Effectiveness of the Storytelling Approach in Developing English Language Performance of Primary Schoolers

BY
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Introduction:

English is the language of globalization, international communication, commerce and trade. It is not only used for communication between native and nonnative speakers of English but also the non-native speakers together. Accordingly, learning and teaching English has become increasingly important in the time to cope with the tremendous progress in the speakers of English all over the world (Richards, 2002).

Anthony (2014) noted that teaching English for communication to young learners is an important topic to investigate because many research studies reveal that English is taught best at an early stage. Language has held a central place in the primary curriculum; students are being taught English is an international language; learning this language requires constant practice and patience. The kind of feeling that prevails among students is that it is not possible to achieve fluency or mastery over English language (Ahmadi, 2016).

Scott and Windsor (2000) explained that language performance can be characterized by general measures of productivity, fluency, lexical diversity, and grammatical complexity and accuracy. There are some skills required for developing English language performance. Integrating the four skills provides the optimum input environment for language learning. Skills integration, is one of the six principles of proficiency-oriented language instruction. Skill integration is a key factor in contextualized, authentic language learning experiences that help students use the target language successfully outside the classroom (Tedick ,1997).

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Ellis and Brewster (2002:81) pointed out that stories exercise the imagination. Students become personally involved in a story as they identify with the characters and interpret the narrative and illustrations. The imaginative experience develops their creative power. Stories are also a useful tool in linking fantasy and imagination with a child's real world.

Stories invite students to engage in more active and informed discussion of their involvement with the text and their own personal experiences relevant to the world of the text. Storytelling is the oldest form of education. Cultures have always told tales as a way of passing down beliefs, traditions, and history to future generations. Stories are at the core of all that makes us human, Storytelling engages students on level that many teaching methods do not (Rossiter, 2000).

Statement of the problem and questions of the study:

Based on the researcher's experience as a teacher of English at the primary stage and in reference to the pilot study, it was revealed that most pupils had deficits in their language performance, using English in classroom accurately and there were some problems facing them through learning English at classroom which led to weakness in English skills.

Therefore, the current study attempted to investigate the effectiveness of storytelling approach in developing language performance of EFL primary pupils.

Consequently, the current research tried to find answers to the following questions

1. What are the skills required for improving the English language performance of primary schoolers?

2. What are the features of some activities prepared in light of the storytelling approach?

3. How far the storytelling approach is effective in developing English language performance of primary schoolers?

 Aims of the research

The study aimed at:

- Identifying the skills required for improving the English language performance of primary schoolers.

- Recognizing the features of some activities prepared in light of the storytelling approach.

- Investigating the effectiveness of the storytelling approach in developing English language performance of primary schoolers.

Significance of the research

- Presenting an interesting way of learning English for primary schoolers using the storytelling approach.
- Arousing the attention of English teachers to develop the primary schoolers' English language performance
- Opening new vision for researchers to conduct similar studies.

 Delimitations of the study

The present study was delimited to:

- A sample of (40) schoolers of third graders of primary stage from governmental school at Abu Hammad- Sharkia, called Abu Satty primary school.
- Student's book of English of primary three
- Required skills of English language performance that should be developed: (vocabulary, Grammar, reading, listening, speaking and writing).
- The duration of the experiment was (14) sessions.

Definition of terms

Storytelling Approach:

This term has been given various definitions, e.g. Caine (2005), Rich, The National Council Of teachers Of English (2005) and Smith, et al (2006). Caine (2005:59), for example defines it as "The primary way that people access, express and retain information and knowledge. They argue that brain research confirms the theory that information is naturally organized in our minds according to story form".

Another definition is given by The National Council of teachers of English (2005) which defines the storytelling approach as" the relation of a tale to one or more listeners and they emphasize that it is not congruent with simply acting out drama or reciting a story from memory or a text, but it is the creation of mental images of the elements of a story through voice and gesture to an audience, and through telling of a story the teller and the audience give complete attention and engage in learning experience".

In this study the meaning of storytelling is conveying the events in words, images, and sounds in the shape of narrative form, it should be simple and amusing to attract the learners. It includes words from the schoolers' textbooks.

