

Using picture books to promote vocabulary acquisition in the primary English as a foreign language class.

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Relatório de Estágio de Mestrado em Ensino de Inglês no 1º Ciclo
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Relatório de Estágio apresentado para cumprimento dos requisitos necessários à
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Dedicatória pessoal

À minha família por todo o incentivo e apoio contínuo do início ao fim.

I am using picture books to promote vocabulary acquisition in primary English as a foreign language class.

Abstract

KEYWORDS: Picturebooks – Vocabulary acquisition - Retention – Recall – engaging teaching environment

This report describes the action research project I engaged in as part of my practicum as a trainee teacher during my master's degree in teaching English in primary education. It investigated how picturebooks can be used in English as a foreign language class, to promote vocabulary acquisition. This study assessed students' retention and recall in storytelling sessions. The study took place in a state primary school in a town close to Lisbon, Portugal. The students involved in this study consisted of a group of 25 students in year four, with ages between 9 and 11. The students had two weekly one-hour lessons in English during the afternoon period. The study was implemented from early November to mid-January and the method used was a small-scale action research project. The research tools used were three questionnaires and three paired interviews. During the research, I implemented storytelling sessions to expose the students to new vocabulary. The lessons were standardized to create routines in the classroom and the storytelling sessions were implemented in a familiar format to the students. The study concluded that storytelling sessions created an engaging learning environment and that the students had a more successful retention rate than a recall rate. Furthermore, the students often referenced the role of pictures during the interviews which often aided them in remembering the words and even the plot. The students could often remember the words and plot in Portuguese, however, had difficulty doing so in English.

Utilização de livros infantis para promover a aquisição de vocabulário nas aulas de Inglês de primeiro ciclo.

Resumo

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Álbuns ilustrados – aquisição de vocabulário – Retenção – Relembrar – ambiente de aprendizagem envolvente.

O presente relatório descreve o projeto de investigação-ação desenvolvido no âmbito do estágio realizado durante o mestrado em ensino de inglês no ensino primário. Teve como objetivo investigar como os livros ilustrados podem ser utilizados nas aulas de inglês de primeiro ciclo, para promover a aquisição de vocabulário. No decorrer do estudo foi avaliada a capacidade de retenção e de relembrar dos alunos que participaram de sessões de histórias. O estudo foi realizado numa escola primária pública numa localidade próxima de Lisboa, Portugal. Os alunos envolvidos neste estudo consistiram num grupo de 25 alunos do quarto ano, com idades entre 9 e 11 anos. Os alunos tiveram duas aulas semanais de inglês de uma hora durante o período da tarde. O estudo foi implementado entre o início de novembro e meados de janeiro, e o método utilizado foi um projeto de investigação-ação de pequena escala. Os instrumentos de pesquisa utilizados foram três questionários e três entrevistas realizadas em pares. No decorrer do estudo foram implementadas sessões de conto histórias de forma a expor os alunos ao novo vocabulário. As aulas foram standardizadas, de forma a criar rotinas na sala de aula, e as sessões de conto de histórias foram implementadas num formato familiar para os alunos. O estudo concluiu que as sessões de histórias criaram um ambiente de aprendizagem envolvente e que os alunos tiveram uma taxa de retenção bem-sucedida, mas que o mesmo não se revelou na taxa de relembrar. É relevante referir que os alunos fizeram frequentemente referência ao papel das imagens durante as entrevistas, fator que muitas vezes os ajudou a lembrar as palavras e até mesmo o enredo das histórias. Os alunos conseguiram diversas vezes lembrar-se das palavras e do enredo em português, no entanto demonstravam dificuldade em fazê-lo em Inglês.

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Introduction

This action research originated from the question: How do picture books contribute to the enhancement of students' recall and retention rates in ESL elementary classrooms? During my MA in primary English education, this question often presented itself. We had been introduced to the value of explicit learning as well as the usefulness of picture books in EFL classes, therefore it became clear that picture books could serve as an explicit learning tool. Explicit learning involves conscious awareness and intentionality. Explicit learning often involves formal instruction, where rules and concepts are clearly explained and practiced. This type of learning is characterized by the deliberate effort to encode information and often includes metalinguistic knowledge to facilitate understanding and retention (DeKeyser, 2002). By using explicit learning teachers can more easily expose students to potential real-life scenarios. As the goal of any foreign language teaching is to set students up for success, introducing them to a language they can use is of the utmost importance. In primary English education, the teacher must consider the student's language level. Young learners are curious and motivated by nature, however, do not possess the learning tools that older students might. This creates a challenge when creating activities for young learners in the context of EFL classes. As it is a new language with words that they have yet to be introduced to, explicit learning can be used in the classroom when students do not have an extensive language repertoire. It quickly became clear that picture books are a common activity used in learning contexts for young learners. The students are already familiar with the formats and even with the 'rules' of picture books, one of them being that usually there is a moral to each story. The familiarity works in favor of the students' success in acquiring vocabulary. Young learners are familiar with the process of storytelling through the use of eye-catching visual support, and the creative and interesting stories keep them engaged. Taking this into account, I aimed to understand if picturebooks' engaging characteristics, could be a helpful tool to promote vocabulary acquisition, focusing on retention and recall. Krashen (1982) defined recall as the ability to retrieve and use information or language previously learned. An example is involving an active retrieval of language from memory, such as trying to produce a sentence or answer a question in a second language. The author refers to retention, as the ability to maintain and store language knowledge over time. It is about how well information is preserved in the memory, ensuring that it remains accessible for future recall. Therefore, this research aims to explore the role picture books can have in

EFL classes in the recall and retention of vocabulary. It is known the role stories can have in the lives of young learners; thus, it is also important to highlight the role they can have when used in teaching. Using picture books to explore language and to provide explicit learning scenarios without leaving the classroom can be an excellent tool for teachers. Using the work of diverse authors, such as Kirsh (2016), DeKeyser (2002), and Mourão (2016), I aim to answer my research question of how can picture books be a tool to stimulate students' retention and recall of vocabulary.

Chapter 1: Literary Review

To theoretically contextualize my action research, and explain its purpose and aims I will start by using the work of Cameron (2001), Kirsh (2016), DeKeyser (2002), Kuśnierek (2016), Krashen (1984) and Mourão (2016) to explore the topic of picture books in language development. This section contains a review of recent and relevant literature regarding the role of picture books in elementary EFL classes. In the context of teaching vocabulary in elementary EFL classes, researchers such as the ones introduced above, often have mentioned the importance of narrative and contextualized learning. I will allude to different authors who have claimed that contextualized learning can be key in vocabulary acquisition for young learners. By connecting the importance of using meaningful activities in EFL class with the potential picture books have in those scenarios, I will answer the question I posed: what can be the role of picture books regarding retention and recall of vocabulary?

1.1 Vocabulary acquisition in ESL class for young learners and implications for teaching

Cameron (2001) stresses the importance of understanding the developmental stages of young learners. She highlights that younger children have different cognitive and linguistic needs compared to older learners. Vocabulary instruction should therefore be tailored to be age-appropriate, engaging, and relevant to their everyday experiences.

The author mentions contextualized learning and how vocabulary should be taught within meaningful contexts rather than in isolation. Cameron suggests using stories, songs, games, and real-life situations to introduce new words. This approach helps children to see the practical use of vocabulary and aids in retention and understanding.

The author also states the importance of using repetition and recycling. Frequent exposure and repeated use of new vocabulary are essential for young learners. Cameron points out that children need to encounter new words multiple times and in various contexts to effectively internalize them. Activities should, therefore, be designed to recycle

vocabulary through different modalities—listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Cameron advocates for the use of pictures, flashcards, gestures, and role-playing to make new words more memorable. These strategies help in making abstract words concrete and easier to understand.

The author claimed that fostering an environment where children are curious and eager to explore new words is vital. Suggesting that teachers should encourage questions and provide opportunities for children to discover new vocabulary through exploration and play. It also highlighted the importance of ongoing assessment to monitor vocabulary acquisition and adjust teaching strategies accordingly. Cameron, therefore, recommends using informal assessments, such as observations and checklists, as well as more formal methods to track progress and identify areas needing reinforcement.

Overall, Cameron's insights emphasize a holistic, interactive, and child-centered approach to vocabulary acquisition in ESL classes for young learners. Her recommendations underscore the importance of creating a supportive and stimulating environment that promotes natural and effective language learning.

1.2 Retention and Recall in ESL class

According to Krashen (1982), retention involves the effective storage of language knowledge through meaningful input, while recall is the ability to access and use this stored knowledge, facilitated by a supportive and motivating learning environment.

