

Integrating Literature through Stories and Fairy Tales in Fourth Year Primary Education Textbook

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Abstract

This research seeks to highlight the importance of integrating literary texts in the textbook of primary school education. After the publication of My book of English for fourth year primary school education, its content has been open to a myriad of visions and revisions. This study aims to analyze fourth year textbook in primary school education from a literary perspective. It attempts to show how to implement various literary texts relevant to children's age, level and area of interest through the use of textbook adaptation strategies.

The analysis unravels that literary texts are not used in the textbook, and this research suggests different literary texts in terms of stories and fairy tales to be implemented in primary school education in order to enhance pupils' language proficiency.

Keywords: *fourth year textbook; literature; textbook adaptation strategies; syllabus.*

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INTRODUCTION

Implementing English in the Algerian primary school has drawn the attention of many people, researchers and policy makers throughout the recent decades¹. The Ministry of Education integrated English in primary school in 2022-2023. In this regard, teaching English to primary school pupils was a significant step to make important changes in the Algerian educational system. Yet, its integration has elicited a myriad of challenges and perspectives because of the rivalry between the use of English and French in the Algerian educational system.² In 2023-2024, English was implemented for fourth year primary school children through the publication of the textbook *My Book of English*. Accordingly, this research seeks to shed light on analyzing the textbook from the standpoint of literature in order to unravel the importance of integrating literature through the use of textbook adaptation strategies in the textbook of fourth year primary school education. In this regard, this article scrutinizes this understudied area of research of analyzing this textbook to highlight the importance of integrating literature in *My Book of English*.

1. The Importance of Literature

Many students have misconceptions about literature as unnecessary and difficult subject based on rote memorization and difficult concepts which are not relevant to their practical life as future teachers. However, in reality, literature is a rich subject that requires higher order of thinking in terms of analysis, evaluation and creation³. Yet, teaching literary texts in primary school is regarded as paradoxical and contradictory. In other words, literature is a difficult subject that requires high and abstract thinking while children's abstract thinking is low, and they prefer concrete matters. Hence, this research attempts to show that integrating literary texts is possible through textbook adaptation strategies to be implemented in revised or future textbooks, and literature is an essential source to teach children

authentic materials relevant to native speakers in the target language.

Albeit literature is regarded as a distant subject from teaching in primary school, it is highly important. It provides a source of authentic materials relevant to real life and foreign language. Furthermore, it is a good tool to use the target language in its context to ensure a good teaching and learning process because a language cannot be taught out of its context. In this case, since it is related to real life, it helps learners to develop their language use and usage. In other words, it boosts learners' communicative and linguistic competences. From literature, learners can learn new information, vocabulary and syntax. It is a tool to develop the four language skills in terms of listening, speaking, reading and writing. According to Brian Parkinson and Reid Thomas, there are various advantages for teaching literature. It enriches learners' cultural and linguistic capacities and competences. It also develops their mental and critical thinking since it is open to different explanations. In this case, it triggers learners' motivation. In addition, for some literary genres, like poems and songs, they can be easily memorized⁴

Using literature inside the classroom widens learners' scope of knowledge, and their cultural competences since learning a language that is different from their native language and culture helps them to appreciate other different cultures and ideas. Thus, literature provides an essential source to familiarize learners with foreign cultures and contexts. They learn to accept and respect cultural differences. According to Asuncion Barreras Gomez, "Literature...allows pupils to understand...cultures and ideologies different from their own. Consequently, children learn to respect other cultures and to be involved in them"⁵. Most importantly, teaching cultural differences through literature can help learners to avoid cultural shocks, especially for young learners.

