

Investigating the Use of Bed-Time Stories and Moodle in EFL Classes: Attitudes, Benefits and Challenges

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Abstract

This study scrutinizes the effectiveness and the feasibility of an EFL story-based textbook supported by a Moodle platform in Moroccan high schools. Along with the use of Moodle as the learning management system, this study uses a story-based approach in foreign language teaching/learning. Before designing this story-based textbook, the researcher investigated the Moroccan EFL context to be more practical and the textbook stands on a solid ground by having an added value not just being repetitive. Therefore, a quantitative study was conducted to collect up-to-date data and see (a) whether stories are already used or not in Moroccan EFL classes (b) the benefits and challenges, if any, stories can have according to these teachers (c) some of the most challenging obstacles behind not using stories in Moroccan EFL classrooms. To answer these questions, a questionnaire was administered to 100 EFL teachers from Casablanca. The data collected through the questionnaire revealed that most informants appreciated the use of stories in EFL classes. Additionally, most of them perceive the story-based approach as a useful tool to help students develop language skills. To conclude, these findings suggest that stories help in boosting students' motivation, retention, and thus developing language proficiency. The findings also provided some solutions to teachers' common challenges while using stories.

1. INTRODUCTION

There has been much interest recently in the concept of face-to-face and online learning. Studies on this issue have been growing at a rapid rate since the COVID-19 pandemic has plagued the world. The questions specialists must now reflect upon is how we can adapt our teaching/learning practices to situations when schools may be inaccessible like in the case of lockdowns. That's why, a new paradigm of education must emerge to compromise between face-to-face and online learning. In addition, it has become crystal clear that 21st century learners easily get bored by the traditional ways of teaching, hence, using storytelling in teaching foreign languages has been widely recognized for its effectiveness in various

educational contexts (Vinnikova, 2022). It has been found to enhance vocabulary learning, critical thinking, and intercultural communication skills (Kirsch, 2016). Folktales, in particular, have been identified as a valuable resource for teaching foreign languages to young learners, as they facilitate language acquisition and cultural understanding (Nhung, 2016). Digital storytelling, a modern adaptation of traditional storytelling, has also been shown to be a powerful tool for language learning, promoting student engagement and technology integration (Reinders, 2011).

Learning is undoubtedly a process of meaning-making. I mean, learners try to make sense of the input they are exposed to. Similarly, the narrative is a fundamental structure of human meaning-making, the events and actions of one's life are understood and experienced as fitting into narrative episodes or stories (Bruner 1986, 2002; Polkinghorne 1988, 1996). Rossiter (2002) states that narratives are deeply appealing and richly satisfying to the human soul, with an allure that transcends cultures, centuries, ideologies, and academic disciplines. Most of what has been done in applied linguistics literature emphasizes the fact that language teaching/learning enterprise has been a very demanding task for both teachers and learners. A fact that gives rise in some cases to frustration and tension in the classroom. Thus, teachers and other specialists have been for decades concerned mainly with how they can lessen this atmosphere of anxiety and inhibition and make learning as joyful and enthusiastic as possible. This constant effort results in the use of stories in language classes as a means to entertain and educate students at the same time. Along with giving students a chance to practice language skills and structure in a less stressful atmosphere, stories can be effective activities that highly motivate students and enable them to use the language in a natural and real-life context. Pedagogically speaking, Gudmundsdottir (1995) notes that pedagogical content can be thought of as narrative text and teaching as essentially the exercise of textual interpretation. In short, Ramirez-Verdugo (2011) stated that stories are widely employed as a powerful medium of teaching and learning. How do stories foster learning? Neuhauser (1993) answered this question by claiming that stories are effective as educational tools because they are believable, rememberable, and entertaining. There are other reasons for using stories. According to Duff and Maley (1990), the use of literature in the classroom offers a wide range of styles, vocabulary, etc. During the last decades, using stories in language classes has gained a general consensus. According to Ramirez-Verdugo (2011), they can be a great source of contextualized input because they can offer a valuable way of contextualizing and introducing new language, making it comprehensible and memorable (Wasik & Bond 2001; Wright 2000).

Research Objectives/questions/ hypotheses

This study is an attempt to show the use of bedtime stories in Moroccan EFL classes and why teachers don't use them although they are given much beneficial according to the literature. One further purpose of this study is to find out some challenging obstacles behind not using stories in Moroccan EFL classrooms. These objectives are as follows:

1. Discovering the extent to which Moroccan EFL teachers integrate fairy tales in teaching.
2. Investigating, if any, the benefits of stories in Moroccan EFL classes
3. Investigating the possible reasons for not using stories in teaching.

Research questions

This study aims to answer these questions:

1. To what extent do Moroccan EFL teachers integrate bedtime stories into their teaching?
2. What are, if any, the benefits of stories according to EFL teachers?

