**Universidad Zaragoza**

1542

# Trabajo Fin de Grado

## The use of Storytelling to encourage and improve the acquisition of Academic English

Uso del storytelling para la creación de secuencias con objetivo de aumentar la capacidad comunicativa en ingles

Autor/es

Pedro Aliaga (817341)

Director/es

Paula Buil Beltrán

Facultad de Ciencias Humanas y de la Educación. Campus de Huesca.

Año 2024-2025

**INDEX:**

**ABSTRACT**

**Abstract**

The following dissertation has the main objective of explaining the process and use of storytelling as a form of teaching academic English for EFL students. It contains an explanation of the academic language, evolution of storytelling, and the use of it to improve the macro skills and other aspects of the students. It also contains a hypothetical explanation on how it could be applied, with actual examples and forms of teaching. The conclusions and cons are available in the end of the document, as a form of closing this academic paper.

**Key Words**

Academic English, Storytelling, Macro Skills, English as a Foreign Language

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND JUSTIFICATION.

If we search the Cambridge Dictionary, we will find the academic definition of "Storytelling," which is everything related to writing and telling or reading stories in various formats.The art of telling and creating stories has been an important part of cultures and our learning process since we have a record of human writing. As Lawrence (2016, p.64) says:

Storytelling has been a part of all indigenous cultures since the first humans inhabited the earth. Whether depicting dangerous predators on a cave wall in order to instill courage and empowerment during the hunt for a potentially dangerous animal or gathering loved ones around a comforting fire under a new moon to share a story of

communal connectedness, storytelling covers a broad range of life-affirming, time-tested lessons.

We can agree that storytelling is a tool for expressing our feelings, ideas, and other concepts related to human beings. That's why, in this dissertation, I want to focus on storytelling itself, its history, and how it can improve the acquisition of English, including the use of technology.

Also, the acquisition of Academic English in primary school students in relation to the previous point will also be a topic that will be discussed. As Anstrom (2010, p.3) states"AE can be viewed as part of overall English language proficiency which also includes more social uses of language both inside and outside the school environment. It is referred to variously as a variety of English […] typically used within specific sociocultural academic settings."

However, different approaches and theoretical orientations create a framework that is not clear, just as DiCerbo and Baker (2014) stated. But, for this dissertation, it will be based on the concept idea on Bailey & Heritage (2008), where they refer to AE as the language used in school to make students acquire and use the concepts and information from it. This is relevant because it provides us with an idea of how the obtention of the knowledge is.

As Scarcella (2003, p.10) states: "Academic English includes multiple, dynamic, inter-related competencies. It provides a compilation of a broad range of discrete linguistic items so that teachers and researchers are provided with sufficient information concerning what the language features of academic English are." This is a key aspect in the dissertation, because we will be digging deeply into the dynamic of storytelling and its impact.

Finally, we must keep in mind that we must see storytelling as a form and vehicle for the acquisition of languages, rather than just a tool to learn some words, vocabulary and lexis. According to Landrum, (2013, p.5): "Stories impose structure on our experience and are essential tools of cultural learning and reflection. Stories and their associated narratives provide the means for children to make sense of their world and create their sense of self". So, there will be a deeper meaning and study of the methodology.

## 2. OBJECTIVES

This dissertation has the goal to explain the evolution of Storytelling and how it can be used for the learning of Academic English and name differences. I will formulate a compressed timeline related to storytelling in our schools and where we are heading nowadays.

## 3. THEORETICAL JUSTIFICATION

### 3.1 Academic English in the third cycle of primary school

Cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) is a term coined by Jim Cummins. In chapter 48 of the book *International Handbook of English Language Teaching,* he introduces us to this term, also called "Academic Language". It originated as a way of "solving" the problems that he believed the primary school curricula has in relation with the four language skills (speaking, listening, writing and reading), as he states (2007:797): "If we ignore the distinctions within the four language skills we risk designing curricula and language instruction practices that are poorly aligned with the needs of learners and the overall goals of the program".

After explaining the previous idea with specific examples, Cummins (2007:108) proceeds to give us a definition of "Academic English", which is: "(AE) refers to

students' ability to understand and express, in both oral and written modes, concepts and ideas that are relevant to success in school.". After that, he adds: "academic language proficiency includes knowledge of the less frequent vocabulary of English as well as the ability to interpret and produce increasingly complex written and oral language."

CALP started to exist as a differentiation to Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS), which is more centered towards small talks and engaging effectively in conversational interactions and routines. As Mozayan (2015:2) redacted: "BICS usually involve context-embedded and meaningful situations which are not very demanding in terms of cognitive capacity". On the other hand, Mozayan (2015:2) redacted: "CALP comprises the macro skills required for formal interactions around varying subject area content in the classroom"

The attainment of CALP in older students tends to be faster than in younger ones. As Collier (1987:12) states:

It must be emphasized that the older children's common underlying proficiency in their first and second language assists with the process of SLA. Thus, for older students, many academic skills and concepts acquired in the L1 transfer to the L2, and the process of SLA occurs at a faster rate than for younger children.

On the other hand, if we read the update that Cummins wrote in 2008, we will be able to check some specifications he didn't explain before. One of them (2008:73) would be:

A five-year-old may need a level of CALP appropriate to learning the basics of reading and writing; a fifteen-year-old may need a level of CALP appropriate to writing

a book report; twenty-five-year may need a level of CALP appropriate to writing a doctoral thesis.

He made it clear that each group and age needs a different pace and specification of knowledge in order to progress and understand the use of English. Afterwards, he reiterates this statement with the addition of a new term, called "common underlying proficiency". Anderson (2013:54), in relation to it addressed: "the learner's development of conceptual, cognitive, and metalinguistic competences in the L1 language positively influence the development of the ability to deploy such competences in the L2". If we put it in other words, it would mean that one of the biggest influences on the acquisition of new competences in the targeted language is the learners' original abilities in their mother tongue.

Therefore, students from higher grades (such as 5th and 6th grades), will be more likely to obtain a more broad academic language and will be able to use it in more aspects than the lower grades, due to the second ones not being less able to communicate with academic language in their mother tongue.

Also, in relation to the age of the learner, Cummins (2008:3) wrote: "If we take a 12-year-old child and a six-year-old, there are enormous differences in these children's ability to read and write English and in the depth and breadth of their vocabulary knowledge, but minimal differences in their phonology or basic fluency". So, in order to teach different styles and skills of ESL, we must keep in mind the different levels of proficiency and knowledge for the students. As a brief example in relation to storytelling, we can tell a student in fifth grade a fable and he or she will understand all of it, but if we try to explain a myth or a debate to a student in first grade, he won't understand most of it. This is due to the level of academic language we are using.

If we link that difference of ability to the set of skills the students have, we will perceive that the ones related to storytelling (such as reading, listening or even speaking) will also be affected when they are involved in this activity.

## 3.2. Storytelling for improving academic English

If we had to give an order of precedence in relation to academic language acquisition, we would check what Cummins (1987:801) himself said: "Extensive reading is crucial for academic language development because less frequent vocabulary, most of which derives from Greek and Latin sources, is found primarily in written text." Thus, we link this acquisition directly to narrative and storytelling.

As we've seen previously, storytelling is based on the act of listening and reading stories. According to Fikriah (2016:86): "activities where students participate in telling, writing, reading and listening to stories can motivate them to be active learners, developing within them a constructive approach towards ESL language learning". Added to this: "Stories are effective as educational tools because they are believable, memorable, and entertaining", explained Neuhauser (1993:8).

Based on the name itself, we would think that storytelling is only based on reading, but we can see that it has an impact on many other aspects. This is crucial and beneficial for the act of academic language acquisition.

Fillmore (1997:4) stated that the role of the teachers was one of the most important aspects of storytelling being useful. In relation to the role of the teacher he understands that they must:

- Provide the support learners need to make sense of the text

- Call attention to the way language is used in the text

- Discuss with learners the meaning and interpretation of sentences and phrases within the text

- Point out that words in one text may have been encountered or used in other places

- Help learners discover the grammatical cues that indicate relationships such as cause and effect, antecedence and consequence, comparison and contrast, and so on

It is noticeable that they put an emphasis on the act on noticing the vocabulary and meaning that exists within the structures. But what should be wondered is how can students get better at academic English using storytelling.

The perceptible skill they tend to improve is critical thinking. As seen in a study carried out in 2010 in Turkey by the University of Primary Education, Dilek (2010:5) explains that: "It was observed that the participants pointed out the efficiency of the method particularly in terms of questioning, prediction, discussion, high-level thinking skills and asking critical questions." The students themselves were able to check that their abilities associated with a more scholastic ambit were increasing. Later, Dilek & Dal (2010:5) declared: "storytelling would develop the primary school students' skill of evaluating the events from different perspectives and gain them different thinking ways".

### 3.3. Learning theories applied to storytelling

Although the benefits related to storytelling are plenty and will be discussed in more detail later on, we must keep in mind that there are a few theories of learning that differ in how to tackle and explain how storytelling works.

The social constructivism theory (originally proposed by Vygotsky, 1978), emphasizes and remarks the weight that culture and context help to create or construct knowledge based on a student's understanding (McMahon, 1997). Moreover, it is based on assumptions about reality and interaction between members of a group, "cognition is a collaborative process" as said by Palincsar (1998:349).

Inside of Vygotsky's theory (1978), we can find the "Zone of Proximal Development" (ZpD), which is the distance between the level of actual knowledge and the potential development that a student has. That potential development can be reached thanks to *scaffolding*, which can proceed from the teacher or another student. That is where the theory relates to storytelling, since the students must interact, understand and explain to each other what values, pieces of information and knowledge they are receiving. As Irshad (2021:2) stated: "Vocabulary enhancement through storytelling determines how the zone of proximal development helps the children by speeding up their process of learning and enhancing their intellectual development".