The author affirms that for effective retention, learners need ample exposure to comprehensible input. The more frequently learners are exposed to meaningful language input in various contexts, the better they will retain the new language. Retention ensures that the language remains in the learner's long-term memory, making it available for future use. Krashen references recall as the process of accessing and using the retained language knowledge. For effective recall, learners must not only have retained the language but also be able to retrieve it efficiently. This indicates that teachers should focus on providing rich and varied input that is both comprehensible and slightly challenging. Activities that involve listening to and reading authentic language materials can help strengthen retention by embedding language structures into the learner's long-term memory. Activities that encourage active use of the language, such as speaking exercises, role-plays, and interactive discussions, can help learners practice retrieving and using the language they have retained.

1.3 Explicit learning and young learners' willingness to learn.

DeKeyser (2002) states that explicit learning involves conscious awareness and intentionality. It is analytical and involves processing information in a deliberate and structured manner. Explicit learning is typically associated with classroom settings where structured teaching and learning activities are employed to convey specific linguistic rules and concepts. DeKeyser (2002) emphasizes the importance of integrating explicit learning in teaching. By integrating this approach, educators can address the diverse needs of language learners and create a more balanced and effective learning environment.

Cameron (2001) mentions that young learners have a natural willingness to learn. One of the qualities of YL is their innate motivation and curiosity to learn new topics. Using picture books and songs in EFL classes can be a way to make use of those qualities. Additionally, the importance of meaning is also explained throughout her work. The author writes about the need to create meaningful activities for young learners to help with their acquisition of vocabulary. Regarding this aspect, one can argue that the use of picture books by teachers can create more meaningful activities in the classroom.

Stories have always made their way into our everyday lives. Stories are presented to us in the most diverse formats and can also evoke memories and feelings. Stories can serve many purposes and if one could go back to the time of traditional folklore stories, one would determine how stories set up different contexts and transport us to different realities with the objective of, even back then, teaching the listeners a lesson. Mourão (2016), translates these concepts to EFL classes. The author argues that by creating carefully selected narratives and visual elements, teachers can create environments that not only stimulate linguistic development but also foster a genuine engagement with the language. Mourão goes as far as to defend how picture books, through the introduction of cultural diversity, can become agents of cultural awareness, exposing young learners to a variety of narratives and perspectives. The repetition factor of picture books could also be seen as a key element that helps with the acquisition and retention of vocabulary by stimulating memory. These aspects can be seen both in picture books and songs, and their characteristics contribute to their success in EFL classes. Kuśnierek (2016, p.23) suggests, that one of the benefits of music is that “there is a possibility to sing without listening to any recording”. It could be suggested that the rhythm, both in songs and picture books, stays with us long after they have ended. This factor can be of great importance when applied to vocabulary acquisition. If picture books have the potential to stimulate

memory, used in an EFL class, they could be extremely useful to retain and recall new vocabulary.

1.4 Using picturebooks in EFL classes

Picturebooks are often used in EFL classes, specifically with young learners due to their explicit and interactive characteristics. Picturebooks are often described by quoting Bader's description:

A picturebook is text, illustrations, total design; an item of manufacture and a commercial product; a social, cultural, historic document; and foremost, an experience for a [reader]. As an art form, it hinges on the interdependence of pictures and words, on the simultaneous display of two facing pages, and on the drama of the turning page. (1976, p. 1)

Ellis and Brewster (2014), state that “stories are motivating, challenging and enjoyable and can help develop positive attitudes towards the foreign language, culture and language learning (p.6)”. The benefits of including picturebooks in language classes are also explored in Kirsh's (2016) research by using practical examples. The author highlights the numerous benefits of incorporating storytelling into vocabulary instruction. Kirsh provides an overview of the theoretical underpinning supporting the use of storytelling as an effective teaching strategy. The author emphasizes how stories have been an integral part of human communication since ancient times, offering a natural and intuitive approach to language acquisition. This way, Kirsh is also applying Dekeyser's (2002) ideas of explicit learning.

Kirsch's article delves into the effectiveness of employing storytelling as a pedagogical tool in language learning. One of the key strengths of Kirsch's research lies in her ability to bridge theory and practice. The author presents a variety of innovative classroom activities and techniques that demonstrate how storytelling can be seamlessly integrated into language lessons. From story-based discussions to creative writing exercises, she offers practical ideas that promote active engagement and meaningful interaction among students. This practical focus makes her work a valuable resource for educators seeking to enhance their teaching methodologies. Kirsch also examines the cognitive processes involved in vocabulary acquisition through storytelling. The author explains how narratives provide learners with a contextual framework that facilitates the comprehension and memorization of new words. By including target language within meaningful and memorable narratives, students are more likely to develop a deeper

understanding of word usage and collocations. This method fosters a holistic approach to language learning which promotes increased linguistic and cultural competence. In her research, Kirsh used an ethnographic approach which was interpretive and based on qualitative data. The author used non-participant observation, interviews, and simple assessment tests and documents as methods for collecting data. For the interviews, Kirsh conducted one before the storytelling to understand if the children had any previous knowledge of the story and one afterward to see what the children could re-tell from the story.

In addition, in her article, Kirsch highlights the socio-affective benefits of storytelling in EFL classes. She argues that stories tap into students' emotions, stimulating their interest and motivation. As Cameron (2001) suggests, it is important to create meaningful activities in order to promote a more engaging environment for young learners. Storytelling cultivates this environment and motivates students. Through emotional engagement, learners are more inclined to invest their attention and effort into acquiring vocabulary.

Both song and picturebooks rely on the aspect of repetition and engaging themes. Once one has made this connection between the two formats, one could argue that both can create a welcoming and positive environment. This idea can be seen once again in Huertas and Parra's work (2014). The authors mention that throughout their research, they noticed that the use of songs enhanced positive feelings, self-confidence, and enjoyment among the students.

In her work, Kirsh also concludes that the students were engaged through the process of storytelling and were eager to participate in the activities. The author also mentions that the children were able to recall lexical items as well as to describe the contents of the stories over a period of time. Kirsh argues that a few explanations can be given for these results such as "a repetitive text; the presence of the key structures in several texts; the frequency of encounters; the teaching strategies that allowed for both explicit and incidental learning; the motivating and creative tasks; the children's sustained engagement and participation, and a pedagogy based on social constructivist theories (Kirsh, 2016, p47)". These potential reasons overlap with Schmitt's (2008), Fan's (2016), and DeKeyser's (2002), studies. By using explicit learning, chunks of language, repetition, and engaging activities, young learners are more likely to recall and retain vocabulary. A recurring thread amongst the articles mentioned above is the emphasis on intentional pedagogical integration. Teachers as active participants in the language

learning process, play a crucial role in the selection and utilizing picture books purposefully. From enhancing language skills through multisensory engagement to fostering cultural competence and promoting intentional pedagogical integration, the versatility of picture books as effective and engaging tools for language learning becomes clear.

Chapter 2: Action Research

2.1 Context

2.1.1 Participants

I conducted my research in a primary state school. The research was conducted in a fourth-grade class with 25 students twice a week with one-hour-long lessons. Initially, the class had 24 students however during the first semester a new student enrolled in the school and was integrated into the class. The class featured 25 students, 6 girls and 19 boys. There were two students who had special needs whose difficulties revolved around reading and writing. Despite their struggles with writing activities, both students were motivated and willing to participate in oral activities. Four students came from Portuguese-speaking African countries and although they spoke Portuguese, there was still a noticeable language barrier. The school had a total of 10 classes and was working with a dual schedule: half of the classes had the morning schedule, and the other half had the afternoon schedule. This class had an afternoon schedule, and our lessons took place in the final hour of the day. This particular fact, aligned with the crowded classroom, which was filled to its maximum capacity, may have contributed to this class being This class was agitated and having difficulty settling down. This was an issue that persisted during the research. The students had a good level of English (their L2), they were able to interact with the language, answer questions related to what they were learning, and do the exercises they were presented with. Despite their behavior, the students were often motivated and engaged in the lessons.

