Interpreting Heritage to School Children through Oral Storytelling Performances in Museums and Historic Sites

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Abstract

This paper aims to study the possibility of communicating heritage to school children and raising their awareness about it using the oral storytelling performance method (OSP). The methodology is based on reviewing the different forms of heritage-based storytelling in live performances and establishing initial guidelines for OSP that may be applied in the framework of extra-curricular, out-of-school heritage programs targeting school children and held in different historic venues.

Key Words

Oral storytelling performance – Extra-curricular activities – Raising heritage awareness – Fact-based fiction – Multiperspectivity.

Introduction

Despite the local and global interest in studying, conserving, and preserving Egyptian heritage, the use of the unlimited potential of this rich heritage in introducing Egyptians to their history and civilization has not yet been satisfactorily accomplished. This cultural wealth can be used as an effective educational tool for non-traditional teaching of history to young Egyptians in order to raise their awareness of their heritage and create a strong connection with it.

Aim

Hence, the aim of this research is to study the possibility of communicating heritage to school children by designing extra-curricular heritage programs using the oral storytelling performance method (OSP). Those storytelling-based programs – which will follow specific guidelines proposed in the study – may be applied as a parallel mode to the traditional teaching methods and will take place outside the school campus in museums and heritage sites where the original historical events have taken place.

It is necessary to mention that this study is mainly concerned with applying innovative methods to improve the current deficiency in the status of heritage education in schools in a way that does not require drastic changes of the current educational system or large financial resources to achieve

this goal. In this regard, the perspective of studying this topic followed the scope of Hunter, who claimed that the optimum manner to implement heritage in school curricula is through integration with existing curricula in which subjects may serve as the basis for heritage education.[1]

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1   Hunter, "Heritage Education in the Social Studies," ERIC, 1988, p. 4, https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED300336.pdf

Methodology

- Reviewing the literature that have tackled the importance of raising heritage awareness among school children.
- Looking over the different forms of (OSP) applied in historic venues.
- Making an overview of some models of heritage venues which use the storytelling technique to communicate heritage to school children.
- Establishing initial guidelines for oral storytelling performance in heritage.
- Applying the guidelines in the framework of a storytelling event held in a historic site.
- Observing and evaluating the proposed guidelines.

Literature Review

Importance of raising heritage awareness among school children:

Before proceeding to examine oral storytelling as a method aiming to approach cultural heritage to school children in order to raise their awareness about this heritage, the following crucial question should be asked: Why there is a need for raising heritage awareness among children? In the ambitious "Sustainable Development Strategy SDS: Egypt Vision 2030", Egypt aspires to reach an optimum level of sustainable development through three main dimensions: Economic Dimension, Environmental Dimension, and Social Dimension. In the Eighth pillar of the social dimension focusing on culture, Egypt seeks to fulfill "A system of positive cultural values respecting diversity and differences enabling citizens to access knowledge, building their capacity to interact with modern developments, while recognizing their history and cultural heritage."[2]

This challenging goal may be reachable through a set of new ideas and approaches aiming to develop creative thinking especially among young children who are the fertile soil for such initiatives. In this regard, any approach through which cultural heritage is presented to young children in a non-traditional way that enhances their understanding and affinity to this heritage and realizes the aspired heritage awareness, seems to be a relevant approach that goes in harmony with this vision.

According to many scholars, it is crucially important to approach heritage to children for a main reason. On daily basis, children come across tangible and intangible remains of the past to which they try to give meanings and interpretations. Once becoming adults, the accumulation of their knowledge about this past contributes somehow to shaping their identity[3]. Thus, raising heritage awareness is a vital element that helps to shape identity.[4]

According to Assmann, heritage awareness leads to the enhancement of otherness: "through its cultural heritage a society becomes visible to itself and to others."[5] In other words, raising heritage awareness among children may contribute to introducing them to the concept of pluralism and diversity of the sources of heritage, and to the fact that any civilization has been formed by different layers of customs, religions, and cultures. This may eventually lead to the formation of a new generation that is more aware of the principles of citizenship, social cohesion, and the acceptance of the other whether this "other" is a partner from the same community or a neighbor who belongs to another social group.

This idea of using heritage potentials to instill positive values such as citizenship and acceptance of differences has been adopted by many institutions throughout the world. In 1997, the Council of Europe founded the "Education for Democratic Citizenship (EDC) program", which aims to improve new methods for citizenship education that

is contributory to the resistance against "violence, xenophobia, racism, aggressive nationalism, and intolerance[6]". Among the main subjects selected for this program was cultural heritage which is instrumental to introduce the concept of multiculturalism to children and youngsters.

In a related context, raising heritage awareness among school children has a direct positive impact on their ability to reinterpret the past in a way that may help them to a better understanding of the present: "Heritage is a continuous process of construction, conservation, management and interpretations in which people refer to the past with a view to the future, aiming to construct a historical identity in the present". Thus, raising heritage awareness through a proper interpretation of various tangible cultural resources such as historical artifacts, buildings and sites, as well as intangible assets such as customs, traditions and other social practices enhances children's historical and cultural interest and deepen their ability of meaning-making and a critical understanding of history and culture. This may serve to a better understanding of the present through the recalling of deeper-analyzed scenes from the past[7].

Furthermore, it can be easily assumed that there is a conditional link between raising heritage awareness and the willingness and ability of the owners of this heritage to preserve and safeguard it; it is the sense of belonging and ownership that leads to the call to action when heritage is in danger. Raising heritage awareness enhances the ability of heritage owners to recognize its value and accordingly preserve it for future generations. Recognizing the value of heritage by its people fosters their ability to contribute to conserve it and preserve it. In other words, raising awareness can lead to a change in behavior when dealing with preservation of cultural heritage. Tilden stated that "Through interpretation, understanding; through understanding, appreciation; through appreciation, protection[8]."