An actual methodology that could be implemented and would be beneficial for the normal flow of the class could be co-teaching. According to Raskin (2023:38):

Vygotsky's theory allows for individual learning differences between students because each individual's ZPD is unique to that individual's progress in the classroom. This relates to co-teaching which allows for more differentiation, particularly in the co-

teaching models of station teaching, parallel teaching, alternative teaching or team teaching.

In relation to storytelling, Karantalis (2022:5) stated: "The collaborative teaching method is a basic principle of constructivism, as collaborative and cooperative learning experiences allow students to construct a shared understanding by negotiating appropriate meaning and solutions to learning tasks". Thus, the students must keep in mind that the activity and goal are focused towards the global understanding and improvement of their English.

## 4. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT AND ACADEMIC ENGLISH

### 4.1 Historical journey

It's difficult to mark with rigorous accuracy the implementation of Storytelling in the teaching-learning process inside of schools, due to it being around since prehistoric acknowledgement. As Hou (2024:2) explains on the origins and beginnings of Storytelling: "Myths and legends played a vital role in early societies, providing explanations for natural events, human behavior, and the origins of the world. Shared in groups, these stories helped strengthen social bonds and cultural identity". After a short explanation of how stories and their transmission developed through time (press, newspapers, books, etc.) Hou (2024:3) adds: "Traditional linear narratives have given way to more complex and non-linear structures, often incorporating elements of interactivity and audience participation.". We can agree that storytelling, for the last few centuries, has involved some type of engagement and interaction between individuals, which is crucial for it to be effective (especially in education). This interaction can be first related to Piaget and his Theory of Moral and Cognitive Development (1965), as Nair (2014:3) stated on this:

> Teachers can help children learn moral values through stories and scenarios. After the teacher tells a story the pupils should be given the opportunity to create discussions and interactions between peers so that children can learn what is "wrong" or "right" through problem solving and conflict in the individual consciousness and make collective decisions.

In other words, older children tend to interpret rules as socially agreed-upon guidelines. These interpretations are sometimes created with stories and other tales. They are designed to benefit all the group members and are adjustable. This can be translated to

the use of Academic English since, depending on the context, we must adapt and use different vocabulary and grammar, following some "guidelines" imposed by society itself.

Even though this is not directly related to the acquisition of Academic English, it is a starting point to see how the "oldest theories" related to storytelling, such as the Moral Development one, are still active and respected in the appliance and use of this mechanic. We will take this as one of the earliest forms of explanation on how the dynamic of storytelling "makes sense" in education.

At a similar time to Piaget, Vygotsky made an appearance on the explanation on how students acquire knowledge. As we have seen previously, with the ZDP theory, we agree that Vygotsky thinks that cognitive development is enhanced and dictated by interaction, being an important aspect of Social Constructivism. More on this was mentioned by Abderrahim, (2021:4): "they need the guidance and encouragement of a "more knowledgeable other" acting as a facilitator who may be an adult but who may equally be another child". This understanding between two individuals can lead to the processing and formation of new milestones in order to progress in the acquisition of Academic English.

The use of AE, as Vygotsky believed, is deeply rooted to the content of the message, and therefore, to the meaning of it. As Corson (1997) paraphrased in his book *The Learning and Use of Academic English Words,* in the section dedicated to Vygotsky and the use of AE, the skilful use of the lexis from the individual "against" the common use of rules and language done by the rest, can show and denote an advanced student. In our case, the "skilful use" means the understanding, appliance and processing of different

patterns, sentences, expressions, phrases and other aspects that are the norm in Storytelling.

More on this topic in relation to Vygotsky was affirmed by Chall (1987) where he explains that reading and content knowledge, related to the rules for their use, is the key to mastering texts and gaining entry to the culture of literacy.

Following the half of the XX Century and after the Social Constructivism wave settled down in education, new authors started bringing that fresh point of view in different ambits of knowledge gaining.

Almost acting as a sequel to this school of thought, Ausbel et al. (1998) were linking the use of storytelling to significant learning, which is intended to adapt directly to the student's wants and needs. This is one of the first impacts where the use of the narrative is implied and used actively to learn the language for academic purposes. This is due to, following this theory, the previous knowledge is reinforced and improved by the interaction with new thoughts, which results in a new product in a logical way. Thus, reading and narrative has to be done with a context where the student feels like they are making progress and actually acknowledging something. More on this was stated by Uquillas (p.3, 2023): "La lectura como un proceso de lenguaje receptivo. Es proceso de Psicolingüística; comienza en una representación superficial lingüística codificada por un escritor y termina con un significado que construye la lectura en base a su conocimiento.". After that, she starts to explain how the need of the students will be satisfied based on their strategies, objectives and previous learning with the use of an image (Figure 1) as a summary:
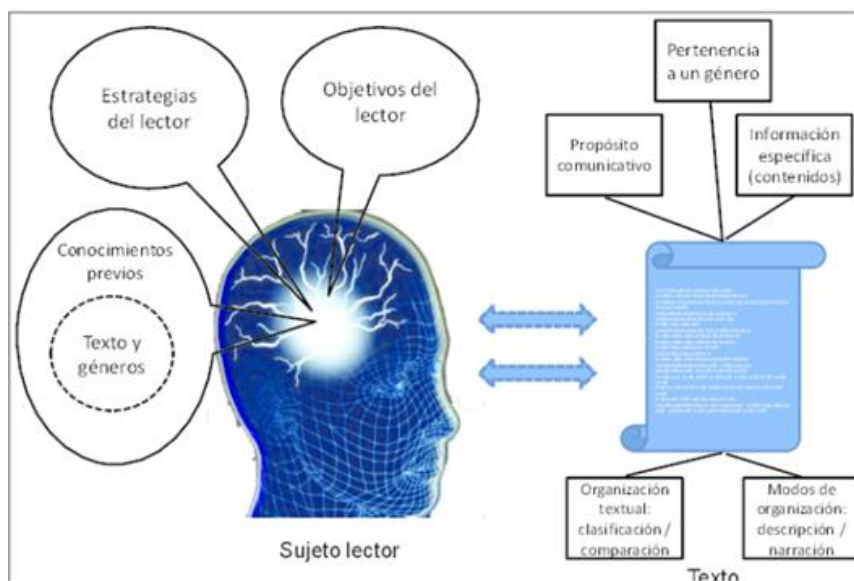
Figure 1: Reading process and factors that are involved in it. Originally stated by Parodi et al. (2010).

As we are able to perceive, the learning process through storytelling is directly impacted by the students' knowledge. We can connect the set of previous knowledge and objectives to Gardner's motivation theory. As Alizadeh (2016:1) stated: "We know that success in a task is due to the fact that someone is motivated. It is easy in second language learning to state that a learner will be successful with the right motivation. Gardner (1985) explains that we can encounter "Instrumental motivation" or "Integrative motivation". The first one is focused on a task, searching for tools and ways to overcome a specific problem or exercise, such as exams or getting a job. On the other hand, integrative motivation is focused on meaning and the search for learning for pleasure or to improve. In this case, we would like the second type of motivation to be present in our storytelling classes and dynamics, since we are searching for the improvement of the students' Academic English.

Yang and Wu (2012) carried out a quasi-experimental study and experiment related to the use of Storytelling on the motivation of EFL learners in Taiwan. In it two appreciable groups of students were used. One of them was given plain texts and lectures in relation to a topic, and the other had storytelling sessions with active participants and critical thinking. The results showed that the second one received a better understanding of the same lesson and had other skills improved, such as creativity, motivation and language skills.

**4.2 Why should we use storytelling?**

We can ask ourselves the question: "Why would we want to use storytelling when there are other ways with which we could learn Academic English?".

As we are able to read in Aragon's Official Bulletin on regards to the English Area:

> El Consejo de Europa indica que el objetivo último del aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera es que el alumno alcance de forma progresiva el mayor grado de competencia comunicativa, es decir, que pueda utilizarla para comprender, hablar y conversar, leer y escribir. El Consejo de Europa indica que el objetivo último del aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera es que el alumno alcance de forma progresiva el mayor grado de competencia comunicativa, es decir, que pueda utilizarla para comprender, hablar y conversar, leer y escribir.

As we can perceive, English has to be understood in a way where the students can get better at their communication skill and use it when needed.

Additionally, in the Aragon Curriculum's first Specific Competence, which are: "*Performances the students must be able to perform in activities or situations whose approach requires the basic knowledge of each area*" is:

**CE.LEI.1.** Comprender el sentido general e información específica y predecible de textos breves y sencillos, expresados de forma clara y en la lengua "estándar, haciendo uso de diversas estrategias y recurriendo, cuando sea necesario, al uso de distintos tipos de apoyo, para desarrollar el repertorio lingüístico y para responder a necesidades comunicativas cotidianas.

This faculty is directly linked with how the students are able to use and perceive the stories and content in them in order to answer questions, retell or even infer upcoming events.

Storytelling can be useful and advantageous for the learning of English's four macro skills: reading and listening (called receptive skills) and writing and speaking (called productive skills).

### 4.2.1 Receptive skills

Storytelling in receptive skills can be used in many forms and based on the target we are aiming for we must change different aspects of it.

