

Dr. Seuss with Very Young Learners

Tuškan, Benjamin David

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Ime i prezime pristupnika: BENJAMIN DAVID TUŠKAN
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MENTOR: izv. prof. dr. sc. Smiljana Narančić Kovač

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Summary

This thesis promotes the use of picture storybooks, especially ones written by Dr. Seuss in teaching very young learners of English as a second language in an authentic environment. It presents activities used with young learners that could easily be adapted for school children and adults. The activities mentioned in the thesis are used to develop imagination, creativity and love for the English language and can be used with other picture storybooks, both by Dr. Seuss and by other authors. It focuses on the benefits both the children and the teacher get from using Dr. Seuss picture storybooks as tools for teaching and learning English as a foreign language.

Keywords: Teaching, picture storybooks, very young learners, English language, Dr. Seuss, activities

Sažetak

Engleski jezik iz godine u godinu postaje sve važniji dio naše svakodnevice te ga imamo potrebu savladati sve ranije. Uz tradicionalne metode učenja, sve je veća potreba za pronalaženjem alternativnih metoda kako bi učenje stranoga jezika djeci postalo što primamljivije i zanimljivije.

Svrha je ovoga rada prikazati kako se koristiti slikovnicama Dr. Seussa kao alatom za poučavanje engleskoga jezika te je predstavljeno mnogo aktivnosti koje se mogu koristiti u svrhu poučavanje djece najmlađih uzrasta, ali i starije djece i odraslih osoba. Istaknute su prednosti korištenja slikovnica Dr. Seussa u poučavanju te praktični primjeri koji se lako prilagođavaju stupnju znanja učenika.

Ključne riječi: engleski jezik, rano učenje, Dr. Seuss, slikovnice, aktivnosti

1. Context

I have been working as an external associate English teacher in Mačak u čizmama (Puss in Boots) kindergarten in Zagreb, Croatia for the past three years. I visit the kindergarten four times a week to conduct English lessons in three different groups, where the youngest children are between only one and two years of age, then there is a group for children from the age of two to the age of five, and the last group is the preschool group with children from the age of five up to the age of seven. Since this thesis is concentrated on using Dr. Seuss books in teaching English to very young learners, I will not mention the youngest group very often, since many of them cannot even speak Croatian, their mother tongue, yet.

I have one-hour lessons four days a week with the older children and spend half an hour in the nursery. The children are not aware of my knowledge of Croatian, so the time they spend with me is spent mostly speaking only English, with help from their homeroom teachers who translate and explain certain things if necessary. The lessons mostly consist of routine circle time activities. As Sandie Mourão says in her article “Playing in English: The Emerging Voices of Preprimary Children in Foreign Language Context” (2018, p. 68).

Circle time for English learning is a whole-class activity and therefore ideal for formal instruction. Routine and repetition are central and language practice is the focus of the interaction between adult and child [...]. The repetitive nature of circle time and the inherent formats within the different activities mean children can predict what will happen in the activity. Familiar routines support both understanding and language development.

After circle time we usually read a story book, and in the three years that I have been teaching in this kindergarten, I have found that children react very well to picture story books written by Dr. Seuss.

These are all children who had never learned English before coming to kindergarten and the repetitiveness and simple language used by Dr. Seuss suits them perfectly as they can follow storylines, participate and learn useful vocabulary in a fun and easy way. After reading a book we do various follow up activities, arts and crafts, or we play games in English, where both the arts and crafts and the games are usually connected somehow to the book or the vocabulary used in it.

The generation of children that are now leaving kindergarten and who have been learning English for three years are still far from fluent, but they have come to love English, enjoy learning it and they use it in their everyday lives, which was the goal of introducing English as a foreign language to them at such an early age.

2. Dr. Seuss and his approach to creating picturebooks

“I want people to leave taking Dr. Seuss’s work a little more seriously... I think a lot of people take Dr. Seuss’s work lightly – it’s fluff, it’s cute. If you sit down and read his books carefully, they have so much more to them.”

Lark Grey Dimond-Cates
(*Dr. Seuss: An American Icon* p. 1)

Theodor Seuss Geisel, known worldwide as Dr. Seuss was born in Springfield Massachusetts on March 2, 1904 and passed away on September 24, 1991. He was a writer and cartoonist who published over 60 books. He started using the pseudonym Seuss after being kicked off the *Jack-O-Lantern* magazine staff for drinking during Prohibition. He wanted to be a professor and attended the Oxford University, but he dropped out and returned to America to pursue his cartooning career. He worked in advertising and journalism before getting into children’s literature.