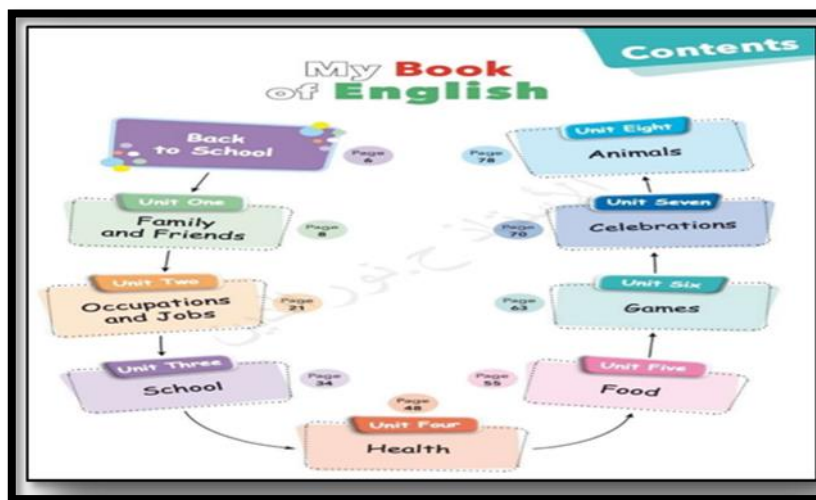
In the past, literature was not given too much importance in teaching English. However, in recent years, many researchers highlight the importance of implementing literature in classrooms in general. Tseng⁶ and Wasti⁷ viewed that there has been new concerns

and ideas to use literature in teaching English inside the classroom inasmuch as it is a rich source to develop learners' language proficiency. For Taharuddin, literature is the most suitable tool to teach English to enhance learners' language use and usage inside and outside the classroom⁸. Yet, albeit its great importance in recent syllabi and programs, is literature included in recent textbooks in Algerian primary education?

2. The Analysis of *My Book of English* for Fourth Year Primary School Education

The textbook for fourth year primary school education was published in 2023. It is entitled *My Book of English*. The head of the project is Samira Charit, a Middle School inspector who co-authored the book with another Middle School teacher named Mohamed Zitouni. The textbook contains 96 pages⁹. It includes the following sequences as it is demonstrated in the following figure:

Fig.1. Fourth Year Textbook Sequences



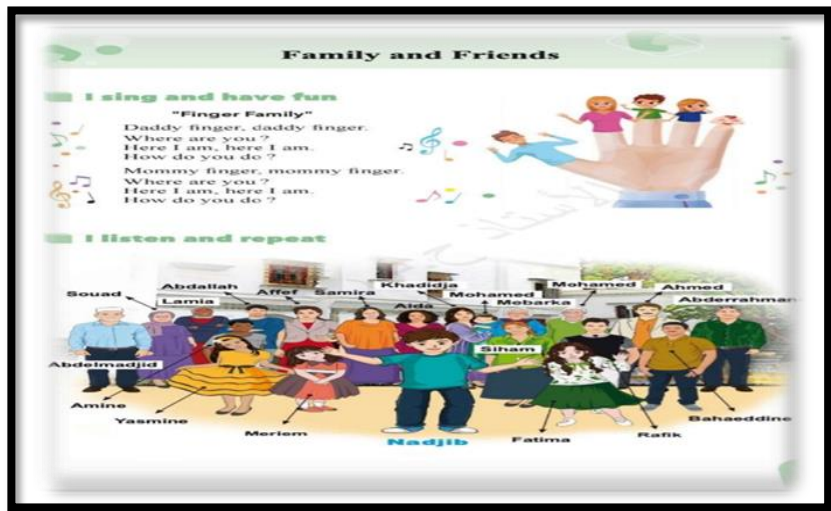
Source: Charit, S, 2023, p. 5

This textbook contains eight valuable units relevant to children's needs and ages. Yet, the analysis unravels the absence of communicative and linguistic objectives of the textbook. They are not mentioned in the same way that is used in other textbooks in Middle

and Secondary school education.

From the standpoint of literature, the analysis of the textbook shows that there is no single story relevant to the target or native culture. The only form of literature that is used in the textbook is related to songs and poems. In fact, a very interesting way to motivate learners is to start each lesson by a song as it is demonstrated in the following example:

Fig. 2. A Song in Unit One



Source: Charit, S, 2023, p. 9

Unit one begins with a song about “Finger Family” to introduce pupils to the different members of the family. Actually, this is a very motivating way to encourage learners, especially children to learn effectively. Other songs also include “What is Your Job?” and “I Love My School”. However, other genres of literary texts, like stories, fairy tales, plays are not integrated in the syllabus.

The analysis of fourth year textbook in primary school education reveals the lack of using literary texts albeit literature is given more importance in recent teaching curricula to ameliorate the teaching and learning process. Thus, as a solution, both novice and experienced teachers can use textbook adaptation strategies.

