

The Effect of Storytelling Method on the Achievement of English Subject at the Elementary Level

Shabana Dilawar¹ & Sheikh Tariq Mehmood²

Abstract

Language is the way of transmitting our ideas and feelings to other persons. It is the need of the time that we all know a language which can be understood and spoken in all over the world. English language has acquired the position of an international language. The purpose of the paper is to share the investigation of at what extent the storytelling method can improve the young learners' cognitive domain at the sub level of knowledge, comprehension, application and analysis. The study adopted experimental method. The target population was consisted of 57 primary schools in urban ii working under Federal Directorate of Education Islamabad and 5000 female 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 story telling method 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 teaching English at the elementary level and the teachers should be trained according to the needs.

Keywords: Storytelling method, elementary class, English, Islamabad

Introduction

A language consists of words and systems of the people of the same community having the same cultural customs in order to convey their meanings. Every language has its own rules, symbols, signs, gestures, arbitrary and vocal sounds. Thousands of languages are spoken all over the world. Every country has its own language along with a lot of regional dialects and local languages. But there is always a need to learn a foreign a foreign language as a means of transmitting the information which can be best understood by the people of other countries. English serves this purpose well.

¹ PhD Scholar, Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad

² Assistant Professor, International Islamic University, Islamabad

But the main problem is how to teach English as learning means permanent change in behavior (Noddings, 1995).

Pakistan is one of the countries in which English enjoys prestigious position because it is being used as the official language. To acquire a foreign language requires us to have sufficient vocabulary of that language to use it fluently. Vocabulary deals with the words of that language. It is considered the communication tool box. If we want to transfer our ideas in a foreign language, we have to choose the right words from our tool box or word bank. Vast vocabulary always improves the four skills i.e. speaking, reading, writing, listening and confirms the success of the user. English vocabulary is a complicated phenomenon in Pakistan. Quddus (1990) said that both the teachers and students try to pick and learn new words and vocabulary but the result is not fruitful. Recent researches show that the vocabulary teaching can be difficult as most teachers are not sure about the most suitable strategy for vocabulary teaching. They even do not know where to start to teach words.

Vocabulary enhancement has always been a major hurdle for Pakistani students in English acquisition as a foreign language. Engaging children in memorizing different words in order to increase their vocabulary is a difficult task. Most of the time English words appear for them just different sounds and the young learners feel difficulty to tackle them in sentences. English learning and understanding become a dream for them due to the lack of the vocabulary. "If language structures make up the skeleton of language, then it is vocabulary that provides the vital organs and flesh" (Harmer, 1991).

The teacher should have the capacity to remove the difficulties of word study. He should use some successful techniques and methods to strengthen and enlarge the vocabulary of his students while teaching English. An active teacher can use the art of storytelling in constructing English vocabulary so skillfully removing all other language influences as children always show their willingness for listening and telling stories. The kids always have some stories to tell when they are going to the market to buy things, when they are busy at the park in playing games with their friends, shifting to a new town, becoming a sibling of a new baby, or even losing any tooth. Imagine what would be the

result if they are not able to tell their stories just because they have not the correct vocabulary to express themselves (McDury&Alterio, 2003).

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. Andrews (2008) said that the teacher should keep in mind that different stories stimulate the young students differently and 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. All human beings need stories to refresh their minds just as we need food for our bodies to grow.

The skills of guessing, thinking, reasoning and inferring the meanings are strengthened by the stories. Palmer (2001) said that storytelling is a way of enhancing the skills of imagination, creativity, and sharpening the language abilities. Before telling the stories to the students, the teacher should keep in mind that the children are different from adults in learning. As the 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 vocabulary. 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 the history. But unfortunately, they are not exposed to the story world while teaching them English vocabulary. Most of the teachers consider the storytelling method a little bit time consuming and find the conventional method an easy way to teach a foreign language.

In Pakistan teaching of English remains painstaking due to presence of many mother tongues, psychology of learners, examination system, focused teaching and lack of motivation of the students. This results in poor performance of the students as they hesitate to communicate in English effectively. Another reason is the teachers are not sure about the most suitable strategy for teaching English. There are many methods of teaching English in which the storytelling method is considered the best one for young learners as they always love listening and telling stories. But storytelling to the young students at elementary level finds rare place in Pakistani schools due to the heavy burden of syllabus on the teachers and the students as well. At this stage, they do not fully comprehend English language and main focus remains on

cramming. The result is that they lose their interest in learning English. Moreover, in Pakistan English is taught through traditional method of grammar translation method in which the teacher translates every word or sentence in Urdu. The focus remains on meanings rather than on the acquisition of English ignoring the fact that learning a language as a foreign language should be learnt as we learn our mother tongue. The process should be natural listening and speaking the language every time rather than memorizing it. So the intent of this present study was to find out the effect of storytelling on the achievement of cognitive domain at the sub level of knowledge, comprehension, application and analysis.

