A REVIEW OF THE USE OF STORYTELLING TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' ORAL PROFICIENCY IN EFL TEACHING

Guoying Yan,
Xiaolin Zhao
Foreign Language School,
Donghua University, Shanghai,
People's Republic of China

Abstract:

This review examines how storytelling has been applied in EFL teaching in secondary and higher education to enhance students' oral proficiency. It aims to offer some insight into using storytelling as an effective tool for designing speaking classes in EFL contexts. The review found that as a teaching strategy, storytelling can be effective in promoting oral proficiency in students of English in both secondary and higher education contexts. The main difference lies with teachers as the main storytelling designers in secondary education and students in higher education. Similarly, in secondary education the application of storytelling tends to happen in the classroom, while in higher education, storytelling is more likely to be used outside the classroom by creating digital stories. Based on the analysis of the implementation of storytelling in both contexts, the review closes with some guidelines for the application of storytelling in EFL teaching.

Keywords: storytelling, digital storytelling, EFL teaching, oral proficiency, secondary education, higher education

1. Introduction

Storytelling is considered an effective way of promoting language learning (Isbell, 2002; Miller & Pennycuff, 2008; Syafrizal, Chaer & Evendd, 2015; Mutiarani & Izzah, 2015). To date, substantive research has been conducted to find the correlation between storytelling and foreign language acquisition (Wright, 2000; Isbell, 2002; Rachmawaty, 2010; Boonsing and Dennis, 2016). The first book that introduced stories to the field of foreign language teaching was "Once Upon a Time" (1983). In this book, story outlines were provided for teachers of students from beginner to advanced levels to design storytelling activities. The book argued that stories can provide a genuine source of language interaction in the classroom, that storytelling is an ability that can be acquired by almost everyone, and that stories should be used in foreign language teaching for the

benefit of motivating students in learning the language in a realistic context. Since then, storytelling has been researched and applied in a wide range of educational contexts, from early education (Wright, 1995; Isbell, 2002; Yang et al., 2016) to higher education (Razmia, Pouralib, & Nozad, 2014; Kim, 2018) in order to facilitate students' language learning, especially in relation to oral proficiency.

Though storytelling is considered to be "*the original form of teaching*" (Pedersen, 1995, p.2), there is a certain bias in the understanding of this teaching methodology. The preference and success of using storytelling among young children by teachers and scholars (Wright, 1995; Isbell, 2002) seemed to have bred a predominant view that it was a teaching method suitable mostly for young children. As Isbell (2002, p. 26) has argued "*children build vocabulary, use more complex sentences, and improve comprehension when frequently exposed to stories*". By comparing reading aloud and telling stories, Isbell (2002) found that "*storytelling promotes expressive language development—in oral and written form—and presents new vocabulary and complex language in a powerful form that inspires children to emulate the model they have experienced*" (p. 26). Her study demonstrates that storytelling is more effective than reading aloud in the early period of language learning, and should therefore be recommended in language teaching to children.

As storytelling is usually considered an effective way to boost language learning for young children, it is understandable that some teachers may feel it too superficial to apply storytelling in colleges or universities for older learners. Similarly, some college students may feel that stories should fall in the realm of fiction writing with all the imaginative and intriguing plots and spoken language for daily communications. There seems to be an agreement among teachers and students that undergraduates and postgraduates should develop a more formal way of speaking, such as argumentative speaking for debates, which can inspire learners to participate in discussions and defending activities and involve them into challenging practices. (Alasmari & Ahmed, 2013; Fauzan, 2016)

However, the benefit of formal speaking does not deny the necessity of telling stories. As Wright (2000, p. 93) has argued, "*stories are certainly not just for little children!*". He asserted that "*the toughest and most powerful people in the world: politicians, the bosses of commerce, warlords and church leaders and media chiefs all know that controlling stories means controlling the way people think and behave*" (p. 97). In addition, he declared that "*the aim of most language learning is to be able to present oneself as a whole person through the foreign language and that is done very powerfully through storytelling*" (p. 97). Wright's research studies (1995; 1997; 2000) have shown that stories are a specific language genre that has a strong influence on foreign language learning and that storytelling is beneficial to both teachers and students as this review will discuss.

2. Literature Review

There have been numerous studies exploring the application of storytelling in EFL classrooms in secondary education and higher education. This review examines how storytelling has been applied in EFL teaching in secondary and higher education to enhance students' oral proficiency.