2.1.2 The lessons

The lessons were divided into two parts. In the first part of the lesson, I would introduce the target language using flashcard activities. New language was only introduced at the start of a new Unit according to the students' book adapted by the school. I used flashcard activities at the beginning of the lesson to both introduce and practice vocabulary. In the

second half of the lessons, I would either practice the language introduced beforehand or use picture books to do my research. The target vocabulary was chosen according to the *Aprendizagens Essenciais* (DGE, 2018) of the fourth grade for EFL. For this class, this students' book used the "Easy Peasy 4" (Abreu & Esteves, 2023). In "Easy Peasy 4" the target language chosen was included in Unit 1, Body Parts, in Unit 5, Animals, and in Unit 6, Food and Drinks. Despite their behavior and difficulty settling down the students' overall English knowledge was good. The students were able to understand chunks of language and use the language reasonably, due to their third-grade English lessons. The students successfully interacted with the language by identifying the target words, corresponding to each lesson, on the board with flashcards, and using them in written exercises. The class performed the majority of the activities really well and was always very eager to participate. The format of the lessons was consistent, with opening and closing segments to establish routines, storytelling-dedicated lessons, and lessons dedicated to data collection. This way I was able to introduce the vocabulary that appeared in the stories, assess the students' immediate retention rate and, in the following lessons, assess their retention and recall rate of the target vocabulary.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 The materials

For my action research, I used picture books to promote students' vocabulary acquisition with a primary focus on retention and recall. By doing so I explored the role picture books can have in helping the retention and recall rate of target vocabulary. By using an action research method, I delved into the issue mentioned above, while interacting with the students, thus applying the "action" component through planned lessons with specific moments of intervention. Using this method allowed me to do my research focusing both on the research and action simultaneously. Furthermore, it allows the researcher to shorten the gap between the ideal and the reality on which the research is being done. In our lessons we often try to introduce vocabulary in the most meaningful way possible, therefore, I executed action research that allowed me to measure if the students' retention and recall rates were higher when the teacher used picture books. My research included activities that used picture books as explicit learning methods. Using explicit learning has shown to be useful in EFL classes, especially with young learners. By using explicit learning with young learners, the students can easily learn through simple sentences as 'chunks' even without understanding them as grammatical structures. This can happen by

using is due to the explicit nature of using contextualized activities to practice language, allowing the students to use it in a more conscious manner. As my research methodology, I used a small-scale classroom-based action research adapted from Kirsch's (2016) methodology over a two-and-a-half months period. In her research, Kirsh focused on the uptake from listening, the acquisition of multiword expressions, and anecdotal experience. With these in mind, Kirsh developed her research methods by focusing on recall and retention instead of the acquisition of lexical items. In my action research I focused primarily on the recall and retention aspects of vocabulary acquisition given the students' language level. My research was conducted on a fourth-grade class using the students' course book as a reference for the language making sure it was in alignment with the *Aprendizagens Essenciais* (DGE, 2018). I used the book *From Head to Toe* (Carle, 2006) to introduce the body parts related vocabulary, the book *I Am a Tiger* (Newson & Collins, 2019) to introduce vocabulary related to animals, and the book *Handa's Surprise* (Browne, 1994) to introduce vocabulary related to foods. These picture books relate to the vocabulary of *Aprendizagens Essenciais* (DGE, 2018) for the fourth-year level of EFL. To collect data regarding the retention and recall rates, I decided to use picture books solely in the lesson when new vocabulary was being introduced, this way it was clearer if the students were able to remember the target language.

2.2.2 Research Framework

The research was conducted throughout October, November, December, and half of January. During the first month, the learning objectives for the students were defined, and the picture books were chosen, according to the *Aprendizagens Essenciais* (DGE, 2018) for the fourth grade. In the selection process, the theme and the plot were considered. The picturebooks had to integrate the target vocabulary, and be relevant and engaging to the learners. During this period the questionnaires and the interviews were crafted to fit the picturebooks. For the first storytelling session, I selected the book *From Head to Toe* (Carle, 2006) which used body parts-related words, such as "head, neck, shoulders, arms, hands, back, legs, and feet". The plot was simple and included animals doing certain movements with their body parts and two children, a boy, and a girl, trying to mimic those movements. For the second storytelling session, I selected the book *I Am a Tiger* (Newson & Collins, 2019) to practice animal-related vocabulary. In this picturebook, a small mouse is determined that he is a tiger. During the story, the other animals in the book, a fox, a raccoon, a bird, and a snake try to explain to him that he is

not. The animals do so by comparing different tiger traits to mouse traits to make the little mouse understand that he could not be a tiger. However, the mouse always manages to spin it around and justify that he also can do all those things, such as roar, jump, climb, and even hunt. At the end of the story, the animals realize that the mouse does not know what most things are named and even compares them to fruits and objects. The listener of the story reaches the conclusion that the little mouse simply believes in himself and does not allow labels to define what he is and what he is not. Lastly, for the third storytelling, I selected the picture book *Handa's Surprise* (Browne, 1994), to practice fruit-related vocabulary. In this picturebook, a little girl called Handa wants to surprise her friend by bringing her favourite fruits. During the walk to her friend's house, several animals appear and steal different fruits. As she is walking, she keeps thinking about whether her friend will like the gift. When Handa finally arrives at her friend's house, it seems as if there are no fruits left. However, Handa quickly reveals that she had her favourite fruit hidden all along.

During the second month, the storytelling sessions were implemented. The students were familiar with the storytelling format, as it is a common practice in their school. The lessons that included the storytelling sessions, had the same format. The lesson would start with the opening routines to establish consistency in the classroom and cue to the students what was expected of them during each activity. Afterwards would follow the flashcard activities to introduce the language. This way the students were introduced to the words and had a chance to practice them orally. This was followed by the storytelling sessions in which a physical picturebook and story-related flashcards were featured. Using a picturebook in the material format allowed me to circulate the classroom and give the students a chance to come closer to the material. Using flashcards related to the story created a more interactive session, as I asked the students to point, repeat, or even lift the flashcards or mini flashcards. The storytelling sessions ended with employing the questionnaires to assess the students' immediate retention rates. The interviews were conducted during the following lesson to assess the students' recall rates.

2.2.3 Research ethics

At the beginning of my research, I used consent letters to submit to both the parents (Appendix A) and the students (Appendix B). Before submitting them to the parents I submitted an introduction and authorization form to the school cluster's Director (Appendix C). In the consent letters, I explained what my research was about and what

and how I would be conducting the research and data collection. In the lesson, I handed out the consent letter to the students I made sure to explain in simpler language what would be happening during the research time and that it was not mandatory. This consent letter ensures that the parents are truly informed about what the students will experience. By using consent letters with the parents and the students we give them a chance to make an informed decision about the activities and whether they are comfortable with the students participating. Ensuring the parents give informed consent creates an environment of mutual respect which allows the research to go more smoothly. Using consent letters also gives a safeguard to the researcher conducting and writing the research.

2.2.4 Storytelling sessions

For this action research, I performed three storytelling sessions. As mentioned above the storytelling sessions aimed to create an explicit learning moment for the students. For the storytelling sessions, I aimed to create sessions with formats that the students were familiar with, such as introducing the story by referencing the author, and the title and bringing awareness to the elements on the cover. At the beginning of the lessons that included the storytelling sessions, I would always have introduced the target language using flashcard activities. By doing so the students were already introduced to the vocabulary and the storytelling session served almost as a consolidation exercise. The storytelling session started with the introduction of the picturebook and the storytelling followed. For the first storytelling session with the picturebook “From Head to Toe” (Carle, 2006), I explored the body parts and movements introduced at the beginning of the lesson. I encouraged the students to participate by repeating the target language and to help tell the story by finishing some sentences that were repeated several times during the story. For the second storytelling session with the picturebook “I am a Tiger” (Newson & Collins 2019), I also started by introducing the picturebook highlighting the same elements as in the first session. For this session, I stuck the flashcards, with images of the animals, on the walls of the classroom and, instructed the students to point at them when they appeared in the story. By doing so, I aimed to further include the students in the storytelling session making it more interactive. For the last storytelling session with the picturebook “Handa’s Surprise” (1994) by Eileen Browne, session I handed out mini flashcards with images of the fruits represented in the story to the students. I then instructed them to raise the mini flashcards when they appeared. This also aimed to give

the students purpose when listening to the story. All the storytelling sessions ended with a questionnaire handed to the students.

2.3 Research tools

2.3.1 Data collection

For my data collection, I used the methods I believed would be the most successful in assessing the students' retention of vocabulary. For collecting quantitative data, I used questionnaires to assess the student's retention rate. Using questions related to the story and the target language. The utilization of questionnaires and interviews served as the cornerstone of data collection, enabling an analysis of both immediate retention rates and subsequent recall rates among the student participants.