One of the first and most straightforward skills we would think we can improve with this technique would be the reading skill. Plenty of studies, documents, dissertations and discussions online and tangible are filled with explanations on how the narration of stories can lead to an improvement of the literature perspective of the students. As one of the quotes we could find in the net regarding storytelling and reading, Miller (2008,4) stated: "Through participation in storytelling experiences, students learn to build a sense of story by anticipating features of the genre, including how a story may begin and end, to increase awareness of cause and effect, sequence events, and develop other skills"

On a recent study carried out by Fono (2024), she is able to prove how storytelling can affect positively in many aspects (skills and personal ones primarily) and in the conclusion section Fono (2024:6) stated: "Many researchers agree that the storytelling method is very effective for improving literacy skills for students and improving reading comprehension skills. Storytelling is also a pedagogical strategy to strengthen understanding by helping students develop a sense of a storyline or story.".

The other receptive skill, listening, can also be deeply studied and practiced through this methodology. As Soares expressed in the results of her study and experiment with primary students, there are many benefits from using storytelling focused on listening, such as being fun and engaging for the mere act of understanding English; the inference of ongoing parts and what might happen in the upcoming events, feelings the character can have or even how it will end…

However, what stands out from this document, as explained by Soares (2018:28) is:

> As the listening activities were carried out in the lessons, either with storytelling activities or other listening tasks from their course book, children became less fearful of failing in those given tasks because they knew there were strategies available for them to overcome difficulties, despite the fact that they answered that they had not used them on the final questionnaire.

This means that storytelling strategies and ways of learning can be directly applied to other activities and contexts. Motivation and self-assurance were present after the storytelling techniques were used, even though they are not strictly aware of them. It can be rooted in their personal and academic way of thinking.

In an experiment carried out by M. Fajri, the author was aiming to study both receptive skills through storytelling, in which he stated that the pre-test showed that the students that were divided in groups of two didn't have a significant difference between them. After applying the post-test when given the storytelling methodology, Fajri (2017:5) declared: "Upon administering the post-tests to measure the students' comprehension ability after the treatment implementation, results indicated that the experimental group tests scores improved". This means that, even in the slightest and most brief lessons with the implementation of storytelling, listening comprehension can be improved and taught in a meaningful way.

### 4.2.2 Productive skills

Acting as a complementary skill to listening as it is the most immediate way of showing your understanding and expressing thoughts and feelings toward an occurrence, speaking is also a broadly used and trained utility with storytelling. Moreover, it is the form of interaction from the transmitter towards the listener and the outstanding way of "showing" the dominance of a language.

Focusing on a strict relation to Storytelling and how it impacts speaking, Nair (2021) carried out a research with many different articles and interviewed various researchers in order to confirm how this methodology enhances multiple skills, aimed especially towards communication and sharpening students' speaking skill. He specified that it doesn't primarily affect pronunciation or speech elaboration, but rather on spontaneous and easy or complex and specific situations where the student has to be quick with his thoughts and perceive all the information to carry out the conversation fluently.

On another research conducted by Bin (2016, p.9) in Indonesia, after comparing two groups that were taught with and without Storytelling during a school year concluded that: "There was a significant improvement in the performance of the EC students taught using the storytelling technique compared to the CC taught conventionally."

The last macro skill we can find in the English language is writing aptitude. Despite not having as immediate an effect as in the other three examples above, writing is conditioned towards improvement through constant exposure to literature and texts from different fields. Knowing how texts are organized depending on different contexts, or how punctuation should be used, is as important for a student focusing on Academic English as any other utility. Even though it is not currently used as a common and reliable method to improve writing, it is undeniable that it can enhance and nurture creativity and organization in the learner's mind. As Munajah (2023:5) in relation to the use of Storytelling for this purpose stated: "Teachers experience difficulties in improving learning outcomes in writing stories, so innovation is needed to help teachers improve the quality of learning in elementary schools.".

## 5. ACADEMIC ENGLISH AND STORYTELLING

As we have seen, Storytelling has a high number of perspectives from which it can be viewed, reviewed and studied, as well as story and research done constantly on it. In addition, it contains many aspects that can be used and shaped towards Academic English, and that is what we will be trying to understand in the next subsection.

As a brief summary and reminder from the first couple of pages, AE can be described as a specific and more elaborated type of English, where the student aims for more

complex structures and lexis that is normally used in more formal and scholarly situations. This affects all four sets of skills, and it focuses on clarity, precision and coherence.

Based on Wright's book (2002) has been a major guide and steppingstone for multiple narrative authors and teachers since it marks off clear sections for explaining how to instruct storytelling, and therefore English with this method. In the first pages of the book, we can find several concepts on which we will rely on to explain Academic English, due to them being accurate and encompassing the major targets that we look for putting into words. These ones are:

- Agents involved in the story (student and teacher / listener and teller)

- Impact of the story (motivation, meaning and fluency)

- Stage of the story (before, during and after)

Before defining all the boundaries and explaining each section previously mentioned, we have to keep in mind that there is not an international and registered outline with which we can define what is and what isn't AE. As stated by Scarella (2003:9) in his document *Academic English: A conceptual framework*: "Academic English is itself diverse and there are no widely accepted standards of academic discourse adhered to by all academicians, because academic English actually consists of multiple dynamic and evolving literacies."

Based on research done personally on the Internet, the most common answers to what Academic English is, are the use of advanced grammar and lexis (such as superlatives, comparatives, conditionals, passive sentences, etc. between others), vocabulary

(connectors, scientific terms, unusual verbs), along with other characteristics such as idioms or phrasal verbs.

## 5.1 Agents:

Teacher:

As cited by Scarella (2003:7): "Although in recent years teachers have been trained to teach phonics, many academic English problems revolve more around the students' deficiencies in academic English than around their ability to decode single words.". Teachers (or "the storytellers" in our case) are the main guidance and helper for the students' understanding and correct evolution. Even though the lessons are usually student-centered, we must keep in mind that teachers are a key point for the actual development of these lessons. Scarella (2003:10) also stated: "teachers of older learners rarely understand the importance of teaching the features of academic English that students need to learn to communicate well in specific academic contexts".

On the other hand, teachers are responsible for not only telling the story, but creating scaffolding, preparing the lessons for previous and posteriori knowledge (which will be explained in detail afterwards) and evaluating the students outcome. This means that the teacher must have a fluent academic English to be able to transmit and teach the students said knowledge.

In *storytelling with children*, Wright (2003) argues that the teacher must choose a story depending on the students' preferences, aim of study and what we plan on doing with the process and outcome. He recommends that teachers learn the stories beforehand in order to be able to tell them in a proficient way. Their role includes learning the aspects

and parts of the story where we want to add academic English (such as vocabulary, connectors or grammar). On the teacher's role Schleppegrell (2012:9) stated:

> Teachers need to understand and connect with the language resources children already have in order to help them develop new resources for meaning making. This means being sensitive to differences in language use, being open to culturally different ways of using language that may be unexpected but appropriate and being prepared to support all children in helping them develop new academic language registers.

Academic English can flourish in many ways. Asking and answering questions is usually the most basic and standard one, but self-assessment, debates or reflecting on a story, character or part can be other examples. Us as teachers must keep in mind these ways and be ready to permit and impulse said form of expression.

Again, Schleppegrell (2012:10) added this in the dissertation:

> Perhaps the child has the right information but organizes and presents it in ways that are not valued by the teacher, as in the sharing-time example. Perhaps the child is using an informal register when a formal one might be expected, and the teacher is distracted by the word choice or grammatical construction. Or perhaps the child is adding something new and unexpected that might take a moment to grasp.

Also, they must keep in mind that students have different origins and exposure to this English feature. Many students aren't exposed to this type of language on their daily basis, homes or media they consume, so it will probably be tougher for them to follow and acquire said language than the students that commonly are exposed. As

Schleppegrell (2012:12) stated: "Teaching students academic registers is an equity issue, as some children gain access to these registers outside of school through family and community activities, while other students need support in the classroom"

The teacher has many other features and duties when referred to in this role, but they will be discussed and presented afterwards.

Student:

Considered by the student-centered learning as the protagonist and target of the teaching and learning processes, students are the main person who must develop, improve and demonstrate the acquisition of Academic English. In this context, students are also referred to as the listener, since they are the ones receiving the information and interacting for the first time with an unknown story.

Related to their impact and broad role on storytelling, Scarcella (2003:10) stated: "it involves mechanics such as decoding as well as higher-order thinking-conceptualizing, inferring, inventing, and testing. Literacy encompasses oral communication skills as well as reading and writing skills". As we have seen previously, a multitude of skills are taken into action, so students must be open and aware that they will use and improve said skills. Complementary to this idea, we find a quote from Wright (8:2003) often referred to by other authors to keep us aware of their abilities: "Children can be helped to understand quite complex stories in language well above their own active command. It is what we expect the children to do which determines the proficiency level required, not the story itself".

Also, another key factor related to the students themselves would be their preparation and knowledge beforehand. For example, a person that is constantly in contact with more academic papers, such as complex books or chats with adults that contain some academic language, can have an advantage over other peer individuals. On this, Schleppegrell (4:2012), added: "academic language refers to the new set of registers that many children encounter for the first time on arrival at school […] children do not all come to school prepared in the same ways to engage in these new contexts and registers."

