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**MULTIMODAL STORYTELLING AS MOMENTS OF CRITICAL LITERACY AND  
MULTIMODAL COMPOSING IN THE ESL PRESCHOOL CLASSROOM**

**BY**

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## AFFIDAVIT

I, Monica María López Ladino, hereby declare that this master's thesis has not been previously presented as a degree requirement, either in the same style or with variations, in this or any other university (Article 92 Advanced Education Student Code, Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana)

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Monica Lopez Ladino". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M'.

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MONICA MARÍA LÓPEZ LADINO

## **Abstract**

This qualitative study seeks to describe how multimodal storytelling can be utilized as a method to engage ESL Pre-K students at a private bilingual school in Medellin, Colombia in critical literacy practices and multimodal composing. The teacher researcher used multimodal storytelling to present stories that were used as bridges to connect students with the real world and bring cultural and social issues discussions into the classroom. Here lies the importance of working critical literacy to problematize stories and empower students to use the language to promote a change in the world. Four five-year-old children participated in this study. The instruments used to collect data were class audio records, class video records, children's artifacts, and the teacher's journal. The aim of this study is to identify specific teacher's actions that create spaces for critical literacy, and to explore children's literacy production when involved in multimodal storytelling and critical literacy.

The findings of this study reveal that the teacher effectively established a connection between critical literacy and the ESL Pre-K program, designed strategic lesson plans, and assumed the role of facilitator, mediator, and guide. In addition, the findings show that the children used multimodality to retell stories, produced multimodal cooperative composition, represented reality in their texts, produced multimodal composing as critical literacy actions, established a relation between the stories and the real world, and began to believe that they can write. This research is a referent for other educators interested in literacy, critical literacy and multimodality in early ages. Future research could include different settings, as public preschool education or EFL and ELL preschools.

**Key words:** preschool education, ESL education, storytelling, multimodal storytelling, literacy, critical literacy, multimodality, children's literacy.

*To my son, my God's gift:*

*Open your mind to read the world, use different sources to understand it, verify the information you receive, seek to use multiple perspectives to read, but most of all, raise your voice and act for doing the world a better place.*

*Love, mom*

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Exploring Multimodal Storytelling as an opportunity for Critical Literacy and Multimodal Composing**

The experiences from my graduate studies and my own English Language and Literacy class to ESL Pre-K students at the school where I work invited me to look for new paths in order to go beyond the traditional definition of literacy. I decided to start my journey after I read about new research in the literacy field (Christie & Misson, 2012; Harste & Vasquez, 2011; Larson & Marsh, 2015; Mora Vélez, 2010; Mora, 2012; Street, 2014).

Commonly, literacy has been directly related to traditional forms of the reading and writing processes (Lankshear & Knobel, 2011). For this reason, it is not unusual to find that the preschool curriculum emphasizes the development of early literacy skills in traditional ways: book awareness, print awareness, alphabet knowledge, phonological awareness, comprehension, word recognition and emergent reading (NELP & NCFL, 2008); reducing children's literacy to decoding symbols. Nevertheless, the demands of our time require expanding the conception of literacy. The last few decades, literacy is conceived as a social practice (Christie & Misson, 2012; Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; Harste, 2003; Lankshear & Knobel, 2011; Street, 2014). The above, invites educators to teach children to read the word and the world (Freire & Macedo, 1987) by analyzing the messages of the texts around them. It is equally important to problematize those messages and reshape them, by understanding the language is not neutral (Fowler, 2013; Hyland, 2007; Morell, 2015; Vasquez, 2010). Here, critical literacy takes place in the field of education.

In Colombia, preschool education asks for a broader conception of literacy. The Colombian Ministry of Education structures preschool education according to the four pillars of education proposed by Delors: *learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, and learning to be* (as cited in Preschool National Curriculum Guidelines, 1998). Hence, to teach preschoolers under these parameters, it is necessary to help children understand the world around them using language as a vehicle to develop critical thinking but most importantly, to encourage children to use language to act.

Also, the Colombian Ministry of Education establishes a vision of children through their dimensions of development. The communicative dimension becomes an invitation to support children “[...] to express his knowledge and ideas about the things, the events, and the phenomena of the reality” (Lineamientos Curriculares Preescolar, 1998, p.20, own translation). That is to say, to allow children to raise their voices and elicit them to have an active role in social phenomena.

Likewise, one of the specific objectives of Colombian preschool education is “The development of the ability to acquire new ways of expression, relationship and communication and to establish relations of reciprocity and participation with respect, solidarity and rules of coexistence” (Ley 115, 1994, art. 16, own translation). According to this statement, preschool education demands pedagogical perspectives that recognize children’s literacy and foster the importance of it to our social order.

With this intention, children deserve educators who can guide them to explore the world by taking them outside the classroom to learn in context, to make learning meaningful. I started wondering how to involve those ideas in my classroom when I began my graduate studies, in the

hopes that my preschool students would grow an awareness of the relationship between language and power, understanding their possible roles as oppressors and the oppressed (Freire, 1993).

It was my aim to explore critical literacy in my classroom. However, I had to justify the implementation of this pedagogy in my class to the school administrators. Besides, I also had to guarantee the regular execution of the preschool curriculum. The ESL Pre-K program aspires to immerse children

[...] in a language-rich environment that foster the use of English in daily situations and classroom activities in order to help them to develop communication skills to express needs, feelings, experiences and ideas in L2. Students will be exposed to a variety of “texts” such as songs, rhymes, poems, stories, information books and charts in order to increase their vocabulary, speaking and listening skills, and to develop early literacy skills (Bilingual Private School Medellin, 2015).

In view of this, I realized that multimodal storytelling offered an opportunity to mediate between my teaching and learning goals, my students’ potential, and the present curricular demands in my institution. Multimodal storytelling became my personal teaching strategy to help the children get involved during reading sessions in the second language and offered kids the opportunity to enjoy and better understand stories. I define multimodal storytelling as the fusion of storytelling with multimodality, that is to say, to tell a story by using modes (gestures, pictures, sounds, smells, puppets, objects, media resources, etc.). In this sense, multimodal storytelling constitutes a different approach to reading comprehension.

In reference to storytelling, the use of stories offers different kinds of texts to express a vision of the world (Andrews, Hull & Donahue, 2009; Barton, 2000; Boltman, 2001).

Unfortunately, teachers may either oversimplify storytelling or simply confuse it with story

reading (Chesin, 1966; Shirley, 2015), where a teacher reads a story and students listen to the teacher, which results in students playing a passive role in the reading of the story. The activities related to this teaching strategy are reduced to basic reading comprehension: identification of the characters, setting and, story sequence (McNamara, 2012, Morrow & Gambrell, 2004; Van Den Broek, Kendeou, Lousberg & Visser, 2011).

In contrast, for multimodal storytelling, telling a story is also telling a vision of the world (Andrews, Hull & Donahue, 2009; Barton, 2000; Boltman, 2001). Through multimodal storytelling, students have the opportunity to interact in the construction of the story and they become readers and tellers at the same time.

Likewise, connecting stories to the school curriculum themes is meaningful to the children but connecting these themes with their context is also equally important. This way, storytelling can become a moment of dialogue between reality and fantasy, and between classroom and family situations, values, knowledge and learning. For this reason, it is also necessary that storytelling takes into account the practice of critical literacy as a way to interrogate the texts we read and the manner that we read them (Ko, 2013; Luke, 2012; Norris, Lucas, & Prudhoe, 2012). Multimodal storytelling through the lens of critical literacy will become an opportunity to help children build meaning-making from the reading of stories, and to explore the four critical literacy components (Lewison, Flint & Van Sluys, 2002). For this reason, critical literacy aims to create spaces to link the texts that are worked in the classroom with students' realities (Janks, 2014).

As part of critical literacy, there is a call to question the status quo to change the social order (Ko, 2013b). Therefore, teachers need to elicit children to write, rewrite or design texts that promote equality. At this point, it is necessary to expand our idea of writing from just the result

of coding words and sentences. Having in consideration new literacy ideas, children can produce multimodal compositions by using modes. These modes are the ways children use to send a message. Consequently, multimodality was an important element to bring to life critical literacy in my classroom. I considered the children's writing process as multimodal composition. Therefore, critical literacy can act as a catalyst to elicit children to produce texts.

This research project aims to 1) advance preschool teachers' understanding of multimodal storytelling to open spaces for critical literacy, 2) broaden their definitions of literacies and literacy practices, and 3) connect children's literacies to real world actions. Additionally, this research operates under the assumption that critical literacy creates an opportunity to give children voice during literacy practices and engage them in social actions based in multimodal compositions. The question that will guide this research is: What possibilities of engagement with critical literacy arise when implementing multimodal storytelling in an ESL Pre-K classroom?

### **Defining the Pillars of This Study**

The concepts I used as pillars of this study are: multimodality, storytelling, multimodal storytelling, and critical literacy. Below, I provide a brief definition of those terms to start building a bridge between them. At the end of this section, I will present the connection between multimodal storytelling and critical literacy.

**Multimodality.** For the purpose of this study, "multimodality is the integration of a set of modes (e.g. sound, color, text, images, etc.) as resources for sending a message" (Mejía-Vélez & Salazar Patiño, 2014). When telling a story to children it is possible to use different methods to help them comprehend the meaning of words in an L2. , It is viable to use pictures, gestures,



sounds, media, props, classroom materials, and songs, among others, that correspond appropriately to the story, in order to allow children to active their senses in the learning process, making it memorable and meaningful for them. This integration of different modes to convey meaning is called: Multimodality (Albers & Harste, 2007; Kress; 2010; Serafini, 2013).

Kress (2010) defines modes as semiotic resources for making meaning and by this way it is possible to create texts. There are eight modes that provide a message meaning representation: written language, oral language, visual representation, audio representation, tactile representation, gestural representation, spatial representation and representation to oneself (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). I will use this principle to transmit stories to children, since, stories are also texts.

Setting multimodality in the classroom requires rethinking literacy; it demands to go beyond the traditional definition of decoding letters and sounds. Albers & Harste (2007) sent an important message to teachers about redefining what being literate means and also an invitation to teachers to value everyday students' literacies and to help them develop an awareness of what and how they represent it, in terms of arts, multimodality and new literacies. Students have access to different tools that can create messages that go beyond the use of letters in the alphabet since music, smartphones, arts, applications, social networks, and websites like YouTube, are offering new ways to communicate, requiring also new ways of literacy.

The aim when using different resources in my class during the meaning-making process is to make the message comprehensible (Mora, 2015b) for ESL Pre-K students. Children need to receive input that will be simpler to understand because they are assembling different processes at the same time: learning a language, understanding a story, connecting the story with specific curriculum content, all of this being done by activating cognitive processes. Multimodality

allows children to construct the meaning of a story, but this is not the single use of this tool in my classroom; we can also observe multimodality in the texts that children create (Mills, 2015; Pahl, 2007; Serafini, 2011; Wohlwend, 2015). Pre-K children build texts using drawings, symbols, gestures, their voice, as well as other forms of meaning making and this also constitutes literacy.

When a teacher uses multimodality as a tool in the classroom, it is necessary to think about the intention of the message (Mora, 2016): what is the purpose of telling this story to children? But also, its meaning: what does this story say? And lastly, it needs a plan: what will I use to show the message? All of this requires class preparation and a very clear lesson plan. In order to use multimodality in my ESL Pre-K classroom, I need to define the objective of the message according to the story that I am going to tell, the meaning of the modes that are going to be integrated and of course, the plan of the whole story. To make this process more organic, I took into consideration the level of language acquisition of the class, the vocabulary learned in the previous three academic terms, and familiar modes for my students that we established during the school year or were part of our context. Besides, I took into account children's age and the modes that will integrate their senses. During the process of planning multimodality for my classroom, I feel a professional growth as a teacher (Mora, 2015) because it requires me to find new ways to think about language and literacy and also to increase my creativity in order to provide something that really catches my students' attention and that fulfills the requirements of the class learning outcomes.

This idea of multimodality in an ESL Pre-K classroom made me think about meaningful props or actions for children: manipulatives, gestures, jokes, interaction, classroom materials,

language resources, the social and emotional development of children, and other aspects that play an important role in preschool education.

**Storytelling.** Storytelling is an umbrella term that can be used in different contexts and for different purposes. For example, there is oral storytelling (Berkowitz, 2011; Curenton, 2006; Curenton, Craig & Flanigan, 2008), digital storytelling (Sanchez-Laws, 2010; Shuyan & Hong, 2010), therapeutic storytelling (Alschuler, 2014; Parker & Wampler, 2006), or personal storytelling (Fung, Miller, Lin, & Chen, 2012; Miller & Wiley, 1997), to name a few. In the educational field, Boltman (2001), Ellyatt (2002) and Shirley (2005) agree storytelling is a way to present a sequence of events.

In view of this study, “storytelling refers to the use of a story as a pedagogical tool that can introduce a message related to a specific learning topic” (López-Ladino, 2016). Additionally, it is important to clarify that storytelling is not the same as story reading (Chesin, 1966; Ellyatt, 2002; Isbell, Sobol, Lindauer, & Lowrance; 2004; Shirley, 2015). Story reading refers to a group session when someone reads a story aloud (Schickedanz, 1978; Vivas, 1996) and others listen. Although both are considered teaching strategies that promote literacy, storytelling allows the use of different kinds of texts for the telling of the story. These texts can be visual, written, spoken, and tactile, and can be many different formats.

A story is not just a sequence of events but also a text. A story can be presented in multiple forms: nursery rhymes, songs, illustrations, videos, picture books, poetry, among other possibilities, allowing children to get involved with language and a story sequence that catches students’ attention. Boltman (2001) stated that “stories offer children a compelling mechanism for understanding their world, expressing themselves to others, and connecting with their culture” (p. 11); this being the way they can begin to understand the relationship between the

language and the world. Also, Egan stated that the story “is not just some casual entertainment; it reflects a basic and powerful form in which we make sense of the world and our experience” (as cited in Boltman, 2001, p.32). Certainly, storytelling is a natural way to learn about the world and to be exposed to a language.

Storytelling catches children’s attention easily and produces natural enjoyment, in turn making the learning process a significant experience while they are receiving input in the target language. Storytelling moments can turn into a strategy for activating students’ motivation because for them, it is also a time to laugh, play, interact and move; it is a moment to have fun and therefore is required in a preschool classroom.

As a classroom strategy, storytelling is also well known for teaching in ESL classrooms (Colon-Vila, 1997; Evans, 1990; Huang, 2006). When teachers use this tool in the ESL preschool classroom, they have the opportunity to place children in contact with different types of texts, introduce new vocabulary, build the notion of sentence through language patterns and repetition, stimulate their imagination and oral production, connect story events with life events, develop active listening, foster respect for others and support student’s emotional development. This last aspect is evident when students express their emotions and personal ideas in a natural manner; in other words, storytelling becomes an opportunity for them to discover their personal conditions and immediately provide them guidance. When I started using storytelling in my classroom to support speaking and listening skill development in the L2, my perspective, at that time, was to develop early literacy skills. However, it produced so much more because the use of storytelling in the classroom bring several benefits associated with the language, cognitive, social and emotional aspects of the child.

The aforementioned language development benefits include the following: storytelling familiarizes children with language patterns (Baldwin & Dudding, 2007; National Council of Teachers of English, 1992), increases vocabulary, and oral and listening skills development (Chesin, 1966; Ellyatt, 2002; Fitzgibbon & Wilhelm, 1998), helps students to acquire the notion of sentences and develops writing and reading skills (Nessel, 1985; Peck, 1989; Roney, 1989), promotes literacy (Koehnecke, 2000; Stanley & Dillingham, 2009). In terms of cognitive benefits storytelling supports the development of critical thinking (Boltman, 2001) and encourages comprehension (Malkina, 1995). Social and emotional benefits comprise of the fact that storytelling elicits children to express their ideas, thoughts and feelings (Ellyatt, 2002; Malkina, 1995) having a positive effect on children's emotional development (Dowling, 2009; Eades, 2006).

Teachers are often viewed as storytellers, but we must also highlight the importance of empowering students to become their own storytellers. Taking into consideration the broader understanding of literacy, children are able to tell stories also. At this point, children can develop listening skills and understand the importance of respectfully listening to others, so that they can discover that the use of English is powerful tool to express their stories and ideas. Also, children can read other classmates' stories which is a remarkable opportunity to work on literacy because children are storytellers by nature (Craig, Hull, Haggart, & Crowder, 2001); Mallan, 1991).

Teachers can create spaces for listening to children, at the time they start acquiring vocabulary and recognizing important aspects of the language like language structures, literature, story structures and as well as others, and through their own interaction, not only through teacher input (Nicholas, Rossiter & Abbott, 2011). As a result of this, knowledge will be constructed through the interaction and collaboration of the children and teacher with the stories.

The use of stories in the classroom can help ESL Pre-K students obtain better language comprehension, higher interest and the actual construction of knowledge (Malkina, 2014).

Storytelling brings sufficient advantages to the ESL preschool classroom and the corresponding aspects such as gestures, sounds and funny voices all appeal to children. In addition, storytelling allows children to become storytellers as well as they share their personal experiences, creating connections between stories and their lives. Stories can bring awareness of cultural and social issues into the classroom, enriching discussions and promoting children's social and emotional development.

**Multimodal Storytelling.** I used this term to define the fusion I did of storytelling through the use of multimodalities. By working with storytelling in my classroom I wondered how using different ways to produce meaning, not only with my voice or my gesture might offer.

Through multimodality, I started to include different modes such as: audio, videos, prompts, written words, textures, and smells to construct the story's message. I learned that a mode in isolation does not provide a message but when I began integrating different modes through storytelling, the story emerged easily.

I decided to combine storytelling with multimodality after an event in my classroom that helped me understand the difference between story reading and storytelling. Once, when I was reading aloud a short story, from the book *Anthology of Traditional Tales* to my students. I finished the book and started asking them basic comprehension questions. They were silent until finally someone said "I didn't understand that story" and all her classmates agreed. After this, I decided to retell the story in my own words, using the pictures in the book as support as well. This time, I tried to use words they already knew, according to our English Language and Literacy class curriculum (I feel it was a challenge for me to find synonyms as fast as I was

retelling) and I also tried to introduce new words to them, explaining their meaning with actions or through daily school situations. Suddenly, a student exclaimed “Ah! Miss Monica that’s what it was about? Why didn’t you tell us the story?” At that moment, I realized that when I tell stories to my students, they are more attentive and engaged than when I simply read from a book. I enjoy using different voices, funny gestures, actions, pictures, music, objects, etc., and this is how I started involving a variety of modes to communicate specific meaning to my students.

For the past two years, I have used multimodal storytelling in my classroom after realizing that understanding a read-aloud story was challenging for my ESL four and five-year-old students. Pre-K is the first grade in which students acquire L2 vocabulary, so comprehension process generally is slow. Sometimes, my preschool students were not interested in story reading, as their periods of attention were short and they were easily distracted. Furthermore, there was a noticeable lack of comprehension at some important story scenes. Due to this, reading aloud was not an enjoyable activity for them, despite the colorful pictures, the large book size, the use of different voices while reading, etc. I associated this lack of interest when a teacher reads aloud unknown vocabulary in English and minimum interaction with the story. Reading aloud is a wonderful strategy when children have the language to understand the story but I needed to do something different to get them to that point.

Multimodal storytelling became a strategy to represent the story in a way that the children would understand much more easily; while using different modes, children can involve their senses in order to construct the meaning of the story, and during early childhood stages this is the way children learn: through their multisensory perception. Through the perception of senses, children explore and learn about the world (Mills, 2016).

Senses play an active role during multimodal storytelling. We use our senses to receive information from the environment from infancy. Therefore, senses have an important role in education in early ages. Taking sensory information into account, children not only need to listen to a story to understand it but they also can use their sight, taste, touch, and smell, to understand the story's message, as the senses help children in their first years in their learning process. Preschoolers are multimodal readers and writers.

In order to design multimodal storytelling in my classroom, it was necessary to have a broad understanding of children: their developmental stages, the milestones of each stage (4-5 years-old children for this study), the way they learn, an integral perspective of what they are and what a teacher can do in the Pre-K classroom. Also, I took into account that reading, writing, speaking and listening are integrated skills, which are also related to a child's social and emotional development. All of those considerations provided an integral view of ESL preschool education and the understanding of children as multimodal readers in nature.

It is a well-known fact that speaking is a very important aspect of children's development, which starts in the L1 with the use of simple words that later will be combined to create short sentences (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Hoff, 2006). Transferring this idea to the L2, the acquisition of vocabulary becomes an important aspect to further construct short sentences (Jiménez, 2000; Handsfield & Jimenez, 2008, Pérez, Tabors, & López, 2007). Therefore, multimodal storytelling was used in a way to enrich students' vocabulary and elicit children to build short sentences to contribute to their expressive language. Moreover, I recognize the link between learning to talk and learning to read, and also that children can write about what they hear, see, read or think. This is how all those abilities are linked and due to this, preschool



education becomes a setting to stimulate children and to guide them through knowledge construction.

Additionally, I found that storytelling allowed me to use and construct different kinds of texts to tell a story, so that children could receive language input and I could stimulate the acquisition of vocabulary in order to help them develop oral skills in the L2. One of my aim was to help my students increase class participation in the second language because they frequently participated in the L1.

Moreover, to bring multimodal storytelling into the classroom requires a detailed lesson plan. It is necessary to think about: the intention when choosing a particular story, the meaning of the story, and the plan design. This last aspect requires looking for the integration of images, sounds, feelings and sensations (textures or manipulatives), movements and gestures, scene (place or scenography), reading material, writing material, and speech, in order to construct the texts the students will read. However, not all modes need to be present in multimodal storytelling. Also, a conscious use of them in the story is required to convey a certain meaning that will be understandable for children and catch their attention, so that they are actively involved during the reading process of the story.