Language performance:

This term has been given various definitions, e.g. Scott (2011), Scott & Windsor (2000), and Cummins (2006).

It is argued that proficient learners of English are said to produce good quality pieces of writing, Cummins (2006).Scott & Windsor (2000) explained that language performance can be characterized by general measures of productivity, fluency, lexical diversity, and grammatical complexity and accuracy.

In this study, the meaning of English Language performance is the level that the learners must reach in learning English language by developing their listening, speaking and writing and using English fluently in the classroom.

Hypotheses of the study

1. There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control one, in their performance of the English Language Performance post-test as whole and its sub skills in favor of the experimental group.

2. There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group in their performance of the pre and post-administrations of the English Language Performance test as whole and its sub skills in favor of the post administration.

3. The storytelling approach is effective in developing the English Language Performance of the experimental group.

Literature Review

Language performance

English Language performance is the level that the learners must reach in learning English language by developing their speaking, listening, writing and reading and their sub skills in addition to vocabulary and grammar to be able to use English fluently and correctly.

Richard (2003) defined speaking as a process in which people share information, ideas and feeling. It involves all of body language mannerism and anything that adds meaning to a message. Speaking is one of the most difficult skills that language learners have to face. In spite of this, it has traditionally been forced into the background while the teachers of English have spent all classroom time trying to teach students how to write, to read and sometimes even to listen (Bueno, Madrid and Mclaren, 2006: 321). Listening is the skill of understanding spoken language. it is an essential skill, present in most of the activities we carry out throughout our lives, as Lindsay and Knight (2006:45) indicated that we listen to a wide variety of things, for example; what someone says during a conversation, face to face or on the telephone, announcements giving information, the weather forecast on the radio or

television, a play on the radio, music, a lecture, advice, at the doctor's or in the bank and instructions or directions about any machine.

Reading is a process which requires the learner to interact with the text deeply to be perceived and understood. It is strongly connected with the term comprehension since the ultimate goal of all instructional reading is to create learners who are able to comprehend different sorts of texts (Lenz, 2005:5).According to Lesakova (2008), writing is the representation of language in a textual medium through the use of a set of signs or symbols (known as a writing system". Writing is considered to be productive skills that mean, they involve producing language rather than receiving it.

Taylor (1990) as cited in Graves (2000) defined vocabulary as the words belonging to the branch of knowledge or known by an individual. He also states that the lexicon of a language is its vocabulary, which includes words and expressions. Thornbury (2004:1) defined grammar as the study of forms and structures of a language and description of rules which govern how a language and sentences are formed.

Storytelling approach

Telling stories is a good way to combine instruction and entertainment. Stories are an effective tool for teaching languages (Malkina, 1995:1, as cited in Fitria, 2000). Children usually love stories. While listening to stories, children develop a sense of structure that will later help them to understand the more complex stories of literature. Through storytelling, the teacher can create an atmosphere in which the students can learn English while being entertained. Green and Brock (2000: 701) indicated that storytelling is a narrative form which requires a passage that raises unanswered questions and presents unresolved conflicts or depicts in which the characters encounter a crisis.

Storytelling and the English language performance

According to Ghasemi (2001), story as a multi-dimensional literary genre can be profitably used in the acquisition of various language skills. The short story's distinctive features, i.e., its brevity, modernity, and variety make it appealing and interesting to language learners. When the short story is chosen based on the students' level of English proficiency, it can offer them adequate linguistic, intellectual, and emotional involvement and enrich their learning experience .The use of stories can promote language learning because many stories contain natural repetition of key vocabulary and structure. This helps

children remember every detail and learn to guess what is about to happen next in the story (Ellis and Brewster, 2002).
Method

Design and participants of the study

The participants of the study were forty schoolers of third grade of primary stage chosen randomly from Abu Saty primary school at Abu Hammad Sharkia 2018/2019. The study adopted the quasi-experimental pre and posttest. The sample was divided randomly into two groups each one has 20 schoolers. The first was assigned as the experimental one and the second as the control one. Both groups were pre-tested .The experimental group was taught by using storytelling approach and the control one was taught through the ordinary method; they were post- tested and the data was statistically calculated.
Variables of the study

