



Nursery rhymes in early language learning: an underused resource

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Outline

- Definitions
- Why use rhymes?
- Selecting and presenting rhymes
- Experiencing rhymes
- Rhyme sequences
- Four stages for using rhymes
- A tip and a warning



Have a think!

Nursery rhymes

What are they and which ones do you know?



Nursery rhymes

Nursery rhymes are the
'happy heritage of our oral tradition'

(Opie & Opie 1955)

A **nursery rhyme** is a traditional poem or song for children, sometimes they are referred to as *Mother Goose Rhymes*.



Why should we include nursery rhymes ...



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Nursery rhymes ...

- Are familiar to children
- Allow for differentiated participation
- Provide meaningful / motivating exposure to the target language
- Offer opportunities for memorization of chunks of language
- Provide natural exposure to rhythm and stress of English
- Expose children to different sounds, syllables, and rhyming words
- Contribute to understanding the concept of narrative
- Are important for literacy development
- Contribute to the development of the whole child
- Provide developmentally appropriate exposure to culture

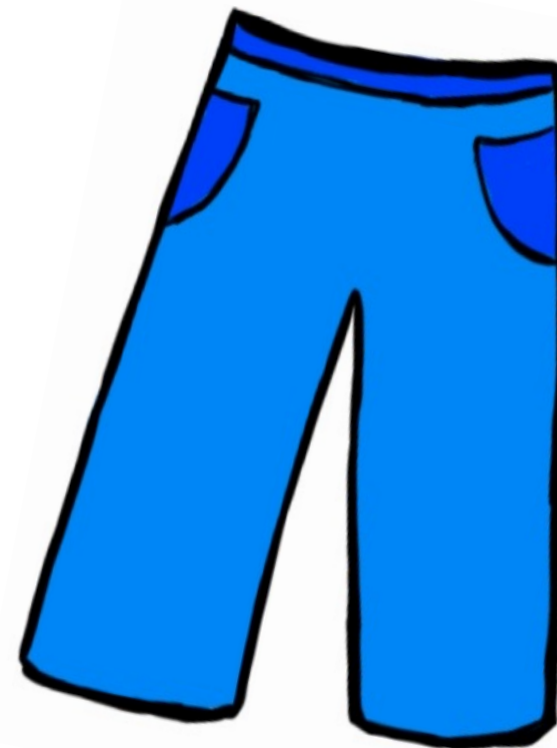
Nursery rhymes ...

In EFL contexts children need to ...



... the rhyme

Nursery rhymes: Diddle, Diddle Dumpling



Nursery rhymes: Diddle, diddle dumpling



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Nursery rhymes ...

How can we select rhymes?

In groups of four or five:

- Look at the rhyme
- Think of some actions to use
- Have a little practice
- Be prepared to share your rhyme
- Would *you* use this rhyme?



Nursery rhymes and their sequences

- Sequencing is about recognising the beginning, middle and end of a narrative,
- Sequencing is the ability to retell the events in the order they appeared

Understanding and recognising these sequences contributes to children's ability to comprehend a written text.

1. mini-narratives
2. instances of cause and effect
3. 'question and answer' patterns



Nursery rhymes – a mini-narrative

*Incy Wincy Spider,
climbed up the water spout.*

A beginning

*Down came the rain,
and washed the spider out.*

A problem

*Out came the sun,
and dried up all the rain.*

A solution

*And Incy Wincy Spider,
climbed up the spout again.*

A happy ending



Nursery rhymes – an instance of cause and effect

*I hear thunder!
I hear thunder!
Oh! don't you?
Oh! don't you?*

*Pitter, patter raindrops,
Pitter, patter raindrops,
I'm wet through!
I'm wet through!*

The instances

- 1 A cause (The sound of thunder.)
- 2 An effect (It begins to rain.)
- 3 A cause (The rain drops)
- 4 An effect (You get wet!)



Nursery rhymes – a question and answer pattern

*Pussy cat, pussy cat, where have you been?
I've been down to London to visit the Queen.
Pussy cat, pussy cat, what did you there?
I frightened a little mouse, under her chair.*

The sequence

Question 1: (Where did you go?)