Based on what was said by Krashen (1982), the most optimal way of learning based on the student's knowledge, would be the "finely tuned input". This methodology is dependent on giving the learner a slightly more complex input, which is a cumulus of new information which we are looking for them to learn, that depends on very personal and individual circumstances. This is often called "i+1", where "i" means the current abilities and skills our learners possess, and "+1" is focused on the "small step" we want them to take (Figure 1).
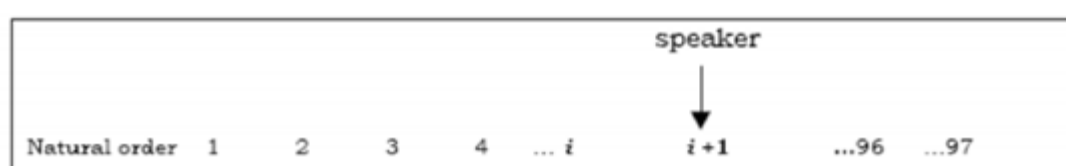


Figure 1. Finely tuned input scheme

However, this method in an average class, which usually has a minimum of 15 to 20 students, would be hard and would probably take a lot of time. Also, we must keep in mind that we are aiming for a storytelling ambience, where they interact and talk to each other, so it would be more beneficial if the content was the same or similar. To fix this problem, Krashen (1982) explained that, if we know the average level of the class, we

are able to give a "roughly tuned input" to all of them. This means that they will have the same content that will be focused on a broad understanding. This is beneficial for them since they will need to use more than their linguistic competence but rather have other skills for them to understand (Figure 2).
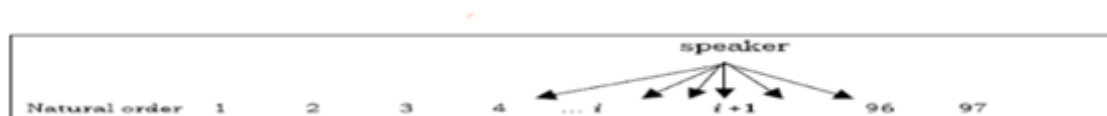


Figure 2. Roughly tuned input scheme

We can find inferences or negotiation of meaning to understand the teacher and their colleagues, which will make them be present and engaging with the story.

It's the teacher's responsibility to know their level beforehand and also know at all times if their students are able to understand what is being said and to provide help and scaffolding to those students who may have more problems. If we interpret this chunk of Krashen's theory into our Academic English perspective, the teacher must know the AE level of the class beforehand, so he can prepare a story which will include the different aspects that we are searching for them to acknowledge.

The last aspect related solely about the students' needs and abilities, would be the one based on another Krashen's theory: "The affective filter hypothesis". This is an explanation of how the state of mind of our students can affect their ability to receive and produce output. As we know, on recent laws and updates of the academic framework, the institutions are putting more emphasis on the well-being of the learners, and how it can impact on their performance and learning, so adding this chunk of information should be considered as important as the rest of it. The AFH, explained by Krashen (1986), refers to the conditions of the process of acquisition, commonly

referred to as "obstacles" or "barriers" that can condition the effective learning of the content. The main affective factors are motivation, confidence and stress (Figure 3). The higher the filter, the harder the students will have to understand and explain what they learn. Ideally, our students would be comfortable and will "dare to" talk in Academic English with us and other pupils, but there are many situations and scenarios where a student may be ashamed, embarrassed or "not in the mood" for explanation or active participation. It can also happen that the class is tired, stressed out or unmotivated, so our job as teachers is to be understanding and try to change the way we explain, the way we sit them down, change partners, etc. It really depends on the precise situation and we must not be afraid to change and adapt the sessions to their needs.
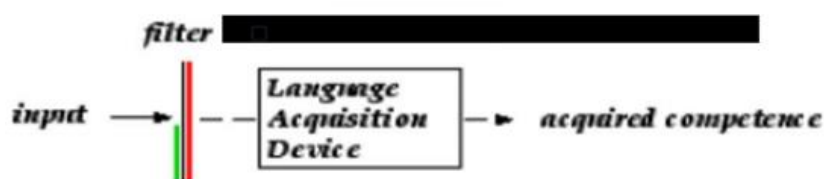


Figure 3. Scheme of the Affective Filter Hypothesis by Krashen

**5.2 Impact of the story:**

<u>Motivation:</u>

As we have seen in the previous segment, Krashen's theory includes the definition of motivation and how it could affect our students. The exact impact of motivation on the ability of our students to engage with the story is worth exploring.

First and foremost, we need to narrow down our definition of motivation. As a certain definition by Purnama (2:2019) that tries to sum up all the explanations given by experts regarding the motivation is: "it is regarded as an important component to make students successful in their English learning. Motivation can also be defined as one's

direction to behaviour or what causes a person to want to repeat a behaviour and vice versa". On the other hand, Oxford Dictionary explains it as "the feeling of wanting to do something, especially something that involves hard work and effort".

As we can see, the definitions are broad and extensive, and are hard to summarize, but in this specific context we will understand it as the sentiment and desire to take part, learn, understand and engage with the story and their peers.

Related to motivation in storytelling and literacy, Yoon (2019) carried out an experimentation where she analysed how the engagement in Storytelling could impact on the students' tuition. She made up a term (I AM TOP CAMP) for the different aspects of motivation in this ambit, which includes some concepts like "Meaningful", "Authentic", "Personalized". Some of the most outstanding definitions from Yoon (4:2019) are:

- o Meaningful: encourages students to become more conscious of the ability to tell their real story which catches the attention of audience

- o Motivating: allows students to gain personalization of the learning experience by increasing motivation.

- o Appealing: Students are expected to gain high academic motivation, engagement, and achievement for further learning.

This principle is crucial for our students and how their effort and output will show or if it even will show. It constitutes a special aspect that must be thought of in advance by

the teacher, where it's necessary to create an environment in which they feel the urge to participate and comfortable enough to make mistakes.

Meaning and fluency:

As it was explained before in this dissertation Academic English is understood as the ability that generates from the combination of having a broad vocabulary and lexis, which would be related to the concept of "meaning", and how they manifest said meaning and their adaptability to the context and form, which would be related to the concept of "fluency".

Focusing on meaning (also called accuracy), we can encounter a broad variety of stories that have many interpretations. We can find stories about animals, space, with a lot of characters, with only one character, long, short… But what makes them important and linked is the common target. As Nelson (388:1989) stated: "reading is most meaningful when materials are in the child's own language and are rooted in her/his experience".

As teachers, our common and most important objective should be to make our students want to learn English through our resources. In this special case, we are aiming for them to learn through our stories. But, as it was seen previously, their motivation and engagement are crucial for this aspect, so we need to create or pick a story with which they will be stimulated to understand the whole meaning of it. The content of the story is the main attraction and what will mostly determine their input and output, with the help of other variables. But even though the amusement of the students is wanted, the focus on an actual use and recalling of the contents seen in these chunks of literacy is as important. The content must be liked and therefore used and remembered. On this,

Bower and Clark (1969) reported an increase in the capacity of understanding and recollection of concepts and words when using stories compared to serialization and repetition.

In this ambit, Digital Storytelling could be our best example if we are referring to meaning and content. As we are able to understand and infer from the name, DS is directly related and based on the technologies and digital devices that can reproduce said literacy. They have a bright appearance, with colorful images and a well narrated story. DS has the ability to transmit all the facts from stories we have been seeing throughout this document, but adding scaffolding and external help from sounds, videos and music. Students can understand and interpret stories better from this, which would help to increase the amount of information and input they are able to handle at the same time. It would be a good idea, in order to understand and teach Academic English, to incorporate to some degree the use of technology and digital to explain, portray and give support to our students' literacy skills.

Based on Scarcella (2003), the most important skills found in students that handle and perform in good Academic English are lexical and grammatical. In our case, we must include these pieces of information in the development of the stories and chunks of literacy.

On the lexis, Scarcella (2003) categorized the words that can be used in AE (Figure 1).

**Table 2**
**Words Occurring in Academic Settings**

| *Type of Words* | *Meaning* | *Domain* | *Examples* |
|---|---|---|---|
| General Words | Nonspecialized | Used across fields | *already, busy* |
| Technical Words | Specialized | Used in specific fields | *fulcrum, pivot* |
| Academic Words | Both specialized and nonspecialized | Used across fields | *assert, research* |

Figure 1. Words used in Academic English.

The engagement with all kinds of words and lexis is crucial for the pupils to understand. Our stories must include all kinds and types of words, trying to combine them in a way that seems logical and easy to follow. For example, we could use the words "vaccine" and "illness" in a story about doctors and hospitals, trying to explain the meaning indirectly. As an example: "Mary was feeling very bad that day. She was ill, her head hurt, and she felt weak. "I hope the doctor doesn't use a vaccine on me!" she said. "They hurt a lot!".". We are able to find technical words (such as doctor or vaccine), general words (such as bad, head), and academic words (ill, weak) . This would be helpful to be assisted with depictions of her in a bad mood and ill, being vaccinated afterwards and with a sad face. Even better, if an animation of her being ill and vaccinated while she narrates would be ideal, because it will leave no room for doubts.

Conversely, the idea of fluency could be categorized as "simpler". The Oxford Dictionary explains the meaning of fluency as "the ability to speak or write a language easily, well and quickly". Although it would seem clear to everyone that producing work in an easy-to-understand way would make you "fluent," the truth is that getting to the point where you can define precisely and be understood by everyone is initially a difficult skill that few people possess.

But what makes the difference in today's conception of fluency is the ability to sound like a native speaker and express yourself in that way. Even though it's not the modern target in education, since it's communicative skills, we can't and must not ignore the key role and help that fluency and the expressive abilities provide. More on this was stated by Abbaspour (146:2016): "accuracy is the basis of fluency, while fluency is a further improvement of a person's linguistic competence and a better revelation of his/her communicative competence".

