

## Narrative Discourse between Pedagogical Function and Literary Construction

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### Abstract :

This study examines the role of narrative discourse in bridging pedagogical function and literary construction, with a particular focus on its contribution to enriching the lexical repertoire of primary school learners. It highlights the significance of the story as both an educational and aesthetic medium that fosters the development of linguistic and communicative skills, expands vocabulary, stimulates imagination, and instills values through its diverse thematic content; The study also addresses the importance of integrating storytelling into the educational process by outlining the criteria for story selection and the stages of its pedagogical implementation within an interactive, competency-based approach. Furthermore, it is supported by a classroom-based application drawn from a textbook model, illustrating practical mechanisms for leveraging stories to enhance comprehension, expression, and vocabulary development.

The study concludes that storytelling constitutes an effective educational tool that combines enjoyment with learning, contributing to the construction of integrated learning that harmonizes linguistic, literary, and value-based dimensions.

**Keywords :** Narrative Discourse ; Pedagogical Function ; Literary Construction ; Lexical Development ; Teaching Arabic ; Competency-Based Approach.

### Introduction

Children's literature has gained a prominent position in contemporary cultural and literary production due to its pivotal role in shaping children's awareness and fostering their cognitive, moral, and linguistic development. It is no longer merely a source of entertainment ; rather, it has become an essential educational and pedagogical tool that demands concerted efforts and unified perspectives to establish its status among other literary genres. Today's literary output for children extends beyond recreational content, representing a foundational step in building the future of generations, as it addresses children's needs and interests,

encourages interaction with their environment, and prioritizes the holistic development of their cognitive, intellectual, cultural, moral, and spiritual dimensions.

Within this framework, the story emerges as a central instrument in children's literature, combining educational and aesthetic functions. It contributes to value formation, awareness enhancement, and the development of linguistic and communicative skills. This study highlights the role of storytelling in primary education, emphasizing its contribution to enriching students' linguistic repertoire and stimulating imagination and critical thinking. The study also examines key types of children's stories, including folk tales, moral and religious narratives, and symbolic stories, and underscores their role in instilling values and fostering social and cultural awareness.

Furthermore, the study explores the pedagogical significance of stories within the educational process, illustrating their impact on linguistic and communicative skill development, vocabulary expansion, and the activation of creativity and imaginative thinking. It delineates essential criteria for selecting appropriate stories and presents structured teaching steps based on a modern, interactive pedagogical approach that enhances competencies. The theoretical framework is complemented by an applied analysis of a primary school textbook, demonstrating how stories can be employed to develop comprehension and expression skills while enriching students' linguistic repertoire. The study concludes that stories represent an effective educational tool that combines enjoyment with learning, fostering an integrated educational experience that harmonizes linguistic, literary, and moral dimensions.

## 1- Thematic Frameworks of Stories for Children

The story represents a literary form distinguished by its unique artistic structure, which compels the reader to reflect on the work and enjoy its stylistic richness, as well as the purposeful messages it conveys. A story can be defined as "a collection of events narrated by the author, dealing with one or more incidents related to human characters, whose ways of life and behaviors in various situations differ"<sup>1</sup>. This distinguishes it from other literary forms, as narrative storytelling serves as a marker of this difference, directly presenting events in a manner that encourages careful consideration of their logical sequence and interrelation.

It is widely recognized that stories aimed at children carry specific themes and subject matters that shape their structure, expressed through linguistic frameworks characterized by their strong impact. This renders them highly significant in the world of the child, making stories one of the most effective tools for personality development. In line with our objective of highlighting the themes of children's stories, we categorize them according to content as follows :

**1-1 Folk Stories :** This category focuses on the narration of folk tales specific to a given community. A folk tale can be defined as "a true story experienced by an individual or a group who made sacrifices for a cause and achieved victories, thereby earning popular heroism and leadership. The community became fascinated by their deeds and immortalized them by recounting their stories and passing them down to successive generations"<sup>2</sup>. Folk

content reflects matters pertaining to the life and values of communities, preserving and commemorating their heroic achievements across time. To ensure their transmission, these narratives are presented to children, with the objective of perpetuating them through successive generations. Consequently, folk stories constitute a fundamental element of social formation and serve as an enduring symbol of a community's cultural heritage.

