to triangulate the instruments of data collection, which shows the evidence through different patterns that have been found during the classes. As Oliver & Allen state: “Triangulation involves the careful reviewing of data collected through different methods in order to achieve a more accurate and valid estimate of qualitative results for a particular construct” (2005, p.132). Having this definition in mind, the purpose of this chapter is to study and to analyze the data collected through three different instruments, obtained from different activities developed in class, in order to foster students’ lexical competence. The first instrument used was class observation, in which we created two different formats with the main characteristics of each element of the lexical competence: inference and reference, the second instrument was video recordings, and the third instrument was a questionnaire that students answered. Based on the previous information, this chapter provides information obtained through the process, which gave us the possibility to understand the role of fairy tales in students’ lexical development. All in all, the analysis of the data collected through the three instruments mentioned before, attempts to establish two categories that support the main objective of the project. The first category was the referential component, which is connected with two sub-categories: word/object association and sound/spelling association. The second category, inferential component which referred to students’ depth vocabulary and the way students relate the words with synonyms. Hence, the categories support the data gathered, and provide relevance to the research project.

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### **Referential Component**

The Referential component was one element of the lexical competence that was found as a category during the classes applied to students involved in this project. According to Marconi, “referential competence totally coincides with the ability a speaker has to relate words to the world thanks to the perception and other cognitive faculties” (2013. P. 2054). In other words, the referential component is the capacity to understand the words in context and project those words in real life, which means that a person who develops this component is able to make word/object associations and sound/spelling associations. As Monaghan, Christiansen and Fitneva state: “sound–meaning associations pertains only to narrow pockets of the vocabulary” (2011, p. 140). This refers to the way the sound of a word can be strongly associated with the meaning. It also makes part of the way the words are written from the sound or pronunciation, which means a person who is able to write correctly a word from hearing it has the ability to develop this competence. Having these concepts in mind, this text shows evidence of the word/object and sound/spelling association through the use of three instruments: first, class observation formats; second, video recordings and finally questionnaires.

### **Word/object association.**

In order to collect evidence about the first division of the referential component in students’ lexical competence, it was necessary to recognize one characteristic of it, which is the ability of the students to associate a new concept with a real object. “A more fundamental difference is that some forms of word recognition may reflect the learning of a mere associative link between a word and an object – a “goes together” understanding,” (Werker. (2000) p4). In the following excerpts taken from the applied classes, it was evident the connection that the students made between concepts presented during the class and some real objects that they easily recognized.

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Once the application of the project started, researchers could notice that students recognized some objects in Spanish, and they tried to say the word in English. This situation was repetitive, especially when students wanted to say a word and associate it with the object. When the implementation of the lesson started, students always needed an object to be associated with English. The following excerpts evidence students' word/object association through all the data collection instruments.

**CLOB:** Class observation

**CL:** Class

**VDR:** Video recording

**Q:** Questionnaire

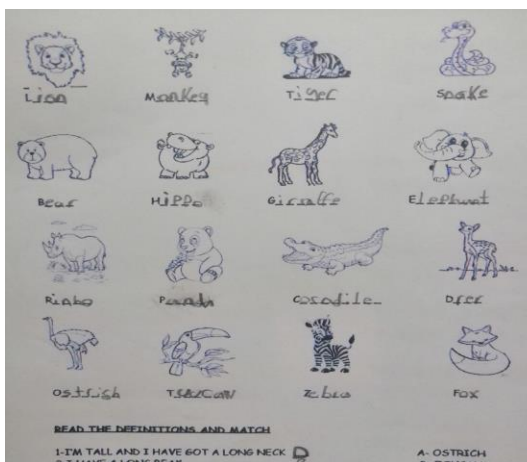
**ST:** Students

*Excerpt 1: (CLOB1).*

Is the student able to associate words to the concept?	1	x		Students understand some concepts like colors and animals but they do not recognize others like tractor. Students identify the animals but with the name in spanish
	2	x		
	3		x	
	4	x		
	5		x	

*Excerpt 2: CL2 VDR1.*

*Excerpt 3: CL2 Q2 ST 3.*



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**Transcript Excerpt 2: min 2:28 - 2:32**

**Teacher:** Do you know what is this?

**Students:** *Lion (as it is written)*

**Teacher:** *Lion? or Lion? (/ˈlaɪən/)*

**Students:** *Lion (/ˈlaɪən/)*

During the observation, the students recognized the images shown by the teacher, they used some words in Spanish to associate them or asked for the meaning of the animal in English. According to Gruenenfelder (2016), “In a word association task, the participant is presented a word, referred to as the stimulus word, and asked to respond with the first word that comes to mind”. (p.1461) This was seen in our project when the teacher presented flashcards of the animals in order to give the students a “guide” to get the correct name or word for the animal and the students said words like “cocodil” or “monki”. At the first time, the teacher asked the students about animals that live in the jungle, he gave them characteristics such as colors or the sound that they produced but students did not recognize them; once the teacher showed the flashcards with the images, they associated the animal with a similar word, not only in Spanish but also they tried using some words in English. Through the application of this project, it was possible to analyze that children connect easily a new concept seen in class when they can touch or see, on their own, an object to associate it with; this represents a better understanding of how the students would remember the concept and apply it in different contexts while boosting their lexical competence.