In secondary education contexts, research studies have been carried out mainly from the teachers' perspective. For instance, Ostovar-Namaghi and Torabi (2017) examined fifteen experienced teachers' personal experience in applying various techniques of teaching oral skills and found that, among other techniques such as summarizing, picture describing, and practicing linguistic patterns, storytelling is an effective way for teaching oral skills. They also stated that storytelling is an effective method to develop second language learners' oral skills in language classes. The result of their research provides a positive view on the implementation of storytelling in the EFL class. Similarly, Tanni and Raba (2015) investigated the role of storytelling in promoting students' oral proficiency and found that most teachers in their study agreed that storytelling plays a remarkable role in promoting students' speaking skills in the classroom. They suggested that on-line courses could also benefit from using storytelling to promote oral proficiency although more studies on this should be conducted. In the same vein, Marzuki (2016) used Interactive Storytelling Strategy in the EFL classroom, and found that the learners' speaking ability improved through interactions and communications in the activities. This study shows that storytelling can be used strategically to increase the learners' speaking ability and classroom activities. These research studies provide some clear indication about the positive effect of applying storytelling in the EFL class, and convincingly suggest that storytelling be implemented to motivate students to speak in the classroom.

Storytelling has also been applied in higher education contexts. Rachmawaty and Hermagustiana's (2010) research, for instance, found that retelling stories is an effective technique which can be applied to improve university students' speaking fluency because they have the opportunity to use various strategies in the retelling process. Rachmawaty and Hermagustiana's research showed the positive effect that storytelling can have on the development of the oral proficiency of college level students. Likewise, Akhyak and Indramawan (2013) demonstrated in their research that using stories in EFL teaching on the university level can provide students the opportunity to use words and a major and constant source of language experience. They concluded that storytelling could improve the students' fluency, grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, and content in their speaking. In a similar study, Razmi, Pourali, and Nozad (2014) combined computer tools with storytelling and concluded that Digital Storytelling techniques could help students develop better oral skills. Their study showed that EFL learners could become creative storytellers through digital storytelling and they could be more motivated in developing their oral abilities. As these studies suggest, the

retelling technique could also be implemented in order to develop university students' speaking fluency.

Despite these and other studies discussing the implementation of storytelling in EFL classroom in different contexts (e.g. Kim, 2014; As, 2016; Sharma, 2018), a more systematic analysis of the contributions of storytelling to enhance students' oral proficiency in secondary and university contexts is needed. In addition, some research-based guidance on how to use storytelling to improve oral proficiency, which could encourage EFL teachers to use them in class, would be appreciated.

Taking these considerations and the current direction of research in this area, this review thus surveyed a body of published studies on how storytelling can help improve oral proficiency in teaching English as a foreign language in secondary and higher education, and particularly conducted an in-depth review of twelve of them in an attempt to narrow this gap in the field. Through analysis and comparison of diverse pedagogical purposes and class designs in different contexts, the paper concludes that storytelling is an effective way to stimulate students' motivation to speak and to help them improve their oral proficiency, although storytelling may be more demanding for teachers than other traditional ways of teaching. The paper also offers some guidance for teachers of English as a foreign language interested in using storytelling as a motivational tool to help students improve their oral proficiency in English.

3. Material and Methods

3.1 Problem Statement

Oral proficiency (or speaking proficiency and speaking skills) is essential to communication, as Sharma has stated 'speaking is the first way to interact with others in the social community' (2018, p. 97). From a linguistic perspective, Omaggio has argued that a high degree of oral proficiency implies having the ability to apply the linguistic knowledge to new contexts (topics) and situations (cited in, Stein, 1999, p. 1). It includes the ability to communicate verbally in a functional and accurate way in the target language. The term accuracy relates to correct use of linguistic structures (grammatical accuracy), appropriate use of register (sociolinguistic accuracy), precision of vocabulary (semantic accuracy), and proper use of cohesive devices (rhetorical accuracy) (cited in Stein, 1999, p. 2). How to enhance students' oral proficiency through storytelling in EFL classes involves a complicated language learning process but is at the same time a recommendable teaching strategy (Wright, 2000; Isbell, 2002; Tanni & Raba, 2015; Boonsing & Dennis, 2016). Aiming to evaluate key contributions made to this area of EFL pedagogy, this review is set out to answer the following questions:

1) How is storytelling used in secondary and higher education contexts to improve students' oral proficiency?
2) What are the differences in class design when using storytelling in these two contexts?

3) What are the common formats of stories used in the EFL teaching to improve students' oral proficiency?
4) How are new technologies applied in storytelling?
5) What are the respective pedagogical applications of storytelling in secondary and higher education?