Different Forms of Storytelling Used in Heritage Interpretation:

Many museums and historic sites adopt the oral storytelling performance as a method to connect school children to the heritage environment. This heritage content which is closely linked to the national standard curriculum is presented through the different forms of oral storytelling performances taking place within the school visits.

Storytelling-Based Guided Tours

The tours aim to recreate the past by giving the visitor an emotional feeling towards the place and the people who once resided in this place. However, as stated by Butcher[9], the narration which is mainly based on an oral script has to avoid "romanticizing" historical events or "idealizing" the place and the people. The closer the story is to accuracy and the farther it from exaggerations, the stronger the impression is on the audience and the more genuine the experience.

Oral Storytelling

Not only are museums suitable hubs for the application of storytelling as an interpretation technique, but museums are also themselves, storytellers. Hence, storytelling is instrumental in the work of museums. Bedford[10] reported that "It makes sense that storytelling is appropriate to the work of a museum for museums are storytellers. They exist because once upon a time some person or group believed there was a story worth telling, over and over, for generations to come." Storytelling in many museums and historic sites is widely used as an interpretation technique that helps audiences to re-imagine historical events and key figures who contributed to shaping them.

3 Terrie Epstein, review of "Constructing and Questioning Connections between History Education and Heritage Education," by Carla Van Boxtel, Maria Grever, and Stephan Klein, Published online: 07 November 7, 2017, p.3 https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00933104.2017.1386960?journalCode=utrs20

4 Maurizio Rontani, "Patrimonito: a Visual Storytelling of World Heritage from and for Children" (Masters diss, University of Malmö, 2012), diva-portal.org, p. 20, https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1483083/FULLTEXT01.pdf

5 Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," New German Critique, No. 65, (Spring - Summer, 1995), p.133.

6 Audrey Osler and Hugh Starkey, "Education for Citizenship: Mainstreaming the Fight Against Racism?" European Journal of Education 37, no. 2 (2002): p. 143, 149 JSTOR

7 Carla van Boxtel, Maria Grever, and Stephan Klein, eds, Sensitive Pasts: Questioning Heritage in Education, (Berghahn Books, 2016) p. 3-6

8 Freeman Tilden, Interpreting our Heritage (Univ of North Carolina Press, 2009), p. 38.

9 Sherry Butcher-Younghans, Historic House Museums: A Practical Handbook for their Care, Preservation, and Management, (Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 188.

10 Leslie Bedford, "Storytelling: The Real Work of Museums, " Curator: the Museum Journal 44, no. 1 (2001): p. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.2151-6952.2001.tb00027.x

Demonstration (Usually Accompanied by First Person Interpretation)

This interpretation technique consists of one or many curators wearing costumes that represent the designated historic period, and performing real tasks that originally took place in the house or its plantation: Plowing earth, trimming grass, baking bread, making butter, sewing, etc. These demonstrators may do their jobs silently or may use the first person or the third person interpretation techniques which usually include other techniques such as storytelling, verbal interaction with the audience and answering the audiences' questions about the performed tasks.[11]

Role Play

Role players are also costumed interpreters using the first-person technique. However, what characterizes them from demonstrators is that they recreate the lives of real people who inhabited the house as owners or as workers and helpers. The role-play is usually based on what was left by
the original inhabitants such as letters, diaries, photos, paintings, drawings etc.[12]

Living History Performance

This technique consists of plays performed by a group of Interpreters/actors depicting the story of the house and its inhabitants.[13]

Models of Heritage Venues Which Apply Different Forms of (OSP) to Communicate Heritage to School Children:
The Colonial Williamsburg:

The Colonial Williamsburg, the largest outdoor living history museum in the US which encompasses 88 original historic houses, created a program consisting of a set of customized tours using different forms of oral storytelling. The program dedicated to school students is mainly based on the theme of citizenship. Each storytelling-based tour targets children from a specific school stage and is tailored to meet the school curriculum needs:[14]

• In the "Discover Williamsburg" tour targeting grade 3, children are offered stories in which they are introduced to the people who struggled for independence and freedom and "Americans who were united by common principles and choices".

Discover Williamsburg Tour

• In a tour entitled "Shaping a Nation through Colonization & Conflict", which targets Grades four and five, children experience another storytelling form in which they are essential players in the story.They participate actively in the colonial world by experiencing "the merits of peace and the burdens of war" and engage in live debates and are exposed to take crucial decisions either "to stay loyal to the crown or to join the rebellions".

Shaping a Nation through Colonization & Conflict

• Another program dedicated to school children from sixth to eighth grade entitled "Creating a New Republic" in which another storytelling form is applied. It is a participatory based method where school children encounter the revolutionaries from the time of the founding fathers, hear their stories and are introduced to their unconventional viewpoints and ideas. They also get the opportunity to put themselves in the shoes of the founding fathers and imagine themselves taking decisions about the best form the government should take.

Creating a New Republic

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11 Sherry Butcher-Younghans, Historic House Museums: A Practical Handbook for their Care, Preservation, and Management, (Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 209.

12 http://www.strawberybanke.org/people/roleplayers.cfm

13 Sherry Butcher-Younghans, Historic House Museums: A Practical Handbook for their Care, Preservation, and Management (Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 211.

14 https://www.colonialwilliamsburg.org/learn/?from=navlearn accessed 15-9-2020.