From the early stages of the application of this project, researchers could identify that students were not able to easily associate a concept with a specific object in the world. In other words, vocabulary is one of the main factors of lexical competence, which needs to be fostered in learners. Word/object association makes part of the way students can acquire new vocabulary. As Buchanan states, “When examining or using word pairs as experimental stimuli, one inherent

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problem is that some words have stronger connections in memory than others” (2012, p.746), we can affirm that EFL learners have the ability to easily make strong connections when they are exposed to aids, in this particular case, visual aids. The stimuli provided enough information in order for us to make relations and connect knowledge in memory. It was noticed with the topic “body parts”, presented through the fairy tale “Little Red Riding Hood”. While students were listening to the story, they were able to identify and point each part of the body.

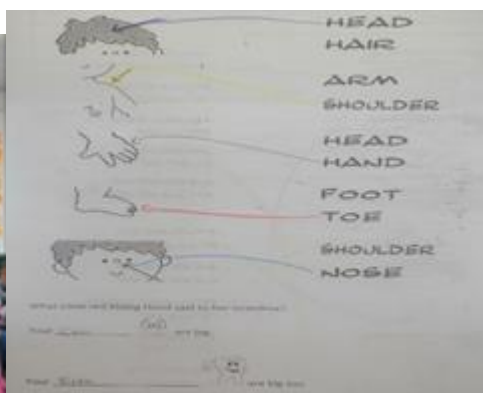
### *Excerpt 4: (CL3B1).*

Components of lexical competence (Referential)	Student #	Yes	No	Comments
Does the student associate the concept with a real object?	1	x		All the students relate the concept of the body parts with their own body, they followed the song "the body parts" to identify each one.
	2	x		
	3	x		
	4	x		
	5	x		

### *Excerpt 5: CL3 VDR1.*



### *Excerpt 6: CL3 Q3 ST 2.*



### **Transcript Excerpt 5: min 4:30**

**Teacher:** what is this? (pointing at his head)

**Students:** head!

Based on the previous information in excerpts 4, 5 and 6, it was possible to identify how students relate the words with the real object. According to Gruenenfelder (2016), “In a word association task, the participant is presented a word, referred to as the stimulus word, and



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asked to respond with the first word that comes to mind” (p.1461). The association made by the students was demonstrated from the beginning of the class, after reading the fairy tale students had to spin the roulette and follow the activities such as matching, answering some questions and singing songs. As shown in the excerpt 3, when the teacher played the song and students identified each part of the body by singing and looking at the teacher’s movements. In excerpt 4, the teacher pointed at a part of his body asking what it is, then learners reply with the proper word. Moreover, students shown the ability to relate a word with an object in the target language. Also, during the questionnaire #3, students could match the parts of the body according to the corresponding name. The participants took advantage of the images, as a good strategy to associate the real part of the body with the new word that they acquired in class. In brief, it is evident that learners made associations between object or stimuli and words from the very first classes.

As it was mentioned during the previous section, word/object association was a repetitive pattern during the classes’ implementation. At the beginning of the process, the students showed the necessity of having a more elaborated vocabulary to communicate their ideas, but they did not have it; however, after the teacher’s explanation, the students showed improvement in their lexical competence during the class, due to the association of new concepts to images or objects. It was remarkable during the association of a simple topic, such as type of animals or parts of the body, the importance of the relationship that students make between a concept and an object, which allow students to develop their lexical competence.

### **Sound/spelling association.**

In the second division of the referential component in students’ lexical competence, it is essential to recognize another characteristic of it, which is the way how students associate the sound and spelling between languages. Blasi, Wichmann, Hammarström, Stadler and

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Christiansenh (2016) assert: “Experimental studies support the hypothesis that humans are indeed sensitive to such associations. It has been demonstrated several times that participants perform above chance when asked to pair up words with opposite meanings (antonyms) in languages unknown to them, and that English speakers might even be able to decide on the concreteness of words from languages to which they have not been exposed” (p.10820). The following paragraphs add concrete illustrations of how students used to associate sounds or spelling in their mother tongue to connect with the meaning of the concept in English.

From the very first class, researchers could observe that students’ use of association between sound and spelling meaning was repetitive in order to communicate in the foreign language. When the implementation of the lesson plans started, students constantly pronounced the words in English with the same sound as it was in Spanish, they heard words and got confused easily. The same happened when students had to write, they used their mother tongue to complete the activities in English. According to Fitzpatrick (2007), there is a strong relationship between the L1 acquired vocabulary and its use in L2 acquisition process. The author explains that there is the possibility of an intervention of the L1 in the way of using the L2 in writing exercises. The following excerpts evidence students’ sound/spelling association through different collecting data instruments.

