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The Effect of Stories on Young Learners' Proficiency and Motivation in Foreign Language Learning

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**THE EFFECT OF STORIES ON YOUNG LEARNERS'
PROFICIENCY AND MOTIVATION IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE
LEARNING**

A Research Project for Partial Fulfillment of Master of Arts in Teaching English as a Foreign
Language

By
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Abstract: *The present study was conducted to assess the effect of storytelling on Iranian EFL learners' motivation and general English proficiency level. 102 homogenized secondary school students at elementary level of proficiency randomly were selected and assigned to experimental and control groups. Data of the study were collected within one semester period through a pre-posttest design. While the control group was instructed through traditional approach, the curriculum of the experimental group was accompanied by storytelling. To investigate the influence of storytelling on students' motivation, Attribute/ Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) questionnaire was administered after the term. To confirm the results of quantitative data of this part, a semi-structured interview was conducted. Comparing the results of the tests and questionnaire of both groups, it was found that although experimental group outperformed at proficiency measure, the two groups did not show significant difference in motivational level. However, this conclusion was in contrast with pertained research literature and interview results which showed that applying storytelling would greatly motivate students in learning a foreign language. All these findings imply that storytelling can be used as an effective pedagogical tool in EFL setting, but choosing appropriate stories along with suitable implementation approaches is a key point in achieving its educational aims.*

Key words: *Language proficiency, motivation, storytelling*

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Chapter One Introduction

1.1. Introduction

While the experience of language learning is something interesting and attractive for some learners, for some others it is a boring activity that makes them wish to get away from it. Teacher domination over the classroom, having learners to do what they are told to, lack of creativity, learners not having any room for their saying and being bound by their benches for over an hour, and following a monotonous schedule are some of the factors augmenting this boredom. The problem with traditional monotonous schedule is the assumption that what goes on in the classroom is appropriate for all learners while there are so many varieties among the students in terms of their personal characteristics, learning styles, and foreign language learning needs. Besides that, the activities that learners are engaged in traditional classrooms are not authentic because they are specifically designed for teaching purposes, so they don't have any similarity to their real life situations.

One of the important issues in designing a syllabus is whether it is flexible enough to account for all the learners with different personality and learning types. While the assigned materials and teaching resources might be suitable for a group of students, they cannot be adaptable to other learners' preferences and learning styles which result in compulsory continuance or if possible to dropping out the course. The syllabus should also provide this opportunity for the learners to show their capability in language learning so that they can stand out, receive feedback, and get encouragement.

Among many techniques and strategies available for foreign language educators to encourage students and help the acquisition of a language, the enormous benefits and applicability of language literature in foreign language learning have distinguished it from the other techniques that can be used in a language classroom. Literature in the language classroom can change the monotonous schedule, create a much more motivating environment and provide wide variety of language input which is adaptable to every learning style.

Stories as one of the important elements of literature are full of enjoyable events and characters that bring fun, creativity, enjoyment and authenticity to the language classrooms.

Having a language classroom supplemented with different stories, a change of atmosphere would be created which brings a feeling of camaraderie among students who then will be able to communicate their ideas freely without being bound by their psychological drives. Stories have been found to be so efficient in increasing language competency, and also motivating learners

and reinforcing positive attitudes toward language learning (Ellis & Brewster, 2002). They have the potential to increase learners' enthusiasm toward language learning, foster creativity and create an enjoyable classroom atmosphere in which learners do not feel afraid of language learning task and enjoy their learning experience (Harmer, 2001). Krashen (1982) utters that a weak affective filter triggers language learning in a stress-free environment. The variety introduced through the story lowers the affective-filter, minimizes the stress, and creates a non-threatening classroom atmosphere that greatly helps learning and retention of the material.

It needs to be pointed out that when we talk about storytelling, we mean the use of stories in language classroom as teaching aids that are taught along with the main instructional materials rather than introducing them as a source of mere fun.

In addition to their potential benefits in changing classroom atmosphere that have been mentioned so far, stories have been reported to have positive effects on learners' language proficiency. Depending on how they are used in the classroom and what areas are the main focus of teaching, stories help to improve different skills, grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. They expose students to so much amount of vocabulary and structure in an authentic context which can be beneficial for their proficiency in these areas. According to Scott and Ytreberg (1990), introducing stories in language classrooms provides much comprehensible input that can contribute to more effective acquisition of the target language.

1.2 Rationale of the study

According to Murphey (1992), language literature is a valuable tool in language classroom due to its flexibility, making students culturally aware of the target group, and motivational capabilities. He sees increasing proficiency as the other byproduct of introducing stories in the classroom. Stories when regarded as an assistant in foreign language classroom and an element that trigger language acquisition, are regarded as teaching aids, so the need to examine their impact on language proficiency comes up. There are a number of studies proving the effectiveness of stories in enhancing learners' development of the four skills, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and also empowering short term and long term memory (Wright, 2003). Young learners benefit from literature since they are so valuable resources of linguistic, affective, cognitive, cultural and social aspects (Malkina, 1995). The need to examine the effects of stories on young learners' proficiency and motivation becomes evident when we see that there is scarcity of major investigation on this issue while many studies have provided theoretical justification for it.

1.3 Purpose, Research Questions and Hypothesis

In the first phase of the study, we are going to review the role of stories in language classroom as an instructional aid for foreign language educators whether as a tool for developing the proficiency of the students or as a motivational instrument that arouse interest and encourage learners. Two research questions are proposed.

Q1. What is the effect of storytelling on young learners' language learning motivation in foreign language learning classroom?

Q2. What is the effect of storytelling on young learners' language proficiency in foreign language learning classroom?

Based on these research questions, the following null hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Implementing stories in language classroom does not motivate learners in learning a second language.

H2: Implementing stories in language classroom does not have any significant influence on learners' second language proficiency.

1.4 Definition of key terms

▪ 1.4.1 Language proficiency

When learners are able to speak or perform in an acquired language, they are regarded as language proficient individuals. Classification of language proficiency is a controversial issue because of the existence of various theories among pedagogues. Bachman (1990) describes language proficiency as follows:

“Language proficiency whose distinguishing characteristic is its recognition of the importance of context beyond the sentence to the appropriate use of the language. This context includes both the discourse, of which individual utterances and sentences are part, and the sociolinguistic situation which governs, to a large extent, the nature of that discourse in both form and function. Along with this recognition of the context in which language use takes place, has come a recognition of the dynamic interaction between that context and the discourse itself, and an expanded view of communication as something more than the simple transfer of the information”.

▪ 1.4.2 Motivation

Motivation is an inner device that stimulates learners toward better accomplishment of their learning task. It influences how and why people learn as well as how they perform (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996). Based on Gardner's (1985) theory, motivation is a kind of central mental 'engine' or 'energy-centre' that includes cognitive aspects, effort, want/will, affective factors, and task-enjoyment.

In case of learning a foreign language, L2 motivation is a complex, multi-faceted construct involving instrumental and integrative motivation. Integrative motivation refers to a desire to learn the language in order to acculturate, meaning becoming part of the target language culture, while instrumental motivation refers to a desire to learn a second language to get a prize or promotion (Arnold & Brown, 1999). In addition to these, there is another type of motivation in

language classrooms which is referred to as situational motivation. The motivating factors in this case involve learning context like classroom condition, materials used, teacher and student characteristics and their relationship.

▪ **1.4.3 Storytelling**

The process of presenting texts by teachers in the form of telling stories to smooth the progress of comprehension and developing integrative skills by students' retelling texts in a new construction is defined as storytelling. Storytelling is carried out either by the teacher or by an audio program, and it emphasizes a positive, collaborative, and supportive classroom climate in which students could develop skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing. The theme of stories are from general interesting topics which are taken out from leveled books, their grammatical complexity are modified based on the level of the students and their vocabulary are limited to those of the textbook.

Chapter Two

Review of Related Literature

2.1 History

Until the 1970s in the United Kingdom it was believed that students participated in selective method schools, should study the 'classics' in their native language as it was a requisite for a well-rounded education. The principles of grammar-translation method of teaching Latin and Greek was followed for the teaching of modern foreign languages. Classical Latin and Greek were considered as the cultural and linguistic foundation of current English language and society and not taught for their communicative capability. The emergence of comprehensive (non-selective) secondary education coupled with applying technology like language laboratories and video recorders in the classroom contributed to the emergence of communicativeness and practicality as the main concerning factor in curriculum development, hence big changes in pedagogical principles of teaching foreign language. Moving the focus away from grammar/translation resulted in using literature in the foreign language classroom. However, some contended that since literature has no obvious practical use in terms of structured EFL language training, it cannot be appropriate for language classroom. Regarding this, Henry Widdowson (1984), in his *Explorations in Applied Linguistics* said that "literature (.....) has a way of exploiting resources in a language which have not been codified as correct usage. It is therefore misleading as a model". Consequently, using literary texts were less emphasized in language classrooms, and extracts or magazine-style articles got the place of full length works. But in the 1980s, some books and articles were published in arguing against this movement. Among the academic community, Widdowson, Brumfit, Long and others advocated the value of teaching literature in class. In that time, Carter and Long (1986) offered the Cultural, the Language and the Personal Growth models as three benefits of using literature in language classroom.