3. What are, if any, the hurdles that stand against Moroccan EFL teachers while using bedtime stories in their classes?

Hypotheses

The idea of using bedtime stories in EFL classes was meant (a) to boost learners' motivation and (b) to achieve meaningful and purposeful learning. To put it differently, the learners taught using stories will have the chance to construct their knowledge since they are exposed to different stories with a variety of tasks that meet their own real-life needs and their individual differences. They integrate their new knowledge into the old one. They learn in a meaningful context while creating the end product. It is generally agreed that authentic learning paves the way for students to experience meaningful and real-world tasks.

- Bedtime stories are rarely integrated into EFL textbooks in Moroccan high schools.
- There are several benefits of using stories in Moroccan EFL classes.
- Moroccan EFL teachers have negative attitudes towards using stories in their classes.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

I would like to begin by explaining how my interest in using bedtime stories as a source of input developed. From my humble years of experience as an EFL teacher, I noticed that reading is not given much importance in our EFL textbooks. F. Dubin claimed that language teachers have turned away from the reading skill because of its apparent association with the "old-fashioned" grammar-translation method and the talk about communicative competence which fills the air. According to Dubin, too little attention is devoted to reading in language pedagogy. For me, although the grammar-translation method was much criticized for its teacher-centeredness and focus on grammar and written language, no one can deny that it has exposed learners to extensive reading that allowed them for sure become good writers. My story-based approach will be a compromise of both the grammar-translation method and the communicative language teaching. In other words, this approach will focus on reading stories to teach language skills and components in a learner-centred and communicative way. To explain my vision, I may take from Martin Luther King's famous speech and I say:

"I have a dream that one day foreign language teaching will be as enjoyable and educative as reading a bedtime story. I hold this claim to be self-evident that reading is the right key to language proficiency door"

When we talk about the use of bedtime stories, one key term emerges on the surface of discussion and needs more elaboration namely reading. That's why, the coming section surveys what researchers say about reading shedding light on some important ideas about this skill. Then, the other section will be about the use of bedtime stories in teaching.

2.1. Reading

Throughout the past few decades, many researchers, especially psycholinguists, have tried to understand reading and provide a satisfactory definition of it. Those scholars differ in terms of their views of language in general and language skills in particular, thus, many definitions emerged as there are many ways of perceiving language, especially reading. Some scholars like Grabe and Stoller (2002) see reading as the ability to draw meaning from the printed page and interpret this information appropriately. However, this is only one simple definition among many which simplify the reading process and neglect its complexity in the sense that there is no mention of the cognitive processes and subskills that are activated while

reading. Because there is no clear-cut definition of this ability nor are its subskills and cognitive processes dealt with exhaustively, the coming section will be about the different views of reading and hence the different definitions emerging from those views about this process.

2.1.1. Survey of reading definitions

As said earlier on, during the last six decades, different definitions of reading skills have emerged from several ways of viewing language. Since reading is a key term in my research, an understanding of this complex process must be taken into consideration. Here is a brief survey of some numerous definitions that have been given to readers starting since the 1930s. In his article “Language” (1933) Bloomfield defines reading in a very simplistic way that reflects his structuralistic view of language; he says “reading is nothing more than the correlation of a sound image with its corresponding visual image.” Accordingly, reading is very simple, it is only a matter of correspondence between sounds and their graphic representations, which is not true because reading is more complicated than that. Another similar definition is that given by Fries in his article “Linguistics and Reading 1962” he says that learning to read is simply a transfer of linguistic knowledge from the oral medium in which it was first acquired to the written medium. These two definitions are similar in that they both give priority to the spoken form of language and thus refer to reading as a reflection of oral sounds through visual marks. In 1964, Carroll defined reading in his article “Language and Thought” as “the activity of reconstructing a reasonable spoken message from a printed text and making responses to the reconstructed message that would parallel those that would be made to the spoken message.” Here we recognize a shift in the way reading is defined, that is to say, there is a shift from viewing reading as a simple process to a more complex one, from a passive skill to an active one. This idea of a shift in the perception of reading is clearly shown in the coming definitions. In 1967, Goodman provided a definition that is characterized by the emergence of a new concept namely interaction, he says “reading is an interaction between the reader and the written language through which reader attempts to reconstruct a message from the writer.” He added in 1970 the term psycholinguistic by defining reading as “...a psycholinguistic process, an interaction between language and thought.” Nine years later, Widdowson adds new concepts to the definitions of reading namely variation of meaning from one reader to another, purpose and knowledge, he says in his work: *Exploration in Applied linguistics* “a text does not have meaning but potential for meaning which will vary from reader to reader depending on a multitude of factors but crucially related to purpose and knowledge”. In 1990, a new term was added to the previous definitions by Rebecca and Wallace when they defined reading in their work *The Psychology of Reading: An Interdisciplinary Approach* as “a process of translating signs and symbols into meaning and incorporating the new information into existing cognitive and affective structures”. Six years before the emergence of this definition, Bloom and Green in their work *Directions in the sociolinguistic study of reading* defined reading as “a social process which performs a socializing function. It acculturates readers and makes them belong to a group...”