• Moreover, Colonial Williamsburg gives the visitors – including school children – the opportunity to meet renowned historical figures who played crucial roles in shaping the history of the United States and hear them narrating their stories in a program entitled:
"Meet Our Nation Builders."[15]

Meet Our Nation Builders

Mount Vernon:

The same approach of interpreting historical heritage to school children through different storytelling forms is also applied in Mount Vernon, the George Washington Mansion.[16]The Mount Vernon, which was opened to the public in 1869 as a "Great Man" historic house museum represents a serious attempt to present a comprehensive account of George Washington's legacy and to offer it as extracurricular activities to school children of different stages. Mount Vernon is among the successful museums having applied most of the storytelling forms which are held in live performances and which mainly rely on the human element. Nowadays, Mount Vernon is the most visited historic house museum in the United States with over one million visitors annually.[17]

• Among the interesting tours dedicated to school children in Mount Vernon is a tour entitled "Legends and Legacies: The Real George Washington"[18] In this storytelling-based tour which targets school children from the third to the sixth grade, children are introduced to stories that go far beyond the legends that surrounded the life of George Washington. It is a serious
attempt to present a comprehensive version of Washington's legacy.

Legends and Legacies: The Real George Washington

• Another relevant example of a tour which offers to school children another side of George Washington's biography is a tour entitled "Telling their Stories: Mount Vernon's Enslaved People." In this storytelling-based tour, children from grade 5 to grade 12 hear stories of individuals who used to work in Mount Vernon and contributed to make the site a successful plantation.[19]
• Moreover, through the storytelling-based tour "Through my Eyes" dedicated to school children of grades 2 to 8, children get the opportunity to meet with characters who lived at the time of George Washington and were close to his life. Through this character-based storytelling, children learn more about Washington's legacy through the eyes of his contemporaries.
• In addition to the historical-based heritage, Mount Vernon offers to the school children storytelling-based tours interpreting various elements related to intangible heritage. The tour entitled "History Meets Hollywood in Mount Vernon" targeting school children from grade 4 to 8 combines the history of Washington and the intangible treasure of the cinematic heritage consisting of many films which were produced to commemorate his time.[20]

History Meets Hollywood in Mount Vernon

• Moreover, children can get the opportunity to explore many domains and elements of intangible cultural heritage which are depicted through historical interpreters who demonstrate parts of the daily life in the time of Washington. Mount Vernon offers an activity in which children are introduced to the first attempt of making ice cream. Another activity focuses on the story of making cheese along with a detailed narration of the recipe and a live making of cheese where children may take part.[21]

Dairies in Mount Verno

Historic House Trust:

In a related context, Historic House Trust, a non-profit organization responsible for many historic sites in the US and operating with the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation, provides a set of educational programs which are tailored to improve in-school heritage instructions related to many curriculum areas for different school grades. The programs are "directly linked with New York State Learning Standards" and provide the children with different types of heritage instruction which vary between historical-based heritage and intangible heritage related to the old daily practices and their relation with the present social practices. Those programs are delivered through different interactive activities among which is the storytelling-based tours.[22]
To conclude, it is important to mention that whatever the type of heritage content is, the unique power of storytelling

15 https://images.history.org/keywords/nationbuilders?f1f99824_page=2 accessed 14-12-2020

16 https://www.mountvernon.org/plan-your-visit/group-reservations/student-groups/ accessed 1-2-2021

17 http://www.mountvernon.org/about/employment/historic-trades- internship/?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=about accessed 1-2-2021

18 https://storybank.dccollaborative.org/post/156043124144/legends-and-legacies-the-real-george- washington accessed 10-8-2021

19 https://www.mountvernon.org/education/for-teachers/plan-a-student-trip-to-mount-vernon/student-field-trips/ accessed 1-2-2021

20 https://www.mountvernon.org/plan-your-visit/calendar/events/national-treasure-tour/ accessed 10-8-2021

21 https://www.mountvernon.org/blog/2018/05/dairies-at-mount-vernon accessed 1-2-2021

22 http://historichousetrust.org/pdf/Education_Programs.pdf accessed 1-1-2021

consists of its ability to regroup the various cultural aspects of this content and to present them in a coherent interpretive narrative. In other words, storytelling re-introduce the interpreted heritage by revealing its various cultural values, and brings it back to life by connecting it to the audiences' present and everyday lives.[23]

Proposing Initial Guidelines for Oral Storytelling Performance in Heritage Venues:

Those guidelines were designed to serve the different stages of the oral storytelling performance process from the preparation to the implementation and evaluation as follows:

I. Guidelines for Content Preparation:

• Designing interpretive heritage-based stories with flexible content that suits the largest scale of audiences.
• Tailoring a type of stories that presents a whole account of the interpreted heritage content, based on the notion of multiperspectivity.[24]
• Applying the charming approaches of fictional stories by crafting the stories using a fact-based fiction (blended method) linking information to imagination.
• Crafting the stories on a character-based method which has the ability to engage audiences and to promote more affinity and understanding of the heritage content presented through the story.
• Connecting the past to the present

II. Guidelines for Storytelling Event Preparations:

• Applying various forms of oral storytelling performances.
• Undertaking the appropriate measures of efficient organization of the storytelling event by putting into account all the relevant details: Duration, location, type of audience and their way of participation, number of sessions and number of audience in each session, availability of the needed equipment.
• Using the appealing performance techniques which are usually applied by the performers of fictional stories and which consist of:
    o Free style narration which avoids memorization, while only memorizing the beginning and the end of the story.
    o Use imagination and picture the story in mind.
    o Focus on the main theme of the story.
    o Learn the skill of ending the story.
    o Perfect use of the body as the tool that transmits the message

II. Guidelines for Storytelling Event Implementation and Evaluation:

• Involving the audience in a participatory-based approach.
• Establishing a set of various evaluation methods that fit different target audiences.