Answer 1: (To London)

Question 2: (What did you do?)

Answer 2: (Frightened a mouse)



Nursery rhymes – a question and answer sequence

Look at your rhyme.

- Find the sequence

Is it:

1. a mini-narrative
2. an instance of cause and effect
3. a 'question and answer' pattern
4. something else?



Nursery rhymes: Stages

Stage 1: Children **HEAR** the rhyme

Stage 2: Children **RECOGNIZE** the rhyme

Stage 3: Children **PRODUCE** the rhyme

Stage 4: Children **OWN** the rhyme



Nursery rhymes: Stage 1

Children **HEAR** the rhyme

- They hear it.

Children see the visual sequence

- They hear it and see it.

Children join in with the actions

- They hear it, see it and experience it

Nursery rhymes: Stage 1

Children see the visual sequence



(Re)Connecting with nursery rhymes

Building Connections / 33rd APPI Conference / Lisbon / 3 - 5 May 2019



Nursery rhymes: Stage 2

Children **RECOGNIZE** the rhyme

- They sequence the visual aids

Repetition is essential

- Children begin to say bits of the rhyme
 1. The final word of a line
 2. The final phrase
 3. A whole line
 4. Then another line
 5. ... until most children can say the rhyme without prompting.

Nursery rhymes: Stage 3

Children **PRODUCE** the rhyme

- Recite the rhyme in chorus
- Recite in groups
- Sequence the visuals
- Perform in groups / pairs / alone

A rhyme time routine



Nursery rhymes: Stage 4

Children **OWN** the rhyme
They *play* with the rhyme:

- with puppets,
- a felt board,
- through role-play
- sequencing visuals

During free play /
English learning area



Nursery rhymes: Stage 4

Children **OWN** the rhyme

They *select* the rhyme:

- during rhyme time

During circle time



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Nursery rhymes: Stage 4

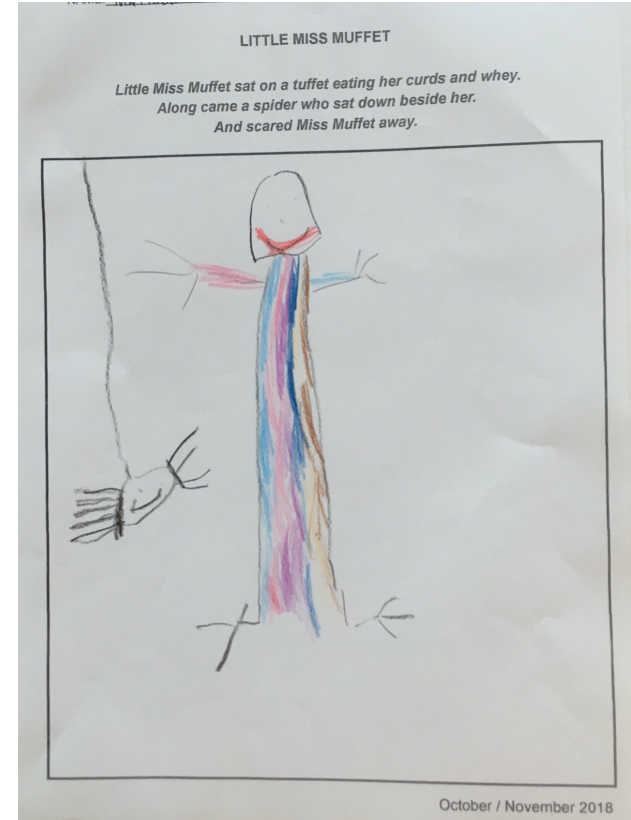
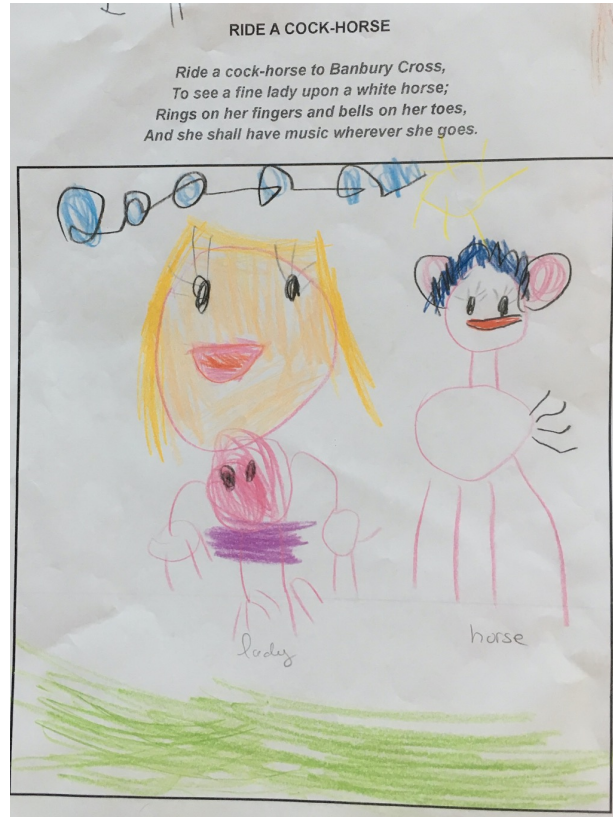
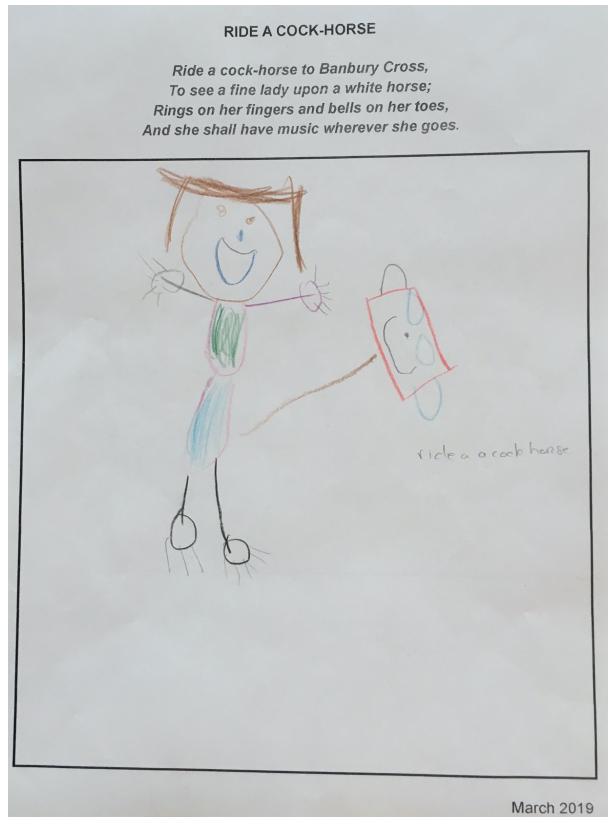
Children **OWN** the rhyme

