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Storytelling to Improve Speaking Skills

Narración de cuentos para mejorar las habilidades orales

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to establish the effectiveness of storytelling to increase the speaking skills of adolescent students at high school level; through, a mixed methods analysis using as data collection technique: the survey. This instrument was applied to tenth grade students of the Remigio Romero y Cordero Educational Unit in Cuenca. The survey was used to collect data to evaluate the impact of the oral expression activities and the students' perceptions, experiences, opinions and points of view. With these results obtained, a proposal emerges for the foreign language teachers of the Remigio Romero y Cordero Educational Unit in Cuenca, on the benefits of applying storytelling with adolescents, its effectiveness in improving the level of language proficiency and recommendations for its implementation in schools.

Descriptors: Language instruction; second language instruction; bilingual education. (UNESCO Thesaurus).

RESUMEN

Este estudio tiene como objetivo establecer la efectividad de la narración de historias para aumentar la capacidad de hablar de los estudiantes adolescentes a nivel de escuela secundaria; a través, de un análisis de métodos mixtos utilizando como técnica de recopilación de datos: la encuesta. Este instrumento se aplicó a los estudiantes de décimo año de la Unidad Educativa Remigio Romero y Cordero en Cuenca. Con la encuesta se recopilaron datos para evaluar el impacto de las actividades de expresión oral y las percepciones, experiencias, opiniones y puntos de vista de los estudiantes. Con estos resultados obtenidos, surge una propuesta para los docentes de lengua extrajera de la Unidad Educativa Remigio Romero y Cordero en Cuenca, sobre los beneficios de aplicar la narración de historias con adolescentes, su eficacia en la mejora del nivel de dominio del idioma y recomendaciones para su implementación en las escuelas.

Descriptores: Enseñanza de idiomas; enseñanza de una segunda lengua; educación bilingüe. (Tesauro UNESCO).

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INTRODUCTION

Certainly, many English teachers deal with teenage students who do not like English or feel frustrated because they cannot see a positive result in their learning due to their performance at the time of using the foreign language. Many reasons are involved in the low development of the students' academic performance, such as the methodology applied by the teacher, incorrect evaluation criteria, lack of reinforcement process, or improper guidance from parents (Singh et al. 2016). For this reason, this research proposes a different approach that can change the learners' attitude towards the English language and improve their performance.

According to Lucarevschi (2016) "storytelling is claimed to be more effective in language teaching than traditional language teaching methods… it works on language skills in a fun, engaging and contextualized manner, raising learners' interest in listening to stories, as well as in speaking" (p. 24). Similarly (Nozima, 2021) declares, stories develop young people's communicative competence and critical thinking in a playful and fun way.

However, it is important to remark that most of the research about this topic is primarily focused on children´s learning, but there is not enough information about teenagers who learn with this approach, perhaps it is because it is assumed that only children like stories. Moulton (2020) specifies that storytelling is part of our identity and should be used to benefit both teenagers and adults.

This paper is also addressed to revise the different types of storytelling and which one is the most recommended or appropriate for teenage students, between the most common are classical storytelling and digital storytelling. Traditional storytelling is to transmit a fixed story to an audience, using gestures, facial expressions, and verbal tones. In an article on ICT in the classroom (Gutierrez, et al. 2019), say that Traditional storytelling has been considered the best and the most original approach for teaching. And about digital storytelling (Abderrahim & Plana, 2021), say that "digital storytelling is used as a tool to give a voice to people to tell stories about identity, family, relationships, community, health,

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healing, place, environment, work, social justice, and human rights". (pág. 38) Besides, there is a big variety of stories to apply in class, such as short stories, adventure, comic, science fiction, romance, urban legends, fairy tales, thriller, and even teachers and students can use their own life experiences and dreams as it is mentioned earlier. This study also purposes to investigate the perceptions of students regarding the use of Storytelling in the learning process.

