

The Enhancement of Receptive and Productive Skills of Young Learners through Storytelling Method at the Elementary Level

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Abstract

Learning means permanent change in behavior resulted by practice. Different methods and strategies are used by the teachers to get the desired learning in the students. The main aim of the paper is to share the investigation of how storytelling method is helpful to improve the young learner's receptive and productive skills at the elementary level. The target population was consisted of 57 primary schools in urban area working under Federal Directorate of Education Islamabad and five thousand male students studying in grade iii. One school and 60 students were randomly selected for the study. Two groups of control and experimental were made dividing randomly 30 students in each group. The control group was taught through conventional method while the experimental group was taught through storytelling. The pre-test and the post-test were the instruments of data collection. The data was analyzed through using T-test and was presented in the form of tables. The findings revealed that the students taught through story telling performed better than that of those who were taught through conventional method. So it is recommended that the story telling method should be used for the enhancement of the young learners' productive and receptive skills in teaching English at the elementary level and the teachers should be trained according to the needs.

Keywords: Permanent, behavior, receptive, productive, enhancement.

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Introduction

Education is the strongest element which provides mental moral and physical development of the individuals and makes them aware of their aim and objectives in life (Noddings, 1995). During recent years lexical competency among students at primary level has been much focused. Many researches proved that our minds can store and absorb all the information in the form of story rather than abstract ideas. Thus an active teacher can increase the vocabulary potential of the students through story telling. In Pakistan, teaching English is not considered an easy task as here English is not taught as a second language but sometime it becomes a third language as most of the children's mother tongue is not Urdu.

The learning of new words can be considered if it can be stored for long time. Generally the teaching process involves three main paradigms that are the teacher, the learner and the material to be read. The teaching process is considered successful when the learner is able to use the gained information accurately and practically whenever it is needed (Sarwar, 2002). Teaching of English vocabulary to young learners in Pakistani schools has been neglected by the teachers due to the lack of training and the lack of interest on the side of the teacher and the students as well. Without grammar, it is possible to convey the meaning but without vocabulary it is not possible to make a sense and give information about anything.

Without vocabulary one cannot imagine to learn a new language. While teaching English vocabulary to the young students in Pakistani schools, the teachers face a lot of problems in getting aims. He should implement the most appropriate methods and must be acquainted with up-to-date knowledge. The use of visual aids, drawing, pictures, contrast, gestures, guessing etc. can be some important techniques to improve vocabulary. But the storytelling method has always a long life impact on the young learners' learning when the story is presented in an enjoyable and fun filled experience where the listeners also become a part of telling, guessing and retelling it. Storytelling improves the four skills that are listening, speaking, reading and writing. Listening and reading are called receptive skills while speaking and writing are productive skills. The skills of guessing, thinking, reasoning and inferring the meanings are also strengthened. Before telling stories to students, the teacher should keep in mind that the children are different from adults in learning. They are different in their ways of thinking, their behavior, their interest etc. (Shirley, 2005).

The art of storytelling is not a new idea. It finds its roots in primitive society. The scientists said that human beings are storytelling creature. Oral words have great power and expression. The teachers create a wonderful atmosphere of learning in which young children acquire a lot of new words because of repetition of words. Above all the performance of the storyteller involves them actively. They often repeat the words or do the actions with the teacher having a lot of fun together. The teacher should keep in mind that different stories stimulate the young students differently and

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they show different reactions to the stories they hear. If the teacher knows the art of telling a story, he can spell the young learners. Storytelling art is considered an effective educational tool (Andrews, 2008). All human beings need stories to refresh their minds just as we need food for our bodies to grow. Children are considered natural language learners but they should be exposed to native learning environment.

The students who have greater scope and exposure of listening to the stories, they have more chances of listening of new language, learning new words and understanding story structures and sentences. While listening to stories, students remain active, relaxed and attentive. The success of the storytelling in the classroom lies in the good selection of books and reading method. Storytelling is a way of enhancing the skills of imagination, creativity, and sharpening the language abilities. As learners of a foreign language, children have their own psychological and strange qualities, which are different from those of adults. These qualities include their ways of thinking, their behavior, their interest, etc. This should, of course, affect the way they are taught. In order to give them the best quality of English teaching, their teachers need to know and understand the children. They absorb language effortlessly and imitate the speech sounds without knowing it (Cameron, 2001)).