3.2 Objective of the Study

This review aims at looking into the use of storytelling in EFL to evaluate how it can enhance oral proficiency in secondary and postsecondary contexts with an attempt to make valuable recommendations for teachers.

This review will focus on how storytelling is used in EFL teaching to improve students' oral proficiency by twelve research-based papers. These papers (see Table 1) have been selected, studied, classified and analyzed in order to bring valuable insights into applying storytelling as an effective tool to construct a student-oriented class design, and utilizing an up-to-date teaching device for teaching in EFL classes.

Table 1: Papers included in the review

Macro-context	Secondary education	Higher education
Papers	As (2016); Marzuki, Prayogo and Wahyudi (2016); Bashirnezhad and Yousefi (2017); Nguyen and Nguyen (2018); Phuong (2018); Sharma (2018)	Akhyak and Indramawan (2013); Abdolmanafi- Rokni and Qarajeh (2014); Kim (2014); Razmi, Pourali, and Nozad (2014); Khodabandeh (2018); Kim (2018)

3.3 Research Methodology: a Semi-systematic Review

It is put forth by Macaro, Curle, An, Pun, and Dearden (2017) that a systematic review should match the following criteria:

1. Be carried out by more than one reviewer;
2. Have transparent procedures;
3. Include studies based on exhaustive and reliable searching, including doctoral theses;
4. Aim to reduce reviewer bias as much as possible;
5. Attempt to produce syntheses including discussions of the reliability of the evidence reviewed. (cited in Rose et al., 2018, p.153)

This review does not fully match the above criteria as the data we collected do not include doctoral theses, and therefore, it cannot be classified as a formal systematic review. For this reason and borrowing from Rose et al. (2018), we name the methodology of the current study a semi-systematic review. This review was conducted through the following steps: search for papers on storytelling in EFL on a number of databases and academic websites (e.g. ProQuest, Jstor, Elsevier & Sopus, Mendeley); set up inclusion criteria; select research papers according to the inclusion criteria; further identify and choose research papers to get the most relevant ones; produce a systematic map by extracting information from the papers; and produce an in-depth review. To

reduce potential bias, these procedures were followed independently by the two authors and the resulting selection compared to reach agreement.

The selection criteria for this review are:

1) They have been published between 2013—2018;
2) They are on how storytelling is used for teaching English to EFL learners;
3) They have been published in English;
4) The storytelling is used for teaching instead of assessing purposes;
5) The form of stories can be various, ranging from picture description, stories in movie clips, stories in textbooks, to digital stories;
6) Storytelling is used for the purpose of improving students' oral proficiency;
7) Storytelling is used in either a secondary or higher education context.

This set of inclusion criteria have been established for a number of reasons. The papers published in the last five years can best reflect the latest trends in using stories to stimulate learning in EFL secondary and higher education contexts, with a special focus on helping students to develop oral proficiency. Choosing papers published in English is more likely to select valuable contributions written by various EFL teaching experts who are internationally oriented with a willingness to share their research achievements with a wider group of readers. As the application of storytelling in EFL teaching is the main aim of using stories in language classes, putting the emphasis on teaching strategy instead of assessment can dig into the pedagogical values of the stories themselves, and thus provide a more direct perspective for the study of storytelling used in class designs. Picture description, stories in movie clips, stories in textbooks, and digital stories are the representative styles of stories used in storytelling in EFL teaching in the present time which is dominated by the Internet and media but still advocating traditional oral telling of stories. Stories are most closely related to talking, retelling and many other aspects of linguistic development in terms of speaking, so oral proficiency is the most salient manifestation of skills related to storytelling. The categorization of contexts into two groups, namely, secondary and higher education offers a subjective perspective for comparison and analysis of the application of the teaching methodology among teenagers and older learners. This offers evidence to support the statement that storytelling is applicable in secondary education as well as higher education for older learners.

3.4 Limitations

Our review has some limitations in spite of careful attention taken to avoid them. First, the search for research papers was limited by the databases available to us, and therefore, it was likely that there might be some important papers eluding us. Second, our failure to include doctoral theses due to limited resources may have also caused an omission of some interesting new ideas. Third, the research in the papers included have been conducted with comparatively small numbers of subjects, which were a few dozens in maximum, due to the special features of speaking which requires teachers' empirical attention to each component of speaking, and therefore it is not possible to

involve numerous subjects whose improvement can be measured conveniently in a mechanical way. We acknowledge the limitations, but the research studies included still prove of great value, and we have never deviated from our focus on answering our research questions in the review.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results of the Systematic Map

After retrieving about 300 papers from databases (e.g. ProQuest) and academic websites (e.g. Mendeley), we selected 25 papers related to storytelling, oral proficiency and EFL teaching. Then, we further narrowed the scope of our study by context so that the final papers would deal with the topic in secondary and higher education. This last selection formed the basis for our systematic map.

