



## TELL ME A STORY: ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF STORIFICATION IN THE GHANAIAN CLASSROOM

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### **Abstract:**

Following insights from the impact of technology on education and the implementation of innovative strategies in the classroom, there has been a recent growing interest in exploring storied pedagogy in the classroom. The present study contributes to this growing body of studies by assessing the utilization of personal narratives or stories in ongoing lessons. This study seeks to achieve two main objectives. All fourteen lecturers at the Department of English Education, University of Education, Winneba and twenty randomly selected students were included in the study. In all, a total of nine non-relational and four relational instances were recorded and analyzed. The relational digressional instances facilitated understanding on the part of students since the stories made lessons relatively easy to understand. The non-relational digression instances also played a significant role in enhancing teaching and learning. These instances highlighted the affective and didactic dimensions of classroom teaching and learning. All the non-relational digression instances allowed students and the lecturer to engage in issues unrelated to the lecture. These occasions encouraged students to put off their affective filters to relax and be mentally ready when the lecture resumed. The study confirms established studies that storied pedagogy or the inclusion of personal narratives in ongoing lessons effectively enhances teaching and learning. It also has implications for further research in storied pedagogy, teacher's digressional instances in the classroom and how digressions can be utilized to ease learners' anxiety in the classroom.

**Keywords:** storification; digression; pedagogy; affective filter

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## 1. Introduction

There is an urgent call for educators to devise innovative pedagogical practices that are both engaging and effective. This demand is necessary because of the advent of technology and digitalization. Another factor that justifies this call is the composition of student groups, which are becoming increasingly heterogeneous (in relation to race, gender and beliefs). Teachers are avidly competing with social media for the attention of students. Rymes (2012) estimates that readily available videos on YouTube and the rapid spread of online games have negatively affected the number of hours students spend with their books. This has made the need for teachers to be abreast with the ever-changing times more stringent. Teachers also have to exploit some of the evolving technologies and engagement practices to create a stimulating erudition environment for students. Quite recently, there has been a rise in the utilization of various online educational games. Storification (Akkerman, Admiraal, & Huizenga, 2009), role-play Heyward (2010), Van Der Meijden, & Denessen, 2011), Connolly, Boyle, MacArthur, Hainey, & Boyle, 2012; Vos, gamification (Majuri, Koivisto, & Hamari, 2018). All these and other engagement approaches and technologies are now popularly utilized in education.

This research investigates the utilization of teachers' personal experiences as a pedagogical tool to enhance teaching and learning in the language classroom. The researchers are interested in assessing the diverse impact teachers' personal narratives have on ongoing lessons in the classroom. Since teachers usually veer into stories during the course of their teaching, this article focuses on how such 'digressional instances' contribute to teaching and learning. This study then contributes to the ongoing debate on storification as a pedagogical strategy. Deterding (2016) opines that Storification refers to the weaving of a personal narrative or an activity into either a fictional or nonfictional narrative so that the activity becomes more engaging. Both Connelly & Clandinin (1990) and Sadik (2008) are of the view that storification is not new in pedagogy as it has been in existence for a long period of time. Armstrong & Landers (2017) researched on the potential benefits of Storification and concluded that it greatly aids understanding since pupils can often easily relate to the lesson. In recent times, there have been unprecedented levels of research on the use of storification as a pedagogical tool. The fact has been proven over and over again that when teachers paint vivid pictures with words or intersperse their lessons with personal stories, pupils' interest and engagement with the lesson peaks. According to Piipponen & Karlsson (2019), stories and storytelling serve the unique purpose of attaching new levels of meanings by making lessons much more understandable, applicable and pertinent. This serves the unique purpose of boosting the retention levels of students (Parker & Lepper, 1992; Stewart, 2012).

Many educators have coined different terminologies in an attempt to describe this practice of introducing life narratives into an ongoing lesson. This phenomenon is referred to in certain circles as story-based learning, where a narrative-centered learning environment is consciously stimulated (Mott, & Lester, 2011). This particular research prefers 'storification' because the term comprises not only storytelling strategies in education but also the incorporation of wider approaches of engagement teachers adopt

in the classroom. Storification indicates a much more holistic utilization of stories in a way that generates and transfers a narrative to its audience in a more enthralling and persistent way (Akkerman et al., 2009). Bernstein again explains that storification activities in education are often encoded and woven within a story in an easily understandable way (Bernstein, 1971, 2003). This serves the purpose of building relationships between an ongoing lesson and an instance in real life. It again engages the interest of learners outside the immediate learning environment since they are positioned in a place where teaching is contextualized and made much more germane (Deterding, 2016).