**1-2 Moral Stories :** In this category, moral values occupy a central position, serving as a referential framework that children should be acquainted with. This type of story aims "to instill in students virtues and exemplary ideals, to cultivate noble behavior, foster a spirit of cooperation and self-sacrifice, encourage respect for others, promote justice and truth, and deter them from injustice while motivating them to oppose it"<sup>3</sup>. The moral dimension constitutes the core justification for employing stories in the ethical upbringing of children, as it conveys genuine ethical values that guide them toward becoming positive and responsible members of society. Such narratives provide children with a clear framework for appropriate conduct, helping them navigate interpersonal relationships and make ethical decisions in their daily interactions.

**1-3 Religious Stories :** The content of this category closely aligns with moral stories in guiding children toward virtuous behavior, drawing its principles from the teachings of Islam and emphasizing their importance and the obligation to adhere to them. This type of story addresses "a variety of topics, all framed within Islamic ethics, offering guidance and instruction, including acts of worship, beliefs, social transactions, the lives of the prophets and messengers (peace be upon them), stories from the Qur'an, and accounts of heroic deeds, interwoven with artistic techniques to enhance engagement, such as focusing on a particular idea while transitioning to another"<sup>4</sup>. Such narratives harness the influential power of storytelling to captivate and positively affect the audience, fulfilling the fundamental objective of all stories : to educate, engage, and leave a lasting impression on the reader or listener.

**1-4 Symbolic Stories :** This category refers to "those tales narrated through the voices of animals, intended to convey lessons, guidance, and moral instruction indirectly, through suggestion and implication rather than explicit statements, thereby positively influencing the learners, encouraging them to embrace what is good and avoid what is bad. Symbolism, <sup>5</sup>" which constitutes a fundamental element of this narrative type, serves as the audience's pathway to understanding the overarching meaning of the stories. Consequently, readers are encouraged to engage in careful reflection on these symbols and to interpret their general significance, through which the broader moral or thematic message is constructed.

In conclusion, the discussion of the content of children's stories leads to the identification of narrative types, which are conceptually structured according to the nature and classification of their themes. The categorization of these narrative forms is based on the content they convey, resulting in four primary types : folk stories, religious stories, moral stories, and symbolic stories. Each of these categories occupies a distinct role in shaping a child's social personality, endowing it with specific religious, ethical, and cultural attributes that distinguish it from others. Consequently, these narrative forms play a pivotal role in

establishing the child's sense of belonging to their own community, reinforcing its unique values and identity.

## 2- The Educational Significance of Children's Stories

A story is defined as a form of literary production directed at children in their early developmental stages. It is designed to address the child's diverse needs, interests, and inclinations, which must be nurtured and satisfied. Children's literature, in general, serves as "a primary window through which children explore life in its various dimensions. Alongside its ability to provide imagination and enjoyment, it delivers scientific knowledge across multiple subjects, enriches their linguistic repertoire, and fulfills a range of psychological, intellectual, and social needs, such as the need to belong first to the family, then the city, the nation, and eventually the world at large. It also addresses the need for social acceptance, relief from daily routine, the pursuit of knowledge, curiosity, appreciation of beauty, and a sense of order. Considering the significance of children's literature in both moral and " educational upbringing, it is essential to highlight the role of stories as a key literary form within this domain. Stories play a pivotal role in achieving numerous educational objectives, particularly in early childhood education. Through their ideas, character conflicts, complex plots, portrayal of human or other beings' emotions, temporal and spatial settings, language, and varied narrative techniques, "stories evoke strong emotional responses in readers, capture their attention, and engage them in following the fates of their protagonists<sup>7</sup>".