Different stories and story formats are used to investigate the effect of storytelling in learning English. Stories are in the form of fairy tales, fables, folk tales, stories on personal experiences, adventures and romantic stories etc. Haven & Ducey (2007) said that different studies have showed that the young learners benefit from them and enhance their vocabulary fruitfully. The stories can be oral or in the printed form. The role of digital storytelling has also been found very effective in the improvement of learning English. Stories have vast materials for learning about the world they live in and every real life situation is tangible in the spell bounding world of imagination.

Kozol (2007) believed that continuous eye contact between teacher and students is important in storytelling as this act is natural in communication and thus it improves communication skills in the classroom. Storytelling is a verbal activity that makes listening skill better but also improves the involvement of the class participation. Stories are famous among children in Pakistan. They are familiar with many famous characters and different themes. They know the brave heroes of their history. But unfortunately, they are not exposed to the story world while teaching them English. Most of the teachers consider storytelling method a little bit time consuming and find the conventional method an easy way to teach a foreign language.

Many researchers proved that learning a new language is not very easy task. The fact that young children learn their first language with such speed and competency that shows that if the process can be better understood, it is possible to

create new methods which can be helpful for the children to learn a second language in the same way as they learn their first language (Mellow, 2001).

When young learners enter the school, they bring different experiences and stories with them. The teachers should get advantage of these stories in order to make teaching meaningful to the students as they are founded on their own interest and experiences (Lee, 2016). The teachers are handling the students who are trying understanding the present changing world. Thus he should know words and stories to get their concentration. He should make them comfortable to understand the reality. Actually our every student is a born storyteller shaping and arranging the raw material of every day experience that gives meaning and life.

Lee (2016) also proved that the vocabulary acquisition could be best enhanced through narrating a story to young children. The idea of story kept the young learners focused. They learnt the new vocabulary rapidly. Read (2000) selected participants to teach vocabulary. The vocabulary items from stories were in the form of pictures and gestures. After the pretest and the posttest the EFL learners gained better achievements than the students who were taught through text books.

Storytelling is a unique method of welcoming the young learners to the startling world of the books. It makes them habitual for reading. When they are exposed to the patterns of oral language, it affects their sub skills of listening. They can make images using their imagination. They can think of new ideas feeling more confident and motivated. The storytelling is the best way to change the difficult and abstract ideas into simple and teachable language.

Primary school programs demand verbal and written proficiency in all subject areas. The students can learn these if they practice reading, writing, speaking and listening. The language teachers are trying to implement storytelling in classrooms considering it an appealing approach for the young learners in learning a foreign language. Actually stories help the teachers to help them in their teaching materials. This approach significantly involves the four skills making the materials more effective and enchanting linguistically, cognitively, socially and psychologically. All these skills can be taught through a story giving a lot of advantage to the language teacher in the following ways:

Storytelling and Receptive Skills:

Listening

Listening skill is developed first in the child. According to the psychologists the period of early childhood shows the fastest progress of human life in his physical, mental, emotional growth along with the rapid development in his language skill. All children follow the same sequence of changes and growth in physical, mental, emotional and social development having different pace of growth (Philips, 2013).

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How children listen a story is very important in developing their vocabulary. The teacher should create suitable conditions for listening along with proper teaching materials, talking about topic and body language. Brumfit, Moon & Tongue (1991) believed that when the students communicate in the classroom environment, they are actually spending their maximum time in listening to their teacher, listening to their class fellows and different recording materials. They are continuously listening English from the teacher in the form of story, instructions, explanation and some time he is praising some other students or asking them to answer a question. The main problem is that the teachers do not teach their pupils how to listen.

Nunan (2003) said that listening skill is a passive skill that is used the most but it is not taught in the classroom. It has been observed that now- a- days children like to spend more time with the electronic media than listening to stories. The reason is that their parents are so much busy in their lives that they seldom bother to give their children some time for telling stories. The parents want their children to spend their evenings watching television or playing games.