Tanggaard (2014) again estimates that the inclusion of life narratives in lessons can stimulate creativity and generate a general feeling of relatability and a heightened perceptive and sentimental abilities, which induce in individuals an appreciable level of absorption. This is important as it makes lessons much more appealing and operative (Deterding, 2016). The inclusion of personal narratives in lessons also intensifies the engagement levels of students (Prestopnik & Tang, 2015). Above all, it also leads to an increase in student's learning, high retention levels and personal learning drive and a source of enjoyment (Akkerman, Admiraal, & Huizenga, 2009; Dickey, 2011). In addition to Storification, there are other ways of ensuring students' interest in lessons. Heyward, 2010 and Cakici & Bayir, 2012 are of the view that gamification is one of such pedagogical strategies. There are a lot of pedagogical strategies that can be adopted in the classroom to enhance effective teaching and learning. A recurrent and important feature of these strategies happens to be their wide-ranging engagement of narratives and stories (Ke, 2016). Most of these strategies can be categorized under the parasol of Storification practices. Storification as a pedagogical concept concentrates on the motivational application of stories, which often cuts across contexts. The inclusion of personal narratives or storification is gradually becoming an increasing trend in educational settings. It is often adopted as a sole teaching approach, or it is combined with other approaches. There seems to be a dearth of research on the actual benefits of storification in pedagogy. In light of this, this current study investigates the effects of the inclusion of personal experiences and narratives (storification) on students' understanding of specific topics taught in the classroom and how it goes to enhance learning and teaching. While earlier studies have explored the impact of Storification in teaching, (Prins, Avraamidou, & Goedhart, 2017; Aura, 2024), they have not explicitly addressed the concept of personal narratives as digressional or non-digressional instances. Thus, this study investigates the impact of narratives as either adding to ongoing lessons or distracting from them.

## **2. Storification as a Pedagogical Concept**

The concept of storification within the pedagogical context calls for the consideration of other prevalent pedagogical methods. The unique role of storification in enhancing teaching and learning demands the need to align it with other Constructivist Learning Approaches. Piaget (1977) avows that most constructivist strategies achieve the purpose of making teaching and learning much more interactive and effective. Again, Hassad

(2011) is of the view that in traditional classrooms, most activities can often be characterized by behaviorist factors leading to activities that are teacher-centered. This is because they often highlight rewards in relation to stimuli. Storification, on the other hand, concentrates on the efforts of the teacher to ensure the inclusion of child-centered learning. This is where the teacher allows individual students to have more responsibility for their own learning (e.g., Brouwer, Jansen, Severiens, & Meeuwisse, 2019). Conceptually, then, Storification can serve as an effective teaching strategy that can be both socially constructivist and interactive. This will serve the purpose of ensuring that teaching and learning environments eventually become conducive learning environments. Storification, then, will give teachers much more room to make their lessons more relatable, as students can easily draw inferences for themselves. It is possible to situate Storification and storified pedagogy within the larger pedagogical framework of either constructivism or behaviorism.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

This study adopts a number of mutually agreeable theories. Bernstein (1971)'s Code Theory and Quintilian Theory of Digression. Bernstein's Theory stipulates that language and contexts of pedagogical communication influence learning and school cultures in such a way that students are able to shape their values and practical views of the world. Bernstein goes on to explain that when teachers succeed in delivering their lessons through stories or bring their personal narratives into their lessons, students easily identify with the lesson. This implies that if lessons are delivered through stories that are relevant to the lesson, in a language that resonates with that of the vocabulary of students, learning becomes more attainable for students (Bernstein, 2003). Perhaps, this explains why educators often utilize the art of weaving into their lessons, their own personal narratives. This strategy then becomes a vital tool in the pedagogical tool kit of teachers that is often employed to ensure that lessons are much more interesting and engaging for students (Bernstein, 1990).

Quintilian's Theory of Digression, on the other hand, is derived from his *Institutio Oratoria* which appeared in the first century of the Common Era. It appeared in some of the earliest theories of the novel. It is grounded on the narrative functionality of the structuralists whose theoretical models can be traced to narratology. The structuralist-narratological notion of narrative gave birth to the centrality and linearity of a story, its progression and most importantly, the purpose that phenomena serve (Teleology) in the story. This model views Digression as an interruption, suspension or aberration that actually impedes the purposeful direction of a narrative as a whole. Thus, Digression is an anti-narrative device and as such it can be disruptive and destructive of narrative. It is a fact that too much digression can threaten the unity of the plot and weaken both the coherence of the story and the essential narrative structure of the larger text of which it is part. It is in this way that Digression is caught in the trap of being a supplementary material. It can be a subtle negation of the plot structure or neutralise itself as a digressive force. As narrative is treated with plot, Digression can disrupt the structure of a plot that

is intended by the writer. As Chatman (1978) indicates, “*a narrative without a plot is a logical impossibility*” (p. 47). However, Brook's (1984) model seems to grant Digression this space. For Brooks, Digression describes what is fundamental to how stories are told in such a way that digressions become an indispensable part of the narrative as it delays its inevitable progression towards the end. With the Brooks model, Digression is not supplemental, and it is actually the indispensable part of a narrative from the beginning to the end.