2.2. The adopted approach: bedtime stories

No one can deny the benefits of bedtime stories but before we go into more details about this, let's first define what we mean by bedtime stories. There are so many definitions of bedtime stories. According to Wikipedia, a bedtime story is a traditional form of storytelling, where a story is told to a child at bedtime to prepare the child for sleep. The bedtime story has long been considered "a definite institution in many families". Reading bedtime stories yields multiple benefits for parents and children alike. According to Patti (2011), the fixed routine of a bedtime story before sleeping can improve the child's brain development, language mastery, and logical thinking skills. The storyteller-listener relationship creates an emotional bond between the parent and the child (Patti 2011). Due to "the strength of the imitative instinct" of a child, the parent and the stories that they tell act as a model for the child to follow (Dickson and Stockman, 1919). According to this definition, it seems that bedtime stories have been for

ages a well-established practice, they have many benefits such as brain development, language mastery, and logical thinking skills. They can even strengthen our relationships be they parents-children or teacher-students. According to this definition, bedtime stories help a lot in language teaching. First, they improve the brain's development. Well, no one would deny how this development will help in language teaching since the brain is an essential element in language learning. In addition, it is stated clearly in the definition that bedtime stories help in mastering and learning the language effectively. Along with developing critical thinking skills, bedtime stories strengthen the teacher-student relationship and thus there will be a stress-free atmosphere during the sessions, this will surely be conducive to learning since the learners' affective filter will be lowered and learning will then take place. During the sessions, learners will be engaged in purposeful and fun activities that lead to successful and effective communication without fear or stress. All the mentioned benefits are related to the concern of this study, more benefits will be discussed thoroughly in the coming sections.

2.2.1. Benefits of bedtime stories

Learning a foreign language has long been a very demanding task and thus it should be dealt with carefully and not left to chance. I always look for ways to improve my teaching and help students learn effectively. That's why, I use varied activities that are not in the textbooks among which are bedtime stories. They proved to be very effective for children and adults alike. Stories also create dynamic and motivating classes. Teachers who have been exposed to stories as a teaching tool will have some benefits to share, I am sure, and data analysis will prove that. Unfortunately, during some discussions with colleagues, I noticed that some teachers think that stories can be used just for breaking boredom and not for a long time as a teaching device. They consider them light-hearted activities for having fun. These teachers don't realize that meaningful learning takes place when learners are in an anxiety-free atmosphere and are not bored with formal drilling and too much focus on grammatical rules. As foreign language teachers, our ultimate goal is to create classes where learners forget that they are learning in a formal class, we should make our students unconsciously take input. In doing so, we will achieve foreign language acquisition and not just learning. Krashen states that language acquisition does not require extensive use of conscious grammatical rules and does not require tedious drills. He adds "Acquisition requires meaningful interaction in the target language – natural communication – in which speakers are concerned not with the form of their utterances but with the messages they are conveying and understanding." Other teachers think that bedtime stories are not appropriate for adults, these teachers are not aware of the fact that adults like reading or being told stories. S. M. Silvers says there is a child inside every one of us, and bringing out this child undoubtedly facilitates the learning of a foreign language (1982:29) I think that bedtime stories will help awaken the child in every adult and this will definitely lead to enjoyable and meaningful learning.

Foreign language teaching/learning experience has been a very demanding task for both the teacher and the learner, a fact that gives rise in some cases to frustration and tension in the classroom. Because of that, teachers and other specialists have been for decades concerned mainly with how they can lessen this atmosphere of anxiety and inhibition and make learning as joyful and enthusiastic as possible. This constant effort results in the use of stories in language classes as a means to entertain and educate at the same time. Giving students a chance to practice language skills and structures in a less stressful atmosphere that is conducive to learning, stories are also effective in that they highly motivate students and enable teachers to expose their learners to a language that is natural and from real-life context. There has been much interest recently in the use of stories in EFL classes, most researchers in the field of language teaching in general and foreign language teaching in particular agree that stories add a new dimension to the teaching of languages. However, most of the findings have concentrated principally on using stories to teach different skills, vocabulary or grammar but the use of stories as a source of input to teach the four skills, grammar, vocabulary and culture has not

been given much attention. That is to say, research on using stories as a starting point that paves the way to the teaching of all elements and skills of the language is rare. That's why, this study is an attempt to see whether a story-based approach to teaching foreign languages would be beneficial and yield effective learning. In her article, Erkaya agrees that with students at the beginning and intermediate levels, instructors can use literary texts for "language practice, reading comprehension, and possible aesthetic appreciation" (Muyskens, 1983, p. 413). In her article *benefits of using short stories in the EFL context*, Erkaya agrees that students can gain insight into literature by gaining entrance to a world familiar or unfamiliar to them due to the cultural aspects of stories and taking a voyage from the literary text to their minds to find meanings for ideas, leading to critical thinking (Erakya, 2005). Moreover, much recent work in the field of language teaching has listed several benefits of using stories. Below is a brief discussion of some benefits.

