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Learning English through Small Worlds

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Paraules clau del treball:

English, Primary, Contextualize, Small World, Corners.



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No way. The hundred is there.

*The child
is made of one hundred.
The child has
a hundred languages
a hundred hands
a hundred thoughts
a hundred ways of thinking
of playing and speaking
a hundred always a hundred
ways of listening
of marvelling of loving
a hundred joys
for singing and understanding
a hundred worlds
to discover
a hundred worlds
to invent
a hundred worlds
to dream.
The child has
a hundred languages
(and a hundred hundred hundred more)
but they steal ninety-nine.*

*The school and the culture
separate the head from the body.
They tell the child:
to think without hands
to do without head
to listen and not to speak
to understand without joy
to love and to marvel
only at Easter and Christmas.
They tell the child:
to discover the world already there
and of the hundred they steal ninety-nine.
They tell the child:
that work and play
reality and fantasy
science and imagination
sky and earth
reason and dream
are things that do not belong together.
And thus they tell the child
that the hundred is not there.
The child says:
“No way. The hundred is there”.*

Loris Malaguzzi
Hoyuelos (2006:11-12)

Abstract:

This final project is a didactic proposal to set up a “Small World” as a speaking corner in a 2nd grade class in primary school. The aim is to contextualize and connect the English area within the referent classroom. The project is supported by the principles of learning by playing, storytelling, Reggio Emilia’s approach, Inclusive Education and Corners Methodology. The topic is about polar regions where children can acquire new vocabulary and grammatical structures about North and South Pole, animals and landscape. It explains how to elaborate a lesson planning based on Corners Methodology, where contents, aims, materials, activities, space and time arrangement are described. It includes an explanation about the application of the Small World in order to observe the reaction of the children.

Key words: English, Primary, Contextualize, Small World, Corners.

Resum:

Aquest projecte final és una proposta didàctica per a construir un “Small World” (Mini Món) com a racó d’expressió oral en un curs de 2n de primària. L’objectiu és contextualitzar i connectar l’àrea d’anglès amb la classe referent. El projecte s’ha basat en els principis d’aprendre jugant, conta-contes, la pedagogia de Reggio Emilia, l’Educació Inclusiva i la Metodologia per Racons. El tema tracta sobre les regions polars on els infants poden assolir nou vocabulari i estructures gramaticals sobre el pol nord i sud, animals i paisatges. S’explica com elaborar una programació basada en racons, on es descriuen els continguts, els objectius, els materials, les activitats, l’espai i la temporització. Inclou l’explicació sobre la implementació del Mini Món per observar la reacció dels infants.

Paraules Clau: Anglès, Primària, Contextos, Mini Món, Racons.

Index	Page
1. Introduction.....	5
1.1. Justification.....	5
1.2. Aim of the final project.....	6
2. Theoretical background of the didactic proposal.....	6
2.1. Learning by playing.....	6
2.2. Storytelling.....	8
2.3. Reggio Emilia.....	8
2.4. Inclusive Education.....	10
2.5. Corners Methodology.....	10
3. Polar Corners Methodology.....	11
3.1. Why a Polar topic?	11
3.2. Contents, aims and materials.....	12
3.3. Lesson planning.....	14
3.4. Space and time arrangement in Polar corner sessions.....	15
3.5. Polar corner activities.....	16
4. Setting up the White Small World.....	20
4.1. What the White Small World is and procedures to set it up.....	20
4.2. The White Small World introduced in the class.....	25
5. Implementation of the White Small World.....	26
6. Conclusion.....	28
7. Bibliography.....	30

1. Introduction

This final project for a degree in primary school teaching is a didactic proposal where English, as a specific area, is contextualized in ordinary classroom life including mathematics, science and language acquisition through English subject. It is based on how a storytelling session generated in class can provide and develop particular English sessions based on Corners Methodology, where writing, reading, listening and speaking skills can guide children to acquire their own learning process. Specifically, I will focus on setting up a Small World as a speaking corner in a 2nd grade class at primary school, where children can improve their speaking skills with the new vocabulary learnt by interacting and playing and using their imagination.

1.1. Justification

In these last two years during my teacher training periods at different schools, I have realised that contextualized learning situations are very important elements to take into account when being with children to make significant learning happen. Contextualized situations mean to take into account elements such as space distribution, material resources, Inclusive Education, an interdisciplinary education approach and the child as a protagonist.

I have connected a learning experience I had about storytelling, at a school, and how could I work it through Small Worlds, because I think they integrate those five elements mentioned above and that they should be introduced in a teaching and learning environment. We could say that Small Worlds are a representation of different scenes from real life in a minor scale with nature elements and miniature items in it. They incite children to symbolic playing when interacting with them by learning and using new vocabulary related to the topic.

I have studied about corners, at University, as a methodology proposal, and I have researched about Small Worlds introduced mostly in the young learners' stage (Infant School). For this reason, my curiosity and interest have encouraged me to look for a way to join them into a contextualized English Learning Area at Primary Stage. According to Zabala & Arnau (2007) the educational intervention should begin from a close situation to the child's reality (Antonio Zabala is the director of the *Institut de Recursos I Investigació per a la Formació*, supporter of the Guix Magazine and, Laia Arnau is pedagogue and collaborates in investigation groups).