In shifting the focus from textual digression in relation to a plot, one can view it not simply as a disruptive (potentially destructive) measure to a narrative or its teleological perspective but rather how Digression can offer an alternative to the plot. Thus, it can help generate narrativity in contrast to Brook's conception of it as supplementary to plot progression. In Samuel Frederick's (2011) “Re-reading Digression: Towards a theory of plotless narrativity”, he posits that some radical forms of digression can resist the plot's teleological imperative and its demand for unity and how they produce a different mode of storytelling altogether. He emphasises that plot and narrative need not coincide as a narrative can be freed from the structures of the plot of a story. According to Brooks, all narratives lead to their inevitable termination, and this means that it is both the end that directs the course of the plot for it to come to a final rest. However, the plot is only possible because this end is deferred such that there is space between the initial arousal of desire and its consummation. Despite its appearance as a detour or divergence of squiggle towards the end in the real sense, Brook's theory of plot is not, in reality, a model of Digression. It rather hinges on the governing notion of progression that is based on tensions and suspense resisted by Digression. The text's meanings are then developed in what Brooks (1984) refers to as a “*suspense of final predication*” (p.7); the kind of suspense that encourages the plot progression toward final predication. For Brooks, narrative progression is always a kind of narrative deviation.

According to Frederick (2011), digression functions in such a way that is directly opposed to Brooks's theoretical ideas on plot and its attendant progressive unfolding as a detour. Frederick claims that Robert Walser prevents the digressive manoeuvres, which cause the kind of narrative tension that Brooks talks about in his model of digression. With Walser, digression becomes an alternative mode of narrative movement and is not based on the intentional succession of events. Walser believes that digression is free to carve out its own narrative space. In this way, digression pre-empts the plot from assuming control, from subordinating the multiplicitous parts of the narrative to its demand for a purposeful totality. In such a model, digression is positively valued: its plot-destructiveness, most importantly, does not negatively impact the narrativity of the overall narrative it appears to be interrupting. This reversal of anti-narrative effectiveness results in part from a critical shift brought about by the dynamics of this particular mode of digression, a shift in the locus of narrativity away from the plot.

The above theoretical ideas can easily be associated with pedagogy. In the learning and teaching situation, teachers often employ instances of digression that can be related to the subject being discussed in class or unrelated to the topic being treated in class. Just as scholars argue on the role of digression in a narrative as a supplementary tool to

pedagogy or as a distractive/destructive tool to the learning and teaching situation, the teacher's personal experience in the classroom is a kind of narrative. This is often punctuated with relational and non-relational ideas about the topic under discussion. A combination of theoretical ideas drawn from Quintilian, Peter Brooks and Samuel Frederick serves as the appropriate basis for this study. This caters for the pedagogical significance and implications of both relational and unrelated digressions captured in this study. Therefore, the researchers of this paper did not adopt an overarching theory of Digression, as four theories were given an eclectic representation in order to underscore the core values of the study.

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

This study examines the place and role of storification as a pedagogical strategy in the teaching and learning process. The focus is on how the inclusion of personal narratives impacts teaching and learning in the classroom. The relevance of this pedagogical implication can be clearly understood through various scenarios exemplified in this paper.

##### **4.1 Research Objectives**

This research is intended to:

- 1) Identify and examine the purpose of adopting storified pedagogy in the teaching and learning process
- 2) Illustrate the relevance of Storification as a pedagogical tool to enhance various teaching and learning situations
- 3) Evaluate the pedagogical implications of adopting Storification as an effective pedagogical tool

##### **4.2 Statement of the Problem**

In the course of teaching, teachers normally treat personal stories as marginal to the topic, and as such, they are not always given much-needed attention. Available pedagogical researches, however, attest to the fact that storified pedagogy is an effective way of making lessons both lively and engaging. This study investigates how teachers use life experiences/stories (storification) as teaching strategies in the classroom. This study seeks to validate the assertion that the inclusion of personal narratives in lessons could be categorized under 'relational' or 'non-relational' instances of digression. Thus, this study examines the effects digressional instances have on the teaching and learning situations in the classroom.

#### **5. Methodology Adopted**

Traditionally, the narrative has been associated with literary studies. However, it is now an integral part of qualitative social science research. Nowadays, qualitative researchers regard written and oral stories, anecdotes and life histories as useful data in their

research. These stories are constructions created through interpersonal, sociocultural and historical processes (Padgett, 2004). Recent scholarship on education and narrative focuses on developing narrative approaches to classroom learning and understanding educational experiences. It also examines the experiences of teachers, their professional biographies and institutional lives. This is done in three main ways. First, through the application of theories of psychological, linguistic, social, and cultural practices of learning through storytelling and using didactic narrative in classrooms. Secondly, theoretical and applied research will be conducted to examine the social construction of learning and teaching experiences. Finally, through educational development, I am committed to raising awareness of the achievement of professionals.

Storytelling in the classroom, as an established tradition, has been used for language development and moral education. This approach has become dominated by written narrative, but it has been complemented by teachers' performance practices as a way of encouraging learners. In retelling their own personal experiences, teachers tend to influence and encourage their students to improve their learning and see them as role models. Egan (1989) advocates the development of the imagination and the learning of knowledge in school through stories. Classroom narrative mediates the acquisition of knowledge in any curriculum subject, and narrative activities socialize children into imaginative worlds.

