THE POSITIVE EFFECTS OF IMPLEMENTING STORYTELLING

IN EFL CLASSES

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Abstract

Finding innovative strategies and materials to apply in the EFL classroom is one of the

biggest concerns that most teachers have; this is the reason why this study aims to analyze,

through an exhaustive documental research, the positive effects of the implementation of

Storytelling in EFL classes. The studies taken into account for this analysis were gathered

from the national and international contexts, and dated from 2010-2018. The use of

Storytelling has a great impact on all types of population, especially on young learners, since

this research demonstrated that it contributes in a constructive way in the EFL learning

process; also, this study underlined the importance that teachers' role have when applying this

strategy in their classes, as they act as mediators between the knowledge coming from the

stories and the learners.

Encontrar estrategias y materiales innovadores para aplicar en el aula de ILE es una de

las mayores preocupaciones que tienen la mayoría de los maestros; esta es la razón por la cual

este estudio tiene como objetivo analizar, a través de una exhaustiva investigación

documental, los efectos positivos de la implementación de Storytelling en clases de ILE. Los

estudios tomados en cuenta para este análisis se obtuvieron de los contextos nacional e

internacional y dataron de 2010-2018. El uso de Storytelling tiene un gran impacto en todos

los tipos de población, especialmente en los estudiantes jóvenes, ya que esta investigación demostró que contribuye de manera constructiva en el proceso de aprendizaje ILE; además, este estudio resaltó la importancia que tiene el papel de los docentes al aplicar esta estrategia en sus clases, ya que actúan como mediadores entre el conocimiento que proviene de las historias y de los alumnos.

Key words

Storytelling, Literacy, Motivation, Variations, Language skills, EFL classroom, Positive effects.

Introduction

English is a language of remarkable prominence in the 21st century; currently, the world counts with 1,121 million English speakers, taking into account native and non-native. It is now the most spoken language being followed in number by Mandarin Chinese, with 1,107 million speakers (Simons & Charles, 2018). Its relevance is not only due to the number of speakers but also to the amount of information that can be found in this language as it is estimated that around 54% of internet content and 50% of the scientific periodicals are written in English (Prah & Pardo, 2016). This language is spoken in 118 countries around the world, and it is the official language in 59 of them (Simons & Charles, 2018).

Taking into account the importance of English in today's world, it is fundamental to reflect upon the demands English as Foreign Language (EFL) teachers role implies during the process of learning a new language since teachers are the mediators between students and language. Teachers' effort to provide a good environment to foster motivation and to show an engaging way to learn a new language by innovating in the classroom, creates inevitably a

series of challenges related to different aspects of education (Gómez, 2010). Regarding EFL classes, they need to be captivating and sufficiently active to catch students' attention and interest in all types of population. As an example, children learn by playing and interacting with their environment; for them, it is also essential to feel comfortable and safe with their teachers and partners. However, this type of learner tends to lose interest quickly because their attention span range is short due to their age. For teachers, this last feature represents a situation they have to tackle in the educational field, as they need to take advantage of the language development stage in which their students are; since, at this point, they assimilate and incorporate all the information from the context around them (Krashen & Terrell, 1983).

Regarding input presentation, it is indispensable to provide suitable tools in order to help students to learn the language; since, the teachers' labor is to foster the abilities in language skills, and to make sure that students receive a comprehensible input (Ray & Seely, 2004); supporting this idea, Krashen & Terrell state that the learning of a language depends mainly on understandable input (1983). To achieve an effective language learning process, teachers need to connect the learning with their students' lives, and stories are an adequate way to get in touch with learners' feelings due to the close relationship they can have with real-life (Denning, 2005). Likewise, stories can add personal components that allow students to understand and create a connection with them (Hansen, 2008).

