



**University  
of Victoria**

Graduate Studies

Notice of the Final Oral Examination  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

of

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**“The Role of Storytelling in the Development of Pronunciation of  
Brazilian Learners of English as a Foreign Language”**

Department of Linguistics

Monday, January 15, 2018

10:00 A.M.

University Centre Building

Room A207a

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Hossein Nassaji, Department of Linguistics, University of Victoria (Supervisor)

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## **Abstract**

A number of studies in the literature claim that storytelling is a powerful tool in the development of receptive (i.e. Reading and Listening) and productive (i.e. Speaking and Writing) language skills, including pronunciation (e.g. Atta-Alla, 2011; Mottalabi & Pourgharib, 2013; Zare-Behatash & Saed, 2016). Furthermore, there are studies that suggest that storytelling is even more effective than traditional teaching methods (e.g. Hsu, 2010; Li & Seehouse, 2010; Zare-Behatash & Saed, 2016). The problem, however, is that those studies generally lack specific information about how storytelling improves pronunciation and what aspects are enhanced, for instance.

This study aims to fill such a gap in the literature by investigating the effect(s) of storytelling on the development of the pronunciation of Brazilian elementary learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) who are 15 years of age and older, through a focus on specific segmental (i.e. /l/; /i/ and /ð/; /θ/) and suprasegmental (i.e. word stress) features that are considered difficult for Brazilian learners of English to pronounce intelligibly (i.e. Baptista, 2001; Cruz, 2003; Reis, 2006). Additionally, it aims to investigate how storytelling activities compare in effectiveness to textbook activities in the development of pronunciation, since textbook activities are widely used pedagogical tools in English classes in Brazil and generally considered to be effective in the development of language skills (e.g. Consolo, 1990; Xavier & Urió, 2006). Last, the study examines Brazilian learners' perceptions about the usefulness and relevance of the storytelling/textbook activities they were exposed to in improving their pronunciation.

Data were collected at a private school in Brazil three times a week, in 12, 25-minute sessions. A total of 86 learners participated in the study and were randomly divided into three different groups (i.e. experimental,  $n=28$ ; comparison,  $n=29$ ; and control,  $n=29$ ). The experimental group performed storytelling activities, and the comparison group performed textbook activities. The control group received no treatment. Quantitative and qualitative analyses were conducted to examine the data gathered from pre-tests, post-tests, classroom activities, and questionnaires.

The findings of the statistical analyses of the participants' performance in the perception and production pretests/post-tests indicated that storytelling and textbook activities similarly had similarly a small effect on the pronunciation improvement of the participants. Overall, the findings of the quantitative and qualitative questionnaires showed that, in general, participants in the experimental (i.e. storytelling) and comparison (i.e. textbook) groups were unsure about the usefulness and relevance of storytelling and textbook activities for the improvement of their English pronunciation.

This study offers various contributions in the investigation of the effect of storytelling on pronunciation improvement. In addition to addressing the lack of specific information in previous studies on the relationship between storytelling and pronunciation development, the lack of effects of storytelling activities on pronunciation improvement indicated in this study also contributes to the field by showing teachers that the implicit approach examined in the study did not seem to play an effective role in the development of learners' pronunciation. Instead, an inductive approach that involves exposing learners to target sounds through the use of enhanced input, for instance, could potentially increase the effectiveness of pronunciation improvement through storytelling.