**Critical Literacy.** This approach calls for readers to find the relationship between the text and its context, knowing that language and reality are dynamically interconnected (Freire & Macedo, 1987). We cannot forget that a story is also a text, and texts are never neutral (Luke & Freebody, 1997; Vasquez, 2010) Therefore, stories have an intention. Critical literacy encourages students to read the world using a critical view to discover the hidden messages that surround their reality and we, as teachers, can elicit students to problematize the classroom setting and texts in order to empower them as researchers of language (Comber, 2015a).

Freire, in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, explains how the banking system of education is an instrument of oppression, where teachers are narrators of knowledge and students are *containers* or *receptacles* of contents (Freire, 1968). Nevertheless, teachers have the opportunity to transform education into a way to avoid oppression while we empower our students to be critically literate in order to acquire knowledge that can be turned into action that changes the status quo (Lee, 2011). Following this statement, teachers are called to recognize that students are language users, not language recipients, as Van Sluys (as cited in Lee, 2011) stated, and in so teachers can empower them to act in the world.

Critical literacy is linked to the idea that literacy is about reading the word and the world (Freire & Macedo, 1987) and it goes beyond the traditional conception of literacy. Its aim is to empower students to question the text to promote social justice in issues such as racism, class, genre, cultural diversity, power and control, etc. What is more, there is a differentiation between critical reading and critical literacy; the first one refers to the reflection about a text, and the second one, about a process of questioning the text and the status quo to change social order (Ko, 2013b). Indeed, problematizing the text is a way to inspire students to have a voice and act in the world, not just for teaching them a system of symbols or grammar rules to communicate a message, that is to teach them language skills (Huang, 2011; Ko, 2013b). Critical literacy pays attention to how the language affects and is affected by social relations or relation of power. Therefore, it is important to ask which perspective the author holds, what is the reader's position when they read a text, which voices are silenced in the texts, etc.

According to Luke (2012) "the term critical literacy refers to the use of technologies of print and other media communication to analyze, critique, and transform the norms, rule systems, and practices governing the social fields of everyday life" (p.5). This means that we cannot

reduce the interpretation of a text to the act of reading as decoding symbols. On the contrary, it requires going beyond this superficial notion of reading, to reading words in a context and in relation to the world. The aim of critical literacy is to help people to understand the world from different perspectives and to act in the world in a way that transform their lives. Also, following this idea, we can say, “the aim is the development of human capacity to use texts to analyze social fields and their systems of exchange with an eye to transforming social relations and material conditions” (Luke, 2012, p. 9). Like this, children can create their own ideas, their own interpretations, their own way of knowing the world because if we only retain the information we receive from texts or teachers, we make the mistake of knowing the world through the eyes of others.

When I talk about critical literacy in my classroom, I am not talking about instruction but a way to encourage children to use different perspectives when reading a text; in this case, the stories we enjoy during multimodal storytelling time. I used the metaphor of critical *literacy lenses* to create some craft lenses for my ESL Pre-K students to wear when we analyzed stories; in doing so, the children became familiar with a different way of thinking and reading. Certainly, we need to avoid the myth that critical literacy is for older or higher ability students (Luke, 2011), as critical literacy is also for preschoolers.

It is also important to clarify that critical literacy is not the same as critical thinking or the critical analyses of a text (Janks, 2000; Vasquez, 2010). Critical literacy problematizes the text and demands real-world effects that elicit children to act and go beyond a reflection or analyses of a text. This is the remarkable part of critical literacy in a classroom: the way children can do real things to change the world around them, the way the teacher empowers his students to use their voices so they can be heard for others.

### **Connecting Multimodal Storytelling to Critical Literacy.**

Multimodal storytelling has provided me with the opportunity to make literacy a significant experience in my classroom. Basically, it allows me to integrate listening, speaking, reading, and writing into my lessons, using the L2 as a vehicle for the telling and understanding of the story, to familiarize children with multimodality and the constructions of multimodal texts, to present vocabulary in the L2 to be used in context, and to elicit children to retell the story in order to check for an understanding of the key issues.

Later, multimodal storytelling allowed me to engage critical literacy because I saw that stories present situations that require a deeper look. Seeing literacy as reading the world, I started creating the space for a moment of critical literacy in my ESL Pre-K classroom. I began asking my students questions like: What are these stories trying to tell us? What elements can be taken from these stories that are linked to reality? Whose reality is in these stories? This is how we started questioning the stories. At this point, the children created text with more complex messages to talk about deeper issues.

As an ESL English teacher in the preschool setting, I would like to go beyond just the teaching of a language and more towards helping children become a different kind of learner. The kind that will be more prepared to face social issues and call for social actions; the kind of student that will be more conscious of considering different perspectives to participate in the world. As Harste (2001) argues, we need to teach children how to use the language, not just to learn a second language. It is not about using the second language to learn contents or to learn some aspects of the language; it is about how to use the language to participate in society.

Critical Literacy awakens the development of critical thinking in children and simultaneously, contributes to their social and emotional development while introducing them with issues related to coexistence. Particularly, it helps them to recognize the relationship between language and power in the stories involving learning about values, which are required to become good citizens, and of course, good human beings. Likewise, moments of meaningful learning are linked to the emotional component of a child. If a teacher elicits the activation of this component, the learning process will be guaranteed, and when critical literacy is present during storytelling, the emotional aspect of a child always emerges.

Preschool education demands an enriching teaching process in relation to the student's literacy that allows them to explore the creation of texts and the comprehension of the texts that surround them. Storytelling helps children to learn a language, multimodality facilitates the understanding of messages, literacy promotes the reading of the word and the world, and critical literacy allows them to make their voices heard and act in the world, by reconstructing and redesigning texts to provide a new equitable meaning (Vasquez, 2010). Therefore, engaging in critical literacy with preschoolers allows them to understand literacy as a social practice and due to this, it is possible to elicit children to design and produce texts that transform the status quo, so that they can think of a way to reconstruct a text to show social justice and equality in order to have a real-life effect.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Reviewing Multimodality, Storytelling, and Critical Literacy Literature**

The aim of this chapter is to provide a review of the literature in multimodality, storytelling, and critical literacy. These topics are quite extensive, as they intersect into multiple educational contexts. My aim was to narrow them down to two specific and relevant contexts: English as a Second Language and preschool education contexts. I examined the significant research conducted in the last ten years to extract the relevant issues to enrich my study. Initially, I looked for studies that simultaneously present both: ESL and preschool education. Unfortunately, this search produced few results. I found multimodality, critical literacy, and even storytelling are commonly explored in English language as an L1 but more research in the area of English as L2, mainly in early ages, is still required. Therefore, I will include studies that I found relevant to my research that focuses on ESL or preschool education.

The purpose of this literature review is to become familiar with the main issues, considerations, benefits, and difficulties around multimodality, storytelling, and critical literacy in order to identify studies that support my research. Also, it aims to identify a methodology design to keep in mind, and to find gaps in those fields.

#### **Multimodality: What Is It Relevant For My Study?**

**Multimodality in the ESL Classroom.** Current research in multimodality influences ESL contexts by calling educators to rethink literacy. Studies from authors such as Ajayi (2012), Burke & Hardware (2015), Early, Kendrick & Potts (2015), Lotherington & Jenson (2011), Yi & Choi (2015) give substantial attention to multimodality in ESL classrooms.

Lotherington & Jenson (2011) provide significant theoretical perspectives on multimodality, and present different multimodal teaching practices in L2 contexts. From their work, I found the call for ESL teachers to engage with new understanding of literacy relevant in providing authenticity in L2 learning (p.228), and to understand “[...] that single authorship is now an option, not a model in writing, and that the physical classroom extends beyond its brick walls, connected digitally to resources and learning partners (p. 229) relevant.

Children have access to find communities, game-based sites, wikis, and other media contexts. As result, Henry Jenkins (2006) affirms “we are living in a *convergence culture*, where the media, including those who control, consume, and produce it, have converged (cited in Lotherington & Jenson, 2011). At this point, it is necessary to recognize that children use modes to convey meaning and they also bring them into the classroom. Following this idea, Lotherington & Jenson (2011) and Early, Kendrick & Potts (2015) argue that ESL educators need to recognize the value of the semiotic resources children bring to the classroom, and give equal importance to the variety of modes.

It is also important to mention that, Lotherington & Jenson (2011) pointed out that in order to generate suitable multimodal L2 teaching, the following is necessary: appropriate teacher education, assessment practices, pedagogical spaces to experiment with multimodality, and respect for the varying (multiple) language competencies of all members of a learning context (p. 241).

Early, Kendrick & Potts (2015) state the interest in multimodality in L2 contexts is that “while we learn languages to communicate, language is not the only or even (at times) the primary mode of communication” (p. 1) Due to this, it is necessary to rethink discourses and languages pedagogies.

Regarding the problematics that multimodality faces in the educational field, Yi & Choi (2015) mention teachers' lack of preparation for lesson plans, computer skills, and skeptical views of the benefits of multimodal practices (p.2). In response, those researchers conducted a study in two graduate courses for ESL teachers in United States, related to teachers' engagement with multimodality in K-12 classrooms. Twenty-five teachers participated in data collection constituted by a qualitative questionnaire, online posts on multimodality, participants' reflection and response posts on their multimodal projects, and research notes written by both researchers.

The findings of the research above showed that some teachers associated multimodality exclusively with digital technologies, most teachers recognize the engagement and the benefits, expressed concerns about multimodal practices in terms of time taking for planning and implementing multimodal lessons, a discrepancy between multimodal learning and print-based assessment, and multimodal learning being seen as less academic (Yi & Choi, 2015). This study corroborates my suspicion that some teachers misunderstand multimodality as just a digital practice, reducing the multimodality's spectrum, and highlighting the need for more studies to expand the view of multimodal practices.

Equally important is the work of Burke & Hardware (2015) with eight immigrant children, aged 13, Grade 8 during English as a second language class. In this case study, the researchers engaged children in discussions about the importance of modes as forms of communication for the construction of a digital photostory project (Burke & Hardware, 2015). To collect data, they performed class observation, interviews, focal group discussions, took field notes, and recorded four videos of the digital storytelling assignment. This study demonstrates how students drew connections from their own lives, how they discussed the semiotic resources they used during creation of their project, how they created alternative reading positions to



analyze and question texts, and finally, how they engaged in more critical and complex understandings. Burke & Hardware (2015) state that multimodality is beneficial for students with limited English vocabulary because visual modes can help them better understand the topic being taught.

Regarding the importance of modes to construct the message, Ajayi (2012) carried out a study with eighteen third-grade students about the use of the socio-historical experiences and multimodal resources of Hispanic ESL/literacy learners in the interpretation and representation of Cinderella. In this study, the researcher used the principles of multimodality and critical literacy to demonstrate how ESL children ‘read’ the video and re-created their understandings in pictures and sentences. From this study, the integration of multimodality and critical literacy, and the analysis of children’s artifacts by using a qualitative, interpretative research approach is relevant.

**Multimodality and Preschool Education.** For this study, I used literature related to L1 and multimodality in preschool, due to the lack of studies in the ESL preschool setting. Comparatively, the preschool field seems to be more familiar with multimodality due to the understanding of literacy in early stages. I found a variety of studies that show how preschoolers construct meaning from pictures, comic conventions, toys, sounds, textures, and a wide range of manipulatives that offer visual, auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic modalities, that provide a variety of semiotic modes (Cohen & Uhry, 2011; Mellgren & Gustafsson, 2011; Pieretti, Kaul, Zarchy & O’Hanlon, 2015; Scofield, Hernandez-Reif, & Keith, 2009; Yannicopoulou, 2004).

To support early childhood literacy and multimodal expression in children, Mellgren & Gustafsson (2011) pointed out that children must be supported in making meaning and becoming involved as competent participants in the culture of literacy, listening needs to be learned, the

interpretation of pictures and narratives may need to be supported individually before the child is able to make use of this skill in a group reading session, children can make inferences and be able to listen to each other with the pictures and the narrative. Following this idea, Yannicopoulou (2004) asks teachers to use the term “reader-viewer” to refer to children while reading texts. For this reason, it is more beneficial for children to include multi-modalities in the transmission of a message (Yannicopoulou, 2004).

Multimodality is not only a way for children to express themselves but a way of learning (Pieretti et al., 2015, Scofield et al., 2009). Scofield et al., 2009 demonstrated that preschoolers use multimodality to learn words. In their study, researchers found that children learn words by coordinating information across multiple sense modalities and that word learning improved with age (Scofield et al., 2009). The findings of the previous study support L2 word learning while using multimodal storytelling in my ESL Pre-K classroom.

For Cohen & Uhry (2011) the multimodal construction of a text by preschoolers goes beyond drawings, it also includes block play. They found that children represent real life experiences situated in a social context with blocks. They also stated the importance of taking into account the value of children’s cognitive abilities in early stages to represent meaning, and to rethink how playing and the learning environments are linked to sociocultural issues (Cohen & Uhry, 2011).

Another important work related to children’s multimodality was carried out by Richards (2017). The researcher described how an ESL five-year-old Chinese-Australian boy used drawings and storytelling to facilitate his communication with others, and to express his interests and concerns. This study allowed us to understand how multimodal representations, (drawings and graphic stories) can help children to navigate complex topics such as social, cultural, and

linguistic issues through a careful and deep analysis of a child's multimodal drawings, which build a bridge between "[...] his verbal communication skills and his teachers' abilities to understand him" (Richards, 2017). The child's work helped him to facilitate "greater social interaction and participation" (Richards, 2017). The research concluded "[...] as educators we need not only be open to hearing and seeing these extraordinary accomplished multimodal stories as expressed through spontaneous art, but we need to actively bring them into the arena of adult-child interactions with educational settings" (Richards, 2017).

**Multimodality in Colombia.** There are few studies about multimodality and English as a second language in our country. Those studies have in common a broader understanding of literacy and, the belief that a multimodality approach enhances our understanding of communication. Overall, the topic of multimodal research in Colombia is emergent, both in language (Álvarez, 2016) and in teacher education (Mora, 2016, under review), as well as in early childhood education (Cañas, Ocampo, Rodríguez, López-Ladino, & Mora, forthcoming).

Regarding the language education field in Colombia, Álvarez (2016) provides a set of suggestions to integrate multimodality in language classes. I will mention those that echo the key elements of my study. Álvarez (2016) writes,

design tasks that require students to create multimodal texts in connection to the various topics and communicative functions of the language curriculum, discuss the characteristics of genres such as textbooks, brochures, postcards, letters, chat scripts, articles from newspapers, websites, and video clips, design materials articulating modes of communication and genres that provide different sources of input to the topic or language function being studied, and link student's learning styles to multimodal projects" (p. 112).

These words serve as a reminder of that which I need to keep in mind when working with my ESL preschoolers. I would like to accept his invitation when he declared that “[...]as meaning making and texts become more complex and sophisticated, language educators and educators in general are called to help students understand the new dynamics of text construction and text interpretation” (Álvarez, 2016)

In their paper, Rincón & Clavijo-Olarte (2016) discussed the qualitative work performed with community inquiries to develop literacy practices in a group of tenth-graders in their EFL class in Bogota, Colombia. Technology and the use of networking communities constitute tools to enrich the language learning experience. The methodology used was an action research and the instruments used to collect data were videotape recordings, teacher’s journal, students’ interactions on Facebook, and students’ blogs. For data analysis, they used grounded approach and a software called ATLAS TI to codify and organize the data. The study highlight the facts that “students’ language learning was evident in multimodal texts in English in their blogs, in the use of EFL in their oral presentations, and in their comments in response to peers on Facebook and their blogs” (Rincón & Clavijo-Olarte, 2016). From this study, I can reaffirm that multimodal texts do reveal language learning.

Similarly, García, García, & Hernández (2011) generated surveys, interviews, and field notes at the language center at Universidad Pedagógica Nacional in Bogotá, to analyze student’s beliefs when interacting with multimodal texts as tools for foreign language learning. Using domain analysis and color method triangulation, the findings of this case study suggest that students believe that multimodal texts are meaningful and motivational pedagogical tools, that improve communicative skills and to critical thinking (García, García, & Hernández, 2011).

As an emerging topic, it was interesting to find more qualitative studies (in MA thesis) done with school children, language learners at language's center, and pre-service EFL teachers using multimodality (Cañas Mejía & Ocampo Castro, 2015; Isaza Velásquez, 2016; López Bustos, 2015). From those studies, I observed how multimodality is taking place in school and at the university level, including in the training of a new generation of language teachers.

Those studies used ethnographic and case study approaches, and for collecting data they used participants' artifacts, surveys, interviews, and teacher's journal. For data analysis, López Bustos (2015) followed six steps: data collection, preparation of data for analysis, reading through data, coding data, coding for descriptions, and coding for themes, proposed by Creswell (2012) (cited in López Bustos, 2015). In contrast, Cañas Mejía & Ocampo Castro (2015) used mapping, coding, and reducing data to charts. The findings of those studies suggest “teachers should use multimodal texts and include personal literacies to enhance children's learning experiences” (Cañas Mejía & Ocampo Castro, 2015), “a classroom where students are more involved in creating knowledge, and use language as a way to be critical of their own learning process” (Isaza Velásquez, 2016), and “to recognize the potential and the affordances of multimodal texts in literacy teaching” (López Bustos, 2015)

Another important research topic related to multimodality in Colombia is the understanding of second language literacies in the city (Mora, Castaño, Gómez, Ramírez, Mejía-Vélez, & Pulgarín, 2015; Mora, Chiquito, Giraldo, Mejía-Vélez, Uribe, & Salazar Patiño, 2016; Mora, Mejía-Vélez, Ramírez, & Pulgarín, 2016; Mora, Pulgarín, Ramírez, & Mejía-Vélez, forthcoming). In this research, multimodality provides an analytical lens to observe how literacies in second languages appear in the city of Medellin.

**Multimodal Storytelling.** While searching electronic data bases such as JSTOR, ERIC, EBSCO, Science Direct, Springer Link and Scopus, I found this term is used for different purposes. I classified the studies that used the term multimodal storytelling into two main groups: digital storytelling and multisensory storytelling. I decided to refer to them as multimodal storytelling versions.

Digital storytelling refers to software or storytelling applications that are used to tell, create, and design a story. It mainly uses audio and visual stimuli to send a message, as well as allowing for the creation of multimodal compositions using modes such as: photography, videos, avatars, software tools, etc. (Liang, 2015; Vasudevan et. al., 2010; Wang, 2007; Yang, 2012). In those studies, I perceived the limited understanding of multimodality as an approach solely related to technology.

On the other hand, multisensory storytelling refers to the use of multisensory perception to tell a story. In this version of multimodal storytelling, there is the possibility to use not only a digital screen but also to include modes that involve more of the senses to decode the message. Qualitative studies carried out by Matos, Rocha, Cabral & Bessa; Binder, 2014; Poveda, Pulido, Morgade, Messina & Hèdlova, 2008; Sanchez, Gu, Kunze, & Inami, 2015 involved the use of more modes such as audio, video, tactile, and smell stimulus. Those last studies helped me to open my mind to the idea of integrating different modes, and pushed me to think of different ways to involve as many modes as possible to send messages to the children. The children were the main participants and their multimodal texts were the main focus of analysis.

In none of the aforementioned studies was multimodal storytelling used to refer to the teacher's way of telling stories and children's ways of receiving messages, but as ways to aid children to produce multimodal texts through drawings or computer applications.

## **Storytelling: learning from previous studies**

**Storytelling in ESL classroom.** While looking for studies about storytelling, I found that its usage is mainly recognized for supporting language development process, including second languages. Regarding English L1 children, storytelling helps develop: story comprehension, oral retelling, recognition of elements of the story, writing and reading skills and listening skills (Andrews, Hull, & Donahue, 2009; Isbell, Sobol, Lindauer, & Lowrance, 2004; Wright, Bacigalupa, Black, & Burton 2008). Similarly, storytelling contributes to English L2 children's vocabulary gains, comprehension, and development of language skills (Al Harrasi, 2012; Mart, 2012; Sulistiawati, 2014; Uchiyama, 2011).

Regarding English vocabulary and comprehension, Uchiyama (2011) conducted a study in 2009 in public schools in Japan with fifth and sixth graders (10 to 12 years-old) using storytelling and reading stories. To engage pre – teens in English learning, Uchiyama replicated the work of two researchers (Trostle & Hicks, 1998) that used character imagery and simple reading in the L1, but this time the study was carried out in English as the L2. The findings of this study showed that reading and telling stories are both effective, but Character Imagery presented a meaningful, increased improvement in relation to the development of vocabulary and comprehension in the students' L2.

Uchiyama's study confirmed that storytelling is an effective strategy to teach vocabulary and when it is combined with character imagery, multimodality in L2 classrooms is implemented. Additionally, this study shows through their findings that storytelling allows teachers to grow professionally, as it is a scaffolding process for them, while non-native speaking teachers need to memorize the story in order to tell it to their students (Uchiyama, 2011).

Furthermore, this study proves that storytelling engages students in a more natural use of language and that it captures students' attention easily.

**Storytelling and its connotations.** There does not seem to be a clear consensus about what exactly storytelling is. Some studies define it as classroom tool or strategy (Keshta, 2013; Parr & Campbell, 2007) whereas others classify it as a method (Andrews et al., 2009; Isbell et al., 2004). Andrews et al. (2009) provided a discussion about storytelling as an instructional method in different areas such as dentistry, military, aviation, general medicine, law, and business; giving it the category of a method. In this version of storytelling, the story is used to engage the learner in order to simulate an experience through the context provided by the story itself. According to this definition, there are four instructional methods related to storytelling: cased-based, narrative-based, scenario-based, and problem-based instruction (p. 7).

In the ESL classroom, storytelling is frequently used as a natural way to expose children to the target language and elicit their interaction not only with the language but also with teachers and classmates. However, Sulistiawati (2014) argued that “the interaction between the teachers and the students happened in the review section not when they were telling stories” (p. 21). Conversely, I consider that storytelling is a dialogue between the teacher and students that requires interaction when delivering the messages and giving meaning to the message. Also, storytelling allows teachers to use different strategies or tools to promote interaction: images, puppets, body language, questions, etc. Natural interaction is a valuable component of storytelling.