One of the main problems with children is getting them to start reading by themselves, and it is best resolved by showing them that reading is fun, and that there are many ways in which Dr. Seuss makes reading and listening to his stories interesting and fun for both children and adults, the reader and the listeners.

According to *Biography.com* (2019) the writer John Hershey said in a 1954 article in *Life* magazine the following:

In the classroom boys and girls are confronted with books that have insipid illustrations depicting the slicked-up lives of other children [...]. All feature abnormally courteous, unnaturally clean boys and girls [...]. In bookstores anyone can buy brighter, livelier books featuring strange and wonderful animals and children who behave naturally, i.e., sometimes misbehave [...]. Given incentive from school boards, publishers could do as well with primers.

As a response to this article Dr. Seuss was asked to create an exciting children's book that would encourage children to read by Houghton Mifflin and Random House, and he wrote *The Cat in the Hat* using only 236 words, making it easy for young learners to read, but also making it interesting enough for them not to give up reading it.

Dr. Seuss uses chaos to make the story more interesting for young readers and listeners. His stories start in "normal" and seemingly boring environments, such as looking out a window on a rainy day, lying in bed or with a blank background of a single character on the page. A few pages later there are fish flying around a room, Sam is offering green eggs and ham on a boat that has a train, a car, a fox, a mouse and a goat on it, or there is a big dog party on top of a tree. Children, especially very young children, love "chaos" and think it is really interesting, but even most adults think it is funny to see a brass band walking around someone's bed at night. What I find very useful, especially while working with young readers and listeners, is that the chaos stops at the end of the book, as when the boy in *And To Think I Saw It On Mulberry Street* (Dr. Seuss, 1937) sees people throwing confetti from an airplane, police on motor bikes, and an elephant and giraffe pulling a brass band, he tells his father he saw nothing special on his way from school "But a plain horse and wagon on Mulberry Street" (p. 30)

Although Dr. Seuss is famous for his illustrations, anyone who reads his storybooks immediately sees that his stories are written in

verse; to be more precise, thirty-nine out of the forty-three books he wrote and illustrated are written in verse.

In the 1950's in the USA teachers and educators had problems with books that children were supposed to read in school, they read books like *Fun with Dick and Jane* that Pulitzer prize winning journalist, John Hersey, called anything but fun. After reading Hersey's article about school primers, William Spaulding, the director of Houghton Mifflin's educational division, challenged Geisel to write a book that children would not be able to stop reading. He also gave Geisel a list of 348 words that were selected from a standard first grader vocabulary list and told him to limit the story to 225 words from the list.

Having been given the task of writing a story using not more than 225 different words from a list of 348 words, and writing the story for between nine months and a year and a half, he said: "It's painful to write when you can't use any adjectives and few nouns" (*Pressfrom.info* 2019) and "You got an idea and then found out you had no way to express yourself" (*Pressfrom.info* 2019). As Philip Nel says in his book *Dr. Seuss: American Icon* (2004, p. 16), "he did find a way to express himself and, as a result, Seuss's Beginner Books not only teach us to read but also teach us to enjoy poetry."

Further, he points out (Nel 2004, p. 16):

Seuss's particular style of verse is one the most distinctive things about him. Seuss has become the unacknowledged U.S. laureate of nonsense poetry because elements of his style have caught on, and one such element is rhythm.

Dr. Seuss was often limited by the number of words he could use in his books, and he was a perfectionist, which is one of the reasons why children and adults love his books. When writing about Theodore Seuss Geisel, David Kanigan says (2013):

He was a perfectionist in his work and he would sometimes spend up to a year on a book. It was not uncommon for him to

throw out 95% of his material until he settled on a theme for his book.

Guy McLain, a historian, librarian and former museum director at the Springfield museum in Dr. Seuss's hometown, Springfield, and an expert on Dr. Seuss, has a story that tells us how hard Dr. Seuss had to work to become as famous as he is today. After being rejected 27 times by publishers and almost giving up and destroying the book, according to McLain (2012), "[h]e bumped into a friend who had just become an editor at a publishing house in the children's section," who then asked to have a look at the story, and shortly after that, the book was published.

When we know that he used such a limited number of words to write books, and that he would throw aside 95% of the materials initially prepared for a book, we can conclude that he was a very skilfull and meticulous author who managed to make the most from very sources.