Rasinski (519:2012) in relation to accuracy reading, stated: "If we think of someone who is a fluent reader or speaker, we generally do not think of a person who speaks or reads fast. Rather, we are more likely to think of someone who uses their voice to help convey meaning to a listener when speaking or reading orally". Since the ability to comprehend and follow what is being said in the reader's voice is a complementary aspect of the entire storytelling process, this also applies to reading comprehension. Furthermore, Ransinski (520:2012) explained: "When reading, discussing, rewriting, and retelling stories, students have to think deeply about the meaning of the story as they process print texts into oral speech. Thus, comprehension and oral expression are integral to fluency.". This also applies to reading comprehension because the ability to comprehend and follow what is being said in the reader's voice is a complementary proficiency that is attained by combining all the previously mentioned factors. For both teachers and students to effectively convey and absorb the information, vocal inflection, pauses, pronunciation, and pace are crucial. Storytelling can therefore be useful in establishing circumstances in which we can exaggerate and illustrate aspects that are explicitly stated of the entire narrative process. But we still have to keep in mind that their ability to express themselves and getting involved in the activity should be more important than the pronunciation or the vocal inflexion. As Wright (4:2003) stated: "the

teacher must give more importance to what the child achieves than to the mistakes he or she might make. It also means that the teacher must encourage situations in which the child can be fluent and can 'have a go'.". It's our role to make them feel in a safe place and able to show their learning process.

**5.3 Stage of the story:**

Pre-Storytelling:

The benefit gained from the sessions may be significantly impacted by the way the teacher organizes and anticipates their students' engagement with the storytelling practice, content, and experience. It's important that, although stories come very handy to practice lexis and grammar, it should not be our main target. Focusing solely on the more "academic" aspects of a story can leave the students feeling overloaded or even bored. Literacy should be something the students look forward to and enjoy, talk about, participate, etc. rather than write down a few words and memorize them. The balance between making a story fun and helpful for learning can be stressful, but if we focus on certain aspects of it and plan it with enough time beforehand, it can be successful.

The process of planning out the sessions and how they are going to be delivered will be called "Pre-Storytelling".

The **first** decision that must be made is the format of the story. As we have seen previously, stories can be told using technology and other similar tools (commonly denominated Digital Storytelling) where a pre-recorded voice is used to tell, using animation and sounds as a complement. On the other hand, we can use the more "traditional" method, where the teacher is the teller, he moves and gesticulates and can bring external support like puppets or scenarios. The second one is commonly used

simply because it's more accessible, flexible and easier to prepare, but both methods are helpful.

In association to the format, the display of the students is what will determine the amount of engagement they are asked to have towards the story. It's not the same to have them sitting down in individual chairs with students closer to you than others, than having them arranged in a specific way, showing them it's "Story time". Wright (17:2003) explained further on this: "change the seating before the story is told. I always try to do this before the children come into the class. My preferred arrangement is a U-shape of chairs with a U-shape of tables immediately behind." He added the following image (Figure 1) as an explanation:
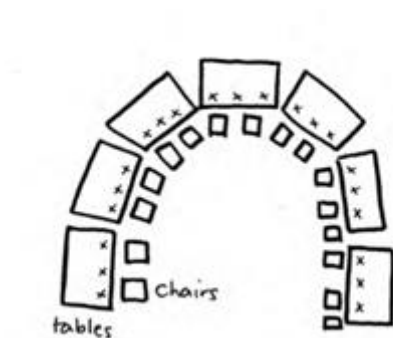


Figure 1. Example of displacement by Wright

Furthermore, Wright (2003) explains how beneficial it would be to have a designated spot or room to tell stories, since it will make them pay attention, be present and have a change of scenery. He designates this special spot as "the reading corner". It shouldn't just make them listen to your storytelling, but be a place where they can consult books, read freely and spend quiet time after finishing activities, as a reward or incentive to keep learning.

The **second**, and probably the most important aspect of it, which is directly related to Academic English, would be the story selection and adaptation. The selection of the story itself must be thought beforehand and analysed relating it to the students' needs and wants. As Del Negro (56:2021) explained on how to prepare for storytelling: "Who are your listeners? What stories are they attuned to receive? "Cinderella" to a group of Boy Scouts may be challenging, whereas "Taily-po" might be the bull's-eye of the event". As EFL teachers, we must keep in mind that, even though the stories can be appealing, the length and complexity of the story can have a big impact on our students' performance and retention of information. We must prioritize the learning and the quality of our books, trying to make it as appealing as possible. For example, if we know our EFL students would enjoy a book about animals, we should try to look for a story that involves said topic but also has a story that's simple and straightforward, since too much information would make them fall out of the environment we are trying to create.

Wright (1995) explains that there are other factors that can also help us choose and decide the book we will be working on. For example, a story with multiple characters can help us create different voice inflections and will maintain the students' attention. On the other hand, a book with multiple and colorful pictures that convey and complement the literacy can result in a "subtle" form of storytelling, working inference and thought-provoking in our students.

The school curriculum also plays a big role in the selection of the book, since it should be related to what content we are trying to teach in that unit.

The extra step that will be added in this section is the modification of words, structures and idioms in relation to the Academic Language that we want them to learn. First, we

have to read the book multiple times to be sure that it is understandable and able to be followed. If possible, it should be remembered and explainable without the book, even though it can be used as support if chosen. Once we dominate the story, lexis and grammar of the story, we can start adjusting them and turning into an Academic English tale.

As we have seen previously, Academic English is a broad term which includes multiple types of words, as Cummins (4:2008) explained: "aspects continue to develop throughout our lifetimes. Thus, these very different aspects of proficiency cannot be considered to reflect just one unitary proficiency dimension". So deciding on what categories the change will be focused on must be a priority. The options include connectors, verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs, etc. and must fulfill our needs as teachers (depending on what we want them to use these words in the future) and the students' needs (if it will be helpful and handy to them). As it was explained, there is no specific guidance on what content should be taught on what level, so it is recommended that the teacher or teller evaluates the level of the pupils and teach said language with a purpose. For example, a teacher for 3rd grade students could be explaining the connectors such as "Furthermore", "On the other hand", etc. but it is unlikely that the students will be using them soon, or they even remember at all. It would make much more sense to focus on the enrichment of vocabulary to give them a broader number of options to express themselves. Whichever option is selected, it is important to remember that academic language should be an "extra step" beyond their language ability, offering communication methods that deviate from their typical self-expression expectations. As it was seen previously, the importance of the AE and the impact it has on the 4 macro skills should also be considered in the process of choosing. When learning a specific chunk of information, the teacher must be the one who knows where it can be applied.

For example, the use of adverbs of frequency become very handy for productive skills, since it can help express actions more specifically, while the use of idioms and phrasal verbs can be more beneficial for the receptive skills, focusing on understanding. We should make a checklist which contains all the factors we want to work with before starting and check it as we progress.

Finally, it is recommended to plan beforehand if an explanation and introduction will be done before the storytelling. Normally, the academic language must be in a context if you want to explain it without translation, since it can be hard to infer from the name itself, so you can decide to explain or make emphasis on them while reading, but an introduction to the story, thoughts and experiences that will be discussed can turn out very beneficial for the students and the normal flow of the sessions. Wright (2003) explains how showing a picture and making questions about what they can infer the story will be about can create a solid base on their level and previous knowledge. If we show a picture of a vampire tale, for example, the adjectives, vocabulary, explanation and verbs will broadly show their understanding. Asking questions or letting them share their thoughts can form a comfortable environment to start with. From there, we can adjust our planning and choice of AE focusing towards the "during storytelling" section. The time that will take to do all the activities and how much we work with the storytelling can also be a factor that can modify our perspective on what we will carry out.

As a guide for seeing these concepts in action and to grasp the general idea of how it should be applied, a hypothetical example will be explained onwards. The teacher of a 2nd cycle (3rd or 4th grade) of primary school from Aragon, which has around 25 students, is currently working with adjectives and clothes. This is due to the curriculum citing specifically what must be taught:

- Expresión de la capacidad ("can"), el gusto ("Like/Don't like"), la preferencia ("favourite"), el sentimiento (happy, sad, scared, angry, unhappy, hot, cold).

- Descripción de personas y animales, actividades, lugares, objetos, hábitos.

In this case, this teacher thinks beforehand to work with the book "The Paper Bag Princess", a short tale by Robert Munsch, where a princess starts to describe her world with princes and dragons, explaining size, color and other properties. Also, it gives a twist to the common formula of "happily ever after" and other characteristics from stories.

The election was taken due to it being a short book (15 pages) with colorful images that can be easily done and worked in 2 to 3 sessions, apart from being charming and having an interesting moral. If he or she wanted to aim for a longer period of time with more sessions or a longer book, there are other options that revolve around these topics, it would be a great idea to check "The Smartest Giant in Town" by Julia Donaldson, or "The Day the Crayons Quit" by Drew Daywalt. To go on with this theorized context, the teacher should have access to puppets that represent the characters or real-life scenarios where the story could be displayed, like a big poster of a recurrent scenario. In this case, a good scaffolding could be having puppets of the dragon, princess and prince, and the dragon's cave scenario as well, since it is a recurrent place in the story. The display chosen should permit every individual to be capable of admiring what is being shown. The chosen story, in this case and without notion of the target audience's interest, it's based upon a twist on the ordinary tales and as a funny and refreshing plot line, compared to the ones they know beforehand.

The key aspect of the sessions, since we are looking for the academic and specific language, should be the "translation" of the story into a higher level of adjectives and vocabulary, since that will be the focus in these sessions.