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23 Jade van Blerk, FEST Survey on Storytelling in Heritage Contexts, Federation of European Storytelling 2019, p. 10-11, https://emotiveproject.eu/index.php/about/background/
24 Robert Stradling, Multiperspectivity in History Teaching: a Guide for Teachers, (Council of Europe, 2003), p. 9, https://rm.coe.int/1680493c9e

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Applying the Proposed Guidelines in the Framework of a Tailored Scenario of an Event Held in a Historic Site.

Introduction:

This scenario entitled "This House Belongs to me", was designed and implemented in the framework of the initiative "Recognize your Heritage" which is based on reviewing school curricula and designing storytelling programs related to the history subject and offering them to schools as the practical part of the theoretical subject. Programs are in the form of doable interactive activities provided to students in-situ within field trips. The initiative was launched by the researcher in cooperation with the Sector of Islamic and Coptic Antiquities.

The selected historical topic to be interpreted to school children within this scenario is the French Expedition in Egypt. Accordingly, the site which was chosen to host the activity is Bait el Sennary, a house which was built within the Ottoman Era (1795) and was the one that hosted the Scientific Committee appointed by the French Expedition to conduct researches and carry out projects. The work of the committee was later compiled and published in the famous book of Description De l'Egypte. Moreover, the artists of the French expedition resided in the house and used it as an atelier.[25]

Aim:

Presenting the historical-based heritage to school children in a way that promotes their awareness through a deeper understanding and affinity of the heritage material provided to them using various forms of storytelling.

Applied guidelines:

I. Preparing the Content for Storytelling:
I-1. Designing Interpretive Heritage-Based Stories with a Flexible Content that Suits the Largest Scale of Audiences:

Although the target audiences are primary-aged children, the researcher attempted to experiment the notion of the flexibility of storytelling and its suitability to a larger age group, and the stories were designed accordingly.

I-2. Tailoring a Type of Stories that Presents a Whole Account of the Interpreted Heritage Content, Based on the Notion of Multiperspectivity:

Since the objective of the activity was to instill a better understanding of the interpreted topic, the decision was made to plunge in the depth of the topic and to prepare a scientific material that highlights it from its different perspectives. Accordingly, the main theme upon which the whole event was built is:

The Positive and Negative Impacts of the French Expedition on Egypt and the Egyptians at the End of the 18th Century and the Beginning of the 19th Century.

In this regard, the team members worked together in this research phase trying to read all the available literature that has been written about the house, and tried to connect it to the school topic which tackles the French expedition. The related data was collected from primary and secondary sources in order to come up with a comprehensive account of this crucial era of the Egyptian modern history. This scientific material is prepared in a way that highlights even the parts that are not mentioned in the topic taught in the school curricula.

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25 Ahmed Amin, Beit El Sennary (Alexandria: Bibliotheca Alexandrina, 2013), p. 9, 15

The main theme was divided into the following subthemes:

- Positive and negative impact of the French expedition on Egypt's political situation at the end of the 18th Century and the beginning of the 19th Century.
- Positive and negative impact of the French expedition on the Egyptian society at the end of the 18th Century and the beginning of the 19th Century.
- Positive and negative impact of the French expedition on the Egyptian's cultural life at the end of the 18th Century and the beginning of the 19th Century.

Those subthemes were interpreted throughout the different storytelling forms which were applied within the event.

I-3. Applying the Charming Approaches of Fictional Stories by Crafting the Stories Using a Fact-Based Fiction (blended method) Linking Information to Imagination:

After setting the main theme and the subtheme of the event throughout three workshops where all the team members contributed, comes the phase of crafting the stories and tailoring them to serve the theme, the subthemes and the objectives of the event. In this regard, the script of the two first storytelling activities as well as the scenario of the role play were written by the researcher whereas the script of the theatre performance was written by a researcher and PhD holder of Egyptian Modern History.

The main theme and the subthemes were interpreted through three different stories:

1. An introductory fictional story entitled (Miss Sanaa the Mentor of History) that aims to highlight the value of studying history. The story is about an imaginary character, a history school teacher who changed the life of her student by re-directing her view about history from being a set of complicated useless events that have no relation with the present, to a time machine where people of the modern time may explore the lives of people in a different time and different circumstances. This story was designed to be presented as an icebreaking activity aiming to engage the young audience to the heritage content offered to them throughout the event.

2. A story entitled (The Tales of Satoota) about the struggle of Egyptian people against the French expedition through the eyes of a fictional character (The grandmother Satoota) who lived in Alexandria at the time of the French Expedition and witnessed the despondency of the Alexandrians in the face of the French occupier. Throughout her personal memories about this era, Satoota gave a whole overview of the different incidents which occurred throughout that period along with her personal analysis about the advantages and disadvantages of this era and its impact on Egyptians. Within the narrated story, Satoota focused on the fact that this is her personal view of the history of that period which may be judged by others as right or wrong. This approach aims to enhance the young audience to re-evaluate what they hear and build their own opinion which may be in accordance with or contrary to the narrator.

Through a character-oriented fact based fiction method, the story was crafted to encompass the following elements in order to put the audience in the heart of the action and in the shoes of the main character of the story and to give them the chance to re-read the incident and to build their personal interpretation about it:

- The emergence of the idea of invading Egypt in the minds of the French rulers before the reign of Napoleon Bonaparte.
- French forces' first attack on Egypt from the coast of Abou Qir Gulf in Alexandria
- Alexandrians popular resistance to the French attack
- Napoleons desperate attempts to gain the people's consent and confidence and the negative attitude of the Egyptians toward it.