Reading:

Reading is also an important way of acquiring a second language. When they read a book, it takes them another world of fantasy and learning a second language becomes an enjoyable experience and activity for them (Ellis & Brewster, 2002). The children of age ten are capable of transferring their reading skills of English. It is found that pupils feel difficulty in reading text books because they lack fluency due to unfamiliarity with the words. They lose their confidence. Storybooks provide many chances for reading improving their interest. To expect the children to read too much does not have the plus point as it demotivate them.

Real books can create a successful classroom. They can motivate the children to effective reading in English. Harmer (1991) believed that a passage of English can be comprehended though the vocabulary and structures the students has never gone through before. He described the following points to help both the teacher and the students strengthen the reading skill:

- a. Foretelling skill
- b. Getting the main gist of the information
- c. Grasping the general idea reading in detail
- d. Identifying speech patterns and functions
- e. Inferring the meaning from the context.

The teacher helps the young learners to do a lot of exercises in intensive reading, extensive reading, scanning and skimming. While selecting storybook for reading, two points should be kept in mind:

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- i. Is it a good story?
- ii. Can it be shared with the students?

Storytelling and Productive Skills:

Speaking:

Speaking is “the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of contexts”. Speaking skill is one of the most important children’s first medium that is used most of the time to communicate with others. It is the very first medium through which he tries to make evaluation for describing and controlling his/her emotions, feelings and experiences. Above all the speaking skill is the main source of transferring the culture and the world of their own defining themselves with it and within that culture (Cregan, 1998).

Children speak a lot. They always like to speak about their home, surrounding, pets and likes and dislikes. But they feel uncomfortable when confronting a foreign language at school for the first time. English speech and sounds and patterns become difficult for them. They are unable to speak fluently. At the same time they have the ability to learn quickly through playing and enjoy repeating words in games (Cajete& Eder, 2007).

Writing

Writing skill is considered the last one to be taught. English should be taught as we learn our mother tongue starting from listening, speaking, reading and writing should be in the last. The students are generally asked to copy words and small sentences as a practice in English hand writing. This practice exhibit their school works or daily lives. It is further connected with pictures and posters in the class. But writing skill cannot be restricted with the simple words and sentences. It should be innovative, creative in spellings, grammar, pronunciation, choice of suitable words selection and knowing about how to join words and how to build passages (Philips, 2013).

Writing stories by the students provide an opportunity to the teacher to have insight into their character, interests and problems. They can be asked to complete some written tasks which they face during holiday or in a journey. The children feel great experience when they start shaping their text in writing.

Significance of the study:

Learning a new language is a complex process because it is not a way of arranging different meaningful words together rather it requires a mental, physical and emotional action when getting messages in it. As a matter of fact learning a new language means learning a new system, new culture, new sounds, different styles of thinking, feeling and doing action. The learner needs accuracy, fluency and meanings (Lee, 2016).

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Storytelling is considered an important educational tool as it links the classroom and the home. It unites different cultures and bridge up the cultural gap. It inspires young students' imagination and they meet new words in a new world. Stories can bridge up the gap between the language and how to use the language and also joins the classroom learning with the outside world. A skilled teacher can use storytelling as a part of language curriculum to construct his pupils' language skills. Students improve their reading and writing when they go through the language patterns of stories enriching their vocabulary. They become aware of selecting not only the right words in true manner but also conveying their meaning and creating expected result on reader (Pfeiffer & Boles, 2008).

Through storytelling teacher spells students and they are unconsciously learning a language which is not familiar to them. Learning English vocabulary has always been problematic for Pakistani young students. In government schools the situation is not rosy rather gloomy as traditional methods of teaching English language put no positive effect on students learning vocabulary resulting low competency in English language at later stage. Being a developing a country, Pakistan needs to make use of English in order to prove its international power. Many researches showed that teaching of English remains a challenging task for Pakistani teachers. It becomes painstaking due to the lack of qualified and trained language teachers, their experience as bilingual teacher in the presence of many mother tongues, psychology of learners, assessment techniques, improper educational policies etc. The learners face problems due to the focused teaching, heavy burden of syllabus, lack of motivation, examination system etc.

