

Storytelling method in teaching English to preschool children

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Abstract: This study explores the use of the Storytelling Method as an effective strategy for teaching English to preschool children. Storytelling, as an interactive and engaging approach, offers young learners an opportunity to absorb language naturally while developing listening, speaking, and comprehension skills. Conducted in a preschool setting over six weeks, the research employed a qualitative approach involving classroom observations, teacher logs, and pre- and post-assessment of vocabulary acquisition. Findings indicate that storytelling significantly enhances vocabulary retention, promotes motivation, and improves learners' confidence in speaking English. The study suggests that storytelling can serve as a vital method in early language education.

Keywords: storytelling, English language learning, preschool education, early childhood, vocabulary development

Introduction. In recent years, the teaching of English to preschool children has gained increasing attention due to the recognition that early language exposure significantly enhances long-term linguistic competence. During the preschool years, children are particularly receptive to new languages because of their natural curiosity, flexible cognitive structures, and developing communicative abilities. For this age group, language learning must be engaging, emotionally resonant, and grounded in meaningful contexts. One method that has shown considerable promise in this area is storytelling - the oral presentation of narratives that captivate attention and facilitate comprehension through context, imagery, and repetition. According to Wright, "Stories are particularly powerful in the young learner classroom because they allow children to become emotionally involved in the language learning process while being exposed to natural language." In contrast to rote memorization or isolated vocabulary drills, storytelling embeds language within memorable events and characters, making it easier for children to internalize new words and structures. Storytelling not only introduces new vocabulary and grammatical forms but also supports multiple domains of development, including listening skills, sequencing, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence. Furthermore, when combined with visuals, gestures, and interactive activities, storytelling becomes a multisensory experience that supports a wide range of learning styles, in line with Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences. Despite its proven effectiveness, storytelling is still underutilized in many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) preschool contexts, particularly where structured curricula and traditional methods dominate. This study aims to explore how storytelling can be systematically integrated into English language instruction for preschool learners and to evaluate its impact on vocabulary acquisition, speaking confidence, and classroom engagement. Language learning in early childhood is most effective when it is enjoyable, meaningful, and rooted in context. Preschool-aged learners thrive in environments where they can engage with content emotionally and imaginatively. One powerful method that aligns with these principles is storytelling - the art of sharing narratives to convey meaning. As Wright notes, "Stories help children to internalize language in a natural way by exposing them to repeated patterns and vocabulary in context." In the context of teaching English as a foreign language, storytelling not only captivates young minds but also serves as a foundation for vocabulary acquisition, sentence

structure awareness, and pronunciation development. This paper investigates how storytelling can be implemented in the preschool classroom to teach English, and what effects it has on language acquisition and learner engagement.

Methodology. This qualitative action research was carried out at a private preschool in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Participants included 18 children, aged 4 to 5 years, and one English language teacher.

Duration: 6 weeks

Sessions: 2 per week (25-30 minutes each).

Procedure: Each week, a storybook related to a theme (e.g., animals, emotions, food) was read aloud. Stories were accompanied by visual aids, gestures, role-play, and repetition of key phrases. After the reading, children engaged in follow-up activities: acting out scenes, answering questions, drawing scenes from the story, or using new vocabulary in games.

Data Collection Tools: Teacher observation notes. Audio recordings of sessions. Children's drawings and oral responses. Vocabulary recall checklists (before and after).

Results. Data analysis revealed several key outcomes: **Vocabulary Improvement:** On average, children increased their active vocabulary by 40-60% across different themes. **Improved Listening and Attention:** Children demonstrated longer attention spans during storytelling compared to traditional lessons. **Increased Speaking Confidence:** More children began volunteering to speak in English using phrases from the stories, such as "I am happy", "Where is the cat?", or "It's a big red apple."

Emotional Connection: Learners remembered stories even weeks later and were able to retell parts using gestures or keywords. As Shin and Crandall emphasize, "Storytelling creates a low-anxiety environment where young learners can acquire language in a meaningful context."

Discussion. The findings support the view that the Storytelling Method is a highly effective tool for teaching English to preschool children. Several reasons contribute to its success: **Contextual Learning:** Words and phrases are embedded in meaningful, memorable contexts.

Multisensory Engagement: Through pictures, sound, gestures, and interaction, children receive input through multiple channels, reinforcing learning.

Affective Benefits: Stories create emotional connections, which are known to aid memory and motivation.

Encouragement of Natural Language Use: Unlike isolated vocabulary drills, storytelling presents language as a holistic system.

However, some challenges were noted:

Stories must be carefully chosen to match the children's cognitive and linguistic level.

Teachers may need training to effectively integrate interactive storytelling techniques.

Overall, the benefits outweigh the limitations, especially in settings where traditional methods may not fully engage young learners.

Conclusion. The Storytelling Method proves to be a valuable, child-centered approach to teaching English in preschool contexts. It supports language development by offering exposure to meaningful, repeatable, and engaging language input. Moreover, storytelling promotes confidence, creativity, and communication. Teachers of young learners are encouraged to integrate stories into their curriculum not only for linguistic gains but also for the emotional and cognitive development of the child.

The findings of this study demonstrate that the Storytelling Method is a highly effective and developmentally appropriate approach to teaching English to preschool children. By engaging

learners in meaningful, emotional, and context-rich narratives, storytelling facilitates natural language acquisition in ways that traditional instruction often cannot .

Preschool children benefit from the repetition, rhythm, and structure found in stories, which support vocabulary development, listening comprehension, and the emergence of speaking skills. As Brewster et al. observe, “Stories provide ideal conditions for learning a language: repetition, predictable structure, and enjoyment.” Moreover, storytelling fosters imaginative thinking and emotional involvement, which are essential components in early childhood education .This method also aligns with Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory, emphasizing the role of social interaction in language development. Through storytelling activities such as role-play, dramatization, and question-and-answer sessions, children are provided with authentic communication opportunities in a low-anxiety environment .Despite some challenges - such as the need for careful story selection and teacher preparation - the advantages are substantial. Storytelling not only enhances linguistic competence but also nurtures confidence, creativity, and a love for learning. Therefore, it is recommended that English language teachers working with preschoolers integrate storytelling into their regular classroom routines, using stories not only as entertainment but as powerful pedagogical tools.

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