Another relevant aspect about storytelling in the classroom is that researchers use a differentiation between storytelling and story reading, agreeing that both bring significant



language benefits to students (Isbell et al., 2004; Uchiyama, 2011). According to Isbell et al. (2004) reading a story has a main referent: the text and each of its pages.

This differentiation in the conception of storytelling has an important influence on teachers' classroom practices and this is how teachers start building their own definition of storytelling and the assumptions to implement it in their classrooms. Following this idea, Sulistiawati (2014), in his study, explored how classroom practices echo teachers' beliefs on using storytelling to teach to preschoolers. He found four aspects to take into consideration: using L1 and L2 when teachers tell the story, the selection of a good story, using media to tell a story and storytelling as a way to deliver a message or a lesson through stories. I searched for those aspects in other studies to find useful elements for my research.

**Usages of L1 and L2 during storytelling.** The use of code switching in the ESL classroom generates a discussion among teachers. Some researchers, as Kao (2009) consider it a tool, while others point out that it can have negative effects on L2 acquisition (as cited in Ratnasary, 2014, p. 1). In terms of storytelling, Ratnasary (2014) examined the reasons for code switching use during storytelling to teach English in a Faculty of Language and Literature, in Satya Wacana Christian University in Indonesia with eleven students. The research found that the use of code switching and code mixing in storytelling is due to lack of vocabulary, speaking anxiety, the need for facilitating language production, the need to control the language and the absence of equivalence in the target language. Those findings are related to emotional aspects of learning but it does not mean using the L1 constitutes an impediment to learning another language.

**Selection of stories.** Selecting a story requires teachers to keep in mind the characteristics of their audience, the purpose of the message given by the story and the proficiency level.

Sulistiawati (2014) showed in his study that teachers refer to a good story as those that have good or positive models for children because these kinds of stories become an opportunity to learn about values. Thompson (2011) describes how moral values are developed in preschool children; for this purpose he took into account four methods: individual education, group education, opportunity education and storytelling. One of the findings showed that storytelling was the main method of transmitting values. Another study from Wright, Diener & Kemp (2008) showed how storytelling dramas provide opportunities to build community in preschool education, in order to contribute to the social-emotional development of children by keeping positive relationships among the school community.

Another important element to consider when selecting a story is the use of simple language. A story can be enjoyable to the reader in their L1 but difficult to understand in their L2, the issue being due to familiar and unfamiliar words. When using a story in an English as a second language setting, it is necessary to guarantee that students will be able to understand the vocabulary in the story. Yang (2009) studied a secondary school in Hong Kong, with students (aged 12 to 14) whose L1 is Cantonese, to learn about the effectiveness of the use of short stories using the storytelling approach to transform students' interest and their confidence when using English. The results indicated that using "short stories will not automatically make students become more interested in English unless the stories are interesting and the language used meets their level" (p. 1). We can see this study is linked to an important statement by Willis' (1996) model about the language learning process (as cited in Yang, 2009, p. 36). Willis stated that "what is essential is that the learner has exposure to accessible language, has the opportunity to use language, and has the motivation to learn".

Likewise, Schatt & Ryan (2015) suggested choosing a story with clear narrative elements, easily character identification, rhyming verses, repetitive and rhythmic language, and repeated actions and events, all which can also encourage students' engagement and participation in storytelling. It is important to clarify that a good story is not defined by the attractive tools used to tell it, for instance a luxury version of a book or colorful pictures. To support this statement, there is a study carried out in Canada with 4-5 year-old children about the effect that the color and the black-and-white pictures can cause in the quality and quantity of children's stories (Schneider, Rivard, & Debreuil; 2011). The results of this study concluded that using color or black pictures picture stimuli does not seem to affect the stories told to children. Schneider et al. (2011) concluded that when choosing narrative stimuli, there are other variables with greater relevance while implementing storytelling.

**Use of media for telling a story.** Telling a story is not limited to the use of voice; it can also be told with the use of a variety of materials that help to deliver the message of the story. Common media used for storytelling include puppets, flashcards, pictures, storybooks, videos, movies, songs, wordless pictures books, and others. For example, Hu & Commeyras (2008) directed a study in storytelling in English and Chinese using wordless pictures to investigate the language and literacy development of English and Chinese in a 5 year-old child. By the same token, Sylla, Coutinho, Branco & Müller (2015) carried out a study using a digital manipulative system for storytelling that allows five-year-old preschoolers to create stories and play language games. This digital manipulative system uses the principle of the tangible technology that allows students to manipulate story elements virtually. Similarly, Toki & Pange (2014) involved ICT and storytelling in their study through the use of multimedia tools for creating a story such as:

computer-generated text, images and computer-based graphics, animations, video clips, music, recorded audio, visual and sound.

Digital storytelling becomes a widespread type of storytelling. It is considered the combination between the art of telling stories and digital multimedia (Robin, 2008). The use of digital storytelling in English language learners' contexts was explored by diverse researchers. Among them, Vinogradova, Linville & Bickel (2011) provided practical suggestions for language teachers to try digital storytelling. In their study, digital storytelling is seen as a student-centered project based approach, allowing students to create multimodal projects: narrative, image, sound, and technology elements, where "The digital stories themselves are multimodal narratives in which every element is consciously selected for its explicit and implicit message, and elements must work together to create meaning" (Vinogradova et. al., 2011).

As we can see, digital storytelling recognizes the role of multimodality and its benefits. Nevertheless, it is important to highlight that digital storytelling is not the only way to encourage the use of multimodality composition in the classroom. There are also other alternatives to create multimodal narratives through the use of other materials that are not technological tools; which I will explain more fully in the multimodal storytelling section.

**Storytelling in Colombia.** In the Colombian context, the studies related to storytelling for learning the English language, mainly focus on early childhood. The aim of using storytelling in the classroom is to motivate students to learn the language, acquire vocabulary, improve their communicative skills, and develop literacy skills (Barreto, 2009; Porras, 2010; Vanegas, 2001). In her study, Barreto (2009) used storybooks to help children comprehend the world and cultures, to understand language functions, and to improve the children's proficiency in English. Her study included reading two stories, talking about their cover pages, analyzing the illustration

to understand the story, exchanging ideas for text comprehension, drawing pictures of the stories' plot (some children included sentences); all of this helped to demonstrate how students interact with the story as they simultaneously improve their communicative skills. In this study, Barreto (2009) stated that colorful pictures of storybooks help students to grasp ideas of the stories and facilitate the comprehension.

Another study in Colombia suggested that storytelling helps kindergartener's literacy development (Vanegas, 2001). In this action research project, storytelling is used to motivate students in the transition level to develop reading skills in the English L2. Firstly, the teacher planned the story-reading sessions and allowed students to have class not only in the classroom, but also in the reading center or in the video room. The activities proposed after read-aloud storytelling included "memory games, word pictures matching, pleonasm, bingo, mastermind, unscrambling words with alphabet cards and story summary (p. 27). Those kinds of activities allowed students to also improve their listening and speaking skills, not just the reading skills as originally proposed. The researcher stated that "learning a language is useless if we do not know how to communicate, how to listen to others, and how to speak and write so that listeners and readers will want to listen and read and be able to understand" (p.27).

Another study carried out in our country took place in Bucaramanga. This time, children in early stages of elementary school showed positive results when using stories to teach English (EFL context). They revealed motivation in regard to learning and increased participation, story comprehension, and vocabulary acquisition. (Porrás, 2010).

## **Critical Literacy: What Scholarship Has Said and Done.**

**Critical literacy in the ELL classroom.** Critical literacy is gaining interest with educators from ELL countries such as Canada, Singapore, USA, Korea, Taiwan, among others, in different levels of education from preschool to college. However, there are few studies that explore English in Second Language contexts, precisely in preschool, as the aim of their study. Moreover, those studies do not emphasize on the development of language skills in early childhood but more so on how to set critical literacy in the classroom (Huang, 2011; McCloskey 2012). The critical literacy approach is still under-exploration.

**General beliefs and perspectives towards critical literacy.** I searched for literature that covered teachers' beliefs and the challenges they face when working with critical literacy. Cho (2015) explored critical literacy with pre-service and in-service teachers in the United States through an action research approach. The findings of her study exhibit that "The major obstacle to employ critical literacy in public school settings was the standardization of curriculum and the test-driven educational environment. Another concern addressed by teachers involved parental resistance and confusion over the construct of critical literacy" (Cho, 2015). In a like manner, Curdt-Christiansen (2010) explored knowledge and beliefs about critical literacy in a group of Singaporean English language teachers. This study concluded that the teachers' understanding of literacy is related to code breaking, meaning making, and text participating, but they showed less understanding of critical literacy. In this research, some teachers manifested a conflict between using time on teaching critical literacy and preparing students to pass their tests (Curd-Christiansen, 2010).

Similarly, Ko (2013b) carried out a case study in an English reading class at a university in Taiwan, where the growth of an EFL teacher in critical literacy was registered. The study

showed how the teacher transformed himself from an *information-giver to a critical facilitator* (Ko, 2013). This study also provides suggestions for implementing critical literacy in an EFL reading class that can be also meaningful for ELL contexts, some of these being: balance instruction in basic language skills and critical literacy, the use of locally-relevant or student-lived experience-related texts as supplementary materials, create a supporting environment where learners can consider a variety of perspectives, and model a questioning stance towards texts (Ko, 2013 p. 106).

Beck (2015) described some challenges when teaching critical literacy by taking into account that the classroom is not exempt from power struggles. Some of these struggles are as follows: authoritative students may intimidate others, students can feel uncomfortable with the shift from teacher to student authority (some of them are more familiar with teacher-centered classrooms), variety of ways of implementing critical literacy according to teachers' understanding of it, lack of full implementation of the all four dimensions of critical literacy practices, absence of a method to implement critical literacy; it is necessary a good classroom management for harmonizing classroom discussions, and to keep a balance into school curriculum and critical literacy practices (Beck, 2015). Also, to face those challenges, the scholar claimed that it is necessary to support other critical literacy practitioners.

**Critical literacy's considerations.** To open spaces for critical literacy in the classroom requires having a clear understanding of the four dimensions of critical literacy proposed by Lewison, Flint & Van Sluys (2002): disrupting the commonplace, interrogating multiple viewpoints, focusing on sociopolitical issues, and taking action and promoting social justice. This four dimensional model is also used in other important studies regarding critical literacy in ELL contexts (Curdt-Christiansen, 2010; Labadie, Wetzel & Rogers, 2012; Vasquez, Tate &

Harste, 2013) and it helps to develop reflective stances about important social issues presented in texts. In addition, Comber (2007) suggests using questions that go beyond the traditional reading comprehension model:

- Who/what is represented in this story?
- Who/what is absent or not represented?
- What is the author trying to make you believe?
- How is language used in specific ways to convey ideas in the story?
- How could this story be rewritten to convey a different idea?

In words of Labadie, Wetzel & Rogers (2012), it is important to ask open-ended questions, or critical questions as Huang (2011) named them, because they help readers to see texts from critical perspectives.

Another important consideration while working on critical literacy in the classroom is to avoid a teacher-centered class, because it is time for the students to take an active role, and also new role, during class time. Kuo (2015) found that students assumed various learning roles, including: code breakers, text users, text participants, and text critics. This finding shows how critical literacy practices engaged students with different types of texts in an EFL context in Taiwan.

**Critical literacy and conventional literacy.** To work on critical literacy does not require us to completely disregard conventional literacy or to oppose it. On the contrary, skills like decoding, oral reading fluency, reading comprehension, writing, and spelling, play an important role in the process of understanding the text that is being read using a critical literacy lense. In the words of Labadie, Wetzel & Rogers (2012), "Critical literacy teachers are dually concerned with supporting their students in reading and understanding increasingly difficult texts and



navigating the dimensions of critical literacy” (p. 125). Some studies, as the one carried out by Huang (2011), shows how ‘reaction texts’ constituted EFL production, and on those texts, students demonstrated that not only did they have the opportunity to write about their thoughts over what they had read, but also, this allowed the teacher to ensure that the students were fully comprehending what they had read.. This researcher promotes the idea of working the dual focus in the classroom because this balance can offer more benefits to students, but it demands a clear organization of the class to avoid the idea that conventional literacy is sacrificed for working critical literacy (Huang, 2011).

Another consideration regarding conventional literacy is about the English proficiency level of the students. In her study, Ko (2013) found that the students’ English level did not hinder their critical literacy. For this reason, it is also possible to work with both at the same time, because the two processes can support each other. The researcher concluded that “Critical literacy could be implemented in the EFL context even though the students’ English proficiency is still limited, but special attention should be paid to the selection of the reading materials and the use of the target and first language” (Ko, 2013). In addition, Lau (2012) stated that “ELs are quite capable of complex language learning when they are given adequate support” when using critical literacy in the classroom. At this point, it is evident that critical literacy can be used as an excuse to provide support in conventional literacy too.

**Critical literacy in Preschool education.** Very few studies documented the work of critical literacy and its implications with preschoolers (Kim, 2016, McCloskey, 2012); however, I collected some considerations about previous experiences from studies done in Canada and South Korea in ESL preschool contexts to enrich my reading.

When starting working with critical literacy in the preschool setting, it is necessary to think about creating spaces that do not affect what the school curriculum dictates must be followed (Vasquez, 2014). Besides this observation, it is important to understand the early literacy development in a broader sense that includes children's multimodal literacy practices (Comber, 2001).

The most common texts used to engage in critical literacy practices with children are picture books (Kim, 2016; Vasquez, 2014). However, Vasquez (2014) indicated that critical literacy could arise from a poster, a school situation, a children's game, classroom incidents, class discussions, etc.

Furthermore, Vasquez (2014) listed some ideas about issues that were explored with children (environmental issues, access and equality, responsibility, activism, gender, different perspectives, issues regarding labeling, media and advertising, consumerism, language and positioning, racism, power and control, among others) as well as the actions that children did to promote social justice (writing letters, creating posters, petitions, etc.). Those actions were oriented in writing alternatives texts as social justice promotion. Therefore, those texts are artifacts that demonstrate children's literacy. However, there is a need to explore the multimodal texts children can create to promote critical literacy.

### **Discussion about the studies: What I learned**

After exploring a sample of studies and resources in relation to storytelling, multimodality, and critical literacy fields, I listed some important considerations to take into account for my research in terms of methodology that I divided into methodology and research

findings. In the discussion of those studies, I found a need for further research in multimodality and critical literacy.

In terms of methodology, I found that the most common research approach was qualitative, and some of them were specifically defined as case studies. Regarding multimodality and critical literacy, it was common to find studies that report what researchers did in a specific setting; their findings showed me some trends in those fields: the broader definition of literacy, some kinds of multimodal texts, children's texts, strategies that teachers implemented (the way to tell a story, the use of L1 and L2 during classes, etc.), teachers' beliefs about critical literacy, etc. The data collection was characterized by the usage of journals, interviews, class observations, videos and audio recording, and artifacts (pictures, students' production, bulletin board). Mainly, the qualitative research approach appeared in the studies in the forms of case studies and ethnography respectively.

Early, Kendrick & Potts (2015) affirm that multimodality is "on the margins" of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages. Likewise, Lotherington & Jenson (2011) suggest further research in the idea that students design bilingual texts to help them with language learning. While in the critical literacy field, Huang, 2011; Kim, 2016; McCloskey, 2012; and Vasquez, 2014 call for further research in preschool education and English in Second Language contexts.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Multimodal Storytelling and Critical Literacy in an ESL Pre-K Classroom:**

#### **A Qualitative Research Study**

This research constitutes a systemic and rigorous process to describe preschoolers and teacher engagement with critical literacy when implementing multimodal storytelling. In this chapter, I will present the methodological characteristics of this study and the approach that underpinned it. Additionally, I will present the research question, the participants and site, as well as the data instruments that were used to collect information. Finally, I will include the data analysis of this study.

#### **Research Design**

For the purpose of this study, I used a qualitative research approach, because it helps the researcher to understand the complexity of people and their lives in real settings and real world events (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004; Stake, 2010; Yin, 2010). In this particular case, I describe the moments of engagement of critical literacy when using multimodal storytelling in my ESL Pre-K classroom, and according to Stake (2010) “those studies with emphasis on personal experience in described situations are considered qualitative” (p. 14). The aim of a qualitative research in terms of Lankshear & Knobel (2004) is to make events, phenomena, programs, people and the like as usefully complex as possible to better understand in contextualized ways the who, what, when, why and how of what was studied.

My role in this study is a teacher researcher because I carried it out in my own classroom with the intention to contribute to an improvement of my students’ learning and my teaching

practice (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004). It is necessary to clarify that, in the position of teacher research I do not try to impose my perceptions of the phenomenon to interpret my students' views, rather my students' perceptions were used to understand the phenomenon (Arghode, 2012). What I intend to do is to share my students' literacy production , explain how I gave power to their voices to act in the world and show how I used critical literacy practices during the multimodal storytelling to teach English as a second language to my Pre-k students.

**Research Question.** To guide my research, I proposed the following question to be answered: What possibilities of engagement with critical literacy arise when implementing multimodal storytelling in an ESL Pre-K classroom?

**Sub questions:**

- How did the teacher researcher create spaces for critical literacy through multimodal storytelling?
- How was the children's literacy production when using multimodal storytelling to engage them with critical literacy?

**Research Setting**

I carried out this research at a private bilingual school near Medellin, Colombia. The school is divided into three sections: Immersion, Primary and Secondary. The immersion section corresponds to preschool education. First of all, I want to clarify that in Colombia, only one level of preschool education is mandatory, which is called "Transition" for 6 year-old children (Ley 115, 1994, art. 17). The levels below transition are offered by nurseries and private schools.

The Immersion program in which I work is made up of five levels: the first two levels aim to consolidate the mother tongue; bilingual education begins in the third level, Pre-K,

followed by Kindergarten and Stage 1 (*Transition* level in Colombia). Within Pre-K, where I conducted my research, the children are immersed in a language-rich environment that fosters the use of English through daily situations and classroom activities to help them develop communication skills to express needs, feelings, experiences and ideas in the L2.

Additionally, students are exposed to a variety of texts such as songs, rhymes, poems, stories, information books and charts to increase their vocabulary and speaking and listening skills and to develop early literacy skills. For this purpose, students receive 25 hours of classes in English during a cycle (a group of six academic days). These hours are divided into the following school subjects: nine hours of English Language and Literacy, six hours of Numeracy, six hours of Discovery of the World, and four hours of Social and Emotional Development. The three basic subjects are taught by the homeroom teacher: English Language and Literacy, Numeracy and Discovery of the World. Other subjects like Language and Literacy – Hora del Cuento, Creative Expression (art, music and dance) and Motor Skills Development are taught in Spanish.

The school possesses a wide variety of resources that allow teachers to use different tools in the classroom: TVs, teacher laptops, Internet connection, tape recorders, tablets, virtual platforms, flashcards, big books, props, charts, puppets, costumes, etc.

Most of the students in the Immersion Program are Spanish speakers, mainly of Colombian descent. However, there are students from English speaking countries in the school as well. The students of this private bilingual school have the opportunity to visit English speaking countries due to tourism or visiting family and friends', and they also have the possibility of participating in student exchange programs.

## Participants

The Pre-K level had two groups that consisted of fourteen children each one. Both classrooms had a homeroom teacher and an assistant teacher. Nevertheless, the research study was carried out in my Pre-K group, called Beginners A. The children are four and five years old (they are one year older than monolingual preschoolers in the country) and all of their L1 is Spanish, including the research teacher. I collected all the data during English Language and Literacy class.

**Recruitment procedures: Securing consent.** First, I talked to my immediate bosses (i.e. the Immersion Program director and sub director) to explain the purpose of my research. I explained to them that I had been using storytelling combined with multimodality for two years and that children seemed to show an increase in because of this enjoyment and story comprehension, but I wanted to take them beyond this and guide them through critical literacy practices, because I believed they had many things to say and to show to others. They offered me their support and insisted that I share the activities with the other Pre-K classroom and asked me to explain how to use this strategy to my fellow teacher and the activities in her classroom. However, I considered that she required more preparation regarding the concepts of literacy and critical literacy, being that this was something completely new for her and it required a deeper understanding of those pedagogical tools. It is something that cannot learned in one day or with a simple explanation; it requires reading, searching, analysis, and a deep comprehension.

Then, I scheduled an appointment with the school principal to present the research proposal. I presented the research project and he signed an informed letter of consent (See Appendix A) to approve the research that was to be carried out in my classroom. Later, during the third term general meeting with parents, I presented my research proposal to them and I

asked for their help to allow me to collect data from their children in order to elaborate my master's thesis. I was surprised by their interest in multimodal storytelling and critical literacy, and also with their cooperation. I obtained consent from 14 families, all of whom signed the letters of consent. That moment was meaningful for me because I felt that the parents liked my work and believed in what I was doing with my students. I felt their support but I also felt their commitment as parents to contribute to the new things coming into the classroom and subsequently the learning process that would be enhanced. The most special moment during that meeting was when I was explaining what exactly is critical literacy and parents showed their enthusiasm for this new concept.

**Selecting a sample.** I collected data during multimodal storytelling activities in the last term of the school year (a school year is divided in four, two-month terms) during English Language and Literacy class. I realized that collecting and analyzing data from fourteen children would be too time consuming. Therefore, I decided to use a purposive sample (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004; Suter, 2012) and I selected six students as participants. When starting the selection process for the convenience sample, I made a list of the characteristics students needed to have in order to collect representative data. The categories were: interest and enjoyment of multimodal storytelling, self-confidence when expressing their ideas and thoughts, three representative levels of English proficiency (advanced, intermediate, beginner) according to the Pre-K program, and a good school attendance record that guaranteed participation during the data collection process.