3. Guided reading

This thesis is about using books by Dr. Seuss with very young learners, who mostly cannot read by themselves, or who need help while reading, so this is a very challenging topic.

A way towards developing an independent reader is guided reading, which "...is a teaching approach used by educators to support or scaffold the reading development of learners at all stages along the reading development continuum." (Ministry of Education of New Zealand, 1996).

Irene C. Fountas and Gay Su Pinell (1996, p. 4) give a list of essential components and techniques used in guided reading such as working in small groups, making sure the children in the group are on the same or similar level of knowledge, they say it is important for the teacher to introduce the stories and to assist children's reading in a way that helps them develop their reading abilities. They also say it is important for each child to read the whole text given to them, the goal of guided reading is to get the children to read independently and silently and it is important to give the children increasingly challenging books over time. The children are to be grouped and regrouped in a dynamic process that involves ongoing observation and assessment. As Irene C. Fountas and Gay Su Pinell put it (1996, p. 25-26):

Reading aloud is the foundation of the early literacy framework. By being immersed in a variety of well-chosen texts children not only learn to love stories and reading, but they also learn about written language.

Special activities based on the text to be read guide children in developing their literacy skills, and contribute to their creative thinking, confidence, holistic thinking, open-mindedness and critical thinking. Some such activities are presented in the following chapters.

By reading aloud to children and using the right books we can

help children come to love reading and literature in the future. I found that reading Dr. Seuss story books in kindergarten made children love reading, they would always ask for more and participate actively while I would read aloud, and as they could recognize the style of Dr. Seuss they would automatically feel motivated to listen and participate in the storytelling. According to Irene C. Fountas & Gay Su Pinnel (1996, p. 1):

By reading aloud, teachers help children experience and contemplate literary work they cannot yet read. In shared reading, children participate in reading, learn critical concepts of how print works, and get the feel of reading. Literature circles enable children to think more deeply about a text as they talk with one another and co-construct new understanding. It is through guided reading, however, that teachers can show children how to read and can support children as they read. Guided reading leads to the independent reading that builds the process; it is the heart of a balanced literacy program.

After reading a book by Dr. Seuss aloud to young children, even two-year olds, I found that even a couple of days after the reading they would take the book we had read and look at the pictures, mention certain words or rhyme patterns from the book, or ask me or other teachers to read the same book over and over again. Even during the first reading most children would actively participate in the reading by completing the teacher's sentences, guessing words or even read by themselves to the rest of the group.

The whole classroom needs to be arranged to facilitate reading to children, bookshelves, chairs, tables and other furniture can be used to create a reading center in the classroom. The teacher should be able to see the children who are reading in order to be able to help them if help is needed.

Although the young learners of English this thesis is about learn it as a second language and most of them cannot read, it is still possible

to do guided reading activities with them. First of all, it is important to use books that are predictable and easy to understand through illustrations. Even if the child cannot read, it is important for the children to feel like they are reading, even if they are only pretending to read. Some of the books used with this particular age group are so easy that most children can “read” them after listening to the story once when the teacher reads it aloud, this makes them feel competent and they start becoming familiar with print. Repetition also helps develop children’s memory, and they start predicting events in stories. After reading aloud once, you can read the story again but leave some important and predictable words out and see if the children can guess what is going to happen, or what word is missing, and this will build their confidence as readers.

4. Teaching English as a second language to preschoolers

Early and pre-school education in the Republic of Croatia is regulated by the Law on Pre-school Education (*Narodne novine* No. 10/1997, 107/207, 94/2013, 98/2019) and the accompanying by-laws, which include education, pre-school education and care for children from six months of age to primary school attendance.

According to the Law on preschool education of the Croatian Ministry of Education (2019):

Early and pre-school education is the initial level of the educational system and, apart from pre-school programs which are mandatory for children in the year preceding primary school, it is not compulsory for all children of preschool age. It is divided into three educational cycles:

1. From the age of six months to the end of the first year of the child's life
2. From the end of the first to the end of the third year of the child's life
3. From the end of the third year of the child's life to the start of elementary school.

If a child starts going to nursery or kindergarten at an early age, we as teachers should seize the opportunity to make the most out of it. Of course, it is necessary to adapt the learning materials and techniques to the age group you are teaching, it takes a lot more work and patience and you have to take into consideration that it is a situation where the children are learning a second language while they are still learning their mother tongue

As I mentioned above, for the past three years I have been working in *Mačak u čizmama* kindergarten as an English teacher with children from the age of one up to the age of seven. Dr. Seuss and his books have helped both me and the children with teaching/learning

English as a foreign language. As the children didn't know I could speak Croatian, it was very important for me to create a basis and teach the children some of the basic words used in the books we would read before the first reading session, in order for them to understand as much as possible.