### *Excerpt 7: (CLOB1).*

Does the student associate sound/spelling-meaning across words?	1	x	Students associate many words to spanish when the teacher asked them to repeat the words, for instance when the teacher ask for pronounce jungle, lion or tiger they pronounce it spanish like.
	2	x	
	3	x	
	4	x	
	5	x	

### *Excerpt 8:CL3VDR2.*

### *Excerpt 9: CL2 Q2 ST 3.*

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**Transcript Excerpt 8: min 39:00**

**Teacher:** Can you tell me what this is?

(pointing at his eyes)

**Student:** The “yes”?

All in all, the examples presented in excerpts 7, 8 and 9, showed specific moments where students used sounds/spelling meaning when sharing their ideas or concepts in English. Excerpt 7 illustrates how a student participated, giving concepts of the reading of the fairy tale, associating lexical features to Spanish; for example, when the teacher asked them to pronounce some words such as jungle, lion or tiger, they pronounced the words, as if they were in Spanish. In that moment, the teacher pronounced the words properly and as a result, students started to pronounce as the teacher did. In addition, in the second example (excerpt 8) students could make an association between concepts when the teacher pointed at his own eyes, the student was supposed to tell what part of the body it was. However, he mentioned a word that sounded similar, but it was not the right answer. In these particular cases, not only can we identify that the sounds are similar, but also the spelling is alike. In the same way, in excerpt 9, the participant confused the word “crocodile” in English with the word “Cocodile”; the last one associated with the word in

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the mother tongue “cocodrilo”. Hence, the data collected exemplifies and illustrates the way students associated sound and spelling meaning.

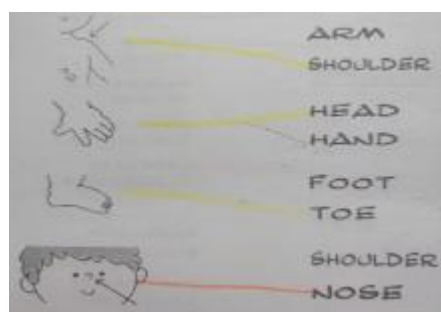
As the students continued learning new vocabulary through fairy tales and games, researchers could notice that sometimes students heard sounds that were similar and got confused. This phenomenon does not really mean that learners were acquiring the wrong knowledge. In fact, this reaction demonstrates that learners could also make a strong connection between sounds and meanings. As we previously mentioned and quoted, according to Basil, “learners are able to pair up or match words with different meanings in languages they do not truly know whether they have been exposed to them or not” (2016, p.10820). There is a higher chance of this phenomenon to happen if the words are alike, so the participants make use of the vocabulary knowledge-based they have stored so far. When this occurs, most of the participants showed confidence when they made this kind of attempts, they seemed sure about what they said due to the similarity between sounds. Thus, learners were also able to make sound-meaning associations, as we can see in the following excerpts.

### *Excerpt 10: CL2VDR1 (Min 00:58).*



**Teacher:** Can you tell me the name of the animals?

**Student:** Kitchen Teacher: (Kitcher” or “chicken)? Student: Chicken

*Excerpt 11: CL3 Q3 ST1.*

The previous examples clearly show how the students related sounds of particular words and they inverted their meaning. For instance, in excerpt 10, the teacher asked the students to mention vocabulary learned during the last class and one of the students says a word that is not related to the topic, but it sounds similar. Then, in excerpt 11, learners were previously instructed to match words with their actual pictures, in this particular case, to pair parts of the body. We can see that the student found the words “head” and “hand” similar and matched the picture of the hand with the word “head”. As Messum & Howard state: “the child uses his own judgement of similarity between what he recovers from the speech input (an acoustic pattern in some theories or a pattern of gestures in others) and what he produces in return to match this. This judgement informs and improves his subsequent production in a “matching to target” process.” (2015, p.125). This phenomenon may occur due to assumptions made by the child when he or she tried to find a representation of speech, and the brain matched a sound with an image. In consequence, the data collected demonstrates the way learners associated sounds across languages and meaning.

In conclusion, learners were able to make associations between sounds and spelling, not only across languages (in this case Spanish as mother language and English as foreign language), but also with similar words in the same language. We could observe in different examples, how students made attempts to connect sounds or forms of the words with the first assumption that

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came to their minds, learners were also able to recover forms of the words in their mother tongue while making these attempts. Researchers also found out that not only the students associated the sounds and lexical features when it came to meaning similarity, but also when the spelling is alike in either language. In consequence, the data collected demonstrates the way learners associated sounds across languages and meaning.

Developing the referential component was a relevant stage of students' lexical competence. It was evident that when applying strategic activities through fairy tales, researchers could notice and study some patterns during the classes by using three data collection instruments: class observation formats, video recordings and questionnaires. Students learned new vocabulary through the process, and they were able to associate words with the objects and applied that new vocabulary to the real life when developing the different activities. We also found how students had the capacity to associate the meaning of the words with the sound that is familiar to them, not only in the L2 but also in their mother tongue. As a result, we identified that even though some of the students had issues at the moment of developing those components at the beginning, they managed an improvement in the associations that they made between concepts in L2 and L1, but also associations between familiar sounds and new concepts.

