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TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE THROUGH STORYTELLING

Abstract. The relevance of the study is determined by a high effectiveness of using storytelling for teaching, especially with young learners who always enjoy listening to stories. Stories have the ability to make the children use their imagination and dive in it. It helps the learners to develop their skills (listening, speaking, reading comprehension and writing). The method has a great impact in motivating learners to be more active in their learning process. So, teaching through storytelling can give learners a fun language learning experience. There considered the theoretical background of the problem studied and showed the importance of storytelling while teaching English as a foreign language giving some proving examples.

Keywords: storytelling, english as a foreign language, young learners, stories, method, comprehension, skills.

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ОБУЧЕНИЕ АНГЛИЙСКОМУ ЯЗЫКУ КАК ИНОСТРАННОМУ НА ОСНОВЕ СТОРИТЕЛЛИНГА

Аннотация. Представлена эффективность использования сторителлинга в процессе обучения. Показано, что истории помогают детям задействовать воображение, что способствует

развитию навыков аудирования, говорения, чтения и письма. Описано влияние метода на мотивацию младших обучающихся к участию в учебном процессе. Представлено теоретическое обоснование проблемы, показана важность применения сторителлинга при обучении английскому языку как иностранному, приводятся примеры.

Ключевые слова: сторителлинг, английский язык как иностранный, младшие обучающиеся, рассказы, метод, восприятие, навыки.

Nowadays, English is considered as the primary international language of technology, education, aviation, global business and international diplomacy. It has become the most commonly used language of international communication today. People, all over the world, use it for both sending and receiving messages. Of all languages in the world today, English deserves to be regarded as a world language. It is the world's most widely spoken language after Chinese. Also, it is the common means of communication between the peoples of different nations. As such, it is regarded as the unique language for global communication in the 21st century. Most people who use English these days are not English and were not born in an English speaking country. English is not only attracting people's notice, but it has gained access to both their hearts and minds as well. Again, the number of speakers of English as a second/foreign language is increasing every year, as mentioned before, because there is a growing importance towards that language as an international language and as a lingua franca.

Storytelling is one of the best ways to help students learn the four skills in their first and second language because of the numerous benefits embedded in stories. It also enhances learners' communication skills [12, p. 167]. According to L. A. Sanchez, storytelling is the best way to help the students learn the second language in the same way as their mother tongue; telling stories can be used as an effective strategy to increase learners' abilities in all learning areas [15]. It is a useful teaching technique for language development and exploring meanings of experiences and also improves students' general knowledge.

Studies show that the use of storytelling in classrooms can contribute significantly to early literacy development. For example, M. X. Rivera Pinzón shows that storytelling and reading stories can improve both students' reading comprehension and their writing [13]. R. Mello's research also de-

monstrates that storytelling can improve the fluency and vocabulary acquisition of children [10]. Similarly, K. Mallan shows that storytelling helps students learn to listen and to participate in their everyday communication [8].

The effects of storytelling on learners' first language literacy are extended to second language learning too, and some researchers and teachers try to use storytelling techniques in teaching speaking and oral skills. For example, A. M. Trousdale's study shows that storytelling improves learners' English speaking abilities [18]. R. G. Brice believes that storytelling is a great technique which can be used to increase EFL learners' oral skills [1, p. 40]. H. Sepahvand states that storytelling is a great strategy to improve the oral speaking abilities of students as they draw students' focus on meaning rather than form [16, p. 1850]. Parallel to this, S. Ebrahimejad, A. Azizifar, H. Gowhary, and A. Jamalinesari advocate that short stories help learners improve their speaking skills and enhance their independent English language learning [4]. The storytelling technique is believed to be one of the most enjoyable techniques which can develop students' English language [14, p. 42]; digital storytelling can improve students' speaking skills much more than the traditional way of storytelling. Marzuki, Prayogo and Wahyudi show that the implementation of interactive storytelling strategy increases the EFL learners' speaking ability and their classroom activities. At the same time, F. Hemmati, Z. Gholamrezapour and Gh. Hesamy demonstrate that reading story aloud and teachers' storytelling affects students' listening comprehension [5].