A variety of experiences lived in the educational context have exposed factors that influence the learning processes and demand teachers' attention. Although teachers have always reflected upon their practices and the diverse dynamics that can arise inside the classroom (Zeichner, 2013), it remains fundamental in the 21st century, which shows how essential is a reflection for both learning and teaching process. Many studies related to teachers' challenges and necessities exist, describing the influence those ones have on

students. Nevertheless, there are some reported specific features related to those situations with which teachers struggle, and those represent essential areas in the EFL classroom. Authors such as Dornyei (1998), Gardner (1982), Hadfield & Dörnyei (2013) expound the necessity of captivating students and engaging them with classes, nonetheless, explaining how complicated it is for teachers; in order to understand and solve these teachers' challenges, it is necessary to distinguish the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation proposed by Deci and Ryan (2002) as they provide insights to improve teaching strategies. Attention span is another characteristic teachers commonly struggle with since many situations occur in the classroom that hinders students' attention. Additionally, it is necessary to foster and maintain creativity in order to transcend the specific knowledge of the subject (Brown, 2007) because of the positive effects on students' and teachers' processes.

The EFL teacher faces more than motivational barriers in the classroom, there is also a high demand coming from the Information and Communication Technology (ICT henceforth) area, as in developing countries are venturing into this field following the steps of developed countries. It is undeniable that ICT tools are changing how students learn and teachers teach, even though little attention has been paid to the pedagogy that is behind the implementation of these tools in the classrooms (Jurema, Lima, Dalmau, & Filho, 1997). This is the main reason why opportunities, where teachers can reflect upon their practices to develop instructional strategies and confront real-life situations with their students, are an urgency in today's EFL classrooms (Romeo, 1998). Furthermore, developed and developing countries are using tools such as computers, tablets, projectors, among others. This approach to the use of technology in the classroom has been creating the necessity of new educational reforms that can benefit all the communities in order to adapt to the new tools (Pelgrum, 2001). Following this line of thought, it is crucial to look for new ways of implementing and adapting these ICT

tools in education that can respond to the scholar and 21st century needs, especially in EFL teaching and learning processes, as they represent the field of interest this paper.

Part of the success of the language learning depends on teachers' creativity to use different tools as well as materials, which rouse the students' interest and curiosity; therefore, the effectiveness of the creation and implementation of language learning materials rely on the integration of the four language skills: listening, writing, reading, speaking. Jing (2006) also points out that the integration of language skills can help students to achieve a more enjoyable and easy communication environment, given that it is useful either inside or outside the classroom. Additionally, Harmer (2007) states that the integration of them generates language stimulation and provides learning opportunities for each student.

Nevertheless, language skills are not integrated, or priority is given to some more than others. For example, listening skills or listening comprehension is difficult when students are in a context where they are not immense in a speaking scenario (Nowrouzi, Tam, Zareian and Nimehchisalem, 2015). Furthermore, Nunan (1997) emphasizes that listening has always been a neglected skill in research and implementation compared to reading; particularly, less attention has been paid to it when literature is implemented. Another aspect to take into consideration is that in some cases students do not feel comfortable enough while speaking, for example when they read a text, and they are asked to give their opinions about it orally, or when they listen to an audio and they have to answer questions in the target language. As Juhana (2012) mentions, students prefer to speak in their native language since they are shy to speak in English. It may also be a reason why the oral skill is not used along with other skills. It is necessary to stimulate the different language skills during the process of EFL learning, as Harmer (2007) asserts, English conversations are beneficial in the way that they develop listening in oral skill together.

Storytelling embraces all the EFL situations aforementioned, as it is closely related to topics such as knowledge transmission, literacy, motivation, and ICT tools. This is why there has been a wide interest in this term in research in many fields of knowledge, and it has been extensively studied. For this reason, its definition has many varying interpretations. Storytelling in education could be understood as a type of oral art, in which there is no physical book presence as it might represent an interference between the teller and the listener. Its main purpose is to create a relationship between the teller and the live audience through the story (Phillips, 2013). In like manner, Zipes (2004) supports this idea when defining Storytelling as a tool that fosters oral expression in students, allowing them to participate by giving their point of view about the story.