A closer examination of the story's role in providing readers with information about both real and imaginary events, along with its distinctive features and qualities that stimulate engagement and interaction, underscores its value in educational and pedagogical contexts. Since the teacher's role involves developing children's cognitive skills such as perception, attention, memory, reasoning, intelligence, creativity, and other competencies, while also fostering their cognitive growth and expanding their cultural horizons through listening and attentive engagement with relevant narratives<sup>8</sup>, it becomes imperative to employ educational tools that effectively support these objectives; Accordingly, stories have been recognized as a key educational resource aimed at equipping learners with a variety of pedagogical and developmental principles. The educational significance of stories can be summarized as follows<sup>9</sup>:

- They provide children with enjoyment and entertainment through tracking interpersonal relationships and engaging with the narrative.
- They enhance children's linguistic wealth, enriching their vocabulary with new words, expressions, and structures that build on prior linguistic experiences.
- They connect children with the traditions, customs, and values of their own society while introducing them to those of other nations, allowing them to adopt positive aspects and avoid negative ones.
- They foster imagination, enabling children to visualize events and scenarios in ways that align with their cognitive developmental stages.
- They encourage expressive interactions among peers in both school and social contexts.

- They provide an outlet for repressed emotions and feelings experienced by some children due to familial, educational, or societal pressures.

Considering these educational and pedagogical dimensions, it is evident that children's stories occupy a distinctive place within the educational framework, contributing to the development of a well-rounded learner. Such learners acquire a set of cognitive, social, cultural, and linguistic competencies that enable them to integrate harmoniously into their communities while understanding the diverse characteristics of their society.

### **3- Criteria for Selecting Educational Stories for Children**

After stories have assumed a significant place in the child's school life, due to their recognized role in achieving various educational and pedagogical objectives, it becomes essential to emphasize the criteria for selecting appropriate narratives. The stories presented to learners, particularly those in early educational stages, must align with a set of conditions necessary for texts designed for children at a specific developmental level. Their selection is closely linked to the extent to which they fulfill the educational and pedagogical goals of that stage; The criteria for selecting educational stories for children can be summarized as follows:<sup>10</sup>

- The narrative style should be simple, clear, and easily understandable by students without undue difficulty.
- Stories should provide students with new knowledge and experiences.
- They should contain elements of excitement and engagement, such as novelty, humor, action, and imaginative content.
- The content must be appropriate to the students' level in terms of style, subject matter, and vocabulary.
- Stories should carry an ethical or didactic message, such as promoting fundamental human values or socially acceptable customs.
- The length of the story should correspond to the time allocated for its study and discussion.

Based on these considerations, it can be concluded that teaching stories at various educational stages relies heavily on the presence of these diverse components. A story intended for children in a school setting must encompass these qualities, as the overarching goal of story-based instruction is to equip learners with a breadth of information and knowledge that enhances their cognitive and linguistic development, while simultaneously shaping their emerging personalities. Ultimately, this process contributes to nurturing well-rounded individuals whose development aligns with the cultural and social characteristics of the community in which they live.

### **4- Steps for Teaching Stories to Children**

Teaching stories to children differs from instructing other literary text types, as this literary form possesses unique characteristics that distinguish it from other texts. The effective presentation of a story requires the teacher to undertake several preparatory actions, which can be summarized as follows<sup>11</sup>:

- Selecting a story appropriate in terms of content and language, matched to the learner's cognitive level.
- Preparing the necessary educational tools and resources, such as pictures, sound effects, and audio recordings containing relevant sounds that enhance the story's presentation, as well as other materials that help reinforce its impact on learners.
- Designing questions and activities that enable students to understand the story's content fully.

These steps pertain to the teacher's preparation for teaching the story; When addressing the actual procedural steps of delivering the chosen story, it can be stated that the story's success in fulfilling its educational and pedagogical objectives depends on the teacher's adherence to established instructional practices, which include the following<sup>12</sup>:

- Introduction and mental preparation of students : The teacher prepares students for the story by creating a receptive and attentive mindset. This may involve posing questions that activate prior knowledge and direct their attention toward the story's theme.
- Story narration : The story is presented naturally and fluently, reflecting its meaning and capturing students' interest. The teacher's voice should be clear, calm, and expressive, modulated as appropriate to the situation.
- Student reading and dramatization: Some students may be asked to read the story aloud, following the teacher's model. In certain instances, the teacher may assign a larger number of students to enact the story in front of their peers, encouraging oral expression, promoting engagement, and breaking away from traditional passive learning methods.
- Post-story discussion and comprehension checks: After the narration, the teacher poses questions to assess students' understanding and comprehension of the story's content, followed by guiding them to extract its overarching moral or lesson.