For example, in the third page, a piece of the story is encountered, where she must follow the dragon who just destroyed her home (Figure 1). In this page, the story uses the synonyms chase-follow, and wear-put on. The use of the first term, referred by Scarcella (2003) as General Words (such as chase and wear) can be used as a guide for implicit explanation, since later we could modify the synonyms of those words to use Academic English for their level, turning them into the so-called Academic Words.
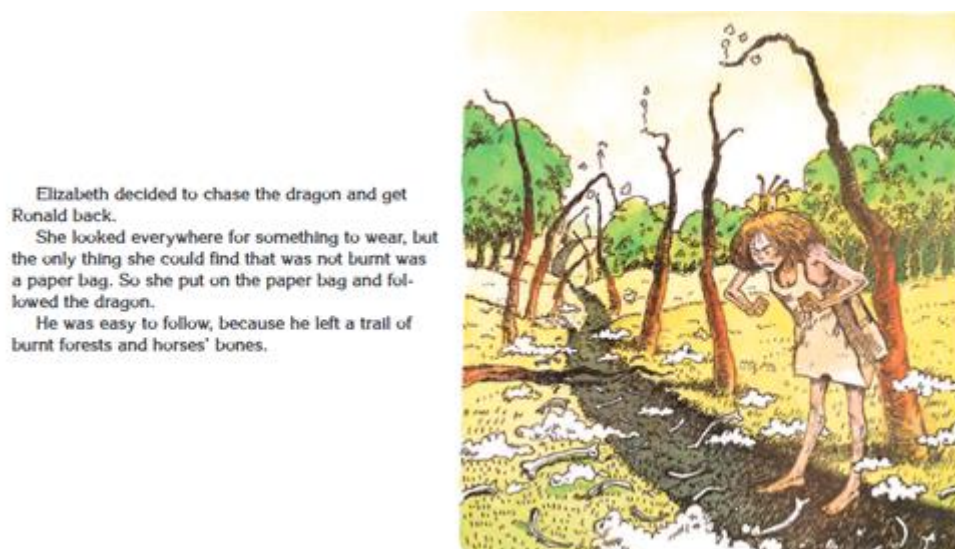


Figure 1: Page 3 of "The Paper Bag Princess"

As an example of a form of adapting this page to the academic language could be: "She got dressed in the paper bag and went after the dragon". "He was easy to follow […]". Since both examples are common and habitually used phrasal verbs, it could be a good idea to add them to the students' vocabulary.

The same thought process could be used for adjectives, since it's another of our targets in this specific and brief storytelling. In page 14 (Figure 2), after the princess made the

dragon to move fast and use all of its energy, the word "tired" (which is most-likely known by the students) is used. In page 15 (Figure 3) the same word is used, depicting the image of the dragon sleeping. Here is where an academic upgrade could be used, such as: "[…] he was too tired to talk […]" à "the dragon was so fatigued […]".



So the dragon jumped up and flew around the whole world in just twenty seconds.
When he got back he was too tired to talk, and he lay down and went straight to sleep.

Figure 2: Page 14 of "The Paper Bag Princess"



Elizabeth whispered, very softly, "Hey, dragon."
The dragon didn't move at all.
She lifted up the dragon's ear and put her head right inside. She shouted as loud as she could, "Hey, dragon!"
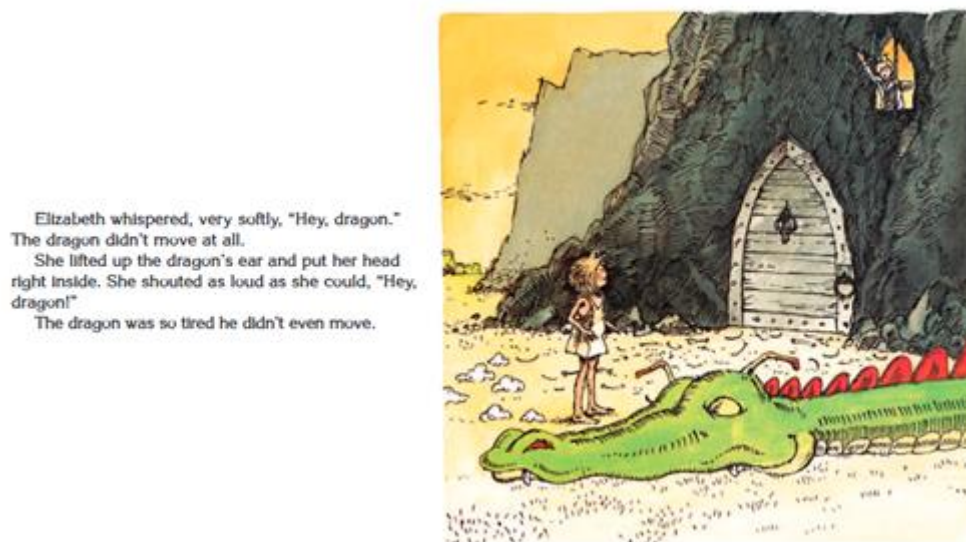The dragon was so tired he didn't even move.

Figure 3: Page 15 of "The Paper Bag Princess"

As has been explained previously, the number of changes and levels added to the story depends on the students, but it should not be a big quantity in one take, since it could oversaturate and make them feel lost or as if the story was something out of their level. Wright (15:2003) added a quote on this: "We must remember not to spoil the story in our eagerness to 'get a lot of useful work out of it'! Sometimes the best activity for the children is to sit and listen". The scaffolding here could be the use of words with the same meaning repeated throughout the story and changing them to make their vocabulary broader.

Once the changes have been done, reviewed and approved by the teacher, a pre-telling activity could be carried out. To begin, a series of questions could be posed to the students as an introduction to the task. They would be used by the instructor to ensure that the students understand the "basic" vocabulary that will eventually be transformed into "academic" vocabulary. A few of these inquiries might be "Do you know any princess stories?", "Can you describe me a princess, what do they wear?", ¿Can you describe me a prince and where do they live?", and similar. The idea behind this is to help them concentrate on the adjectives and vocabulary that will be demonstrated and practiced during the sessions, while also helping them to refresh their memory so they can receive additional input.

<u>During Storytelling:</u>

Following proper selection, planning, and adaptation of the story to the level and subject matter desired for the students to work on, it is important to think about the concepts that can be discovered while reading the story. The planification and inference on how the academic language will be received is as important as the previous step. Reading it and listening to it as we currently understand it calls for a number of abilities and

qualities, including the capacity for sustained focus, interaction with the narrative, and comprehension of a fictional setting, which means that the storytelling session has to help simplify said directions and intentions, since the main objective is their understanding and amusement. As Scarcella (13:2003) stated: "today most researchers take a much broader view of literacy, suggesting that it involves mechanics such as decoding as well as higher-order thinking—conceptualizing, inferring, inventing, and testing.". It is not expected that most of the primary students think explicitly about these mechanics, but it is believed that they will use some of them to a certain extent. In the upcoming chunk of information, a series of ways to help simplify the acquisition of academic language will be displayed.

Wright (2003) aimed his book towards the explanation of the storytelling process for teachers, but he put a special emphasis on the "during literacy" section, since he thought it was the broadest ambit of them. One of the most basic but effective techniques would be the use of questions that reflect their inferences and empathy for the characters, which would be a direct manifestation of their understanding and following. Some of them could be "How would you feel?", "Picture this, what can you see?", etc. On the justification of this "basic" technique, Scarcella (21:2003) gives examples of English proficiency techniques that we can find while reading with primary school students: "signalling cause and effect, hypothesizing, generalizing, comparing, contrasting, explaining, describing, defining, justifying, giving examples, sequencing, and evaluating". Scarella (25:2003) emphasizes this further on: "readers must think about text in order to interpret it. They must do more than associate sounds, graphemes, meanings, and words. They must predict, infer, and synthesize meaning to create and transform knowledge".

As we could understand, not all of these examples will be able to be taken into account while preparing and performing our class, but the use of questions and their participation in the storytelling process can help them to improve these techniques. The teacher's role is important, since he or she must shift the conversation towards a more specific conversation, where the students must start thinking and self-reflecting what they know and how they can express, even creating new ways of thinking (such as comparison, justification, etc.).

For example, in our theoretical example, as the story of The Paper Bag Princess starts to be different to other tales, it could be possible to ask our students what they feel it's different. We could show them the twelfth page of the book (which has been shown previously) where the princess defeats the dragon. There we could start asking questions like: "Is this what normally happens in princess tales?", "Can you give me an example of that?", "Did the princess do something different? Why?". The idea is to make them recall other stories, explain them, compare them and justify their beliefs, while focusing our target to their engagement and participation with the story.

Apart from them enjoying and wanting to hear more about the story, we are also looking forward to the acquisition of academic English. As we are dealing with children and young people, these words are more likely to be consolidated and remembered if we make them relatable through a melody or jingle. This is what Wright (45:2003) called "chanting": "is an extension of chorusing in which repetition is used together with rhythm and stress. The children chant in groups and other groups respond." This means the teacher underlines a specific sentence with a certain rhythm, which is easier if it is said by a character since it can be given more inflection and melody and chooses another sentence that is similar. This is also called "jolly phonics" which is a way of understanding the pronunciation of letters for early stage English students. In our case,

it could be two sentences with the targeted academic language, in order to make it stick to our students. For example, in the ending of the story, the prince tells off the princess for not being "girly" enough, which we can adapt to make it rhyme and easy to remember: "Elizabeth, Elizabeth, look how you are dressed! Your appearance is not that of a princess!". The academic word could be "aspect". This could be, for example, said by the male students, while the female could reply with an adapted quote from the last page of the tale: "Ronald, Ronald, I hate your lovely clothes! I smell you with my nose!". The academic words could be "lovely", "smell" and "nose", depending on the level of the students. The meaning of these words should be explained, since knowing the jingle without the meaning would not be useful at all. The procedure of chanting should be to first repeat it altogether at unison a series of times. After the jingles are understood, we can change who says it to make it appealing and challenging but working with the same words.