Storytelling also helps the learners to develop other language skills such as vocabulary and grammar knowledge, reading and writing. For example, N. H. Mokhtar, Abdul Halim and M. F. Kamarulzaman show that storytelling improves learners' reading skills and helps them develop their vocabulary [12, p. 165]. In a similar study, Soleimani and Akbari also confirm that storytelling increases learners' English vocabulary. This is also corroborated by F. Kalantari and M. Hashemian, who show that storytelling increases the vocabulary knowledge of Iranian English students and also boosts their motivation [7]. H. Soleimani reveal that using storytelling also helps students learn grammatical rules easily [17, p. 4008].

Moreover, storytelling encourages less willing EFL learners to participate more in the classroom activities such as listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Other studies show that the use of stories has positive effect in the classroom. For example, S. Samantaray believes that storytelling technique changes the environment of a tedious classroom into an exciting one [14]. M. Dujmović conclude that animated storytelling can be used as a powerful tool in the classrooms [3]. Among these, storytelling can improve the competence of EFL learners and decrease their stress. F. Kalantari and M. Hashemian's [7] and B. I. Martinez's [9] studies demonstrate an increase in EFL students' motivation toward and interest in learning through telling stories. Similarly, S. Miller and L. Pennycuff observe that reluctant students tend to be motivated by engaging in storytelling activities [11, p. 40]. In addition, M. Cortazzi and L. Jin also confirmed EFL learners' improvement in their skills [2, p. 651]. Finally, storytelling provides an interacting bond between teachers and students for learning language [6, p. 15].

Besides, the personal plan presupposes the peculiarities of the readers' perception of the work on the basis of their own life experience, moral ethical principles, and the impression made. This plan makes it possible to adapt the classical text to the realities of modernity and look at well-known stories in a new way. ... It is advisable to put students in conditions that encourage them to be active, to attract their own experience, to realize their individuality in the perception of a literary text [19, c. 10].

Read the story from beginning to end several times. Read it out loud. Master the structure of the story: the beginning (introduction of characters), the body (building of conflict), and the climax (resolution of conflict). Visualize the succession of scenes. Work on creating sensual setting and character descriptions. Note unusual expressions, word patterns, rhymes, and dialogues. Try to outline the story. Learn a story incident by incident, it is not useful to memorize the story word for word, prepare notes that will help you remember this structure. Cue card outlines are also useful in preparation and storage of tales, but should not be used in telling.

Long stories can be simplified or sequenced, but not overly modified or censored. Time for yourself while practising. Perhaps a "story hour" should include a mixture of activities: reading storybooks, listening to story tapes, reciting poetry, singing songs, playing games, etc. as well as the oral story itself.

Try always to control the story's vocabulary. The rich vocabulary, with carefully chosen adjectives and adverbs, gives colour and texture to

the telling. However, you should be comfortable with your use of language and not try too hard to get things right, or the story will appear flat and tense. Don't worry if your listeners don't know every word; guessing is a part of learning a language.

Tell the story out loud to hear your voice – your instrument – that you can practice, train, and even change. Stopping and lowering the sound is often more effective than screaming. Report the conversation at normal speed; tell the narration more quickly, and turns towards the climax. Practice aloud to yourself, your family or friends. You could practice on audio or even video tape. Practice in front of a mirror to eliminate poor gestures and facial expressions. Some say practice makes storytelling artificial and studied, but it is essential to the beginner.

Warm up as the situation allows with breathing, stretching and vocal exercises. Relax before telling the story.

There are a number of techniques you can use when reading stories aloud to make the experience more enjoyable and successful for your pupils. If they aren't familiar with storytelling, start with short sessions that don't take too much of them and increase their focus. The story should be presented in a way that emphasizes the “what” of the story, not the “how” of the story.