The Cultural Model

Carter and Long (1987) introduced literature as "the accumulated wisdom, the best that has been thought and felt within a culture" (p. 2). Valdes (1986) states that "It is simply accepted that literature is a viable component of second language programs at the appropriate level and that one of the major functions of literature is to serve as a medium to transmit the culture of the people who speak the language in which it is written".

The Language Model

According to Carter and Long (1986), literature in EFL classrooms is mostly utilized in a 'language-based approach' which can enhance vocabulary and structure learning and can also improve other creative aspects of language in students.

The Personal Growth Model

This is the place for the students to express their own ideas on a text, and intellectually and emotionally respond to what they are experiencing. This is based on the theory of reading which believes in the interaction between the reader and the text. "Text itself has no meaning; it only provides direction for the reader to construct meaning from the reader's own experience".

2.2 Theoretical background

According to Vygotsky (1962), children construct knowledge through other people, through interaction with adults. Adults/teachers work actively with children in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Since we are working with a group of young learners, this necessitates devising activities and tasks which create interactive activities between children and peers and also children with the teacher.

Piaget (1972) called the intellectual state of the young learners as "concrete operations" that are limited in some way. At this point since the attention span of the child is so short and they just can focus on *here* and *now*, the activities used in the classroom should be designed in such a way that capture learners' immediate interest (Brown, 2001). Incorporating stories in the language classrooms can meet this need because they have always been interesting for the young learners. Stories can keep learners' attention focused and have the ability of making even the most abstract ideas so tangible for the students.

Cultural transmission includes curriculum theories that explain individual development as a process of enculturation or initiation into the historical practices and achievements of a given society (Oxford et al., 1996). The literature of a language opens the doors to the variety and cultural complexity of a language. When learners are taught through stories, they are exposed to some cultural and historic elements that familiarize learners to the target culture which is so motivating for the students when learning another country's language.

Dörnyei (2001) sees a pleasant and supportive classroom atmosphere as one of the factors that is motivating for the learners. There are a number of factors that make the students motivated to continue learning a foreign language. These factors include instrumental, integrative, intrinsic, or extrinsic motivation. Apart from these motivating factors, learners can also be motivated by classroom factors such as tasks, learning activities and instructional materials (Dörnyei, 1998; Ellis, 1985; Julkunen, 2001; Pinter, 2006). The tasks assigned, activities carried out in the classroom, and the materials introduced to the learners can either make the students so eager in the process of language learning, or adjourn it by being so dull. The inherent fervor of young

learners in stories is an efficient tool to make them motivated in learning another language either instrumentally or socially.

Stephen Krashen's theories are fulfilled in a language classroom that stories are an integral part of it. Krashen believes that acquiring a language is more successful and longer lasting than learning it. Language is incidentally acquired through natural exposure to the language whereas language is learned in language classroom by explicit explanation. When incorporated into language classrooms, stories increase the chance of incidental learning by turning learners' attention to understanding and keeping the track of the story rather than language form, thus acquisition happens. Krashen also believed that as long as comprehensible input is provided, learning takes place. Literature in language classroom provides as much input as needed because stories specially are rich source of input which may be below, at, or beyond the level of the students. Finally, Krashen regards learning to be at its optimal state when the affective filter is low, that is, the level of anxiety of the learners is low, and their motivation is high. As mentioned before, incorporating stories in language learning classroom can be motivating for the students and bring an enjoyable atmosphere into the classroom.

The Neurological Aspect

The anatomic structure of the brain brings enough evidence that in most of the people, the left hemisphere is responsible for language tasks. However recent studies show that the right hemisphere too plays an important role in some specific language tasks. The left hemisphere analyzes the details and the relationship between the words while the right one deals with semantic information. Anton (1990) asserted "when a learning activity combines both left and right hemispheres simultaneously engaged in a particular activity, an ideal learning situation is established and the most productive learning occurs" (p. 1170). A learning situation that combines both left and right hemisphere would facilitate flexible thinking and have several positive consequences for the process of language learning. This tells us much about the importance of using stories along with actions and role plays in language classroom due to the integration of oral reading and action and then engaging both left and right hemisphere. To clarify the point we think it is necessary to make a distinction between *explicit* and *implicit* modes of learning that are two different types of learning process. Conscious attention and analytical learning such as learning some linguistic elements is referred to as explicit learning. On the other hand, implicit learning happens when it occurs incidentally without much awareness like learning first language or learning songs. It can be said that applying literature can be so beneficial for implicit learning which is situated in the right hemisphere. Then for raising the learners' awareness about the linguistic components and more detailed information, the explicit mode of learning and thus the left hemisphere would be of great help (Forster, 2006).

Gestalt theory

Psycholinguistic approach stresses the personal and close contact between a learner and a counselor and this is a key feature of this approach. A humanistic approach called *person-centered counseling* is developed by Carl Rogers, in which he stipulates that three core conditions must be present in a counselor teacher to effectively carry out the process of teaching/learning: unconditional positive regard, congruence, and empathic understanding. In this view, the subjective experiences of the learners should be emphasized. Self-actualizing tendencies are client/learner's actualizing inclination that Roger postulated they will lead to growth and empowerment (Rogers, 1974, p. 120).

In 1910 some psychologists whose pioneer was Fritz Perls developed the Gestalt approach to counseling and therapy from a psychological theory of perception known as Gestalt psychology, that was founded by May Wertheimer, Wolfgang Kohler, and Kurt Kofka in Germany. The main idea behind the Gestalt psychology is that human experience must be understood and considered as an organized whole rather than separate components. Since Gestalt theory and therapy supports learners with getting in touch with unexpressed feelings such as resentment, rage, hatred, pain, anxiety, grief, guilt and abandonment, it is evident that the theory views people as capable of directing their own development. Thus, when people feel the sense of responsibility for their lives, they tend to self-actualize, and the final empowerment will be achieved as a result of this self-actualization. Also, Gestalt approach has introduced an approach to teaching a second language to counseling and therapy and its idea is presented by Curran (1976).

From Gestalt point of view, teachers should account for students' whole person in which in addition to students' intellects, instructors consider the relationship between their feelings, psychological reactions, instincts, and desire to learn.

Implementation of stories in language classrooms can create situations in which students are exposed to much comprehensible input, interesting topics that arouse students' intellect, feelings and emotions, and reading aloud and teacher-student talk which results in more interaction. Stories are capable of attributing language learning to the students' instinct because human being is raised in situations where stories are told and recite from person to person so the desire of an individual to listen to and recite stories is an instinct knack born with human.

2.3 Story telling in classroom

Stories have always attracted people and have been source of inspirations and enthusiasm. Over the centuries epics, myths, legends, and folk tales have excited, inspired, and entertained and story teller have had special recognition among the people. In most cultures storytelling is considered as the most frequent joint activity between adults and children. It is also the motive for longer conversation holding verbal interaction between children and adults. Stories have always been the bed time friend of the children and the extent of speech addressed to children is a predicting factor in language development. So, story reading can be viewed as a tool for language improvement. In classroom, storytelling, among all different options of activities and

literary material, is really helpful in learning because it appeals to learners' imagination, increases motivation and, above all, create a rich and meaningful context. It is one of the most frequently used activities, with beginners and false beginners. In most countries storytelling is an established part of the curriculum, and they are considered as a first-rate resource in child's own language teaching. Based on recent studies, while four-year-old children generally can tell stories in snatches (the type of story in which the child passes randomly from one event to another, leaving out key facts as understood), six-year-olds are able to tell stories including cause and effect relationship between different occurrences. The main features of storytelling such as the location of the action in space and time, the main plot and the final outcome can be implicitly recognized by six-year-old children. Growing up, children little by little will be more able to produce stories. As their age increases, children's ability to follow and enjoy stories improves too. Sometimes, children's desire to tell a story is the best indication of how much they enjoy it.

2.4 Story telling in language classroom

The texts based on traditional structural approaches and the newer, integrated, communicative courses are not considered efficient for the increasing demands of the academic classes. On the other hand, a motivating medium for language learning classrooms is to implement a syllabus based on authentic children's stories, which also helps fostering the development of the thinking skills that are needed for L2 academic literacy. In addition, stories are powerfully capable of bringing about change in language classroom by developing pupils' intercultural awareness while at the same time nurturing empathy, a tolerance for diversity, and emotional intelligence. Children's stories are defined here narrowly as stories taken out from authentic sources, but simplified for the sake of teaching some grammatical points and vocabulary though the theme is tried to be as close to the real life situation as possible. Basal readers, or reading scheme books are perfect example of developing such stories around specific vocabulary. According to Ghosn (2002), authentic stories are regarded as a good alternative to the traditional bottom-up approach in EFL classroom. She proposes four reasons for using literature in EFL classrooms:

First, authentic literature provides a motivating, meaningful context for language learning, since children are naturally drawn to stories.