It is very important to prepare very young learners of a second language for the book they are about to listen to. We would work for weeks to get ready to read a book such as *Green Eggs and Ham* by learning about animals, transportation and auxiliary verbs and adverbs so they could understand as much as possible when it came to reading the book. It is also very important for the English instructor to collaborate with the homeroom teacher who uses the children's native language. It makes it much easier if what we do during the English lesson is connected to the activities the children are doing in their mother tongue.

Here are some guidelines I came to after teaching preschoolers for a couple of years:

4.1. Keeping it short (and simple)

Very young children cannot concentrate on an activity for a very long time, so I tend to keep my activities in the time range of 5 to 10 minutes as some children often get restless and start distracting the children with longer attention spans. Sometimes it is very hard to predict how children are going to react to a certain activity, and that is why you always need a backup activity to avoid "losing" the children while teaching. It is also good not to lose a lot of time between activities, because children tend to find something to do for themselves if you do not give them something to do.

4.2. Not too many words at a time

Many books and websites say teachers should only teach up to 10 words in a lesson, and most of the time I agree with that, but

sometimes one single new word is too much, or sometimes it is possible to teach many more than 10 words in a day. It depends on the topic, the complexity of the words, the children's interest, the way the word is introduced and even the time of day (if the children are tired or not).

4.3. Getting visual

If teaching without the use of the children's native language, sometimes it is extremely hard to explain what you are trying to say without visual support. Flash cards were my best friend in teaching many times, but illustrations, short videos, real objects and photographs are a great way to explain what you are saying, and they help the children understand the lesson properly.

4.4. A variety of activities

It is impossible to have an English lesson with very young learners and expect them to be sitting down for the entire lesson. What I found to be the best way to get them to stay focused for as long as possible was to use a variety of 5-minute activities. After sitting quietly, I would get them to move around, sing a song, play a game, use TPR activities, arts and crafts, but it was also important not make the activities last too long.

4.5. Showing the children how

The children in preschool kindergarten are often not all at the same level of understanding a second language, which is why it is always important to show the children how to do an activity. After explaining the activity verbally, one needs to show them how to do it oneself or use a child that you are sure understands the activity to demonstrate what is expected from the other children. The teacher should put herself or himself in the child's shoes and explain the activity step by step, not as though explaining it to an adult who speaks the language already.

4.6. Playing games

Games are great for children who cannot read or write yet; children love them and they can be used as a reward after a good lesson. It is important to make all the children feel like winners, and to try making the games as educational as possible, so that children can learn something while playing. I found that it is very useful if the teacher takes part in the games and does not just observe. Thus it is possible to teach them a great deal and they will not even realize that they are learning new words or repeating the ones used in the lesson while playing. Playing games also gives them more confidence if the teacher lets them win from time to time.

4.7. Using themes

It is important not to go too wide in the lesson, keep it simple and within a certain theme. It makes it easier for the students to follow and understand the lesson.

4.8. Avoiding the children's native language

As the children I am teaching do not know that I speak their native language, it is sometimes very hard to explain something new to children without using it, but it makes the children try as hard as possible to explain something to me using as much English as possible in order for me to understand what they want to say. I use the fact that I do not speak their language to make them work as a group to explain something to me, sometimes they teach me words in Croatian, which they find to be great fun, and then automatically learn their equivalents in English. It is also important to cooperate with the homeroom teacher. She uses English words as much as possible, too, and when the children work on a project the teacher needs to teach them the main words in English so they can explain what they did to me.

5. *Green Eggs and Ham* activities

Taking into consideration the age and lack of knowledge of some of the children I worked with, it took a large amount of preparation before we read the book to get them ready and help them understand what the book was about as easily as possible. Some of the activities were used both with preschoolers and very young learners and with older children and grown-ups, with slight modifications, of course.

5.1. Pre-reading activities

Flash cards

I always started with flash cards in pre-reading activities. Flash cards with the basic words used in the book were very helpful for me and for the children to understand each other (Figs. 1a and 1b). I would start with five to ten words and add some new ones to the list every day before I felt we were ready to read the book. I would try to group them as Dr. Seuss does in his books to make it easier for the children to learn the words that rhyme.