Productive research looking at teachers' work through an examination of their narratives about classroom experience is a worthy academic venture. The methodology in this research shows that teachers' stories recur in classroom activities, and this can unravel pedagogic dilemmas, which are a feature of teachers' professional culture. In analyzing teachers' narratives, there is a profound sense of professional identity in the context of institutional change. Teachers' personal narrative accounts will help them to teach and then reflect critically on their meanings and contexts in teacher development. Through narrative inquiry, novices reflect on and evaluate their own or others' teaching practices and beliefs. Narrative reflection can be extended to include an extra dimension. Through the recalling and reconstructing of narrative events, learning itself is reconstructed and reflexively evaluated. Narratives, therefore, not only reflect past learning events, but narrating them is itself continued learning.

Studies of teachers' life stories, career biographies, and longer-term professional development have emphasized agency, power, and change, the sources of professional knowledge in social and historical contexts. Many of the current developments in narrative and education have an underlying theme of restoring or developing the personal, humane, and poetic dimensions of learning and teaching. This is sometimes in opposition to technocratic approaches to the curriculum. Teachers' stories often reveal the mystery and magic of learning and their sense of vocation. Learner-centred educational narratives by teachers are essential in revealing more of the human dimension of education.

### **5.1 Study Design**

The current study analyses data using the Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA). In all the numerous definitions of QCA, a cohesive view of text and their definite background that permits researchers to comprehend social realities in a personal but scientific manner is advanced. Patton (2002) defines QCA as *“any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings”*. Schreier (2012) estimates that qualitative content analysis is mainly used in the analysis and interpretation of data. Content analysis represents a methodical and unbiased channel for describing and quantifying an occurrence or a situation (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992; Schreier, 2012). Again, content analysis is a research tool used to determine the presence of certain words, themes, or concepts within some given qualitative data (e.g. the inclusion of personal narratives as instructional material). Using content analysis, researchers can quantify and analyze the presence, meanings, and relationships of such certain words, narratives, themes, or concepts. This kind of analysis reduces data to viable concepts that actually describe the phenomenon under study (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

The researchers adopted QCA for the current study because the objective of the study, among other things, sought to examine the pedagogical implications of personal narratives in the teaching and learning of literature and language. Since personal narratives could be rendered as ‘text,’ it becomes possible to explore its pedagogical benefits to students. Again, due to the fact that this research used both a questionnaire and observation to gather data, it can be observed that the ‘extracted narratives’ can be adequately analyzed through QCA.

### **5.2 Study Population and Area**

This study's area is the Department of English Education, University of Education, Winneba. The department is dedicated to training and equipping teachers in the best pedagogical practices that are most suitable for senior high school language and literature classrooms. The study population is all the lecturers in the Department of English Education, University of Education, Winneba. There are fourteen in all: seven language and seven literature-in-English teachers.

### **5.3 Sampling Techniques Adopted**

The study adopts the purposive sampling method. Purposive sampling, also known as judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling, is a form of non-probability sampling in which researchers rely on their own judgment when choosing members of the population to participate in their study. Purposive sampling is widely used in qualitative research to gather rich information regarding a particular phenomenon of interest but can also be used in mixed researches (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan & Hoagwood, 2013).

According to Odoh (2015), purposive sampling is a nonprobability sampling technique whereby the respondents or participants are chosen based on prior judgment about their relevance in the study. This was adopted for the current study because the respondents (both lecturers and teachers) served as vital sources of data.

#### **5.4 Sample Size**

All fourteen literature and language teachers in the Department of English Education were included in the study. Since the researchers themselves are lecturers in the English department, access to the English and literature lectures was relatively easier to handle. All the language and literature lecturers were observed to evaluate how personal narratives were woven into their lessons. Twenty students out of a total of fifty answered the administered questionnaires. The data from the selected respondents (students) can be generalized since all the students are taught by the same lecturers.

#### **5.5 Data Collection Procedure**

In collecting data for the study, researchers employed a variety of ways, but part of a method is often determined by the context of the research topic. Questionnaires, interviews, observation, participant observation, diaries, public reports, and documentary evidence are the most often utilized data-gathering methods. Primary data sources are best obtained from personal observation and experience. The researchers first observed the lectures of the respondents and then recorded them. The recorded lectures were then transcribed, codified and analyzed. Students were also engaged in a discussion after the lectures to ascertain their views on the concept of understudy.

#### **5.6 Analytical Procedure**

After the recorded data was transcribed and codified, instances where lecturers 'digressed' into personal narratives were extracted and labelled. These digressional instances were categorized under relational (implying that the story was related to the lesson) and non-relational (the story was not really related to the lesson). Digressions that were related to the ongoing lesson were thematized and analyzed, whilst the non-relational instances were not thematized but analyzed, and their impact was assessed. In all, fourteen 'digressional instances' were recorded and assessed to know their impact on students' understanding of the ongoing lesson. The impact of the narratives was then analyzed through the theoretical frameworks for the study. The researchers had three major concerns: the extent to which the findings of the study corroborate existing literature, to interrogate Bernstein's (1971) Code Theory and the other three theories on Digression in the light of the research findings and finally, to answer the research objectives satisfactorily.