Second, literature can contribute to language learning. It presents natural language, language at its finest, and can thus foster vocabulary development in context. As Collie and Slater (1987) have pointed out, it stimulates oral language and involves the child with the text; it also provides an excellent medium for a top-down approach to language teaching. Language materials contained in literary text can foster language learning because they are interesting, integrates the four skills, offer predictable natural language that can develop word recognition. Also literary texts promote reading and writing ability and they are not grammatically ordered. While in most classes of primary EFL teaching, course books focus on simple present tense, literature provides

opportunities of working on all tenses. This is so helpful because children's lives are mostly organized around narratives. "It seems to me that stories, with their often familiar 'story grammars', provide an ideal context for verb tense acquisition. Literature may also help L2 learners to internalize the new language by providing access to a rich variety of linguistic items and a context for their communication efforts" (Ghosn, 2002). Literature provides the opportunity of exposing learners beyond the "utilitarian" level of the language which includes dialogues about mundane daily activities. Stories are likely to generate much more "pupil talk" than artificial language text. This kind of language motivates the students and creates more interaction between the students and the teacher which results in meaning negotiation.

Third, literature can promote academic literacy and thinking skills, and prepare children for the English-medium instruction.

Academic literacy also requires critical thinking skills, and literature offers a natural medium through which students can be introduced to the type of thinking and reasoning expected in academic classes. In case of storytelling, these include looking for main points and supporting details; comparing and contrasting; looking for cause-effect relationships; evaluating evidence, and becoming familiar with the type of language needed to express the thinking. Also, being highly generative, good literature allows the teacher to expand the themes while making use of the new language in different contexts, and accommodates to student needs and interests.

Fourth, literature can function as a change agent: good literature deals with some aspects of the human condition, and can thus contribute to the emotional development of the child, and foster positive interpersonal and intercultural attitudes. Literature can play a very significant role in developing empathy and tolerance based on data accumulated from research on multicultural literature and peace education, though the opportunities for communicating these sorts of socially beneficial themes have not been exploited in EFL programs so far. Literature helps learners gradually understand themselves and the world around them (Bettelheim, 1986), as a result learners better find out about the behaviors and feelings of others that is necessary for empathy, tolerance, and conflict resolution.

Contemporary literature sets the stage for the students to gain insight into the target language culture. Stories have the ability of reflecting target language culture by showing the characters in contexts of foreign language culture. In choosing stories for the classroom, the teachers should consider the fact that stories be related to the prevailing cultural value of the time rather than being about out dated costumes.

2.5 Storytelling and motivation

Motivation, as a psychological term, usually refers to the initiation, intensity and persistence of behavior. The static and dynamic conceptions of motivation were synthesized in a short definition by Dörnyei (1998): "(motivation) is a process whereby a certain amount of instigation force arises, initiates action, and persists as long as no other force comes into play to weaken it

and thereby terminate action or until the planned outcome has been reached". In another definition posed by Slavin (2000, p. 327), motivation is defined as "an internal process that activates, guides, and maintains behavior over time". Intensity and direction of motivation may vary though they are difficult to separate. In addition to getting students engaged in learning, it is important to determine how much they will learn. The value placed on motivation for learning a foreign language is emphasized by some scholars: Motivation "provides the primary impetus to initiate second or foreign language learning and later the driving force to sustain the long and often tedious learning process" (Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008 p. 55).

Dörnyei and Clement (2001) classified almost all the motivational constituents of the selected models/frameworks into seven broad dimensions:

1. *Affective/integrative dimension*, refers to attitudes, beliefs and values associated with the process, the target and the outcome of learning which are a general affective "core" of the L2 motivation and it includes variables such as "integrativeness," "affective motive," "language attitudes," "intrinsic motivation," "attitudes toward L2 learning," "enjoyment" and "interest".

Gardner (1985), in his landmark account of a socio-educational model of language acquisition, wrote that motivation to learn a foreign language can be described as a complex of constructs, involving both effort and desire, as well as a favorable attitude toward learning the language at hand. This model promoted the notion that self identify and identification with the foreign language community is important to the language-learning process. For example, a student may feel he or she does not "fit in" with the target language speakers (a demotivating factor), or may want to "fully integrate" and become, perhaps, completely passable as a native speaker of the language (a highly motivating factor). Where one is along this continuum is described as one's integrative motivation, or how much one wants to integrate with the target language community.

2. *Instrumental/pragmatic dimension*, referring to extrinsic, largely utilitarian factors such as financial benefits. Learners who are instrumentally motivated may want to learn the foreign language to achieve a practical goal, such as a job promotion or to obtain course credit (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1991).

Arnold and Brown (1999) explain: Extrinsic motivation comes from the desire to get a reward or avoid punishment; the focus is on something external to the learning activity itself. With intrinsic motivation the learning experience is its own reward (p. 14).

Intrinsic motivation comes from the joy or pleasure derived through language learning itself, while extrinsic motivation results from the desire to obtain some particular outcome.

3. *Macro-context-related* dimension, refers to broad, societal and socio-cultural factors such as multicultural, intergroup and ethno linguistic relations.
4. *Self-concept-related dimension*, refers to learner-specific variables such as self-confidence, self-esteem, anxiety and need for achievement.
5. *Goal-related dimension*, involves various goal characteristics. Provided that learners set realistic goals for themselves, they are motivated to achieve and follow their specified goals. Goals provide the direction people need to reach their destination, the motivation to sustain them on their trip and a way to measure their success.
6. *Educational context-related dimension*, refers to classroom setting and school context which are the immediate learning environment.
7. Significant *others-related* dimension, refers to the effect of students' parents and friends on their motivation in language learning.

Human motivation to learn is a complex phenomenon involving a number of diverse sources and conditions. Some of the motivational sources are situation specific, that is, they are rooted in the student's immediate learning environment, whereas some others appear to be more stable and generalized, stemming from a succession of the student's past experiences in the social world (Dörnyei, 2000).

The conceptual framework of children at a young age is still in the process of development which will make it possible for them to process language as an abstract system (Thornbury, 2006). Also, children's attention is so short and they are highly probable to lose concentration on activities that need full attention or analytic thinking. So during every kind of learning especially language learning, they need frequent changes of activity; they need to be provided with kinds of activities that they enjoy and activities that stimulate their curiosity and capture their attention; also they need to be kept active themselves (Harmer, 1991). When children encountering an activity, they interpret it and find it meaningful on their own terms. So when designing materials for young learner courses, we should bear in mind that activities need to be child-centered and communication should be authentic (Peck, 2001, p. 139). Limiting class activities on daily life and routine work may create boredom in language classes since they lack variation, do not sound enchanting, and are unlikely to create an animated classroom atmosphere. Communications occurs when there is a free and light-hearted atmosphere while a nervous and unbending atmosphere builds invisible obstacles in communications. The solution is to plan for strategies that interest students and make them motivated to the learning task. Nowadays, motivation, and in general anything to do with factors which affect the emotions are considered crucial in all learning processes. Dörnyei and Csizér suggest that in order to make language learners motivating, material developers should strive for:

- Create a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere in the classroom.
- Teachers should bring in humor, laughter and smiles, do fun things in class, and have game-like competitions.

- Present the tasks properly.
- Make the language classes interesting
- Encourage creative and imaginative ideas, encourage questions, and share responsibility by having students help organize the learning.
- Personalize the learning process.
- Familiarize learners with the target language culture.

Young learners really enjoy stories because they activate children's imagination and sense of enjoyment, are interesting for them, meet their emotional, cognitive and psychological needs and bring variety and change (Malkina, 1995). Also, stories provide a context that holds students' attention (Cooter, 1991).

Stories increase interactional opportunities among the students because the lively atmosphere and real life environment created by stories encourages the students to talk and discuss with each other. Besides that, stories can decrease nervousness because learners who are fully attending to stories are not in stressful situation. Stories are capable of bringing reality to the language classroom because children can actively take part in dramatizing the stories they hear, extending and adding more details to them (Ji, 1999). Learners come to language classroom with varying needs and it is unlikely that a single course book could address these varied needs. Cameron (2003) offers using differentiated tasks, provision of remedial literacy skills, increasing learner autonomy and adopting a different approach altogether. We hypothesize that introducing stories to the curriculum can create such condition and brings a different approach.