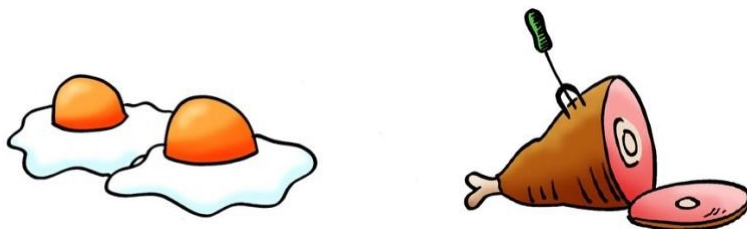


Figure 1a. Images of different objects from *Green Eggs and Ham* by Dr. Seuss from the web page *Nanopdf* (2018), used for flash cards activities



Figure 1b. Images of different objects from *Green Eggs and Ham* by Dr. Seuss from the web page *Nanopdf* (2018), used for flash cards activities

I would hold a flashcard up (Fig.1) and say the word out loud, after that the children would repeat the word with me and we would do that three or four times before picking one of the children to take my role.

An activity the children always loved was when I would ask them to teach me the words from the flash-cards in Croatian, they would have to repeat the word in English many times before I would finally “learn” the word.

Food coloring activities

After talking about food, the children’s favorite drinks and snacks, and food they do not like so much, we would try and modify some of the meals and drinks the children mentioned by coloring the food. We would take a glass of water and put a few drops of food coloring into it, after the color of the water was completely changed we talked about whether the children would be willing to drink it, after taking a sip of it they realized the colored water tasted the same as regular water. We did the same activity with dough and made colored bread. The aim of the activity was to get the children to be creative, break boundaries when it comes to trying new and different things, and to talk about food, drinks, how things taste and why they like or dislike certain foods and drinks.

It was always very interesting to see how children would not like to try a drink or eat a sandwich if the bread was a little purple, or the drink was not yellow as it was supposed to be, but green after putting blue color in it. If nobody wanted to try the colored food or drink, I would break the ice and try it first for the children to see that it was still safe, then the children would try it after me and they would be very surprised to find out that the taste had not changed.

Rhyme memory game

I used the flash cards (Fig.1) to make a rhyme memory game for the children. They would have to pair up the flash cards that rhymed and they would get an extra point if they could tell me a word that rhymes with the pair they found. This activity made them develop creativity, and they produced some very interesting rhymes, not only the ones from the book. We worked on body parts and means of transport before reading the book, so the children connected some words from older lessons to this one.

Car – Star

Tree – bee

Tree – pea

Ham – tram

Rain – brain

“Do you like green eggs and ham?”

When the teacher asks the children whether they like green eggs and ham, most of them will probably say no, or that they think it is disgusting. The teacher asks why they think so, do they think Sam will like green eggs and ham? Did they ever try something that was very strange? I also asked the same question after reading the book to the children.

5.2. While-listening activities

The children sit in a semi-circle facing the teacher who is reading the book, facing the children, so they can see the illustrations and connect the words to the illustrations. After reading a few pages,

the children hear the pattern Dr. Seuss used for writing this story, and the teacher reads the first half of the sentence, and the children finish it all together.

“Not in a BOX.

Not with a FOX.

Not in a HOUSE.

Not with a MOUSE.”

The teacher helps the children by pointing at the illustrations and saying the words aloud, together with children.

The aim of this activity is to help children concentrate on the story and to gain confidence in using English in their everyday lives. Also, the activity encourages children to read the book after the activity (even though they cannot read properly). Even after two weeks the children would still take the book and read it for themselves or in pairs.

5.3. After-reading activities

After reading the book, the children and the teacher stay in a circle and talk about the story. The teacher asks the children “Do you like green eggs and ham?” Most of them will say yes, since they saw that Sam liked them in the end, which was different from the beginning when they said they would not like green eggs and ham. Then they could recall the activity they did a couple of days ago with food coloring. Also, if the children’s level of English allows the teacher to do so, it is possible to talk about things that the children have never tried to do, eat or drink, or things that they think they would never do, and see if their opinions would change if they tried doing, eating or drinking some of those things.

6. *The Foot Book*

The Foot Book by Dr. Seuss was first published in 1968 and it is the first book in his Bright and Early Book series, written for very young learners and readers. The book is all about feet, opposites, different colors, different moods, numbers. It is interesting that Dr. Seuss used fewer than 50 words for this book.