2.3.1.1 Questionnaires for quantitative data collection

The questionnaires were strategically used immediately after the storytelling sessions, aiming to assess the students' immediate grasp of the vocabulary introduced during the lesson. For each storytelling session, I used one questionnaire tailored to each storybook. The first questionnaire had nine questions in total. The first picturebook used was the shortest. The plot was simple, the images had bright eye-catching colours and the vocabulary was easy to memorize due to the sentences and structures simplicity. For the first picturebook, I assessed whether the students were able to remember body-related words such as Head, shoulders, arms, hands, back, knees, legs, and feet. The second questionnaire was tailored to the second picturebook. It included thirteen questions that aimed to assess whether the students were able to identify the animals in the story by connecting them to the corresponding images. It also had a plot-related question which allowed us to assess whether the students understood the story and could contextualize its characters. For the second picturebook, I assessed whether the students were able to remember animal-related words such as Tiger, mouse, raccoon, fox, snake, and bird. The third questionnaire had seventeen questions, which similarly to the second one, were tailored to the third picturebook. I assessed whether the students were able to remember fruit-related words such as tangerines, bananas, pineapple, guava, avocado, mango, and passion fruit. The questionnaires were crafted to include direct questions regarding the meaning of the vocabulary introduced in the picture books, thus serving as a proxy for assessing immediate retention. Additionally, the inclusion of questions regarding the plot of the picture book enabled an evaluation of students' comprehension beyond mere vocabulary recognition. By soliciting responses in a controlled classroom setting

immediately post-storytelling session, the questionnaires facilitated a systematic analysis of vocabulary retention within a constrained timeframe.

2.3.1.2 Interviews for qualitative data collection

For collecting qualitative data, I used interviews. The interviews were conducted approximately one week later, providing a temporal separation between the storytelling session and the recall assessment, therefore affording insights into the students' short-term retention capabilities. The interviews took place 3-5 days after the storytelling sessions. The interviews were conducted in the classes following the storytelling sessions as a method to assess the students' retention rate of the story and the target vocabulary after a few days. The interviews were conducted in the classes following the storytelling sessions as a method to assess the students' retention rate of the story and its 'chunks' of language after a few days. The interviews were audio recorded and were conducted in pairs. The questions were semi-fixed to allow the students to use their knowledge of the stories if they felt like it. I chose to conduct the interviews in pairs to make the students more at ease. The student's classroom had a smaller room next to it which was empty during the lessons. I chose four pairs of students according to their personalities and profiles. I chose 1 stronger student who would often be more talkative to be paired with a timid student who would more difficulty opening up. By employing this method, the stronger student often encouraged the weaker student to participate and share their recollection of the story as well as their opinion. By engaging in dialogue with pairs of students, the interviews aimed to elicit nuanced responses regarding their recollection of the vocabulary introduced with the picture books.

2.3.2 Data analysis

When analyzing quantitative data, I used tables to express the percentage scales and graphs. To analyze qualitative data such as the interviews I used transcription to categorize the information and organize it. The information was organized, firstly by the transcripts made from the interviews and then categorized. The first category was the students' ability to remember the target words in the L2, the second was their ability to remember the target words in the L2 and the third category was relevant and impactful mentions to the images in the picturebooks. A key objective of employing these distinct research tools was to differentiate between retention and recall processes. While questionnaires facilitated the assessment of recall rates by presenting the students with targeted questions concerning the vocabulary and plot of the picture books, interviews

offered a more in-depth exploration of retention abilities. The structured nature of the questionnaires allowed for the quantification of vocabulary comprehension and plot understanding, whereas the interviews allowed the students to articulate their thoughts and reflections on the story, therefore facilitating a deeper engagement with the target language.

3.Results

This chapter aims to delve into the efficacy of picture books in enhancing recall and retention rates of the target language among students in English as a Second Language (ESL) primary classes. This section serves to present the outcomes and findings derived from the exploration of research questions that have guided this study.

The focus of this action research is to answer the following question:

1. How do picture books contribute to the enhancement of students' recall and retention rates in ESL elementary classrooms?

This research sought to shed light on the potential benefits of integrating picture books into EFL classes. It aimed to find whether the incorporation of picture books, could effectively increase students' abilities to recall and retain vocabulary, thereby fostering an enriched learning experience. In order to answer the questions mentioned above two research tools were used in the data gathering process: Questionnaires and interviews.

During this research and through the analysis of the collected data, several salient patterns and themes emerged, offering valuable insights into the dynamics of vocabulary retention and recall in storytelling sessions.

3.1 Questionnaires

3.1.1 First storytelling session and questionnaire

The first intervention involved reading the picture book "From Head to Toe" (Carle, 2006) to a group of 24 students. The session was designed to evaluate how effective storytelling could be in aiding students to retain and recall vocabulary. Following the storytelling session, a questionnaire was administered to assess the students' retention of the vocabulary presented in the book. The questionnaire comprised four questions aimed at determining students' familiarity with the story, their enjoyment of the story, their ability to order words correctly, and their capacity to associate actions with the

correct animals from the story. The questions were crafted to assess the students' recall rate of the target vocabulary by their ability to correctly answer them.

3.1.1.1 Familiarity with the story

The initial question sought to determine whether the students were already familiar with the story "From Head to Toe" with a Yes or No question. All 24 students reported that they were not familiar with the story prior to the session, indicating that the intervention was their first exposure to this material.

3.1.1.2 Enjoyment:

The second question addressed whether the students liked the story and required them to explain their reasons. This qualitative data showed a positive reception with several students noting the engaging nature of the story and its illustrations. For this question, 88% of the students answered that they liked the story.

Table 1 -Number of yes and no answers to the questions: “Did you know this story?” and “Did you like this story?” on the **first questionnaire**.

Question	N° of Yes answers	N° of No answers	Total n° answers
Did you know this story?	0	24	24
Did you like the story?	21	3	24

3.1.1.2 Vocabulary Recall - Word Order:

The third question tested the students' ability to recall and sequence words correctly from the story. This was designed to assess their attention and retention of the vocabulary presented during the storytelling. In this question, the students were asked to select the correct option for word order. Out of the 24 students, 13 selected the correct answer, thus revealing a 54% success rate.

3. Read the question and select an option.
 Lê a pergunta e escolhe uma opção.

Choose the option with the correct order.
 Escolhe a opção que tem as palavras na ordem correta.

- ☐ Head my turn
- ☐ Turn my head
- ☐ Turn head my
- ☐ My head turn

Figure 1: Third question in the first questionnaire.

3.1.1.3 Association of Actions to Animals:

The final question challenged students to link specific actions to the correct animals, a task that tested their comprehension and retention of the story's content. This question was particularly indicative of how well the students were able to integrate and use the vocabulary in context. In this question out of the 24 students who participated, 13 achieved a retention rate of at least 78% correct answers across the questionnaire. This suggests a strong capability to recall the vocabulary immediately after exposure to the story. The success rate, comprising more than half of the participants, indicates a significant positive impact of the storytelling session on the students' vocabulary retention abilities.

4. Link the image to the correct movement.
 Liga a imagem ao movimento correcto.

	☐ Arch my back	
	☐ Bend my neck	
	☐ Wave my arms	
	☐ Kick my legs	
	☐ Turn my head	
	☐ Clap my hands	
	☐ Wriggle my hips	
	☐ Stomp my foot	

Figure 2: Fourth question in the first questionnaire.

3.1.2 Second storytelling session and questionnaire

During the second intervention, the picture book "I Am a Tiger" was read to the same group of 24 students. Following the reading, a questionnaire was used to assess students' retention of the story's vocabulary and content. The questionnaire mirrored the format of the first one, with questions designed to probe students' familiarity with the story, enjoyment, ability to identify and recall specific vocabulary items such as the names featured in the story, and understanding of the plot.

3.1.2.1 Familiarity with the Story:

The first question aimed to identify if any students were previously acquainted with "I am a Tiger". Like the first session, all students indicated that they had not heard the story before the session.

3.1.2.2 Enjoyment:

The second question explored students' enjoyment of the story, asking them to explain their reasons. This feedback was used to assess engagement, showing that students found the story enjoyable and engaging, with several noting the humor and the distinctive illustrations. For this question, 100% of the students answered that they liked the story.

Table 2 - Number of yes and no answers to the questions “Did you know this story?” and “Did you like this story?” on the **second questionnaire**.

Question	N° of Yes answers	N° of No answers	Total n° answers
Did you know this story?	0	24	24
Did you like the story?	24	0	24

3.1.2.3 Identification of Story-Specific Animals:

In the third question, students were presented with images of 12 different animals and asked to identify those featured in the story. This question tested their attention to detail and ability to distinguish between the story's characters and other animals they might

have known beforehand. For this question 14 out of the 24 students, were able to select all the correct animals thus a 54% success rate.

3. Which animals were in the story? Circle the correct ones.
Que animais aparecem na história? Rodeia os corretos.

Tiger	Giraffe	Raccoon	Mouse
Monkey	Lion	Penguin	Bird
Elephant	Fox	Snake	Cat

Figure 3: Third question in the second questionnaire.

3.1.2.4 Vocabulary Retention - Animal Names:

The fourth question required students to connect the names of animals with their corresponding images, assessing their ability to retain and recall vocabulary accurately. During the storytelling session, the students were shown the images of the animals but not the words. The students had to rely on their listening skills during the storytelling session. The words were introduced at the beginning of the lesson through the flashcard activity. They were then presented with the words once more during the questionnaire. For this question 15 out of the 24 students were able to link the images to the correct word thus a 63% success rate.