Stories can be motivating because children reading a story in their L2 use all the resources available to them to try to make sense of it, and to find out what happens in the end. When they reach that understanding, they experience the satisfaction that comes from using a foreign language to achieve a real goal: "Motivation becomes synonymous with a process of engagement through which the learners begin to feel a sense of involvement with the target language" (Sivasubramaniam, 2006, p 262). This kind of motivation is resultative motivation which refers to the case in which one who experiences success in learning may become more motivated to learn. Resultative motivation can reflect Cook's view (1996) that motivation goes in both directions. "High motivation is one factor that causes successful learning; successful learning, however, may cause high motivation" (p. 99).

2.6 Storytelling and proficiency

There are a plethora of models proposed for language proficiency since it is not easy to straightforwardly determine the skills and competency learners need to speak a second language and also to act appropriately in second language situation. The following is one of the models that claim to account for all the components of language proficiency developed by Bachman and Palmer's (1982).

Componential model of strategic competence

Bachman and Palmer empirical study (1982) resulted in the development of the most important models of language proficiency which has been used in many contexts and defining proficiency in many areas related to second language teaching. The model consists of linguistic competence, pragmatic competence and socio-linguistic competence. Language competence components are made of two broad categories namely organizational competence and pragmatic competence.

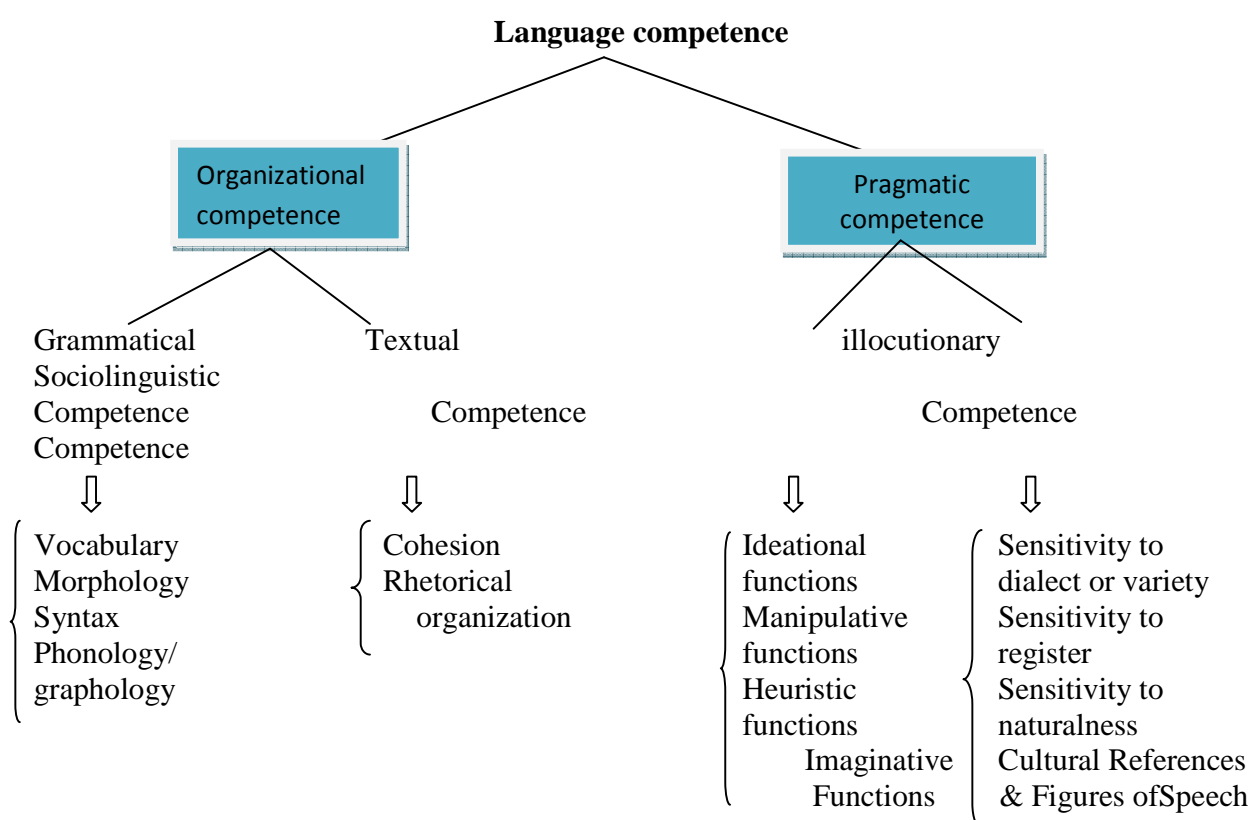


Fig. 1: Components of language competence (Bachman 1990:87)

Organizational competence consists of “abilities involved in controlling the formal structure of language for producing or recognizing grammatically correct sentences, comprehending their propositional content, and ordering them to form texts” (Bachman, 1990:87). It also includes grammatical competence that is vocabulary, morphology, syntax and phonology/graphology and textual competence that are knowledge of rules of cohesion and rhetorical organization.

Bachman defines (1990: 89-90) *pragmatic competence* as “the relationships between utterances and the acts of functions that speakers (or writers) intend to perform through

these utterances, which can be called the illocutionary force of utterances, and the characteristics of the context of language use that determine the appropriateness of utterances”. Pragmatic competence and also illocutionary competence is related to knowledge of the pragmatic conventions which are required to have an acceptable performance of language functions [1990:90]. It comprises ideational, manipulative, heuristic, and imaginative functions and sociolinguistic competence which refers to the sociolinguistic conventions that are needed to perform appropriately in a social context (1990:90). Furthermore, sensitivity to differences in dialect or variety, sensitivity to differences in register, sensitivity to naturalness, and the ability to interpret cultural references and figures of speech falls under the category of sociolinguistic competence.

Bachman (1990:84) describes Communicative Language Ability “consisting of both knowledge, or competence, and the capacity for implementing, or executing that competence in appropriate, contextualized communicative language use.” It consists of three components: language competence, strategic competence, and psycho-physiological mechanisms (Fig.2).

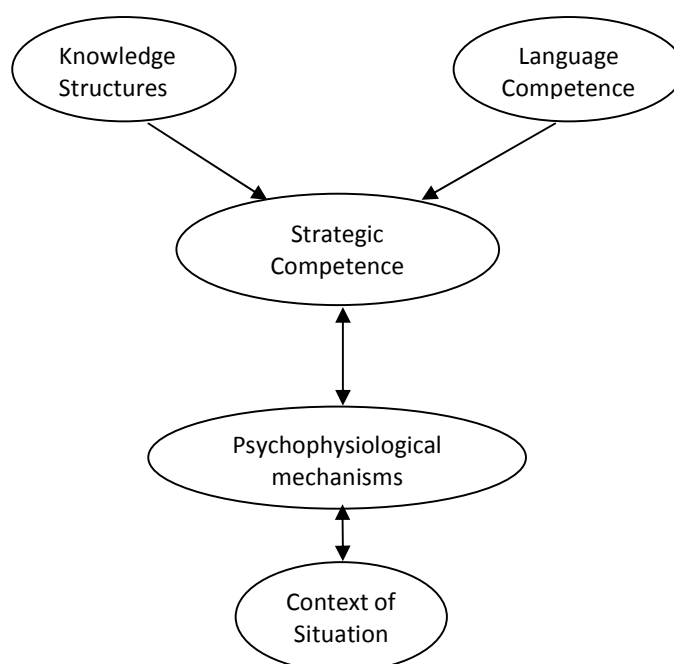


Fig.2 Components of communicative language ability in communicative language use (Bachman 1990:85)

Bachman (1990:107) describes psychophysiological mechanism as the auditory/visual channels and the receptive/productive mode, which are employed in language use.

On defining strategic competence, Bachman (1990:55) embarks with redefining the relationship between competence and performance, claiming that it has dynamic qualities. This dynamic quality is shown in Fig.3, where strategic competence plays the central mediating role between knowledge structures, language competence, and context of situation.

Strategic competence is central to all communication. It achieves its orchestrating role by carrying out a mediation role between meaning intentions (the message which is to be conveyed), and underlying competences, background knowledge and context of situation.

▪ 2.6.1 Teaching Proficiency through Reading Stories (TPRS)

Incorporating TPRS in language classroom accounts for all aspects of the language competence needed to achieve proficiency based on what is proposed in Bachman and Palmer (1982) model. Created in the early 1990's by a High School Spanish teacher named Blaine Ray, TPRS combines aspects from a wide variety of foreign language teaching methods to create an innovative and effective means of training students in a second language, which, if employed exclusively, presents an important departure from the way languages are generally taught currently.

The method combines Dr. James Asher's Total Physical Response (TPR) with Dr. Stephen Krashen's language acquisition strategies, allowing us to teach grammar, reading and writing along with vocabulary. The traditional TPR evolved with the feedback of the teachers by the year 2000, there was a much larger emphasis on reading and the spoken class story.