In this present study there is one independent variable and a dependent one. They are as follows:

1. The independent variable is the storytelling approach

2. The dependent variable is English language performance
Instruments of the study

Three instruments were used in this study:

1. A language performance questionnaire.

2. A Language performance assessment rubric

3. A Language performance pre/post-test.
Validity of the test

In order to ensure that the test was valid and measure what it was supposed to measure, it was submitted to a group of jurors of ten members between professors from Zagazig University and supervisors and teachers in the field of English as a foreign language methodology, supervisors of teaching English and experienced teachers. They indicated that the questions were appropriate to the primary stage and related to the objectives of the lessons. They also suggested that some questions needed modification to be suitable to the abilities of the participants and the objectives of the program as well. The researcher made the necessary modifications so the test proved to be valid measure of English language performance.

Self-validity was tested using the following formula:

The self-validity $=\sqrt{\text{ reliability}} = \sqrt{0.75} = 0.86$
Reliability of the test

In order to compute the reliability of the test, a pilot study was conducted on 15 schoolers. Those schoolers had the same

characteristics of the sample of the study but they weren't included in it. The researcher used Test-retest method as she applied the test on the same sample for the second time after two weeks. In order to avoid subjectivity of evaluation, not only the researcher evaluated the schoolers' performance but it was also evaluated by another English teacher at the school in the same session of the test. Then the main score of the two evaluations was recorded. The findings of using Pearson correlation between the two applications revealed that there was a statistical correlation between them, so it can be said that the test was reliable.

Material

Teaching Activities

This part of the study answered the second questions of the study" What are the features of some activities prepared in light of the storytelling approach?"

In teaching the instructional material, the researcher adopted some activities in light of storytelling approach that seemed to be relevant to the third grade of primary stage to help in developing English language performance. They also helped the learners to be active and responsible during the learning process. The teacher tried to create an encouraging environment, attractive and funny learning to help in developing English language performance.

Short stories

The researcher used all vocabulary and sentences in every lesson to create a short story which included the grammar of the lesson and the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) that should be developed at the end of the lesson. The researcher took in herm mind not to overload the stories with new vocabulary or expressions to be suitable to the third grade of primary schoolers. The stories are divided into two parts the core level and the descriptive level. The core level is tackled the main ideas and the major points of the story, and the descriptive one tackled the details and the actions of the story (with home, why, when ,and how,……). The researcher used some activities to be helpful while telling the stories and to facilitate learning in light of storytelling approach to help in developing English language performance.

These activities are:

Visual clues: It means using videos, pictures or colored words to make the learners aware of connections between visual and oral

representations of language and helping in providing attractive learning.

Predicting: This means to encourage learners to predict or guess the content of the text from its title or guess the end of the story from the beginning actions.

Role playing: This means letting the learners play given roles with given ideas to talk about or replay roles of characters of the narrated stories to encourage learners to use language they know, encouraging them to speak and give information, this makes the learning funny and creative.

Problem solving: This activity helps in practicing language of dis/agreement (I agree, I disagree), and the persuasive language (I think,…) this helps learners to speak fluently.

Summarizing: This activity helps learners to sum up as short as possible and show the text with important ideas and information.

Word games: This activity is helpful in revising previously taught vocabulary and distinguishing the differences between sounds. This enhances learner's fluency.

Voice recording: This technology is very attractive for the learners and keeps them interactive in the leaning process; such activities are difficult to forget their feedback.

Implementation of the experiment

a. The pre-test

Before starting the experiment, the language performance test was administered to both the experimental group and control one in order to ensure that they are equivalent. The researcher used independent sample t-test for achieving the equivalence between the two groups in pre measures. The results analysis indicated that there were no statistically significant differences between the experimental and control groups at (0.05). This means the two groups were equivalent.

b. Experimentation

The experiment lasted for (14) sessions some of them lasted for 80 minutes and others lasted for 40 minutes based on the schedule of the school and the lessons. The first session was introductory where the schoolers of the experimental group were told about the aims and the importance of using storytelling approach. At the end of each session, they were evaluated to be sure that the session was successful. The schoolers of the control group were taught by another teacher using the ordinary method. This teacher also participated in the assessment process.