The last example of techniques useful for keeping up the engagement and attention of our students while relating to the academic language could be the use of mimicry and imitation of the words. This idea is based on the Total Physical Response theory, originally created by Dr. Asher in 1969. Originally, in Asher's paper (1969) the TPR is described as a form of connecting the physical movement and coordinating it with language learning. The instructor gives orders and actions that must be performed by the learners in their target language, focusing on understanding the language and passively obtaining said language's grammar and vocabulary. This doesn't mean that it must be translated, since the instructor can give the original example himself, sharing a demonstration of what the order or word means. In Storytelling for the Academic English acquisition, we are looking for a similar approach, since the mimics and relation of words to action exists, but it's not focused on orders. Instead, it would be beneficial

to associate the words we are focusing on learning (which are the ones with high proficiency) and give a specific gesture that reminds us of said words. For example, in our hypothetical storytelling session, we encounter the phrasal verb "go after". As teachers, we could ask them directly if they know what the word means, without wanting them to translate. Most likely, no one or maybe one student will be aware of the meaning. In either of those examples, the teacher shouldn't translate or explain with words what the phrasal verb means but rather do a short and engaging performance with a student, chasing him or her and telling the class "I go after "x "", exemplifying the action and transmitting the meaning. It would be easy to understand and more appealing to the students, who will remember it through this action. Later, we can practise by gamifying the class, saying two random students and asking one of them to "go after" the other.

Other techniques that won't be explained but could be useful are the use of puppets to exemplify the story and words we are aiming for, use of flashcards with the grammar and vocabulary found in the story, and creating "a family tree", where they label different lexis based on their characteristics, such as families (verbs, adjectives, etc.) or relation with the characters of the story (dragon à fatigated, princess à mess, etc.).

We must remember our objectives set before the story, our aim to explain the proficiency of the language and, most importantly, the students' amusement and likeness with literacy.

After Storytelling:

Even though the action and process of storytelling itself should be the main target, since it is what permits us to show and teach the vocabulary and the proficiency language, the

action after the story are important as well, since it shows if they have understood what has been explained.

Two types of explanation after the story has been told will be displayed, one will be directly related to the understanding of the story, vocabulary and academic English, while the other will be related to how the storytelling can impact or be used in the four macro-skills. The justification of this review and need of check if they have comprehended the academic English that has been involved in the sessions comes from Scarcella (26:2003): "The comprehension process involves, among other things, assimilation of new knowledge into existing schemata and accommodation of existing schemata to fit new knowledge.". This sounds familiar and in relation to the use of memories in the Input/Output theory.

In the first example, our target will be to generate and make them encode the new input into the working memory and, potentially, into the long-term memory. These two concepts are based on the evaluation of the types of memory (short-term, working and long-term) that take place when receiving a new input (Figure 1). The following activities and examples are aimed towards the working memory, which includes what has been seen recently and translates it into real outcome.
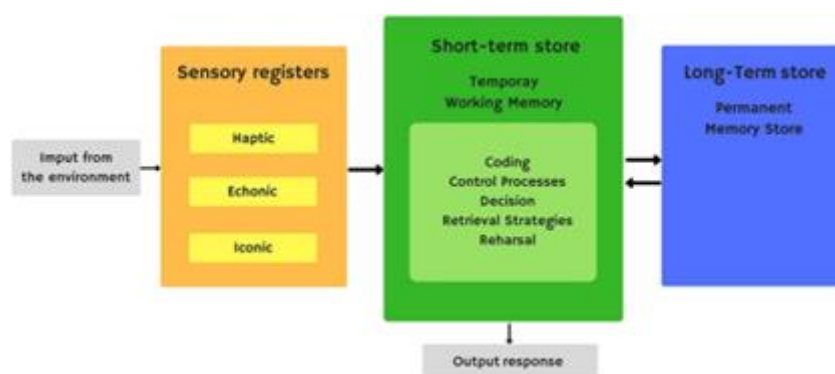


Figure 1: Types of memory

Since we are using this methodology to make our students learn academic English, it should be our main target to work with.

Wright (2003) explains how retelling, and its variables can be beneficial for them to use the short-term store, since it is something seen recently. Making the whole class retell the story, focusing on the recent words can result in them underlining the importance of them. For example, if we say: "What did the princess do when the dragon burned her castle?", we should be looking forward to them saying "She went after him", rather than any synonyms. This can be done by asking the students, letting them correct each other or give hints to the focused target. Another variable on this could be us being the "retailers", explaining the story but with some mistakes, making them justify and give examples of our incorrect statement because, as we have seen, is a key aspect of academic literacy. For example, saying "The prince put on a paper bag as clothes", and letting them correct us can make them feel confident about their abilities. Also, we should focus and let the individuals who are not being especially active take the spotlight, making them lose their fear of being incorrect.

Other explanations could be with the help of flashcards. Considering that we have used this resource during storytelling, linking both concept and the image can result in the manifestation of the working memory. For example, "go after" can be linked to an image of a princess chasing the dragon, or even the TPR explanation given before. If we want to gamify this bit, we could create a race between groups, where they must link flashcards with the concept and hand them to the teacher. After all the groups are done, a global review can be done one more time to make sure everyone got it right or correct mistakes that can be present.

Finally, self-assessment is recommended for students but also for teachers. A checklist or description box can be handed to every individual where they can check if they have understood the story, enjoyed it, remember terms, want it easier or harder, etc. The main target is for them to assess what they have seen, to check if their level can be taken a step further or if a more subtle adaptation should be done. The same criteria must be done with the teacher, showing if he or she should tell the story slower, louder, quicker, work more on the new words, etc. At the end of the sessions, the idea and target is everyone's growth so it can be done again.

On the other hand, if we are looking to review and improve their academic English with the new acquisitions and additions on their macro skills, we can also use the review lessons and post Storytelling activities to improve said skills.

As we could understand, listening and its relation to proficiency in language is worked through the whole process of explanation and on the examples shown previously, so in this section of the dissertation it will take an implicit role.

Speaking is directly related to our focus on Storytelling, due to their active role. We must make them use the academic language learned and make them show us their understanding. It can be considered the quickest method of explanation, so we should use it in favour of interaction. As Ellis and Brewster (39:2014) stated on using the information gap activity for speaking: "usually carried out in pairs or groups and often involve pupils asking and answering questions. One partner has some information that the other does not have.". This applied to the proficiency we are searching for can make the more shy and quiet kids be "forced" to speak with a partner. The teacher will adopt a role of guide and listener, while the couples can ask questions about the story and, especially, the vocabulary (where negotiation of meaning will be a key to their

understanding). Other activities based on speaking and storytelling for the acquisition of academic English could be the global retelling made with the whole class. The teacher adopts a secondary role while the students retell the story little by little, adding their use of their own words with the help of academic language that has been learned in the previous sessions. The last activity, which combines speaking and reading, could be to give them other short stories that contain the new words while the rest of the text is understandable, so they focus their pronunciation learning on these specific terms. The idea is one of the learners to read this time. For example, a story like: "Mom, I don't want to put on my clothes. I am exhausted, I want to sleep". It gives them the opportunity to use the new words in another context, giving a scaffolding with a closer and more familiar example. It also makes the rest of the students listen to the individual reading, ask questions to the teller about what they think the story means, explain it in other terms, etc. the possibilities are extended.

Since it has been introduced now, reading can be worked through storytelling. An example of an advanced proficiency language structure, such as poetry can be worked through this story. As Ellis and Brewster (2014) explain in the reading section, it is important for the pupils to understand the rhythm and inflection that is needed in academic English. The learners can have a series of phrases and create rhymes based on said phrase. For example, in our sessions, we could hand them the phrase: "Elizabeth is "the paper bag princess"" and hand them a bunch of examples that relate to the story, where the matching one for rhyming could be "That has a face and hair like a mess". Inference and analysis are a big part of the AE, apart from the vocabulary that is included as such in this example.

Another example that can keep them engaged could be creating different and short endings on the story where the use of the words learned are present on them, so it

involves reading these words in other contexts. Decoding and conceptualizing the new words based on what they knew before can improve their literacy skills, apart from making it attractive to re-read something they have worked with. In this case, students will have to justify why they chose a new ending and give examples of what could happen afterwards, gamifying the use of academic language.

Finally, on writing the options are more varied, but it must be chosen based on their abilities and wants since it could be considered the most arduous activity of them all. If higher proficiency texts have been studied, such as letters or emails, they can take place in this context, where an activity of writing letters to the characters, or an email to a person talking about the story can be helpful. On the other hand, based on the adaptation of AE, maybe the use of positive, negative and questions is considered to be of high proficiency for the students by the teacher, which can also lead to them writing about the story in this format, since it's included in AE as well. On this, Scarcella (17.2003) stated: "The noun, reference, verb and modality systems are important in everyday English and academic English. Academic English involves the ability to use these systems accurately and effectively".

Lastly, it could be considered the most "old-fashioned" form of evaluation and practising, with the use of tests, written questions and activities, such as matching, circling, true or false, anagrams, fill the gap, etc. This does not mean it should be avoided, but it must be done correctly to result in an attractive result for the pupils. Designing a cover art for the book, or a poster for it as well can make some of the previously learned AE skills take part in the process, organizing, explaining and justifying their chosen options.