The basic principles of TPRS are providing lots of comprehensible input in context, motivating students with personalized, comical stories that all are conducted in the target language. In teaching through TPRS, target vocabulary and grammatical structures are repeated many times by using various questioning techniques. Fluency is achieved by implementing activities that are common in the first language acquisition case such as repeated words, telling stories, reading stories, etc. TPRS lessons begin with the introduction of vocabulary and complex structures. The teacher then assigns a story containing new vocabulary and structures which is read orally in the classroom. The first two steps are followed up with reading. In such a learning situation, as envisioned by Dr. Krashen, students rapidly acquire the target language effortlessly and involuntarily. The method relies heavily on the five hypotheses of The Natural Approach of Stephen Krashen: the acquisition hypothesis, the input hypothesis, the natural order hypothesis, the affective filter hypothesis and the monitor hypothesis.

We can make sure that the method based on TPRS provides the necessary amount of comprehensible input because it contains a lot of stories during a course so it is possible for it to hypothesize that learners acquire all aspects of a language through comprehensible input.

However, this view has been criticized on the grounds that input is not sufficient for language acquisition, and that learners need also to produce language. According to Swain's Comprehensible Output Hypothesis, it is not required to focus on especially syntax, or grammar, rather input can be understood purely in terms of semantics and pragmatics, or the raw meaning of the utterance. Although some syntactic structures could be learned through input, output is an important factor in the development of a syntactic or grammatical understanding of the target language. Although teaching through input is the primary means of instruction, it is not the only channel. When asking the students to produce language in the form of retells, free writes, discussions and answering questions during the stories, can we claim that TPRS students are able to experiment with the language on their own; however, it is not a whole class activity for them.

The other discussion that focuses on language output is Interaction Hypothesis, which basically states that acquisition arises from the negotiation for meaning that occurs during any language interaction. Stories taught by TPRS provide opportunity for interaction between teacher and students and among students themselves. Stories are repeated many times and the teacher is supposed to constantly check for comprehension through the process of questioning so there will be much interaction in the classroom due to the output produced.

As Communicative Language Teaching has become the most widely accepted approach to language pedagogy, the practices of any new method should match up with this approach, unless it can provide a valid argument as to why it does not. TPRS adhere to most of CLT's principles though it does not discuss CLT explicitly. Cognitive Principles, affective principles are the common principles shared by both TPRS and CLT. Only in the cases of certain principles does TPRS deviate from CLT. In the case of "Strategic Investment," TPRS does encourage a wide range of learning styles, though not all of them.

Cognitive Principles

Issues related to the way brain process language are referred to as Cognitive principles. The components of cognitive principles are briefly elaborated here.

"Automaticity" refers to the ability of simply comprehending or producing language without having to think about what they are hearing or saying it, it is the "feel" for a language that fluent speakers exhibit (Brown, 2001). "Meaningful learning," is the process of "subsuming" information into existing structures and memory systems in addition to creating links between these various systems which promote maintenance of the individual forms (Brown, 2001). "Strategic investment" that refers to learner's own "investment" in the language learning process is an essential aspect of language learning. It is one of the areas where one might find fault in TPRS.

The main shortcoming of TPRS is its fairly monotonous choice of techniques. Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences is believed to be a good response for this criticism.

Claiming that all humans have 8 different types of intelligence, the theory says that people vary in displaying greater aptitude in some intelligence and less in others. The intelligences are as follows: Linguistic, Logical-Mathematical, Spatial, Bodily-Kinesthetic, Musical, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal and Naturalistic. According to Dr. Thomas Armstrong, TPRS teaches the various intelligences. Students come to the language classroom with varying learning styles and storytelling, which sometimes is accompanied by student actors portrayal, caters to the needs of students with strong linguistic, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic and interpersonal learning styles. Even auditory learners are encouraged through TPRS when songs as mnemonic devices are used in the classrooms (Webster, 25). Intrapersonal or introspective intelligence is satisfied when the learners are encouraged to personalize the stories, though this is less obvious. For naturalistic intelligences, Armstrong also claims that stories cater for this type of intelligence because of the involvement of animals and exotic places. Finally, using numbers in stories and grammatical patterns stimulates the logical-mathematical intelligence (Armstrong). While it would be challenging to find any method that completely and equally satisfies all of the intelligences, this also holds true about Gardner's theories because one of the major drawbacks to TPRS is that it may not fully supply the needs of all students in a language classroom.

Affective Principle

Anything that may affect students' anxiety and their attitude towards the target language fall under the category of "affective principles". The "Language Ego" states that students will develop a second ego when learning a foreign language and that ego causes the creation of "a sense of fragility, defensiveness, and a rising of inhibitions" (Brown, p. 61). "Self-Confidence" refers to the learners' beliefs in themselves, that is, if learners believe that they can accomplish language learning tasks and activities, their chance of actually accomplishing them is much greater. Based on the "Risk-Taking" principle, "Successful language learners should attempt to produce and to interpret language that is a bit beyond their absolute certainty" (63). The final principle in Brown "affective" category does not apply to TPRS as well as the others. "The Language-Culture Connection" principle refers to the interconnectedness of language and culture and that teaching culture should be an integral part of the language classroom (Brown, 64). Although in the methodological layout of TPRS, the main focus is on language acquisition and culture is not discussed, TPRS does take account of the instruction of culture.

Linguistic Principles

The issues learners encounter while learning a target language which arises from the language itself are "linguistic principles". The first principle is "Native Language Effect" which states that the native language can both interfere and facilitate second language learning. "Interlanguage principle" discusses the fact that, regardless of the order of the structures that are taught, there is a general, natural order in acquiring a language.

▪ 2.6.2 Storytelling and Grammar

The grammatical structures included in the story should be seen mainly as formulaic expressions which do not need grammatical analysis but which can be learnt in an ongoing way because they appear frequently in stories in appropriate contexts. It has always been argued that grammar is best acquired through comprehensible input which is more pleasurable than learning grammar through instruction. Rodrigo (2006) found that if learners be exposed to a great deal of input through listening and reading, grammar can be acquired incidentally. When acquiring grammar through listening and reading, learners do not need to attend to language forms and are able to apply it intuitively in the actual language use. Not only does conscious attention to grammatical rules take up massive amounts of students' time and mental energy, but also the students may not be able to perform appropriately in the real life situation. As long as learners can use the instructed rules of grammar in actual language use, can we say that they have acquired the rules properly. Grammar instruction should be in such a way that learners can apply them in reading and writing. Ray (2005) claims that repetitive exposure to comprehensible input results in the acquisition of language structures. Therefore, learners need to be given a great deal of input for acquiring a language.

▪ 2.6.3 Storytelling and Vocabulary

Most of the new language in stories is perfectly contextualized and it is usually repeated more than once, therefore the listener has more than one opportunity to understand the meaning. If additional information is also given to help learners with the comprehension of the story (as with visual aids for example), the introduction of new words need not be a huge task. There are a few reasons why stories can help memorization. De la Fuente (2002) found that learners exposed to input during negotiated interaction with or without production of pushed output will attain higher levels of L2 receptive and productive vocabulary acquisition than learners exposed to non-negotiated, pre-modified input. Graesser and Ottati (1995) and Wood (2003) assert that stories have a structure that helps retrieval of information. They report that in a study from 1969, Bower and Clark showed that participants who arranged vocabulary words into story form were five times more able to remember new vocabulary than participants in the control group. Similarly, in his theory of multiple intelligences, Gardner (2006) advances the notion that students are more effectively taught when they receive instruction that addresses their different kinds of intelligences. Furthermore, by engaging the senses more actively and creating an emotional reaction through the telling or writing of stories, people are better able to retain new knowledge, including vocabulary (Willingham, 2009). Willingham further declares that stories are easy to comprehend because the audiences who hear the stories often know the structures of those stories. In addition, stories are easy to remember due to the causal structure of stories where a part of the plot in a story helps people remember other parts of the same story. It follows that by comprehending and remembering stories people can better retain vocabulary from stories

as well. In fact, according to Schank and Abelson (1995), people remember by telling stories especially when the telling of stories is rehearsed. Through the act of storytelling, memory is constituted, and conversely, the stories we tell are based on the memories we have.

Storytelling has many benefits regarding the improvement of memorization as follows: First, it can help in the understanding of concepts and retention of information (Casey, Erkut, Ceder, & Young, 2008; Hutchison & Padgett, 2007). Second, it can improve literacy skills such as building vocabulary and enhancing speaking, listening, reading and writing skills (Collins & Cooper, 1997; Egan, 1986). Third, stories are a very effective method of memorization (Egan, 2005; Schank & Abelson, 1995; Willingham, 2009).

▪ 2.6.4 Storytelling Critics

Although literature shows many advantages about the role of storytelling in classroom, there are some drawbacks about it which impede its application freely in language teaching. TPRS is a growing movement among foreign language teachers, particularly in the United States, but it has established little coverage in academic world. TPR Storytelling is unusual in that it has received little support on the part of publishers or academic institutions. It is an ordinary movement among language teachers who tried to apply it with the desire of reaching more students and achieving better results in comparison to the previous methods. To this end, they have published their own materials and teaching manuals, and teaching in TPR Storytelling is commonly accessible at workshops by existing TPRS teachers rather than at Teacher Education College.