It is important to highlight the results of the use of storytelling in the classroom, (Razmi et al. 2014) in their research found that storytelling is a persuasive tool to improve the oral performance of EFL students as it engages them in the learning process, learners not only take an interest in their learning but also will be more liable. Furthermore, this investigation intends to reach out to these teachers who are struggling with teenage students' English language acquisition and be helpful to them by demonstrating that using the Storytelling Approach with adolescents works to acquire English in a meaningful and entertaining way. Additionally, this study proposes some strategies and techniques in which skills such as listening and reading will be developed, but the most important aim is to demonstrate that students speaking ability will be significantly improved.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Storytelling is based on a large amount of input (reading and listening) that students acquire during their teaching-learning process. The acquisition-learning hypothesis by (Krashen, 1985) states that the means for the development of our linguistic abilities are acquisition (subconscious language) and learning (conscious language). According to him, acquisition is more imperative than learning because it is the natural process of development of a language; on the contrary, learning is the conscious reception of language. Thus, by using stories, vocabulary and grammar structures are learned implicitly and the more comprehensible input students receive the more they will

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communicate. Furthermore, stories motivate children and help make the language input comprehensible and enrich vocabulary development (Albaladejo & Coyle, 2018).

Additionally, both the Comprehensible Input Hypothesis and Second Language Acquisition theory are interrelated because the input has to be understandable and meaningful for successful use of the language. (Krashen S. D., 1985). Comprehensible Input Hypothesis refers to comprehensible messages or giving messages that people can understand, input that is slightly more advanced than their current level, and Second Language Acquisition is the result of that input. (Krashen, 2010). Through stories, teachers can develop a foreign language in a substantial and real way to increase students' enthusiasm (Krashen, 1985) affirms that the blocks learners from receiving the second language appropriately, and that they need to be "open" to the input. However, this input could be affected by the affective filter which refers to positive or negative emotions that affect or change language acquisition ability (Lewis, 2020). Therefore, the approach or approaches, educators use to teach their students are as important as the content because they have to be clear and suitable for teenagers.

Proper use of storytelling depends a lot on the correct choice of stories. Teachers need to select stories according to students' needs and linguistic level, (Nozima, 2021) states that the brevity of writing is essential for young people because they will see that they have the possibility to read, understand and complete something in English, and this gives them a sense of accomplishment and self-confidence. In addition, students can become storytellers by presenting their own stories to their partners by recording themselves and by using the different platforms on the website and making their stories authentic. (Razmi et al. 2014)

Krashen (1981) says that "simple speeches such as teacher-talk, interlanguage-talk, and foreigner-talk help second language acquisition for adults in almost the same way that caretaker speaking help a child language acquisition" (pág. 132). Consequently, by telling stories to adolescent students, they will be involved in an immersive experience by

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listening to English in an entertaining, practical, and more real condition, making them acquire language and then produce it effectively.

STATE OF THE ART

Importance of Storytelling for teenagers

Telling stories is as old as the story of humanity (National Geographic, 2020). They are passed from generation to generation through time, recounting memories of people´s ancestors and their actions, stories of kings, wars, conquests, and even love stories. Most of our time, we tell stories about our lives, what we did, where we went, who we spent time with and we will continue doing that during our existence. Additionally, storytelling transmits education, knowledge and it was one of the initial methods of communication. (Haigh & Hardy, 2011)

In regards to education (Koki, 1998) says that stories boost students' linguistic and cultural diversity, allowing teachers to learn about their students' civilizations, experiences, and important interactions. There are many benefits of using storytelling in education. It improves students' vocabulary mastery (Satriani, 2019). It integrates the four language skills development (Atta-Alla, 2012). It is an effective pedagogical instrument to improve learners' language skills in L2 (Lucarevschi, 2016). It encourages active participation, imagination, creativity, cooperation, and verbal proficiency (Dvalidze, 2017).

Several studies have been found about storytelling as a useful method to teach children at elementary schools. However, there is little information to assert the importance of using this approach with teenagers. In research about the role of storytelling in language learning, Lucarevschi (2016) suggests that there is a lack of studies about the effects of storytelling on teenagers and adult second language learners since most of them focus on young learners. And as cited by Alla (2012) "children´s literature can be adapted to teach literacy skills to adult ESL learners as well it can be enhanced by age-sensitive book

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selections, clear class presentations, and the creative development of related lesson and unit plans" (p. 1).