I usually read educational articles because they help me reflect. Some months ago, I read the article *¿Dónde jugarán los niños?* by González (2019), a primary teacher who was inspired by a song by the artist Maná, which shares the same title. The author reflects about where and how children play nowadays at the same time as the virtual game environment is increasing in our life. So, I listened to this song and I began to investigate on the theoretical basis of game in education, the connections that are generated from the stories, the importance of space and the child as the protagonist.

1.2. Aim of the final project

The general aim of this final project for a degree in Primary School Education is to design a didactic proposal, a Small World, in which the English area is contextualized within the referent classroom and put it into practise through Corners Methodology. This is based on two principles, on the one hand, the knowledge that I have acquired in my degree in Primary School Education during the last years at University, and, on the other hand, regarding the teaching resources that are sustained by the Curriculum for English in primary school education of the Balearic Islands, to implement the game and Corners Methodology.

2. Theoretical background of the didactic proposal

As it is mentioned above, in order to set up the Small World in this didactic proposal, the main characteristics have been taken into account within the following methodological premises: 1) learning by playing, 2) storytelling, 3) Reggio Emilia, 4) Inclusive Education and 5) Corners Methodology.

2.1. Learning by playing

First of all, I would like to reproduce the words that the renowned psychologist, Ramirez (2008: 26-27) uses in her article to describe the game:

The game is the guarantee of growth and development because children explore, investigate and put into scene their curiosities and concerns. When playing, we can create other realities, learn, represent fantasies or imaginary worlds accompanied by the pleasure of playing.

Regarding the contribution of playing in children's development, if we consider "the ability to symbolize is the base of mental combinations" (Ruiz & Abad, 2016: 107), then we should think that symbolic playing is important to improve the intellectual development of the child. There are two types of symbolic games, "personal play and projected play" (Slade, in Ruiz & Abad, 2016: 104) but the focus will be placed on the last one.

According to Ruiz & Abad (2016) projected play is characterized by the fact that the objects in it are brought to life and become the protagonists of the drama action. The child becomes the stage director and also interacts with the creatures. It is founded on construction activities that can lead to a solitary (personal) game complemented by expressions or comments aloud, that means, that a great capacity of concentration is needed to make several characters speak, with different roles, such as to change their voices and to distinguish them, elaborate dialogues and be creative enough so that the plot does not end in one sentence. In addition, these authors comment that roleplaying appears in children when they are 4 until 7 years old, and that symbolism transforms itself from the solitary (personal) stage, to a collective situation, where the greatest concern is to try to imitate reality as much as possible. This is achievable when children cooperate to adapt themselves to the theme, the necessities of the situation and their own roleplay.

Now that we have explained the importance of learning by playing in Primary School Education, the focus will be on the significance of introducing it concretely in an English class as a Foreign Language. As the conductors of teacher training seminars, Lewis & Bedson (2000: 5) say "Games are fun, and children like to play them. That in itself is a strong argument for incorporating them in the EFL classroom". According to these authors, teachers should introduce playing as a natural part of the learning process and children's development, because it allows them to interact with the environment, discover and experiment. Including them adds variety to the lesson, increases motivation, allows children to understand their world and, in addition, English teachers can expand children's vocabulary through the experience of a foreign language because, the game context makes the foreign language useful to them.

2.2. Storytelling

The final didactic proposal begins with a storytelling session. All children like to imagine stories, but also like hearing them, how they generate in them curiosity and empathy. They are able to make us understand other ways of feeling and thinking, and also, the world we live in to build up our own world. Why storytelling? According to the author, illustrator, teacher trainer and storyteller Wright (1995), stories offer an abundant and constant source of language experience and should be a central part of the work of all primary teachers, whether they are teaching the mother tongue or a foreign language to children. In addition, when telling a story our voice is a very important element and also in it lies the essence of whom we are and in which circumstances we create the appropriate atmosphere to read out aloud a story. As the primary teacher and member of ICE at Univerisity of Lleida, Morera (2015: 48) says:

They expect a lot from your story, they hope it will help them to understand the world, it allows them to build bridges between who they are and what they feel, between what happens to them and what happens to the characters in the stories. They want to feel they are not alone.

2.3. Reggio Emilia

Reggio Emilia is a municipality in Italy where its educational project has become a reference point throughout the world and the central figure is Loris Malaguzzi. Loris Malaguzzi together with several local administrators and citizens, specially woman, contributed to the birth and development of Reggio Emilia's network of Infant-toddler Centers and Preschools.

The expression "*Small World*" is not used directly in Reggio Emilia's approach; however, it seems the main inspiration of this type of learning by playing, based on Loris Malaguzzi's contribution. This teacher and pedagogue inspired this pedagogy by learning through real experiences from real facts happened after 2nd World War in Italy. The intention is not to explain the whole Loris Malaguzzi's theory but highlight on those aspects taken into account to support the final project and create the Small World.

Correa & Estrella (2011), in their thesis about Reggio Emilia's educational approach, comment that this pedagogy is based on some basic principles: listening, but not only on receiving auditory stimulation, listening understood as the ability for the child to express themselves. The

space and the environment at Reggio Emilia motivate and encourages discovery and creation. The ateliers (specific place to work) and workshops (the artistic productions created) are the responsible for promoting art expressions. In addition, they highlight the importance of the observation and documentation, resources and tools to assess the process through the projects, as a teaching and learning development. To carry out the documentation you have to listen, observe and interpret. The child is the protagonist and the role of the teacher is to discover with children, meanwhile the teacher is accompanying and guiding them in their learning process. Finally, the families and the society's participation are a fundamental labor, they are the main educating agent, so their total and active involvement in school becomes vital.