Furthermore, there are some obstacles in the way of teaching language through TPR story telling at classroom level which are as follows:

Time

Regarding the length of the class, in comparison to previous methods, a curriculum involving story telling may need much more time.

Tests

Language instructors are not sure if TPRS-taught student would exceed on a standardized test. Especially in case of grammar point questions, it has been found that TPRS-taught students excel when it comes to reading comprehension, writing, and speaking.

Another worth mentioning point here is that some students are very good at learning language. Those who would do weakly on a traditional grammar/vocabulary test will probably do the same on a similar test even after being instructed through TPRS. However, true TPRS teachers don't apply traditional tests to assess the ability of their students. These teachers would do their best to meet the ACTFL proficiency guidelines.

Preparation for college courses

TPRS-taught students would be unfamiliar with teaching techniques and expectations of the instructors of foreign language classes in college.

Articulation

As the goal of TPRS is acquiring language rather than memorizing grammatical concepts and rules, the students may be unfamiliar with the explicit grammatical terms.

Grammar Instruction

TPRS only teaches "pop-up grammar", by which the teacher only gives a simple and concise explanation for why a phrase means what it does, while a teacher in grammar-based approaches teaches all possible forms of a grammar point and practices some activities to make sure if the students have learnt it or not. On the other hand, TPRS teachers do not cover much grammar and the material they teach is not in a linear manner, so, students do not learn how to conjugate verbs or learn other grammar that will place them in a good position to advance or the next level of the course.

Difficulties aligning TPRS lessons with textbook

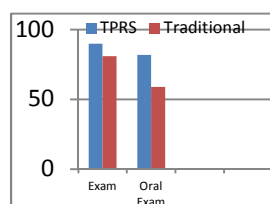
For determining the levels of instruction, schools, institutes and districts need particular curriculum and syllabus and textbooks, especially when the next level of articulation is concerned. This will expose TPRS teacher with some limitations because the teacher will be obliged to come up with very contrived stories which are focused on particular grammar and vocabulary points in the course book. In sum, the material taught under TPRS can be at odds with the material taught under other teaching strategies. Thus, there are many teachers who see TPRS only as a complementary teaching strategy that can be used together with other strategies. Such teachers do not defend nor reduce the value of TPRS, but put it into practice as they see fit.

2.6.5 Review of Literature

According to Mello (2001), storytelling has been used as a method of teaching since ancient times. In all cultures, storytelling has paved the way of transmitting important knowledge. (Gordon, 1978; Collins & Cooper, 1997; Leeming & Sader, 1997).

Using a standardized Second Language Proficiency Examination, Varguez (2009) compared four beginning high school classrooms with different teaching methods and socioeconomic status. She found that the TPRS classroom performed better than the traditional classroom when socioeconomic status was held constant, and underprivileged students who were taught with

TPRS equaled those students who were taught in traditional method in the more prosperous school district.



Administering a final and an oral exam, Watson (2009) compared two beginning high school TPRS classrooms and one traditional classroom. Results demonstrated that the TPRS classes outperformed the traditional students on both tests, and that the distribution on normal curve was wider in the traditional classes. This documents the fact that when taught with traditional methods, some students failed and others succeed, whereas more students can succeed with TPRS.

Spangler (2009) found that middle school and high school students in TPRS classrooms significantly outperformed classrooms using Communicative Language Teaching on speaking, and that the two groups of students performed the same on reading and writing.

Davidheiser (2001) listed some benefits of TPRS such as improving pronunciation and vocabulary memory, reducing anxiety, promoting active learning, providing a natural way to learn language, and being appropriate for different types of learners. He argues for the integration of grammar instruction with TPRS at the college level.

Braunstein (2006) asserted that even adult ESL students, who expected more traditional way of teaching and learning, had a positive reflection toward TPRS. Students showed more enthusiasm about learning and reported that the methods helped them in remembering vocabulary, and understanding English as a whole.

“[Webster’s] research found unusual success on the Advanced Placement exam by students of TPR teachers” (p. 271), and “[Webster] concludes, ‘TPRS students are more than prepared for college.

Kariuki & Bush (2008) in another TPRS study, “The effects of total physical response by storytelling and the traditional teaching styles of a foreign language in a selected high school” ,found similar results to Webster’s findings.

The results from a summative test following the teaching of a unit in Spanish I to both the experimental and control groups are as follows: First, students taught using TPRS strategies scored significantly better overall than students taught using traditional strategies. Secondly, students taught using TPRS strategies scored significantly better in vocabulary acquisition than students taught using traditional strategies.

Every empirical research study on TPRS to date has found that TPRS students outperform traditional students on some measures of language skills—particularly on speaking. No study has found that TPRS students underperform traditional students.

There are some studies which have shown the positive effect of stories in language classroom, however they have not used TPRS as the way of applying stories. Here we have referred to some of these studies.

Dombey (1995) did a case study in which he examined 3- and 4-year-old children's experiences with storytelling and the potential effects of those experiences on the children's future success in learning to read. Subjects were students attending one of two nursery school classes held at a large primary school on the south coast of England. These children came from families experiencing financial, social, and physical problems. Results indicated that: (1) storytelling helped to gain the students' attention; (2) throughout the school year, the children began to move toward more explicit, individual self-expression and away from dependence on shared observations; (3) some children had substantial gains in learning language styles very different from those found in their prior conversational experience; (4) in October, only 21 percent of teacher-child dialogic interactions were initiated by students, but by May, this number had increased to 54 percent; and (5) children experienced many positive gains, in various areas.

Phillips (2000) in a 4 week storytelling-based program for preschoolers (3-5 year olds) explored the value of storytelling in early childhood education and on developing the children's listening comprehension and storytelling skills, enhancing their imagination, and fostering a sense of community, through creative exploration of stories. The stories were accompanied with a variety of variety of extension activities that included opportunities for children to tell their own stories, draw stories, and act out stories, which were designed to match different interests and styles of expression. It was concluded that through the storytelling program, the children readily absorbed the storylines. Moreover, the program was a source of inspiration for children's exploration of knowledge. The researcher argued that storytelling enhanced children's awareness of story structure and that they could recall and comprehend more effectively.

Tsou (2002) investigated the relationship between storytelling and language learning at the primary school level. The researcher compared two classes -in one, the teacher incorporated storytelling into her teaching method, in the other she did not. The result indicated that the teacher talks in the storytelling classroom were different from that in the non-storytelling regular English classroom. In the storytelling classroom the teacher used more open questions, prompts and student volunteers.

Groce (2004) tried to describe how elementary teachers used their experiences in a storytelling training to teach lessons in language arts, science, social studies, and bilingual education. Storytelling was found to be a valuable tool for motivating students to listen and engage in content area lessons, improve reading skills and others in the content areas, and as a springboard for beginning units and skill development.

Lordly (2007) in a study examined the impact of storytelling in the classroom and what motivates individuals to engage in storytelling. A storytelling methodology was introduced in an undergraduate nutrition course as an opportunity to enhance the teaching and learning environment. A 28-item, multi-part, self-administered survey was distributed to the class. Survey

responses indicated that educators' and students' storytelling could positively influence the learning environment. This occurs through the creation of a greater focus on personalized information, glimpses of real-life experience, a connection with a topic as participants recognize similarities in their own personal experience and knowledge, and connections between different topics and through the emphasis on key concepts.

Chapter Three

Methodology

3.1 Participants

We have selected two types of English classes, one of which has story telling in their regular schedule while the other class follows the traditional method of teaching without employing stories for teaching. The classes of stories are our treatment group which consists of 60 students while those not having stories are the control group which consists of 42 students. First of all we have tried to make sure the two groups are homogenous in terms of their age, gender and proficiency level. The students were all from the same school that we could homogenize them and distribute them to different classes based on their proficiency level. All the students are male with age range of 11 to 14 and proficiency level of elementary level that we have proved it by administering a pre-test. When administering the questionnaire, the students were not informed about the purpose of the study and just were asked to answer the questions honestly so their answer would not be affected by their prejudgment about the study.

3.2 Instrumentation

In order to carry out the study, two proficiency tests and a questionnaire were used.

Pretest

A proficiency test consisting of grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension designed by the researchers themselves was used to both determine the proficiency level of the learners and to make sure they are homogeneous before conducting the study. The test was pilot tested by being administered to 15 students whose characteristics were similar to the sample subjects.

Story

The researcher did not have complete freedom to choose the story books so the stories used in the treatment classes were those specified by the school English department. After completing each unit of the main course book, a part of a story was taught. The stories are so rich in the amount of vocabulary and the structures that have been taught are repeated many times during the stories. Stories mostly set around cartoonish themes in which cartoon characters create interesting events that usually have a happy ending.