Traditional Storytelling

Traditional storytelling is the action of telling factual and fictional stories to others. This started with the use of visuals or drawings, then shifted to oral communication and subsequently to written stories (Yilmaz & Cigerci, 2018). Traditional storytelling occurs when people socialize and shares information, thus we can say that it is a daily common routine among human beings. About applying stories with adolescent students, (Popova, 2019) declares young people are mistaken for being older for stories. However, an engaging story, told by a teacher or told by the students themselves, can bring several benefits to the classroom, such as interesting topics, interactive activities, development of speaking skills through vocabulary and grammar structures, among others.

Despite its antiquity, this approach has demonstrated its efficacy for teaching a second or foreign language. Satriani (2019) in her research affirms that it has been evidenced that storytelling has positive impacts on students' instruction because the stories are part of their culture and can be transmitted from one to another. Additionally, a study has revealed that stories motivate students to talk in class to express their feeling or thoughts as part of their lives (Li & Seedhouse, 2010).

Digital Storytelling

Undoubtedly, nowadays the use of media is a crucial tool for the application of storytelling with high school students. This digital era allows both teachers and students to have access to a variety of technical devices, virtual platforms, videos, games, and music which can help us to facilitate our teaching-learning process. Digital storytelling is telling stories but using technology to enrich the exposition or delivery of stories through visual and auditory aids to motivate and engage students in EFL/ESL learning (Razmi et al. 2014;

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Munaro & Pianovski Vieira, 2016; Robin, 2008). However, Normann (2011) states, the story and not the technology should be at the center considering that language is the key point.

Digital storytelling is a learner-centered process allowing students to interact and produce language genuinely as part of the learning process and especially to improve their speaking skills to communicate and be part of our nowadays society. Thus, the results of the research were positive with the implementation of this method, since Razmi et al. (2014) found that learning through digital storytelling has two purposes: it becomes personal, friendly engaging, and artistic, and it also benefits students to improve their linguistic skills to express their opinions using digital narratives for an audience.

Types of Stories

Comprehensible input creates an ideal environment for learning through Storytelling (Lucarevschi, 2016). Hence the importance of selecting appropriate stories for adolescents, stories that have a clear and correct level of language, interesting, and that capture their attention. Researchers use different stories to evaluate their impact on the development of EFL/ESL (Lucarevschi, 2016).

There is a variety of types of stories, for example, fairytales, folktales, fables, fiction, legend, short stories, written stories, picture-based stories, personal stories (Denning, 2021) among others. One of the most important goals of Storytelling is to acquire vocabulary and grammar implicitly and as a result to produce language effectively. (Khodabandeh, 2018) in his research found that this goal can be achieved. He also said that students significantly improved their English-speaking skills.

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METHODOLOGY

Mixed Methods Triangulation design is used in this proposal in tot complementary data or similar results between the quantitative and qualitative analysis, (McKim, 2017) in his study mentions several advantages of using Mixed Methods, such as the increase of legitimacy, informing a second data source, and a profound comprehension of the phenomenon.

The procedure is the following, the quantitative analysis was applied to evaluate teenagers' knowledge and interest in stories, and the qualitative analysis was used to know their perceptions about the implementation of storytelling in class. The study was applied to students of the 10th year parallel B - 23 students between 14-15 years old, there were no special needs students in this group, besides most of the students have a low level of English because of the little performance during virtual classes.

Inclusion Criteria**:** Male and female with an A2 level of language according to the CEFR.

For this investigation, a survey was used which is composed of 17 items. The evaluation of the reliability of the instrument was good (Cronbach's Alpha α 0.909). To identify the level of interest to work with Storytelling, the dimensionality of this tool was validated using the unweighted least squares (ULS) method. The level of suitability of the sample is low but acceptable (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure 0.526), the level of identity is excellent ($p=<0.001$), and the explained variance for three factors is 64%. The dimensionality results show a minimum factorial load of 0.50 for each factor and the maximum reaches 0.967. According to the results, the first dimension indicates the predisposition that students have to work in classes with Storytelling; the second is the interest in listening to stories and the third is the interest in telling stories.