I selected a girl and boy with an advanced level of English, a girl and a boy with an intermediate level of English, and a girl and a boy with a beginner level of English. All of them fulfilled the other characteristics. As I mentioned previously, all parents signed the consent form



but I informed the children's parents that they would become a part of the convenience sample at the end of the research.

Table 1

*Participants and English Language Proficiency*

<b>English Proficiency Level*</b>	<b>Girl Student</b>	<b>Boy Student</b>
Advanced	Emiliana	Juan
Intermediate	Violeta	Salomon
Beginner	Julieta	Juan Esteban

\*English Proficiency level according to the school Evaluation System.

**Ethical consideration and pseudonyms.** In order to protect the children's identities, I used pseudonyms that students themselves chose based on their own preferences. Regarding school confidentiality, I included neither its name nor easily-recognizable details. As a further measure of trustworthiness, I did not assess any of the activities that were part of the data collection. Professionally, it is my duty to show respect to my students and during my research, I demonstrated respect for their literacy practices and the ideas they expressed during class discussions. For this reason, I was careful to avoid manipulating their answers.

**Multimodal Storytelling = Storytelling + Multimodality**

Multimodal storytelling was the tool I used to foster critical literacy. As follows, I will provide a description of how I started using this storytelling and the elements I took into account

in order to design it. As I stated in Chapter 1, my use of multimodal storytelling started when I made an effort to help my children understand more aspects of a story, taking into account that they were just beginning to acquire English vocabulary but they could understand the message if I transmitted it using modes that help to convey meaning. I saw in the multimodality approach a way for children to communicate and a way of leaning (Pieretti et al., 2015, Scofield, Hernandez-Reif, & Keith, 2009). Taking this statement into account, I started developing the fusion of storytelling and multimodality.

When I use multimodal storytelling, my students are not listening to a story. They are reading the story because they are reading the message produced by the integration of different modes. They are doing more than listening to the teacher while she is decoding symbols; they are decoding multiple elements that are involved in storytelling. Multimodal storytelling became a closer way to interact with the story, making it comprehensible while the children are receiving natural language input and are part of the development of the story.

**Connection with the “English Language and Literacy” Class.** The English Language and Literacy class was the scenario for this research. This subject’s plan is composed of the following elements: four strands (Phonics – Spelling & Vocabulary, Speaking and Listening, reading, and writing), generative topics, four learning objectives, and a distribution of generative topics between four academic terms. The generative topics seek to integrate the strands and the learning objectives in order to provide a setting that contextualizes the students’ learning. Besides, I took into account what it means to be literate today using the Luke & Freebody’s Four Resource Model of Reading (1992): code breaker, meaning maker, text user, and text critic. These four elements constitute a gear assembly for the English Language and Literacy class by

complementing each other. The table below presents the strands and their corresponding learning objectives.

Table 2

*Strands, Learning Objectives and Generative Topics for the Fourth Academic Term.*

STRANDS	LEARNING OBJECTIVES	GENERATIVE TOPICS
<b><i>Phonics – Spelling &amp; Vocabulary</i></b>	Identifies and names the vocabulary related to the generative topics.	The House
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Begins to recognize to the initial sounds in familiar words.</li> </ul>	The City
<b><i>Speaking and Listening</i></b>	<p>Speaks using language patterns and vocabulary previously learned to describe objects, situations or express his/her ideas and identifies vocabulary by listening to riddles and descriptions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Speaks using language patterns to describe vocabulary items (at least 3 characteristics), relating new vocabulary to prior knowledge and showing progress in clarity of pronunciation.</li> <li>- Guesses vocabulary words by listening to riddles and descriptions.</li> <li>- Answers simple questions (WH?-Y/N?).</li> <li>- Understand and follow two-step verbal instructions</li> <li>- Sings songs and learn rhymes and poems.</li> </ul>	
<b><i>Reading</i></b>	<p>Completes all reading activities by recognizing story elements and successfully retelling stories using images.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recognizes story elements (beginning, middle and end)</li> <li>- Retells the story using visual aid.</li> <li>- Recognizes the characters of the</li> </ul>	

	story
<b>Writing</b>	Recognizes and writes her/his own name with appropriate posture and correct pencil grasp.

\* Source: *Pre-K Long Term Plan - English Language and Literacy Class Program. Preschool Curriculum (Bilingual Private School Medellin, 2015)*

The learning objective that awoke my interest in storytelling was “Completes all reading activities by recognizing story elements and successfully retelling stories”. However, it is part of the curriculum to integrate the four learning objectives. What’s more, the fourth and last academic term has two generative topics: “My House” and “The City”. In Table 3, the stories I used according to the topics proposed in the Pre-K program and their relationship with the generative topic can be found.

Table 3

*Stories Used to Work with Multimodal Storytelling and Critical Literacy.*

<b>Generative Topic</b>	<b>Story</b>	<b>Author / Adapted from</b>	<b>Description</b>
The House	The Three Little Pigs	Silly Symphony - <i>The Three Little Pigs</i>  “ <i>The Three Little Pigs</i> ” Anthology of Traditional Tales. Splash into Pre-K. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. 2012	Three little pigs built their own houses using different materials: straw, sticks and bricks. A bad wolf blows down the first two pig’s houses, but he could not destroy the third pig’s house made of bricks.
The House	It’s Too Noisy	Joanna Cole, 1989	A poor farmer lives in a little house with lots of family. He is tired of his noisy house, so he went to the Wise Man for advice.

			He brought all his animals inside the house and it was so loud, then the Wise Man asked him to remove all the animals. Now the house is less noisy but not quite at all.
The House	The Napping House	Audrey Wood, 1984	People in the napping house sleep on a bed and they gradually increase the pile: a snoring grandma, a dreaming child, a dozing dog, a snoozing cat, a slumbering mouse and a wakeful flea. The flea bites the mouse and it caused a chain of events: a broken pile and even a broken bed.
The City	The Gingerbread Man	Addison Wesley, 1989	An old woman was baking a gingerbread man who leaps from her oven and runs away. The woman, a farmer, and farm animals tried to catch him. The story ends with a crocodile catching and eating the gingerbread man.

I needed to guarantee that the multimodal storytelling class sessions allowed me to not only to teach reading skills, but also to integrate the other learning objectives for an enrichment class. As you can see, my purpose was not only to present stories in a fun way or to work on reading comprehension, but also to connect different teaching functions: vocabulary, language patterns, speaking, listening, fine motor skills, etc.

**Selecting Stories and Searching Resources for Multimodality Composing.** The first step for implementing multimodal storytelling in my classroom was to select the stories but the principle requirement was that the story must be relate to the generative topic. The second step was to see if the story itself could be presented with a multimodal approach that could be interesting for children and catch their attention but also one that they could comprehend. I clarify that multimodality can be used when presenting any story but my intent was that the modes really convey a meaning for four and five-years-old children. The third step was to plan the multimodal composing to tell the story; this included thinking about the modes that I could use and how to integrate them. Finally, I guided the students to look at the story from a critical literacy perspective and children initiated discussions and established social interventions.

In Table 4, I will describe the resources I used to transmit the story's message to the students; in other words, the semiotic resources that helped the students to easily comprehend each story in L2 when just beginning to acquire vocabulary. I included some pictures to illustrate the materials I used, in order to more clearly demonstrate them. (See figure 1, 2 and 3).

Table 4

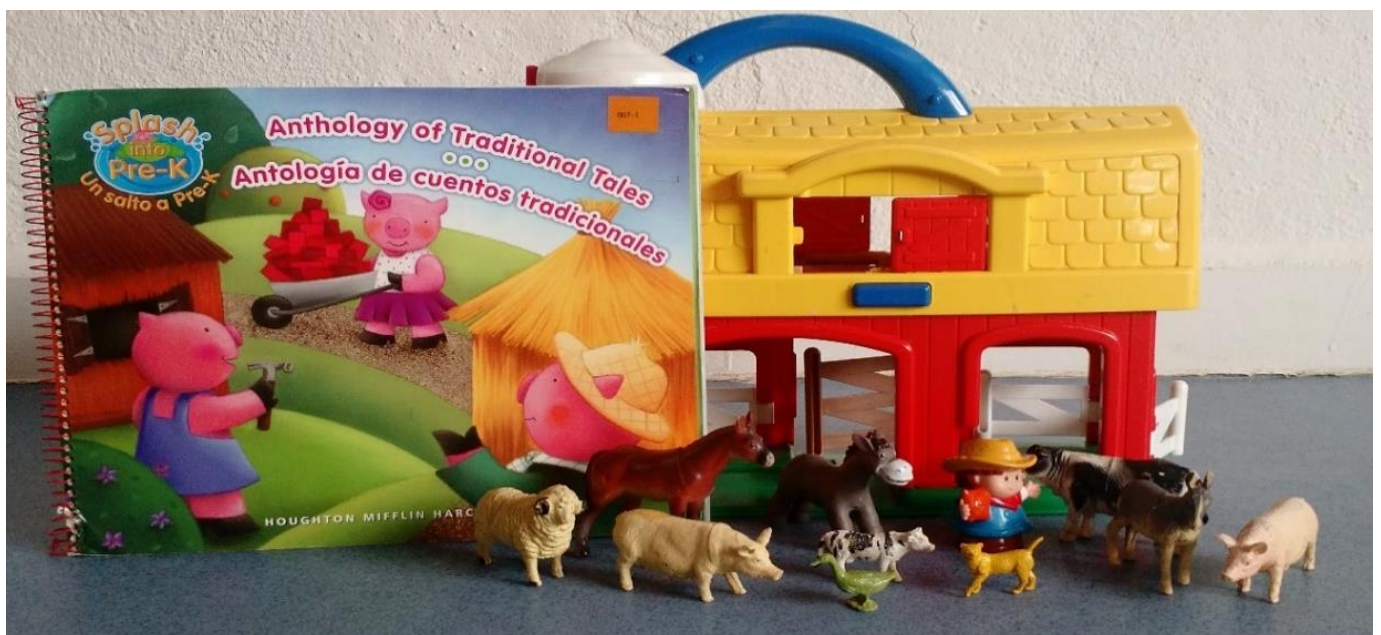
*Stories and Teacher's Resources for Multimodal Storytelling*

Story	Resources for Multimodal Composing
<b>The Three Little Pigs</b>	<p>Storytelling basket: The Three Little Pigs It contains three little pigs, a wolf and an old woman finger puppet, real straw, a piece of wood, a brick, a hairdryer to simulate the blow of the wolf, a pot, fire picture, chimney picture or construction with building blocks)</p> <p>Teacher's voice and gestures.</p>

<b>It's Too Noisy</b>	<p>Book "It's Too Noisy" by Joanna Cole.</p> <p>Musical instruments: trump, drum, tambourine, maracas, Chinese sticks, etc.</p> <p>A small farm, a farmer puppet, a wife finger puppet, a grandma finger puppet, a grandpa finger puppet, eight children pictures, toy animals, a hat of a farmer.</p> <p>Children and teacher voices and sounds: laughing, yelling, singing, snoring, and animal's sounds.</p> <p>Teacher's gestures.</p>
<b>The Napping House</b>	<p>Video - The Napping House. Retrieved from YouTube  <a href="http://watchknowlearn.org/Video.aspx?VideoID=46333&amp;CategoryID=3981">http://watchknowlearn.org/Video.aspx?VideoID=46333&amp;CategoryID=3981</a></p> <p>Different Ways to Say Sleeping - Power Point Presentation</p> <p>Students' pajamas and blankets.</p> <p>Characters props</p> <p>Story Stick</p> <p>Teacher's voice and gestures.</p>
<b>The Gingerbread Man</b>	<p>A big picture book.</p> <p>Ginger.</p> <p>A poster with the phrase: Run, run as fast as you can!  You can't catch me. I'm the Gingerbread Man!</p> <p>Teacher's voice and gestures.</p>

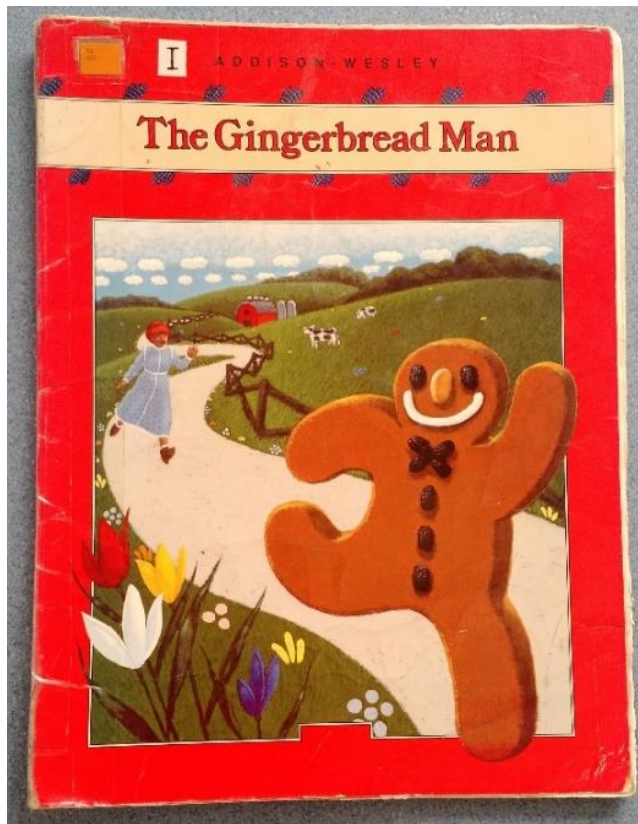


*Figure 1.* Storytelling Basket and Storytelling Stick. Material used to present target vocabulary related to the story: The Three Little Pigs (left). Material used to present the story: The Napping House (right).



*Figure 2.* It's Too noisy – Multimodal Storytelling Material





*Figure 3. Big Book: The Gingerbread Man – Multimodal Storytelling Material*

### **Data Collection**

With the purpose of collecting data to find information that helps me answer my research question and sub questions, I selected four main instruments: class audio records, class video records, children's artifacts, and teachers' journal.

**Class Audio Records.** I recorded the class discussions that took place during two different moments when the multimodal storytelling strategy was being used: a reading comprehension discussion and a critical literacy discussion. These recordings provide information about the children's ideas and thoughts while the comprehension of the stories and critical literacy perspective worked together. It provides meaningful information about the how critical literacy took place in the ESL Pre-k classroom and the role of the students and the

teacher while developing it. Also, this instrument provides information about the implication of using multimodal storytelling as a critical literacy moment.

**Class video records.** In order to keep a record of multimodal storytelling, I made class videos that present the evolution of a class when using multimodal storytelling with ESL Pre-K students. Those videos show me with my students, telling and retelling the stories used during this research. Also, in these videos, it is possible to identify the modes we used to establish class communication, class development, and children's participation and interaction. The importance of this instrument is based on the data about the implications of using multimodal storytelling and how children's literacy was.

**Children's artifacts.** My interest is to show how children's literacy production is done while living critical literacy. Through those artifacts, I can demonstrate how children started being the protagonists of social actions in the school setting. For this reason, artifacts became a fundamental instrument to show what students have done during this experience, specifically their multimodal literacy practice (Vasquez, 1998). The artifacts collected were drawings, a letter, a picture book, a chart, and a preschool campaign that children created as evidence of their literacy. Also, I included my first try at audit trail, which is considered a collection of artifacts on the bulletin board of my classroom (Vasquez, 2014) in order to show to the community what we have done during the fourth school term.

**Teacher's journal.** I used a digital journal to record all the possible descriptions, observations and reflections I had during the implementation of multimodal storytelling classes, as a narration of this strategy in my classroom. I took into account the recommendations addressed by Hatch (2002, p. 87) for writing my journal in order to be the most thorough possible. Furthermore, the journal registered my observations of the students' behaviors,

feelings, and attitudes during the multimodal storytelling sessions. The journal contains a narration of how the class was planned and developed, students' observations and the teacher's reflection, all of these coming from the three sessions that it took me to develop multimodal storytelling. The journal helps me to describe how the teacher creates spaces for critical literacy through multimodal storytelling and depict the children's literacy production while using critical literacy.

### **Data Analysis: Categories**

I used three main categories to interpret my data. All of them are linked to the sub-questions I proposed to answer my research question.

**Teacher's actions to open spaces for critical literacy.** In this category, I analyzed what I did to create an environment for discussion under the critical literacy perspective. Also, I included the lesson plan design, the search for items and permissions to establish critical literacy, and the way the teacher guided student discussions. This category was mainly used for the analysis of the teacher's journal and the audio recordings.

**Students and critical literacy.** In this category, I included the ideas the children presented during the discussions, the use of oral English and Spanish language to express their ideas, and the children's behaviors and actions presented while using critical literacy. This category sought to find the how students engaged in critical literacy.

**Students' multimodal composing.** This category is based on the new concept of literacy and how children nowadays can use different modes to convey meaning. I wanted to focus on the characteristics of the four and five-years-old multimodal compositions and the opportunities to use multimodality to create texts.

## **Data reduction**

I decided to use three ways to visualize the aforementioned categories. In all three of the instruments, I applied: Mapping, Charting, and Multimodal Audiovisual Analysis.

**Mapping.** I used mapping at two points of the research: while collecting data and while analyzing the data. Initially, I made a map that showed the stories, dates, possible artifacts and instruments to collect data. Later, I made a map where the stories appeared, an inventory of possible artifacts, and audio recordings (all of them named and filed systematically), and the clearly organized teacher's journal. In addition, I included how each category was analyzed or if some of them could be used in a specific instrument.

**Charting.** I made a chart that included the three categories and the stories I used to elaborate multimodal storytelling. Then, I divided the story section into three columns: audio recordings data, teacher's journal and artifacts. In this chart, I provided the information I considered relevant according to the categories. Using this chart, I had a panoramic view of the research.

**Multimodal Audiovisual Analysis.** To analyze a multimodal research setting, it is also necessary to use a methodology that allows the data to be read from a multimodal viewpoint. As a result, the Multimodal Audiovisual Analysis (Mora, Giraldo, López-Ladino, Pulgarín, Rodríguez & Castaño, 2016; Rodríguez Martínez, 2017) takes prominence to analyze my audio recordings. Children use more than their voice to express themselves; they express meaning using their gestures, postures, and facial expressions. Meaning can also be expressed in the pauses they take while talking and when they consciously or unconsciously pronounce specific words or phrases with emphasis.

In the case of the ESL participants in my study, meaning was also expressed when they decided to use English or when they resorted to using their mother tongue, at times even using objects to transmit a message when their words did not suffice. All of those elements require an interpretation as part of their literacy. Taking this into consideration, the traditional method for analyzing audio does not provide a rich narrative of the data. The multimodal audiovisual analysis methodology seeks to read the voices (Mora, Giraldo, López-Ladino, Pulgarín, Rodríguez & Castaño, 2016) from a multimodal and aesthetic dimension.

I implemented the multimodal audiovisual analysis in my research following a 3-step process. First, I listened to the audio recording to become familiar with the children's voices and the topic of discussion. Second, I took notes and transcribed relevant quotes about issues related to my research categories. Meanwhile, in the third step, I used a more multimodal and aesthetic view to read the voices in order to include more detailed elements that enriched the narratives from the previous step.

### **Trustworthiness**

This qualitative research was carried out with professionalism, and with a firm commitment to respect my students. In terms of methodological design, the data collection and its analysis took into account the age of the children to establish the validity and reliability of this study. Therefore, the parents received the students' literacy production at the end of the term. Also, the preschool director and sub director were informed and have constant contact with the lesson plans and students' literacy production as a social action.

The students' literacy production was exhibited on three bulletin boards: one inside the classroom, one outside of the classroom, and the other one was the preschool's general bulletin

board. Teachers, students, parents and other members of the school community had access to the artifacts displayed on the bulletin boards. This gave credibility to the work completed in my classroom because the artifacts were not manipulated; they were authentic children's work.

The discussion scenes were part of the confident and relaxed atmosphere of the classroom. The children felt comfortable sharing their ideas and thoughts, not only about stories, but also about classroom issues. Due to this, their answers were not manipulated; the audio recordings showed natural discussions from four to five-year-old children. Further, I used triangulation as a methodological strategy in the three data collection instruments to support my analysis.

### **Ethical Considerations**

I made a personal commitment to follow the seven rules established by Mills, Durepos & Wiebe (2010) "[...] 1. Do not harm participants. 2. Maintain their privacy. 3. Bring them available benefit. 4. Inform them about the research. 5. Involve them only voluntarily. 6. Ensure research of good quality. 7. Be honest with data reporting" (p.337). All these rules were the road map to conduct my research in a respectful and responsible manner. I protected the children's identity using pseudonyms and I regularly informed their parents about the classwork that were being elaborated during class.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Multimodal Storytelling and Critical Literacy Scene in a Pre-K classroom**

In this chapter, I will present the patterns I noticed after analyzing data including class discussions, audio recordings, children's artifacts and the teacher's journal. The study took place in a bilingual Pre-K classroom, while using critical literacy in a multimodal storytelling scene. This study seeks to answer the following research question: what possibilities of engagement with critical literacy arise when implementing multimodal storytelling in an ESL Pre-K classroom? To answer this research question, I used two sub-questions to categorize major themes.

Sub-question 1 asked how I created spaces for critical literacy through multimodal storytelling. The category used to analyze the data in order to answer this question was the teacher's actions to open spaces for critical literacy. Sub-question 2 inquired about children's literacy production when using critical literacy. To answer this sub-question, I used two categories: (a) students and critical literacy and (b) students' multimodal composing.

To answer the sub-questions and to narrate the findings of this research, I will use pseudonyms to refer to the students that participated in this study (Table 5). Students were asked to choose their own pseudonyms as part of the research methodology. I included verbatim quotes and pictures of students' artifacts to illustrate critical literacy and multimodal composing moments. The verbatim quotes were analyzed in Spanish and English, due to the fact that the children switched constantly between the languages during class discussions. To generate comprehension of this research and the verbatim quotes cited, I translated them into English. This action was done in order to eliminate confusion and foster understanding.