As far as listening is concerned, and following the Thesis mentioned above, listening is the ability to perceive what we want to communicate with words, movements, gestures and art or even silence. Teachers should be able to listen to the children when there is silence, because silence could mean something too (it could mean that they have not understood anything or that they are concentrated on what has been mentioned). So, it would be very important that adults listen to what children want to say because, they do not only express themselves through the speech, and as Malaguzzi in his poem says "The child has a hundred languages" (Hoyuelos, 2006: 11), to make himself heard and it should be the adult who must develop the ability to understand those languages. Bearing this in mind, a book brought from a child in the referent classroom, is used to introduce the Small World in the English subject in this didactic proposal. A story that a child wants to explain, a book that a child wants the rest to listen to, is evidence that the child has voice in the class.

The next principle is about the space and environment quality in the classroom and how it is taken into account as an environment where children should feel comfortable and willing to learn. It is not only decorating the place, it is about distributing elements, furniture and using its components that facilitate learning "not only because it 'feels good', but because the objects found in your classroom are useful" Correa & Estrella (2011: 29). Setting up the environment is carried out taking into account the senses, the movement of the air, lights and the position of furniture. This means, that the space should speak for itself and should be inviting for children to participate in it. The environment should be a living and changing concept, so this could be an educational strategy to help children develop in their learning process because it allows constant interactions to acquire knowledge, social and motor skills as they grow up. As the teacher and philosopher, Hoyuelos (2006: 73) says "the environment is conceived as a

participant of the pedagogical project”. In this way, the ecosystem of the classroom also takes part of education development. According to Correa & Estrella (2011), some educational tendencies use the similar concept of space and environment to carry out corners in a classroom.

Lastly, the child as a protagonist. The teacher is a collaborator, researcher, guide, companion, observes and interacts. As Boada (2017: 4) says, “Reggio Emilia’s methodology understands that children are researchers in the world around them, using their native curiosity and learning more spontaneously”. The teacher should be in continuous training in order to propose activities and projects based on children’s interests, levels and needs. In this way, children and teacher are elements that are taken into account to develop the Small World final project.

2.4. Inclusive Education

Another aspect to bear in mind to create the didactic proposal is inclusiveness. To explain this concept, the article presented in Guix magazine is about Inclusive Education, that refers to UNESCO (2015):

An education that wishes to be inclusive in its school perspective, is the one that can offer all children without any distinction due to issues or disability, race, gender or any other difference. The opportunity to perform, to be educated in your ordinary referent group, being a member that acts as an active agent, having the opportunity to learn with and from their peers and in their referent space: the classroom [...]. Inclusion adds complexity to the classroom work because, it implies an alteration of the priorities, of the didactic planning, of the methodologies of work. Editorial Guix (2019: 5).

According to Elizondo (2019: 11) “we have to achieve that each didactic intervention, in educational institutions, purchases the goal to offer and guarantee an inclusive, equal and quality education”. In this didactic proposal all the children in the class participate at the same time with open activities and with different levels, as Corners Methodology enables it to happen.

2.5. Corners Methodology

Finally, according to the teachers and pedagogues, Fernández, Quer & Securún (2008), corners are delimited spaces in class where children, individually, in pairs or small groups do simultaneously different activities. This approach responds to the necessity of establishing

organisation strategies upon different interests, needs and rhythms in children's learning process. Students take part in an active way by building up their knowledge and acquires a greater leadership role. Teachers facilitate them the access to knowledge, promoting interaction with all the educational members in the environment, and enhancing dialogues between peers, therefore, teachers become mediators among young learners.

Learning by corners meet the children's needs and also promotes their enthusiasm to continue learning because, it develops their desires of research, investigation and contributes to their using different techniques and strategies at a time to find a solution to problems that have arisen. In addition, it helps them to realise about their possibilities, to value their progress accepting mistakes and how to deal with them without giving up easily.

As the teachers, Capdet, Merino & Oller (2007: 36) say, "It is important that children can take the opportunity to choose freely the corner in which they want to go to, taking into account that there cannot be more children in that space than the numbers assigned to each Corner". The circumstance of letting them decide improves their criteria and therefore, their autonomy, in fact, dealing with another peer about who goes to which corner, enhances their social abilities as important as their empathy towards them. Finally, corners imply a creative and flexible methodology where children, guided by the proposals, can learn observing, exploring, manipulating, discovering and creating.

3. Polar Corners Methodology

In these next sections, the intention is to explain how Polar corners work. There are 6 corners: Let's read, Game, Audio, Writers, English and White Small World. In this point, the first 5 corners will be explained, and, in the following point, the focus will be the White Small World because the didactic proposal is to set up a Small World as one of the corners working through speaking skills. As a result, it is needed to be mentioned apart because of its importance.