They *draw* the rhyme

- They talk about their drawings
- They create their own book of nursery rhymes

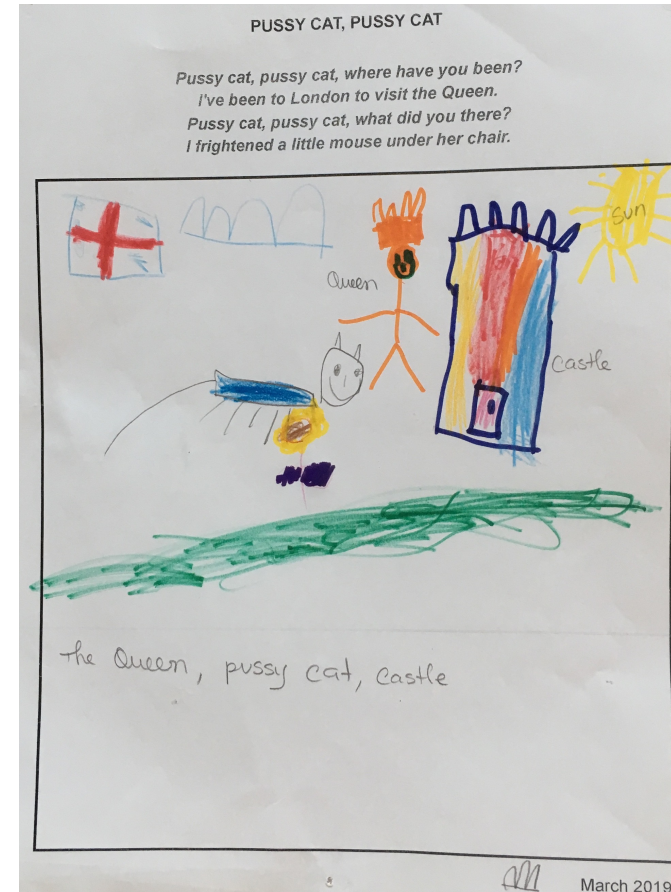
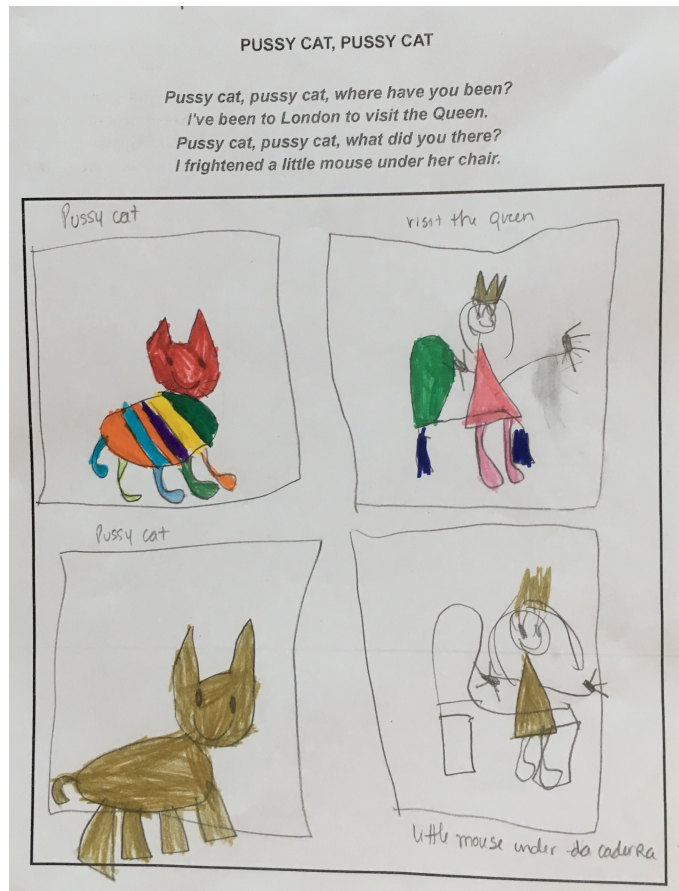
Nursery rhymes: Stage 4

Rhymes drawings 4-5 years old



Nursery rhymes: Stage 4

Rhymes drawings 5-6 years old





Nursery rhymes: Stage 4

Children **OWN** the rhyme

They *share* the rhyme with others

- ✓ They take it home and share
- ✓ They point to displays and share (e.g. posters / drawings etc)
- ✓ They have mini-books and share

Nursery rhymes: Self-assessment

Non-verbal scale to stimulate reflection

How well can
you say the
rhyme?

I can mime it

I can say
bits of it

I can say
all of it



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A TIP! Nursery rhymes in picturebooks

- ✓ Share different illustrated versions
- ✓ Leave picturebooks in the children's library
- ✓ Share picturebooks which make visual references to nursery rhymes



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A WARNING! Nursery rhyme animations

These may *not* be helping your children:

- Rhymes are for listening to ...
- Animations do not allow response by the teacher e.g. pausing, repeating, nodding, encouraging.
- Animations rarely allow for response by the child
- Setting up an animation may mean a break in the session flow = detrimental for some children.