- Change of Bonaparte's attitude towards Egyptians and the revealing of the colonial face.
- The evolution of the situation of the French Expedition throughout the 3 years of occupation.
- A general objective overview of the impact of the expedition on the Egyptian society.

The overview includes all the direct and indirect impacts as reviewed from contemporary and modern sources.

3. A story entitled "This is my House" in which 4 historical figures were fighting to win the ownership of the house. Every one of the 4 characters Napoleon Bonaparte, El Gabarty the historian, El Sennary the founder of the house, and Monge, the head of the Scientific committee and one of the founders of L'Institut d'Egypte, were trying to claim the possession of the house while a child from the modern era was trying to judge justly between them. Within the context of the play each one of the personages tells his story and his relation with the house and tries to convince the child to judge on his side.

Through a character-oriented fact based fiction method, the story was crafted to encompass the following elements in order to put the audience in the heart of the action and in the shoes of the main characters of the story and to give them the chance to re-read the incidents and to build their personal interpretation about it:

- The historiography related to the French Expedition and the important role played by the historian El Gabarty in this respect.
- The story of the building of the Sennary house and the dramatic story of its owner which highlights the status of the Mamluk society in the time of the Expedition.
- Napoleon Bonapartes's military, social and economic politics in Egypt: A whole overview.
- The role of the scientific committee (through one of its members) nominated by Napoleon Bonaparte in the process of studying Egypt and describing its status in the book The Description of Egypt.

4. A participatory-based role-play entitled the trial of Napoleon (Involving the audience in a participatory-based approach):

Based on the presented stories which tackle the main theme of the event as well as the three subthemes mentioned before, the third story which was planned to be presented within the event consists of an empirical improvised role-play in which the participants are the main players. This activity was prepared in a way that gives the chance to the young participants to improvise the dialogue which will be said with a slight guidance from the facilitators about the content. The facilitators play the role of the court judges who recite the charges against Napoleon Bonaparte and then listen to the arguments of the plaintiffs (half of the young participants) and the judges (the other half of the young participants) of the accused. Moreover, the facilitators score the arguments of each of the aforementioned groups on the three charges of the trial.

The three charges against Napoleon Bonaparte are:

- Leading a military campaign that had a negative impact on Egypt's political situation at the end of the 18th Century and the beginning of the 19th Century.
- Leading a military campaign that had a negative impact on the Egyptian society at the end of the 18th Century and the beginning of the 19th Century.
- Leading a military campaign that had a negative impact on the Egyptian's cultural life at the end of the 18th Century and the beginning of the 19th Century.

In this activity, the researcher followed the theory of Bage about the impact of participatory based storytelling in a history teaching context on the audiences. The impact of such an approach goes far beyond being a simple commemoration of historical events; it is rather a repetition of those events in which the participants become main characters. Accordingly, they are exposed in an experience in which they are not living "in chronological time but in primordial time, the time when the event first took place.[26]

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26 Grant Bage, Narrative matters: Teaching history through story (Routledge, 2012), p, 44, https://library.aucegypt.edu/home

But how the historical accuracy can be guaranteed in the framework of an improvised role play which is not based on a pre-prepared script given to the participants? The information used by the participants during the workshop was derived from many sources from the historical content presented within the two stories which will be performed during the event. Accordingly, the information, though improvised, is based on accurate sources offered to the children. This information is far from being direct instructions that impose on the children a one-side perspective; It is rather an open-ended multi-perspective content which invites the children to build their own point of view based on the diverse data. In this regard, the researcher also adopted the method of Grant who considered that the pre descriptive storytelling helps having evidentially accurate history in the participatory role play.[27]

I-4. Crafting the Stories on a Character-Based Method

As mentioned before, the designed stories were built on a character-driven method which has the ability to engage audiences and to promote more affinity and understanding of the heritage content presented through the story. Each story is based on a main character(s) who shape the main event and drive it to the plot as follows:

In the first story (Miss Sanaa, the Mentor of History), the main character is the history teacher who changed the vision of her students about history.
In the second story (the tales of the Grandmother Satoota), the different events related to the French Expedition were presented from the eyes of Satoota, the main character of the story.

The third story (This House Belongs to Me) is based on five main characters who drive the incidents: Masry, the child who met the four figures who re-appeared from the past and played main roles in the history of the French Expedition Period: Monge, Napoleon Bonaparte, El- Sennary, El-Gabarty.

In the fourth story which will be improvised by the participants, the main character who will drive the incidents is Napoleon Bonaparte and is exposed to a number of charges in the court.

I-5. Connecting the Past to the Present

The set of stories crafted for the event are based on an interaction between characters from the present and others from the past. This approach aims at promoting and increasing the engagement of the audience and enhancing them to put themselves in the shoes of the characters.

II. Storytelling Event Preparations:

II-1. Selecting Various Forms of Storytelling to be Applied within the Event:

The researcher attempted to get advantage of the rich heritage material which will be presented and interpreted in this scenario as well as the heritage venue where the event will take place to diversify the forms of storytelling which will be applied within the event. Accordingly, the selected forms to be applied are:

- Icebreaking activity: Non-costumed role play in live performance (first and third person approach).
- Non-costumed role play performance in first person method "autobiographical performance art which also includes third person narration highlighting historical events.
- Storytelling-based guided tour.
- Costumed role play performed in a theatrical format "interpretive storytelling in theatrical impersonation"
- Participatory improvisational role play workshop in which young audience take part.