Posttest

The test used at the end of the study is a proficiency test consisting of vocabulary, grammar, and reading comprehension that is administered to see the result of the one-term treatment. Since our subjects were at elementary level for whom examining pragmatic category of language proficiency was not feasible, we decided to assess three important elements of their organizational knowledge which include their vocabulary, grammar and reading knowledge that are also regarded as the determinants of English language proficiency across schools in Iran.

The Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB)

In order to assess the initial motivation of the learners, a motivation questionnaire called *The Attitude/Motivation Test Battery* was used. The questionnaire (AMTB) has been used in many different forms. The original formulations of the major concepts as well as the original items were developed by Gardner (1958; 1960) and extended by Gardner and Lambert (1972). Full scale item development and concern with internal consistency reliability of the sub-tests which led to the present version was initiated by Gardner and Smythe (1975a). A summary of the initial cross validation is presented by Gardner and Smythe (1981), and they reported the Cronbach's alpha of 0.89 for the test. The composition of the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery varies somewhat from form to form depending upon the purpose and the cultural group for which it is intended. For the sake of the present study, we have deleted some questions and have also made some changes in a number of items considering the age of the participants and the context of Iran. Almost all forms of the questionnaire consists of 12 subscales that are: Attitudes toward English speaking people, Interest in Foreign Languages, English Course Evaluation, Attitudes toward Learning English, Integrative Orientation, Instrumental Orientation, English Class Anxiety, Parental Encouragement, Motivational Intensity, Desire to Learn English, Orientation Index, and English teacher evaluation. The modified version of the questionnaire that we used in this study included 39 items consisting of 5 content areas that are Interest in Foreign Languages (9 items), Attitudes toward learning English (10), English Class Anxiety (5 items), Motivational Intensity (9 items) and Desire to Learn English (6 items).

3.3 Design

The design of the study is Randomized Pretest, Posttest Control group design. Since the age and gender of all the students were the same, we tried to homogenize the groups through a pretest by considering their proficiency scores and randomly assign two classes as control group and two classes as experimental group. The effect of the treatment is assessed at the end of the study by comparing the posttest scores of the control and treatment groups.

3.4 Procedure

The study was carried out during one semester in 2011-2012 educational year in Iran among a group of young EFL learners. First, we administered the pretest to know about learners' homogeneity and their proficiency. In the same session, AMTB is given to determine the students' initial motivation in learning a second language. Students are encouraged to choose the best answer based on their own preferences, they are also assured that the answers would not be revealed to anyone.

To conduct the treatment, that is, applying storytelling in language classroom, the three steps proposed by TPRS approach is used as our framework. We will not stick closely to the framework but will try to follow its general steps. The steps are as below:

Step one: Establish Meaning

In this step the students are introduced to the new vocabulary phrases for the lesson. Teacher presents the lesson as the way it is in other classes of Iranian schools so there is not any significant difference between the treatment group and control group in this phase.

Step two: Spoken Class Story

In step two, students hear the new structures and new vocabulary of each unit of the course book many times in the context of a spoken class story. This story is usually short, simple, and interesting, and will contain multiple instances of the target structures used in context. The number of times the structures are heard is further increased by the *circling* questioning technique. Depending on the class conditions and activities of the story, students are asked to do some post-story activities like story writing, answering some comprehension questions, and role plays.

Step three: Reading

Step three is where the students learn to read the language structures that they have heard in steps one and two. There are four basic types of reading activities used in TPRS. The first, and most common, is the class reading, where the students read and discuss a story that uses the same language structures as the story in step two. The next most common activity is free voluntary reading, where students are free to read any book they choose in the language being learned. The other activities are Kindergarten Day, and homework reading. For Kindergarten Day, the teacher brings in a children's picture book, and reads it to the students in class. Homework reading, like the name implies, means assigning specific reading for students to do at home.

Chapter four

Findings

This chapter puts forward the statistical analysis of the data collected through the study. The present study aims to investigate the effect of storytelling on proficiency and motivation of a sample of school children at secondary schools of Iran. In this chapter we discuss both the questions and the hypotheses and answer the questions as they posed before.

First, we have provided some information about subjects to avoid any marginal interference and prove that the two groups are homogeneous in terms of their age, proficiency level, and gender.

Table 1: Participants characteristics

Group	N	Gender	Proficiency level	Age
Experimental	62	Male	Elementary level	12.40
Control	48	Male	Elementary level	12.38

The students were all in the first grade of secondary education, that is why their age averages are so close. We obtained their personal information by asking some ethnographic questions whose answers were proved by investigating the related school files. T-test was used to measure the statistical differences of their age and proficiency level. The results of table 2 demonstrate that there is not a sharp age difference between subjects so it is quite justifiable to have such groups as our control and experimental groups.

Table 2: T-test result for controlling age variable

Scope	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. value	Sig. level
Age	experimental	62	12.40	.495	.298	.766	Not Sig.
	control	48	12.38	.489			

As was mentioned before, we ran a pre-test to put the students at the same level of proficiency in the same classroom at the start of the educational year. Results of table 3 confirm the fact that subjects are all at the same level of proficiency before the study.

Table 3: T-test result for controlling proficiency variable

Scope	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. value	Sig. level
Proficiency	experimental	62	87.76	9.204	1.882	.063	Not Sig.
	control	48	84.08	11.276			

To answer the major questions, the researcher assigned two groups (experimental and control group). Pre-test was the instrument used to collect data about learners primary level of proficiency and also to make sure that the two groups are at the same level of language proficiency, and then storytelling program was implemented and finally post-test shows the level of achievement after our treatment .

To answer the first question:

- 1- Does implementing stories in language classroom have any effect on learners' motivation in learning a foreign language?

After having stories in experimental group for one semester, we administered a motivation questionnaire called The Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) to both experimental and control groups to gain information about their motivation. As it is shown in table 4, we calculated the means and compared them.

Table 4: Group mean for motivation

Motivation	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
	Experimental		62	3.4638
Control		48	3.5896	.41638

Table 5 shows the motivation means of the two groups in detail along with the total mean.

Table 5: Motivation data

	Experimental Group	Control Group
1	4.08	3.25
2	3.56	4.08
3	3.83	3.95
4	3.72	3.05
5	1.28	3.10
6	3.18	3.69
7	2.40	3.26
8	1.77	3.71
9	3.88	3.72
10	3.80	3.72
11	1.03	3.62
12	3.53	3.95
13	1.08	3.49
14	3.05	3.84
15	4.08	4.05
16	4.08	3.90
17	4.03	3.97
18	3.23	2.47
19	3.23	2.59
20	3.75	3.87
21	3.20	3.62
22	3.44	3.51
23	3.50	2.77
24	3.63	3.58
25	3.78	2.67
26	3.33	4.10
27	3.38	3.41
28	3.98	3.38
29	3.70	3.16
30	3.82	3.38
31	3.88	3.74
32	3.28	4.15
33	4.05	3.44
34	4.05	3.77
35	2.80	3.62
36	3.80	4.03

37	2.43	4.05
38	3.45	4.08
39	3.97	3.13
40	4.05	3.74
41	3.40	3.74
42	3.95	3.69
43	3.98	4.18
44	3.73	3.56
45	3.63	3.28
46	3.55	3.55
47	3.28	3.82
48	4.00	3.87
49	3.82	
50	3.10	
51	3.70	
52	3.20	
53	3.48	
54	3.85	
55	3.75	
56	3.74	
57	3.98	
58	4.05	
59	3.97	
60	3.23	
61	3.45	
62	3.93	
Mean	3.4638	3.5896

Looking at the results of the motivation means, we can see that the mean score of control group is a little more than the experimental group (3.58 to 3.45). There is not a sharp difference between the two means, however this result shows that those classes having storytelling in their schedule are not more motivated in learning another language compared to those who don't have storytelling as part of their schedule. Contrary to what we claimed in the literature, findings of this part do not support the studies that have found a positive effect of storytelling on learners' motivation in second language learning. Since we had homogenous groups at first and the syllabus, context, and text books were the same except for the use of stories in experimental group, we expected to see motivational differences between the two groups resulting from the use of stories in the classroom. The motivation means of the two groups are not very different and we can claim that both control group and experimental groups are motivated enough, but

storytelling does not have any significant effect on their motivational behavior. Therefore, the first hypothesis of the study is accepted and we did not see a more motivation mean for the experimental group whose English classes have been accompanied by stories during a term.

For the second research question:

- 2- Does storytelling in the language classroom have any significant effect on young learners' general language proficiency?

To answer this question we have administered a test assessing the general language proficiency of the students after the term that the study was finished. The scores of the students are shown in table 6.