To process the data, the SPSS 25 program was used (Field, 2018; Lovia Boateng, 2020) and to graph the Jasp program (Gross-Sampson, 2019). The results of the three dimensions are presented in averages accompanied by standard deviations (SD). An analysis is performed to know if any of the three dimensions is significantly different from

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the others, for which the ANOVA parametric test statistic of a factor is used. The established significance level is 0.05. The results are plotted with a raincloud plot to visualize the location of each student, as well as a box and whiskers diagram.

RESULTS

The results are presented on the interest that students have in working with the storytelling technique in classes according to the three dimensions of the scale. Chart 1 shows the general results of the predisposition to work in classes with this technique, taste for listening to stories, and taste for telling stories as part of their learning.

The predisposition to use this technique within classes shows a level that tends towards the acceptance of this technique (mean 3.35, SD 0.90). Within this predisposition, it should be taken into account that the lowest level corresponds to the desire to read live stories, as well as to mimic when reading. However, within this dimension, it is observed that students believe that this technique will help them to develop reading and listening skills, followed by writing and speaking.

Regarding the dimension of attending or listening to stories, it was found that there is an intermediate positive trend with an average of 3.05 (SD 1.00). In this dimension, it was observed that they have little knowledge about this technique. In all the other items, it is noted that there is a positive trend that leans mainly towards liking stories and the way they are told.

Finally, the dimension of telling stories reveals an intermediate level in the scale (Mean 2,82; SD 0.99). The biggest problem is the lack of preparation to make use of this strategy because learners say they do not feel ready to do voices and mime a story. However, despite this, it is noticed that the desire to make voices when reading a story is greater, it is also positive that students feel comfortable writing their story and telling it.

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Chart 1.
Average and standard deviation of the dimensions of interest in working with Storytelling technique.
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	Average	SD
Predisposition	**3,35**	**0,90**
I feel comfortable miming when I read a story.	2,90	1,04
Storytelling could be useful for reading	3,76	1,22
Storytelling could be useful for writing	3,48	1,25
Storytelling could be useful for speaking	3,57	1,03
Storytelling could be useful for listening	4,05	1,20
I would rather read a story than write it.	3,48	1,40
I would like to read.	2,24	1,09
Attend to stories	**3,05**	**1,00**
I like stories.	3,52	1,08
I like to be told stories.	3,24	1,22
I like when people do voices when they read a story out aloud.	3,24	1,18
I have listened to storytelling.	2,19	1,17
I would like the teacher to make voices and mimes when she reads a story aloud.	3,14	1,39
I would like the teacher to apply storytelling in English classes.	2,95	1,47
Tell stories	**2,82**	**0,99**
I like to tell stories.	3,10	1,26
I would like to make voices when I read a story.	2,76	1,38
I feel ready to make voices and mime if the teacher gives me a story.	2,48	1,03
If this tool were implemented I would like to write my own story.	2,95	1,12

Note: SD= Standard Deviation.

To compare whether there are significant differences, the ANOVA statistic was used after testing the assumption of normality and homogeneity of variance. The results showed that there are no significant differences between the three dimensions evaluated [$F(2/60$ gl)$= 1.615$; $p=0.207$). Figure 1 shows a point cloud of the average of each dimension reached by the students. The location is similar in all three cases. However,

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what is most noticeable is a better concentration of data on the predisposition towards learning. This can also be seen in the box and whisker diagram on the right side of the graph. The box and whiskers diagram shows that the most concentrated box is the predisposition box, which indicates that students have a shared level of agreement in the interest that the teacher uses this technique for English classes.