### **Inferential Component**

As it was mentioned before, the inferential component is the second element that makes part of the lexical competence and it was selected as the second category of our research project. Marconi states that: "inferential component, is the ability to deal with the network of semantic relations among lexical units, underlying such performances as semantic inference, paraphrase, definition, retrieval of a word from its definition, finding a synonym, and so forth" (as cited in Calzavarini, 2016, p.29). In other words, the learner must have a deeper knowledge of the vocabulary, not only to recognize it but also to being able to identify the characteristics of the

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words and give them a lexical organization. As Calzavarini mentioned: “we know that a *cat* is an *animal*, we can verbally describe the differences between a *cat* and a *dog*, we can recover the word *cat* from a definition such as *the animal who meows*, and so on (2016, p.30). The previous statement is a clear example about how inferential component can be explained in daily life words. In fact, it is possible to evidence how it is necessary to make connections among words in order to accomplish it, which means that to develop this component of the lexical competence, it is not enough to have a clear meaning of the words in the mother tongue, the learner also should have the capacity to use it in a more complex way. Having this concept in mind, we focused on two main characteristics of the inferential component: the depth of vocabulary knowledge that refers to how words are well known; and the second, the synonyms, where a learner is able to find words with a similar or nearly the same meaning in the language that is using. Through the implementation of the three instruments: video recordings, class observation formats and questionnaires, it was possible to collect information in order to demonstrate whether or not the students were able to accomplish the inferential component. After having the findings, we could explore the characteristics of the competence and use the information to analyze the patterns that students present when applying the classes.

Firstly, the researchers noted that learners were able to make deep relations among words. In other words, the learners could link a word with categories or groups based on similarity, sound, meaning, etc. According to Choudhury (2015), the “depth of vocabulary knowledge, which he calls “organization”, refers to the relation that a word might have with other words in the language” (pg. 39); we can also define these connections as the ability to classify lexical units, for example, when the students are exposed to a word, they can find words somehow related to it. Choudhury also says that, “The relationship could be paradigmatic (antonymy, synonymy, hyponymy, etc.)” (2015. pg. 40). The previous concept is understood as the capacity

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that students develop to find the meaning of a concept through the use of related or similar words.

In order to see the students' process of building connections among words, the following excerpts are evidence of learners' inference in relation to their lexical competence.

### *Excerpt 12: CL3VDR2 (Min 34:56).*



**Teacher:** Tell me three parts of your body

**Student:** Nose.

**Teacher:** What is your nose?

**Student:** (points at her nose)

**Teacher:** Okay

**Student:** Eyes and leg.

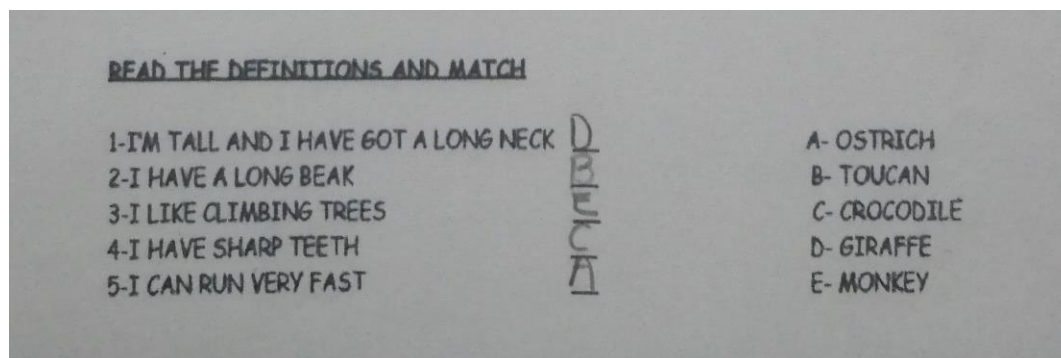
### *Excerpt 13: CLO3.*

Does the student use knowledge for production?	1	4	Most of the students make connections among words based on basic definitions such as parts of the body
	2	5	
	3		

### *Excerpt 14: CL3 Q3 ST2.*



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The previous excerpts show how students provided wide connections among lexical features. For example, in excerpt 12, the teacher encouraged the students to spin the roulette and get a card with a question. The student was asked to mention three different parts of the body, she says: nose, eyes and leg. In this case, the student basically retrieved more than one word of a whole concept, which was “parts of the body”. As Calzavarini (2016) says, examples of inferential performances can be naming from definition, choice of synonyms, etc. (p.29). Being that said, learners were able to provide extensions of a single definition. Additionally, researchers could recognize this ability when they observed the class as shown in excerpt 13. Calzavarini also agrees with Marconi when states that, inferential component is related to the ability to handle chains of semantic connections among lexical units. Such a statement was evidenced in the excerpts 12 and 13. Finally, in excerpt 14, the student matched sentences about actual characteristics of some animals with their proper definition in the target language, all the answers are correct. This is an accurate example of what Calzavarini (2016) calls “naming from definitions”. In fact, learners have been exposed to activities where they have shown the ability to make deep extensions based on definitions.

Moreover, regarding synonyms and as previously mentioned, learners are also able to link lexical units based on similarity regarding meaning, sound, category, etc. As the classes were developed, it was demonstrated how the student made attempts to find the closest meaning for a

## IMPLEMENTING FAIRY TALES TO FOSTER LEXICAL COMPETENCE

word that is unknown to them. According to Webb (2007), “learning the synonyms of known words is a very common occurrence in vocabulary learning, and intuitively and logically, learning a synonym would be easier than learning a non-synonym” (p.120). In other words, during the early stages of language acquisition, like in the case of our students, children genuinely tend to search for similar words in order to acquire unknown vocabulary easier. The following excerpts provide examples of how students made attempts to find words close in meaning either in English or Spanish.