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27 Grant Bage, Narrative matters: Teaching history through story (Routledge, 2012), p, 44, https://library.aucegypt.edu/home

II. 2. Undertaking the Appropriate Measures of Efficient Organization of the Storytelling

Event by Putting into Account all the Relevant Details:

The researcher communicated with the director of one of the schools at the neighborhood of Misr El Gedida and offered her the participation of a group of sixth grader students in the event which will take place in Beit El Sennary. The director showed a lot of interest and accepted the offer.
Then the director and the researcher set together the suitable date for the event which they intended to be at the same week of the history class where the French Expedition will be taught to children in school. The duration of the event, number of audience and their way of participation, number of sessions, were also decided in the same meeting.
Moreover, two of the helping team communicated with the responsible in Beit el Sennary to get their approval to host the event, to determine the appropriate location for the activities and to check the availability of the needed equipment (chairs, tables, sound system etc.)

Accordingly, the event was organized based on the following storytelling forms:

Oral storytelling in live performance, storytelling-based guided tour, costumed interpretation in theatrical performance, participatory improvisational role play workshop.

The event was then scheduled with all the needed details:

- Number of children: 40

- Age group: primary aged children focusing on sixth grade children who study the French Expedition in the history curriculum with the ability of the storytelling event to host younger or older students as mentioned before
- Duration: 3 hours divided as follows:

  o Introduction and oral storytelling performance 30 minutes
  o Guided tour 20 minutes
  o Break: 30 minutes
  o Role play theatrical performance: 40 minutes
  o Participatory Activity: 60 minutes
  o Distribution of certificates, commemorative photos and ending session: 10 minutes

II. 3. Selecting Performers:

In this stage, the researcher and the core team held two meetings for the selection of performers who will take part in the three storytelling activities. The team decided that the researcher will be the storyteller in the two oral storytelling performances (due to the researcher's previous experience in the field of OSP). As for the theatrical performance, the decision was made that two members of the core team, from the department of archaeological awareness at the Ministry of Antiquities, will participate as actors. Moreover, three volunteers (also suggested by the core team) who are interested in history and heritage joined the team of actors and offered to participate as actors in the theatrical performance without any financial compensation: A 12-year-old child, a bank employee and a fitness trainer.

II. 4. Rehearsing Phase:

This phase was divided into two parts:

- Individual rehearsal of the OSP which was done by the researcher (as the oral storyteller of the event). In this regard, the researcher did five rehearsals in addition to a general rehearsal right before the event. Throughout the aforementioned rehearsals, the researcher exercised the performance techniques following the proposed guidelines with all details and sub-details:

Using the appealing performance techniques which are usually applied by the performers of fictional stories and which consist of:

o Free style narration which avoids memorization, while only memorizing the beginning and the end of the story: The researcher avoided memorization and replaced it with reading the story several times, try to connect it with previous incidents (if any), putting the written script aside and trying to visualize the events of the story and the characters. However, in order to grab the audience's attention with an impressive start which is essential for an effective storytelling, the researcher memorized only the first two sentences of the story. Moreover, in order to frame the storytelling in the best possible

way, the researcher also memorized the last couple of sentences and practiced them several times to be able to perform them smoothly and naturally.

o Use imagination and picture the story in mind: The researcher exercised to use her imagination to look at the characters of the story as if they were physically present, try to feel what they feel, to smell what they smell. In other words, she tried to practice the

identification with the characters as a means to improve her performance and to reach credibility.

o Focus on the main theme of the story.

o Learn the skill of ending the story.

o Use the body as the tool that transmits the message (Facial expression, body language, and voice).

The second part of the rehearsal was the one related to the theatrical performance. This part also followed the guidelines concerning the use of the appealing performance techniques which are usually applied by the performers of fictional stories such as the perfect use of the body, face and voice. However, and since the theatrical performance in this scenario was based on a structured written script, actors had to memorize their roles and to recite it exactly like the original script because trying to improvise on a written script which includes many actors did not find a success. This is due to the fact that the actors of the play were amateurs not professional actors. Accordingly, they were so much confused when one among them changed any word of the written script. In other words, they did not have the skills of a professional performer who is flexible to improvise alternative dialogues depending on improvisation.

III. Implementation: Storytelling Event

In this event, as mentioned earlier, many forms of storytelling were selected to be applied: Icebreaking Activity: Non-Costumed Role Play in Live Performance (First and Third Person Approach):

The event starts with an icebreaking short role play entitled "Miss Sanaa, the mentor of history" where the researcher played the role of a student who remembered when she attended the history class in school with a history teacher who transmitted her passion of history to her students and managed to make them consider history as a time machine where they may explore people who lived in a different time and passed through different circumstances and events.

Icebreaking Activity (Beit El Sennary, December 2018)

Non-Costumed Role Play Performance in First Person Method "autobiographical performance art which also includes third person narration highlighting historical events:

The second performance (The tales of grandmother Satoota) was also a short first person role play performed by the researcher. Throughout the performance, the researcher tried to involve the audience interactively by asking them questions and giving them the chance to communicate their feelings about what they hear.

The Tales of grandmother Satoota (Beit El Sennary, December 2018)

Storytelling-Based Guided Tour:

• The third activity of the day was a storytelling-based guided tour which was held to introduce the place to the students. The guide, who is a member of the organization core team prepared his narration script in a way that focused on the main theme of the event: Positive and negative impact of the French expedition on Egypt and the Egyptian people at the end of the 18th Century and the beginning of the 19th Century.

Storytelling-based guided tour (Beit El Sennary, December 2018)

Costumed Role Play Performed in a Theatrical Format "interpretive storytelling in theatrical impersonation":
The fourth activity of the event entitled "This House Belongs to Me" consisted of a theatrical performance which took place on stage in front of the audiences who were a mix between primary- aged children, students from higher grades, teachers and members of the school administration, employees of Beit El Sennary.

