Exploring the Potential of Authentic Picturebooks in a Combined Grade Level Classroom

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Abstract

A combined grade level classroom (mixed-grade classroom) is a distinctive educational environment accommodating two or more grade levels. Teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) in such a setting requires a unique approach. In this context, the English teacher engages with multiple classes simultaneously, employing a blend of direct and indirect teaching methods. However, this teaching methodology may inadvertently neglect essential language learning skills due to an increased emphasis on individual student work. Implementation of collaborative teaching materials, such as authentic picturebooks, presents an opportunity to enhance the efficiency and coherence of lessons, facilitate language acquisition, and foster the equitable development of all language skills.

This research seeks to investigate the potential of authentic picturebooks as primary teaching materials in combined grade level classrooms to mitigate the need for extensive individual student work and promote direct teaching across all grade levels. The study focuses on The Gruffalo (1999), a picturebook by Julia Donaldson, employed in four English language lessons within a combined two grade level classroom in a Croatian district school. Various picturebook-related activities and tasks aligned with the objectives outlined in the National Curriculum for the subject English Language will be implemented during these lessons. Preliminary findings indicate that students readily acquire vocabulary, phrases, and grammatical structures, while also benefiting from increased opportunities for communication in the English language. This, in turn, has a notable positive impact on their oral communication skills.

Key words

authentic picturebooks, combined grade level classroom, EFL teaching, The Gruffalo

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