These procedural steps for teaching stories across different educational stages represent a crucial strategy for achieving numerous intended educational and pedagogical objectives. Teaching stories to children has received considerable attention from educational linguists, emphasizing that adherence to selection criteria and structured teaching steps is essential. Such adherence ensures effective implementation by teachers and educational practitioners, ultimately maximizing the story's pedagogical potential and supporting the holistic development of the learner.

## **5- Educational Applications of Stories within the Classroom Context**

The Arabic language textbook for the second stage of primary education serves as a practical and pedagogical tool, designed to achieve comprehensive competencies based on the terminal objectives of the curriculum. It incorporates all necessary resources, systematically organized in a gradual and integrative manner that aligns with the methodological and pedagogical choices of the new curricula, adhering to two fundamental principles: the competency-based approach inspired by social constructivism and the systemic approach<sup>13</sup>.

To foster the targeted competencies and resources, concepts are presented within a coherent framework, dividing the material into eight interconnected educational segments. These segments are drawn from accessible and engaging Algerian texts, rooted in the learner's environment, aiming to develop intellectual and behavioral capacities while reinforcing spiritual, ethical, and national values, as well as cultivating artistic taste and broadening cognitive horizons. These segments enable learners to construct knowledge in meaningful, interactive situations and offer opportunities for active contribution alongside peers. The project-based pedagogy proposes integrative activities and projects across all segments, focusing on linguistic, phonetic, morphological, syntactic, semantic, and stylistic levels<sup>14</sup>.

In this context, we will examine the first segment of the textbook under study as a model for analysis, addressing its key stages of comprehension, analysis, and in-depth engagement. This includes attention to syntactic structures, morphological forms, orthographic phenomena, and vocabulary enrichment. Children engage with the linguistic material through stages of reception, understanding, and applied utilization across various outputs, whether oral or written.

The foundation of this process is comprehension, considered the key to mastering all educational content. The teaching of Arabic is therefore structured around four domains: oral comprehension, oral expression, written comprehension, and written expression. In this framework, the teacher plays a central role in guiding classroom activities, nurturing literary appreciation, and fostering a love for reading, thereby enriching the learner's linguistic repertoire. In this study, emphasis will be placed on the first segment, which centers on human values and the theme of brotherhood, with detailed analysis as follows<sup>15</sup>.

### **5-1 Stages of Lesson Implementation**

Unit Title: The Two Brothers

Learning Sequence: Human Values

Domain : Reading Comprehension and Written Expression

Activity: Reading (Performance, Comprehension, Enrichment) and Handwriting

Competency Components : The learner demonstrates the ability to comprehend written texts and reconstruct the information they contain. They are also able to use textual information effectively, apply appropriate reading strategies, and critically evaluate the content of written discourse. In addition, the learner becomes familiar with the various forms of Arabic letters and the orthographic conventions governing correct writing.

Performance Indicators: The learner adheres to the rules of silent reading, respects the requirements of oral reading, including proper intonation and observance of punctuation marks, and expresses comprehension of narrative texts as distinct from other text types. The learner also observes the conventions of structured presentation.

Values and Cross-Curricular Competencies: The learner develops moral, religious, and civic values derived from the components of national identity, while also practicing different modes of reading.

**Learning Objective:** The learner comprehends written texts and employs linguistic and extralinguistic cues to infer the meanings of new vocabulary, thereby enriching their lexical and cognitive repertoire with unit-related terms. Furthermore, the learner produces written letters accurately in terms of form and proportion.

Through the teaching guide of the first instructional sequence, we will outline the stages of lesson implementation, along with the presentation of the accompanying story supported by an illustrative image reflecting its content for learners. Through the presentation of the text, the learner focuses attentively on all its sentences, interacting with the oral discourse while analyzing the features of the communicative situation. This process enables them to retain and invest newly acquired vocabulary, reusing and appropriately deploying it in relevant contexts.