### **6. Data Analysis and Interpretation**

#### **6.1 Understanding Different Learning Abilities Among Learners**

In this first recorded lecture, students' attention was drawn to the differences in height, complexion and even temperament among learners. He went ahead and asserted that learners come to the classroom with different learning abilities. Therefore, in the classroom, some of them are gifted and talented, whilst others are creative Learners. It is, therefore, important for the teacher to factor these differences into his lesson. The lecturer went ahead and narrated how school life had been for him throughout his years in the

teachers' training college. He told the story of how some of his mates were well-catered for and did not lack anything. They came to school with lots of food and drinks. All of them envied such lucky students as they always appeared happy and contented. Then there were the others, including himself, who had to struggle for virtually everything. Their studies were affected because they had to care for themselves and other family relatives while in school. Thus, their teachers used to talk down on them because they were not performing as well enough, unlike their 'favored' friends.

It is clear that this digression is related to the topic under study. Its impact is therefore measured in the efficacy. It made the learners aware that there are differences in the learning abilities of students. This calls for the teacher to apply different pedagogical strategies so that the specific learning needs of learners are addressed. This digression heightens the student-teacher's level of consciousness to a place where he comes to acknowledge that if he does not deal with students' peculiarities, which can either impede or promote effective learning, he will not attain the desired outcome. As the student-teacher plans his lesson around the 'entering behaviour' (different attitudes, backgrounds, opinions, perspectives of students, etc.) and composition (learning abilities, pace, preferences, etc.) of learners, there is the strongest possibility that he will achieve his desired outcome. In effect, then, it is this awareness that eventually influences pedagogy. Perhaps the strongest point of this digression is the fact that it makes the student-teacher aware of the need to engage in what is termed improvisation. This is where the teacher revises and adapts his lesson based on existing conditions in the classroom. The impact of this digression validates Bernstein's (2003) assertion that if teachers succeed in delivering their lessons through stories or bring their personal narratives into their lessons, students easily identify with the lesson.

There was also another instance of relational digression in Lecture 1. This time, the teacher narrated how his two-year-old boy nearly blocked his phone the other day. He said he was amazed that as young as he was, operating a complex phone was not much of a huddle for him. His voice was filled with wonder at the fact that whenever he left the phone somewhere in the house, the boy picked it up and began to install and play games with it. The lecturer ended his narration on the note by saying that these are some of the signs student-teachers should look out for to determine whether one is gifted or talented, especially at a tender age. This relational digression can be regarded as one of the reinforcements of the earlier one when he was expatiating on different learning abilities of students. The lecturer cautioned against underestimating any student, especially in this technological age. Since technology greatly enhances effective learning, learners who have mastered its use are better placed to make use of it to advance their learning. The pedagogical implication of technological advancement is that the teacher should strive to master technology in such a way that he can successfully integrate it into his lesson.

When the lecturer digressed the third time in Lecture 1, it was a non-relational one. During the course of the lesson, the lecturer digressed to talk about his days at the University. He said he and his colleagues were not first-class students. Their teachers were always insulting and degrading them. Fortunately for them, they are all currently

teaching at the university today and doing quite well in their chosen field of endeavor. He went on to explain that one of his friends graduated with a third class in his undergraduate program, yet he rose to obtain a Doctorate. He ended his narration by making the students aware that life has not been a competition since time and chance have influenced all men in diverse ways. This particular digression is captured under non-relational because it is not directly related to the lesson. It is, however, important as it emphasizes the dangers of underrating the potential of students as well as their learning abilities. The narration drives home the message that no learner should be underrated in any learning situation. A certificate or degree is not an end in itself, as it should be used circumspectively to help one to progress from one stage to another.

In the fourth non-relational digression, the lecturer stressed that students should seize the opportunity while on campus to learn other skills that will enhance and support their livelihood and not depend on core-related academic disciplines only. He admonished the students to learn sign language and computer-related skills. He ended by encouraging students to support their younger siblings and other relatives to also achieve success in their endeavours. Though this digression is not related to the topic under study, it is helpful since it encourages students to be versatile. The acquisition of other pedagogical skills outside one's domain of learning is a venture that would eventually benefit the students, especially in this era of changeability.

The fourth and last time the lecturer digressed during his lesson happened to be a non-relational one. He shared a story about a certain man who was seated with his wife in a restaurant. The man's wife wanted to know if the man had seen the beautiful lady who had just entered the restaurant. The wife was convinced that her husband had seen the lady since all the men had settled their gazes on her as soon as she entered. The man was in a dilemma since he was aware that if he answered yes or no, it would lead to a misunderstanding since his wife knew he had seen the said lady. In a brief moment of inspiration, the man asked his wife which of the ladies she was referring to "which of the ladies" to avoid further interrogation because saying 'yes' could mean. In contrast, she (wife) was seated with him, he was still noticing other ladies and 'no' could mean he was clearly lying. When the lecturer ended his story, all the students burst out laughing.