2.2.2. Why stories

Throughout history, language teaching/learning experience has been a very demanding task for both the teacher and the learner, a fact that gives rise in some cases to frustration and tension in the classroom. Because of that, teachers and other specialists have been for decades concerned mainly with how they can lessen this atmosphere of anxiety and inhibition and make learning as joyful and enthusiastic as possible. This constant effort results in the use of stories in language classes as a means to entertain and educate at the same time. Giving students a chance to practice language skills and structure in a less stressful atmosphere, stories are also effective activities that highly motivate students and enable them to use the language in a natural and real-life context. There are other reasons behind using stories. According to Duff and Maley (1990), the use of literature in the classroom offers the following advantages like offering a wide range of styles, and vocabulary, dealing with matters that concern children and are related to their personal experiences and being open to multiple interpretations and opinions, bringing about genuine interaction and participation in the classroom. Additionally, Martínez (2007) sheds light on other reasons for using stories in language teaching. According to Martínez, stories can be one more tool to reach the curriculum goals. They can also be used to arouse interest and increase motivation among students who are learning a second language. One more reason is that stories are one of the best ways for children to not only learn the language but also learn content, cultural aspects, and how to solve everyday problems.

2.3. ICT and language teaching

In recent years, information communication technology ICT has undergone great progress all over the world. Unlike previous generations, nowadays learners are surrounded by high technologies in their daily lives so we can imagine the difficulty of teaching these students with traditional methods and relying only on books. I mean, the impact of these advances in technology made learners' attention and motivation very hard to maintain in language classes, especially by teachers using traditional methods without using ICT in their practices. According to Moursund (2005), the field of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) combines science and technology. It includes the full range of computer hardware and software, telecommunication and cell phones, the Internet and Web, wired and wireless networks, digital still and video cameras, robotics, and so on. It includes the field of Computer and Information Science and a huge and rapidly growing knowledge base that is being developed by practitioners and researchers. It has become crystal clear, especially after the long period of lockdown that ICT is of great value in solving problems and accomplishing tasks in business, industry, government, education, and many other human everyday tasks. The section below will provide definitions of some key concepts related to the use of ICT in language teaching.

2.3.1. E-learning

According to the European commission 2000, one of the main characteristics of e-learning is:

d'utiliser des technologies multimédias et l'Internet, pour améliorer la qualité de l'apprentissage en facilitant l'accès à des ressources et des services, ainsi que les échanges et la collaboration à distance

This definition explains e-learning as the use of all possible high-tech tools be they the internet, computers, DVDs...etc. to better the quality of learning and ease the exchange of information and interactions between distant teachers and learners. There are numerous characteristics of e-learning, the quote above sheds light on some key elements of e-learning namely the use of the internet and multimedia, improving the teaching/learning experience, easing both the access to different resources and the distant interaction between different members of the teaching/learning process. In other words, e-learning refers to learning using some technologies to distantly get access to educational content in a virtual classroom-like setting. In most cases, it means a course or a program delivered completely online. Sometimes it is delivered live so that you can interact in real time and sometimes it is a lecture that has been prerecorded. There is always a teacher interacting with you and grading your participation, your assignments and your tests. When talking about e-learning two important key terms emerge namely asynchronous and synchronous learning. Below is a brief explanation of these terms.

2.3.2. Asynchronous vs. synchronous learning

Also called location-independent learning, asynchronous learning denotes a type of learning that occurs independently from location. That is to say, learning can be asynchronous when it is not bound by location or time. So, students can learn the target structures or items at different times and locations. Thanks to this, learners can communicate and keep interacting without being obliged to meet at the same place and time. Unlike asynchronous learning, the synchronous one designates learning at the same time. I mean, when a group of learners are engaged in the learning process at the same time, this is what was referred to earlier as “electronically” raise your hand and interacting in real-time. Some systems facilitate the use of e-learning because they help teachers manage different learning operations. These systems are called open source Learning Management Systems (LMS). The coming sections provide more details about LMS.

2.3.3. Learning management systems

As the name denotes, learning management systems are used to help teachers or administrators manage their learners' learning process. According to Wikipedia Ellis and Ryann K. (2009) define learning management systems (LMS) as a software application for the administration, documentation, tracking, reporting and delivery of educational courses or training programs. The learning management system concept emerged directly from e-learning (Ryann K, 2009). These systems help the instructor deliver material to the students, administer tests and other assignments, track student progress, and manage record-keeping. Some of these systems used for creating and managing online courses are Moodle, TelEduc, BlackBoard, WebCT, Toolbook, and TopClass Server. Among these examples of LMS, Moodle will be used to carry out this project. The sections below will offer more explanations about Moodle.

Moodle

Moodle (Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment) is an Open Source Learning Management System (OS LMS). It aims, as said above, at facilitating the teaching/learning experience, especially delivering material to the students, administering tests and other assignments, tracking student progress, giving feedback and making courses more

interactive and appealing to nowadays learners who get easily bored by the traditional ways of teaching that do not integrate ICT.