- **Initial Phase (Warm-up) :** The teacher begins the lesson centered on the story under study with an engaging introduction designed to stimulate learners' interest. This is achieved by posing a set of thought-provoking questions inspired by the child's socio-environmental context, serving as a gateway to the topic at hand. Learners respond spontaneously, drawing on their prior knowledge and individual background experiences. It is evident that the objective of this preparatory phase is to arouse learners' curiosity about the story and foster their motivation to read it with interest and enthusiasm. This, in turn, requires the integration of multiple skills, including attentive listening, sustained concentration, and the activation of speaking abilities to express emerging thoughts verbally. Consequently, learners' responses emerge through various expressive linguistic forms. Such an approach contributes significantly to the development of oral expression skills, relying on previously acquired lexical resources. Indeed, "oral expression represents the ultimate outcome of language teaching and its various arts, including reading, writing, and listening; This can be <sup>16</sup>" illustrated through questions such as :

- Your father bought you a toy and another for your younger brother, but your brother prefers your toy and insists on taking it. What would you do ?

- If you give it up and agree to exchange your toy, how would you describe this behavior?

- **Learning Construction Phase :** Following the introductory phase, the learning construction phase begins, during which learners are introduced to the target text. The teacher invites learners to observe the visual support accompanying the story, then asks questions about its content, such as :

- What do you see in the picture?

- Where is the family gathered?

- What has happened?

It is noteworthy that the image accompanying the story corresponds closely and faithfully to its content. As such, it constitutes an effective pedagogical tool that contributes to achieving the intended competencies. It provides initial cues and hypotheses that support prediction of the story's content. In this context, visual discourse assumes the role of linguistic discourse, as the semiotics and expressiveness of colors substitute for the rhetoric of language<sup>17</sup>; At this stage, the teacher acts as an observer, capturing learners' responses and

interactions, recording their predictions until the story is read and understood. The primary aim here is to identify learners' prior knowledge. Subsequently, learners are asked to engage in silent reading individually to explore the story<sup>18</sup>, followed by comprehension questions such as :

- Who is the character mentioned in the story?
- Where did the grandfather visit his grandchildren?
- When did this take place?
- **Guided Reading Phase** : This phase involves the teacher's actual reading of the text, which should be exemplary, expressive, and vividly reflective of the story's meaning. The teacher pays particular attention to accurate pronunciation, respecting proper articulation points, since "the letter is not an end in itself ; rather, it is part of a word, the word part of speech, and the smallest meaningful unit of speech is the sentence, while a set of sentences forms a coherent text on a unified topic This phase ; <sup>19</sup>" proceeds as follows :
  - A model reading by the teacher, using expressive cues to convey meaning. Speech here is understood as a performative process involving gestures, facial expressions, and movements that help convey and deepen meanings, ideas, and emotions<sup>20</sup>.
  - Learners take turns reading paragraph by paragraph, beginning with more proficient readers to avoid discouraging less advanced ones.
  - Difficulties encountered during reading are addressed, and new vocabulary is explained and contextualized in sentences produced by learners themselves, drawing on their prior knowledge. The teacher plays a positive role by using reinforcement techniques to stimulate learners' linguistic production, such as :

Word	Meaning	Use in a Sentence
Save (to)	To accumulate and keep money for future need	My father saved a sum of money to spend the summer vacation at the seaside.

Such activities, among others, contribute to making the story an effective pedagogical tool that fulfills its intended objectives. They foster a rich imagination, refine learners' verbal expression, broaden their horizons, enrich their language, and cultivate their aesthetic sensibility particularly when the story is accompanied by engaging images and vivid colors. In this context, the teacher stimulates learners and encourages them to produce sentences based on familiar and meaningful topics, enabling them to mobilize their lexical repertoire to convey ideas in well-structured utterances. At this stage, learners are trained to present their ideas using diverse linguistic forms while incorporating target vocabulary intended for retention. This approach helps consolidate and stabilize knowledge in the learner's mind<sup>21</sup>.