### *Excerpt 15: CL2VDR1 (Min 1:06).*



**Teacher:** What was the topic we learned last class?

**Student:** ¿El pato? ¿el ganso?

### *Excerpt 16: CLO4.*

Does the student	1		x	Students did not have enough knowledge to complete the games, they just wrote the sentences incomplete with few words related to the topic.
use knowledge for	2	x		
production?	3		x	
	4		x	
	5	x		

As the classes were developed, researchers also noticed that students made attempts to find synonyms of words in Spanish. Sometimes, when we are asked to say a word or to give a definition, we try at least to say something similar. In excerpt 15, the teacher asked the students if

## IMPLEMENTING FAIRY TALES TO FOSTER LEXICAL COMPETENCE

they remembered the vocabulary learned during the previous session. One of the students made an attempt to say “goose”, he said “¿El pato? ¿el ganso?” (duck and goose in English) instead. We know that “duck” and “goose” are different animals, but they fit in the same category of birds that live in farms, which makes these words near-synonyms. According to Taylor (2003), “Near synonyms are words which are similar in meaning, which tend not to be contrastive, but which are distributed differently” (p. 50); in other words, they are words that have a really close connection but not necessary with the same or an opposite meaning. Researchers noticed that learners are able to make close attempts to define words using synonyms in the native language, but they need more vocabulary in the target language in order to achieve the goal of defining through synonyms. This need of vocabulary was also evident as quoted in excerpt 16, where the students gave incomplete information during games, and were able to provide related words instead of synonyms. Talking about near-synonyms, Zaiu (2002) affirms that “Using these strong associations, we plan to learn about nuances of near-synonyms in order to validate and extend our lexical knowledge-base of near-synonym differences” (p.68). In other words, learners aim to extend their knowledge foundation regarding lexical features by using strong associations in Spanish as their mother tongue. As a result, learners present a necessity of acquiring new vocabulary in the target language and with this, being able to find synonyms and boost their competence at communicating ideas.

Developing the inferential component was a significant phase in student’s lexical competence. When researchers applied different activities through fairy tales, they could analyze and study some patterns during all the classes students had; these patterns were found through three instruments: class observation formats, video recording and finally questionnaires. At the beginning of the study, the students had not developed; first, the capacity to associate words with a single category and second, the ability to find the meaning of a concept through the use of

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similar words, this was called depth vocabulary and synonyms. Based on the findings, we could notice that students selected for this project were close to the first characteristic mentioned before, where they could connect different words to a whole concept, but they presented less ability where they had to relate words with synonyms, they were able to accomplish this second characteristic in their mother tongue but they needed to foster competence in their foreign language, since they did not have enough vocabulary and knowledge in L2. As a result, we could recognize that students attempted in the first characteristic which is depth vocabulary but in the second one, they were not able to use or look for synonyms in the foreign language as they normally do in their native language.

As general conclusion, during the application of multiple lesson plans based on fairytales and Game-based Learning, we aimed to analyze their impact to boost lexical competence in third graders. We found two components of lexical competence: referential and inferential. The former was defined as the ability to understand the words in context and project those words in real life, in which researchers were able to recognize different kinds of associations made by learners. The students not only were able to associate words and objects, but also sound and spelling in either language (English as foreign language and Spanish as native language). The latter was defined as the capacity of handling deeper knowledge of the vocabulary (not only to recognize it, but also to be able to identify the characteristics of the words). During the application of inferential component activities, students showed that they could provide wide connections among lexical features, such as naming from definitions. Nevertheless, learners still needed to expand their vocabulary in order for them to find synonyms associations in the target language, which is English. All in all, teachers aimed to foster students' lexical competence in young learners through fairy tales and games as didactic tools, implementing different activities based on the

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inferential and referential components in order to improve the ability of the students to communicate their ideas in L1 and L2.

### **Chapter V: Conclusions**

Regarding the need of vocabulary in third graders from a Bilingual school in La Calera where English is the target language and Spanish is the native language, we decided to carry out a project where the students felt more engaged to develop lexical competence. For this purpose, we implemented fairy tales to teach vocabulary in English as a second language through Game-Based Learning. This project aimed to boost knowledge in vocabulary by using the Lexical Approach in ten classes. Thus, the researchers intended to find the impact of the use of fairy tales in young learners who are acquiring vocabulary in English as a second language. This chapter aimed at providing conclusions regarding the research findings on the impact of using fairy tales and games to boost lexical competence in third graders from a bilingual school. The following paragraphs present, first the general conclusion of this research -which is divided in two main characteristics, (The Referential component and the inferential component) through the use of fairy tales and games; finally, we present the challenges that appeared during the implementation of this research project, likewise further suggestions for other studies.

To begin with the general conclusion, it was possible to analyze and conclude that our students or participants in this research project were able to connect the previous knowledge and new knowledge in The Referential component and The Inferential component. The Referential and Inferential components are important characteristics from the Lexical Competence, the lexical competence boost students to develop their communicative skills while they understand the usage of the words, that means that The Lexical Competence not only allows the learner to comprehend the main characteristics of the words, such as, form, meaning and use, but also to

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apply that knowledge in a real communication context. It is possible to say that our students have developed this competence, since during the sessions they demonstrated, through their language use and behaviors, that they are able to adapt to the requirements of the environment in which they find themselves in order to establish communication. To sum up, learner's connections between previous and new knowledge, as well as the use of their communicative skills were evidence of the development of The Lexical Competence.

