

# Storytelling as a Pedagogical Strategy to Teach English Language Vocabulary to Children

## Storytelling como estrategia pedagógica para enseñar vocabulario en inglés a niños

*"Stories are our primary tools of learning and teaching, the repositories of our lore and legends. They bring order into our confusing world. Think how many times in a day you use stories to pass along data, insights, memories or common-sense advice" ([Edward Miller](#))*

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### ABSTRACT

This article was written with the purpose of obtaining information from physical and digital documents, as well as, analyzing the important data used in the literature review of our project, "Storytelling as a Pedagogical Strategy to Teach English Language Vocabulary to Children". The studies were categorized into four aspects which are 'study', 'focus', 'context' and 'results. We focused our attention on gathering relevant information to achieve the objectives of this project. Since teaching English in elementary school has been recently implemented in Nicaragua, not enough research has been done in this area. We believe it is necessary to support elementary school with more research about the use of different resources to support English language teaching in this country. One of the weaknesses when learning a second language is that if children have lack of vocabulary, children will have difficulties understanding some explanations in the English language classes. Effectively teaching English will promote better communication and understanding in future English classes. Studies have proven the effectiveness storytelling has in teaching English language vocabulary to children, as well as, how storytelling can be combined with other educational instruments. Studies also found that learning vocabulary is essential to understand the assignments in the English classes and the activities in the English workbooks.

**Keywords:** Storytelling; pedagogical strategy; English vocabulary; teaching children.

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## RESUMEN

Este artículo se realizó con el propósito de obtener información de documentos físicos y digitales, así como analizar los datos importantes utilizados en la revisión de la literatura de nuestro proyecto denominado "Storytelling as a Pedagogical Strategy to Teaching English Language Vocabulary to Children". Los estudios se clasificaron en cuatro aspectos los cuales son: "estudio", "enfoque", "contexto" y "resultados". Centramos nuestra atención en recabar información relevante para lograr los objetivos de este proyecto. Dado que la enseñanza del inglés en la educación primaria se implementó recientemente en Nicaragua, no hay suficientes investigaciones en esta área. Por lo tanto, creemos que es necesario apoyar a la educación primaria con más investigaciones sobre el uso de diferentes recursos para apoyar la enseñanza del idioma inglés en este país. Una de las debilidades a la hora de aprender un segundo idioma es que si los niños carecen de vocabulario, ellos pueden tener dificultades para entender algunas explicaciones en las clases de inglés, así mismo como para tener una mejor comunicación y comprensión en las clases de inglés. Diversos estudios han demostrado que el aprendizaje de vocabulario es fundamental para comprender los trabajos en las clases de inglés que imparte el profesor o las actividades en los cuadernos de inglés. También se encontraron estudios que han demostrado la efectividad que tiene storytelling en la enseñanza de vocabulario del idioma inglés a niños, así como, como que storytelling se puede combinar con algunos instrumentos educativos.

**Palabras claves:** Storytelling; estrategia pedagógica; vocabulario; enseñanza a niños.

## INTRODUCTION

This article was written with the purpose of obtaining information from physical and digital documents, as well as, analyzing the important data used in the literature review of our project, "Storytelling as a Pedagogical Strategy to Teach English Language Vocabulary to Children". Vocabulary is an essential factor to understand a second language, as the author Wilkins cited by the authors Andrade, Fletcher, Gutierrez, & Ruggeri (2017) states "without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed". It showed that if children have lack of vocabulary, children can have difficulties understanding some explanations in the English language classes. Storytelling promotes better communication and understanding in the English classes.

According to Mutianari & Izzah (2012) it is important to know that, "There are three very important sources of interest for children in the classroom; they are pictures, stories, and games". In Nicaragua, pictures and games are used in English elementary teaching, however, stories are barely used. For this reason, we were motivated to analyze how to implement storytelling in English language education.

This project focused on the use of storytelling with different educational instruments such as flashcards, songs, videos, puppets and masks. This project also proposes storytelling as a pedagogical strategy to assist second grade teachers in their teaching of English vocabulary at the *Puertas Abiertas* school located in *Estelí* city.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This project is designed by using the qualitative approach. The research does not present numerical measurement about the information found through the documentary research. The data used in the literature review of this project was selected taking into account its origin, quality and reliability.