3. Textbook Adaptation Strategies

Textbook adaptation strategies are changes that can be used by an experienced and novice teacher to ameliorate the content of any textbook in order to achieve the required objectives of the lesson¹⁰. This is not to diminish the importance of any textbook because textbook designers strive to provide the necessary materials for learners and teachers. However, any textbook is open to evaluation, criticism and new updates in relation to recent studies in the field of education to enhance the teaching and learning process.

In fact, there are many reasons that can push teachers to make some modifications to any textbook. Kathleen Graves stated that:

Teachers' beliefs, the implications they draw out of their experiences, and their educational background are among the reasons that lead teachers to adapt course materials. In addition, students' needs, and interests are also determining factors which affect teachers' adaptive decisions¹¹.

In this regard, the reasons of adapting a textbook are relevant to both teachers and learners. For Graves, teachers' ideas, educational levels and their experiences in teaching can be adequate reasons to make some adaptations to the textbook. Most importantly, learners' needs and their motivation are an essential requirement for modifying the textbook. Furthermore, for Jack Richards, the teacher needs to "deconstruct and reconstruct" the materials and "tailor them" according to learners' "needs and teachers' teaching style" to be a creative teacher¹². In this regard, the teacher is the master of the materials of the textbook because, in some cases, the content of the textbook is not congruent with the needs of learners. David R.A. Litz claimed that:

The textbook restricts and controls language learning and teaching procedures, processes, methodologies, strategies and approaches. Thus it should not be regarded as the primary instructional material since language learning is a complex process that needs materials that go with the needs of the learners¹³.

Hence, the teacher selects the textbook materials according to his/her vision as well as learners' needs and capacities.

The textbook adaptation can be performed in relation to three levels. The first level is in relation to the syllabus through adding new elements of the lesson and different sequences. This can be applied by highly experienced teachers. The second level is related to the level of unit, where the teacher can use additional activities and exercises relevant to the objective to motivate learners. The last level is in relation to activity. The teacher, especially a novice teacher, can use activities and examples relevant to the various parts of the lesson in terms of warming up, content of the lesson, activities and consolidation at the end of the lesson¹⁴. Hence, many levels can be applied in relation to teacher's experience.

There are various textbook adaptation strategies. According to McDonough et al¹⁵, and McGrath¹⁶, textbook adaptation strategies can be classified into mainly six elements. The first one is related to the process of addition. The latter can be achieved either through expanding the material of the textbook through adding to the quality of the lesson in order to develop its content or it can be accomplished through extending the lesson by using additional examples relevant to the target or native culture to enlarge the quality of the lesson. The second adaptation strategy is related to deletion. The teacher can reduce the quantity of the activities of the lesson through subtracting the length of the material or s/he can adapt the quality of the material by abridging the content to satisfy learners' needs and interests.

The third adaptation strategy is named simplifying. This can be applied through making the textbook content easy and simple according to learners' level. The simplification can be also related to the instructions of the activities of the textbook to help learners grasp the information¹⁷. Moreover, the fourth adaptation strategy is reordering the materials and activities according to teachers' visions and learners' needs to enhance the teaching and learning process.

The fifth adaptation strategy is modifying. The teacher can rewrite or reconstruct the content of the material as s/he can change

the structure of the material through the strategy of restructuring. Then, the last strategy is replacing materials. The teacher can change the material from one situation to another to enhance teaching and learning process and to achieve effective results inside and outside the classroom¹⁸.

On the light of the aforementioned information in relation to the lack of using literary texts in fourth primary education textbook and the great importance of implementing literature in recent textbooks along with using textbook adaptation strategies, the following element of this research shows how to integrate various literary texts in primary education textbooks. Albeit teaching children literature in primary school seems to be inapplicable due to the gap between the level of children who are beginners in learning a language and literature that requires a higher order of thinking and analyzing a sophisticated language, this study endeavors to provide suggestions and practical solutions to implement literary texts in the textbook in primary school education to raise children's motivation and interest.

4. Teaching Literary Texts for Children

Before engaging in using textbook adaptation strategies in relation to implementing literary texts, a teacher needs to know how to select an appropriate text since not any text can be taught to children. Simon Bibby identified five criteria in selecting literary texts. The first criterion is relevant to lexis by selecting texts that include simple words. In addition, the selected texts should include simple syntax by using simple sentence structure and avoiding complex sentences. The third criterion is in relation to the length of the text. It should be short because children easily get distracted and cannot maintain their focus for a long time. Moreover, the last two criteria are related to selecting interesting topics that are congruent with children's needs and interests and familiar texts and topics that have common understandings across cultures¹⁹. In this regard, many literary genres can be implemented in the textbook in primary school education. They can be relevant to stories, fairy tales, songs and poems.