Part of the theatrical performance (Beit El Sennary, December 2018)

Part of the theatrical performance (Beit El Sennary, December 2018)

Part of the theatrical performance (Beit El Sennary, December 2018)

Participatory Improvisational Role Play Workshop:

As mentioned before, in the light of the information gained by the children through the two previous live performances, a workshop in the form of a participatory-based role play activity has been applied in the event. Throughout the workshop, Napoleon Bonaparte was subject to a trial where he was exposed to three charges which represent the three subthemes of the event.

The rules of the role play were explained to the children. Then they were divided into two teams: the first one played the role of the prosecutors, and the other group played the role of the lawyers who tried to defend Napoleon Bonaparte. The event facilitators played the role of the court judges and the actor who played the role of Napoleon Bonaparte in the theatrical performance did the same role in this activity.

The defenders team in action (Beit El Sennary, December 2018)

The prosecutors team in action (Beit El Sennary, December 2018)

The list of charges was read out by the main judge of the court. Then the two teams were given 30 minutes to prepare the case and write down the arguments of the case. The facilitators assisted the two teams by encouraging them to recall the information about Napoleon Bonaparte and the French Expedition which were presented within the previous performances, and helped them select from this data what is relevant for defending or prosecuting Napoleon Bonaparte. Each of the two teams wrote down the recalled relevant data, connected it to each of the charges and came up with a whole written case to be presented to the court.

The defenders team preparing their plead with the help of a facilitator (Beit El Sennary, December 2018)

At the end of the time limit, the first charge was read out again and the group of defenders and prosecutors were invited to take their part.

- **First Charge: Leading a military campaign that had a negative impact on Egypt's political situation at the end of the 18th Century and the beginning of the 19th Century.**

Plead of the Defense Representative:

The defense team began to refute the charges and nominated one member of the group to speak on their behalf. The later began by trying to beautify the image of Napoleon Bonaparte as professional major general who achieved big victories in wars before being nominated as the leader the French Expedition in Egypt. Another defender added that by this time, the qualities of Napoleon Bonaparte as a great leader appeared when he pronounced a great speech in front of the army to enhance their national spirit and to improve their warrior spirit. A third defender claimed that, in this speech, Napoleon Bonaparte gave some important instructions to his soldiers by emphasizing on the fact that the religion of Egyptian people is Islam, and that they are good believers who have strong religious concepts. Accordingly, the soldiers should respect their religion and not interfere with them in any argument regarding religion. From all what has been mentioned, the defender claimed that it becomes clear to the court's justice that Napoleon Bonaparte showed a big deal of dignity and acted as a noble soldier who intended to establish a good relationship with the Egyptians based on respect of the people and their sanctities.

One of the lawyers making his plead (Beit El Sennary, December 2018)

Plead of the Prosecutors:

The prosecutors refuted all the evidences brought by the defense team, and a member of the prosecution team responded by saying that Napoleon Bonaparte did not have those noble purposes and intentions claimed by the defenders and the proof is the following: At his arrival to Egypt, Napoleon Bonaparte issued a proclamation reassuring the Egyptians that he had not come to them as an enemy, but as a friend who wanted to save them from the injustice of the Mamluks. He also stated that he respects God, his Messenger and the Holy Quran. However, Napoleon Bonaparte broke his promises to the Egyptians when the French troupes entered Alexandria and they punished the Alexandrians for their resistance and committed a hideous massacre in which many women and children were killed.

One of the prosecution team making her plead (Beit El Sennary, December 2018)

A confrontation between a prosecutor and a defender (Beit El Sennary, December 2018)

The Court's Decision:

At the end of this first round, the judges decided that the prosecutors' argument was much stronger and that accordingly the first charge is fixed against Napoleon Bonaparte.

- **Second Charge: Leading a military campaign that had a negative impact on the Egyptian society at the end of the 18th Century and the beginning of the 19th Century. Plead of the defense representative:**

The defenders team tried to deny this charge by arguing that, at the beginning of his presence in Egypt, Napoleon Bonaparte was trying to win the Egyptians' empathy by showing them that he admires Islam to the extent that it was rumored at that time that Napoleon Bonaparte had converted to Islam and that he called himself Ali Bonaparte. He also called himself the beloved of the Prophet and the favorite of God, and took many measures to secure the Egyptian pilgrims to Mecca. By that time, he began to wear oriental clothes and he prayed with the Egyptians and attended with them religious feasts like the birth of the Prophet and the birthdays of the saints.

Plead of the Prosecutors' Representative:

A member of the prosecutors' team responded by stating that Napoleon Bonapart's behavior towards Egyptians was not based on noble purposes; he rather had an only aim which consisted of securing and legalizing the French occupation of Egypt by trying to win the affection and sympathy of Egyptians. Seeing that his attempts failed to win the front of Egyptians, he began to completely change his strategy: He demolished houses and mosques so that he could expand the roads and move his soldiers quickly when any revolt against him took place. And when the resistance increased and the first Cairo revolution took place in 1798, he issued orders to his soldiers to strike Al-Azhar, the center of the revolution, to enter the mosque on horseback and to kill as much revolutionaries as possible.

Another prosecutor's plead (Beit El Sennary, December 2018)

The court's decision:

Based on the pleads of the two teams, the court found that the prosecutors' team presented a more convincing argument. Accordingly, the second charge was fixed against Napoleon Bonaparte.