The researcher made the following objectives for the study:

1. To find out the effect of storytelling on the achievement of cognitive domain at the sub level of knowledge of the pupils.
2. To find out the effect of storytelling on the achievement of cognitive domain at sub level of comprehension of the pupils.
3. To find out the effect of storytelling on the achievement of cognitive domain at the sub level of application.
4. To find out the effect of storytelling on the achievement of cognitive domain at the sub level of analysis.

Literature Review

“Children’s hunger for stories is constant. Every time they enter your classroom, they enter with a need for stories...when children create and tell a story in their own language, the language becomes theirs”. (Wright, 1995). Storytelling is considered a true and real method of teaching. Live oral storytelling will never be out of fashion. The learners take advantage of observing non-polished tale created on the spot. Young learners learn their mother tongue by interacting in the language using it in the community. Thus they need to learn a new language when they are exposed to the native

environment. They need to contact with the context and play with the words and structures. Psychologists say that we can learn a new language as little babies learn their first language. “An intriguing paradox in the development of young children is their ability to establish their first language at a time when they are unable to understand anything about the system which they come to use with such competence” (Brumfit, 1991).

Ellis & Brewster (2002) claimed that children can learn a lot by telling and listening stories. Story provides context to teach vocabulary. Words may have many meanings for describing things. Words in stories are exposed in a clear context with the illustrations and situations that convey meaning. Many researchers say that words in groups which have some common points mostly remain in memory. The teacher should encourage the pupils to use their senses whenever it is possible.

The storyteller has a unique importance as his performance regarding articulating some sentences, his pitch, tone of voice, body movement and some other important characteristics have a deep impact on the learners. Slatterly & Willis (2001) said that a storyteller must not only be a performer but also a person having a fast memory and receptive power, liking the story and knowing it very well so that it can be retold for the audience with certainty and without hesitation. Storytellers who generally pay much attention on their performance can impress the audience but at the cost of the story. Storytelling shows rapid language development. It is said that the children who remain busy in listening stories show better listening skills, better abilities of enhanced language comprehension and more organized thinking in their own writing. Isbell, Sobol, Lowrance and Lindaue (2010) proved through a study describing how storytelling improves the language learning. Two groups of students were taken. One group listened to the stories and the students from the second group listened to the stories read from a book. The result indicated that both the

groups acquired the language skills improving their comprehension and new vocabulary.

Ghosn (2000) and many other researchers carried a study on storytelling and language development. They found that the teachers were very eager to use stories in language classroom as they found it very rewarding and helpful while teaching a foreign language to the students. The study results showed that for the young learners, storytelling can be a good method to start a new subject introducing new words and meanings rather than to ask them to read the books by themselves. This kind of teaching improves the pupils' speaking skill. Lee (2016) took a study in China to show the effectiveness of storytelling in learning a foreign language. A survey was given to collect information about the students' interest, advantages, practices and doing storytelling in the classroom. The results were amazing showing their great interest in storytelling as they found it one of the important methods of acquiring language and getting information and understanding about the national culture and multicultural aspects of the country.

Dweck (2013) did a research in an elementary school in Bucaramanga. The teachers and the students were asked to make a plan about the syllabus. They had to write the stories according to the children's interest, likes and age. They were required to plan the lessons gathering and analyzing data. The result showed the students' increased motivation in learning. They were eager to take interest in different activities, in listening stories and in learning new vocabulary. Hassan & Mahkameh (2013) examined the effect of storytelling on the enhancement of English vocabulary. They conducted the study on thirty one Iranian schools. The pretest and the posttest contained thirty vocabulary picture test items from both the course book and the story book. The study revealed that the students positively improved their vocabulary through storytelling method.

Krashen (2011) is of the view that the storytelling is the 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. Dujmovic (2014) tried to investigate the effects of English storytelling on learning attitudes and English proficiency. He observed that stories when told were the best source of enhancing pupils' knowledge changing their learning behavior positively. He concluded that storytelling was a combination of both teaching process and learning process.

Cajete, Eder, and Holyan (2010) mentioned that stories always carry the music, dance, rock art and spoken words making clear the understanding of man's presence on earth. Generations have used sand, leaves or carved trunks to transmit their stories. Even difficult art of tattoos may be another form of telling stories. Andrews and Duckworth (2009) emphasized that stories become more meaningful in transferring knowledge with a social context and background. They said that when stories are told with social background the children become aware of the fact how gained information is used in the present situation. Bewernick (2010) argued, "storytelling and remembering rely on similar practices: they both arrange images in an ordered structure". In order to make storytelling more effective method, new technologies and trends can be manipulated. For example the modern multi-media tools have been widely used. Dramatization in storytelling produces many benefits for language learning. It allows the language to be used in the context interacting with other learners.