The teacher can have the children sit on the ground around you when you read the story, and make sure everyone can see your face and the illustrations in the story. The teacher should speak slowly and clearly. Give his pupils time to think, ask questions, look at pictures, and make comments. The teacher should comment on the illustrations. When you say a word, refer to the term at the same time. Another way to improve storytelling skill is by actively involving your pupils also asking them to refer to the illustrations. Always try to encourage your pupils to participate in storytelling by repeating key words and phrases. You can invite them to do this by pausing, looking at them with an interrogative expression and placing your hand on your ear to indicate that you are waiting for them to join. The use of gestures, mimes, facial expressions, and a variety of tempo and tone is very important. Adapt your voice to different characters as much as you can to help convey meaning and draw your pupils' attention. The creation of a relaxed, informal atmosphere that reflects storytelling in children's homes when telling a story for the first time. You can do this by gathering

the pupils around you in the form of a semi-circle; this arrangement makes it easy for them to hear you and see which visual you want to use. Children will be more comfortable if there is a small carpeted area in one corner of the classroom where they can sit. Some of the old, scattered blankets for storytelling time might be a good alternative. Make sure you practice the story beforehand so that you can look at children repeatedly as you read or tell the story. You should also know where to pause or separate out text for questions, etc. When listening to a story in a foreign language, children rely heavily on their eyes to help them comprehend. Thus, the use of visuals and other forms of support for listening is very important for the child to understand and enjoy the story. The aids you use when telling stories can take many forms, both visual and auditory, and are often referred to as storytellers. These may include pre-recorded or teacher-made pictures, real objects, models, or cassette tapes.

When using storytelling as a method of teaching, asking questions about reading comprehension would be very useful. The teacher can use of the usual who, what, where, when, how much, and why questions. Also there are other, more creative ways to use questions. Multiple choice questions and questions that can be answered by inference can be used. Suppositions can be made, like: What would you have done? What should the character have done? Students may choose from a list of questions provided by the teacher and ask a partner. It's even possible to give out comprehension questions first and have the students construct the story.

The teacher can do listening activities. After a story tale, learners can demonstrate comprehension by: comparing, discriminating, predicting, sequencing, classifying, transferring information, etc. Unlike other listening activities, stories are often repeated, but never in exactly the same words. After reading the story, the teacher can include oral activities. The learners can talk about the tale together. Discussion topics can be taken from the story's themes. Students can retell their favourite tales, or invent stories based on their own personal experiences.

Using written activities is very important. Rewriting, summarizing, or paraphrasing a tale are obvious and worthwhile activities. Written exercises can include controlled writing dictation and cloze paragraphs, guided writing (sentence extension or sentence-combining exercises), or free writ-

ing using the tale as a literary model. Other options include: journal writing, research projects, making up original stories patterned on stories told to the group, and writing a poem or a play version of a story.

The teacher can integrate exercises in phonetics, semantics and syntax. There is no limit to the language exercises that can be based on a story: introduction of new vocabulary in lexical sets, rhyming sets, or grammatical sets; verbal practice and grammatical analysis of repeated phrases.

Teaching through storytelling can contain visual activities. Story-related artwork can include: posters, models, collages, crafts, masks, puppets, mobiles, photos, picture stories, blackboard drawing, etc. Stories are part of aesthetic education and develop creativity.

Creative drama activities also can be used in this process. There are many story games to play. Stories naturally lend themselves to be dramatized, mimed, or role-played. Prepared dialogues from tales can be recited, or students can tell or retell stories they choose or make up themselves.

As the Indian proverb says, “Tell me a fact and I'll learn. Tell me the truth and I'll believe. But tell me a story and it will live in my heart forever.”

Thus, the stories educate, clarify, enlighten, and inspire. They ease routine and stimulate the mind. It is a great incentive for teachers as well as students. The stories are used in an exclusively positive school environment, meaning no grades, no failures, no textbooks, no notebooks, no dictionaries, no expensive audio-visual equipment – nothing that comes between the listener and the reader. Storytelling is learned slowly over a long period, but the novice and the expert can both experience success on different levels. Storytelling is a popular art that cannot be manipulated, contemplated, or mass-produced. Its charm is unique. The narrator is always a teacher, and the teacher is always a storyteller. All teaching methods and suggestions in this article can be adapted to different degrees and proficiency levels depending on the type of literature chosen.

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