From the analysis of the collected data, it was possible to conclude that the participants of this research made a connection with words and objects and sounds/spelling which are characteristics of the Referential component. The referential component is one of the components of the Lexical competence. According to Marconi (2013), The Referential component is defined as the capacity to understand the words in context and project those words in real life (p.2054). This characteristic was important in children from third grade because they were acquiring first their mother tongue and then a second language. In addition, one of the main findings that we could observe was that students started to make connections between previous knowledge and new knowledge, in this sense they started to make connections between images that they already recognized and the words that they were learning during the sessions, they also started to make connections between the sounds and spellings, hence, all of this was closely related to the development of The Referential component and The Lexical competence.

As it was mentioned before, the referential component counts with two main subcategories evidenced during the development of the classes. The first one is known as word/object association, which is the ability to relate words to objects in real life. This pattern was evident in our students not only associating the objects with the word in English but also making the association between the object and the word in their mother tongue. The second, sound/spelling refers to the way our participants associated the sound of a word with the meaning

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when they heard it, and also how our participants could write the word correctly when they heard it and pronounce it. In this case, we could notice this characteristic in our students in the way they associated sounds or spelling in their mother tongue to connect with the meaning of the concept in English. Hence, the development of these two characteristics of the referential component presented a remarkable improvement in the students' lexical competence.

Subsequently, the inferential component as one of the main elements of lexical competence, can be defined as the ability to build connections among lexical features. As the lesson plans were applied, it was possible to identify that learners were able to make close associations in terms of depth vocabulary and synonyms. In other words, the participants had the ability to link words to deep extensions based on definitions in the target language. However, in order to find synonyms of words, the learners needed to check their knowledge in the mother language since they genuinely tended to look for similarities of the unknown words in the language they already mastered. The students were able to link words with definitions, despite the fact that they still needed to find synonyms in their mother language to identify the words in the foreign language.

In addition, it is necessary to mention some challenges that we had through the development of the classes and that should be considered by other researchers in future investigations such as questions that appeared and were not solved. First of all, to develop the project in the school and after asking for the school's permission, the students' parents had to sign a consent form to allow students to be part of the investigation; however, only a few parents accepted the process, this situation made the application of the classes difficult, because of the small number of participants. Since these children were part of a bigger classroom and not all the children had the consent from their parents, we had to look for different strategies to collect data without violating the no participant's privacy. After all the process, there was something

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important to mention, and it was the interest that the students showed to learn not only the language but also to participate in the activities and the opportunity to learn new concepts and use them in their daily lives.

Besides the challenges mentioned before, we consider that one important aspect that should be taken into account for future studies is the importance of developing the lexical competence in other population, for example adults or teenagers. This concept let the researchers analyze and understand the way adults learn a second language differently and which advances they have in terms of communication with other people. On the other hand, we consider important to see if there are other types of texts that can be useful to enhance lexical competence. Lastly, it is necessary to mention the importance of learning a new language in our society and how relevant it is the fact to teach this to children. As presented in this document, developing the lexical competence in children opened the opportunity for them to learn new concepts and started to express personal ideas not only in their mother tongue but also in a second language.



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**Appendices**

## A. Class observation format

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Components of lexical competences	Session #	Yes	No	Comments
Inferential Component	2		x	<p>-Students understand some concepts like colors and animals but they don't recognize others like tractor, hay.</p> <p>-Students did not participate in the activity about association.</p> <p>-Students followed instructions like; repeat after me, write the name of your favorite animal, and commands like <i>stand up, sit down, write on your paper, use black pencil</i>.</p> <p>-Students showed a necessity of using Spanish to communicate or even asked any question.</p> <p>-Most of the students did not remember the previous class topic (Cinderella Story).</p> <p>-Some students expressed that they "like" reading these stories and they "like" animals.</p>

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				<p>-Students did not have enough vocabulary to complete the games. Teacher must explain it (sometimes in Spanish)</p> <p>-3 of 5 students wrote a sentence with the words of the topic.</p>
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## B. Questionnaire format.

The following format will be useful to collect previous information of the students in order to have an idea about their English learning process.

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Age** \_\_\_\_\_



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Grade \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

1. ¿Qué tema aprendiste en la clase de hoy? *What topic did you learn today?*

---

2. ¿Que cuento leíste en la clase? *What fairy tale did you read in class?*

---

3. Menciona 5 palabras que hayas aprendido hoy. *Mention 5 words you learned today.*

---

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---

---

4. Escoge un de las palabras anteriores y úsala en una oración. *Choose one of the previous words and use it in a sentence.*

---

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5. ¿Cómo te sentiste en la clase? *How did you feel in class?*



## C. Consent formats.

*Formato de consentimiento informado para padres de participantes del proyecto.*

*Licenciatura en Educación Bilingüe*

*Facultad de Educación*

*Universidad El Bosque*

**Nombre del estudio:** *Implementación de los cuentos de hadas para promover la competencia léxica en estudiantes de tercer grado de primaria.*

**Investigadores:** Angie Rodriguez Garcia, Katerin Varon Lopez, Carolina Rojas and Felipe Cardozo

El propósito de este documento es brindarle a usted (como padre de un posible participante de la investigación) información que podría afectar su decisión acerca de dejar o no participar a su hijo/hija en este proyecto de investigación. Por favor lea la información y realice las preguntas que tenga antes de decidir si le permite a su hijo/hija participar o no en el estudio.