Storytelling, as a significant aspect of literature, is an essential source to develop children's listening, speaking, reading and writing²⁰. Unlike adults, children have special ways of learning. They like listening to stories in their mother tongue or other languages. For Piaget, the third stage in children's theory of cognitive development is called the concrete operational stage. It is between seven and eleven years and, in this stage, children develop concrete logical thinking. They can understand concrete rather than abstract ideas. Hence, the teacher can use storytelling to put the language in a concrete context rather than teaching new vocabulary in abstract ways. Gomez, Asuncion Barreras Gomez stated that: "storytelling and tales can help the teacher contextualize vocabulary and make it easier to understand and learn"²¹. Thus, this facilitates the learning of new vocabulary for children. Children learn better a foreign language when it is contextualized and there is a focus on the meaning rather than the language *per se*²². In this regard, children learn through concrete notions.

5. Implementing Stories and Fairy Tales in Fourth Year Textbook

Stories are highly important for learners, especially children. They increase children's motivation and imagination inasmuch as stories are based on fiction²³. They can also increase children's thinking abilities to relate the different parts of the story. Most importantly, stories improve children's language proficiency by learning new vocabularies and how to apply grammatical rules in concrete contexts. In addition, since children like listening, stories can help them to develop their listening and speaking that are the first skills to be developed in learning a foreign language.

Any teacher needs to be careful in selecting stories for children. They should be authentic and relevant to the target language. Moreover, stories should be abridged through simplifying the language to be relevant to children's level, age and interest. In addition, selecting stories, like fairy tales that are already known to pupils in their mother tongue or second language, is really helpful to

develop their comprehension and acquisition of English. In this regard, pupils are going to focus on knowing the words in English in familiar stories. Thus, they can learn English in a motivating and easy way.

It is suggested that a teacher can use children stories in general relevant to children's interest and age or s/he can use international famous fairy tales by the Brothers Grimm. For instance, this story about "The Ugly Duckling" can be effective in many levels.

Fig.3. The Story of "The Ugly Duckling"



Source: Google Image, 2024

In the website of the British Council Learn English Kids²⁴, many stories along with their activities are suggested for children. For instance, for this story, the language is simplified for children including simplification of lexis and syntax as stated earlier by Simon Bibby. The story is also short and relevant to their interest and they can be familiar with the story in their mother tongue. The following figure shows the simplification of the story:

Fig.4. The Story of “The Ugly Duckling”

The ugly duckling

Mummy Duck lived on a farm. In her nest, she had five little eggs and one big egg. One day, the five little eggs started to crack. Tap, tap, tap! Five pretty, yellow baby ducklings came out.

Then the big egg started to crack. Bang, bang, bang! One big, ugly duckling came out. 'That's strange,' thought Mummy Duck.

Nobody wanted to play with him. 'Go away,' said his brothers and sisters. 'You're ugly!'

The ugly duckling was sad. So he went to find some new friends.

'Go away!' said the pig.
'Go away!' said the sheep.
'Go away!' said the cow.
'Go away!' said the horse.

No one wanted to be his friend. It started to get cold. It started to snow! The ugly duckling found an empty barn and lived there. He was cold, sad and alone.

Then spring came. The ugly duckling left the barn and went back to the pond. He was very thirsty and put his beak into the water. He saw a beautiful, white bird! 'Wow!' he said. 'Who's that?'

'It's you,' said another beautiful, white bird.

'Me? But I'm an ugly duckling.'

'Not any more. You're a beautiful swan, like me. Do you want to be my friend?'

'Yes,' he smiled.

All the other animals watched as the two swans flew away, friends forever.

Listen to this story <https://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/short-stories/the-ugly-duckling>

Story Time






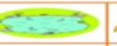
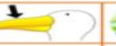






Source: British Council, 2023

Then, the following activities, related to the story can be used to teach pupils many aspects of the language, like new vocabulary and develop their thinking and listening strategies.