The systematic map shown in the Appendix describes, summarises, and categorises relative evidence extracted from the twelve papers to give the readers a glimpse of the context where this review is located. Half of them were set in secondary education context and the other half in higher education context, as is shown in Table One. Eight of them focused on oral proficiency as a comprehensive whole, three of them focused on one specific perspective of oral proficiency, that is, pronunciation (Bashirnezhad & Yousefi, 2017), autonomy (Kim, 2014), and coherence (Phuong, 2018) respectively, while one of them focused on oral proficiency and autonomy (Kim, 2018).

Each experiment varied in the number of subjects; the biggest number was 60 and the smallest 5, all the other experiments ranged between 20 and 40. All of them used quantitative analysis, and four of them used both quantitative and qualitative analysis (Abdolmanafi-Rokni & Qarajeh, 2014; Akhyak & Indramawan, 2013; Kim, 2014; Phuong, 2018).

The stories used in storytelling were various. There were printed stories and non-printed stories, though in As's (2016) paper, the form of stories used was not mentioned, and in Sharma's (2018) paper both printed and non-printed stories were used. Among the printed stories, there were picture description, stories from textbooks, and short stories. The non-printed stories were online audio stories and video stories as part of digital storytelling.

As to the measures taken to analyse the research statistics, three of the papers used tests, three used both tests and questionnaires, two used classroom action research, one used questionnaire, one used tests, questionnaire and interview, one used interview, and one used tests and interviews.

4.2 Results of in-depth Review

Storytelling usually involves two forms of telling: teachers' telling and students' telling. Teachers' storytelling in the classroom is an acceptable method that can construct a link between the teacher and the students with the creation of the story background, development of plot and the transmission of feelings and information through verbal

expression, eye contact and other body language. When storytelling is used as a learning tool, students are encouraged to explore their unique expressiveness to communicate thoughts and feelings in an articulate, lucid manner (Tanni & Raba, 2015). Under teachers' instruction, the students can tell the stories to their teachers and classmates, or to themselves simply for the purpose of practice, through retrieving grammar, vocabulary, cohesive devices, and the like, stored in their brains. In EFL teaching, both teachers and students are likely to tell stories to each other in designed activities (Dujmovic, 2006; Haven & Ducan, 2007; Tanni & Raba, 2015). Teachers can retell stories to assist students to understand the content of learning, and students can retell stories with help from the teacher.

Storytelling is applied in secondary and higher education with different focuses and strategies. The most salient characteristics reflected in the two contexts are the swapping of students and teachers' roles as storytellers, which is manifested in the diversity of class designs, pedagogical applications, and technologies applied to storytelling. The kind of preparations teachers make, the distribution/shift of the role as a storyteller among teachers and students, the degree of teachers' participation in the storytelling activities, and the degree of autonomy students enjoy in storytelling practice, all contribute to the construction of a productive English learning class by using storytelling technique to stimulate students' oral English proficiency pertinent to their respective context. This is reflected in the papers in this review which are listed in Table 1.

This section of the review will focus on four main areas: sub-section 5.1 looks at teacher's role as a storyteller in secondary education; 5.2 examines students' role as storyteller in higher education; 5.3 reviews teaching strategy and design of storytelling in class, in and outside class, and outside the class; and 5.4 looks at a number of salient issues relating to story-telling: Oral proficiency, attitudes and feelings, and online devices.

4.2.1 Teachers' role as a Storyteller in Secondary Education

Teachers' role in secondary education seems to resemble that of a storyteller and a designer. They take care of the organization of classroom activities, and pave the way for students to tell stories by introducing background information and vocabulary, directing the storyline, or simply by telling stories to students at first. For instance, in the teaching procedures of As's (2016) research, teachers gave their students an introduction to the story topic, and brainstormed relative topics, and students were then organized in pairs, although they had the liberty of reading, listening to partner's reading and writing down the story before retelling. Similarly, in Bashirnezhad and Yousefi's (2017) research, the teacher provided instruction on pronunciation activities before learners listened to audio stories, and provided some explanation in order to enhance students' pronunciation after some listening and practice exercises. Likewise, in Phuong's (2018) research, teachers selected pictures for picture description and organized the class activities with specific aims and flexibility according to the students'

abilities. Students could either do the repetition practice of basic linguistic skills, such as sentence and pronunciation, or use the patterns provided by the teacher in communicative practice. In another example, Sharma (2018) examined teachers as story-tellers who prepared a storytelling performance for the students. In these practices, teachers are at the same time careful planners, detailed explainers, introducers, leading guides, and storytellers. But most of all, throughout the teaching process, they are instructors who are in control of their class and attract students' attention and lead the progression of classroom activities, offering help whenever necessary, while the students follow teachers' carefully planned instruction, receive their help when necessary, and practice by themselves or with partners in class.