6.1. Pre-reading activities

Body parts

During circle time the teacher chooses one of the children to lie down on the floor and the teacher draws an outline of the child on a large piece of paper. The teacher and the children talk about all the body parts they know and can see on the outline of their friend. If they know any other body parts that cannot be seen they can be added to the outline, then the children color the outline and add details to it. Then we stuck the body outline on the wall and use it to repeat body parts.



Figure 2. Inspiration for the “body parts” activity from *Purnimasampat* (2013)

Get the children to sit around the table, then give them a bunch of old magazines and newspapers and tell them to cut different pieces from different pictures in the articles to make their own people, making sure they cover as many body parts as possible in their mosaic (Fig. 2).

Then I would give the children two different colored wristbands (as in Fig. 3) and explain that one color is for their left hand, and the other one is for their right hand. The idea is to try and make the children use a certain hand throughout the day, or even week, so they learn what is left and what is right. The teacher asks them to give him a pencil with their right hand, to hold their cup with their left hand and try to make them do as many activities like that every day. One can also do the same thing with their legs.



Figure 3. Inspiration for wristbands used for teaching left and right, retrieved from *Pinterest.com* (2015)

Opposites

Flash cards (Fig 4.) can be used to teach opposites, too, by getting children to try and guess the opposite of what is on the flash card, then if they cannot remember, showing them the opposite flash card to help them.



Figure 4. Material used to create flashcards retrieved from *Pinterest.com* (2018)

The aim of all the pre-reading activities is to teach the children some of the new vocabulary they will come across while reading *The Foot Book*, to help them understand and follow the story.

6.2. While-listening activities

6.2.1 The children sit in a semi-circle around the teacher with their LEFT and RIGHT wristbands (Fig. 3), and every time they hear the words left or right in the book they have to raise their left or right hand to show that they have learned what is left and what is right.

Since there are many opposites mentioned in the book, the children can guess what the teacher is about to read:

Teacher: “Feet in the morning

Feet at...”

Children: “Night” (Fig. 5)



Figure 5. *Foot Book* by Dr. Seuss (p. 2)

Teacher: “Small feet.”

Children: “Big feet.” (Fig. 6.)

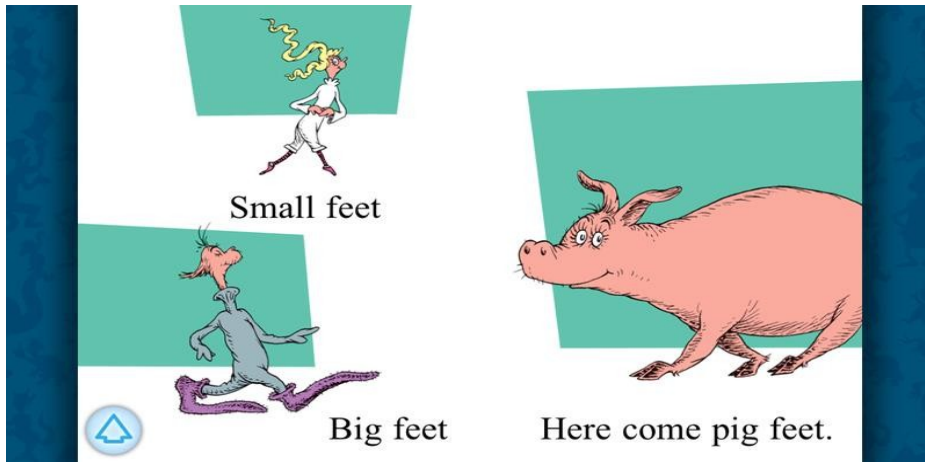


Figure 6. *Foot Book* by Dr. Seuss (pp. 14–15)

Teacher: “Up feet”

Children: “Down feet” (Fig. 7)