Shirley (2005) stated that all the stories of different countries and cultures have the same theme discussing the issues of life, death, sorrows,

happiness, fear, anger, love affection, bravery, understanding and so on. These stories discuss many sober issues of life and give us the lesson how a gentleman faces the challenges and difficulties in life. She said that the students feel the bitter realities of life. They are facing the violence, death of their dear friend or parents, divorce between their parents, poverty, physical and mental torture etc. These can be used to develop their critical thinking skill.

Research Methodology

The study was carried to find the effect of teacher's storytelling on the achievement of cognitive domain at sub level of knowledge, comprehension, application and analysis.

The study was quantitative and experimental in nature. The population of the study was all the female 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. (i) The school was selected using the purposive sampling. (ii) The 60 female students of grade iii were selected through random sampling. Islamabad Model School (i-v) G/10-2 was selected through purposive sampling. There were three sections of grade iii and the number of the students was 120. The sixty students were selected through random sampling. Two groups were formed:

Table: 1.7.4.1

Group A	Group B
30 Students	30 Students

Research Instrument:

The study was experimental in nature. So the pre-test and the post-test were used as the research instruments.

Procedure

The study was conducted in Islamabad Model School (i-v) G/10-2. The sample of study consisted of grade iii female students. A pre-test was consisted of 100 items containing 100 marks based on Knowledge, Comprehension, Application and Analysis. 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 Blooms Taxonomy. 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.

Findings

The comparison between the pre-test mean scores of the control and the experimental groups were 22.9 and 23.9 respectively showing that there is no prominent difference in the mean scores of both the groups before the treatment.

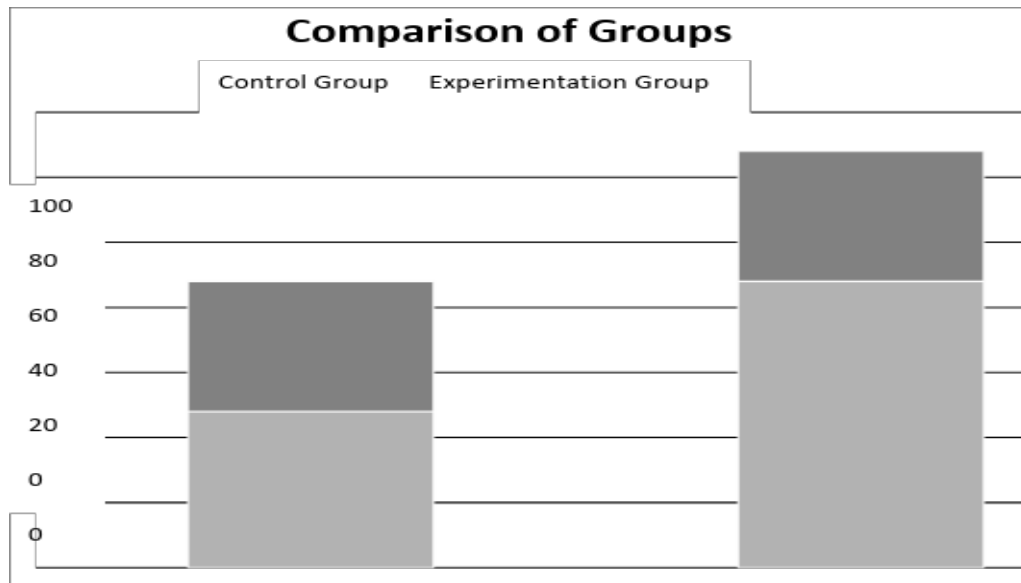
GROUPS	N	Mean
Experimental	30	24.8
Control	30	23.8

The students of the experimental group showed better than that of the control group in the post-test on knowledge items after the treatment. The students of the experimental group showed better performance than that of the control group in the post-test on comprehension items after the treatment. The students of the experimental group performed better than that of the control group in the post-test on analysis items. The students of the experimental group performed better than that of the control group in the post-test on application items. The students of the experimental group taught through the storytelling

method were better in the post-test than the students of the control group taught through the conventional method.

Groups	N	Mean	SD	t-value
Control	30	57.7	9.2	4.73
Experimental	30	69.7	10.4	

The difference between the two groups was also shown in the graph:



Conclusions

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 attainment of the knowledge and comprehension concepts of the experimental group which was taught through storytelling was better in the post-test than the control group. The attainment of the analysis and application concepts of the experimental group which was taught through the storytelling was better in the post-test than the control group which was taught through the conventional method. 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 knowledge, comprehension, analysis and application 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 vocabulary enhancement 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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