Si decide que su hijo/hija participe en el estudio, este formato será utilizado para recolectar su permiso.

Si está de acuerdo, su hijo/hija participará en el estudio acerca de la implementación de Cuentos de Hadas para promover su competencia léxica en inglés. El propósito de este proyecto es analizar el impacto que este tipo de textos tienen en la habilidad de los estudiantes de tercer grado para comunicar sus ideas.

## IMPLEMENTING FAIRY TALES TO FOSTER LEXICAL COMPETENCE

Su hijo participará en las siguientes actividades:

- Participar en 10 actividades planeadas sobre 10 cuentos de hadas populares.
- Entender y usar vocabulario nuevo en diferentes contextos del ILE.
- Participar en algunas actividades didácticas (Ruleta) con el fin de practicar lo aprendido.

Su hijo/hija podría ser grabado en audio y video y responderá algunos cuestionarios; después de esto, dichas grabaciones y cuestionarios serán analizadas por los investigadores con el fin de hallar resultados al propósito. La participación de su hijo/hija es voluntaria. Él/ella podrá desistir de participar o retirarse del estudio en cualquier momento.

Es importante aclarar que este estudio es anónimo y nosotros no recolectamos ningún tipo de información personal, no tendrá ningún costo participar en el estudio, ni recibirá contribución monetaria

Usted está tomando la decisión para permitir que su hijo/hija participe de este estudio. Su firma en la parte inferior del documento indica que usted leyó toda la información anterior y ha decidido permitirle que participe en el estudio. Si después usted decide retirar el permiso de participación de su hijo, él/ella podrá retirarse en cualquier momento. Usted recibirá una copia de este documento.

Muchas gracias.

Cualquier inquietud puede contactarse a estos correos:

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[kvaron@unbosque.edu.co](mailto:kvaron@unbosque.edu.co)

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Nombre del niño (a) \_\_\_\_\_ Fecha \_\_\_\_\_

Nombre del padre \_\_\_\_\_ Celular \_\_\_\_\_

Firma \_\_\_\_\_

Nombre de la madre \_\_\_\_\_ Celular \_\_\_\_\_

Firma \_\_\_\_\_

*Formato de consentimiento informado para realización de proyecto de investigación en la**Institución**Licenciatura en Educación Bilingüe**Facultad de Educación**Universidad El Bosque*

**Nombre del estudio:** *Implementación de los cuentos de hadas para promover la competencia léxica en estudiantes de tercer grado de primaria.*

**Investigadores:** Angie Rodriguez Garcia, Katerin Varon Lopez, Carolina Rojas and Felipe Cardozo

El propósito de este documento es brindarles a ustedes como directivas del colegio, información que podría afectar su decisión acerca de la aprobación o no de la aplicación de esta investigación en la institución

El proyecto de investigación que se realizara es el último paso para obtener el título como Licenciados en Educación Bilingüe; hemos escogido la institución dado que uno de los

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investigadores labora en el colegio como docente de Ingles y se presentaría una facilidad para la obtención de los datos.

A continuación, presentamos las actividades que se llevarían a cabo si se obtiene la aprobación de la aplicación del proyecto:

- Participar en 10 actividades planeadas sobre 10 cuentos de hadas populares.
- Entender y usar vocabulario nuevo en diferentes contextos del ILE.
- Participar en algunas actividades didácticas (Ruleta) con el fin de practicar lo aprendido.

Los participantes podrían ser grabados en audio y video y responderían algunos cuestionarios diseñados para esta investigación; después de esto, dichas grabaciones y cuestionarios serán analizadas por los investigadores con el fin de hallar resultados al propósito. La participación de los estudiantes es voluntaria. Cada uno de ellos podrá desistir de participar o retirarse del estudio en cualquier momento. De igual manera, los padres de familia tendrán conocimiento de esta propuesta y deberán firmar un consentimiento aprobando o no, la participación de sus hijos.

Es importante aclarar que este estudio es anónimo y nosotros no recolectamos ningún tipo de información personal, no tendrá ningún costo para el colegio ni para los estudiantes, de igual forma, no se recibirá contribución monetaria

Ustedes están tomando la decisión de aprobar la realización de este proyecto en la institución. Su firma en la parte inferior del documento indica que leyeron toda la información anterior y han decidido permitirles a los investigadores realizar el proyecto con la población seleccionada.

Ustedes recibirán una copia de este documento.

Muchas gracias.

Cualquier inquietud puede contactarse a estos correos:

## IMPLEMENTING FAIRY TALES TO FOSTER LEXICAL COMPETENCE

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Firma: \_\_\_\_\_

## D. Lesson Plans

**LESSON PLAN No. 3**

Teachers' name	Katerin Varon, Angie Rodriguez, Carolina Rojas and Felipe Cardozo
Date of Application	
Lesson Number	3
Class time	2 hours
Theme	Jungle animals
Learning objective	students will be able to identify the vocabulary of jungle animals and use it in a real context. (inferential component)
Teaching objective	To encourage students to learn about the jungle animals.
Materials and resources	The Jungle Book, roulette, images, board, markers

**Warm up: 15 minutes**

## IMPLEMENTING FAIRY TALES TO FOSTER LEXICAL COMPETENCE

For the warm up the teacher is going to ask students about the jungle animals, if they know what animals are in the jungle like panther, lion, etc. Later the teacher is going to show to the students, images with the jungle animals to know if to students recognize it.