Table 6: proficiency data

	Experimental Group	Control Group
1	90	77
2	80	98
3	76	60
4	91	94
5	100	93
6	88	56
7	89	79
8	100	88
9	72	45
10	69	99
11	88	100
12	84	99
13	92	77
14	95	69
15	78	96
16	94	77
17	99	88
18	82	99
19	87	77
20	98	59
21	100	100
22	90	87
23	89	99
24	78	78

25	100	65
26	77	88
27	69	69
28	100	66
29	98	88
30	92	99
31	89	68
32	97	88
33	94	77
34	92	91
35	98	94
36	65	88
37	99	73
38	90	55
39	55	89
40	79	73
41	49	69
42	90	78
43	70	99
44	88	97
45	70	61
46	91	76
47	99	66
48	93	87
49	98	
50	95	
51	69	
52	89	
53	79	
54	88	
55	81	
56	81	
57	66	
58	89	
59	99	
60	100	
61	94	
62	98	
Mean	86.76	81.21

Results of tables 6 and 7 show that the mean for experimental group in post test is 86.76 with standard deviation of 11.876 while this is 81.21 with standard deviation of 14.535 for control group. The participants in experimental group outperformed those in control group in post test. To see if this difference is significant at .05 level of significance, we have run a t-test.

Table 7: Group Statistics

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Post Test	Experimental group	62	86.76	11.876	1.508
	Control group	48	81.21	14.535	2.098

Table 8: independent sample t-test for post test scores

	Levene's test for equality of variances		t-test for equality of means						
	F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. 2-tailed	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								lower	upper
Equal variance assumed	4.770	.031	2.204	108	.030	5.550	2.519	.558	10.542
Equal variance not assumed			2.148	89.67	.034	5.550	2.584	.416	10.683

Reporting on the results of the second row of table 8 where equal variances are not assumed, we can see that the t value is 2.148 and the significant value is less than (.034). This indicates that the observed difference between the experimental group and control groups is significant at .05 level of significance. Therefore, the second hypothesis of the study is rejected and we can claim that the use of storytelling in the language classroom had a significant effect on language proficiency of first graders in secondary schools of Iran.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

Based upon the collected data and the results of statistical analysis, this chapter focused on summarizing and discussing the findings gained from this study. Next, some pedagogical implications of storytelling teaching in secondary school are presented. Lastly, the limitations of this study are illustrated and the suggestions are proposed for teachers and researchers who intend to conduct further related studies.

This study investigated whether using storytelling in language classroom has any influence on language proficiency and motivation of secondary school students in Iran. The program was designed to maximize language proficiency and motivation of the students through practicing storytelling activities. In the hypotheses of the study, the researcher suggested that storytelling technique would bring positive changes in the target students' language proficiency and would make them more motivated in pursuing their goals in learning a foreign language. Statistical analysis demonstrated that the mean score for control group was a little more than that for experimental group meaning that motivation of the students in experimental group did not change after the one-term period of the study with storytelling. Since stories have always attracted people especially children, it was supposed that stories in a foreign language classroom will motivate the learners by introducing joy, excitement, variety and fun to the classroom. Perusing the literature critically, we have seen many studies which proved the increased motivation of the students as one of the by-products of using stories in the classroom. Being aware of the fact that stories are not just interesting and enjoyable to a specific group of people, rather they are usually attractive for every individual, we assume that the type of stories chosen and the way they were put into action for the sake of this study were not conducted in a way that could be motivating for the students. As was mentioned before, researches could not choose the stories for the experimental group and the teacher had to introduce those stories that have been issued by the institute authorities. When asking students what their opinions are about using stories in language classroom, beside the advantages that were raised, the main limitation reported by the students was about the topic of the stories. Most of the students said that the topics are not interesting at all because they seem to be so childish for them. The students at such age are more interested in adventurous genres and those which contain action and sensational themes. However, the stories could not satisfy their needs because they were mostly very simple cartoon characters which make learners bored that results in the loss of excitement on the part of the learners. The students in such classes, when asked their ideas, mostly believed that stories can have positive effects on their learning as long as they follow a story in such a way that they wish it never ends. The program developers of the institute seem to have provided a couple of story books for all graders without paying enough attention to the students' age and their interest. Although the main reason for the ineffectiveness of our treatment in motivating learners is the

dull stories which made both teacher and students willing to finish them soon, the way the storytelling was carried out in the classroom has triggered the motivation problem. The teachers were trained on how to use stories in their classes and how to make the students to play roles, but the results of the study cast doubts about the way our training was carried out. So we can blame our training and report it as one of the major limitations of the study because whatever the story, the training should enable teachers to carry out TPRS sequence in the classroom in a way that arouse the interests. A very serious restriction posed upon the teachers is lack of sufficient time for all activities, then it does limit their freedom in following the TPRS sequence as we expected. Teachers usually hasten to catch up to the schedule because what is important at the end of the course both for teachers and school heads is whether the materials dedicated to the course are covered or not.

This study also tried to find the effect of using stories in language classroom on learner's proficiency level at secondary school level. We already defined the concept of proficiency which helped us take account of the important issues that determine the level of language proficiency in our post test. We found that stories did have a positive effect on learners language proficiency when the results of the post test showed that the students in the experimental group gained a better average than those in the control group. As was mentioned in the review part, stories provide huge amount of comprehensible input for the learners which can familiarize them with language structure, introduce new vocabulary, and contextualize the structure and vocabulary. Being in an EFL context, Iranian students do not have much contact with language use outside the classroom since there is almost no native speakers, no multimedia sources in English, no English magazines or so, therefore, we should try to provide this opportunity for the students to work on their English and examine it when they are not in the classroom. The inherent stimulating features of stories make learners greatly eager to continue reading them at home, therefore we have given them the chance of being around English while they are away from their language classes. This is one of the reasons that made students proficiency increase over the period of study.

Stories also benefit the vocabulary knowledge of learners since students face a lot of new vocabulary which are not just seen and forgotten, rather they are used in TPRS phase. Then the new vocabulary is put into practice and students have the chance of applying the new learnt word which can turn it to an active vocabulary resulting in the long term storage of the vocabulary. Using vocabulary in TPRS phase make them much better committed to memory because learners would be in a situation that they need to retrieve just those vocabularies that they learned from the story. The opinion poll showed that many students see stories as the strongest supplier of new vocabulary and believe in enriching their vocabulary knowledge as the main advantage of the stories in language classroom.

This study confirmed the claim that storytelling can improve the language proficiency level of the young learners. When thinking of the ways to improve reading skills, vocabulary knowledge

and designing ways to make the newly taught structure understood, teachers cannot overlook the important role of stories. They are highly recommended to set a specific time for reading stories in the classroom, and if possible to follow them with actions so that learners can make connection between the story and the created plot in the classroom which is especially helpful in case of having young learners. Teachers and course developers should bear in mind that stories should be at learners' age, their interest, and their language proficiency. All the three factors are highly important and as soon as one of the factors is not carefully considered when designing syllabus materials, can we expect the inefficiency of our use of stories in the classroom. Dull stories that are not adapted to the level and age of the students could not bring any change in motivation and proficiency of the students and bringing such stories in the classroom is futile and ineffective. Only being aware of the fact that stories are valuable resources available for the language teacher is not enough, the teacher should consider all in force factors when choosing the story and also apply the most appropriate way to use them in the class.

Suggestions and Recommendations

We have recently seen the use of stories as a supplementary material beside the main course book in some language classes across distinguishing institutes and schools in Iran. However, the stories are usually assigned as homework and students are asked to read the stories at home and answer some comprehension questions in the class. TPRS accompanies the stories with actions where students feel they are acting a play in another language which is both interesting and helpful for their learning. When having stories in the classroom, the atmosphere should be changed, it is suggested that the traditional activities be replaced with techniques that include more actions.

It is concluded that using stories in the language classroom is so much beneficial for the learners because it activates learners' imagination, increase their textual knowledge, and make students more interested in learning the language. However, the way the storytelling activities are carried out in the classroom is important because it might lead to opposite results if stories are not chosen and taught appropriately. For teaching stories in the classroom we proposed TPRS method that is a very effective method of making stories a useful teaching aid. Depending on the community norms of the learners and their contextual situation, stories could be localized so as to become more interesting and familiar since they become closer to their cultural values. On way of making storytelling more stimulating is to accompany them with multimedia resources such as power point slides that show the text, big pictures related to the story shown on the screen, and playing music or the voices of characters. Although TPRS strongly supports the role of actions in learning, it can be more interesting and memorable when stories are not just read and done; rather they are read, watched, listened and done.

One problem that we faced in this study was the matter of authenticity. The stories that were used during the period of the study were all pedagogically designed stories because the learners

were not at a level that could read authentic stories. Authentic materials always arouse the interests and make learning activities so meaningful to the students, but it is not always possible to succeed in applying such materials in language classes because most of the time learners are not at a level of understanding texts that native speakers easily make sense of. As a suggestion for further studies, a TPRS method with more proficient learners who can be assigned authentic stories could render more functional results.

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