Furthermore, Pesola (1991) affirms that Storytelling is also a tool that helps the teacher to surround the learner with the language; which means that Storytelling is an expression of oral art that applied to education can be a great tool to connect the teacher and the learner with a story by using the language as the main channel. The fact that Storytelling integrates content topics and language development makes it become a valuable technique to implement in EFL classes. "Listening to stories develops the child's listening and concentrating skills, which allows them to understand the overall meaning of a story and relate it to their personal experience." Brewster & Ellis, 1991, p. 2). Aside from these definitions, in which Storytelling is understood as a tool and technique; Richards (2006), describes it as an approach that allows students to experience the authentic use of the target language in the classroom, encouraging natural communication through surrounding them with the language.

Considering all the questions mentioned above emerges regarding the positive effects found when implementing Storytelling in the EFL classroom. This paper aims at providing an

answer to this question through the analysis and explanation of 4 main categories related to literacy, storytelling variations, motivation, and language skills. Within those categories, topics associated with stories, children, input, language, and literacy development are deepened. It also expounded the spectrum of Storytelling, talking about Reading Aloud, and Digital Storytelling. Additionally, the relationship between Storytelling and vocabulary retention, attention span, motivation, and creativity are outlined, concluding the effectiveness of Storytelling in improving learners' language skills. To establish these four categories, literature was reviewed from the national and international context, following a deductive process where the focus was to find studies in which Storytelling and EFL were the key terms. Sixteen studies written in a range of time between 2010 and 2018 were analyzed, taking into account aspects such as Storytelling definition, stated problematics, context, population, objectives, methodology, and findings. This analysis led to the identification of patterns and common features between the studies, conducting the process to a more in-depth examination of papers related to these characteristics, resulting in the classification of the four main categories and subcategories that compose this study.

What are the positive effects of the implementation of Storytelling in EFL classes?

Literacy

According to the natural approach set forth by Krashen, children are considered natural language learners, taking into consideration pivotal factors such as age and the brain plasticity (1983). In this natural stage, the most crucial concern in the language classroom is not understanding the whole lessons. The secret is to infer the context and likewise be aware of this strategy. Forasmuch as what must happen is that by listening to everything and an

understandable context, the learners can develop this, encouraging the learning and the acquisition processes (Krashen & Terrell, 1983).

Krashen (1983), claims in his input hypothesis that listening and reading are of the primary importance in the language program, speaking and writing emerge after the learner has acquired competences through comprehensible input. The quality and quantity of the input that children received in their first years are fundamental for the future learning (Ray & Seely, 2004), it is the answer for the question, "how can students understand language that contains structures that they have not yet acquired?" (Krashen & Terrell, 1983, p. 32)Since it depends on the comprehensible, natural, meaningful, and optimal input.

Therefore, learners have to be in contact with the context, also with the exploration of extra-linguistic information such as sentences structures, articles, auxiliaries, plurals and so on; all things little by little, because this is not the major concern of the teachers, given that, what they need is to make sure that students are understanding the input if there is enough input the process with things related to the linguistic of the language will be automatically (Krashen & Terrell, 1983).

Taking into account that learners need significant exposure to the language in order to acquire a structure, in terms of time and materials (Gregg, 1984); complementary to this affirmation MacNamara (1972) states that children acquire by "going for meaning" so that, children understand first and this helps them to acquire language. The role of the teachers is crucial in this stage; they need to propose activities in which students receive comprehensible input and have active participation without having to respond all the time in the target language. This means the use of simple words such as vocabulary regarding a specific topic because what students need is not to feel forced to produce responses in the target language, considering they can focus their entire attention on comprehension of what the teacher has

said. Teachers provide a diversity of activities in which they can combine different elements for making the input more effective such as pictures, gestures, keywords, and so forth. Indeed, the students are only consciously focused on remembering vocabulary that they "forget" they understand another language (Krashen & Terrell, 1983).

Literature provides a wide range of benefits inside the EFL classroom not only for teaching and learning processes but also for students' lives. It has been extensively used in the Educational field itself in many ways and with different purposes. Arias (2016) points out some of the benefits of working with literature inside the classroom, when saying that: "it is authentic material that demonstrates people's cultures, it provides knowledge from every corner of the world, and it enhances language enrichment and motivates students' involvement in the field." The fact that literature is part of all cultures allows a universal perspective of this term (Hişmanoğlu. 2005). Although the material is not specifically designed for teaching, its authenticity allows it to include a variety of topics, different writers' sensations, and experiences, and these aspects make it possible to generate dynamics in the process that facilitate students' encouragement and language improvement.