Why Moodle?

Moodle was chosen to carry out this project simply because it is a free web application that educators can use to create effective online learning sites. One of its main advantages is its open source, or has open source allowing any user with programming knowledge to modify and adapt the environment according to their own needs. In addition to this, Moodle has gained a good reputation for its simplicity and flexibility. That's why; it is widely used worldwide by universities, communities, schools, instructors, courses, teachers and even businesses. Stanford (2009) provides other reasons for choosing Moodle. Here are some of the things that make Moodle particularly attractive to all teachers

This chapter deals with the research design used for carrying out this study. Here, the researcher describes the research design, research participants along the sampling procedure. Next, other components of the research are discussed namely instruments, data collection procedure and data analysis.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1.The Research Design

The researcher opted for a quantitative research method to collect numeric data and frequencies and then see how some independent variables affect these frequencies. Hence, descriptive and correlation designs were adopted. Moreover, the researcher is interested in collecting data concerning how often stories are implemented and how this use may be affected by teachers' gender and experience. This study will provide statistics that pave the way for an experimental design in which a treatment, experiment and control groups will help measure the effect of the story-based approach on students' proficiency levels.

3.2.The Research Participants

This research targets Moroccan EFL teachers in both the public and private sectors. However, it is very difficult to include and cover all members of this population. Thus, the research scope was reduced to a sample of 100 EFL teachers in Casablanca.

3.3.Sampling procedure

Because it was so hard to reach EFL teachers during the lockdown in our country, the researcher used non-random sampling which is based on volunteers and easily available individuals or groups. The researcher could not use cluster sampling or naturally occurring groups because of the aforementioned reason.

3.4.The Research Instruments

Based on the rationale behind opting for the quantitative research method, the researchers used a quantitative instrument to collect frequencies, percentages and different correlations the study variables may have. Therefore, a questionnaire made up of closed-ended and semi-closed-ended questions was used in the study. Closed-ended questions make answering the questions very easy. So, you can ask a lot of these questions without tiring the survey respondents.

3.5.Data Collection Procedure

After designing the research instrument, the researchers had to collect data. To obtain data that would qualify the study as valid and reliable, piloting the instrument had to precede the data collection step. This step helped to spot some problems concerning the way the questionnaire was answered. The administration of questionnaires was also affected by the constraints mentioned above. Hence, the questionnaire administration method changed. So, instead of administering the questionnaires face to face, the researcher resorted to Google

Forms and other technological tools like Facebook and WhatsApp for administering the questionnaires.

4. RESULTS

At this stage, the researcher starts preparing, organizing and coding the data he has collected. After that, a statistical program was chosen notably SPSS with the help of Microsoft Office Excel. Then, data are analyzed to address the research questions and hypotheses. To do so, different statistics were used namely descriptive statistics to have frequencies and describe other relations, inferential statistics were used to see how two groups in the independent variable affect the dependent one as mentioned in the research question. Here, causality is being investigated. The preceding chapter dealt with the methodology and the data collection procedure. Now let's present the different data the questionnaires provided. SPSS was used as said before to transform the data into frequencies and percentages. Then Excel was used to fuse separate tables in one table. For example, section one includes information about gender, teaching experience, sector of work and experience, SPSS gave separate tables and thanks to Excel, these tables were fused into one table (see table 1 below) entitled respondents' personal information.

Table 1. Frequencies and percentages of respondents' personal information

		Frequencies	Percentages
Gender	Male	65	43%
	Female	49	57%
Teaching Experience	Novice	41	36%
	Skilled	26	21%
	Expert	47	46%
Sector of work	Public	84	74%
	Private	12	10%
	Both	18	16%
Experience as a student	Yes	31	27%
	No	69	61%
	I don't remember	12	11%

		Frequency	Percentage
Frequency of using stories	Never	36	32%
	Once a year	13	12%
	Once a semester	8	7%
	Occasionally	46	41%
	Very frequently	10	8%

Language skills stories enhance	Reading	89	78%
	Listening	53	46%
	Writing	67	59%
	Speaking	56	49%
Language components stories enhance	Grammar	56	49
	Vocabulary	98	86%

As shown in the table, the questionnaire was distributed to 114 EFL teachers with a gender participation of (57%) males and (43%) females. As for the respondents' teaching experience, there weren't many differences since informants were, more or less, equally distributed among the three levels namely 41 for novice, 27 for skilled and 47 for well experienced. As for the sector of work, there was a significant difference since 84 out of 114 participants work in the public sector and only 12 out of 114 participants work in the private one. Frequency of use language skills: speaking language skills: listening language skills: reading Language components: grammar Language components: vocabulary

Table 2. Frequencies and percentages of respondents' use of stories and what language skills and components stories enhance

Frequencies		Frequency of use	language skills: speaking	language skills: listening	language skills: reading	Language component s: grammar	Language component s: vocabulary
N	Valid	113	99	99	98	112	112
	Missing	1	15	15	16	2	2

As for the results reported in the table above concerning the frequency of using bedtime stories, 32 % of the participants never use stories whereas 68 % use them. This use varies from 8 % very frequently. This result can be interpreted as 8 % of participants always use stories. The other results showed that 12 % use stories once a year, 7 % use them once a semester and 41 % use stories occasionally. Accordingly, the hypothesis that EFL teachers don't use stories is disconfirmed. The percentage is just 8 % for those who use all stories but along with the sum of the other percentages namely 60% from (12%+ 7%+ 41%) the result will become 68 % of the participants who use stories even once a year.