- **Third Charge: Leading a military campaign that had a negative impact on the Egyptian's cultural life at the end of the 18th Century and the beginning of the 19th Century.**

The defenders' plead:

The defenders group claimed that Napoleon Bonaparte was the leader who began the process of reforming the administrative system in Egypt and ruled in Cairo through a divan made up of the most prominent personalities in the country. He also established the Scientific Council, which included senior scientists, and provided it with a chemistry and physics laboratory, a botanical garden, an astronomical observatory, and a museum of archeology.
The scholars of the Scientific Council were the ones who prepared the twenty-four huge volumes that were published by the French government under the title of "Description de L`Egypte."
These measures and endeavors are very much in favor of Napoleon Bonaparte, because his campaign included not only soldiers, army commanders and generals, but the campaign was also accompanied by 167 scholars in various sciences and arts. Those scholars were the ones who founded the Scientific Council and their researches and studies on Egyptian history and civilization were the reason which led Egyptians to realize that they are the owners of a great civilization. The team members ended by stating that if we evaluate the cultural impact of the French Expedition objectively, the conclusion from all that has been mentioned is in favor of the Expedition and not against it.

The prosecutors' plead:
The prosecutors team acknowledged all the information mentioned by the defense; however, they questioned the real intentions behind this administrative and cultural reform undertaken by Napoleon Bonaparte and his men. They argued that all those apparently-good endeavor had only one purpose which consists of controlling over Egypt by colonizing it culturally.

Court's decision:
Based on the pleads of the two teams, the court found that the defense team presented a more convincing argument. Accordingly, the second charge was not proven against the accused.

End of session:
At the end of the session, the court judges announced that both of the teams presented respectful, objective and logical pleadings. Therefore, the court decided to give the two teams equal scores in this high intellectual competition. Accordingly, each member of the two teams was awarded a certificate of appreciation in recognition of his/her efforts, interaction and positive participation in the different activities of the day. Finally, the event ended by the distribution of the certificates.

Distribution of Certificates (Beit El Sennary, December 2018)

IV. Observation and Evaluation:

As a mandatory school-graded fieldtrip at an old district in historic Cairo, the students began the day with a little enthusiasm and a level of boredom. Those feelings started to decrease gradually and the degree of their engagement exceeded from one activity to another to reach its peak at the participatory role play activity in which they contributed with a percentage of 100%.

As mentioned before, the content of the different activities was crafted in a way that is suitable to a wide age group. Thus, the young audience did not find any difficulty to follow the two role play sessions and were very attentive to the information which recalled the related information that they have previously acquired from their school curriculum as well as a set of new information to which they were introduced throughout the different activities. Moreover, elder students as well as adults who also joined the event followed the sessions without any feeling that the content is childish or is crafted only to address primary students.

Throughout the day, the children managed to benefit from all the data that has been presented to them and used it perfectly in the participatory role play: Both of the two groups used the acquired information the best way possible and recalled all the relevant data, re-interpreted it and re-used it in a very smart way during the trial of Napoleon Bonaparte. This later activity in which children play a main role of the story was proven to stimulate their critical thinking and enhance their positivity towards re-interpretation of the heritage content presented to them. The defense and prosecution' pleads were totally crafted by the children with a little help from the facilitators who only assist the children to recall the events and the data which were included in the two presented role plays, but without any interference in their way of interpreting information and repurposing it to serve their goals which varied from defense or prosecution according to the task of each team.

It was noticed that the information recalled by the children was an interesting mix from what was taught to them in the formal history class and in their history text book, and the new information that was presented to them within the different activities of the day. The role play was totally improvised by the children.

However, the researcher noticed a certain disparity in the level of information recalled by the children during the preparation phase that preceded the improvisational role play: This disparity was justified in many scientific studies: "knowledge does not enter the mind of the learner in the form transmitted...never a straightforward copy, but a new, personal reconstruction."[28]

Group Interviews:
At the end of the event, and while the children were in the main court of the house waiting to board on the buses, the researcher directed a focus group interview with them. The interview was not conducted in the form of questions and answers but rather as a friendly chat with the children about their feedback on the event and if they would like to repeat the same experience in other heritage sites related to the historical topics that they learn in their school curriculum. The most relevant responses of the children were the following:

- This is the first time that I discovered that history is that "entertaining"
- For me, this is a lifetime unforgettable experience
- If history were taught to us in this way in school we would not need to study or learn by heart, we just need to watch and understand
- Please take our contacts and inform us whenever you are going to organize similar sessions again. We really would love to attend even if the events will take place in the weekends or will happen separately from the school mandatories.
- I would love to come to the next events even if they are not graded by the school
- I was always confused what to choose as my major study in the high school (Natural Sciences or humanities) now I make up my mind, I will choose humanities and focus on historical studies.

V. Conclusion:

Historical heritage must be simplified for primary-aged children. Storytelling, in which history is dramatized, may be one of the most effective tools to be used in this context. However, what we really need to present to the children through this tool is a close-up of a specific episode from an event rather than a direct recitation of the whole event. That episode has to be dramatized in a way that enhances children to participate in a workable framework in which every single detail is examined and analyzed to the deepest: It is not about a simple presentation of the historical period of the French expedition; it is rather a deep focus on a certain point of research related to that period from its different perspectives: Did the French Expedition have only negative impact on Egyptians or it has a hidden bright side? This very point was the main theme of the proposed event and all the interactive activities which were designed to develop this point.

And this is how we really have to engage children and enhance them to look at history using a time- machine through which they can objectively look at other people who lived in other era different than ours. Storytelling may help youngsters plunge in those people's lives and study them closely and thoroughly and try to learn lessons from their stories of failure and success.

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