This is not the case with the dimensions of the taste for listening to stories or for telling them, in which a higher level of dispersion is observed. Althoug, it is not significantly different, it is evident that the location of the third box is lower than the other two, this is a reflection of the students' concern to tell a life story using voices and mimicry.
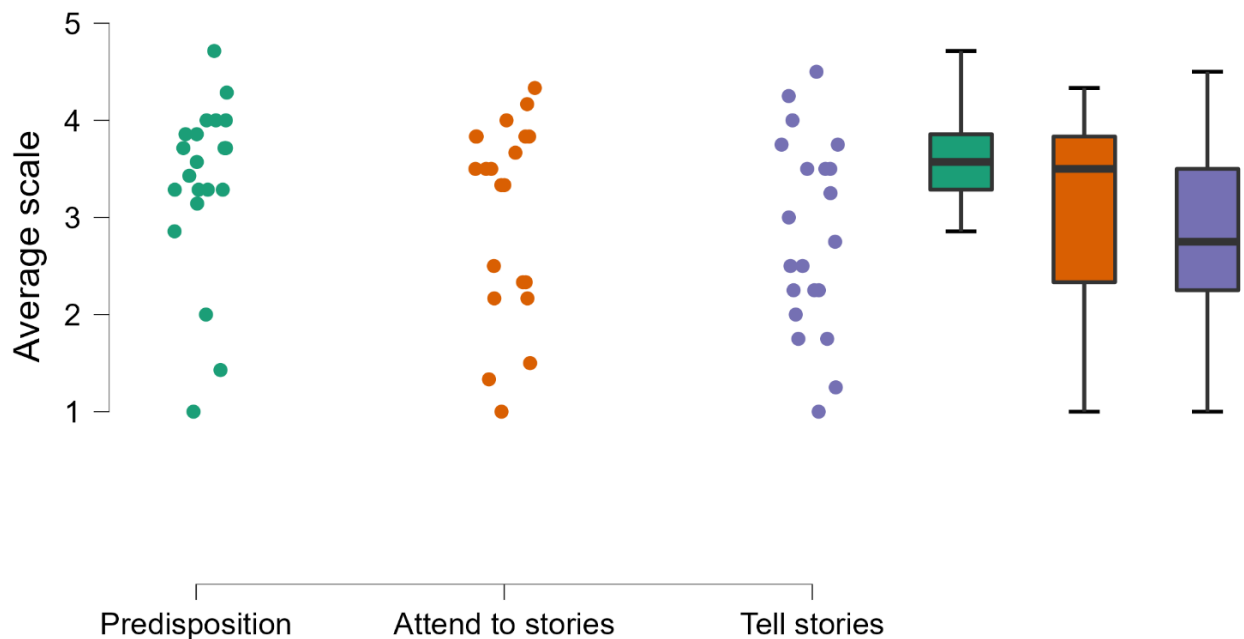
Figure 1.
Raincloud plots of the students´ predisposition and interest in the Storytelling technique.

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In short, it is noted that there is a good predisposition to work with Storytelling in the classroom; however, students show their concern for not knowing how to use this technique. Their biggest fear is doing voices or mimes in classes. Given this, a qualitative question was posed asking them how they would like to perform in this activity if they had the opportunity to do so. Except for two students who feel prepared to do it live, all the others preferred to employ this technique by using recorded video. Below are two student testimonials.

> To go little by little because although the English pronunciation of many students is good, it is not enough to read a complete story. This pandemic has prevented us from pronouncing and understanding English the way we should, but good preparation will help us in a positive way, such as reading a few paragraphs first and then reading the whole story correctly. But to correct our pronunciation it would be better if we record the final product.
> If I had to do storytelling, I would like to tell stories to small children in the house, I could even record that.

In addition, students were asked about the type of stories they would most like to work on, with the majority pointing to horror and science fiction stories with 61.9%, respectively. It is important to note that another group of students tends to show interest in suspense or love stories. Few are interested in comedy, tragedy, fairy tales, or crime novels. Given this varied level of interests, it would not be appropriate to work only with certain types of stories, but rather leave students free to choose the stories they like the most after making an adequate selection for the level of English they intend to achieve.