3.1. Why a Polar topic?

Bearing the active listening in mind, that has been analysed in the theoretical background about Reggio Emilia, the main reason for using the Polar topic is to link the English subject to a referent classroom through the book "*What's a Christmas?*" by Down & Fennel (2015). They

are named 'Polar' because they are contextualized on this topic. In short, this book is about an elf that falls out of Santa's sleigh in the South Pole. Four little penguins find him and learn all about Christmas because they have never heard about it.

In addition, I think that winter is the most wonderful season, especially when you are a child. Children look forward to the winter coming, so they can play in a snowy fairy tale, even dream of a fascinating trip to the north country covered with snow to see Santa Claus, reindeers or elves. Moreover, the Curriculum for English in Primary School Education in the Balearic Islands (2014: 10) includes, on one hand, a section about this theme:

Learning a foreign language involves acquiring about the features and cultural facts of different communities and speakers of this language. This learning should be translated into an interest in knowledge about other cultures.

And on the other hand, its content is "identify basic, specific and significant social cultural and social linguistic aspects of daily life (habits... celebrations) ..." (2014: 26). Consequently, this topic should be introduced in the English area.

3.2. Contents, aims and materials

To begin, this section includes the contents and general aims to work during the Polar sessions. They have been retrieved following the Curriculum for English in Primary School Education of the Balearic Islands. In second place, in order to explain the specific aims and the materials used in each corner, a chart (Table 1) will be used because it will be more visual and operative.

Contents:

- Using previous information about the type of activity and topic.
- Colours, numbers, clothes, animals, seasons and natural environment identification.
- Sound, rhythms, intonation patterns.
- Simple expressions.
- Simple text productions.
- Animal and natural environment descriptions: fur, feathers, wings, polar, north, south...
- Communicative functions.
- Simple grammatical structures.

- Space expressions: prepositions, adverbs of location, position and distance.
- Adverbs of manner: slowly, fast...
- Verbal Tense: present simple. -s
- Declarative sentences: birds fly, birds *can* fly.
- Affirmative, negative and interrogative sentences (*wh*- questions, *aux.* questions).
- Paralinguistic procedures: gestures, facial expressions, corporal or visual contact...

General aims:

- To listen and understand oral messages in a specific context with a visual support.
- To read in a comprehensive way different words, sentences and texts.
- To write different words about the topic.
- To identify phonetic and rhythmic qualities and use them.
- To learn to use audiovisual, library and Technological resources in an autonomous way.
- To use abilities and knowledge in previous experiences with other languages to acquire English as a second language.
- To develop the interest of learning English as a foreign language.
- To value English as a communicative resource.
- To be able to reach an agreement.

Table 1: Specific aims and materials of 5 corners

	Skills	Specific aims	Materials
Let's read corner	Reading	To practice intensive reading. To help children to learn how texts are organized.	Sort it out: 10 pieces of colorful cardboard with sentences in different range of difficultness. 10 laminated pictures. Animal description: 10 different sheets of animal descriptions. Colorful pens.
Game corner	Reading Speaking	To develop the ability to co-operate. To compete without being aggressive.	Memory: 8 pairs of laminated cardboard cards (animal pictures and word movements). Domino: 3 types of dominoes: picture and picture, picture and word, word and word.

Audio corner	Listening	To identify the meanings of the vocabulary. To Listen to music for pleasure. To understand the main words in a context related on the topic.	Laminated pictures. Songs: Waddle on the ice. 1 iPod with a double connection and 2 headphones. And a play list 1 computer with double connection and 2 headphones. Pencils, rubbers and sharpeners. Sheets of a list of 10 words.
Writers corner	Writing	To learn vocabulary. To Spell words.	Some join the dot sheets with 7 dots to join. White little board. 8 Word search puzzles Pencils, rubbers and sharpeners. Notebooks, different images and beginning sentences.
English corner	Reading	To read instructions. To develop Eye-hand co-ordination. To put in contact with English culture.	Pieces of thin card cut into pieces of 15cm by 10cm, pieces of crepe paper 30cm by 20cm, strips of string or ribbon, sweets and sweet papers to decorate. Triangles of green card, sweet papers, bottle tops, and other pieces on bright waste. Different objects related on English culture: coins, magazines...

3.3. Lesson planning

When starting the elaboration of the didactic proposal, it is necessary to structure a few elements that will be used to identify the programmation. These elements are the first decisions that a teacher must take into account: the school and its sociocultural context, the educative cycle and level of the students. In this final project, this didactic proposal is destined to learners that are in 2nd primary education (7 or 8 years old) in the Balearic Islands. There are 21 students in this class. English is taught twice per week and only one session each week will be to work by corners. I would like to introduce an example, Figure 1, of the programmed sessions to help to visualise what I am referring to, introductory sessions and then corner sessions:

November 2019						
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
				1	2	3
4 Session 1 (introductory) Re-tell the story	5	6	7 Session 2 (introductory) New vocabulary	8	9	10
11 Session 3 Corners	12	13	14 English lesson	15	16	17
18 Session 4 Corners	19	20	21 English lesson	22	23	24
25 Session 5 Corners	26	27	28 English lesson	29	30	
December 2019						
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
						1
2 Session 6 Corners	3	4	5 English lesson	6	7	8
9 Session 7 Corners	10	11	12 English lesson	13	14	15
16 Session 8 Corners	17	18	19 English lesson	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

Figure 1: Example of programmed sessions

In the other sessions that are not worked by corners (English lessons) there will be some activities related to Christmas related to specific vocabulary from the Polar topic.