*Table 5*

*Preschool Students Participants*

<b>Girls</b>	<b>Boys</b>
<b>Emiliana</b>	Juan
<b>Violeta</b>	Salomon
<b>Julieta</b>	Juan Esteban

**Teacher's Actions to Open Spaces for Critical Literacy**

Multimodal storytelling was the strategy I used to integrate the four learning objectives of the English Language and Literacy class; those learning objectives are closely related to the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Later, I implemented critical literacy practices as an opportunity to teach outside of the traditional understanding of literacy. Here, I will present the process carried out to create spaces for critical literacy through multimodal storytelling, the teacher's journal and the audio and video recordings will support the following findings.

**Establishing a connection between critical literacy and the Pre-K program.** It was necessary to link critical literacy with the learning objectives of the Pre-K program to guarantee a pertinent connection to the curriculum and to show that critical literacy was not a fad educational style or a trend, but a tool that allows children to go beyond the just comprehending the texts. In my teacher's journal, I explained how critical literacy initially started as an excuse to help my students read, speak and write in the second language.



I believe that with the use of critical literacy, my students can be in contact with discussions and written activities. The written activities developed through critical literacy would help me to work on the learning objective: “Increases fine motor skills by completing different activities with appropriate posture and correct pencil grasp.” Also, the discussions constituted an opportunity to allow the children to use English language to express themselves. I see critical literacy as a way to enrich my English language and literacy class and as a way to teach my children another way to see the world. (Teacher’s Journal, April 1<sup>st</sup>/2016)

When the critical literacy discussion appeared, the children were working on the learning objective: “Speaks using language patterns and vocabulary previously learned to describe objects, situations or express his/her ideas and identifies vocabulary by listening to riddles and descriptions.” At this point, they were able to use the learned vocabulary and were able to express their ideas using simple sentences. Those simple sentences were supported by the use of language patterns, thus critical literacy discussions were a pretext to use the oral language in context. During the discussion of *The Three Little Pigs*, children describe houses using language patterns and vocabulary learned in class: “This is a...” and “The ... is ...”, because, strong, bricks, big, straw, garage, kitchen, bathroom, and small.

Juan: This is a big house. These are bricks. The house is strong. This is a straw house is... no good... is for poor people.

Teacher: why do you think is for poor people?

Juan: Because it is small and it has not a garage, a kitchen, a bathroom.

Teacher: I cannot see what is inside of the house, maybe the garage, the kitchen and the bathroom are inside.

Juan: no because is small!

(Audio record, March 31<sup>st</sup> /2016)

In the story It's too Noisy, Salomon describe the house using the language patterns "The house has" and "This is a..." also, he uses words previously studied during the school year (grandma, grandpa, mom, father, dog, cat, brother and sister): "The house is medium. The house has many people and animals. This is a grandma. This is grandpa. This is the mom. This is the father. This is a dog. This is the brother and sister. This is a cat." (Video Record, April 8<sup>th</sup>/2016).

Furthermore, the literacy interventions done by children were an opportunity to work on fine motor skills. This issue was linked to the learning objective: "Increases fine motor skills by completing different activities with appropriate posture and correct pencil grasp". At this time, the children were writing and strengthening their fine motor skills through the use of pencils, crayons, and markers as well; also, they were working on their posture and the correct pencil grasp. I registered in my Teacher's journal how children's actions when working critical literacy become an opportunity to increase fine motor skills.

It is amazing to see the interest of children to write texts in response to critical literacy discussions. I elicit them to use markers, crayons, pencil, and color pencils to stimulate the development of fine motor skills. It is not necessary to several writing exercises but to work on something that really catch students' attention. While children are working on their texts, I visit their tables to support their pencil' grasp and posture in a more natural way. (Teacher's Journal, June 2<sup>nd</sup>/2016)

**Designing strategic lesson plans.** One important element to open spaces for critical literacy in my class was the design of strategic lesson plans. I planned my lessons including five key components: (a) multimodal storytelling, (b) reading comprehension discussion, (c) retelling

of the story, (d) critical literacy discussion, and (e) social action or literacy intervention (See Appendix B Lesson Plan Sample). Those steps in the lesson plan helped me to direct the path through critical literacy in coherence with the preschool program. I carried out those five components during three class sessions, as shown in the journal entry below:

The structure of the lesson plans was the same in all the three previous stories and it took three class sessions. First, I began with the presentation of the story using multimodal storytelling. Then, I asked reading comprehension questions. After that, it was time for the critical literacy session but prior to this, the students or I retold the story as a warm up activity. In this session, I asked questions about particular situations or aspects of the story. Those were related to injustice, inequality, etc. Finally, we finished the critical literacy session with an intervention plan and during the third session, the children executed the plan. (Teacher's Journal, April 14<sup>th</sup>/2016)

I will describe the three sessions of class and the activity distribution, involving the five key components mentioned previously. In session 1, I started implementing multimodal storytelling in the classroom setting using the circle time strategy. Through this, the children had the possibility to face each other and I could guide them through a more effective and enjoyable learning experience while activating their attention, socialization and listening skills. My ESL Pre-K students were very much familiarized with this group strategy. During circle time, I carried out a warm up activity to activate students' previous knowledge about the theme of the story. I provide an example below of a warm up activity when telling the story *It's Too Noisy*:

Teacher: Here I have different musical instruments. Everybody will take one.

Students: Each child took a musical instrument from a box.

Students: [children played instruments]

Teacher: Please stop, sit properly and be quiet.

Students: [stay quiet]

Teacher: Now, let's play the musical instruments at the same time.

Students: [All play their musical instruments]

After two minutes...

Salomon: [he stopped playing his drum and he covered his ears]

Teacher: [I observed Salomon putting his head down while covering his ears. I had eye contact with Salomon and it appeared that he wanted to cry]

Teacher: Beginners A, it is too noisy! Please stop!

(Video Record, April 8<sup>th</sup>/2016)

With this warm up activity, I introduced the word “noisy”. The children understood the meaning of the word by experiencing it. With this, I introduced the title of the story and I aided my students to link the title of the story with what happens in it. Additionally, I recreated a real life situation to use the expression “It is too noisy” in a context as a way to teach children the use of language in daily situations:

Teacher: Salomon, what happened to you?

Salomón: Es que si todos lo hacen a la misma vez entonces hacen mucho ruido.

Teacher: ah! [Gestures agreeing with Salomon's ideas]

Juan Esteban: ¡y también nos puede doler la cabeza!

Teacher: Exactly! So it's too noisy! [Includes gestures of dislike]

(Video Record, April 8<sup>th</sup>/2016)

Then, I briefly presented the story: the title, the author, and I asked the students to provide some predictions about the story while observing the cover page or the beginning of the

video (the stories were in different formats). Later, I presented the material or items I used to tell the story to them as a way to introduce vocabulary (See figures 1 and 2). Session 1 allowed me to introduce vocabulary through modes or through the story book or video. This action was linked to one of the English Language and Literacy class's learning objective: Identifies the vocabulary related to the generative topics. I provide an example below:

Teacher: Ok Beginners, for telling you The Three Little pigs story, I brought a storytelling basket. Look what I have here! A wolf and an old woman finger puppet, straw, a piece of wood, a brick, a hairdryer to simulate the blow of the wolf, a pot, fire picture, chimney picture, and course, the three little pigs! [Raise the items up while naming them] (Video record, March 30<sup>th</sup>/2016)

Then, I started telling the story using the semiotic resources: audio representation, visual representation, written language, tactile representation, oral language, gestures, and spatial representation. While telling the story, I encouraged the students to negotiate meaning making and I allowed them to be the storytellers. For example, in The Napping House story, children participate in the following way:

Teacher: And on that granny there is a child [paste the child on the story stick] a dreaming child on... [Point to the following character]

Children: a granny

Teacher: a snoring granny

Children: a snoring granny

Teacher: on... [Pointing to the story stick]

Children: on a cozy bed in a napping house where everyone is sleeping.

(Audio record, April 25<sup>th</sup>/2016)

Finally, it was the time for the reading comprehension questions. At this stage of the class, I created an atmosphere for a discussion focused on the common reading comprehension questions for a story: Who are the characters? What is the setting? What problem do the characters face in the story? What happens in the beginning, middle and end? I used these same questions for all reading comprehension sessions. (Teacher's Journal, April 14<sup>th</sup>/2016) I complemented them with more specific questions about certain scenes of the story.

In session 2, the class began with a story retell activity. I or the students, using the previous resources to tell the story, would do this. I preferred to retell the story first and then let the students do it, in order to model the activity and to reinforce vocabulary, the parts of the story and also to show how to use some of the resources. After I retold the story, the students took turns to doing it on their own. After a couple of stories, the children were familiar with the use of items used to tell stories and were able to do it spontaneously. At this point, it was no longer necessary for me to retell the story to them; instead, my role was to support the children's oral production. (Teacher's Journal, May 26<sup>th</sup>/2016)

It was my aim as a teacher to get my students to comprehend the story before starting the critical discussion session. For this reason, the three previous planning components are quite important: multimodal storytelling, reading comprehension discussion, and retelling of the story. Next, when the students clearly understand not just the global comprehension of the story but also some particular situations in the story and they become acquainted with the vocabulary, it is time for the critical literacy discussion.

I initiated the critical literacy discussion by giving the students special glasses (See figure 4). They are colorful glasses I designed to encourage the children to see the story in a different

way; the students were familiarized with this instrument and this idea. Emiliana explained the reason why we used special glasses: “to look different... to look at the story in a different way” (Audio Record, April 25<sup>th</sup>/2016).



Figure 4. Special glasses for critical literacy discussion.

When the students wore the glasses, they knew they could talk about the story, connecting it to their live, and to find inequalities or injustices. They constituted a classroom code to elicit the critical literacy discussion; in this way, the children understand that I would ask questions that disrupt the common place, interrogate multiple viewpoints, and focus on sociopolitical issues. The idea of the special glasses surfaced when I began to introduce critical literacy in my teaching practice; it is registered in my journal with the following description:

*Special Glasses* – Initially, I wanted to call them critical literacy glasses but I reconsidered this because I felt it was better to call them something more spontaneously and to not to introduce the term “critical literacy” to children. I didn’t want to make it

sound like something weird or complicated for them. I just wanted to introduce a sign, a classroom code to reflect on the story. (Teacher's Journal, March 30<sup>th</sup> /2016).

During the critical literacy discussion, the students and I exchanged ideas about what the stories wanted to tell us. The students were free to express their thoughts and ideas about the stories. I asked key questions that oriented students to think in a different way (Table 6).

Table 6

*Questions used to engage with critical literacy*

<b>The Three Little Pigs</b>	<b>It's Too Noisy</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does this story want to tell?</li> <li>• How does the house of a pig and a wolf look? Where do they live?</li> <li>• Do the houses that appear in the story can be real? Why? How can we find out?</li> <li>• Why The Three Little Pigs have different kind of houses?</li> <li>• How are the houses for real people?</li> <li>• What are the characteristics of real people houses?</li> <li>• What can we do to change the story?</li> <li>• How would you like to tell people that there are different kinds of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does this story want to tell?</li> <li>• Who is telling the story?</li> <li>• What is unfair in this story?</li> <li>• How does the farmer feel? Why?</li> <li>• What does it mean to be happy in this story?</li> <li>• What does it mean to be happy to you?</li> <li>• What do you need for being happy?</li> <li>• What things are not necessary for being happy?</li> <li>• How would you like to present the reasons why you are happy at home?</li> </ul>



houses?	
<p><b>The Napping House</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does this story want to tell?</li> <li>• Who say that all characters have to sleep together?</li> <li>• Who is sleeping more comfortable in this house?</li> <li>• Does somebody else have their own bed?</li> <li>• Who is ignored in this story?</li> <li>• What can we do to change the story?</li> </ul>	<p><b>The Gingerbread Man</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does this story want to tell?</li> <li>• Why did The Gingerbread Man run away?</li> <li>• Why did The Gingerbread Man feel scared?</li> <li>• Whose reality is presented in this story?</li> <li>• What do you want to do change the reality of The Gingerbread Man?</li> </ul>

\*I extracted the questions from the lesson plans and audio records.

Critical literacy discussions have arisen as a way to problematize the stories because it is known that they are not neutral. During this time, the students agreed on what they wanted to do to reconstruct and transform the text, in this case the story or a story issue. At this level, the children were starting to explore the use of different perspectives so I needed to support them by exploring alternative literacy practices (writing letters, making posters, writing books, etc.) for preschoolers.

In session 2, I used the retelling of the story and the critical discussion moments as an opportunity to help my children to develop their oral skills. “During the discussions, I constantly encouraged my students to use English to express their ideas” (Teacher’s Journal, April 11<sup>th</sup>). It was common for me to support children oral expression during these sessions. Those activities

allowed me to integrate the learning objective: Speaks using language patterns and vocabulary previously learned to describe objects, situations or express his/her ideas and identifies vocabulary by listening to riddles and descriptions.

In my lesson plans, session 3 was not planned well in advance, but it required me to act fast because I had to organize everything for the children in terms of materials, permissions, emails, and everything else they needed to implement their plan. (Teacher's Journal, June 2<sup>nd</sup>)

In session 3, students executed the literacy intervention plan. Previously, I had to organize or handle materials, permission slips and requirements for the children to work on their plan. Due to this, I became a facilitator and the children became active literacy producers. In the children's literacy practices session, I will present the actions they carried out.

**Being a facilitator, a mediator, and a guide.** In this research, I identified some important aspects of the role I assumed when using critical literacy in a Pre-K classroom. I detected three notorious roles when analyzing the teacher's journal. Mainly, I assumed the roles of *mediator*, *facilitator* and *guide*.

I was a *mediator* with different figures of authority: preschool coordinator, school principal and parents. I asked for permission when children's actions required so. Also, as a mediator, I justified the integration of critical literacy in the Pre-K program. Regarding the parents, I explained what exactly critical literacy is before starting the study. I wrote emails telling them what story we had read and how the children had connected it to reality. This was one of the e-mails I wrote and I registered in my Teacher's Journal, March 30<sup>th</sup>/2016 (See Figure 5)

Dear parents,

We are working on the story “The Three Little Pigs” and today children had a discussion about the different types of houses: kids believe that houses are only built using bricks; houses are just buildings, and the common houses they see in the city. Only two students were opposite to these ideas.

Homework: research about different types of houses around the world and bring a picture to present it to class. Research is to talk to children, show them books, watch a video, use internet, a dictionary, an encyclopedia, etc. Tomorrow we will continue with the discussion.

Miss Monica

*Figure 5.* Email sent to parents to involve them in critical literacy practices.

Next day, children brought pictures and told me they used books, used internet or talk to family members. The discussion continues:

Teacher: So Beginners, now the idea is that you tell me how was the research you did yesterday with your parents.

Violeta: I saw different house in a magazine... with my dad.

Juan: I brought pictures. This is a house made of wood. This house is in the forest... do I have to name all the houses Miss Monica?

Teacher: show us the most interesting for you

(Audio record, March 31<sup>st</sup>/2016)

It was my intention to take discussions at home to involve parents in critical literacy. By this way, children can expand their perspectives. Besides, it was a responsible way to guide their thoughts or ideas because it was important for me to make the children understand the importance of investigating, to comparing, and looking deeper. When working on The Napping House story, I see the opportunity to request children to investigate about ways to take care of pets because some of them agree and others disagree about sleeping with the pets on our own bed. I wrote an email to parents and the next day, children shared their findings to enrich the discussion.

Teacher: what did you research about the way animals should sleep?

Emiliana: Some pets can sleep with us but some other not...like mouse [hamster]

Teacher: what could happen with the mouse?

Emiliana: die

Teacher: ok, what about you Salomon?

Salomon: the vet told that is better that my dog sleeps in its bed.

Violeta: my mom doesn't allow me to sleep with my cat because I can squash it.

Juan Esteban: my mom showed in internet that there are beds for animals and there are beds for people, not together!

Juan: it is unfair for animals to sleep in the same bed because they need space! And not the floor!

(Audio records, April 25<sup>th</sup>/2016)

I assumed a role of *facilitator* when I looked for strategies that facilitated children's learning. These strategies were basically based on creating spaces for class discussion to encourage them to research, to empower them to write, and to allow the children to get in contact

with written materials and other various forms of texts. For all this, it was necessary to design a forward-looking lesson plan. This kind of lesson plan assured that I guided my students towards learning. “To work on critical literacy, it is necessary to go beyond a traditional lesson plan. This requires anticipate possible topics the children could find in a story and the resources or actions to help them to get data” (Teacher’s Journal, May 31<sup>st</sup>/2016). This means I needed to anticipate my students’ findings and new learnings according to the topics they were exploring during the critical literacy moments.

The implementation of those class strategies facilitated the children’s interaction with classmates, parents, and other sources of data (books, magazines, internet, etc.) so they could exchange experiences that helped them to make sense of what they were learning. In this way, the children were not simple receptacles but active learners. As an educator, one of my aims is to help the children be more autonomous, of course, in accordance with their age. Due to this, I elicited the children to be active participants when exploring the world around them.

Also, I was a facilitator since the beginning of this journey when children started getting familiar with the questions to work critical literacy. Children needed to get familiar with the questions I used to work with the stories (Table 6). I helped my students to deal with this situation by introducing the words and phrases such as justice, unfair, injustice, who’s ignored, what voices are silent, and others, in daily situations.

I see my students are confused with questions such as: What is this text trying to tell me? Whose voices are silent/dominant? Whose reality is presented/ignored? I noticed my students looked at each other and their faces seemed express confusion. I saw this first issue as the most difficult situation to work critical literacy. Nevertheless, I did not stop! I immediately though “I need to do something to simply these questions”. I introduced key

words and sentences in daily situations, for example: during recess was *unfair* that Emiliana used the slide when it was Violeta's turn. (Teacher's Journal, April 14<sup>th</sup>/2016)

It is completely relevant for a successful use of critical literacy in the classroom, to help children understand even the questions about the story. The teacher as a facilitator needs to guarantee comprehension of the questions, I used questions that allowed children to start finding the connection of text with reality, later, I involved deeper questions.

I also became a *guide*. At the beginning, it was difficult for children to find a way to change something in a story. They did not have enough ideas about writing (I explain this later). I gave them examples of things they could do to change something in a story but in a general way. For example, when they were discussing about the different types of houses, they agreed that some people at school would not know this information and they wanted to enlighten them on the topic.

Teacher: Beginners do you think everybody knows that there are different types of houses?

Children: [some says] Yes!! [some says] No!!!

Teacher: but yesterday you said that houses were only made of bricks... so you didn't know that there are more kinds of houses.

Juan Esteban: some children don't know... they are very young

Juan: it's true! Maybe some children don't know

Emiliana: we have to enlighten them!

Teacher: and what is "enlighten them"?

Emiliana: tell them

Teacher: and how can we tell them?

Juan Esteban: Internet!

Teacher: and do you know to send e-mails?

Children: [they have a discussion and talk to the same time]

Teacher: Beginners I have an idea, maybe you could write, you could draw, draw the houses, write a letter, or we can make a book with houses... What do you want to tell people about the different types of houses?

(Audio record, March 31<sup>st</sup>/2016).

I gave them some ideas, and when I realized the discussion was blocked, I tried to help them. I want to clarify that I gave the children some samples of literacy production but I did not tell them how they should think or to act in the world.

Later, after we worked with more stories, my role as a guide was reduced. During this third story, the children were more familiarized with the actions they could take to change an aspect of the story. I felt my accompaniment was reduced. (Teacher's Journal, April 25<sup>th</sup>/2016). I can affirm that the children were becoming more autonomous and they were more involved in the dynamic of critical literacy.

### **Multimodal storytelling and composing as critical literacy engagement.**

I found four elements that characterized the interactions of the participants with critical literacy: Children produced multimodal composing as critical literacy actions, children established a relation between the stories and the real world, children started believing they can write, and children used English as a second language to carry out social actions.

*Children established a relation between the stories and the real world issues.* During the critical literacy discussion session, children demonstrated that they could connect some aspects

of the stories with real life. The first questions I used to work critical literacy were complex for them. I simplified them for better children's understanding. This initial step made me to recognize that children needed to create a connection between stories and real world issues to later problematize the text.

Children express their ideas and thoughts in a natural way and the class discussion constituted a brainstorming of ideas. They gave examples of situations they had seen, heard or lived. For example, in the story *The Three Little Pigs*, children explored the types of houses because in the initial discussion they agreed there were only houses made of bricks or wood. After searching with their parents, they brought new ideas to the classroom. They realized that the three houses presented in the story are real and also, they discovered that strong houses are not just made of bricks. Violeta pointed: "my mom showed me, when we were in the car that there are houses made of plastic" (Audio records, March 31<sup>st</sup>).

We can also see the connection students established with the real world and stories through critical literacy discussions in the story *It's Too Noisy*. I asked students to look at the facial expressions of the characters, Emiliana, Salomon, Juan and Esteban noticed they were smiling and laughing, and children agreed that the characters were happy (Teacher's Journal, April 11<sup>th</sup>). Then, I asked students to describe the houses the characters lived in. Juan Esteban described the house of the characters of the story as: "This is a poor house. The house is ugly and small" (Teacher's journal, April 11<sup>th</sup>). He linked the characteristics of the house in the story with the conditions of poor houses conditions. I replied that the house was not ugly, maybe small but not ugly. Juan Esteban stayed quite. I invite them to discuss about the reasons why people in the illustrations were happy if they lived in poor conditions.



In the story *The Napping House*, when the critical discussion started, Salomon pointed: “there are many people sleeping in one bed... in one bed (gestures to show he was surprised)... each should sleep in their own bed” (Audio records, April 25<sup>th</sup>). Children directed the discussion about taking care of pets and the reasons why humans and animals must not sleep in the same bed. Besides, Juan linked the discussion with reality by saying: “maybe they are poor” (Audio records, April 25<sup>th</sup>), in this way he tried to justify the reason why people and animals are sleeping in the same bed.