All the above problems result in the poor performance of the students in English language learning as a foreign language. They hesitate to communicate in English effectively for a number of reasons, one of them, which is most important, is that they lack English vocabulary. It is the area which is neglected. If some time they try to focus it, the language teachers do not know how pupils can learn English best at their early stage. It is a reality that young learners are naturally very sharp in learning everything when they enter kindergarten. They can be easily trained to raise their level of learning English (Arends, 2004). So the present study tried to investigate to what extent storytelling can improve the young learners' receptive and productive skills at cognitive domain at sub level of remembering

The researcher in this study tried to determine that the storytelling method improves the students' English skills in the classroom. Thus the study may help the teachers and the future researchers to use these findings as guidelines to help the young learners to share a variety of personal experiences and different ways of understanding in the classroom after listening stories .It may help the students to use English language as a tool to shape their thoughts and feelings. It may help them to exchange and extend their ideas and imagination. It may help them to use new words

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in expressing themselves and the things and events around them. This study may be very helpful for the teachers to take the decision regarding the selection of teaching method to teach English vocabulary at primary level.

The findings of the study may help teachers' training institutions, academic managers to arrange the training programs for the teachers how they can use stories to upgrade young learners' vocabulary. The curriculum wing may plan different stories through different techniques.

Objectives of the Study:

The researcher made the following objectives for the study:

1. To find out the effect of storytelling on the enhancement of receptive skills (listening and reading) of the young learners.
2. To find out the effect of storytelling on the enhancement of productive skills (speaking and writing) of the young learners.

Hypothesis of the study:

Keeping in view the objectives, the researcher constructed the following hypothesis:

1. There is no significant difference of mean scores on pupils' receptive skills of cognitive domain at the sub level of remembering by storytelling.
2. There is no significant difference of mean scores on pupils' productive skills of cognitive domain at the sub level of remembering by storytelling.

Delimitation:

The study was delimited to only male students of Islamabad Model Schools (I-V) Urban working under Federal Directorate of Education Islamabad. Only three units of text book (iii) were included to introduce new vocabulary.

Methodology:

The study was carried to find the effects of storytelling on the achievement of receptive and productive skills at cognitive domain at sub level of remembering. The study was quantitative and experimental in nature.

Population

The population of the study was all the male students of 3rd grade studying in the Islamabad Model Schools (i-v) in urban areas working under Federal Directorate of Education Islamabad. The target population consisted of 57 primary schools and 5000 students. The school was selected using simple random sampling. The 60 male students of grade iii were selected through random sampling.

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Sample

Islamabad Model School (i-v) G/10-2 was selected through random sampling. There were three sections of grade iii and the number of the students was 120. The sixty students were selected and two groups were formed:

Research Instrument

The study was experimental in nature. So the pre-test and the post-test were used as the research instruments. The pre-test and the post-test were the same test. The test was consisted of 100 items. The items were randomly ordered and were applied to check the work of the students before and after the experiment. The pre-test items were shuffled and post-test was formed.

Procedure

The study was conducted in Islamabad Model School (i-v) G/10-2. The sample of study consisted of grade iii male students. A pre-test was consisted of 100 items containing 100 marks based on listening, reading, speaking and writing skills. The items of the test were taken from English text book of grade iii. The test was applied on 60 students of class iii. On the result of their achievement scores in the pre-test, the students were divided into two groups randomly. They were named as experimental and control groups. The researcher developed six lesson plans based on the four skills. The researcher taught the experimental group herself using the storytelling method and the control group was taught by the conventional teacher. The achievement scores of post-test were collected and the difference was found and gained data was analyzed through t-test, mean and standard deviation.

Analysis of Data

The data was analyzed by using T-test and was presented in the form of tables.

Table 1

Pre-test scores of experimental and control groups on remembering items of receptive skills

GROUPS	N	Mean
Experimental	30	16.2
Control	30	17.3

The above table presented that there is no prominent difference between mean scores of experimental group (M=16.2) and control group (M=17.3) in the pre-test on remembering items of receptive skills.

Table 2

Pre-test scores of experimental and control groups on remembering items of productive skills:

GROUPS	N	Mean
Experimental	30	13.3
Control	30	12.7

The above table resulted that there is no prominent difference between mean scores of experimental group (M=13.3) and control group (M=12.7) in the pre-test on remembering items of productive skills.