A successful teacher explains difficult words, observes the extent of learners' engagement with the story, and strives to bridge the gap between the reader and the text by clarifying ambiguous words, symbols, and meanings that may otherwise create a barrier or sense of detachment<sup>22</sup>. Examples include terms such as : **to rush, to select, selfishness, grandchild, and to unite, among others** ;It is also important to highlight the positive role of reinforcement, which is a key responsibility of an effective teacher. Reinforcement enhances

learners' motivation and encourages them to produce rich ideas and eloquent, expressive language, whether orally or in writing. Indeed, "language is a behavior acquired through imitation and reinforcement: the child learns language by imitating the sounds heard in their environment beginning with parents, then the family circle, and subsequently the teacher and broader society. When correct attempts and responses are reinforced, language becomes stronger and more firmly established<sup>23</sup>".

In addition to the aforementioned aspects, one of the primary objectives of children's stories is to address the spiritual and psychological dimensions of the learner. Purposeful storytelling plays a crucial role in moral development and self-refinement, as it conveys valuable lessons and meaningful messages. It also serves as an effective medium for offering guidance or transmitting specific information to the intended audience<sup>24</sup>; Furthermore, some scholars emphasize that a child's oral expression ability consists of three main components:

- **Lexical repertoire:** the words acquired from the surrounding environment.
- **Knowledge of linguistic structure:** including the organization of words and sentences.
- **Psychological development:** the ability to use language appropriately in social contexts.

When these elements are integrated, they collectively form the learner's oral expressive competence<sup>25</sup>. Consequently, human values are nurtured and deeply rooted within the learner. This is reflected in classroom practices, such as asking questions about the positive values conveyed in the text, identifying the most admired character, or selecting an appropriate title for the text. Such questions enhance comprehension, deepen knowledge, and promote moral reflection.

From a behaviorist perspective, the teacher uses storytelling as a means to develop and modify learners' behavior. It can be observed that when learners speak, they tend to strive for more refined linguistic expressions that resonate with the listener. This continuous effort to improve their level stems from the ongoing refinement of both their educational and linguistic behaviors, aligning with the concept of learning as a process of behavioral modification<sup>26</sup>. When a story is effectively presented, it engages both emotions and senses, stirring the learner's inner world and contributing to the acquisition of virtuous qualities while discouraging negative traits.

In conclusion, and following this concise analysis, it appears appropriate to highlight the decisive relationship between cognitive input, the process of text production, and the mobilization of the lexical repertoire acquired through storytelling activities. Learning, indeed, engages the individual in their entirety. When cognitive processes are evaluated solely from an instrumental perspective<sup>27</sup>, the success or failure of pupils, students, and even adults in learning is often equally dependent on affective, emotional, and cognitive mechanisms.

Incorporating children's literature within academic curricula contributes to the development of aesthetic and artistic sensibilities, elevating expressive styles to more sophisticated and creative levels. Addressing such themes across different educational stages also enriches learners' linguistic repertoire, enabling them to express themselves in accurate

and eloquent language. Gradually, this fosters the growth of creative writing and authorship among children, allowing them to contribute meaningfully to the field of narrative creativity. Expression, through which emotions are conveyed and inner feelings articulated, enables individuals to translate their sensations into carefully selected language that captures the recipient's attention and invites emotional engagement with the speaker or writer.

Nicholas Tucker has emphasized that literature functions as a balancing force in a child's life. Given the child's natural inclination toward playfulness, curiosity, and exploration of the unfamiliar, stories and narratives serve when effectively crafted as a lasting source of intellectual and emotional nourishment. "The young reader thus carries within themselves, throughout life, enduring impressions whether in the form of vivid images or evocative music Ensuring the durability of such influence through the artistic value embedded across .<sup>28</sup>" successive stages of human development constitutes a powerful factor in preparing the child for the future, particularly in navigating situations and adapting to challenges. In light of this significant role of storytelling, some classical scholars have aptly remarked that narratives are among the forces through which hearts are strengthened, affirming their profound impact on human development.

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