Also, in the story *The Gingerbread Man*, children linked some aspects of the story with real life. During discussion time, children expressed ideas like the ones below:

Salomon: the author wanted to tell us that a child ran away!

Juan Esteban: but cookies cannot run! Cookies do not have life!

Salomon: cookies do not have feet nor hands!

Emiliana: the crocodile ate the gingerbread man because he ran away and he disobeyed his parents. When a child runs away from home someone can steal him.

Juan: but they were not their parents, they were not cookies either.

Salomon: he needs a family to be happy at home.

(Audio records, June 1<sup>st</sup>)

Analyzing the relation between stories and the real world, I found that students did not create discussions about themes of racism, gender, and other topics they were not familiar with. But they explored topics as: cultural diversity, poverty, taking care of animals, and family diversity (Table 7). The discussions were done according to children’s context and their age, they did not focus on controversial topics.

Table 7

*Topics Raised During Critical Literacy Discussions.*

<i>Story</i>	<i>Discussion Topic</i>
<b>The Three Little Pigs</b>	Types of houses – Cultural Diversity.
<b>It's Too Noisy</b>	Reasons to be happy at home – Differences in social economic conditions.
<b>The Napping House</b>	Taking care of animals
<b>The Gingerbread Man</b>	Kinds of families – Cultural Diversity.

Another characteristic of the critical literacy discussions with Pre-K children was that each time a new story was worked in class, children seemed to be more familiarized to establish a connection between the story and reality. In my journal I wrote

I feel kids are getting a more fluid critical literacy discussion, in this third story. I see that little by little, children have established the connection between situations in a story and real life situations; it is a classroom routine now, the fact of reading a story, then see it from a critical literacy perspective and finally, do an intervention as a group (in this case, Beginners A social intervention) (Teacher's journal, April 26<sup>th</sup>).

It was necessary to redirect children's discussion in the initial critical literacy discussions because some students made class interventions that were not related to the story or to the topic discussed. This situation happened when children did not understand the questions asked during

the critical discussion. In the first discussion registered in this research, students were talking about the types of houses and some of them, as Julieta and Juan Esteban, participated in the discussion saying differences about the types of houses related to phantasy and imagination. I needed to ask questions in their mother tongue for students' understanding. Besides, I helped them to describe the houses using the vocabulary that had been worked during the term (Teacher's journal, March 31<sup>st</sup>).

*Children used the second language to carry out social actions.* Critical literacy elicited children to use the language as a tool to raise their voice. ESL Pre-K participants gave their first steps to claim for social justice and equality when reflecting about cultural diversity, socioeconomic differences, taking care of pets, and family diversity. They saw their writing production as a way to enlighten other school community members about situations that affect everybody. As Juan Esteban stated, "it is import to tell other students because they are little ones and they do not know". Violeta pointed: "maybe other students do not know". Emiliana considered important: "to tell others". (Audio Record, April 1<sup>st</sup>)

During this experience, they used L2 in a natural way; they realized they could use it as part of themselves. Children understood that they were working in English so their work would be in this language too. It was a natural participation in the second language.

Violeta: The gat sleep on the dog... on the bed.

Emiliana: the cat

Violeta: the cat sleep on the dog.

Teacher: very good Violeta, the cat sleeps on the dog.

Juan: people need to take care of cats and dogs.

(Audio record, April 25th/2016)

Besides, children created texts and also describe them to the teacher using L2. I helped them to complete the description in L2 when they used L1.

Teacher: so Juan, can you tell me please what is this?

Juan: This is the house for the gingerbread man. This is the living room. This is the kitchen. This is bedroom. This is the father and this is the mother. These are the toys for the gingerbread man.

Teacher: so how does he feel now?

Juan: He feels happy! He has a family.

It was satisfactory to see students using English to work in activities that transcend to class. The children were motivated to use language in a more natural way that just to repeating isolated words or phrases.

*Children produced multimodal composing as critical literacy actions.* Critical literacy actions became a literacy intervention in the Pre-K classroom. Children’s writing production was the way to tell others about what they had discovered when they were working on critical literacy and multimodal storytelling (Table 8).

*Table 8*

*Stories and Critical Literacy Actions.*

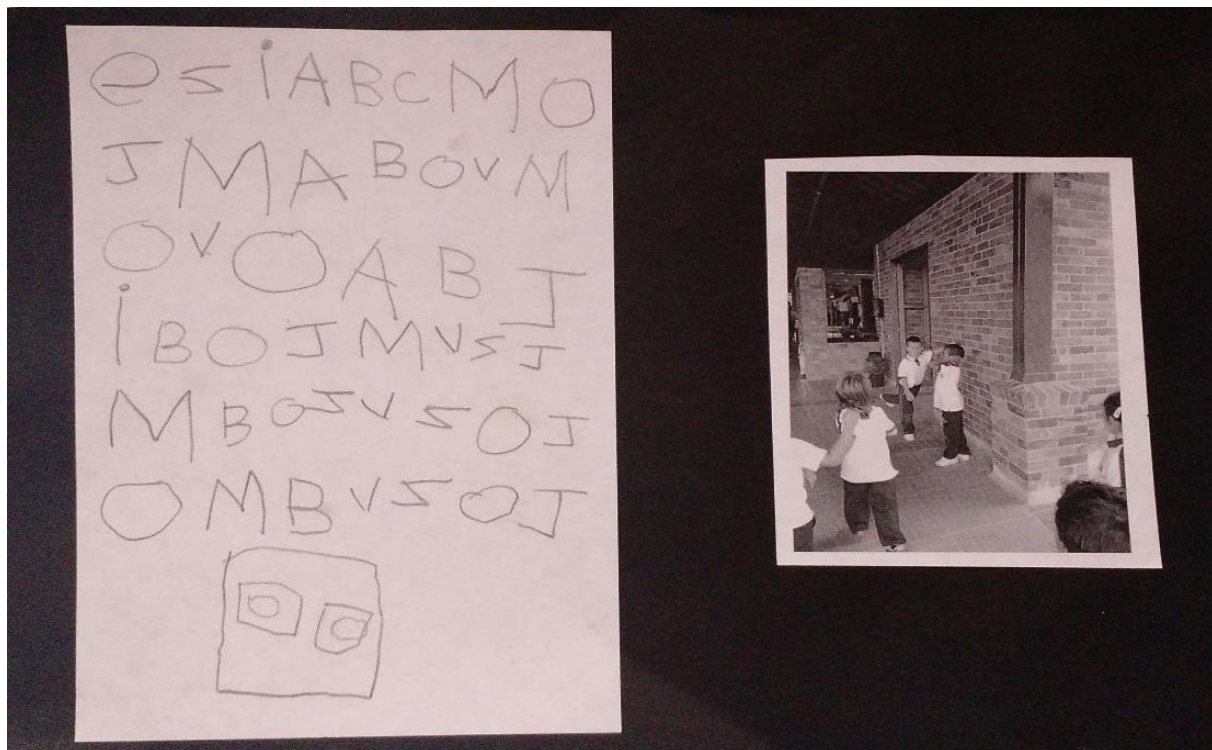
<b>Story</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Critical Literacy Action</b>
<b>The Three Little Pigs</b>	Types of houses – Cultural Diversity.	Wrote a letter to the principal to ask for permission to make an exhibition.  Exhibition of “Different Types of Houses”.
<b>It’s Too Noisy</b>	Reasons to be happy at home – Differences in social economic conditions.	Poster “Things That Are Necessary For Being Happy Vs Things That Are Not

		Necessary To Be Happy”.
		Book “I am happy at home because...”
<b>The Napping House</b>	Taking care of animals	Created a new version of the book protecting animals by giving a bed to each of them.
<b>The Gingerbread Man</b>	Kinds of families – Cultural Diversity.	Created a family for the gingerbread man.  Built a house for the gingerbread man.

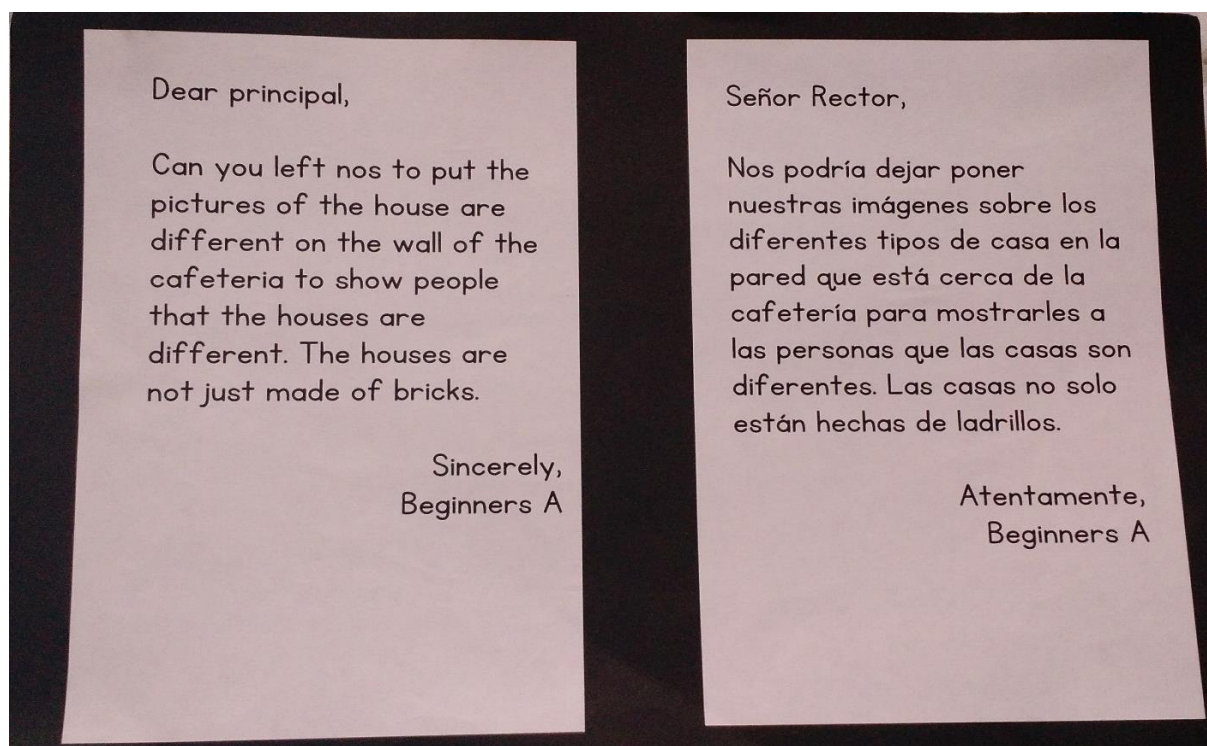
The actions that my students carried out have texts characteristics, specifically multimodal texts. Children showed school community that they could use the language to express their ideas and to act in the real world. They showed others that they could write, they could read and they could use English to communicate with others. They gave value to the language when working on critical literacy by using the English language as a tool for expressing themselves. The most relevant multimodal composing as critical literacy actions were: the letter they wrote to the principal asking for permission to do a types of houses exhibition, the book they wrote “I am happy at home because” in which they expressed that love is above material things; and the new version of the book *The Napping House*, where they claimed for justice about the way of taking care of pets. Next, I will provide more details about those multimodal composing.

The children wanted to have a type of houses exhibition in a crowded place in the school: the terrace. They did not want to present their exhibition in the preschool building because they wanted that many people can get the information they wanted to share. I explain them that for

doing it, they need to ask permission to the principal. I gave them two options: to speak with the principal or to write to the principal. They agreed the second idea. The children decided to ask Emiliana to write the letter to the principal. They agreed because she knows how to write faster. They told her what to write as a cooperative activity. They decided to ask permission to the principal because they recognized him as the main authority in the school. The composing included letters, the drawing of a wall with the possible artworks distribution, and a picture of the place they would like to use for their exhibition (See figure 6). Besides I helped them to decode the letter and translate it to Spanish for the principal (See figure 7). Also, I included a formal letter to the principal to present children's work (See Appendix C). Writing the letter was a component of the critical literacy action children carried out after reading *The Three Little Pigs* story.



*Figure 6.* Beginners A's letter to the principal.



*Figure 7. Teacher decodification of the letter in English and Spanish Version.*

When working on the story “It is too noisy”, children discussed about class and socio-economic conditions: poor and rich people. In this discussion, they talked about the real reasons to be happy that is not only about material goods, and they started raising awareness of the responsibilities they have being a fortunate class, for example, being thankful. Their critical social action was the creation of a book, as compilation of their reasons to be happy at home. In this book, children expressed that love is the feeling that make us happy and it is above all material things. We used a house template to create the pages of the book and children decorated the cover page.

In the story The Napping House, students identified inequality in the way people and animals sleep together. As a social action, they created a new version of this story by illustrating the book in a different way and giving to each character their own bed (See figure 8).



*Figure 8.* Cover page of the new version of “The Napping House” story (left). Giving a bed to each animal as a way to take care of them page 3 (right).

I elicited children to understand that they can change something negative into positive when they write or speak. Constantly, I told my students they have much power than they could imagine because they can speak, listen, read and write. Children started realizing that language has the power to transform negative issues into positive, and they started believing that the language is a tool they can use to raise their voices. “Every time my students prepared a multimodal text they feel proud. When other students were looking at my students’ text, I saw them smiling and telling others, they have made it” (Teacher’s Journal, April 25<sup>th</sup>/2016).

These multimodal texts are evidence of the development of active citizens and, critical literacy actions are evidence of multimodal texts designers. Multimodality empowered children to act. It elicited them to write in the way they spontaneously know, without the restrictions of



the traditional view of literacy. This approach gave children the chance to value what they have to say and how they say it.

*Children started believing they can write.* Pre- K children's social interventions were oriented to transform or create texts. When the idea of writing was introduced to the class, children reacted being skeptical to the idea they could write. I saw the critical literacy practice as a vehicle for children's writing, but children were mainly taught that writing is a way to put letters together in order to make words and sentences. In my teacher journal, I registered what the impression of children was when the idea of writing was introduced in a Pre-K setting: Emiliana looked at me with an expression like "I don't believe it", she immediately pointed that she did not know how to write. Other students, as Violeta and Salomon were surprised.

The first time, I talked about writing in the classroom was when the group was working in the story The Three Little Pigs.

Teacher: I will give you a sheet of paper and you will write that there are different types of houses.

Emiliana: but how we write it?

Teacher redirected the question to all students: how you write it?

Juan: or we draw it?

Teacher: is drawing another way of writing?

Most of students answered no.

Teacher: yes or no?

Salomon: we can write with drawings.

Teacher: excellent Salomon! Excellent idea, we can write using pictures!

(Audio Record, April 1<sup>st</sup>/2016).

Another data that supports this finding is when we were reading The Napping House story.

**Teacher:** so, what are you going to do about the message of this story?

**Juan Esteban:** another thing we have to change!

**Teacher:** And how are you going to do it?

**Emiliana:** buy another book?

**Violeta:** no! writing!!

**Juan:** es que como nosotros sabemos escribir

(Audio Record, May 15th/ 2016). The Napping House

Children did not know the power of their writing expression, and critical literacy became a challenge to express them using their classroom writing materials: pencils, color pencils, markers, crayons, paper, cardboard, etc. Children used to think reading and writing were decoding and encoding symbols. They learned they can write powerful texts as the ones presented during this chapter.

### **Multimodal storytelling and composing as new representations.**

The literacy production in the ESL Pre-K classroom was determined by the use of multimodal texts. This multimodal composing evidenced the use of new representations: children used multimodality to retell stories, children produced multimodal cooperative composition, and children represented reality in their texts.

*Children used multimodality to retell stories.* Four- and five-year-old children like telling stories; it is part of their language development. At this age, they can easily memorize parts of a story and retell it in the mother tongue. Nevertheless, I realized my students presented

some difficulties to retell a story, not because of the story sequence but due to the lack of vocabulary to express ideas in L2. The aim was to help children developing their oral skills in the second language, for this reason the use of modes played an important role in this process. When children were trying to retell the stories developed using multimodal storytelling, they also used some modes to express themselves, to communicate and to ask for help to speak in English. In the story, The Three Little Pigs, we can evidence this situation:

Teacher: What happened at the beginning of the story?

Salomon: eh the mom said ehmmm the three little pigs you are making a house [The mom said to the three little pigs you have to build your own houses]

Teacher: Excellent Salomon! And what happened next? [Asking all students]

Juan Esteban: The three little pigs is the house [shows sticks]

Teacher: The three little pigs built a house... What house?

Juan Esteban: mmm [he looks at the sticks and then at the teacher] mmm this and this and this [he pointed to the sticks, bricks and straw placed on the floor]

Teacher: so, ok! These are bricks, sticks and straw

Juan Esteban: one pig built a house of bricks [show bricks] one pig built a house of sticks [shows sticks] and I forgot this one in English [pointing to the straw]

(Audio Record, March 31/2016)

Children used those modes to become familiar with new words and memorize them.

Gestures also played an important role because children involved gestures as a way to convey meaning when retelling the story.

Teacher: and what happened next?

Juan Esteban: the wolf... the pigs [move his hands simulation the wolf catches them]

Teacher: The wolf wants to catch them?

Juan Esteban: The wolf wants to catch them [repeat the sentence expressing agreement with his sight]

Emiliana: The pigs are scared [she used a scared face]

(Audio Record, March 31/2016)

As we see, retelling a story was not only an oral expression issue, it involved symbolic codes that provide meaning. Besides, the use of modes allowed children to talk about more details in the story. This situation demonstrates more comprehension of the story.

Salomon: the wolf burned the... [Pointing to the tail of a wolf's picture]

Juan: [Pointed to his hips and the hot pot toy]

Teacher: the wolf burned his tail or his head?

Salomon: the wolf burned his tail!

(Audio Record, March 31/2016)

Children use symbolic language to try to retell the story in English. They used common expressions instead of complete sentences or specific words to refer to a particular situation. They used more language resources to express themselves.

Teacher: and what happened at the end of the story?

Juan: the wolf is good bye!

Emiliana: he left and running running running! [She simulated running]

(Audio Record, March 31/2016)

In the story *The Napping House*, there was also evidence that children used multimodality and it seemed that participation increased. The use of modes gave students a notion of

confidence to use the language, they comprehended the story and all that mattered to them was to express them.

During the second session, when it was time for retelling the story, children were excited to participate, all tried to speak. They seemed to have fun when they were retelling using the story stick. I was surprised because some shy students, as Julieta, were happy to participate. Students were yelling and speaking at the same time, they were so enthusiastic (Teacher's Journal, April 25<sup>th</sup>/2016)

*The Napping House* has the characteristics of having many characters, the use of repetitive sentences and a compiled language. Children enjoyed retelling the story using the story stick, carefully following of the corresponding sequence of the story. When using the story stick, students had the chance to memorize the characters and their characteristics: a snoring granny, a dreaming child, a dozing dog, a snoozing cat, a slumbering mouse, and a wakeful flea. "For acquiring the vocabulary of the story, children not only looked at the picture of the book but they also manipulated the elements of the story stick and reproduced actions or sounds to represent the story" (Teacher's Journal, April 25<sup>th</sup>/2016)

Multimodality became a vehicle to communicate in the Pre-K classroom. Children retold stories in a more spontaneous way and used multiple ways to convey meaning. They interconnected different modes to transmit the message they wanted to express.

Teacher: what happened after they were sleeping on each other?

Juan Esteban: the bug bites the mouse [he simulated the action taking the flea and the mouse]

Teacher: the wakeful flea bites the mouse. And what happened with the mouse?

Emiliana: the mouse jumped!

Salomon: the mouse jumped [takes the cat]

Teacher: the mouse scares the cat.

***Children produced multimodal cooperative composition.*** Cooperation and group activities are frequent in this age as part of the characteristics social and emotional development of four- and five-year-old children. Additionally, one of the aims in preschool education is to teach children to work together, and their multimodal composition was also characterized by this condition. Children enjoyed working together when working on multimodal texts. During this research, children created several symbolic representations across language but the ones created through cooperation provided an overwhelming evidence of language as a social practice. I present below three multimodal cooperative texts when working on the following stories: *The Gingerbread Man*, *The Napping House*, and *It is Too Noisy*.

*The Gingerbread Man* raised a discussion about cultural diversity and different kind of families. They agreed that the Gingerbread Man escaped because he was not happy at home, he did not obey the old lady and the farmer because they were not its parents. Children decided to create a family and a house for the Gingerbread Man (See figure 9). They used blocks to build the house and paper rolls to create the members of the family. I helped them by printing gingerbread man's templates for children to design the family members. Children worked together in the construction of the house, agreeing on the rooms they wanted to build, while other classmates were working on the family members. Children decided themselves what they wanted to work on.



*Figure 9.* Gingerbread Man's family and house built by children.