Fig.5. Activities of “The Ugly Duckling Story”

The ugly duckling

1. What's the word?
Write the word under the pictures.

duck	farm	nest	eggs	duckling	ugly
sad	friends	pond	beak	beautiful	swan
					
	duck				

2. What's the order?
Watch the story and put the sentences in order.

<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<p>He met another swan and they became friends forever.</p> <p>In her nest, she had five little eggs and one big egg.</p> <p>Mummy Duck lived on a farm.</p> <p>He saw a beautiful white bird in the water.</p> <p>It started to snow, but then spring came.</p> <p>Then one big, ugly duckling came out the big egg.</p> <p>Five pretty, yellow baby ducklings came out the little eggs.</p> <p>No one wanted to be his friend.</p> <p style="font-size: x-small;">www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglishkids</p>
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Source: British Council, 2023

Moreover, the story can be used to teach moral lessons, as respecting others and their differences in terms of physical appearances and other differences as well. Actually, there are various children stories to be adapted to the textbook of fourth year grade, as the story of “The Lion and the Mouse” in order to teach children language and at the same time the moral lesson of helping each other.

Apart from stories, teachers can use international authentic fairy tales for pupils who are already familiar with these stories in their mother tongue. Accordingly, this can be highly motivating for pupils and effective at the same time to enhance their language proficiency in the target language. Yet, the fairy tales should be abridged and simplified to be grasped by pupils. As examples, Jo Bertrand in the British Council suggested many fairy tales to be used for children inside the classroom. For instance, the fairy tale of Cinderella can be adapted to teach vocabulary relevant to adjectives, like beautiful, ugly, good and evil. It can be also used to teach family members as it can be used to teach time in a concrete context of the story²⁵. Moreover, the following figure illustrates how to use the tale to teach time:

Fig.6. Teaching Time through “Cinderella”




Source: Google Image, 2024

In this case, the teacher can use the fairy tale to create a clock to help pupils know the time through a familiar story. This can be highly motivating for pupils, especially for girls. For boys, the teacher can change Cinderella with the Prince to cope with children's gender and interest. Thus, the teacher can use this fairy tale to achieve many objectives in order to develop pupils' language use and usage.

The fairy tale of "Snow White" can be also used to teach adjectives, as mean, timid, pretty and teach furniture, like kitchen and bed in a story context to be easily understood as suggested by Jo Bertrand in the British Council. In addition, if the teachers want to teach pupils animals and landscapes, they can use the fairy tale of "Little Red Riding Hood". It can be simplified as it is shown in the following figure:

Fig. 7. Abridged "Little Red Riding Hood"

Little Red Riding Hood	Short story
<p>Little Red Riding Hood lived in a wood with her mother. One day Little Red Riding Hood went to visit her granny. She had a nice cake in her basket.</p>	
<p>On her way Little Red Riding Hood met a wolf. 'Hello!' said the wolf. 'Where are you going?' 'I'm going to see my grandmother. She lives in a house behind those trees.'</p>	
<p>The wolf ran to Granny's house and ate Granny up. He got into Granny's bed. A little later, Little Red Riding Hood reached the house. She looked at the wolf.</p>	
<p>'Granny, what big eyes you have!' 'All the better to see you with!' said the wolf.</p>	
<p>'Granny, what big ears you have!' 'All the better to hear you with!' said the wolf.</p>	
<p>'Granny, what a big nose you have!' 'All the better to smell you with!' said the wolf.</p>	
<p>'Granny, what big teeth you have!' 'All the better to eat you with!' shouted the wolf.</p>	
<p>A woodcutter was in the wood. He heard a loud scream and ran to the house.</p>	
<p>The woodcutter hit the wolf over the head. The wolf opened his mouth wide and shouted and Granny jumped out.</p>	
<p>The wolf ran away and Little Red Riding Hood never saw the wolf again.</p>	
<p>Listen to this story https://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/short-stories/little-red-riding-hood</p>	

Source: British Council, 2023

In this fairy tale, the sentences are short and simple and the diction is relevant to children's level. In addition, the story can be used to teach the five senses, like seeing, hearing and touching and their correspondent body organs, as eyes, ears, and hands in relation to the





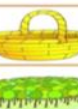





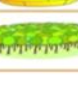

animal wolf that most of the children are familiar with in their mother tongue.