The non-relational digression instances in teaching and learning situations add or promote the affective dimensions (didactic or moralistic, as the case may be) of teaching and learning. It allows the lecturer to impart practical and moral lessons to students. Such instances are also significant because they function as a moment of respite or interlude where the space is created for humour, which positively affects the affective filter in the classroom. If a lesson is characterized by fear, restlessness, anxiety and panic, it means that students' affective filters are on. This implies that learners are not comfortable with the teacher and what he is teaching. In such a tense and anxious classroom, effective teaching and learning are greatly impeded. If learners' affective filter is off, it implies they are comfortable with the lesson and the teacher. One of the ways teachers can regulate the affective filter in the classroom is to digress into narratives which are not really related to the ongoing lesson. During such moments, students have the opportunity to free themselves from any form of intimidation related to a particular lesson. This adds to the

dynamic and complex perspective of teaching and learning in the classroom. When the teacher finally comes back to the day's lesson, students are inundated with refreshing lines of thought as the teacher has created an avenue for students to reflect on possible areas of difficulty. If this opportunity is utilized properly, it becomes easy for students to link ideas even as the lesson becomes cohesive. Hence, contrary to popular beliefs, non-relational digressional instances in the classroom are neither disruptive nor distracting.

## **6.2 The Link Between Emotion and Behaviour**

After treating the topic for a while, he digressed into matters of jerseys and football. He told the students that he forgot to wear his jersey the previous week because it had not occurred to him that week was wear-your-jersey week. The class suddenly broke into a series of discussions on soccer-related issues. For the next five minutes or so, there were heated discussions on soccer as students discussed who their favorite football players were. The lecturer's digression, in this instance, is a clear case of non-relational digression. The content was not related to the subject under study. It could, however, be deduced that this non-relational digression was not disruptive since students had the opportunity to make inputs and engage in an activity that clearly arrested their interest. This created a warm and friendly atmosphere in the lecture hall. The digression also created the opportunity for football enthusiasts to express their feelings about the thrilling game of football and skillful players. A warm bond of friendship was created among students. It opened an avenue for the assessment and evaluation of players' individual skills. Such discussions are often characterized by arguments and betting, which is characteristic of modern-day football.

This digression serves as an interlude where students and lecturers can 'break off' from the regular routine of lectures. As the discussions cool off and students return to the day's business, they are refreshed and more than ready for learning. This welcome break, where students break off and then come back to resume discussions, offers a unique opportunity for students to view an ongoing lesson from a different perspective. They become much more relaxed and confident than when the lesson began. This emphasizes the dynamic nature of classrooms as a place for exchanging academic information and a space where friendships are forged for life. It appears that the more relaxed students are, the more likely it is for them to put their affective filter off. The affective filter refers to students' receptive levels, which are based on how comfortable they are with the classroom and the teacher. If the affective filters are turned off, students are much more comfortable, and if turned on, they are anxious and panicky. Non-relational digressions which veer into subjects of interest can be helpful in ongoing lessons since they psychologically prepare the students for the lesson at hand. It must, however, be emphasized that the importance of this non-relational digression is implicit in nature since it was inferred from the renewed energies of the students when they finally came back to the lesson.

The second instance of non-relational digression happened when the lecturer digressed to talk about the need for obedience and truthfulness. While still discussing the link between emotion and behaviour, he asked students whether anyone had watched a

movie titled 'Away Bus.' When students responded negatively, he went ahead and explained that there was this character in the movie who was constantly warning his daughter not to go out, but she would not listen. So, in an attempt to prevent the daughter, the mother fell and was severely hurt. The daughter did not intend to hurt the mother. He concluded by saying that the daughter's behaviour mirrored that of the students since most of them are bent on doing what pleases them. Thus, if students are not careful about their actions, they could cause permanent irredeemable damages.

It is possible to conclude that this digression is not related to the lecture since it veered off to talk about issues not related to the ongoing lesson. However, it can be deduced that there is a kind of relationship with the lesson underway because the behaviour of the mother and the reaction of the daughter are diametrically opposed. The teacher created the platform for students to assess behaviour and its probable outcomes. Since the lecture was centered on the link between emotion and behaviour, it is apt that the lecturer emphasizes the repercussions of undesirable behaviour. This proves the assertion that non-digressional instances in ongoing lectures go a long way to strengthen the didactic dimension of classroom interactions.

The third digressional instance happened when the lecturer narrated the importance of building a strong network of friends. He admonished students to intentionally network with others within and outside their circles who are influential. He explained how some of his friends have been of immense help to him, especially in times when he needed them the most. He ended by stating that in this day and age, where it is possible to store the contact details of people who are far away, students have themselves to blame if they do not nurture friendships that are beneficial. Though this digression is not related to the lecture, except to hint at the possibility of having stable emotions and emotional well-being when surrounded by friends, it clearly emphasized the need to have people one might fall on during hard times. The utilization of technology has also gone a long way in facilitating discourse. Students can piggyback on technological affordances to bond with people who are not within easy reach. This non-relational digressional instance again emphasized the affective dimension of teaching and learning. Students not only acquire academic knowledge during a period of instruction but are also armed with valuable lessons that would serve them well in life.