4. Link the image to the correct animal.
Liga a imagem ao animal correto.





- Snake
- Tiger
- Bird
- Raccoon
- Mouse
- Fox





Figure 4: Fourth question in the second questionnaire.

3.1.2.5 Plot Retention:

The final question asked students to answer a question related to the story's plot, therefore testing their comprehension and retention of the narrative structure and key events. For these questions 21 out of the 24 students were able to answer correctly, thus an 88% success rate.

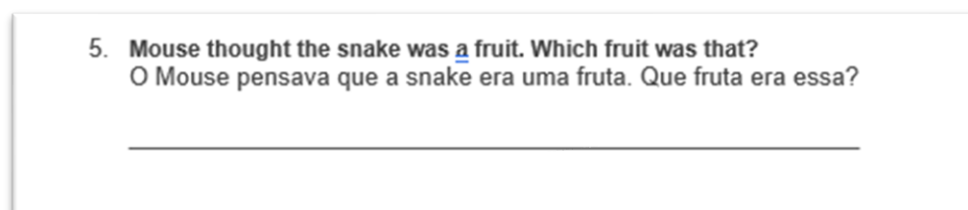


Figure 5: Fifth question in the second questionnaire.

Of the 24 participants, 15 students achieved a score of at least 77% correct answers across the questionnaire. This performance level indicates a robust retention and comprehension rate, reflecting that a storytelling approach can aid in facilitating vocabulary acquisition and understanding of the story's context and plot.

3.1.3 Third storytelling session and questionnaire

During the third intervention, the picture book "Handa's Surprise" was read aloud to the same group of 23 students. Following the storytelling session, a structured questionnaire was administered. The questionnaire consisted of five questions, designed to understand students' familiarity with the story, enjoyment, and ability to identify and recall specific vocabulary items. Such as the names of the fruits features in the story, and understanding plot elements.

3.1.3.1 Familiarity with the Story:

As in the previous sessions, the first question aimed to determine whether any students were already familiar with "Handa's Surprise". All 23 students reported that they had not heard the story before the session, confirming that the picture book was new to them.

3.1.3.2 Enjoyment and Engagement:

The second question sought to assess students' enjoyment of the story and their reasons for it. Qualitative feedback indicated a positive reception, with students expressing appreciation for the illustrations and engaging storyline. For this question, 100% of the students answered that they liked the story.

Table 3 - Number of yes and no answers to the questions: “Did you know this story?” and “Did you like this story?” on the **third questionnaire**.

Question	Nº of Yes answers	Nº of No answers	Total nº answers
Did you know this story?	0	23	23
Did you like the story?	23	0	23

3.1.3.3 Identification of Story-Specific Fruits:

In the third question, students were presented with images of 12 different fruits and asked to identify those featured in the story. This question aimed to evaluate students' recognition of fruits introduced in the story context, rather than merely relying on potential previous knowledge. As fourth-grade students, the potential of previous knowledge of fruits is high, as they were already introduced to food-related vocabulary in their third-grade English lessons. With this question, I aimed to assess whether the students recalled the specific fruits featured in the story or fruits they might have been remembering from other lessons.

3. Which foods were in the story? Circle the correct ones.
 Que comidas aparecem na história? Rodeia os corretos.

Guava	Milk	Tangerines	Mango
Apple	Banana	Cheese	Water
Pineapple	Orange	Avocado	Passion fruit

Figure 6: Third question in the third questionnaire.

3.1.3.3 Vocabulary Retention - Fruit Names:

The fourth question required students to match the names of fruits with their corresponding images by drawing a line connecting the word to the fruit. This task assessed students' ability to recall and associate specific vocabulary items with their visual representations. As in the other storytelling sessions, the written names of the fruits were introduced during the flashcard activities.

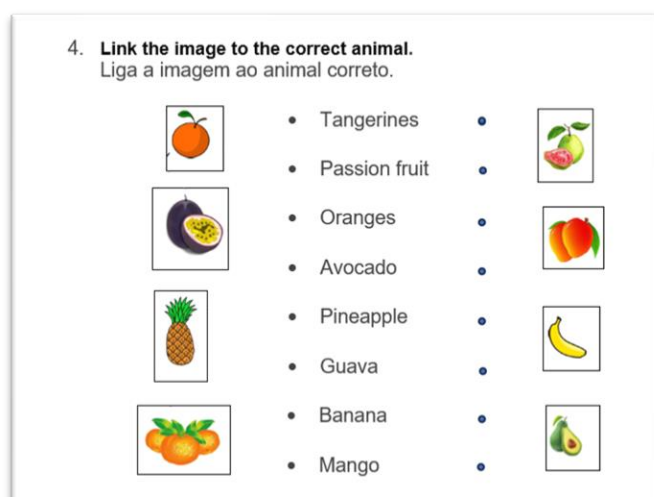


Figure 7: Fourth question in the third questionnaire.

3.1.3.4 Plot Retention:

The final question asked students to answer a question related to the story's plot, evaluating their comprehension and retention of key narrative elements and events.

5. **Aleyko (Handa's friend) did have a favourite fruit. Which fruit was that?**
A Aleyko (a amiga da Handa) tinha uma fruta favorita. Que fruta era essa?

Figure 8: Fifth question in the third questionnaire.

3.1.3.5 Performance Analysis

Out of the 23 participants, 18 students achieved a score of at least 76% correct answers across the questionnaire. The performance level on this questionnaire regarding the third picturebook, suggests a strong retention and comprehension rate, indicating the effectiveness of a storytelling approach in facilitating vocabulary acquisition and understanding of the story's context and plot.

Analysis of the questionnaire responses revealed that while students could easily recall isolated vocabulary items, they encountered difficulties in employing these words within coherent language structures and expressions. This discrepancy suggests a potential gap between lexical knowledge and communicative competence, underlining the importance

of scaffolded instruction aimed at fostering holistic language proficiency. This was true for this picturebook and was not as evident for the other picturebooks.

3.2 Interviews

After the conclusion of the storytelling sessions, semi-structured interviews were conducted with students to assess their recall of vocabulary and plot elements from the stories. The interviews were designed to probe students' memory retention and understanding of the target language and narrative. The interviews consisted of questions regarding the ability to recall the story title, specific body parts and movements, animals, fruits, and their recollection of the plot.

3.2.1 First set of interviews – Picturebook n°1

3.2.1.1 Recall of Story Title

In the first interview, students were asked if they remembered the title of the story. Across all pairs of students interviewed for each picture book, none were able to recall the title. This finding was noteworthy given that the titles were closely related to the target vocabulary. Although the title was directly related to the target vocabulary, the students were not exposed enough to the composition of words which it was composed of. This might reflect their difficulty in remembering the title.

3.2.1.2 Recall of Target Vocabulary - Body Parts and Movements

The following questions focused on students' recall of specific body parts and movements introduced in the story, which constituted the target vocabulary. In the first pair of students interviewed for each story, only a limited number of body parts and movements were remembered. In the first pair, only two out of eight movements and body parts were recalled. In the second pair, only one movement was recalled and in the third pair only two movements and body parts were recalled. As seen above in the questionnaire's analysis, this picturebook revealed to be the least enjoyed by the students which might have impacted their ability to remember the target vocabulary.

Table 4 - Number of body parts each pair was able to remember from the first picturebook.

<i>Interview n° 1</i> <i>“From head to Toe”</i>	Pair n°1	Pair n°2	Pair n°3	Total n° of body parts in the story
<i>N° of body parts remembered</i>	2	1	2	8

3.2.1.3 Recall of Plot Elements

The students were expected to remember the specific target words in English, as they were introduced at the beginning of the lesson and were only referenced in the L2. Despite difficulties in recalling specific vocabulary items, all pairs of students were able to remember the plot of the story during the interviews. However, it was noted that while discussing the plot in Portuguese, students could recall the exact body parts and movements but struggled to express them in English.

The results of the interviews regarding the first picturebook highlight the challenges students faced in recalling specific vocabulary items, particularly the title of the stories and the target vocabulary introduced in each session. Despite difficulties in vocabulary recall, students demonstrated a solid understanding and retention of the plot elements, as evidenced by their ability to discuss the storyline in Portuguese. During the interviews, the students often referred to the images in the picturebook by imitating the movements and saying the body parts in their L1. The visual stimuli of the picturebook could have helped the students remember the actions, however, it did not help them remember the target language.