In the same table, findings showed that stories do enhance some language skills and components. In terms of language skills, 49 % of informants claimed that stories enhance speaking, 46 % for listening, 59% for writing and 78% for reading. According to this, one may claim that the story-based approach enhances all the language skills with a small advantage of the written skills over the oral ones (see figure 1 below). This is logical since students while working on stories are engaged more in the text. In other words, students communicate and interact using the target language, of course, to achieve their goals and hence these oral skills are practised and developed more while written skills notably reading and writing are less practised. Concerning language components vocabulary and grammar, findings, again logically, show that 89% of informants claimed that reading stories does improve students' vocabulary. This is very true since stories offer students some opportunities to know more words and expressions that they may not see in the textbook.

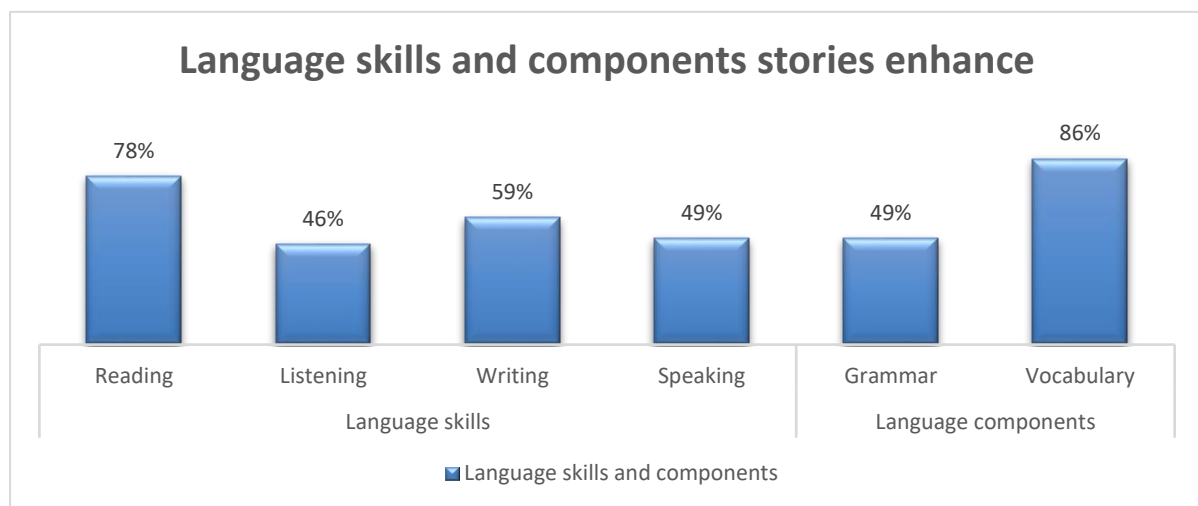


Figure 1

Table 3 below presents findings about informants’ attitudes towards the use of a story-based approach along with the benefits they think stories have for students.

Table 3. Frequencies and percentages of respondents’ attitudes towards the use of story-based approach along with the benefits

		Frequency	Percentage
Attitudes towards the use of stories in EFL classes	Not at all useful	0	0%
	Slightly useful	6	5%
	Moderately useful	24	21%
	Very useful	65	57%
	Extremely useful	19	17%
The benefits of a story-based approach	enhances academic achievement	27	23%
	increases autonomous learning	73	64%
	encourages learning by reading	91	79%
	makes learning meaningful	54	47%
	boosts motivation	43	37%
	helps in gaining life skills	44	38%
	develops higher-order thinking skills	48	42%
	Have fun while learning	77	67%
	makes shy students participate	39	34%

This table has two parts. The first part shows that all participants see the use of a story-based approach as useful to their students no one claimed that stories are not useful. There are even respondents who don’t use stories in their teaching. Yet, they claimed its usefulness. The second part is about the benefits of a story-based approach. Most participants maintained that

this approach helps in boosting students' ability to learn by reading (91%) and this is clear in the other benefit of making shy students participate (39%). This makes sense since the two benefits are related, and one leads to the other because shy students are usually reluctant to participate in speaking but they learn a lot while reading texts. Other benefits that were also important according to the informants include learning while having fun which leads to edutainment (77%), boosting autonomy (73%) and making learning meaningful (54%). So, a story-based approach is very important and really helps students learn better and develop some life skills. Although the other benefits are below 50%, we cannot ignore them.