There were also relational digressions in this very lesson. In the course of the lecture, the lecturer divagates to narrate a story about the experiences of his friends with regard to Ponzi Schemes. He told the students how his friends invested in various Ponzi schemes against his advice. Though they continually insisted that he join them to invest, he declined. One of his friends even bought a brand-new car from the gains he made. In just a matter of weeks, they all lost their investments. He was the one who had to console them since they were so devastated. He added that his wife had advised several of his friends against the idea of investing in the scheme, but he refused. It was when the company collapsed that this said friend remembered what his brother had told him when he was getting married. According to the lecturer, his friend's brother had counselled that if one wanted to live long, then there is the need to listen to one's wife. The lecturer's illustration of the Ponzi scheme is related to the ongoing lesson because it teaches

something about emotion and behaviour in certain human-related operations/activities. The friend who bought the car was certainly overjoyed with his success, and that served as a source of motivation for others who also anticipated similar success. However, the unfortunate loss reported in this scenario serves as a clear situation of disappointment in the collapse of the scheme, resulting in the loss of investment. This foregrounds the need for students to be emotionally strong in moments of persuasion. Brouwer, Jansen, Severiens, & Meeuwisse (2019) highlight the importance of storification in lesson delivery. According to them, storification is important because this is where the teacher allows individual students to be more responsible for their own learning. As students draw inferences from the teacher's story, the concepts of the lesson become much more real to them. This greatly facilitates understanding since it can easily relate to the lesson.

The third lecture on communication disorders is interesting on many levels. After the lecturer explained the concept of communication disorders in detail, he digressed to talk about a funeral he attended recently. He then begins to question why Ghanaians believe that there is someone responsible for the death of anyone who dies. Thus, it is virtually impossible for anyone to die a natural death in Ghana. This is a digression which is not directly related to the ongoing lesson. However, it has enormous implications for the topic under study. Funerals can be theorized as communicative because it is an occasion for discourse. As mourners engage in rumours or conjectures about the cause of death, they are engaging in a kind of communication which borders on speculations. Mourners also attribute the cause of death to spiritual forces or entities like witches and sorceresses. These are all forms of latent but potent forms of communication. Though this appears to be a clear case of non-relational digression, it is possible to deduce or infer a form of communication that could be termed 'funeral discourse.' The impact of this non-relational digression can be measured in terms of scope. The lecturer pointed out possible communicative contexts to students by digressing into discussions around death and funerals. This digression also allows students to build their cognitive skills as funerals create the avenue for expressing people's beliefs and philosophies. Since people's belief systems are captured in their language, the funeral occasion allows people to express these values and traditions. Funeral discourse is also grounds for conceptualising death as transitional or ephemeral. Thus, the lecturer has achieved the profile dimension of using knowledge.

In this non-relational digressional instance, the teacher observes that in Winneba, people advertise all kinds of drugs. Some of them sell particular drugs which, according to them, can cure many ailments, but none has been able to come up with one that makes people intelligent. It was clear from the lecturer's tone that he did not believe in the medicine's potency. The traders are involved in what can be termed 'commercial communication'. The traders are involved in the advertisement language as they are bent on selling their wares. This also qualifies as a form of communication, though the digression appears unrelated to the current lesson.

The lecturer's next digressional instance was related to the lesson since it emphasized pronunciation difficulties among certain tribes in Ghana. He told the students a story about how some of his friends struggled with certain consonant and

vowel sounds. The whole class burst into laughter as they pointed out some of their friends who had similar problems. As they laughed and teased each other, the teacher capitalized on the moment to drive home his message that due to L1 interferences, there is a tendency for people to mispronounce certain words. He cautioned the students against needless hecklings since it is no fault of theirs. This underscores the importance of stories in the classroom. This confirmed Piipponen and Karlsson's (2019) study that stories and storytelling in the classroom serve the unique purpose of attaching new levels of meanings by making lessons much more understandable, applicable and pertinent. This made the lesson practical as students could easily relate to the realities described by the lecturer. The impact of this digressional instance is evidenced by the fact that it placed students in a place where they appreciated pronunciation challenges among ethnic groups. This knowledge is important because it will influence student's instructional strategies in their own classrooms.

The last time the lecturer digressed was when he talked about the importance of temperance. Though it was not related to the lecture, it again emphasized the importance of the affective dimension of teaching. The lecturer narrated a story which happened to him about four years ago when he was preparing for his wedding. He told the students that on his way from Accra to the wedding in his wife's hometown, he was angered by a *Trotro* (commercial bus service in Ghana) driver who was bent on provoking him. This resulted in an open fight with a lot of onlookers trying to separate them. He concluded by saying that he felt so ashamed of himself after the incident. This affected his mood on the most important day of his life. That was why he resolved that he would never allow emotions ever to override his sense of reasoning.