3.2.2 Second set of interviews – Picturebook n°2

3.2.2.1 Recall of Story Title and Animals

During the interviews, students were initially asked if they remembered the title of the story. While the first pair of students couldn't recall the title, they were able to describe what was depicted on the cover of the book. However, the second pair of students successfully remembered the title. For the second picturebook the expectation for the students to remember the title were higher, as it was a sentence often said by the main character in the story. Additionally, the three pairs of students were able to recall the

animals featured in the story, albeit with varying degrees of success. The first pair was able to collectively recall all six animals of the story, the second pair was able to recall three of them, and the third pair was also able to recall all the names of the animals in the story.

3.2.2.2 Recall of Plot Elements and Vocabulary

The three pairs of students demonstrated a strong understanding of the plot, with the ability to retell it in Portuguese. However, when asked to reproduce vocabulary in English, students encountered difficulties. They relied on visual cues from the images in the picture book to recall words, indicating a reliance on memory association rather than direct vocabulary retention.

3.2.2.3 Student Feedback and Appreciation of Story

All pairs of students expressed a positive reception of the story, emphasizing their enjoyment of the narrative and the message. This positive feedback suggests a high level of enjoyment of the material, which may have contributed to their ability to recall plot elements and key details.

The findings from the interviews highlight students' variant levels of recall and comprehension of the second picture book. While the three pairs of students demonstrated an understanding of the plot, difficulties were encountered in recalling specific vocabulary items in English. It was evident that there was a reliance on visual cues and memory association.

Table 5 - number of body parts each pair was able to remember from the second picturebook

<i>Interview n°2</i> <i>“I am a Tiger”</i>	Pair n°1	Pair n°2	Pair n°3	Total n° of animals in the story
<i>N° of animals remembered</i>	3	6	2	6

3.2.3 Third set of interviews – Picturebook n°3

3.2.3.1 Recall of Story Title and Vocabulary

In all three pairs of students, a high level of success was observed in recalling the title of the story. Similarly, students demonstrated strong recall of the names of the fruits featured in the story, with all pairs collectively remembering all eight fruits. As seen above in the

analysis of the questionnaires, this story was also enjoyed by all the students. This factor aligned with their potential previous third-grade knowledge of food and fruits, might have contributed to a higher success rate.

3.2.3.2 Recall of Plot Elements and Language Comprehension

All pairs of students were able to recall and retell the plot of the story in Portuguese. Notably, students exhibited a deep understanding of the story structure and were able to comprehend and respond to short-answer questions in English regarding the plot and characters.

3.2.3.3 Student Feedback and Appreciation of Story

Across all pairs of students, positive feedback was provided regarding the plot of the story, with students emphasizing their enjoyment and appreciation for the narrative. Additionally, students highlighted their ability to understand and engage with the story's content in both English and Portuguese.

Table 6 - Table shows the number of fruits each pair was able to remember from the third picturebook.

<i>Interview n°3</i> <i>“Handa’s surpriser”</i>	Pair n°1	Pair n°2	Pair n°3	Total n° of animals in the story
<i>N° of fruits remembered</i>	8	8	2	8

These interviews highlight a consistent pattern of successful recall and comprehension among students regarding the third picture book. The ability to remember the story title, fruits, and plot elements, coupled with language proficiency demonstrated through English language responses, suggests a high level of engagement and comprehension.

The figure below (figure 9) shows the increase in the recall rate of the target words among the three pairs throughout the three picturebooks. The numbers represent the amount of target words the students were able to remember. In this figure, we can see the number of target words the three pairs of students were able to remember for each picturebook. Starting with a maximum of 2 out of the 8 target words for the first picturebook thus a 25% success rate. In the second picturebook, two pairs were able to remember 6 out of the 8 target words thus having a 75% success rate. Lastly, in the third picturebook, two pairs were able to remember all of the 8 target words achieving a 100% success rate.

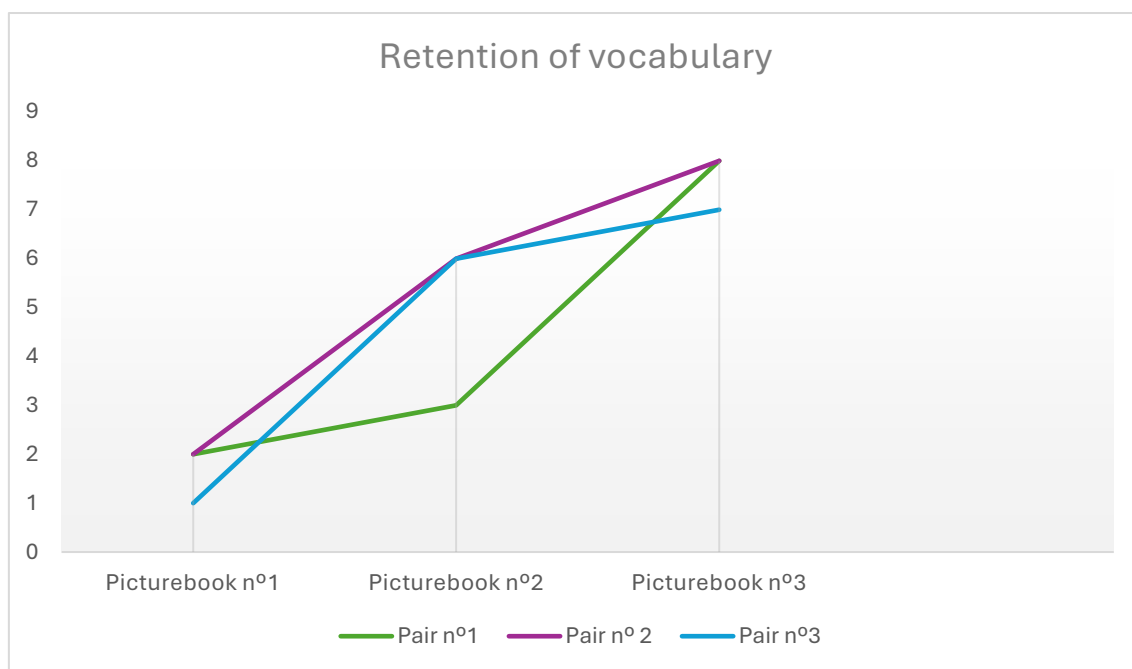


Figure 9: This graph shows the number of target words the pairs of students were able to remember for each picturebook.

it

on the factors influencing both retention and recall. Firstly, it became apparent that students' levels of interest in the picture book significantly influenced their retention and recall of the introduced vocabulary. Students who exhibited a higher interest and engagement with the narrative and visual elements of the picture book demonstrated higher retention and recall rates. This finding underlines the importance of cultivating a stimulating and immersive learning environment, where students are actively engaged and invested in the learning materials. As shown above in figure 18 the last two picturebooks had a better retention rate than the first one. In the interviews, the students expressed how they liked the second and third picturebooks better than the first one. The enjoyment factor was demonstrated to have a significant impact on the students' retention rates. Another factor that might have contributed to the students' higher success rates in the second and third picturebooks' retention of vocabulary, could have been the student's previous knowledge. As mentioned above, animals and food-related vocabulary are part of the curriculum for third-grade English lessons, therefore, it is possible that the students were also relying on their previous knowledge to remember the target words.

Secondly, a noteworthy trend observed across the student responses was the role of visual imagery in facilitating vocabulary recall. Students consistently made references to the images depicted in the picture book, utilizing their memories of the illustrations as memory-boosting devices to aid in vocabulary retrieval as shown in Picture 16. It was

observed that students often vividly recalled specific scenes and characters from the picture book, sometimes even imitating the postures and actions of the characters depicted in the picture books. This reliance on visuals highlights the efficacy of incorporating visual stimuli, such as picture books, as a means of enhancing vocabulary acquisition and retention among ESL learners.