Teachers' leading role as a storyteller and a storytelling designer is also reflected in the selection of specific teaching strategy that can make the teaching process easily acceptable by students who only have some basic knowledge of the foreign language and thus are not capable of carrying out completely independent learning. Marzuki, Prayogo and Wahyudi (2016) employed Interactive Storytelling Strategy in the classroom activities in which the teacher gave a model for retelling the story, and the learners interacted with each other by asking questions related to a story they had read and teachers helped them all through the activities. In a similar vein, the using of storytelling in Nguyen and Nguyen's (2018) paper was planned in a step-by-step way by following the content from the textbook. Similarly, Sharma (2018) used Cooperative Storytelling Strategy to guide the classroom activities. Teachers were storytellers, and students were put into groups to interact and cooperate with their group members in the preparation and practice period for retelling stories in class. Therefore, in secondary education, teaching is mostly strategy-oriented or restricted to textbook arrangements pertaining to applying storytelling in classroom activities, and teachers are also aware of the necessity of catering for students' needs in their preparation period and retelling practice, through the introduction and review of vocabulary, repetition of sentence patterns, leading questions to form storylines, and the like.

4.2.2 Students' Role as a Storyteller in Higher Education

In contrast, in higher education, more autonomy from the learners is encouraged and fostered. Learners seem to be more capable of independent learning and can enjoy more freedom in organizing and participating in the storytelling activities compared with high school students. But at the same time, learners may be required to learn basic computer skills to be able to work online when they carry out digital storytelling activities.

In this context, teachers as storytellers can only be found in Akhyak and Indramawan's (2013) research, where teachers told stories instead of reading them to the students. In all the other five cases, digital stories are employed where students are the storytellers. Kim (2014) used digital storytelling to develop English learners' autonomy through self-access learning, and learners could record their stories outside the classroom. Abdolmanafi-Rokni and Qarajeh (2014) also found digital stories, which

required students to read and retell stories to the computers by using software, effective in improving students' oral performance. In Razmi, Pourali, and Nozad's (2014) study, students were asked to create their digital versions of the given stories and present them by using PowerPoint. Digital storytelling was applied to provide learners with a self-access learning environment in Kim's (2018) investigation. With computer skills, learners can use media and technology to foster creativity and develop self-confidence and autonomy. Khodabandeh (2018) implemented storytelling through the use of Telegram messaging App and social networks by using mobile phones in class. Teachers recorded stories in simple language, while learners were asked to retell the stories or to answer the comprehension questions asked by the teacher and record their answers and shared them in their group. In higher education, storytelling is therefore seen to be used in a more varied fashion and learners have more autonomy in learning. They are more independent in the sense that they can retell stories in class through interaction with other students, or record stories for peer evaluation outside the class by using electronic devices and computer skills. However, the basic way of storytelling, where teachers will retell the stories, has not been discarded in total, as 'storytelling give motivation, meaning, fluency, language awareness, and stimulus for the students speaking [sic]' (Akhyak & Indramawan, 2013), though it is more demanding for teachers to prepare for the lessons, because they have to learn the story well enough to retell it without books and avoid making any mistake in the class. In spite of learners' autonomy, teachers are still responsible for topic selection, computer skill instruction and evaluation of students' storytelling after their recording and uploading.

All in all, in higher education, teachers' roles seem to be drifting farther away from being a storyteller, though they still hold to the role as a class designer as they are still in control of students' progression of storytelling for language learning. Students are the storytellers themselves, even in Akhyak and Indramawan (2013) case, where teachers first tell the stories followed by students who retell the stories.

4.2.3 Teaching Strategy and Design: in Class, both in and Outside Class, Outside Class

It is also interesting to note that there is a trend for storytelling activities in speaking classes to be increasingly linked with the development of the Internet, electronic devices and specific software. With the development of technology applied to learning, the electronic storytelling of radio and television, online storytelling Apps, digital stories, and the like, have ushered in a new era of storytelling. In recently years, digital storytelling has been frequently discussed in EFL teaching (Reinders, 2011; Boonsing & Dennis, 2016; Nassim, 2018).