The final lecture analyzed in this essay centered on the qualities of a good teacher. After the general introduction, the teacher digressed to talk about the need for students to tour the world when they go on vacations. He went on to explain that students from UEW and many from most Ghanaian Universities do not travel for a holiday. He adds that students stay within their comfort zones instead of travelling to learn from other places. This is why, most times, Africans do not contribute productively to the global world but are rather noted for poverty, starvation, crime and the like. The lecturer utilized this opportunity to advise the student on the importance of exploring the world. As students travel to new places and meet new people, their horizons are broadened, and they are positioned to access different perspectives. If students refuse or cannot travel, their contribution to knowledge is limited. This non-relational digression is important because it can be inferred from this scenario that students are being motivated to demonstrate their commitment and initiative. Making personal decisions to better oneself is a quality of a good leader, as it enables one to explore new ideas and techniques that people employ to improve their lives globally. Again, this digression emphasizes the significance of leisure as an interlude in our busy world. Travelling offers people the opportunity to explore new ideas, places and techniques. This enhances their quality of life. One vital aspect of this digression is that it accentuates the significance of leisure as an interlude in our busy world. Taking time away from busy schedules enhances the quality of life and refreshes and rejuvenates the mind so that it becomes more pliable and

receptive to new ideas. The assertion is thus upheld that non-relational digressional instances in the classroom as an instructional strategy really contribute to the didactic dimension of teaching.

Finally, in the concluding part of the lecture, the lecturer digressed to emphasize the importance of honesty. He told the students a story about how some ladies are not faithful to what they tell others about themselves. He added that for some their “yes” rather means “no” and vice versa. The lecturer then went ahead and narrated a scenario where he visited a lady he had recently met. The lady in question was unaware he was coming over to visit her. When he got to the address the lady had given her. He realized that he was at the wrong address. No one at the hostel knew the lady he had gone looking for. He then advised the students that honesty pays in the end and that there really is no reason why one would lie about one's identity or location. He linked this issue to what is happening in Ghana's political scene. He rhetorically asked what would happen if the President told us the true state of the nation's address. By divagating to drive home the absolute importance of honesty, the lecturer has taken the students on a journey where they learnt the need to put an absolute premium on the virtue of truthfulness. This underscores the fact that contrary to popular beliefs that non-relational digressional instances detract the focus of teachers and learners from the topic under study, such occurrences could also offer a viable opportunity for learners to learn some practical life lessons. They are, therefore, not a wasted and needless venture.

## 7. Conclusion

From the above analysis, it is worth pointing out that the academic and intellectual evolution of teaching and learning in our classroom is greatly facilitated by storied pedagogy, Storification can be used as a tool to enhance effective learning and teaching, and it can also empower students to be more affective in a comfortable learning environment. This finding correlates with other established studies that highlight the importance of Storification in teaching and learning (Isabella A, Lobna H., & Juho H., (2021; Glaser, M., Garsoffky, B., & Schwan, S. 2009; Piipponen, O., & Karlsson, L. (2019). In the two lectures analyzed in this study, there were four relational digression instances and nine non-relational instances. Whilst the relational digressions helped consolidate the topic under study, the non-relational instances highlighted the need for the inclusion of a didactic or moralistic dimension to classroom dynamics. Such non-relational occurrences serve as some kind of interlude where learners are offered the opportunity to relax and re-conceptualize salient points derived from the lesson of the day. This idea aligns with Brooks' and Frederick's conception of digression, which is about the supplementary and non-coincidental aspects of distraction in narrative or personal experience discourses. Plot and narrative need not coincide, as a narrative can be freed from the structure of a plot of a story. Thus, Storification in the classroom perfectly fits the definition of pedagogy as 'any conscious activity by one person designed to enhance learning in another'. The conclusions drawn by this study confirm existing research that pedagogy should target holistic training. As Marton and Booth (1997, p. 178) assert:

*“Pedagogy as a discipline extends to the consideration of the development of health and bodily fitness, social and moral welfare, ethics and aesthetics, as well as to the institutional forms that serve to facilitate society’s and the individual’s pedagogic aims.”*

From this analysis, it is important to note that relational and non-relational digression can never be underrated in the versatile use of teaching skills. These findings make storification an effective pedagogic tool that teachers can exploit to make students understand the main ideas of a lesson. Storied pedagogy offers teachers the opportunity to engage non-academic references in the course of teaching. This enhances the affective dimensions in the classroom so that effective teaching and learning can occur in a relaxed atmosphere. As indicated in the theoretical ideas gathered for this study, Walser reiterates that digression serves as an alternative mode of narrative movement and is not based on the intentional succession of events (i.e. the logical progression of lectures as delivered in the classroom). This is where one sees the flexibility and the pedagogical significance of digression in personal experience narratives. It makes sense to concord with Walser, who believes that digression (as a common phenomenon in human discourse) is free to carve out its own narrative space. It is in this way that Digression pre-empts the plot from assuming absolute control and from subordinating the multiplicitous parts of the narrative to its demand for a purposeful totality. It is in this way that digression is positively valued. Most importantly, its plot-destructiveness does not negatively impact the narrativity of the teachers’ personal experience. The proposed learning method in this study (relational digressional and non-relational digressional narratives) tended to have an inordinately higher proportion of efficacy, as opposed to the findings of other studies that state that digressional instances are disruptive in the classroom. Though this paper comprehensively dealt with the effectiveness of storification in the language classroom, there is a need for further studies to be able to generalize the findings. Our study demonstrates that non-relational digressional instances are not always disruptive and that they are more resilient than relational digressional instances. It is our hope that future studies may explore non-relational digressional instances across higher institutions. This comparative approach would pave the way for generalization to its full extent.

### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

All the authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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