All the aspects previously mentioned about literature are mainly connected with the pertinence short stories have in the EFL classroom and students' lives in general. Pourkalhor and Kohan (2013) mention some advantages of teaching English through short stories: "they make the students' reading task easier, they help students to be more creative, they raise cultural awareness, they reduce students' anxiety and help them feel more relaxed, they manage universal language, and they involve fiction" (p. 3). In this sense, Denning (2005) argues that promoting greater participation of cognitive skills in problem-solving is one of the roles that stories have; following these ideas, Essig (2005) reports that when a story is shared, language learning is deeply impacted.

Stories involve many positive effects on learners; different purposes and strategies have allowed this to be explained. Kohan and Pourkalhor (2013), Denning (2005), Essig (2005) and Katsuhiko (2002) concur with their ideas when saying that the cultural, fantastic and creative elements of a story involve and facilitate the language learning process; as those situations represent some of the challenges teachers tackle when teaching, it becomes a possibility for the teaching process as well. As it is stated by (Johnson, 2006) "Although teaching does not necessarily cause student learning, there is a relationship of influence between what teachers learn, how they organize their classroom activities, and what students learn from engaging in those activities" (p. 245). As it was mentioned before, teachers represent an essential role in the classroom, because they are the ones who provide the comprehensible input that students are looking for in order to learn English, in this case; and what is more essential to generate students' motivation towards the language.

It is necessary to highlight and understand the existing individual learning styles since it is an identified aspect of all populations: children, teenagers, and adults. Pinters (2017) clarifies this when saying that each child is unique because even when two children are the same age, they have notably different characteristics. Some reasons make those particularities meaningful, especially with young learners; considering the educational process they have in early ages is vital since, on this stage, they develop social skills, and English can be a way to achieve them. The use of stories with young learners generates positive effects because these help them to develop their communicative skills and makes it possible to express themselves in real social contexts (Faircloth, 2009). Transcending the social and cultural fact, stories represent an important resource in the education field when teaching to young learners, Green and Brock (2000) emphasize that comparing stories with simple examples represent for students a more practical instrument, since stories connect their knowledge, thinking,

emotions and imagination; expanding the possibility of creating more meaningful learning and increasing the effectiveness a story has as material in the EFL classroom.

Several scholars such as Gold and Gibson (2001), Kalfus and Van Der Schyff (1996), Raines and Isbell (1994), among others, have established a direct relationship between Stories and Storytelling with language and literacy development. These authors emphasize this relationship is positive in terms of the successful promotion these means represent to learners' processes of language and literacy development, as they might be considered their foundation.

Data from several studies related to Stories and Storytelling (Gómez, 2010; Hsu, 2015; Kalantari & Hashemian, 2016; Lee, 2012) show that there is a close connection between these terms and childhood. This is because children are beginning to experience language and literature as channels to not only cultivate their lexis or grammatical structures but also to acquire literary competences related to socio-cultural, historical, and semiotic awareness of their contexts (Brumfit & Carter 1986). According to the aforementioned, Duff and Maley (1990) classify the positive influence that the use of literature in the classroom can represent, and how it benefits the language and literacy development in three main aspects:

The first one is related to the wide lexical variety offered by literature, the second aspect is linked to what is appealing to children concerning their realities, and the third refers to bringing genuine interaction and participation in the classroom through sharing opinions and perceptions about a common topic.

Variations

In addition to what has been already mentioned on this paper about Storytelling flexibility as a strategy or approach, it becomes necessary to explore the variations that exist

along with Storytelling or that have emerged from it, trying to respond to different necessities on the educational field; as it happens correspondingly with Reading Aloud (RA), also known as Reading Stories Aloud (RSA), and Digital Storytelling (DST).