Storytelling in combination with modern technology has been discovered to have a positive effect on language students. EFL students are motivated to learn with more interest and autonomy through interaction in digital story creation or Computer-Assisted Language Learning (Kim, 2014; Karameteii & Topraklikoğlu, 2017). Digital storytelling in an Iranian undergraduate EFL classroom turned out to be successful in

improving students' oral proficiency (Razmia, Pouralib, & Nozad, 2014). In another study, Kim (2018) discovered that, through four digital storytelling tasks, 62 university students' oral proficiency was improved and their learning autonomy enhanced.

As a result, the EFL classroom is no longer restricted to a real room with chairs and desks, but widened to a much larger space: the virtual "room" online. Computers, the Internet, Apps for self-learning, and software programs have led to innovations in teaching strategy and design, which have to be adjusted for teaching in class or outside class when students are conducting online practice. There is also a kind of hybrid class where the teaching and learning process is carried both in the classroom and out of the classroom online, with teachers instructing in the class and students practicing and uploading their stories online out of the class. Therefore, the teaching strategy and design can also be categorised according to the venue of teaching and learning, namely, in the classroom, in and outside the classroom, and outside the classroom. The categorisation shows the implementation of computers and smart phones in teaching and the different degrees of autonomy the learners demonstrate in the process of language learning as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Categorisation according to the venue of teaching and learning

Contexts	In the classroom		In and outside the classroom	Outside the classroom
	Secondary education	**Higher education**	**Higher education**	**Higher education**
Papers	Marzuki, Prayogo and Wahyudi (2016); As (2016); Bashirnezhad and Yousefi (2017); Nguyen and Nguyen (2018); Phuong (2018); Sharma (2018).	Akhyak and Indramawan (2013); Abdolmanafi-Rokni and Qarajeh (2014); Razmi, Pourali, and Nozad (2014).	Kim (2018).	Kim (2014); Khodabandeh (2018).

As can be seen in Table 2, the "in the classroom" category is composed of learners from six high schools and three universities, the "in and outside the classroom" category includes learners from one university, while the "outside the classroom" category is constituted of learners from two universities. It can be thus inferred that university teachers are more likely to set independent learning activities outside the classroom, while secondary education teachers still prefer to carry out teaching in the classroom so that students can receive face-to-face instruction and help.

In-the-classroom teaching is a traditional way of carrying out teaching plans and activities, and in this environment, teachers play a pivotal role either as an instructor or an organizer. For example, Bashirnezhad and Yousefi (2017) research focuses on listening to digital storytelling to enhance EFL student's pronunciation. Although students listen to audio stories for repetition and practice to improve their pronunciation, teachers still play an important role in giving instruction on

pronunciation activities before students listen, and providing phonetic symbol and some examples to some students after listening. Another example can be found in Phuong's (2018) picture description technique, where teachers select pictures and manage the pictures in a flexible and creative way, choosing between mechanical practice and communicative practice. In the third example, Sharma's (2018) collaborative classroom action research, teachers try to create meaningful contexts for learners by preparing for a storytelling "performance" so that learners can negotiate meanings with peers and teachers. In-the-classroom teaching makes teaching more personal and approachable. Through face-to-face interactions between teachers and students, or among students themselves, students can learn the language with conventional instructions in a real communicative environment, which is crucial to improving oral proficiency. In addition, as teachers and students are in the same room talking and discussing the same topic, they are participating in activities that manifest both collectivism and individuality. Therefore, empathy with peers and teachers in language learning will be an additional bonus for this teaching design.

"In and outside the classroom" context is composed of teachers' instruction inside the classroom and students' practice outside the classroom. In Kim's (2018) study, digital stories and movie clips as well as media devices were deployed for teaching. Students could choose their preferred movie clips related to topics and access ICT programs using VoiceThread and Vocaroo in and out of class, which can facilitate effective communication and critical thinking to develop oral proficiency and autonomy. The participating students' oral proficiency improved in terms of discourse so they can express their thoughts based on media interpretation and information. In this study, the role of the teachers in the classroom is more like an activity organizer, and learners are in charge of their own learning by using the movie clips chosen by the teacher and the device and programs provided by him/her. In his study, the instructor teaches students how to create individual digital stories using two different programs, how to post their created story links on the classroom website and use a text-to-speech program to produce the correct pronunciation before recording their stories. Then, students can click the recording button to tell their stories after watching their chosen movie clips. The instructor and two peers will give feedback. In the process, students demonstrate autonomy in learning, while the instructor is almost invisible in the storytelling practice, although he/she takes responsibility before and after the storytelling recording.