Many activities can be designed from the tale of “Little Red Riding Hood”. As it is suggested by the British Council for Kids, the story can be used to teach vocabulary and sequencing the events of the story to develop pupils’ listening and thinking abilities.

Fig. 8. : Activities of “Little Red Riding Hood”

Little Red Riding Hood

1. Match them up!
Draw a line to match the picture and the word.

2. What's the order?
Watch the story and put the sentences in order.

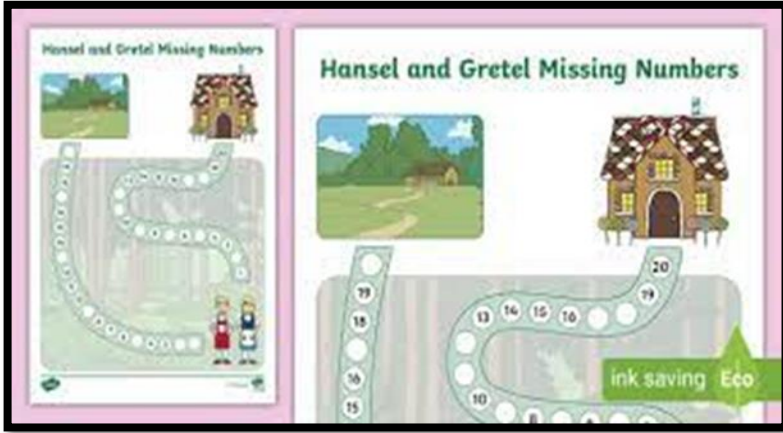
	On her way she met a wolf.
	Little Red Riding Hood looked at the wolf's eyes, ears, nose and teeth.
1	One day Little Red Riding Hood went to visit her granny.
	Little Red Riding Hood never saw the wolf again.
	The wolf opened his mouth wide and Granny jumped out.
	The wolf ran to Granny's house and ate Granny up.
	A woodcutter heard a loud scream and ran to the house.

www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglishkids

Source: British Council, 2023

One of the most important topics that children should learn is numbers. They can be taught in a very motivating way for children through the fairy tale of “Hensel and Gretel”. They put pieces of bread to remember the way to their home. Hence, this can be used to teach pupils numbers as it is shown in the following figure:

Fig.9. Teaching Numbers through “Hensel and Gretel”



Source: Google Image, 2024

Other activities can be designed in relation to the tale to teach vocabulary and enhance pupils’ listening and thinking abilities, like the following figure:


Fig.10. Activities of “Hansel and Gretel”

EXERCISE

There are five characters in the story of Hansel and Gretel. Write their names in each description box below. The first box has been done for you.

Father	Stepmother	Hansel	Gretel	The Witch
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• smart• brave <p><u>Hansel</u></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• scary• cunning <p>_____</p>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• hardworking• kind <p>_____</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• mean• selfish <p>_____</p>
				<ul style="list-style-type: none">• diligent• smart <p>_____</p>

ADJECTIVES



Source: Google Image, 2024

Thus, these are only a few examples how to implement stories in primary school syllabus to raise pupils’ motivation and develop their language proficiency.

6. Recommendations

The analysis of the textbook of fourth year primary school reveals that there are very few literary texts integrated in the book. In this regard, textbook designers should give more importance to literature in the textbook through implementing authentic simplified literary texts in the form of stories and fairy tales relevant to children's age, level and area of interest. They should design activities that represent an appropriate cultural context of the foreign language. They should use names, places and pictures that refer to the real context of the foreign language. Literary texts as stories and fairy tales should be integrated in the syllabus of primary education to promote effective teaching and learning process. In addition, teachers should be creative in using the activities of the textbook through using textbook adaptation strategies.

CONCLUSION

The research casts light on analyzing the textbook of fourth year primary school. It shows the importance of implementing literature through stories and fairy tales to young children. It reveals the importance of introducing authentic simplified stories and fairy tales to develop pupils' language use and usage, communicative capacities and their cultural awareness about the target foreign language. Teaching literary texts in primary school through appropriate materials can highly boost children's language proficiency. Through the use of textbook adaptation strategies, teachers can implement various literary texts as stories and fairy tales to motivate young learners. However, teachers should take into consideration children's age, level and area of interest to create a successful and effective teaching and learning process. Yet, this is one possible suggestion to enrich the content of the textbook which is open to future suggestions and modifications.

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