RA is considered the fundamental base of a language class because it highlights students' participation. Students acquire positive behavior when reading aloud (Terblanch, 2002) because they get to feel important when leading the reading, as the reader is the one that has the word and the attention of his classmates. It is not only said that reading aloud is a support, but also how motivating it can be for students. According to Atwell (1987), good reading aloud can be a motivator for students to search other authors or the same ones and to be interested in the world of literature. RA arouses students' interest to know more about the authors' thoughts, the book's plot, and to deepen their knowledge; it can generate intrigue by acquiring more knowledge about what has been read. For example, Hennings (1992) says that both: RA and Storytelling encourage students' interest in books with higher intensity for them to read. Atwell (1987) and Hennings (1992) highlight the motivation that RA produces, also mentioning the challenge that it generates in students because commonly they are motivated to learn more about the reading topic and have more knowledge. A significant aspect Atwell mentions is that a good Reading Aloud must include accurate intonation and expression to catch its audience's attention. Motivation is one of the positive effects of Reading Aloud. Moreover, there are many others connected to it. Needlman (2004) explains seven of them: reading aloud together is fun, raises interest, helps children with reading difficulties, develops listening skills, promotes the learning of new vocabulary, encourages imagination, and contributes to personality development. Additionally, Rippel (2016) mentions more effects of this variation of Storytelling, such as it increases students' attention span while they sit still

following the story; it shows proper grammar and word usage through hearing well-written stories; it also develops student's vocabulary and knowledge about a variety of topics.

An innovative term derived from Reading Aloud and stories is Storytelling Aloud; it is a fusion that encourages students to be more interested in learning. Trelease (1994) says that Storytelling aloud promotes the desire to read independently. According to the results of the studies conducted by Elley (1991), Amer (1997), Troustle and Hicks (1998), Walker (2001), Campbell (2001) the use of Storytelling Aloud in English classes, helps to develop or improve students' language and communication skills.

Telling stories has always been transmitting social values, wisdom, and knowledge, depending only on direct human interaction. However, currently, a new approach of Storytelling has been acquiring a relevant position on communication, as it combines characteristics of E-learning and ICT tools, which has now facilitated the transmission of knowledge and non-direct human interaction. This is the case of Digital Storytelling, a term defined by Lambert (as cited in Rahimi & Yadollahi, 2017, p.3) as "sharing one's story through multiple mediums of imagery, text, voice, sound, music, video and animation." Notably, education has been permeated by technology because it allows people to be in constant communication through a variety of media, sharing and exchanging ideas and information with no barriers of time and space (Jacobs, 2011). Following this line of thinking, The Digital Storytelling Association (2002), remarks the fact that DST provides a modern style and means the original forms of Storytelling. Furthermore, DST contributes to the establishment of social communities by allowing everyone to share all types of experiences that might be found as unique or common (Meadows, 2003).

Recent studies about this unification of technology and Storytelling have shown noticeable positive effects on language learning, and motivation with EFL students, since it

"blends media to enrich and enhance the written or spoken word" (Frazel, 2010, p. 9). For instance, a study made by Lee (2012), revealed some remarkable findings of using Storytelling supported by technology with EFL children with learning difficulties. This action research study was carried out with 20 students from 2nd to 6th grade; these students participated in the Storytelling sessions for one year and were encouraged by their teachers as they presented learning difficulties in more than one school subject. The primary purpose of this study was to investigate how technology improves the conditions of Storytelling, in order to enhance the learning attitude and motivation of EFL children by using PowerPoint designs and an online recording system. The results showed that the rejection of English at the beginning was greatly reduced, and interest and enthusiasm increased; also, children expressed that listening to stories helped them to learn and memorize new words and sentences, even though they were not asked to.

Another study in which the positive effects of DST in the EFL classroom are pointed out was made by Razmia, Pouralib, and Nozad (2014) in Islamic Azad University, Iran, with 60 students. This study's purpose was to evidence if the use of computer-based tools affected the learner's narrative skills; furthermore, if there was a variation in motivation and engagement. Through the analysis of data collected from Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency, an interview, oral performances in a control group and a DST group; researchers could demonstrate that the use of technology and DST provides the teacher with new ways of organizing the materials and as a result increases students motivation and more importantly, engages reluctant students into a meaningful task of presenting a story for an audience.