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Figure 2.
Students' interest in kinds of stories.
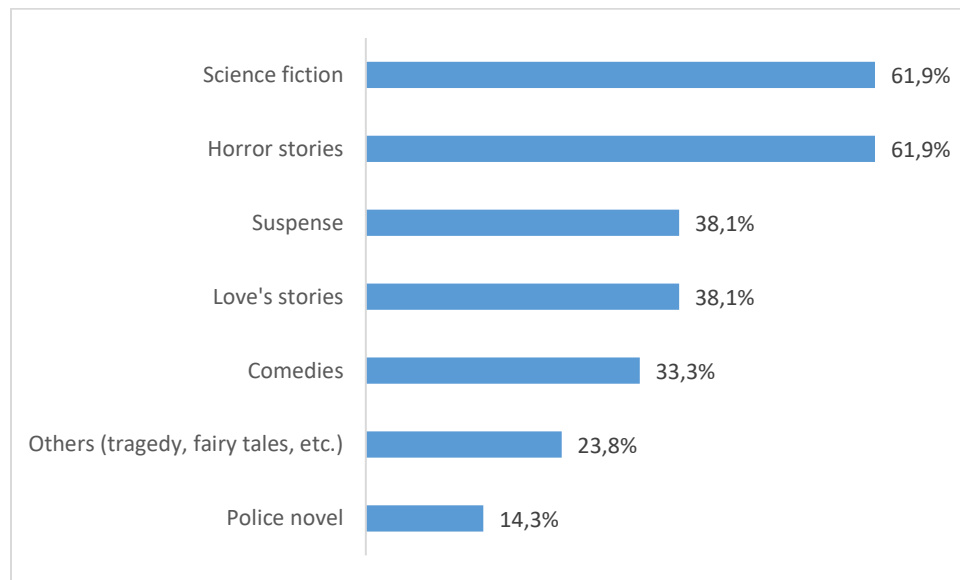
PROPOSAL

Based on the results obtained, it can be ensured that most of the teenagers have good memories of the stories they were told when they were children and show a big interest in the application of this instrument in class. For this reason, a series of strategies to implement a storytelling approach in classes are proposed to improve learners´ level of speaking.

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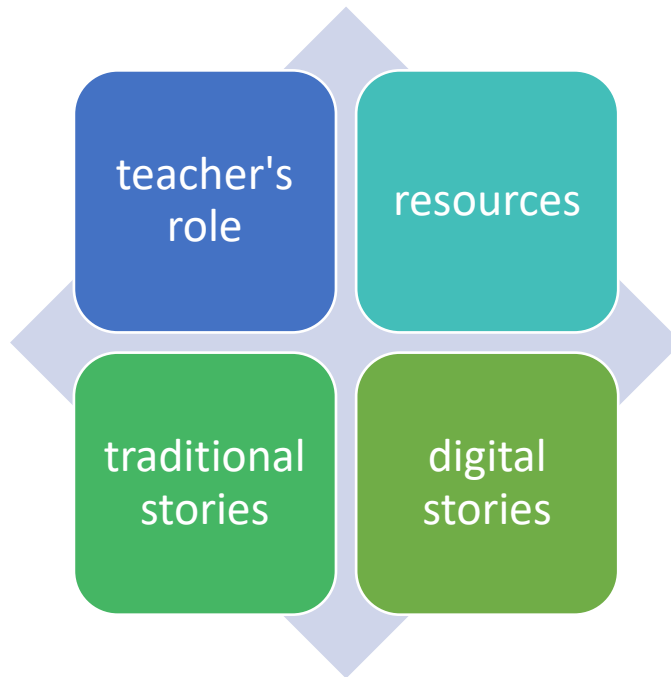
Elaboration: Authors.

Teacher´s role as a storyteller. - To play the role of storyteller or narrator is not easy; however, teachers need to learn how to act as good storytellers to create interest in their students for stories. They must commit themselves to the story and the audience. They should use gestures, body movement, voice modulation, and the use of all the senses to make descriptions since the delivery of the stories plays a fundamental part in the storytelling. On the other hand, we must remember that it is humans' nature to create, interpret, and make up stories; therefore, teachers should not be concerned about this. It is common for people to share stories; they build internal narratives to help us make sense

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of the world (Hennebury, 2020). It is proposed that teachers, who do not have enough experience prepare themselves to be great storytellers. They must pay attention to the following tips:

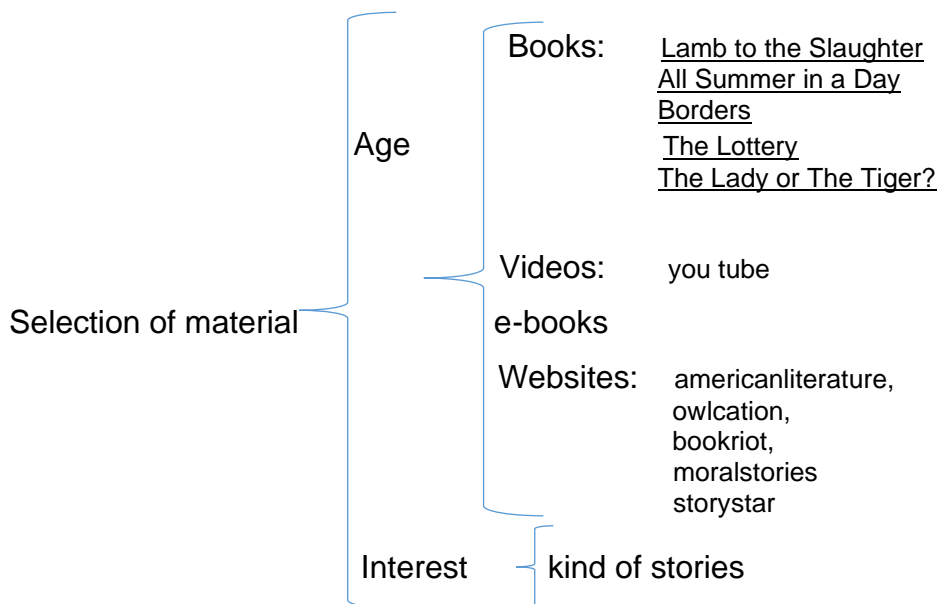**Selection of the resources according to the age and interest of the students**

It is imperative and indispensable to make a correct selection of the material according to the learner's age. It is important to choose a material that is engaging and calls their attention. There are many resources where we can find numerous kinds of stories, such as *books*, *magazines*, *videos*, *e-books,* or *websites*, for instance: *American literature, location, book riot, moral stories, or story star*. These pages can be very practical for teachers in the selection of the appropriate stories for pupils.

 Also, it is a good idea to allow students to select topics they are interested in or it is even important to encourage students to create their *own stories* by themselves; this way they could express their feelings, traditions, and culture through writing and then by reading or telling them.

As well, it is significant to have in mind the length of the stories. They should be short and should make students think creatively and analytically promoting high-order thinking skills (Aisyah & Setiawan, 2009). Some stories carry lessons about social cooperation, empathy, and justice, they can be used as a teaching pedagogy to develop morals. (Thambu, 2017).

(Wilson, 2018) in his book says that according to his experience as a teacher, the most active storytellers and the ones most willing to tell stories are the students from 11 to 14 years old. Therefore, we as teachers, need to take advantage of this so as not to have the mistaken idea that learners do not like to tell stories.

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Selection of material
- Age
  - Books: Lamb to the Slaughter
    All Summer in a Day
    Borders
    The Lottery
    The Lady or The Tiger?
  - Videos: you tube
  - e-books
  - Websites: americanliterature,
    owlcation,
    bookriot,
    moralstories
    storystar
- Interest — kind of stories

Selection of material based on students´ level of English

Here, it is important to remark that tenth graders students are not all in the same level of English according to the standard of the Common European Framework (CEFR). It will depend mainly on their different backgrounds and biographies. For this reason, it is needed to take *diagnostics tests or questionnaires* to have a clear understanding of the appropriate stories to select. Teachers must pay attention to the *vocabulary*, *fluency*, *accuracy*, *pronunciation,* and *comprehension* of their group of pupils. Here are some web pages which can be helpful for teachers: learn English. British council, English/story-zone, reading-z, Helbling language.