During multimodal composing, children not only worked together but they also organized themselves to do it. It was part of my teaching practice to teach children to have a specific role or function in the classroom for a better classroom environment. I also used this strategy when working on the multimodal cooperative composition. We created a list of things to do and then, they chose what they wanted to work on. Figure 7 illustrates a to-do list for *The Napping House New Version* (See figure 10)

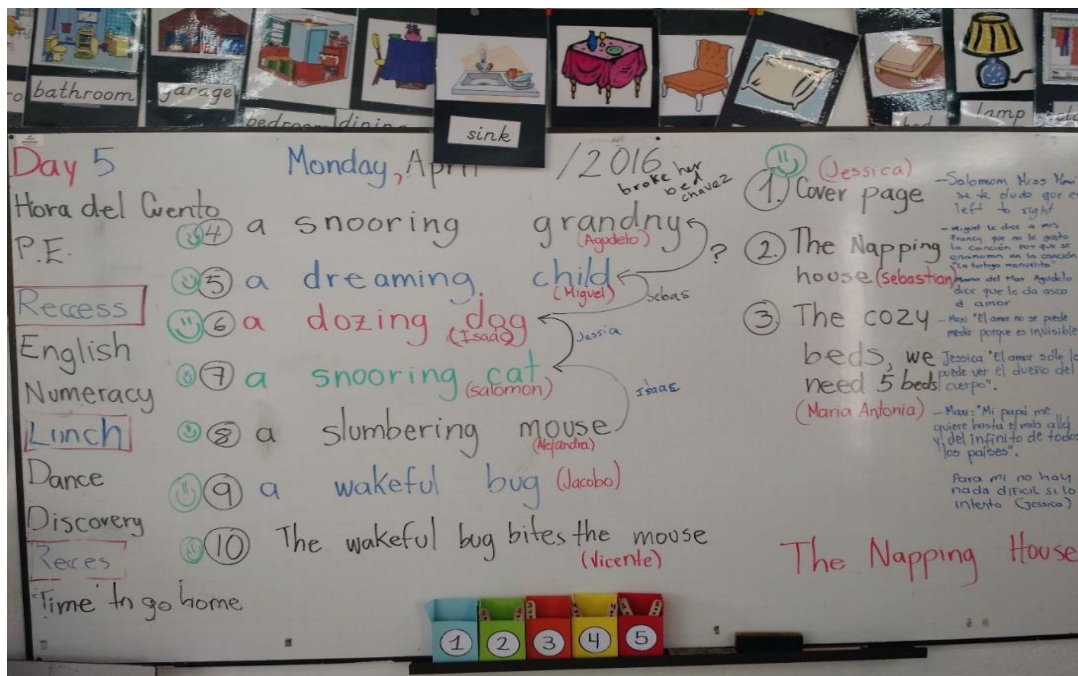


Figure 10. To-do list for writing the new version of The Napping House story.

Children also wrote cooperative multimodal texts during circle time activities. This was the case of a chart they completed by working together (See figure 11). There, children wrote their ideas for creating a whole group chart composition.

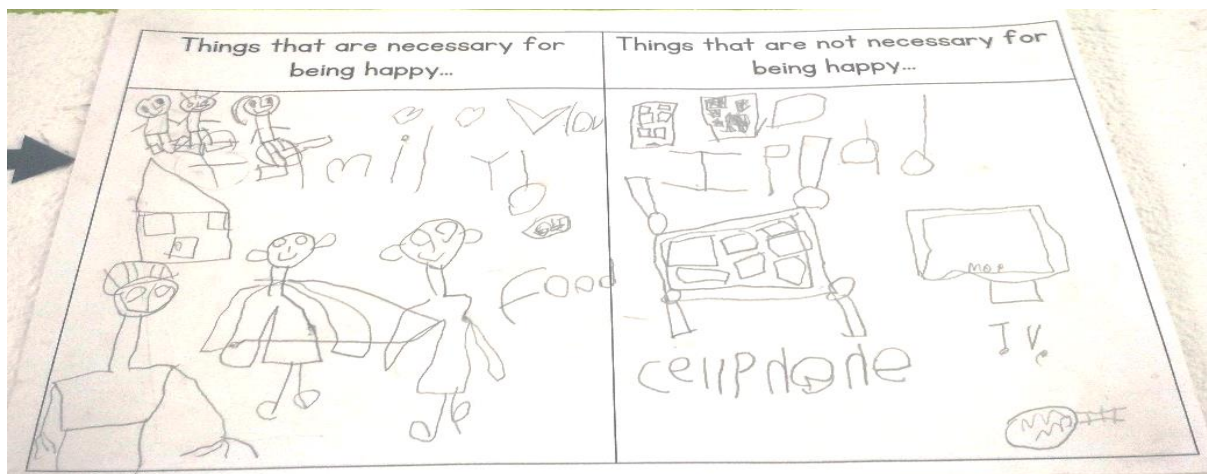


Figure 11. Things that are necessary for being happy vs Things that are not necessary for being happy Chart - Multimodal Cooperative Composition.



***Children represented reality in their texts.*** Children's multimodal texts represent the connection they have with the story and reality. They see the world through stories and create their own representation of it so it was usual to identify how children symbolized real life or daily situations in their drawings.

In the types of houses exhibition, the critical literacy action students carried out in response of the story, *The Three Little Pigs*, represented the connection with the real world. It was possible to see how students recreated real types of houses. Their drawings contained symbolic codes that exalted the characteristics of those houses. For example, Emiliana and Juan represented houses with an easy distinguishable structure (See figure 9). Emiliana's work represented apartment buildings. This is the most common type of house of my students. She used different modes to make this representation: a rectangle and little people to simulate the height of buildings, several buildings indicate this was a gated community; there was a sequence of green triangles that represented green areas. Besides, she made an oral description saying: "This is an apartment building. This is a house tall... has many windows" (Teacher's Journal, April 1<sup>st</sup>). In the case of Juan's work, he represented an eco-friendly house (See figure 12). He was surprised when he saw a house made of plastic bottles in his research at home; later when I presented a video about types of houses around the world, he was really impressed with those. He watched a video about how to build this kind of houses and in his work he used green circles to represent the green plastics bottles. He also emphasized in the size of the house and drew a big one.



*Figure 12.* Emiliana's work for types of houses exhibition: apartment building (left). Juan's work for types of houses exhibition: eco-friendly house (right).

Likewise, Salomon represented a house that really got his attention: the houseboat (See Figure 13). He represented a non-common house in our country, and he used modes to communicate this idea. He colored a blue part below the houseboat to represent the water. Also, he included a black part to represent the port. He drew squares as windows and a green and an orange rectangle to symbolize the boat engine.



Figure 13. Salomon's work for types of houses exhibition. Houseboat.

As we can see, those types of house representations are part of the real world; they do not belong to children's fantasy. Children had the opportunity to use the stories as a referent, but when establishing a connection with reality, they could read beyond and recreate their own representation of reality. Similarly, in *It is Too Noisy*, children used multimodality to symbolize reality in their texts. They prepared a book called "We are happy at home because..." to highlight the real reasons for being happy at home, instead of different socio-economic conditions. Children created texts to connect what make them happy at home to their own conditions, all this in terms of love. To illustrate this issue, I will present the texts from Juan Esteban, Emiliana and Violeta. Children represented one of the complex issues of human feelings: love, using simple symbolic codes. Juan Esteban and Emiliana had a similar reason to be happy at home: their family (See figure 14). But Violeta's work represented a family condition that alerted me (See figure 15).



Figure 14. Juan Esteban' multimodal text (left). Emiliana's multimodal text (right)

Juan Esteban' text represented that he is happy at home because of his siblings. In the real world he has three siblings and we can see them in his work: his big brother, his big sister and his baby brother. Juan drew his favorite black t-shirt and his favorite toy: a rocket. He used a set of rectangles to symbolize the baby's crib. Also, he used a different hairstyle to distinguish the boys from the girl. He added an oral description to his work: "I play with my brother and sister. The baby is sleeping" (Teacher's Journal, April 12<sup>th</sup>). Also, Emiliana's multimodal text recreated that she is happy at home because her dad loves her (See figure 11). But the message goes beyond, she also said: "My dad babysitting me and plays with me and watch movies with me... Kung Fu Panda" (Teacher's Journal, April 12<sup>th</sup>). She represented her family situation: mother works and the father takes care of her.

These multimodal texts allowed others to read children's reality in terms of family issues and emotional conditions. For example, when working critical literacy in this story and creating multimodal texts, Violeta expressed her internal emotional state in relation to her parents (Figure



15). In the work “I am happy at home because...” she only drew her nanny. The same red color dress represented a close relationship between them. Also, it shows how the nanny takes her hand and that was interpreted in a positive way because she is her support and the person that takes care of her. Violeta represented her reality at home in her composition: parents work a lot and she spends a lot of time with her nanny. Some of the texts she produced during this research were presented to the psychologist of the preschool program as support to carry out a work with her parents.



*Figure 15.* Violeta’s multimodal text represents that she is happy at home because her nanny loves her.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Discussing the Findings about Critical Literacy and Multimodal Composing in the Multimodal Storytelling Scene**

In this research study, I used new ideas about literacy to take my students beyond the traditional conception of reading and writing and to motivate them to read the world. For this purpose, I linked those ideas to my multimodal storytelling strategy, and I created spaces for critical literacy that were related to multimodal compositions in a preschool setting. In particular, it was my aim to connect children with the relationship between language and power, allowing them to develop the ability to think critically about real world issues and to empower them to act in order to make the world a better place to live.

In this chapter, I will discuss the connection between my findings and the literature review as a final interpretation. The discussion is divided into the two sub-questions that oriented this study and the categories used for the analysis. Then, I will present a dialogue about the implications of this study in two main fields: ESL preschool education and children's literacy. Also, I will explain the limitations I had while working with critical literacy and multimodal composing with ESL preschoolers, and the suggestions for dealing with those issues in future research. Additionally, I explain how this study can be expanded to obtain possible new findings. At the end of the chapter, I will present my final thoughts about this experience in terms of a personal reflection about the entire study.

## **How the Teacher Researcher Created Spaces for Critical Literacy through Multimodal Storytelling**

My findings suggest that by opening spaces for critical literacy, I established a connection between critical literacy and the ESL Pre-K curriculum. Furthermore, I designed strategic lesson plans to guide and execute the integration of critical literacy and the learning objectives of the English Language and Literacy class through multimodal storytelling. I found that during this process, I became a facilitator, a mediator, and a guide.

My study presented a strong correlation between the ideas of Beck (2015), Vasquez (2014), and Ko (2013) about introducing critical literacy in a classroom. They claim that in order to introduce critical literacy in a school setting, it is necessary to balance it with the curriculum. My findings described how I integrated critical literacy without disturbing the Pre-K program but by enriching it. The teacher's journal corroborates how my lesson plans established a dialogue between the curriculum and critical literacy, and it explains how critical literacy was an opportunity to work on the four language skills:

I believe that with the use of critical literacy, my students can connect with written activities and discussions. The written activities developed through critical literacy helped me to work on the learning objective "Increases fine motor skills by completing different activities with appropriate posture and correct pencil grasp" Moreover, the discussions constituted an opportunity to allow the children to use English as a language to express their ideas. I view critical literacy as a way to enrich my English language and literacy classes and as a way to teach my children another way to see the world. (Teacher's Journal, April 1<sup>st</sup>)

Additionally, my findings corroborated the idea of having a dual focus on critical literacy and conventional literacy in the classroom (Huang (2011; Labadie, Wetzel & Rogers, 2012). The data supports how the connection of critical literacy and the Pre-K program avoids the idea of playing down the importance of conventional literacy due to critical literacy. All this is shown in the integration of the four skills in English Language and Literacy's learning objectives with multimodal storytelling and critical literacy through the lesson plans.

Also, my study extends in accordance with Cho's (2015) research findings about the obstacles when employing critical literacy due to the standardization of curriculum. I demonstrated that a way to avoid this limitation is to design strategic lesson plans that allow teachers to structure their classes in a way that does not struggle with contents. I discovered a way to be flexible without losing my way when teaching a specific content area. When designing strategic lesson plans, it is necessary to deal with the time limitation. This way, teachers can make organize their time in relation to teaching the content and issues with evaluations.

This finding can be a way to avoid the conflict between the time reserved for critical literacy and students' preparation for tests, as Curdt-Christiansen (2010) pointed out in his study. The data registered in my teacher's journal corroborates the way to structure a lesson plan to include critical literacy. The whole lesson plan has ten sessions; I took two sessions but for involving critical literacy, I did the following:

The structure of the lesson plans is the same for all of the three previous stories. It takes three class sessions. First, I began with the presentation of the story using multimodal storytelling. Then, I asked reading comprehension questions. Later, the students or I retold the story as a warm up activity and then it was time for the critical literacy session. In this session, I asked questions about particular situations or aspects from the story.



They were related to injustice, inequality, etc. Finally, we finished the critical literacy session with an intervention plan. The children executed the plan during the third session. (Teacher's Journal, April 14<sup>th</sup>/2016).

Also, my study demonstrated that the role I had as a facilitator, a mediator, and a guide can diminish the school administrators and parents' concerns about critical literacy. This finding expands on Cho's (2015) research ideas about teacher's worries when there is resistance and confusion by parents about critical literacy. The data supports the idea that the teacher's actions as facilitator, mediator and guide can include e-mails to parents (Teacher's Journal, March 30<sup>th</sup>) and communication with authority figures in the school community (Appendix C).

### **Multimodal storytelling and composing as critical literacy engagement.**

Analysis supported that when worked critical literacy in the ESL Pre-K classroom, children produced multimodal composing as critical literacy actions, established a relation between the stories and the real world, started believing they could write, and used English as a second language to carry out social actions.

*Children produced multimodal composing as part of critical literacy actions.* This finding agrees with Vazquez (2014) that children's critical literacy actions are frequently oriented to create alternative texts or informative texts. Pre-K students prepared multimodal texts to raise their voices and show their thoughts about social issues to the world. I found that preschoolers are multimodal writers by nature. This finding extends previous studies about multimodality in the educational field (Albers & Harste, 2007; Cohen & Uhry, 2011; Mellgren & Gustafsson, 2011; Scofield, Hernandez-Reif, & Keith, 2009; Yannicopoulou, 2004). My study is

a referent for other teachers to explore the creation of multimodal texts as part of the work with critical literacy.

***Children established a relation between the stories and the real world.*** I found that children linked some aspects from the stories with real life issues as types of houses, poverty, being grateful, taking care of pets, and diversity. This finding agrees with four-five years old social and emotional milestone about being able to distinguish fantasy from reality. Also, this finding corroborates that the use of questions that transcend the common reading comprehension of texts (Comber, 2007; Huang, 2011; Labadie, Wetzel & Rogers, 2012) allows students to develop a sensibility to connect the text with real life issues. During the critical literacy discussion, children could express the connections between a text and real world, as Violeta did while we were working in The Three Little Pigs story and discussing about types of houses and she said: “My mom showed me, when we were in the car, that there are houses made of plastic” (Audio records, March 31<sup>st</sup>). However, children did not address discussions around controversial topics as sexuality. I consider that this situation was due to the early age of students and the characteristics of their socioeconomic contexts. As children grow older, they have the opportunity to have contact with more social issues and to explore aspects of the world outside of school. They communicate what they know, and the more they learn, the more they can explore about topics and perspectives.

***Children started believing they could write.*** The critical literacy actions that took place in the ESL Pre-K classroom, convinced children they could and knew how to write. This was an unexpected finding. At that children’s age is common to find they start writing letters. Children used to think that writing was only restricted to the use of letters. This finding supports the idea that language empowers children and elicits them to explore what they can do with their

language. The data demonstrated that children were initially sceptic to believe they could write, and little by little they were discovering how they could write by using their drawings. They discovered that writing is a way to send a message and that they could use elements they already knew (like drawings) to do it. Here, the multimodal component plays an important role to allow children believing in the way they use to convey meaning. Preschool educators are more habituated to find clear messages in children's texts but they idea it is to have acceptance from even more teachers and adults around kids.

*Children used English as L2 to carry out social actions.* Critical literacy elicits children to explore the power of the language. They saw English as a way to communicate with the school community and also, they were motivated to use L2 in context. They had a real purpose to use English that went beyond a simple class activity and they demonstrated how the language empowered them to act. This finding motivated children not only to speak but also to read and write in a second language.

### **Multimodal storytelling and composing as new representations.**

The findings support the idea that in order to understand children's literacy production, it is necessary to take into account the multimodality component (Comber, 2001). Working with critical literacy elicits teachers to understand different ways children express themselves and how they can read and write in different ways (Albers, 2006). Preschoolers also have particular ways of using a variety of modes to receive and send a message. My study provides more elements to understand children's literacy production.

*Children used multimodality to retell stories.* The data demonstrated how ESL Pre-K students used multimodality as a tool to communicate when developing their L2 oral skills. They

saw multimodality as a way to establish communication when they did not know the words in their L2 but they had a clear idea of what they wanted to say, thus they replaced oral words with modes. The findings showed how language is not limited to conventional literacy but how children can use semiotic resources to convey meaning (Jewitt, 2008). Also, my study showed how multimodality encourages children throughout the acquisition of a language because they do not feel limited when expressing their ideas due to a lack of vocabulary. On the contrary, they can use other comprehensible ways to send a message to their classmates and teachers. In addition, findings suggest that when children used modes and I supported them by using oral language that the children later repeated or continued using, the message was not affected.

Teacher: What happened at the beginning of the story?

Salomon: eh the mom said ehmmm the three little pigs you are making a house [The mom said to the three little pigs you have to build your own houses]

Teacher: Excellent Salomon! And what happened next? [Asking all the students]

Juan Esteban: The three little pigs is the house [shows sticks]

Teacher: The three little pigs built a house... What house?

Juan Esteban: mmm [he looks at the sticks and then at me] mmm this and this and this [he pointed to the sticks, bricks and straw placed on the floor]

Teacher: so ok these are bricks, sticks and straw!

Juan Esteban: one pig built a house of bricks [shows bricks], one pig built a house of sticks [shows sticks] and I forgot this one in English [pointing to the straw]

(Audio Record, March 31<sup>st</sup>/2016)

Likewise, the data revealed that when children used multimodality to retell stories, they demonstrated a higher level of comprehension in relation to story details, and memorized

vocabulary, and they also felt confident while doing so. This finding was not related to the studies review and I consider it to be a point that requires further research.

***Children produced multimodal cooperative compositions.*** The elaboration of multimodal texts needs to involve the participation of a group of children; it is not only about one student. I found that children could create cooperative compositions when writing posters or a book. The preschool education statement about teaching children to work together can be also applied to the creation of texts: writing together. The data corroborates this preschool education principle when the children worked on the critical literacy with the stories “The Gingerbread Man”, “The Napping House”, and “It is Too Noisy”. This finding agrees with previous studies about different kinds of children’s multimodal construction, not only drawings or screen-based (Bearne, 2009; Cohen & Uhry, 2011). Multimodal composition can be implemented in a group or cooperative manner.

***Children represented reality in their multimodal texts.*** The children’s artifacts demonstrated that they are able to represent reality in their compositions when producing critical literacy actions. This is linked to the statement that four and five year olds can separate reality from fantasy. The data showed how children used semiotic resources to represent reality and recreate their own representation of it, agreeing with Albers & Harste (2007) studies. My study supports how the use of colors, shapes, different sized figures, people, and oral language helps to construct reality for the students. Also, when the children represented their interpretation of reality, they could also show internal affective issues. For this reason, teachers need to look carefully at students’ multimodal compositions because they can enlighten them about the children’s reality at home, at school, with their friends, etc.

## **Implications of this study**

As I stated previously, I will emphasize on the implications of this study in two main fields: ESL preschool education and children's literacy. In each field, there are diverse participants that need to broaden, improve, or change their perspective in order to develop a better comprehension of the current educational needs. Due to this, I also include possible implications on three focal groups composed of people involved in those fields: teachers, parents and the Colombian Ministry of Education. The findings of this study constitute a way to reflect on the possibilities we have to improve teaching practices in the national education system.

**ESL Preschool Education Field.** Early children's education and second language education are broad fields that demand a broader view. The findings of this study are a call to achieve a balance between preschool education and English as second language education. We cannot prevail one against the other; the success of ESL preschool education is to navigate through both arenas with a clear understanding of what they both mean.

My findings suggest the importance of taking into account literacy, critical literacy and multimodality in early children education. At this point, educators need to take into account the characteristics of their language, cognition, gross and fine motor skills, and social and emotional aspects. Teachers can develop a teaching practice that really takes their students into account by guiding them to construct knowledge in a more participatory way, identifying what they can do, and challenging them to go beyond that. In this way, ESL education should not be limited to the mere acquisition of language but also to an integral education as human beings. On the other hand, knowing children's age characteristics allows teachers to think about how they can empower students to use the language, and how to read students multimodal texts.

**Children's Literacy.** It is usual to find that preschool education is concerned with the early literacy skills development and conventional literacy practices: reading and writing. Nevertheless, my study seeks to extend this view of children's literacy. Preschoolers are constantly reading information from different sources: the environment, adults, technology devices, media, and visual aids, among others. The findings of this research advocate the idea that we must understand children as multimodal texts readers and multimodal texts writers. In this way, children are not simply coding and decoding alphabetical symbols. Moreover, multimodality is an element that helps adults to understand children's literacy. It is necessary that educators, parents, and school administrators recognize that children are constantly interpreting information through their senses; this is how children learn. It is possible to say that children learn to read by reading.

Children's literacy includes the composition of texts. According to my findings, they can represent reality and send clear messages about it. For this reason, adults must pay close attention to what children write. Their voices have a large amount to say and their drawings say even more than what we may initially think. Adults cannot downplay children's literacy and they must give it the importance that it deserves.

**Teachers: Critical Literacy and Multimodality.** Introducing a new element to the classroom requires a planned process. It is not about bringing something the teacher liked or learned about, but to identify a close relationship between students' needs and the context itself. The new element must have a real impact on the classroom. This process requires developing links and networks. This is how this study recommends teachers to be creative enough to create spaces for critical literacy in the ESL preschool setting, and to understand how multimodality can contribute to this process. At first, ESL teachers need to establish connections between

critical literacy and the school curriculum. Presenting a clear integration of those elements helps get school administrators and parents' on board with this idea. With this clear integration, teachers can provide evidence to school administrators and parents that critical literacy and multimodal composing are not just educational trends but that this action provides more confidence and clarity. It is necessary to take the time to explain to school administrators and parents what the concepts mean, what they are useful for, what their purpose is when including them in your classes. The teacher should be a bridge to help others to understand the importance of critical literacy, including multimodal text production.

Teachers need to develop the ability to negotiate curriculum and to organize their time. Critical literacy cannot be viewed as simply an extra time activity but as an investment in the language and social-emotional development of children. An organized and creative teacher can build a conscious and reflective teaching practice. In this way, teachers are not just worried about transmitting knowledge but interested in an integral education for their students.