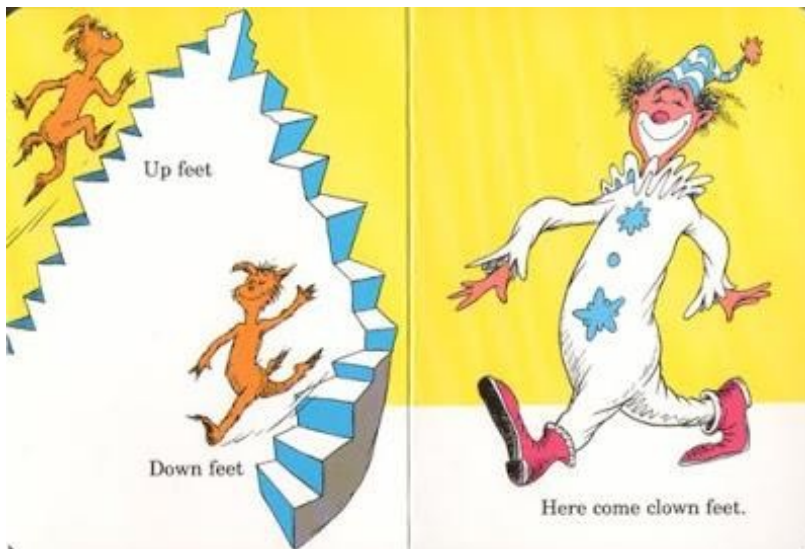


Figure 7. *Foot Book* by Dr. Seuss, (pp. 12–13)

And so on throughout the book.

6.2.2. Another exercise to do while reading is to get the children to count how many feet they can see on the page. The teacher may count out loud with all the children or choose a child to try and count how many feet there are. Some of the pages have over twenty feet (Fig. 8), so some children might need help when counting.

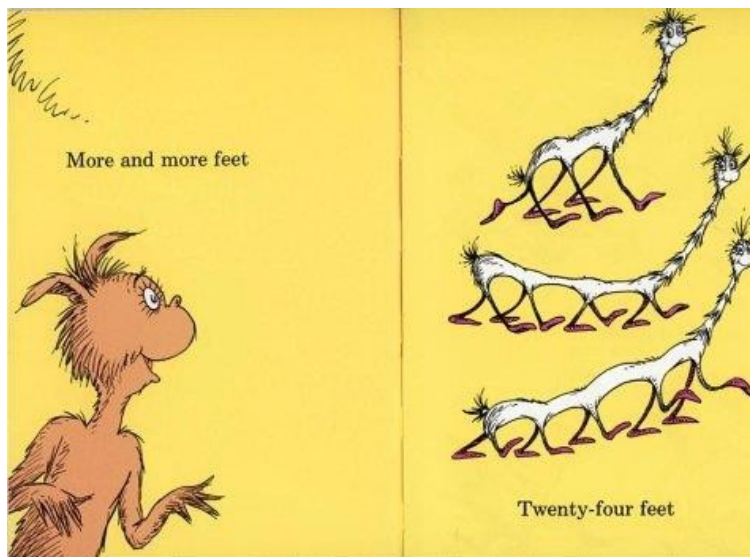


Figure 8. *Foot Book* by Dr. Seuss (pp. 22–23)

6.3. After-reading activities

6.3.1. The teacher should put aside the flash cards that the children can act out and get them to play a game of charades. The teacher chooses one of the children and calls them aside to pull a flash card out of a pile. The child looks at the card without the other children seeing it and tries to act it out. While the child is acting out what was on the card, the other children try guessing what the other child is acting out, then whoever guesses what the child is acting out gets to pick the next card and act it out.

6.3.2. Count how many feet there are in your classroom. Get the children to take their slippers off and count all the feet in your classroom, and do not forget to count the teacher's feet too.

The aim of this activity is to build the children's confidence while counting and repeat body parts in a fun way.

6.3.3. The next activity is giving out worksheets with opposites (Fig. 9) for the children to color, and get the children to tell the teacher what they see on their worksheets.

The aim of this activity is to develop the children's fine motor skills, to repeat what they have learned about opposites, and to develop their creativity.