When teaching is carried out outside the classroom, teachers still hold the responsibility of choosing the content of the stories and they recommend the device to be used for storytelling, but the learning is more like computer-assisted or smart phone-assisted, and thus learners' autonomy is put to full swing. In Kim's study (2014), nine topics were provided for students to choose from in the learner-centered task—storytelling. The participants recorded, practiced, or listened to their performance on their own time, while the instructor mediated the process of using self-study resources via email exchanged without requiring them to submit their individual work. With the

advent of smart phones, students may not be confined in front of computers when they are learning English. In a similar study, Khodabandeh (2018) advocated the use of mobile phones in the English class. Students were expected to be online according to the agreed class time, received instructions from the teacher, listened to the recorded stories, made preparations for retelling and finally retold the stories. It is interesting to note that in Khodabandeh's practice, teaching was conventional in the first stage, when teachers taught new words and phrases, showed PowerPoint and asked questions to lead students to better understanding, and asked students to guess the story. It was in the second stage of the lesson that students were given the freedom of practicing and recording stories for peer evaluation. In both Kim's and Khodabandeh's studies, learning is made more flexible with computers or smart phones, but learners are required to be more self-disciplined to carry out practice activities by themselves out of the classroom.

In conclusion, in the segmentation of different learning contexts, it can be discerned that storytelling can be used with flexibility in EFL classes. Secondary education students tend to have it in a more controlled way in the classroom, and even when digital story is used, and it is mainly used for the purpose of one aspect of speaking, for instance, enhancing pronunciation, but not speaking at the lexical or discourse level. In contrast, students in higher education show more independence in using storytelling in speaking classes, as they can create digital stories by themselves after receiving instructions from teachers. When carried out online, teachers' instructions may still be traditional, paving the way for students to prepare for their storytelling, but students can enjoy the freedom of choosing their preferred place to learn and practice by themselves before recording their stories online. Therefore, it can be concluded that when it is combined with modern technology, teaching through storytelling can be conducted outside the classroom, and learner-centered learning is realized in the real sense as more autonomy is required of learners.

4.2.4 Oral proficiency, Attitudes and Feelings, and Online Devices

The implementation of storytelling has proved to be effective in promoting oral proficiency in students of English both in secondary and higher education. Research studies have shown that learners have demonstrated better speaking skills or more confidence in speaking after the implementation of storytelling.

Studies in both contexts used some indicators to analyse the effect that storytelling can have on students' proficiency in English as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Indicators used to measure the effect of storytelling
in secondary education and higher education

Secondary education		Higher education	
Authors	Indicators	Authors	Indicators
As (2016)	fluency, accuracy and comprehensibility	Akhyak and Indramawan (2013)	fluency, grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, and content

Marzuki, Prayogo and Wahyudi (2016)	fluency, understandability, and accuracy	Abdolmanafi-Rokni and Qarajeh (2014)	speaking skill and communication, vocabulary, retelling and accent
Bashirnezhad and Yousefi (2017)	pronunciation	Kim(2014)	overall speaking, pronunciation, discourse, vocabulary, sentence complexity
Nguyen and Nguyen (2018)	fluency, lexical resource, and interactive communication	Razmi, Pourali, and Nozad (2014)	vocabulary, grammar, fluency and pronunciation
Phuong (2018)	coherence	Khodabandeh (2018)	grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and ability to be fluent
Sharma (2018)	comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation	Kim (2018)	holistic, discourse, pronunciation, vocabulary, sentence complexity, and grammar

As Table 3 shows, indicators used in studies contextualized in secondary education tended to focus on primary aspects of proficiency with fluency, accuracy and comprehensibility dominating the realm of the research. In contrast, research on higher education, seemed to be more concerned with detailed and advanced aspects of oral proficiency, such as grammar, accent, content, discourse and sentence complexity. Coherence and pronunciation have been singled out separately to benefit from storytelling in secondary education, but in higher education, a comprehensive cover of oral proficiency indicators seem to have been involved in each study. Among them, the indicator vocabulary appeared twice in secondary education context, "lexical resource" by Nguyen and Nguyen (2018) and "vocabulary" by Sharma (2018), while it appeared in every paper in the higher education context. Therefore, vocabulary appears to be a very crucial factor that accounts for a student's oral proficiency in higher education.