3.4. Space and time arrangement in Polar corner sessions

There are 6 groups of children because there are 6 corners and 21 students in this primary class. There will be 3 groups of 4 members and 3 groups of 3 members, because the corners are established to work with no more than 4 people in each corner, and this way teachers can have greater control over what's happening in each one. In order to distribute and organize students into groups when working by corners, the teacher will group the students, but according to

Capdet, Merino & Oller (2007) children will choose freely the corner in which they want to go to in each session, without repeating place.

Every session is about 50 minutes and there is warm-up (10'), developing (30') and ending part (10'). In each session, groups will begin in a different corner, that means that they will always start in a new space. This chart, Table 2, is an example of how sessions could be programmed:

Table 2: Weekly session rotation

Corner sessions	Let's read corner	Audio corner	Writers corner	Game corner	English corner	White Small World corner
Session 3	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5	Group 6
Session 4	Group 6	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5
Session 5	Group 5	Group 6	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
Session 6	Group 4	Group 5	Group 6	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Session 7	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5	Group 6	Group 1	Group 2
Session 8	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5	Group 6	Group 1

This chart information will be hung up on a wall, so children can preview what they will do in the next corner session to help situate themselves. This could be a way to favour the autonomy when children work, due to their necessities and complementing their needs.

3.5. Polar corners activities

After the introductory sessions 1 and 2, the next 6 Polar corner sessions, students will work by corners. Each session as mentioned before, has three parts: a warm-up part, developing part (that will be explained in further paragraphs) and a closing part.

In the warm-up part, firstly, there will be an assembly to solve different problems that can arise, for example, the number of students that can be in a corner. Then, the children will receive instructions about them. Afterwards, the whole group will take part in some activities which will be presented in order to warm-up, one of them could be to listen and sing the song: *Waddle on the ice*.

In order to finish the session, in the closing stage, the teacher and children will speak about the session, arrange the room and finally sing the *Goodbye* song.

During the developing part, the students work in corners. In this point there are some examples of the activities that children could do in each one:

- Let's read corner

- Sort it out. The children read different sentences that have been mixed up together from the book. Then they have to join those sentences that correspond to the images.
- Animal description. The children read the different sheets of animal descriptions. Children have to colour them the animal according to the description.

- Game corner

- Memory. There are two sets of cards, one with animal pictures and the other one with the movement that they make. Children match the animals with the movements. For example: Bears swim, sea lions swim, penguins walk... the children put the cards upside down and then they have to turn them over in order to join a pair of cards. This type of activities allows children to join one name with two verbs, if they are able to.
- Dominos. There are different dominos, picture with picture, picture with word or word with word, depending on the children they will pick one or another. For example, they have to join an iceberg picture with another iceberg picture; an iceberg picture card with an iceberg word card or an iceberg word card with an iceberg word card.

- Audio corner

- Songs (they can choose two songs): From the iPod they listen to it and from the computer they can listen and watch it too. Ones are *Waddle on the ice* or *Waddle Emperor Penguin* because the rhythm is fun, and they have the same structure, so it is easy to repeat and memorise. The second one is *Walking in the air*. It is a different song and I could say that it is an evocation to my childhood. If I remember my school stage,

this song comes to my mind. So, I would include it in the sessions because I believe that when you live what you teach, you can transmit it much better, then learning is deeper and emotive.

- The children listen to one of the songs and choose the pictures that fit with what they have heard. Pictures of winter, clothes...
- Listen to a song for the pleasure of listening to music.
- Let's watch and listen. Videos form part of many children's lives nowadays so they could be a very useful tool in the English language classroom: "Videos provide a ready-made context for the presentation of new vocabulary, structures, and functions, as well as providing a stimulus for speaking...The visuals help children to understand the situation and therefore the language...". Philips (1999: 126). A few criteria have been followed to choose the videos:
 - o They are taken from websites that are for children with an educational proposal.
 - o The length: They have a short sequence (5 minutes).
 - o As they are authentic videos, I have chosen those which have as much visual support as possible in order to help children to understand the main words.
- There are some sheets with a list of 10 words. Children cross off the words when they appear in the video. They can choose 4 videos from National Geographic kids' website:
 - o Polar bears rolling around
 - o Hanging out with chinstrap penguins
 - o Mission animal rescue: Wolves
 - o Mission animal rescue: polar bears
- Writers corner
- Joining the dots. Working in group, one child (the thinker) thinks of a word and writes dashes on a white little board to represent each of its letters. The rest of the children try to guess the letters.

- Word search puzzles. The children have to find words hidden among other letters. The words that they have to find can be horizontally, vertically, diagonally and from right to left or bottom to top as well. Children would play one or another depending on their necessities and needs.
- Write your story. The children have loads of pictures, they have to choose some to stick them in their notebooks and write a sentence under each one to create a story. Depending on the level, the teacher can provide the beginning of each sentence which they complete with a word and a picture. This activity could also be done as group task so each group would produce a different story.

- English corner

The children make different objects to decorate the class and the school in this time of the year, the English corner is contextualized to Christmas activities. In addition, according to Inclusive Education, mentioned in the theoretical background, in this corner there will be different books related to the Polar topic in order to be consulted or read, one of them would be *What's a Christmas?*

- Crackers. The children read easy instructions to create crackers step by step.
- Make a Christmas tree. The children read instructions to make a pretended tree.