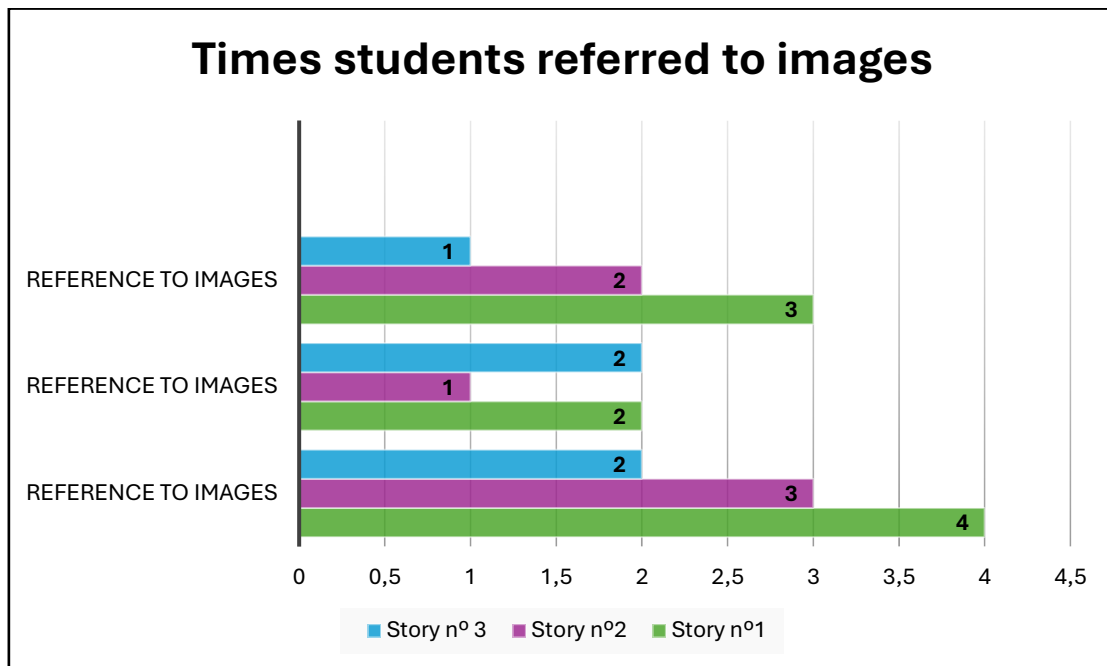


Figure 10 - This graph shows the number of times students referred to the images on picturebooks connecting them to the target vocabulary.

The discrepancy between students' ability to recall plot elements in Portuguese but not in English suggests a potential language transfer effect, wherein students rely on L1 to retrieve information. This finding underscores the importance of reinforcing vocabulary acquisition in English through repeated exposure and practice.

Furthermore, despite their vivid recollection of the plot and narrative elements of the stories presented in the picture books, students exhibited a tendency to express these concepts primarily in their native language, rather than utilizing their English language skills. This observation highlights the need for targeted instructional interventions aimed at bridging the gap between passive vocabulary knowledge and active language usage.

Furthermore, students' positive feedback regarding the story highlights the importance of selecting engaging and culturally relevant materials that resonate with young learners.

The enjoyment of the narrative likely contributed to students' motivation and engagement with the language learning process.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Throughout this action research, the use of picture books as a pedagogical tool in EFL elementary classrooms has been examined with a specific focus on understanding their role in vocabulary recall and retention rates. By immersing students in storytelling sessions facilitated by picturebooks, this study aimed to elucidate the mechanisms underlying vocabulary acquisition and retention among young EFL learners.

Central to the exploration of the research questions was a focus on the immersive aspect of picture books within the EFL classroom. As highlighted in the literature review, providing EFL students with real-life scenarios fosters enhanced language acquisition outcomes. In the context of young learners, stories serve as powerful vehicles for language learning, offering relatable scenarios that resonate with children's lived experiences. Through the utilization of picture books, this study aimed to harness the immersive nature of storytelling to facilitate vocabulary retention and recall among EFL elementary students.

Analysis of the collected data revealed several key findings regarding the impact of picture books on vocabulary recall and retention rates. Firstly, it was observed that students did not demonstrate a heightened ability to retain and recall individual words, in the picturebooks. The immersive nature of the storytelling sessions, coupled with the visual stimuli provided by the illustrations, facilitated students' engagement with the target language and enhanced their recall capabilities in their L1 but not in the L2. Moreover, students frequently referenced the images and drawings present in the picture books, underscoring the role of visual cues in aiding vocabulary retrieval. The students often referred to the images and used them as triggers to recall the actions in the story and consequentially the words in their L1. The mentions of the images linked to the learners' ability to recall the elements, however, did not aid them in recalling the words in the L2. The students were exposed to the target language throughout the lessons, however, they did not have enough chance to use it. The lack of opportunities to use the target language could have negatively impacted the student's ability to recall the words.

As the students were only being exposed to the target language using their receptive skills, it was clear that activities that allowed the students to use their productive skills could have increased their chances of remembering the target words.

Furthermore, students' level of interest in the stories emerged as a significant factor influencing their recall rates. It was evident from the interviews that students exhibited greater proficiency in recalling and retaining vocabulary from stories that captivated their interest and imagination. This finding highlights the importance of selecting engaging and culturally relevant picturebooks to maximize the efficacy of storytelling sessions in the ESL classroom. The stories were chosen to fit the English fourth-grade program and depict situations and plots easily understood by the students. By harnessing the immersive nature of picture books and selecting stories that resonate with students' interests, teachers can create a conducive learning environment where vocabulary acquisition and retention are maximized. Moreover, future research could delve further into the immersive aspect of storytelling sessions, exploring innovative strategies to actively involve students in the storytelling process. Additionally, investigating the long-term effects of picture book interventions on language proficiency development could provide valuable insights into the sustained impact of immersive language learning experiences.

By leveraging these findings, teachers can design and implement targeted instructional strategies aimed at fostering a stimulating and immersive learning environment, wherein students are empowered to actively engage with and use the target language in meaningful contexts. Moreover, the recognition of challenges in language use underlines the importance of holistic language instruction, encompassing both vocabulary acquisition and language proficiency development. This highlights once again the importance of student-centered activities where opportunities for language use can be created. To set students up for success when using L2, teachers must create opportunities for language use that guides them to proficiency development. Passive learning of an L2, when students are only exposed to the language but do not actively use it, should not be what we aim for. Thus, by integrating these insights into pedagogical practices, educators can effectively enhance vocabulary acquisition and language learning outcomes among ESL learners, ultimately fostering their linguistic proficiency and communicative competence. It became clear to me during this research, that picturebooks can be an important and useful tool to use in teaching. Picturebooks can be a great pedagogical tool, specifically to apply explicit learning. However, picturebooks need to be paired with further immersive activities in order to harness their full potential. In the process of this research one aspect stood out: the student needed to use the language substantially more than they did. Explicit learning is an extremely important concept to apply in teaching,

nevertheless, it will bear the greatest results when paired with interactive activities where the students actively use the target language.

In conclusion, the utilization of picture books as a pedagogical tool in ESL elementary education holds great potential for enhancing vocabulary recall and retention rates among young learners. Through immersive storytelling sessions facilitated by picture books, students can not only engage with the target language in a meaningful context but also develop a deeper understanding of language structures and usage. As we continue to explore innovative approaches to language pedagogy, the integration of picture books continues to stand out as an important tool for promoting linguistic competence and fostering a lifelong love for language learning among young learners.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Letter of consent to the parents/tutors

Pedido de autorização aos Encarregados de Educação

Exmos(as). Srs(as). Encarregados(as) de Educação,

O meu nome é Inês Brás de Oliveira, venho por este meio informá-los que, com muito gosto, estarei no 1º semestre deste ano letivo, a estagiar com os seus educandos. Encontro-me a realizar o Mestrado em Ensino de Inglês no 1º Ciclo, na Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas da Universidade Nova de Lisboa. Este mestrado inclui um estágio que prevê a realização de um breve projeto de investigação e respetivo relatório. O meu trabalho intitula-se *Using picture books to promote vocabulary acquisition in primary English as a foreign language class [Utilizar livros infantis para promover a aquisição de vocabulário nas aulas de Inglês no 1º Ciclo]*. Consequentemente venho solicitar a vossa autorização para integrar os vossos educandos neste projeto que irá decorrer entre outubro de 2023 e início de janeiro 2024. Após o pedido de autorização aos seus educandos para os incluir neste estudo, a recolha de dados será realizada através de questionários, realização de projetos em pares e/ou grupos e realização de fichas de trabalho.

Durante todo o decorrer do estudo, a instituição, seus funcionários e alunos irão permanecer anónimos. É de extrema importância que os mesmos mantenham a sua privacidade e anonimato, logo, não serão capturadas quaisquer fotos, nem obtidas quaisquer imagens dos respetivos.

Ressalvo que a qualquer momento os seus educandos se encontram no direito de escolher não participar nas atividades.

As informações recolhidas ao longo do estudo estarão presentes no meu relatório final de mestrado e eventualmente em artigos académicos e conferências.

Para esclarecer quaisquer dúvidas que possam surgir, agradeço que me contactem diretamente ou através da professora titular de turma.

Desde já agradeço pela vossa atenção e sublinho que ficarei muito grata caso escolha autorizar o seu educando a participar neste estudo. Solicito que a autorização seja assinada e entregue o mais breve quanto possível.

Subscrevo-me atenciosamente

Inês Brás de Oliveira

Seixal, 31 outubro 2023

Professora Doutora Carolyn E. Leslie

Orientadora de Estágio

FCSH, Universidade Nova Lisboa



Eu, _____

Encarregado(a) de Educação de _____

declaro que fui informado(a) dos objetivos do projeto intitulado *Using picture books to promote vocabulary acquisition in primary English as a foreign language class [Utilizar livros infantis para promover a aquisição de vocabulário nas aulas de Inglês no 1º Ciclo]* e autorizo o meu educando a participar no estudo.