**Parents: Critical Literacy and Multimodality.** Critical literacy is not just the teacher's work. All adults are responsible for children's education but parents should be the first implicated. Part of the success of critical literacy in my preschool classroom was due to the parents' support during this process. My study recommends establishing a cooperative working relationship between teachers and parents. This home-school connection allowed the children to reaffirm and expand on information about the world. Also, this strategy avoided teacher's beliefs interference and data manipulation. The parents were informed about the topics that were being discussed in the classroom, so they could support them at home as well. Parents and teachers constitute a powerful team that provides children with responsible and trustful guidance. Additionally, when parents are part of this process, they can also help children to open their eyes



to read the world. They can make critical literacy be part of their children's lives instead of just an educational approach. In terms of multimodality, parents can understand the importance of drawings as a stepping stone to creating more complex texts. Parents can become active readers of their children multimodal texts as a way to understand their children's world.

**Colombian Ministry of Education.** The findings of my study present two main messages to the Colombian Ministry of Education: a broader understanding of children's literacy is needed and presents a call for including critical literacy in the school curriculum to foster the education of good citizens. In our country, conventional literacy is the center of attention in the literacy field. The government and most teachers still reduce literacy to reading and writing. But what does it mean to be literate today? It is necessary to transform this view of literacy in order to find for better education programs. Children's literacy deserves more attention at a time when children need to be heard, because this is how they raise their voices. In this sense, the government gives children the chance to participate in the discussion over social issues.

According to this idea, it is necessary to link children's literacy to critical literacy. While the national minister of education claims to include critical thinking in the school curriculum, this is not enough. As a Colombian, I can say that some of us were lucky enough to have teachers that focused on and helped us develop our critical thinking skills, but it is common to find people despite this critical thinking, do not go beyond, do not act, and do not have an active role to change the status quo. Critical literacy demands actions and that is what Colombians need. Despite of the social issues in the country, few people are mobilized to raise their voices. I believe that critical literacy should be used as a governmental strategy to guide children to become good citizens, and actively participate in the solutions of national problems. Adding to this, our country is facing a historical moment: a peace process with the FARC guerrilla. Critical

literacy can give us the tools to participate in this process; it can encourage Colombians to create a broader view of the situation and it can promote a sense of equality and justice.

## **Limitations**

Below, I will explain the limitations I faced when working on this study. I confronted issues I could not control at that time and situations I would like to improve.

**Lack of understanding among colleagues and school administrators.** When asking school administrators for the permission to carry out this study, they had a misconception about critical literacy and multimodality. Initially, they confused critical literacy with critical thinking, and multimodality with a new method to teach English. After my research presentation and the explanation of those concepts, they were more interested in learning about it but I still believe that those concepts require training and a deep exploration of literature.

The school administrators allowed me to perform my research if I shared the lesson plan with my Pre-K colleague. Thus, school administrators guaranteed parents that both groups would have the same lesson plan to ensure that the students would receive the same content. I accepted this agreement but it was demanding for me because as I was taking my first steps in the critical literacy field, I had to teach another person how to do so as well. The lesson plans I presented for the English Language and Literacy class were very detailed. Nevertheless, my coworker did not have a strong understanding of critical literacy so her class was oriented in a different way. Despite this, I tried to explain the idea to her, although it was not a formal explanation. I concluded that people needs training in critical literacy practices to be successful in a classroom. Even though the children's discussions and social actions were different, the overall idea was to promote this approach in the entire Pre-K level.

**Study conducted in the last school term.** I carried out this qualitative research in the last school term in the Pre-K level. This limited the study to two key Pre-K program topics: My House and The City. Throughout the year, it was possible to work with stories related to: the school, classroom, family, clothes, and food. Additional data may have had a remarkable effect. Due to the topics in the last school term, and in order to maintain a link to the curriculum, I did not have the chance to explore additional kinds of stories that could generate different types of discussions and social actions. Also, this reduced the kind of multimodal texts children could create.

**Using videos to register the construction of multimodal compositions.** In the methodology of this study, I explained the aim of each instrument to collect data. I recorded videos to register the multimodal storytelling scene, but now I consider this instrument as a tool to register the children's elaboration of multimodal compositions as social actions as well. Instead, I used pictures and the teacher's journal to describe the impressions, actions, and modes used by children.

**Studies with ESL Pre-K children.** When reviewing the literature, I found very few studies based on multimodality and critical literacy in early ages. Additionally, some of those studies were based on English as first language or they were carried out with older students. To add to this, the studies about multimodality were mainly focused on digital literacy. I felt restricted in regards to finding ideas to support my study, to guide me in the implementation of critical literacy and in the understanding of children multimodal composing. This situation encouraged me to develop a stronger engagement with my research and the possible impact it could have on other children and educators around the world. This kind of research in my

context does not have precedents. There is not a report about critical literacy with preschoolers, nor with multimodal composition in English as a second language with Pre-K children.

### **Recommendations for Future Research.**

Future work includes the development of strategies to face the limitations explained above; also strategies to execute this study in different contexts and to look at children's literacy, particularly their multimodal compositions, in more detail. When I mention the limitations, it is because it is possible to use a longer period of time to be able to capture the work with more stories using multimodal storytelling, for example: a complete school year. In addition, it is important for future research studies to prepare teachers and school administrators with training, and parents' meetings before starting to work with critical literacy; this could bring more understanding and engagement with the critical literacy process in the classroom.

Apart from that, future research about using multimodal storytelling as critical literacy and multimodal composing practice should focus usefully, in particular on ESL Pre-K classrooms, on other contexts. Additionally, another interesting field of further research is our country itself. In spite of its small scale, my study represents a starting point with preschoolers for other colleagues in my country or around the world. It is relevant to investigate EFL preschool contexts in public Colombian schools. Another fascinating, additional study would be with a group of Colombian teachers working on multimodal storytelling and critical literacy in the three main levels of preschool education in our country: Pre-K, Kinder, and Transition. It would provide findings related to the continuity of a tool during the early ages, and the impact on the children's literacy.

I also think that a possible area for further research could focus on how teachers link critical literacy with the curriculum, the strategies they use and how they negotiate time and contents. This could guide novice teachers in the critical literacy field.

## **Conclusions**

This qualitative study is the result of a reflection over a broader conception of literacy and the implementation of this perspective in my ESL Pre-K classroom. My interest was to take my four and five year old students beyond just simple reading comprehension activities when working with stories. Due to their language acquisition process, I used multimodal storytelling to present the stories we worked with in the classroom. This strategy allowed the children to read modes and easily comprehend the story, as well as to consider stories as ways to view and read the world. I attached the use of critical literacy lense to watch the stories in a special way to this strategy. Critical literacy was motivation to get the children to write. At this point, the children's multimodal compositions gained protagonism. The purpose of this study was to investigate what possibilities of engagement with critical literacy arise when implementing multimodal storytelling in an ESL Pre-K classroom.

As part of the methodology of this research, I used a convenience sample and class audio records, class video records, children's artifacts, and a teacher's journal to collect data. Additionally, I used two sub-questions to obtain a detailed view in order to answer the research question: a) How did I create spaces for critical literacy through multimodal storytelling? b) How was the children's literacy production when using critical literacy? For the data analysis, I used three categories: teacher's actions to create spaces for critical literacy, students and critical

literacy, and students' multimodal composing. I applied mapping, charting, and multimodal audiovisual analysis for data reduction.

The findings of this study demonstrate that the research teacher used multimodal storytelling as a strategy to create spaces for critical literacy by establishing a connection between critical literacy and the Pre-K program, designing strategic lesson plans, and being a facilitator, a mediator, and a guide. In addition to this, the findings reveal that multimodal storytelling and composing highlighted new representations and can act as critical literacy engagement. Multimodal storytelling and composing as new representations show that: the children used multimodality to retell stories, the children produced multimodal cooperative composition, and the children represented reality in their texts. Multimodal storytelling and composing as critical literacy engagement indicate that: the children produced multimodal composing as critical literacy actions, the children established a relation between the stories and the real world, that children started to believe that they could write, and the children used the second language to carry out social actions.

This study is a referent for other teachers that are exploring the concept of literacy from a broad perspective; also it constitutes a call for other teachers around the world to create spaces for critical literacy in preschool settings. It is our responsibility as teachers to foster the education of good citizens and better human beings.

### **Final Reflection: What did this study mean to me?**

This research study represents the journey of a Colombian English teacher in the fields of literacy, critical literacy, and multimodality. In this journey, students, fellow teachers, parents, school administrators, and my research adviser were my travel companions. During the trip, I

learned to understand myself as a teacher and as a person. As a teacher, I discovered that I have been in constant evolution since I started in the profession ten years ago. I am always looking for different ways to teach. I seek tools, strategies, and roads so that I can do a better job and to improve my teaching practice in order to reach my students while I appreciate their work. I vibrate with my students' achievements and learning. I feel proud of being an English teacher for preschoolers. As a person, I learned what discipline, perseverance and dedication mean: They were key elements to reach my goals.

I associate this research study with the butterfly effect statement: a small change can have large effects. Although this is a small scale research study, I share my teaching strategy involving the four language skills: multimodal storytelling. This is a useful tool, due to the use of semiotic resources that convey meaning among students and teachers. It can help in ESL, EFL, and ELL contexts. But most importantly, I would like to awake the interest in other colleagues to use stories to connect children with the critical literacy process. It is essential to keep in mind that we are not just language teachers or preschool teachers; we are social stakeholders that foster the transformation of the world.

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## **Appendix A**

I used two models of letters of consent: one for the school principal and another for the parents.

**UNIVERSIDAD PONTIFICIA BOLIVARIANA  
SISTEMA DE FORMACIÓN AVANZADA  
ESCUELA DE EDUCACIÓN Y PEDAGOGÍA**

**MAESTRÍA EN PROCESOS DE APRENDIZAJE Y ENSEÑANZA DE SEGUNDAS  
LENGUAS**

**CONSENTIMIENTO PARA PARTICIPACIÓN EN INVESTIGACIÓN PARA TESIS DE  
MAESTRÍA**

Título y Nombre del Rector

Rector

Institución

Estimado Rector:

Cordial saludo,

Yo, Monica María López Ladino, soy estudiante de la Maestría en Procesos de Aprendizaje y Enseñanza de Segundas Lenguas de la Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana. Uno de los requerimientos para aspirar al título de magíster es el desarrollo de un proyecto de investigación como parte de mi trabajo de grado (tesis). Para dicho trabajo, he propuesto la investigación “Storytelling as Moments of Critical Literacy and Multimodal Composing in the ESL Preschool Classroom” cuyo objetivo es describir como el trabajo con historias a través de la multimodalidad puede convertirse en una oportunidad para involucrar a los niños en el mundo de la literacidad crítica. Este trabajo de investigación está dirigido por el Dr. Raúl Alberto Mora Vélez, Profesor Asociado de la Escuela de Educación y Pedagogía de la Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana.

Como parte de la investigación se hará la recolección de datos dentro de mi grupo, específicamente en las clases de Language and Literacy. Dicha recolección de datos consiste en tomar apuntes de observación sobre las clases y el trabajo de los estudiantes, escanear trabajos de clase y grabar las voces de los estudiantes durante los momentos de discusión cuando se trabajen historias. Esta recolección de datos se planea desde el 1 de abril hasta el 1 de junio del 2016.

Espero que los resultados de este estudio me ayuden a promover en otros docentes el trabajo de la literacidad crítica con niños de preescolar. Los resultados de este proyecto de investigación se

emplearán en principio para la escritura del trabajo de grado (tesis). Sin embargo, los datos que se recojan en el trabajo de campo también se podrían utilizar en futuras ponencias y publicaciones académicas. En todos los casos, se hará uso de pseudónimos. En el caso de la institución, solo si usted como líder de su institución lo permite, se hará referencia al nombre de la misma en el trabajo investigativo a realizar.

Esta carta, entonces, tiene por objeto solicitar su autorización para que yo, en el marco de este proyecto de investigación, pueda llevar a cabo el trabajo de campo para desarrollar esta investigación. A los padres de familia que vayan a apoyar esta tarea se les entregará una forma de consentimiento similar. En el caso de los estudiantes, se les enviará copia del consentimiento a sus padres o acudientes.

Los padres de familia y estudiantes que participen en esta tarea lo harán en completa libertad y se espera que no haya ninguna coerción para su colaboración. Ellos estarán en completa libertad de no participar, sin que ello pueda constituir motivo de represalias en la Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana. Ellos estarán en derecho de ver el producto final y, de no estar de acuerdo con algo en el mismo, se harán los cambios del caso.

De antemano agradezco su colaboración en el desarrollo de esta investigación, la cual me ayudará en mi formación como investigadora. En caso de cualquier inquietud con respecto a este proyecto de investigación, puede contactarme directamente al correo [mlopez@vermontmedellin.edu.co](mailto:mlopez@vermontmedellin.edu.co). También puede contactar al Coordinador Académico del programa, Dr. Raúl Alberto Mora Vélez, en el correo [maestria.ml2@upb.edu.co](mailto:maestria.ml2@upb.edu.co).

Atentamente,

Monica María López Ladino  
Candidata a Magíster en Procesos de Aprendizaje y Enseñanza de Segundas Lenguas  
Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana, Sede Central Medellín

---

He leído la información en esta carta y estoy de acuerdo con la participación de los estudiantes y/o docentes de esta institución en esta investigación.

---

Nombre, Cargo y Firma

---

Fecha



**UNIVERSIDAD PONTIFICIA BOLIVARIANA  
SISTEMA DE FORMACIÓN AVANZADA  
ESCUELA DE EDUCACIÓN Y PEDAGOGÍA**

**MAESTRÍA EN PROCESOS DE APRENDIZAJE Y ENSEÑANZA DE SEGUNDAS  
LENGUAS**

**CONSENTIMIENTO PARA PARTICIPACIÓN EN INVESTIGACIÓN TESIS DE  
MAESTRÍA**

Estimados Padres de Familia,

Cordial saludo.

Yo, Monica María López Ladino, soy estudiante de la Maestría en Procesos de Aprendizaje y Enseñanza de Segundas Lenguas de la Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana. Uno de los requerimientos para aspirar al título de magíster es el desarrollo de un proyecto de investigación como parte de mi trabajo de grado (tesis). Para dicho trabajo, he propuesto la investigación “Storytelling as Moments of Critical Literacy and Multimodal Composing in the ESL Preschool Classroom” cuyo objetivo es describir como el trabajo con historias a través de la multimodalidad puede convertirse en una oportunidad para involucrar a los niños en el mundo de la literacidad crítica. Este trabajo de investigación está dirigido por el Dr. Raúl Alberto Mora Vélez, Profesor Asociado de la Escuela de Educación y Pedagogía de la Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana.

Como parte de la investigación se hará la recolección de datos dentro de mi grupo, específicamente en las clases de Language and Literacy. Dicha recolección de datos consiste en tomar apuntes de observación sobre las clases y el trabajo de los estudiantes, escanear trabajos de clase y grabar las voces de los estudiantes durante los momentos de discusión cuando se trabajen historias. Esta recolección de datos se planea desde el 1 de abril hasta el 1 de junio del 2016.

Espero que los resultados de este estudio me ayuden a promover en otros docentes el trabajo de la literacidad crítica con niños de preescolar. Los resultados de este proyecto de investigación se emplearán en principio para la escritura del trabajo de grado (tesis). Sin embargo, los datos que se recojan en el trabajo de campo también se podrían utilizar en futuras ponencias y publicaciones académicas. En todos los casos, se hará uso de pseudónimos. En el caso de la institución, solo si usted como líder de su institución lo permite, se hará referencia al nombre de la misma en el trabajo investigativo a realizar.

Esta carta, entonces, tiene por objeto solicitar su autorización para que yo, en el marco de este proyecto de investigación, pueda trabajar con su hijo/a y pueda observar, grabar y usar sus trabajos para la recolección de datos de esta investigación.

Usted está en completa libertad de aceptar la participación de su hijo/a, sin ninguna forma de coerción para su colaboración y sin ninguna posibilidad de represalias en su institución educativa o en la Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana en caso de no aceptar. Usted tiene derecho a ver las grabaciones, trabajos de clase y el producto final. De no estar de acuerdo con algo en el mismo, se harán los cambios del caso.

De antemano agradezco su colaboración en el desarrollo de esta investigación, la cual me ayudará en mi formación como investigadora. En caso de cualquier inquietud con respecto a este proyecto de investigación, puede contactarme directamente al correo [mlopez@vermontmedellin.edu.co](mailto:mlopez@vermontmedellin.edu.co). También puede contactar al Coordinador Académico del programa, Dr. Raúl Alberto Mora Vélez, en el correo [maestria.ml2@upb.edu.co](mailto:maestria.ml2@upb.edu.co).

Atentamente,

Monica María López Ladino  
Candidata a Magíster en Procesos de Aprendizaje y Enseñanza de Segundas Lenguas  
Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana, Sede Central Medellín

---

He leído la información en esta carta y estoy de acuerdo con la participación de mi hijo/a en esta investigación.

---

Nombre, Cargo y Firma

---

Fecha

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He leído la información en esta carta y estoy de acuerdo en que mi hijo/a aparezca en materiales de audio y video para el propósito de esta investigación.

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Nombre, Cargo y Firma

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Fecha

## Appendix B

This is the lesson plan designed to work with multimodal storytelling and critical literacy using the story: The Three Little Pigs.

Term 4		
Generative Topic	Learning Objectives	
My House	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifies the vocabulary related to the generative topic.</li> <li>Speaks using language patterns and previously learned vocabulary to describe objects, situations or express his/her ideas and identifies vocabulary by listening to riddles and descriptions.</li> <li>Completes all reading activities by recognizing story elements and successfully retelling stories.</li> <li>Increases fine motor skills by completing different activities with appropriate posture and correct pencil grasp.</li> </ul>	
N°	Class Development	Resources
1	<p><b>Multimodal Storytelling: The Three Little Pigs</b> Adapted from <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Olo923T2HQ4">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Olo923T2HQ4</a></p> <p><b>Warm up: Storytelling Basket</b> Use a storytelling basket to introduce to the children the vocabulary using real materials or pictures (three little pigs, a wolf and an old woman finger puppets, straw, wood, a brick, a hairdryer to simulate the blow of the wolf, a pot, fire, a chimney picture or a real one made with building blocks, pigs' houses <a href="https://es.pinterest.com/pin/59743132529193599/">https://es.pinterest.com/pin/59743132529193599/</a> )</p> <p><b>Multimodal Storytelling:</b> Tell students the Three Little Pigs Story using the props, gestures, voice variation, and involving the children in the story. (Ask assistant to record the activity)</p> <p><b>Group instruction:</b> During circle time, ask comprehension questions about the story related to characters and story sequence.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Who are the characters?</li> <li>What is the setting?</li> <li>What problem do the characters face in the story?</li> <li>What happens in the beginning, middle and end?</li> <li>Ask a child to retell the story using sequence cards</li> </ul> <p><b>Group practice:</b> In groups of three students ask them to organize a set of story sequence cards.</p>	<p>Storytelling basket: The Three Little Pigs (three little pigs, a wolf and an old woman finger puppet, straw, wood, a brick, a hairdryer to simulate the blow of the wolf, pot, fire, chimney picture or a real one made with building blocks)</p> <p>Story sequence cards</p>

2	<p><b>Warm up:</b> ask some students to retell the story using the Storytelling basket.</p> <p><b>Critical Literacy Discussion:</b> introduce the idea of using special glasses to connect the story with the real world. This is "... bringing issues from their world outside of school into the classroom (Vasquez, 2010). Provide students with "Special lens" to see the story in a different way.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How does the house of a pig and a wolf look? Where do they live?</li> <li>- Do the houses that appear in the story can be real? Why? How can we find out?</li> <li>- How are real people's houses?</li> <li>- What are the characteristics of real people's houses?</li> </ul> <p><b>Group instruction:</b> How are real people's houses?</p> <p><b>Option 1</b>  <b>Group practice:</b> How are real people's houses?  Take children to the library in order to explore books and look for real people's houses. Look at the pictures and talk about their characteristics. Record/draw/write your findings.</p> <p><b>Option 2</b>  <b>Group practice:</b> How are real people's houses?  Give students a magazine and ask them to look for a picture of a house. Paste the pictures on a large piece of paper and ask: What do they have in common? Analyze size, color, shape, esthetics (ugly/beautiful). Are they old or new? Big or small? Who do you think lives in those houses? Do you think there are different kinds of houses? Which ones? Paste students' ideas on sticky notes and paste them around the poster.</p> <p><b>Homework:</b> ask children to search for types of houses with their parents' help. Write an email to parents asking them to support children's research and send pictures about types of houses that represent cultural diversity.</p>	<p>Storytelling Basket</p> <p>Special glasses for each child</p> <p>School Library</p> <p>Magazines</p>
3	<p><b>Social action</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This part is negotiated with children and it's different in every class.</li> </ul>	

### **Author's Biography**

Monica María López Ladino is currently teaching in a private bilingual school near Medellin, Colombia. She has been working for the last ten years in the Preschool Program of this school. She has experience teaching English Language and Literacy, Math, Science, and Social Studies with different preschool levels. She holds a B.A. in Teaching in Humanities, Spanish and English Languages from Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana (2010) and she is also a graduate specialist in English Teaching from the same university (2013). She carried out a qualitative research study titled “L2 Oral Production in Preschoolers at a Private Bilingual School in Medellin Based in the Immersion Program” to fulfill the requirements for this post-graduate program. She is also a candidate for the MA in Learning and Teaching Processes in Second Languages from Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana (2017). She conducted a qualitative study titled “Multimodal Storytelling as Moments of Critical Literacy and Multimodal Composing in the ESL Preschool Classroom” to fulfill the requirements for the master program. She is also a teacher-researcher at the Literacies in Second Languages Project. She is currently looking to continue with research projects related to preschool education, children's literacy and critical literacy.