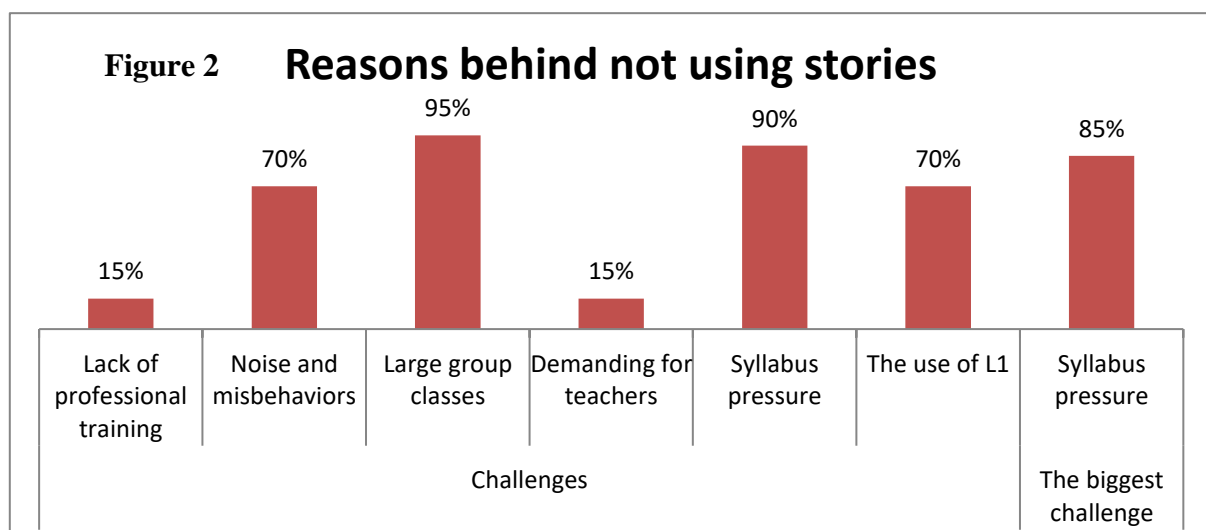
After talking about the benefits, let's move to see the challenges and hurdles that make teachers reluctant to use stories or even forget about using them. This is presented in Table 4 below. Moreover, this table presents the biggest hurdle that stands against using a story-based approach according to the participants and makes teachers forget about using this approach

		lack of training	noise and misbehaviour	large classes	demanding	syllabus pressure	the use of L1	The most affecting challenge
N	Valid	98	98	112	112	112	112	114
	missing	16	16	2	2	2	2	0

(see figure 2 below).

Table 4. Frequencies and percentages of the challenges of a story-based approach

		Frequency	Percentage
Challenges	Lack of professional training	37	32%
	Noise and misbehaviors	42	36%
	Large group classes	81	71%
	Demanding for teachers	22	19%
	Syllabus pressure	73	64%
	The use of L1	46	40%
The biggest challenge	Syllabus pressure	73	85%



It is very clear from the table and figure above that there are challenges when implementing a story-based approach because all the challenges were chosen by informants at least three times. What varies is the degree of effect each challenge has according to participants. For instance, large group classes and syllabus pressure challenges come first with percentages 95% and 90% respectively. In fact, this is true since stories to be fruitful need time from the part of both teachers and students. Thus, large group classes will add much time to every story and hence will affect the pace of the syllabus. This is what most teachers try to avoid especially with baccalaureate students. Furthermore, inspectors always complain about the syllabus progression when visiting a teacher's class. They may also give negative remarks to warn the teachers. Other challenges that come second in terms of percentages are noise and the use of L1 with 70%. Because the question about challenges is the semi-closed-ended, informants were given the chance to add other challenges such as lack of administrative support, and students' unwillingness because of lack of motivation. This will lead us to talk about the elements teachers should think of before using stories. This is what Table 5 is about namely the elements that affect the selection of stories. This study also shows that the most important and influential elements teachers should take into consideration in the selection of stories are the class size and the length of time (85%), next comes the availability of materials needed (80%) and the appropriateness of stories to students' cultures (65%). These are the four most influential criteria that affect the selection of stories.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1. Summary of the Study

Showing the role of stories in developing language skills is the research's main objective, in other words, this study is meant to show whether reading stories do make the learner more competent by developing their proficiency level or not. Under this main objective, other objectives emerge namely: (a) finding out teachers' opinions about the use of stories, (b) determining how often teachers use stories (c) finding out what benefits stories have on the teaching/learning process, and (d) identifying some challenges that hinder teachers' use of stories in our EFL classes. Based on these objectives, hypotheses and research questions were formulated. To answer these questions and hypotheses, a questionnaire was used. This instrument was administered to 114 EFL teachers from Casablanca. The data collected through the questionnaire revealed important results that will be summed up below. These research findings have shown that stories indeed help in developing some language skills. The findings have also provided valuable information about the teachers' common problems and challenges while using stories as well as the benefits stories have on the students' language skills. Among these benefits, findings have shown that most informants find stories helpful in developing students' vocabulary the more they read. In addition, findings confirmed the facts that (a) teachers who have been exposed to stories in their high school learning experience use this approach more than those who have not and (b) most subjects claim that the most important challenge hindering teachers' use of stories is the syllabus pressure. Finally, the findings have provided answers to the research questions related to (a) the teachers' attitude towards using stories in EFL classes, (b) the existence of some factors affecting the selection of stories and (c) the stories' benefits and (d) the frequencies of using stories in EFL classes.