A third study that complements the positive effects of DST on teaching was made in Malaysia with six eleven-year-old kids who were studying English as a second language (L2). This qualitative case study's objective was to examine the perception students had regarding

DST in the language learning process. The aforementioned studies information was gathered mostly from tests trying to measure improvement, while this paper focuses its attention on what direct sources (the students) had to say about DST. The implementation of DST had a beneficial effect on learning vocabulary through the use of tablets as ICT tools. The analysis of this study's information showed that DST brought more than improvement in students' vocabulary as students learned more words. It also brought an increment on students' motivation because of the high interactivity on the multimedia elements integrated on the applications used on the tablets. It is essential to mention that this study was developed with a population of six children, and this might represent a drawback in terms of generalizations because the sample might not be taken as representative.

Motivation

Motivation comes from the Latin term "move," and it is relevant for different sciences and disciplines since it encourages people with a desire to raise goals and inspire actions guiding the proper way to reach them (Dornyei, 1998). In the educational field, this term is fundamental, because it contains necessary features for both teaching and learning; Gardner (1985) asserts that motivation comprises some components related to the interest, desire and attitudes: "interest in foreign languages, desire to learn the target language and attitudes towards learning the target language"; even when the environment where the teaching and learning processes take place varies, those components can remain in the classroom as pertinent issues to develop a purposeful process.

Distinguishing the existing types of motivation is necessary, considering that they allow identifying specific needs to make decisions; Ryan & Deci (2002) explain that motivational differentiation is essential since they allow discovering and understanding student motivational dynamics and the associated outcomes. Referring to those two types of

motivation, intrinsic motivation concerns voluntary participation for pleasure and satisfaction in an activity, while extrinsic motivation is more related to external factors that correspond to a variety of behaviors that have to do with purposes and not for their own sake (Deci, 1975). It has been found that maintaining students' motivation is complex, concluding that it is one of the main challenges for teachers (Hadfield & Dörnyei, 2013). Teachers frequently find themselves in situations that require changes in their strategies, materials, and the pertinent points presented to incite in students the desire to learn. Reflecting on these class-related aspects becomes essential since it is believed that proper strategies and learning materials can attract learners' interest to learn and practice the language inside and outside the classroom (Fewell, 2010).

The suitability of Storytelling in EFL classrooms for teachers and students is also reflected in the motivation process.

Authors as Banaszewski (2002); Lowenthal (2009); Ohler (2006); Sylvester & Greenidge (2009) indicate that digital Storytelling specifically can be an excellent way to motivate students to increase their performance when they are learning a language; since the use of technologies provides learners with tools that are more related with them and their realities. Besides, several studies have shown that DST transcends generating interest and motivation in students. It also facilitates the organization of ideas, understanding content, and provides meaningful learning (Robin, 2006; Sadik, 2008; Van Gils, 2005). Results of several studies have shown that Storytelling and its variations represent a great strategy for both teachers and students, besides the impact, it has in many aspects, it can facilitate the challenges that arise within the classroom.

Attention span development is another characteristic ascribed to Storytelling's positive effects, as it is stated by Dragan (2001). Commonly language teachers struggle to maintain

students' attention on what is being taught in the class; they intend to keep students focused by raising their voices or calling students who are distracted by their names, which in some cases results in a more significant distraction for the students' rest of the class. However, it has been evidenced that the use of Storytelling can avoid this type of reprimands to students because it does not focus on the fact that they are distracted, but the fact that it is a necessity to maintain students' attention through charming them with the story (Gómez, 2010). Regarding children, Storytelling does not direct the teaching to language itself but to the meaning of what is being said, contributing to their learning process of a foreign language in a more efficient way (Bloor, 1991).

Amid occupations, people have set aside the ability to create. Brown (2007) claims that the goal of education is not merely headed to learn specific knowledge but to assist students in developing their EFL learning abilities. For this reason, students should be provided with enough tools for thinking and creating, considering these two as essential parts of the human being that must be developed from the classroom. Teachers can use Storytelling as a means to help students develop creativity because Storytelling facilitates students to think, create, and express emotions, feelings, and learning (Ross, 2000). It can also be an advantage when teaching English and awakening creativity as it generates a comfortable environment in the EFL classroom, where students can feel confident expressing their emotions, what is inside them, and bring out their creativity by setting aside fear (González, 2010). Creativity is a base of expression that can be communicated written and orally; it is crucial to develop it from childhood supporting it inside the classroom.