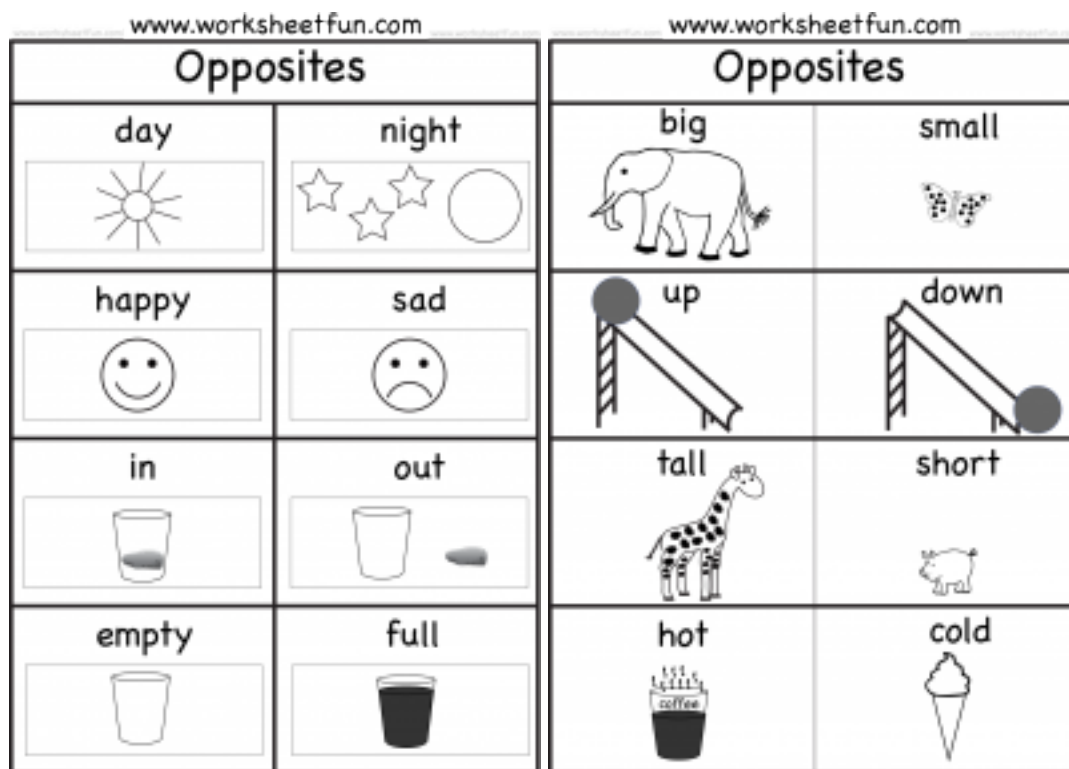


Figure 9. worksheet for teaching opposites, retrieved from *Worksheetfun* (2013)

7. A Comparison of activities used with preschoolers, 2nd graders and adults

All the books by Dr. Seuss in this thesis were used not only with children in kindergarten, but also with a group of second graders I tutor once a week and with an adult I also tutor from time to time.

7.1. *Green Eggs and Ham*

“Try them, try them, and you may!

Try them and you may, I say.”

Not only is the book fun to read, it can be used for deep philosophical conversations about stubbornness, not making judgements and getting out of your comfort zone. This is what I used it for in one of my conversation classes with an adult student who was at an upper intermediate level of English. After reading the book I asked the student the same question I asked kindergarten children: “Do you like green eggs and ham?”, the student answered, “I’m not sure.” After that it was easy to have a long conversation where the student did most of the talking about trying new things, things we regret not doing in the past, experiences we would like to go through in the future, anecdotes of stubbornness, and situations where we have to leave our comfort zone in order do to something. It was a good way to get the student to speak freely about familiar experiences, gain confidence in spoken English and expand the student’s vocabulary.

8. CONCLUSION

Nowadays it is very easy for a teacher to just stick to what he or she is given by publishers and the government in teaching, but there is also the constant pressure by the media, parents and children who often find the materials given boring, not challenging enough or too challenging for their children or the whole age group. It is important for teachers to be creative, to think of different ways of transferring their knowledge to their pupils and to keep the children interested in what they are trying to teach them. Using picture storybooks is just one of the means a teacher can use as an alternative to the typical workbooks used in schools today, and it is definitely one of the most accessible tools a teacher could find. Books by Dr. Seuss may seem basic and simple at first glance, but there are many ways of using them for teaching English as a foreign language not only with children that cannot even speak their mother tongue well yet, but also with adult learners.

Using stories by Dr. Seuss with young learners does not only help them develop their language skills, but it also helps them develop creative thinking, confidence, holistic thinking, open-mindedness and critical thinking which will be very helpful in their future education.

The work of Dr. Seuss has huge potential in and outside the classroom, it makes teaching easier for teachers, and learning easier for students, but in a way, it also makes us all better people.

In Dr Seuss's own words: "I don't write for children, I write for people. Once a writer starts talking down to kids, he's lost. Kids can pick up on that kind of thing." (Reference, možda: *Biography.com* 2017).

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IZJAVA O SAMOSTALNOJ IZRADI RADA

Izjavljujem da sam ja, Benjamin David Tuškan, student integriranog preddiplomskog i diplomskog studija primarnog obrazovanja s engleskim jezikom Učiteljskog fakulteta u Zagrebu samostalno proveo aktivnosti istraživanja literature i napisao diplomski rad *Dr. Seuss with very young learners*.

Benjamin David Tuškan

Zagreb, 15. rujna 2020.