5.2. Limitations of the Study

Because of many constraints and mainly the spread of the corona virus, this research was not conducted the way it was intended. Some very important instruments were omitted, the sampling procedure was modified and the scope of the study was reduced. The research

was thus conducted with what was available, accessible and possible in terms of the population targeted and time allowed. At first, random sampling was planned to be used to obtain a representative sample of the target population. Unfortunately, because of many constraints related to the long period of lockdown, resources and accessibility to potential informants, another alternative sampling procedure was used where the researcher contended himself with any teachers who were available and who accepted to take part in the study. Also, the size of the sample was not large enough or representative of different regions of Morocco to be able to generalize the findings. That is to say, the main limitation of the current study was the sample size. The number of teachers who volunteered and filled out the questionnaire was not big enough. Normally, for us to generalize the results of the study, we should have a representative sample of Moroccan EFL teachers. Additionally, the long period of lockdown because of Coronavirus made it really difficult to meet teachers face to face and give them the questionnaires to fill out. Hence, we were forced to tolerate that small number of participants. Another limitation had to do with research instruments, we could not opt for other research instruments to collect more data. Provided that we had used observation and interviews, we could have achieved triangulation and the data gathered could have been used to justify what was written in the questionnaire. Even though the instrument used in this research (i.e., the questionnaire) allowed the researcher to obtain interesting data, it was not sufficient to determine the real impact of students' exposure to stories on their language skills. Now, the researcher is conducting an experiment where subjects are submitted to treatment by being taught using the story-based approach with a pre-test and a post-test to find out the extent of the impact of this treatment on the subjects' performance.

5.3. Pedagogical Implications

Findings have shown that most informants appreciate the use of stories in EFL classes. Findings have also shown that teachers perceive the story-based approach as a useful tool to help students develop some language skills. The study has also shown that teachers who have been exposed to stories in their learning experience use stories more than those who have not. It is therefore strongly recommended here to use the story-based approach in the Moroccan EFL classes. In addition, this study along with the teaching sessions so far using a story-based syllabus showed the importance of stories in foreign language teaching in Morocco. Yet, it would have been more interesting to conduct an experiment where subjects would have been submitted to a treatment in the use of stories with a pre-test and a post-test to find out the difference between teaching a lesson with stories and without them. Furthermore, some research questions were not included in this project because of the aforementioned limitations. For instance, investigating how Moroccan EFL teachers effectively use stories in Moroccan schools will be of great help to novice teachers who want to use story-based syllabi but are reluctant to do so because of some problems like discipline, time and loaded programs. Another interesting idea worth investigating is the extent to which using story-based syllabi affects the students' intercultural competence. Reading is an important skill and occupies an essential part in the English Language Guidelines for Secondary Schools set by the Moroccan Ministry of Education. Because reading has empirically valid and grounded benefits for language learners namely learner's autonomy, motivation, language as well as content learning, etc. the guidelines recommend that teachers should keep in mind the tips as well as the procedures when adopting a reading-based approach. However, when it comes to reality, reading stories is rarely adopted in some Moroccan educational settings and if it is done, it is not done as it should be. Therefore, these factors should stir up more debates concerning this approach and encourage researchers to investigate more this area to find out whether teachers adopt the story-based approach and the extent to which they adopt it. In addition, specialists should examine whether practitioners add stories to the textbooks explore the problems that hamper their implementation and finally come up with suggestions to maximize the benefits of stories in EFL classes. The study managed to answer the questions set in the general introduction chapter. It concluded that teachers use stories across levels (common core, 1st year Bac and 2nd year

Bac) and the impetus for adopting these types of tasks stemmed from the belief that story-based approach helps students boost learners' language proficiency, and content knowledge about the world. Also, teachers are aware of the other benefits, including autonomy, engagement, and motivation. However, the study concluded that there exist a lot of challenges that pop up as teachers attempt to implement a story-based approach in their classes. Thus, future research may try to find solutions to such problems. The challenges that the study came up with are a lot; at the top of these barriers comes the fact that students and teachers are not accustomed to learning and teaching foreign languages using a story-based approach. Therefore, they do not take the tasks assigned seriously and usually, these activities are skipped. Time shortages push many teachers to restrict their teaching only to teaching language skills that students are to be tested in. Furthermore, the study concluded that learners' poor linguistic competence is another obstacle; it is stated in the study that learners struggle to capture the basics of the English language, let alone read a story and discuss its message.

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