As it was mentioned before, the implementation of Storytelling has great positive aspects in the language development of children; one of these is vocabulary retention, an important aspect in which teachers perceive noticeable changes. Vocabulary retention is

expressed as "the ability to recall or remember things after an interval of time" (Richards & Schmidt, 2002, p. 457). The retention of what is taught depends on the teachers' creativity to innovate in the classroom since if the materials have a significative use, the students will be interested in the class. This learning process occurs through repetition and the understanding of words' features and context. In order to achieve this understanding, aspects such as recognition of words in context, memorization, and visual aids are indispensable (Hedge, 2001).

Language Skills

A variety of techniques exist in the world to enhance the four language skills. It is fundamental to strengthen each of them, although there is special attention to listening. The study of techniques to ameliorate listening comprehension is nowadays considered as a building block in second language acquisition (Dunkel, 1991). In spite of listening skills' importance in comparison with the others, most people do not possess excellent listening skills, since the process of learning a language sometimes occurs in an inverted way and the listening skill is not sufficiently stimulated from the first stage (Islam, 2012).

It is necessary to develop the listening ability, and also exploit the beneficial ways to stimulate it. If learners listen to a story, they are on the appropriate path, given that stories provide a favorable input to students and, in fact, learn how to listen (Mallan, 1991). The "how" implies the development of significant abilities to the listening process, such as concentration skills and the ability to receive and understand the information expressed in words. Besides, with stories, children broaden learning strategies as listening for general meaning, predicting, guessing meaning, and hypothesizing (Castro, 2002). Stories in the classroom can rouse laughter, sadness, excitement, and anticipation, which is not only

enjoyable but can also help build up the children's confidence and encourage social and emotional development (Ellis & Brewster, 2002).

Oral skills might be one of the most used competencies in the EFL classes. Many students of different languages are interested in improving oral skills, and they strive to achieve it (Richard & Renandya, 2002). Moreover, it is essential to value students' interest, using it as a facilitator means to practice and improve oral skills because it is a foremost objective when it comes to teaching-learning (Boonkit, 2010). Teachers' role is paramount in fostering an environment where students find the comfort of participating and communicating in classes (Razmjoo & Ardekani, 2011). Then, the active role of the teacher in English classes and students' interest in participating and speaking English is part of the practice, development, and importance of oral skill.

Regarding orality, there are also difficulties in the process as Juhana (2012) mentions, some students may feel insecure when participating in English, that motive can generate fear and make it difficult to express ideas and change to their native language. Although this is a common phenomenon in EFL classes, it should not be the reason for students to be afraid to participate or have a conversation in the target language; it is a must for teachers to help them to control tension, shyness, and fear (Graham, 2006). Talking about the effectiveness that Storytelling has when it is used to foster oral skill (Brice's, 2004), it can be the means for students to get motivated and talk about the topic, participate and practice. Zippes (2004) mentions the importance of using Storytelling and body language to activate participation in the classroom. The use of Storytelling can benefit children managing to attract attention; it will also provide an environment where they will feel calm and safe while oral skills will be practiced gradually.

Regarding writing, it has been increasing in terms of self-expression and

communication with the world. Nevertheless, some researchers report in their studies that students present insufficiencies in their writing skills, and those learners expound how complicated they find writing activities Arici & Ungan (2008); Salahu-Din, Persky, & Miller, (2008). These findings have allowed an opportunity to discover and adapt many ways to help students to improve their writing skills. Cairney (1997) explains that reading and writing are included in literacy skills, but it also benefits the ability to express emotions and transmit others the idea of a story, which is required when writing to manifest a comprehensible message. Sasser & Zorena (1991); McKamey (1991); Houston (1991) assert that stories can help all students to develop a language for writing, including special education students, second language learners, and gifted students. Also, Eisner (1985) explains that the benefits that Storytelling embraces provide teachers with some elements to help students improve their academic performance in the areas of reading and writing; moreover to motivate children and connect them with the learning process and Eisner complements this idea saying "The enduring outcomes of education are found in the joy of the ride, not merely arriving at the destination." (p. 35).