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		A1
		A2
Levels of English	CEFR	B1
		B2
		C1
		C2
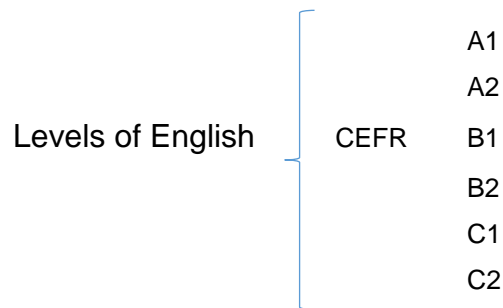
Use of Oral or Traditional Storytelling

Traditional Storytelling is the old-fashioned way of sharing stories through miming, using gestures, and using voice intonation to spark the imagination of the audience. Teachers do not need extra material just to know the story by heart. The teacher uses equally linguistic and embodied resources to engage with the students. (Reddington et al. 2019). Similarly, Sibierska, 2017) describes storytelling as a way of transforming conceptual narratives into the material by using body movements.

This study proposes teachers practice the use of traditional storytelling based on the role of the teacher mentioned above and using the appropriate materials. And after a short time depending on the students´ reception of this approach ask them to share stories in class.

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Use of Digital Storytelling

"Pedagogy, storytelling, and technology interact to teach content knowledge and 21st-century skills" (Lisenbee & Ford, 2018, p. 129). Nowadays, the use of technology in classes has become an indispensable tool for teachers and students, especially during this pandemic where education changed its usual pedagogy from face-to-face classes to virtual classes. Additionally, it has helped teachers to develop their skills and learn new and interesting interactive platforms to teach in a world where teenagers are surrounded by technology. For this reason, high school ESL/EFL educators need to consider implementing Digital Storytelling in classes, (Saritepeci, 2021) says Digital Storytelling develops engagement of the lesson while gaining new knowledge, technological skills, and social growth.

Consequently, this proposal poses the use of digital storytelling tools in the classroom because these resources will make the work of instructors and learners easier while creating an enjoyable learning environment. Traditional e-tools like *videos, PowerPoint, or genially* can be used to create stories by using images, pictures, or sounds. Nevertheless, there are currently some platforms and e-tools that can enhance the teaching experience of storytelling and can also help to create comics or interactive stories. For instance: *Powtoon*, is a software to create animated videos where students can write a script, record a voiceover, and add visuals. *MIT Scratch* allows making interactive stories, games, and animations. *Slidestory,* this device offers pictures, a voice recorder, and an mp3 audio file. *Smile box* generates collages, scrapbooks, slideshows, and audio-visual representations effectively. *Storybird,* this tool turns the story into a visual and legible form. *Zooburst* helps to create 3D pop-up books. *Puppetpals* creates animated and audio-form stories. *ShowMe interactive whiteboard* records voice-over whiteboard tutorials and share them online.

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These platforms will engross students' attention by the use of innovative and interactive visuals, which will be created by themselves and the teacher, positively inducing the development of the speaking skill because visuals and sounds will help them to remember the story as they convey them.

Creating Motivation

Reading helps individuals to increase knowledge and expand vocabulary in their language and a foreign language, that is why it is important to motivate students to read stories from their childhood to adulthood changing the lack of reading culture positively. Engagement and stimulus are primary methods to achieve students' embrace reading practices (Thompson & McIlnay, 2019). Likewise, reading generates autonomy and critical thinking which allows teachers to take advantage of it by propelling students to participate with their ideas, to comment on the stories they read, and at the same time encouraging them to share their stories in class and listen to the performances of their peers. As a result, the students will use the English language which is the main objective of storytelling.

CONCLUSION

This study focuses on the necessity to improve the speaking skill of teenagers based on the implementation of storytelling methodology in classes. Some objectives were expected to be fulfilled, including reviewing the different types of storytelling. Additionally, this study has focused on Traditional storytelling and Digital storytelling, which are the most researched and applied in classes in regards to stories. Likewise, this study has proposed some strategies and techniques for the implementation of storytelling in class, developing skills such as listening, reading comprehension, and speaking.

A mixed methodology was applied through a survey to know the perceptions of students regarding the use of Storytelling in the learning process; although storytelling was not used practically in class, it was obtained some important information about learners´

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positive insights of stories and the students´ predisposition to apply them in classes. Consequently, based on the results, it is highly recommended the application of this approach with adolescents, which will improve the development of speaking skills through the acquisition of new vocabulary, grammatical structures, and the enhancement of pronunciation.

FINANCING

THANKS

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