Animated versions can be introduced as an *additional* form of exposure,
not the *only* form of exposure.



What's your take away?

Have a think!

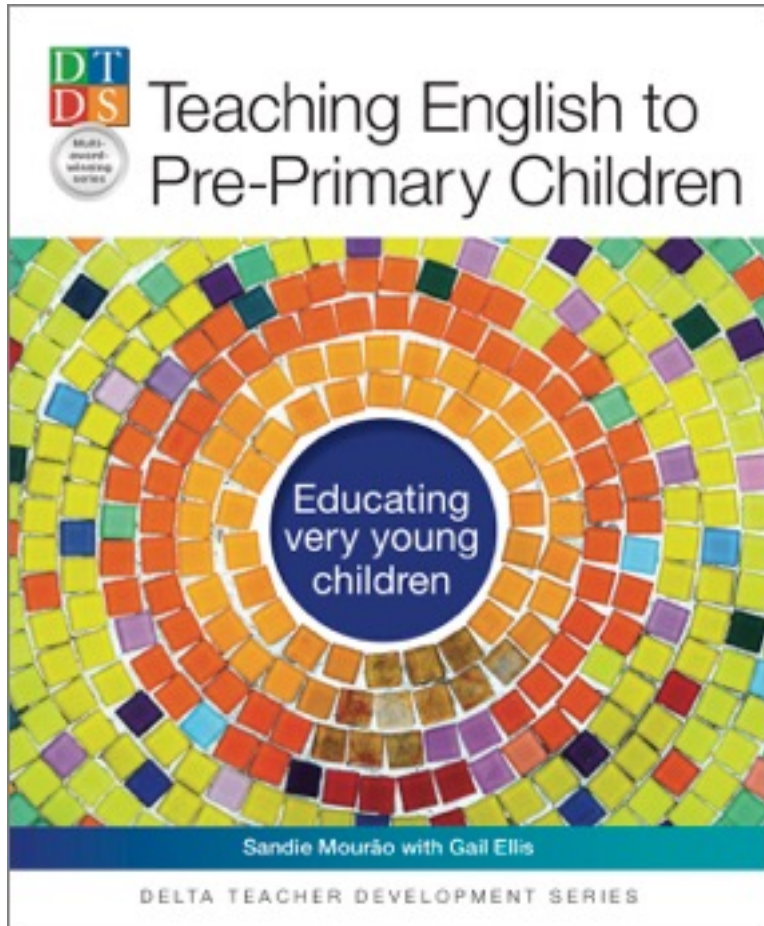
- ✓ Something I didn't know ...
- ✓ Something I was reminded of ...
- ✓ Something I'd like to try out ...
- ✓ Something I'd like to know more about ...



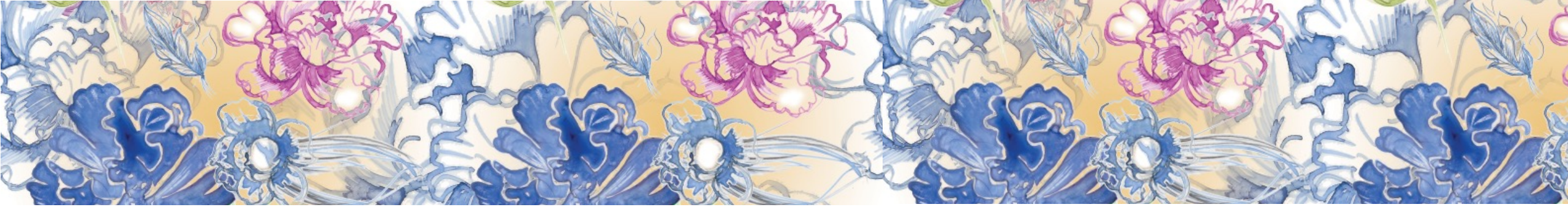
This is what we did!

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- Why use rhymes
- Selecting and presenting rhymes
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Some publicity!



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Thank you!

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