Developing writing skills is a challenging process for students, and "when a learner is struggling with writing, Storytelling gives them confidence with their ideas, motivation to craft an interesting story, and a starting point for written planning" (Houston 1991). When students have the opportunity of learning through Storytelling, there are two key areas that are impacted: use of language and identification of audience; it is necessary to address a clear purpose and audience to accomplish a good performance. As Nicolini (1994) indicates, finding the proper words to write might limit learners, and as it is previously mentioned Storytelling represents a path to improve both of them, this author emphasizes that we are

storytellers by nature; therefore, all the advantages Storytelling contains when it is used to improve writing and reading skill become genuine.

Although on this paper, the positive effects of Storytelling on language skills development are exposed individually, it does not imply that its implementation must be directed to only one skill. The purposes of each study analyzed in this article aim attention at different elements related to language learning and teaching, which does not necessarily mean they are incomplete. This last section seeks to present a study that comprehends the integration of the four language skills. Its purpose was to inform about the effectiveness of the use of Storytelling to integrate the four language skills and the enhancement of language proficiency level; it involved 40 male and female EFL learners, aged between 30 and 50 years old. The data collection methods were a pre-post test and the suggested training model; designed and previously proved, by the researchers, on a different group. The process of implementation of the suggested training model lasted for 28 hours and consisted of 15 stories, divided into three categories: Spoken stories, written stories to be read and retold, and picture books. The data analysis showed the effectiveness of the implementation of Storytelling by supporting the two hypotheses established at the beginning of the investigation. The first hypothesis suggested that the integrated instructional model of Storytelling would prove to be effective in integrating the four language skills; it was evidenced when comparing the pre and post-test results taken by the language learners. This consequently supports the second hypothesis, which suggested a significant improvement in the post-test results compared with the pre-test.

Conclusions

Along with this paper, several arguments have been presented trying to answer the question: What are the positive effects that Storytelling has had during its implementation in

EFL classes?; an in-depth analysis was carried out based on studies whose results contain elements closely related to EFL classes and some of the elements they encompass.

Regarding Literacy and language development, it is imperative to mention that stories are an ideal way to confer the language since presented in a suitable way its development process could emerge automatically, inasmuch stories represent as it is stated by Krashen the comprehensible input. Moreover, this comprehensible input can be complemented by the non-verbal language as pictures and gestures. The process of a language learner can be similar to the process of a child, considering that all the time, they are receiving input from the context, and consequently, this is transformed as output.

Storytelling is not a static concept; it can be adapted depending on the necessities each context encloses. *Reading Aloud* and *Digital Storytelling* are proof of this affirmation as they try to respond to different conditions that comprehend the teaching and learning of a foreign language. On the one hand, Reading Stories Aloud enhances students' confidence and motivation towards the language as they guide the story, and more importantly, it enhances students' curiosity for literature. Digital Storytelling is the adaptation of an ancient technique of knowledge transmission through stories. It adds the technological component, transforming it into an appealing technique to teach new generations who are more interested in the use and the consumption of digital information.

Concerning the motivational aspects, stories transcend the input and output function in the language learning process; stories also transmit a calm atmosphere in the environment, encourage creativity and cultural awareness, moreover benefits the development of social skills and enhance motivation. Stories grant a relevant educational process since students feel connected to the language. Meanwhile, teachers find a way to deal with their everyday challenges.

Language skills were mentioned as what the learner seeks to achieve in the language learning process, highlighting the importance of the teachers' role and students' role conducting the development or their stimulation; the benefits that Storytelling provides for each skill are a way to motivate students to use the language, provide a pleasant environment for English classes and inspire students to create their own stories; either, the four skills integrated or separately, depending on students' needs and teachers' believes.

Throughout the development of this research, the advantageous effects of Storytelling through its implementation in the EFL classes were utterly evidenced; it is a fitting strategy to maintain the illusion of enjoying as a child. Just create, imagine, believe, and allow yourself to feel the fantasy because if you want to be an eternal dreamer, tell a story.

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