**Presentation: 30 minutes**

For the presentation the teacher is going to read the book (The Jungle Book) aloud, at the same time the teacher is going to show flashcards related to the jungle animals to get students attention.

**Practice: 30 minutes**

For the practice, after reading the fairy tale, the teacher is going to use the roulette for the students to practice the new vocabulary about jungle animals. The students will be divided to play the roulette in groups of 4 people; in the roulette students will find vocabulary such as type of animals, the colors, food, objects etc. The students who spin the roulette has to describe or say what is the animals and decide if it is farm animal or jungle animal.

**Production 25 minutes**

For the production, in the board the teacher is going to paste images of the different animals of the jungle, randomly the teacher is going to select a student and in front of each image the student has to put the corresponding name of the animal and one characteristic of that animal.

**Evaluation: 20 minutes**

For the evaluation the teacher is going to ask the students to select one animal of the jungle and write a short tale, using the animal and the vocabulary learnt about the animals of the jungle.

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Teacher`s signature

**LESSON PLAN No. 4**

Teachers' name	Katerin Varon, Angie Rodriguez, Carolina Rojas and Felipe Cardozo
Date of Application	
Lesson Number	4
Class time	2 hours
Theme	Body parts
Learning objective	To recognize the vocabulary of the body parts (referential component)
Teaching objective	To explain the vocabulary related to body parts
Materials and resources	Reading: Little Riding Hood, Video beam, board, markers, flashcards

**Warm up: 15 minutes**

For the warm up the teacher is going to play the song "My body parts song" to introduce the topic, the teacher is going to stop the song to ask the students if they could recognize the body part who is naming in the song.

**Presentation: 30 minutes**



## IMPLEMENTING FAIRY TALES TO FOSTER LEXICAL COMPETENCE

For the presentation of the topic, the teacher will read the fairy tale “Little Red Riding Hood” and each student is going to follow the story in their own book. Meanwhile, the students will see the images of the fairy tale to associate what happen during the story.

**Practice: 30 minutes**

For practicing the new vocabulary acquired about the body parts, the teacher is going to play a game called hot potato where the students has to pass the marker hand by hand and when the teacher say stop the students has to stop passing the marker, the student selected will have to spin the roulette related to the body parts. When the student do this, he/she will found a question or an activity to do related with the topic of the class.

**Production: 25 minutes**

For the production, the teacher is going to give to the students an image of a big body without the legs, arms etc. The students will have to complete the body, drawing each one of the body parts and coloring them. Later in front of the each one of the bodies parts the students will have to write the name of each body part.

**Evaluation: 20 minutes**

For the evaluation the teacher will do that orally, with the help of the teachers’ body they will start raising their hand, raising their leg or showing their nose, mouth etc. And randomly the teacher will ask students to give the corresponding name of the body part to realize if students acquire the vocabulary.

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**LESSON PLAN No. 5**

Teachers' name	Katerin Varon, Angie Rodriguez, Carolina Rojas and Felipe Cardozo
Date of Application	
Lesson Number	5
Class time	2 hours
Theme	Adjectives (physical appearance)
Learning objective	Students will identify the adjectives through the fairy tale "snow white" and will be able to use it in different contexts. (referential component)
Teaching objective	The teacher is going to identify if students use the vocabulary learnt during the lesson to develop the activities.
Materials and resources	Fairy tale: "Snow White", flashcards, poster, board, markers, roulette.

**Warm up 15 minutes**

To start the class, the teacher is going to make a game called "Hot Potato" where students will be given a doll that they have to pass hand by hand until the teachers say stop, the students who has the marker in the hand when the teacher asks to stop will have to see a flashcard showed by the teacher and tell the name of the adjective. The objective of this activity is to identify how much students know about this vocabulary.

**Presentation 30 minutes**

To present the topic the teacher is going to tell the students that they are going to read "Snow White" and ask the favor to say stop when they find an adjective while the teacher is reading. The idea of this reading is to engage students with this topic and clarify the meanings that they don't have clear about adjectives.

**Practice 30 minutes**

## IMPLEMENTING FAIRY TALES TO FOSTER LEXICAL COMPETENCE

Students will play with the roulette by groups of four people, where they will find the main characters of the story, and plenty of adjectives to describe them. The student who spins the roulette is going to describe the character and the rest of the group will have to try to guess the what is the character that is being described. The group with more right answers is going to be the winner.

### Production **25 minutes**

In this part, the teacher is going to paste some posters on the board. Students will work by lines, each line will have a marker and when the teacher gives the instruction they will to pass to the board one by one, they will have to describe the person in the poster using the adjectives in complete sentences such as: The girl has long hair, the kid is small, the boy has brown eyes etc. The idea is that students write the descriptions as fast as possible, because the line who has more descriptions is going to be the winner.

### Evaluation **20 minutes**

Students will work in pairs, they will have 5 minutes to right down the adjectives that they find in their partners, then they will have to pass in front of the class together and they will describe each other. In this way the teacher will verify if students understand the adjectives and if they know how to use them in a real context.

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