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An important point to consider is context, because finding specific studies in our country is difficult. For this reason, it was necessary for us to seek studies from other countries. Studies which had similar characteristics to our project, such as teaching English in elementary school, English as a Foreign Language, teaching English language vocabulary and studies about storytelling.

## **DISCUSSION**

The aim of this article is how to teach English language vocabulary to children, how storytelling helps students to learn vocabulary in order to develop the four skills; listening, speaking, reading and writing. Additionally, how implementing Storytelling with other tools helps children learn vocabulary more effectively. In order to successfully teach English vocabulary to children, it was found that when a person is learning a foreign language, learning vocabulary is essential. Vocabulary plays a crucial role in developing a foreign language, research has shown that when students do not know the vocabulary in their English class, students will not be able to participate in English activities.

Alqahtani (2015) states that researchers such as Laufer and Nation (1999), Maximo (2000), Read (2000), Gu (2003), Marion (2008) and Nation (2011) and others have realized that the acquisition of vocabulary is essential for successfully learning a second language and plays an important role in the formation of complete sentences. In English as foreign language (EFL) learning vocabulary items play a vital role in all language skills (i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing).

In addition to this, it was found that teaching children required teachers to use attractive and effective strategies since children tend to get bored when they do not enjoy the activities used in the English class. Additionally, research suggests that using picture books as a strategy can provide a context that can easily assist in the interpretation of the human experience through visual literacy (Tórrez, & Gómez, 2021) Therefore, the strategies used with children ought to be visual and appealing. Learning strategies should permit students to interact with their classmates and the teacher, along with the teaching-learning materials.

According to Pedersen (1995) cited by Gomez, Parra, & Parra, (2016) "Storytelling is a pedagogical strategy especially when working with EFL children, due to the fact that stories can help transmit heritage in terms of literature and culture". Therefore, storytelling allows the students to learn new vocabulary from stories in a fun and entertaining way. Stories are also effective because they are used in our daily lives; with this strategy teachers and students have the opportunity to take advantage to learn vocabulary and stories in the target language.

Some findings have shown that in order to learn meaningful vocabulary, storytelling should be combined with some instruments or resources such as flashcards, songs, videos, puppets and masks.

The use of flashcards is important in education and can be the first tool for teaching vocabulary. According to Cardoza, Martinez, & Martinez (2015) "The use of the pictures stories is believed to gain the language elicitation from the language learners and enhance their communication strategies, fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary development". Flashcards and storytelling are huge together, since in storytelling the storyteller (in this case the teacher) needs to catch the attention of the listeners (in this case the students), in order to motivate the listeners.

Songs are proven instruments to teach English to children. According to Herrera & Herrera (2016) "Songs can be useful tools in the learning of vocabulary, words, sentence structures, and sequence patterns". Furthermore, "Stories along with songs, allow children to hear and understand far more English than any other method" (Mutianari & Izzah, 2012).

Storytelling can be combined with videos in a concept called "Digital Storytelling". "Digital Storytelling is a form of performance art that combines various types of multimedia, and includes moving images, speech, sound, narration, and music so that display of short stories about a particular topic or theme can be more interesting" (Tridinanti, 2017).

Another finding was, in order to obtain a meaningful knowledge of English vocabulary using storytelling, stories should contain some of the following characteristics: "Stories should be short, stories should have a few characters, and stories should have vocabulary according to children English level". (Gomez, Parra, & Parra, 2016) An important point that Nicaraguan teachers should know is that teachers should tell stories that students already know in their native language, in this case, Spanish. This will allow the students to link the famous or traditional stories in Nicaragua in their target language.

## CONCLUSIONS

- Based on our discoveries, storytelling could be implemented with some instruments or resources that teachers in Nicaragua are already using, and these instruments are effective in teaching in elementary school. Examples of these instruments are flashcards, songs, videos, puppets and masks.
- Studies have proven the effectiveness storytelling has in teaching English language vocabulary to children. Also, learning vocabulary is essential to understand the assignments in the English classes

and the activities in the English workbooks.

- Storytelling allows students to learn English language vocabulary in a fun, entertaining and natural way. Research discovered how to use storytelling in elementary school and what characteristics should be highlighted to make storytelling an effective pedagogical strategy.

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