Children can take their crackers and Christmas tree home if they celebrate Christmas.

- White Small World

Children interact with the elements of the Small World speaking out aloud with the vocabulary learnt on the Polar topic. As this is the main corner of this final project, it will be explained deeply in the following point.

4. Setting up the White Small World

This section is divided into two parts. Firstly, I will talk about what the White Small World is and describe the procedures of the research (the selection and description of information about polar animals and materials used in it); and finally, how to apply the White Small World in class.

Concerning the name of this Small World, “*White*”, it refers to the icy, cold, snowy, frosty polar regions. In the internet Polar Small Worlds, Artic Small Worlds or Icy Small Worlds already appear as a game resource. I found it necessary to distinguish it from all of them because of the background analysis I have made on it.

4.1. What the White Small World is and procedures to set it up

The White Small World is a representation of the polar regions in a minor scale. Each pole is represented in one different tray and its elements and figures in it are related to the polar ecosystem, North Pole and South Pole: animals (polar bear, penguins or seals) and the landscape (ice blocks, snow or landmass).

Inspired by Reggio Emilia, where documentation is a basic principle, first of all I wanted to investigate and document myself about the Polar topic: both poles; animals, not only which ones are in each pole but how they live in groups, in which landscape they are visualised; the life in the poles, etc., in order to complement subjects in an interdisciplinary way (maths, science, English...). And, to do so, I have been researching through *National Geographic*, *Active Wildlife* and *Cool Antarctica* websites. Secondly, I have obtained the elements that will be introduced in the White Small World. And finally, how I would place them in order to set it up.

I will not explain all the characteristics about the life in the poles, but after the research I made, it is necessary to clarify a few differences between them, because the elements in the White Small World are not introduced randomly, and the materials that are part of it, are essential to understand its function. Each element, each material, has been studied and has a theoretical background as seen previously.

As the investigation is concerned, first I will talk about animals and afterwards about the materials used to represent the landscapes in these polar regions.

Bearing this in mind, I have realised that the most common mistake people commit is to join polar bears and penguins simulating they live together. There are no penguins in the North Pole and there are no polar bears in the South Pole. Therefore, I had to be able to distinguish each one, in order to represent both poles, in a realistic way. There are at least fifty types of different animals in both poles. In order to include the different animals which I have chosen, I have taken into account some criteria, and with these principles, I have created a chart (Table 3) to represent them as follows: if they are permanent or visitors (they are permanent, when animals are totally adapted to the climate in the circumpolar regions and are prepared anatomically to live in very low temperatures; and visitors, if they live near the tree line of the tundra and migrate to the far north to breed, to hunt or to search for cooler temperatures). In addition, if they are marine, land or flying animals, also in which pole they live, if they are endangered species and how they group. As a result, the chosen animals are arctic wolves, polar bears, walruses, seals, reindeers, snowy owls, colossal squids, orcas, penguins, snow petrels, blue whales and albatrosses:

Table 3: Classification of animals in the White Small World

Animal	Habitat		Environment			Pole		Endangered	Family/grouping
	P	V	M	L	F	Artic	Antarctic		
Artic wolves	x			x		x			Packs up to 12 pups
Polar bears	x		x	x		x		x	Mother with 2 cups
Walruses	x		x	x		x		x	Herds of hundreds
Seals	x		x			x	x		Solitary or large groups
Sea lions	x		x	x		x			Herds of hundreds
Reindeers		x		x		x			Up to 20-30 members
Snowy Owls		x			x	x			Solitary or up to 3 members
Colossal Squids	x		x				x		Solitary
Orcas		x	x				x	x	Up to 40 members
Penguins	x		x	x			x		Colony of hundreds
Snow petrels		x			x		x		Encountered in hundreds rarely in thousands
Blue Whales		x	x				x	x	Solitary or in pairs

Albatrosses		x			x		x		Solitary or up to 2 members
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(P): Permanent; (V) Visitors; (M) Marine; (L) Land; (F) Fly.

I would like to explain that the animal grouping is important, because in a Small World, every type of family should be represented with two, three or more members, if it is the case, single parental family, two adults and one son/daughter, son and daughter of separated parents, etc. So, children can identify themselves according to the theoretical background about “projected play” mentioned before in Learning by playing section. In this way, in the White Small World, I do not introduce five polar bears which would represent a family with five members, because polar bears mostly go in groups of three. Consequently, there is a narrow relation between the members in a child’s family and the animal grouping.

Furthermore, I have explored about all of these animals in the Table 1. As an example of which features I have taken into account, to introduce them in the White Small World, I would like to describe briefly some characteristics about seven of them. This is in order to be as realistic as possible and to be able to use the appropriate vocabulary, when it is presented to the children (packs, coat, marine mammal, tusks, flippers, litters, herds, pups, calves, dens, chicks, nest...).

The arctic wolves live their whole lives above the northern tree line in the Arctic tundra of North America and Greenland, they are permanent. Their coat is very thick and usually white, but it can be quite grey in some individuals. They live in packs and up to twelve pups are born at a time. This is the reason why I have decided to introduce in the White Small World four elements (an adult and three pups).