## 6. CONS

Right away the biggest con on this dissertation is the fact that it is a broad example that tries to link these two theories and make them work together. It has not been applied to an actual class, but it is considered to be plausible to work out. Adaptations and other modifications must be done by the teacher and every single example and classroom is different, so what may work for some won't for others. The students with special educational, support and needs must be considered when planning a storytelling program, since they must be included and take part in these sessions. Also, academic language is usually present in much higher education, so the adaptation can vary based on the teacher and class, that is why the self-assessment and questioning of the quality of the methods must take place.

On the other hand, students that have a more active and present interaction with academic language outside of school, or the ones who have better skills in English, can demonstrate their understanding better than the ones who don't, so an arbitrary way of evaluation where all the students are equally assessed and asked is almost impossible, so the system must vary from time to time to help them express themselves differently. Schleppegrell (20:2012) added on this:

> Perhaps the child has the right information but organizes and presents it in ways that are not valued by the teacher, as in the sharing-time example. Perhaps the child is using an informal register when a formal one might be expected, and the teacher is distracted by the word choice or grammatical construction. Or perhaps the child is adding something new and unexpected that might take a moment to grasp.

Finally, the use of academic English in primary school can be difficult if the mother tongue's academic language has not worked previously, so the teller must be aware of this and try to engage with the words and grammar that the students know. The use of academic English without the previous knowledge of what those words mean can lead to confusion, frustration and negative feelings from the students.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

As a form of closing this paper, I want to express my gratitude for the reading of this document, since it has provided me with new skills and ways to develop my academic and personal abilities. I consider this methodology creative, useful and something I will be improving and implementing in my future classroom. I am sure that AE will be useful for our students since English has become the lingua franca and used internationally, so these chunks of vocabulary and lexis will help the pupils to get better at these aspects. The use of scientific and other papers is justified and added to the bibliography, as well as the quotes and my gratitude to these authors and their writings, that have helped me to ideate and talk about this topic.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Abderrahim, L. & Gutiérrez-Colón Plana, M. (2021). A Theoretical Journey from Social

Constructivism to Digital Storytelling. The EuroCALL Review, 29(1), 38-49.

https://doi.org/10.4995/eurocall.2021.12853

Alizadeh, M. (2016). The impact of motivation on English language learning. *International journal of research in English education*, *1*(1), 11-15.

http://ijreeonline.com/files/site1/user_files_68bcd6/admin-A-10-1-3-54f17e7.pdf

Anstrom, K., DiCerbo, P., Butler, F., Katz, A., Millet, J., & Rivera, C. (2010). A review of the literature on academic English: Implications for K-12 English language learners. *Arlington, VA: The George Washington University Center for Equity and Excellence in Education*.

https://nysrti.org/files/resources/ells/litreviewacademicenglish.pdf

As, A. B. (2016). Storytelling to improve speaking skills. *English Education Journal*, *7*(2), 194-205.

https://jurnal.usk.ac.id/EEJ/article/viewFile/3733/3423

Bailey, A. L., & Heritage, H. M. (2008). Formative assessment for literacy, grades

K-6: Building reading and academic language skills across the curriculum.

Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Belet, S. D., & Dala, S. (2010). The use of storytelling to develop the primary school students' critical reading skill: the primary education pre-service teachers' opinions. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *9*, 1830-1834.
https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877042810025140/pdf?md5=afb588bc52e6d9aa77f6693ce7dea1b9&pid=1-s2.0-S1877042810025140-main.pdf

Bower, G. H., & Clark, M. C. (1969). Narrative stories as mediators for serial learning.
Psychonomic Science, 14, 181–182. http://dx.doi.org/10.3758/BF03332778

Corson, D. (1997). The learning and use of academic English words. *Language learning*, *47*(4), 671-718.

https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/0023-8333.00025

Cummins, J., Yee-Fun, E.M. (2007). Academic Language. In: Cummins, J., Davison, C. (eds) International Handbook of English Language Teaching. Springer International Handbooks of Education, vol 15. Springer, Boston, MA. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-46301-8_53

Del Negro, A., & Greene, E. (1977). Storytelling: Art and Technique. https://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BB06036205

DiCerbo, P. A., Anstrom, K. A., Baker, L. L., & Rivera, C. (2014). A review of the literature on teaching academic English to English language learners. *Review of educational research*, *84*(3), 446-482.

https://www.academia.edu/download/50111110/Academic_LanguageArticle.full.pdf

Fikriah, F. (2016). Using the storytelling technique to improve English speaking skills of primary school students. *English Education Journal*, *7*(1), 87-101. https://jurnal.usk.ac.id/EEJ/article/download/3163/2984

Fono, Y. M., Sayangan, Y. V., & Gulo, O. (2024). Improving Literacy Skills through The Storytelling Method for Early Childhood. *Golden Age: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, *8*(1), 187-194.

https://ejournal.unisba.ac.id/index.php/golden_age/article/viewFile/13835/5127

Hamdy, M. F. (2017). The effect of using digital storytelling on students' reading comprehension and listening comprehension. *Journal of English and Arabic language teaching*, *8*(2), 112-123.

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Muhammad-Hamdy-2/publication/342364293_The_Effect_of_Using_Digital_Storytelling_on_Students'_Reading_Comprehension_and_Listening_Comprehension/links/5ef0e590a6fdcc73be94b073/The-Effect-of-Using-Digital-Storytelling-on-Students-Reading-Comprehension-and-Listening-Comprehension.pdf

Hou, D. (2024). Origin and Development: History of Storytelling. *Interdisciplinary Humanities and Communication Studies*, *1*(9). https://www.deanfrancispress.com/index.php/hc/article/download/1528/1351

Irshad, S., Maan, M. F., Batool, H., & Hanif, A. (2021). Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD): An evaluative tool for language learning and social development in early

childhood education. *Multicultural Education*, *7*(6), 234-242.
https://www.academia.edu/download/68050672/VYGOSTKY.pdf

Karantalis, N., & Koukopoulos, D. (2022). Utilizing digital storytelling as a tool for teaching literature through constructivist learning theory. *SN Social Sciences*, *2*(7), 109.
https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s43545-022-00412-w

Krashen, S. (1978). Individual variation in the use of the monitor. *Second Language Acquistion Research*, 175.

Krashen, S. D. (1986). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. Oxford: Pergamon Press

Landrum, R. E., Brakke, K., & McCarthy, M. A. (2019). The pedagogical power of storytelling. *Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Psychology*, *5*(3), 247.

Lawrence, R. L., & Paige, D. S. (2016). What our ancestors knew: Teaching and learning through storytelling. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, *149*(Spring), 63-72.

https://www.academia.edu/download/111374043/ld.pdf

McMahon, M. (1997, December). Social Constructivism and the World Wide Web - A Paradigm for Learning. Paper presented at the ASCILITE conference. Perth, Australia

Abbaspour, F. (2016). Speaking Competence and Its Components : A Review of Literature, 1(4), 144–152.

Miller, S., & Pennycuff, L. (2008). The power of story: Using storytelling to improve literacy learning. *Journal of Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives in Education*, *1*(1), 36-43.

https://people.wm.edu/~mxtsch/Teaching/JCPE/Volume1/JCPE_2008-01-06.pdf

 Mozayan, M. R. (2015). BICS & CALP revisited: A critical appraisal. *International Journal of Educational Investigations*, *2*(9), 103-111.

http://www.ijeionline.com/attachments/article/46/IJEI.Vol.2.No.9.09.pdf

Nair, S. M., Yusof, N. M., & Hong, S. C. (2014). Comparing the effects of the story telling method and the conventional method on the interest, motivation and achievement of Chinese primary school pupils. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *116*, 3989-3995.

https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877042814008957/pdf?md5=281e6b8dc04 4333ad27050ce83e208bd&pid=1-s2.0-S1877042814008957-main.pdf&_valck=1

Nelson, O. (1989). Storytelling: Language Experience for Meaning Making. *The Reading Teacher*, *42*(6), 386–390. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20200160

Nair, V., & Yunus, M. M. (2021). A systematic review of digital storytelling in improving speaking skills. *Sustainability*, *13*(17), 9829.

https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/13/17/9829/pdf

Neuhauser, P. C. Corporate Legends and Lore: The Power of Storytelling as

a Management Tool. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993.

Palincsar, A. S. (1998). Social Constructivist Perspectives on Teaching and Learning.

Annual Review of Psychology, 49, 345–375. Retrieved from

http://www.annualreviews.org.sabidi.urv.cat/doi/pdf/10.1146/annurev.psych.49.1.345

Purnama, N. A., Rahayu, N. S., & Yugafiati, R. (2019). Students' motivation in learning English. *PROJECT (Professional journal of English education)*, *2*(4), 539.

https://www.academia.edu/download/100686955/pdf.pdf

Raskin, A. M. (2023). Co-Teaching at the Secondary Level: A Qualitative Study of Perceptions, Implementations, & Constructivism (Doctoral dissertation, University of Nevada, Las Vegas).

https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=5770&context=thesesdissertation

Santos, R. S. (2018). Improving young learners' listening skills through storytelling. *Nova de Lisboa University (Unpublished Master Thesis). Lisbon*.

https://staff.tiiame.uz/storage/users/469/books/UiwrZYWhkS74qZMh79EtqUwDpw9h1T9NVg YwBYKA.pdf

Schleppegrell, M. J. (2012). Academic Language in Teaching and Learning. *The Elementary School Journal*, *112*(3), 409-418. https://doi.org/10.1086/663297

http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/663297?origin=JSTOR-pdf

Yang, Y., & Wu, W. (2012). Digital storytelling for enhancing student academic

achievement, critical thinking, and learning motivation: A year-long

experimental study. Computers & Education 59, 339–352.

https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0360131511003289

Wong Fillmore, L. (1997). Authentic literature in ESL instruction. Glenview, IL: Scott
Foresman