Students' attitude, thinking modes, or feelings were mentioned almost by all the papers. In secondary education, students held a positive attitude towards the implementation of storytelling (As, 2016; Phuong, 2018), gained more self-confidence after the implementation of storytelling (Marzuki, Prayogo & Wahyudi, 2016; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2018), or were more motivated to learn the language (Bashirnezhad & Yousefi, 2017; Sharma, 2018). In contrast, in higher education, apart from self-confidence (Kim, 2014; Razmi, Pourali & Nozad, 2014), and motivation (Akhyak & Indramawan, 2013; Abdolmanafi-Rokni & Qarajeh, 2014), freedom to select what to tell was also listed as a benefit of storytelling (Kim, 2018), and only one paper (Khodabandeh, 2018) failed to discuss students' feelings specifically. However, learners' autonomy, cognitive learning process or creativity were preached or hinted at in all the digital storytelling applications (Abdolmanafi-Rokni & Qarajeh, 2014; Kim, 2014; Razmi, Pourali & Nozad, 2014; Bashirnezhad & Yousefi, 2017; Khodabandeh, 2018; Kim, 2018).

Compared with secondary education, higher education tends to resort more to application of tools and online devices as is displayed by the number of studies on digital storytelling: one out of six in high schools (Bashirnezhad & Yousefi, 2017), and five out of six in higher education, except for Akhyak and Indramawan's (2013) research. Therefore, a good command of computer skills and online software seems to be important when implementing digital storytelling. There seems to be, at the same time, a clear socio-economic divide between students. As Bashirnezhad and Yousefi (2017) asserted in their research: students from wealthier backgrounds applied digital strategies more successfully than those from poorer families as they have had previous and more frequent exposure to digital skills. This seems to account for their better performance in English. Teachers' and peers' evaluation were highlighted in all the studies on digital storytelling, without which the autonomous learning may be poked with the risk of failure, just as Kim (2014) has asserted that self-assessment, motivation, and feedback play significant roles when using self-study resources to develop learners' oral proficiency. In the process of creating digital storytelling, participants were able to build metacognitive skills to achieve their learning goals and evaluate their own speaking as well as that of their peers.

5. Recommendations and Conclusion

According to the result of the in-depth critical review offered in this paper, storytelling can play an active role in enhancing the oral proficiency of EFL learners. It also has a positive effect on triggering learners' motivation toward language learning and cultivating their confidence in speaking. Through assistance from computers, smart phones and other technical devices, storytelling can be used to improve learners' autonomy in learning. Although it may at times be rather demanding for the teacher, storytelling still shows a number of benefits for the EFL student and the class that outnumbers the challenges it poses.

Based on these conclusions, this last section of the review offers some guidelines for the application of storytelling in EFL teaching to improve learners' oral proficiency:

1. Storytelling can be applied to promote oral English development in EFL teaching in both secondary and higher education.
2. When using stories, both the teachers and students can be the storytellers. Teachers tell stories to attract students' attention or give a model of storytelling, and students can retell stories for practice and presentation.
3. Storytelling can enhance students' oral proficiency by attracting their interest, bringing them enjoyment, and stimulating their motivation and self-confidence. The competence of talking in length by using new vocabulary and complex sentences in storytelling can give students thrills of joy, which makes study enjoyable.
4. Storytelling can be used to improve oral proficiency in a particular aspect, such as pronunciation and cohesion, or in a comprehensive domain which covers

vocabulary, grammar, fluency, content, comprehensibility, sentence complexity, etc.

5. Peer feedback on storytelling can help students gain self-confidence and develop their oral proficiency autonomously.

6. Digital storytelling is applied as a teaching strategy for the benefit of giving students more freedom in selecting the stories they like to tell, and choosing the time and place they feel comfortable for practicing retelling. It is also found conducive to cultivating learning autonomy.

7. Smart phones might be a potential learning and teaching tool for EFL teaching through storytelling. With smart phones, students are freed from the classroom in the real sense. So long as they have smart phones connected to the Internet, they can learn whenever and wherever they want. Teacher's instruction can also reach them through phone-based classes.

Therefore, storytelling is a beneficial tool to stimulate speaking and enhance learners' oral proficiency as well as motivate them to take a more active role in their own learning. Future research may consider making full use of the traditional way of telling stories to stimulate students' language learning in general and oral proficiency in particular as well as combining storytelling with modern technology to create a virtual interaction environment for language learning.

Acknowledgements

7. About the Authors

Guoying Yan is an experienced English lecturer teaching postgraduates (non-English majors) in the Foreign Language School in Donghua University. Her research interest falls in teaching English as a second language and translation between Chinese and English.

Xiaolin Zhao is a professor and dean of the Foreign Language School in Donghua University. Her research interest falls in the realm of teaching English as a second language and corpus study.

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