Polar bears live and breed entirely in the far north, they live their whole lives above the northern tree line in the Arctic, so, they are also permanent. They are regarded more as a marine mammal than a land mammal, as they hunt largely at the edge of sea-ice. They are listed as a threatened species because of the potential loss of their sea-ice habitat, resulting from the climate change. As usually two pups are born at a time, normally twins, I have decided to introduce an adult and a pair of cubs.

Walruses are marine mammals that can be easy to recognise with its large tusks, long whiskers and short flippers. They are two species of walruses in the Atlantic and Pacific Ocean but

always maintaining themselves in the Arctic Circle. Groups of walrus are called herds, and they gather in herds of hundreds on the ice. They are endangered species because humans kill them to obtain their tusks and their fat. And the way that I have found to represent them is to introduce four adults.

I have had special difficulties in researching about seals and sea lions, because there are many species and sub-species and not all of them live in the poles. Nevertheless, I wanted to include them in the White Small World because, it is common that people confuse them. Seals are distinguished from the sea lions because they do not have ears. They group in several hundreds and I decided to include two adults and two pup seals, and two adults and one sea lion cub.

The reindeers are animals from the far north tree line in the Arctic tundra and including many islands. They live within families (mothers and calves) within herds of various sizes, normally in groups of 20-30 individuals. This is why I decide to represent this amount by including three adult reindeers.

About the snowy owl, unlike most owls, they are diurnal. They live in the tundra and Great Plains, treeless places and wide-open spaces especially in North America. They nest on the tundra and they may raise ten or more chicks per nest, so they are visitors. In the White Small World there is one adult owl, an immature female that represents her growing up stage when leaving the nest.

And finally, the colossal squid is a very mysterious creature and can measure up to 14 meters. They are deep water species and have been seen mostly in Antarctic waters. There is not much information about Colossal Squids population, and this is the reason why I decided to include only one.

In this next section I would like to make reference to which are the elements and materials I have taken into account to set up the White Small World landscape. Firstly, each pole will be represented in a different tray (to distinguish Arctic and Antarctic regions), this way children will be able to identify the similarities and the differences between each pole. In general terms, the South Pole contains large mountains of ice on top of the landmass, loose blocks of ice and Antarctic Ocean; and the North Pole is a gigantic layer of floating ice, the end of the tundra landmass and Arctic Ocean.

So as to represent this complex scene, I have used these elements: different coloured stones, pieces of cork imitating wood, gravel and porexpan to imitate the end of the tundra landscape. Big and small blocks of real ice dyed with blue tempera (so students can see the effect of the ice when melting). Water and different decorative blue and transparent elements in order to represent the colour of the Ocean. White spray and artificial snow to simulate real snow and the white colour that predominates in polar regions. Besides, a fish tank frozen mountain, to symbolise the frozen mountains in the Antarctic. There is also an Earth Globe to represent where the poles are located, and a thread that joins each position to identify each pole to the tray that it belongs to. In addition, inspired by the quality of space and environment in Reggio Emilia, there are two light boxes, each one beneath every tray. They allow the children to observe the effect of lights and shadows and create an atmosphere to simulate short sunlight days within months of darkness.

In order to experiment with different textures and sensations, in each pole there are real ice blocks so children can experiment with cold temperatures. There is also water to manipulate wet and dry elements. There are water gel balls to contrast with the stones (soft and tough textures).

I am conscious that children will mix up the elements of the White Small World when playing, but as we read in the previous sections, the aim is not to keep the animals in the same position, in fact it will be the opposite, students should move, interact and use the vocabulary with them. For example, polar bears are presented on the surface of floating ice blocks, because they are considered marine mammals, as it is mentioned before, but probably children might want to move them in order to experiment with them.

Finally, I would like to comment that the only element that is not realistic, is the protagonist of the story, the elf. So, to make the difference between the animals (that do exist) and the main character (fantasy), it is represented by a laminated image attached on a decorative clip.

I would like to reflect that it is not a very expensive proposal, considering that many elements are and can be reused. And this is an aspect that a teacher must take into account when working at a school.

4.2. The White Small World introduced in the classroom

Now explained the elements that have been taken into account, the next section will describe how to apply the White Small World when presenting it in class. The White Small World is used in three different moments: firstly, to support the storytelling, secondly to introduce the vocabulary and grammar structures, and finally as a speaking corner.

Firstly, supporting the storytelling: once the child (who brought the book) has explained the story in the class, the English teacher tells it again with the support of the White Small World in order to build the story up, little by little, presenting the polar animals. For example, when the teacher names an animal, she will point it out or she will move it.

Secondly, in the following session, the teacher presents and uses the White Small World to introduce vocabulary, so children become familiarised with it, for instance, the animal characteristics (flippers, wings, fur, etc.); landscape features (continent, snow, ice, etc.); and grammatical structures such as affirmative or negative sentences (“*The penguins swim*”, “*The fur of the polar bear is white*”, “*There aren’t polar bears in the South pole*”). At the same time, the teacher could include interrogative questions in order to motivate children to answer back in English (“*Can the wolves swim?*” “*No, the wolves can’t swim*”). While she is moving the animals, she can check out the students’ previous knowledge by asking other questions. In addition, the teacher is facing the students, there is eye contact, so it is easier to control and check their reactions and knowledge. The questions could relate to the names of the animals, what they eat, where they live, how they move, for example:

- “*Once upon a time as the sunset on Christmas Eve a sound boomed across the South Pole, do you know where the South Pole is?*”
- “*Four little penguins walked alone..., do you know what a penguin is? Have you ever seen one? Can a penguin swim?*” (she uses gestures to represent the questions), etc.