Table 3

Comparison of pre-test scores of experimental and control groups on remembering items of both the receptive and productive skills:

GROUPS	N	Mean
Experimental	30	24.5
Control	30	25.2

The comparison between the pre-test mean scores of the control and the experimental groups were 24.5 and 25.2 respectively showing that there is no prominent difference in the mean scores of both the groups before the treatment.

Table 4

The post-test scores of control group and experimental group on remembering items of receptive skills

GROUPS	N	Mean
Experimental	30	78.5
Control	30	56.2

The table 4 indicates that the mean score of remembering items on receptive skills of experimental group (78.5) was significantly greater in the post-test than that of the control group (56.2) after the treatment. So the null hypothesis "There is no significant difference of mean scores on pupils' receptive skills by storytelling" was rejected.

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Table 5

The post-test mean scores of the experimental and control groups on remembering items productive skills

GROUPS	N	Mean
Experimental	30	59.7
Control	30	31.1

The results indicated that the mean score of remembering items on productive skills of experimental group (59.7) was significantly greater than that of the control group (31.1) after the treatment. Therefore the null hypothesis "There is no significant difference of mean scores on pupils' productive skills by storytelling" was rejected.

Table 6

The comparison between post-test mean scores of the experimental and control groups

Groups	N	Mean	SD	t-value
Control	30	58.3	3.98	5.42
Experimental	30	46.5	5.62	

The comparison between the post-test mean scores of the control and the experimental groups were 46.5 and 58.3 respectively showing that the students taught through the storytelling method were better in the post-test than the students of the control group taught through the conventional method.

Finding

1. The pre-test mean scores of the control and experimental groups were 17.3 and 16.2 respectively showing no significant difference on remembering items of receptive skills before the treatment (table 1).
2. The pre-test mean scores of the control and the experimental groups were 12.7 and 13.3 respectively indicating no significant difference on remembering of productive skills before the treatment (table 2).
3. The comparison between the pre-test mean scores of the control and the experimental groups on remembering items of receptive and productive skills were 25.2 and 24.5 respectively showing that there is no prominent difference in the mean scores of both the groups before the treatment (table 3).
4. The post-test mean scores of the control and experimental groups were 56.2 and 78.5 respectively on remembering of receptive skills and showed that the

- experimental group which was taught through storytelling method performed better than the control group taught through conventional method (table 4).
5. The post-test mean scores of the experimental and control groups were 31.1 and 59.7 respectively showing that the experimental group was better than the control group in the post-test on remembering items of productive skills after the treatment (Table 5).
 6. The comparison of mean scores of control and experimental groups were 46.5 and 58.3 respectively showing that the students taught through story telling performed better than those taught through conventional method ($t=5.42 \geq 2.0$ at $\alpha 0.05$).

Discussion and Conclusions

The main of the study was to investigate the enhancement of receptive and productive skills through storytelling improving the students' English at elementary level. Different angles and dimensions of the topic were brought into light showing the importance of the research study. Important researches on how to improve the listening, speaking, reading and writing of the students through storytelling were mentioned to provide the baseline for showing the importance of the study. A brief account was also included about difficulties faced by the teacher in using stories as a method of enhancing young learners' vocabulary in the schools. The researcher described the benefits of using stories and some important activities which can be adopted through the storytelling strategy in the classroom. An argument has been made on the importance of the teacher's storytelling on improving vocabulary of the primary grade students using the research studies available in the literature.

The comparison of the mean scores of pre-test of both the groups were made showing the performances of the experimental group and the control group indicating no significance difference between them before the treatment. The comparison of the mean scores of both the groups indicated that the experimental group taught through the storytelling performed better in the attainment of listening, reading, speaking and writing concepts of English as compared to the control group taught through the conventional method.

Recommendations

- The storytelling method may be adopted and practiced especially by the elementary school teachers in the subject of English for the enhancement of the four skills and learning a language. It may be used for making the base at this level.
- The method may be used for secondary level for teaching English.
- Teachers may be trained as master trainers in teaching English how to use storytelling method in teaching English.
- Different strategies of storytelling method may be included in the programs of the teacher education at various levels.

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