Data: _____

Assinatura: _____

Appendix B

Letter of consent to the school's administration

Lisboa, 31 de outubro de 2023

Inês Brás de Oliveira
Aluna de Mestrado
Universidade Nova de Lisboa

Direção do Agrupamento de Escolas XXXXXXXX
R. XXXXXXXX

Exma. Sra. Diretora

No âmbito do protocolo estabelecido entre a Universidade Nova de Lisboa e este Agrupamento para a realização do meu estágio em Ensino de Inglês de 1º Ciclo, solicito a sua autorização para a realização do projeto de investigação que constitui parte do meu relatório final de mestrado. O trabalho que me encontrarei a realizar intitula-se “Using picture books to promote vocabulary acquisition in primary English as a foreign language class” (Utilizar livros infantis para promover a aquisição de vocabulário nas aulas de Inglês no 1º Ciclo). e será desenvolvido entre outubro de 2023 e janeiro de 2024 na Escola Básica XXXXXXXX. Este estudo tem como objetivo entender se os livros infantis podem ter um papel importante na aquisição de vocabulário nas aulas de Inglês de 1º ciclo. A recolha de dados será realizada através de questionários, fichas, observações em aula e atividades em pares. As informações recolhidas serão analisadas e utilizadas no meu relatório final de mestrado e eventualmente em artigos académicos e conferências.

Da mesma forma, serão solicitadas autorizações aos encarregados de educação e aos alunos. Os mesmos podem a qualquer momento escolher não participar nas atividades e/ou estudo. A instituição, os professores, os funcionários e os alunos permanecerão anónimos. Deste modo nunca serão capturadas fotografias nem obtidas imagens da instituição ou dos alunos.

Agradeço desde já a vossa colaboração para proceder à implementação deste estudo e manifesto a minha disponibilidade para o esclarecimento de quaisquer dúvidas ou questões através do e-mail: inesbrasdeoliveira@gmail.com.

Solicito igualmente que a autorização seja concedida até 14 de novembro.

Inês Brás de Oliveira
Aluna mestrado
FCSH, Universidade Nova

Professora Doutora Carolyn Leslie
Coordenadora Mestrado
FCSH, Universidade Nova

.....
...

Eu, _____ Diretora do Agrupamento de Escolas XXXX, declaro que fui informada dos objetivos do projeto “Using picture books to promote vocabulary acquisition in primary English as a foreign language class” (Utilizar livros infantis para promover a aquisição de vocabulário nas aulas de Inglês no 1º Ciclo). e autorizo os alunos da Escola Básica XXXXXXXX a participarem no estudo.

Data: _____

Assinatura: _____

Appendix C

Letter of consent to the students

Olá alunos e alunas,

O meu nome é Inês Oliveira. Neste primeiro semestre, vou estar a trabalhar com a vossa professora.



Eu estou a fazer um curso que se chama mestrado em Ensino de Inglês no 1º Ciclo, na Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas da Universidade Nova de Lisboa. Estou a estudar para poder dar aulas de Inglês a meninos e meninas como tu!

Estou a fazer um trabalho para saber se posso ajudar-te a aprender ainda mais Inglês com livros infantis.

Para conseguir descobrir, vou contar-vos histórias, fazer algumas fichas e criar atividades para trabalharem em pares.

O teu nome, a tua idade e a tua escola vão ser sempre anónimos. Isto significa que só eu, a tua professora e os teus pais ou encarregados de educação é que vão saber que participaste.

Nada é obrigatório e podes sempre dizer se não quiseses participar. Se tiveres dúvidas e perguntas podes perguntar à tua professora, a mim ou aos teus pais.

Se gostavas de participar, assina aqui em baixo!

ALUNO/ALUNA

DATA



INÊS BRÁS DE OLIVEIRA



Appendix D

Questionnaire nº 1

Questionnaire

Read the questions and answers with YES or NO

Lê as perguntas e responde rodeando YES (sim) ou NO (não)

1. Did you know this story?

Já conhecias esta história?

YES

NO

2. Did you like the story?

Gostaste da história?

YES

NO

Why?

Porquê? _____

3. Read the question and select an option.

Lê a pergunta e escolhe uma opção.

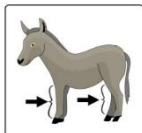
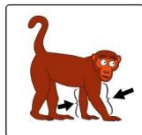
Choose the option with the correct order.

Escolhe a opção que tem as palavras na ordem correta.

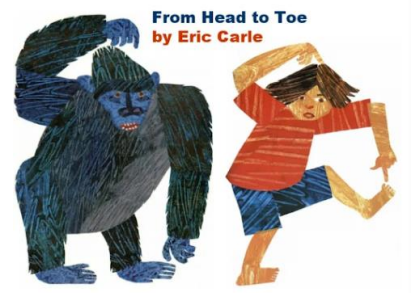
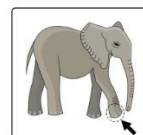
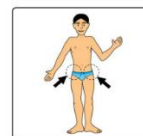
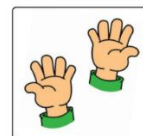
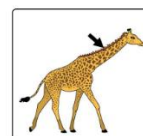
- ☐ Head my turn
- ☐ Turn my head
- ☐ Turn head my
- ☐ My head turn

4. Link the image to the correct movement.

Liga a imagem ao movimento correcto.



- Arch my back •
- Bend my neck •
- Wave my arms •
- Kick my legs •
- Turn my head •
- Clap my hands •
- Wriggle my hips •
- Stomp my foot •



Appendix E

Questionnaire nº2

Questionnaire

Read the questions and answers with YES or NO

Lê as perguntas e responde rodeando YES (sim) ou NO (não)



5. Did you know this story?

Já conhecia esta história?

YES

NO

6. Did you like the story?

Gostaste da história?

YES

NO

Why?

Porquê? _____

7. Which animals were in the story? Circle the correct ones.

Que animais aparecem na história? Rodeia os corretos.

Tiger

Giraffe

Raccoon

Mouse

Monkey

Lion

Penguin

Bird

Elephant

Fox

Snake

Cat

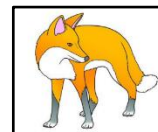
8. Link the image to the correct animal.

Liga a imagem ao animal correto.



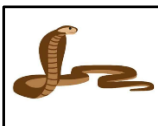
• Snake

•



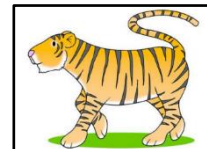
• Tiger

•



• Bird

•



• Raccoon

•



• Mouse

•



• Fox

•

9. Mouse thought the snake was a fruit. Which fruit was that?

O Mouse pensava que a snake era uma fruta. Que fruta era essa?

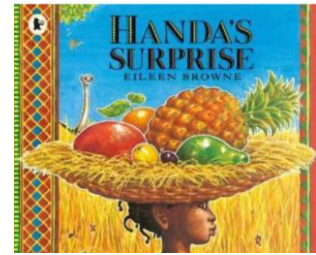
Appendix F

Questionnaire nº 2

Questionnaire

Read the questions and answers with YES or NO

Lê as perguntas e responde rodeando YES (sim) ou NO (não)



10. Did you know this story?

Já conhecia esta história?

YES

NO

11. Did you like the story?

Gostaste da história?

YES

NO

Why?

Porquê? _____

12. Which foods were in the story? Circle the correct ones.

Que comidas aparecem na história? Rodeia os corretos.

Guava

Milk

Tangerines

Mango

Apple

Banana

Cheese

Water

Pineapple

Orange

Avocado

Passion fruit

13. Link the image to the correct animal.

Liga a imagem ao animal correto.



• Tangerines

•



• Passion fruit

•



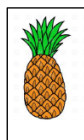
• Oranges

•



• Avocado

•



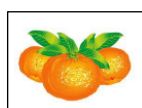
• Pineapple

•



• Guava

•



• Banana

•



• Mango

•

14. Aleyko (Handa's friend) did have a favourite fruit. Which fruit was that?

A Aleyko (a amiga da Handa) tinha uma fruta favorita. Que fruta era essa?

Appendix G

Interviews template

- Questions used in the first interview.

Question n° 1: How do you remember vocabulary?

Question n° 2: When you study, what do you do to remember the things you are studying?

Question n°3: Do you think stories help with remembering things?

- Questions used in all interviews.

Question n°1: Do you remember the title of the story? If yes, what was it?

Question n°2: Can you remember the -target vocabulary-?

Question n°3: Did you like the story? Why?

Semi-fixed questions were used in the interviews. The main goal was to understand how well the students could recall the target language from the story as well as the story itself.