Finally, in the next sessions, the White Small World is introduced as a speaking corner where children can put into practise the new vocabulary and grammatical structures learnt. In this part of the process the evaluation will provide the teacher with information about achievements and errors. It is a valuable starting point for the improvement of the following lessons and for the correction of the mistakes made in the past. For this propose, each session will be evaluated

with the students at the end. Moreover, the interaction in this corner will be observed during the session and registered in the Figure 2 (observation register). This chart includes the contents and specific aims to work on the White Small World following the Curriculum for English in Primary School Education of the Balearic Islands.

Session n°:	Date:	Speaking corner: White Small World	Students:	
Contents about the polar topic		Aims	Acquired	Observation register
2.1. Production strategies:				
Oral text productions worked previously	To know how to apply basic strategies to produce oral texts			
The use of paralinguistic procedures: point at objects, gestures...	To accomplish communication functions about the topic: exchange information			
2.3. Communicative functions:				
Descriptions (places, objects...)	To produce basic information about the topic			
2.4. Syntactic-discursive structures:				
Relation on logical expressions (and, or, but, because...)	To know and use oral lexical situations related on their interest			
Affirmative sentences and short answers				
Negative sentences and short answers				
Declarative simple sentences (can)				
There is /There are				
Action verbs (walk, jump, swim...)				
Quantity (singular or plural: cardinal numerals)				
Space expression: prepositions:				
2.5. Frequent use of oral lexicon (production)				
Colour, numbers, object names, animals, natural environment identification.				

Figure 2: Observation sheet for evaluation

5. Implementation of the White Small World

I was able to present in a session the White Small World in a 4th grade class at primary school, but not being able to follow the steps of the didactic proposal. I introduced it to observe the effect it caused in children. As it is a resource to encourage children to play, touch and experiment, I had to take advantage of the situation to reflect in this final project the children's reactions.

Firstly, before children came to class: I set up the White Small World (Figure 3 and 4) behind a curtain, I arranged the rest of the class to make it comfortable (when reading the book for them) and prepared the story to be projected on the digital board, so they would have visual support while I told them the story.



Figure 3: setting up the White Small World



Figure 4: setting up the North Pole in the White Small World

After the storytelling, I asked them to try to explain what they had understood and, helping themselves, they achieved to explain it. Afterwards, I lifted up the curtain, presented the White

Small World and told them to investigate and experiment with it, they were very surprised, excited and nervous.

After a while, I asked them to come back to their seats to talk about the White Small World. I had planned that some concepts should appear such as family, animal names, ice, cold, elf, snow and all those in which the White Small World was inspired through the story and the Polar regions. And my surprise and satisfaction were, when in fact even more of all those words emerged from the children. All those elements were commented in the class, moreover, they had the ability to relate an ice block that was melting, with previous lessons in which the school project had been investigating on climate change. A student connected the ice block melting through a sadness feeling with a video that I had presented in class about a Greenpeace ice sculpture: *Our future is disappearing*. For this intervention, I was not only careful in the development of the White Small World, but also in the way I presented it, I asked a partner to document the whole process through images.

Finally, I have been reflecting that this intervention has caused very positive effects. Regardless being able to dedicate all the established sessions and working them through corners. As a result, I think that this didactic proposal of my final project for a degree in primary school teaching, could be a very powerful tool to introduce Small Worlds in Primary School Education.

6. Conclusion

I observed during my training periods that the English area is usually not contextualized, so I wanted to elaborate a didactic proposal in my final project to link the English area with the referent class. I wondered; how could it be done? What type of situation could I take advantage of? I have realized that through a story or any situation that happens in the referent classroom, it can be introduced into the English subject. Therefore, the teacher has to have an active listening, so in this way, learning takes great meaning for children and true learning occurs because the child is the protagonist of his learning process.

On the one hand, it has been a complex research because, I have not been able to find many examples that could guide me elaborating this didactic proposal: A Small World, as a speaking corner, in a 2nd grade primary classroom, in the English area (English as a Foreign Language). However, I have been inspired by some schools, ones work by corners in Infant Schools, and

others where Small Worlds are built mostly in Kindergarten. I would like to mention them here because they have been part of my encouragement, motivation and stimulation: Institut de la infància (a non-profit association created to improve children and teenager's care through education); Swinemoor (Primary School in Yorkshire); St Thomas (Primary School in Devon); Riera de Ribes (Public School in Catalonia), El Pi (Public School in Sant Pere de Ribes, Catalonia); Serralavella (Public School in Catalonia); El Puig (Cooperative School in Catalonia) and Sesmon d'Oló (Public School in Catalonia).

On the other hand, through this final project, I have learnt about Small Words. I have discovered that a well done studied Small World, could be a good resource to enhance children's interaction, to help learners acquire new vocabulary. They support Inclusive Education because students can use it in different ways. They are representations of the real world in miniatures, so they promote creativity and, as they are a contextualized game, the foreign language becomes useful to children.

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