Statistical method used in the study

In order to analyze the data from the pre –test and post- test and to measure the effect of storytelling approach, the statistical package for the social science (SPSS) was used. The statistical methods that were used included the following:

1. Spearman correlation technique was used to confirm the test validity and reliability.

2. t- test paired sample was used to measure the differences in developing schooler's proficiency in English language performance between the pre- test and post-test of the experimental group.

3. t- test independent sample was used to measure the statistical differences between the experimental and control groups in the results of the post-test.

4. Eta squared (η^2) was used to check the effect size of the storytelling approach on developing English language performance and to test the hypotheses as well.

Results of the study

The results of the experimental and control groups on the English language performance skills pre-test indicated that the schoolers of the two groups were almost homogeneous where there were no significant differences of the two groups in the pre-test before administering the experimental treatment of the study.

After experimentation, results revealed that the level of the experimental group who were taught using the storytelling approach was higher than that of the control group who received the traditional methods of teaching. This result indicated that the storytelling approach used in the present study had a positive effect on the English language performance skills of primary schoolers in the experimental group. The performance of those students in the post test was better than that of the control group students. Thus, the first hypothesis of the study was accepted. In addition, the results revealed that the level of the schoolers of the experimental group on the overall English language performance skills in the post-test was higher than their levels on the pre-test. In that way, the second hypothesis was also accepted; the third hypothesis was also accepted.

The results showed that the storytelling approach is effective in developing English language performance skills and this means that the three hypotheses were confirmed. It also assured that applying the storytelling approach of the study improved English language performance skills of the experimental group.

Findings of the study

This study found out that using storytelling approach was effective on developing English language performance of primary schoolers where significant differences at ($a \leq 0.05$) between the pre and post-test of the experimental group in English language performance.

The first question is "What are the skills required for improving the English language performance of the primary schoolers?".

To answer this question, the researcher prepared the English language performance skills questionnaire that was judged by a panel of jury to be the most important and suitable for primary schoolers. (Appendix3). These skills were categorized in six main items: vocabulary, grammar, reading, listening, speaking and writing. According to the results of the English Language Performance skills in pre-test, both of the experimental and the control groups suffered from problems in English Language Performance skills.

The experimental group performed well after administering the Storytelling Approach and the schoolers were able to:

- Use vocabularies and compounds to convey meaning, they were able to use precise, correct word form and appropriate words that convey the meaning correctly and clearly.
- Pronounce correct (vowels, consonant, hard and soft c sounds, and stress patterns), use the grammatical rules correctly such as (the present simple , the past simple, the past continuous ,the future simple ,the possessive pronouns , and the definite and indefinite articles) , use structural rules they learned in class easily and accurately and manage the conversation effectively.
- Express their opinions and ideas clearly, use the language continuously without repetition, get the meaning during conversation, maintain dialogues, give advice, make suggestion and make effective request.
- Describe people and picture, emphasize key words in a conversation, and summarize the main idea of a text practice reading skills well.
- Connect the ideas of the text during reading, generate ideas to write about easily and write a cohesive and coherent paragraph.

The second question was "What are the features of some activities prepared in light of storytelling approach?"

The researcher reviewed literature on storytelling approach and short stories in the field of English and asked the specialists in the field of teaching methods to make stories from the new vocabulary of the lessons using the pictures in the textbook and taking in mind the

objectives and the skills should be achieved. To do this the researcher used some strategies in light of storytelling to be helpful in teaching stories(visual clues, voice recording, brain storming, predicting, solving problem, role playing, summarizing and word game). Every session had a new short story and different strategies in light of storytelling helping in teaching.

The third question was "How far the storytelling approach is effective in developing the English language performance skills of primary schoolers? "The results of the study showed that the storytelling approach is effective in developing the English language performance skills of primary schoolers. This is illustrated through the results of pre and posttest to the experimental and control group and the differences that have been calculated between the two mean scores of the two groups.

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Abstract:

This study aimed at investigating the effectiveness of the storytelling approach on developing the English language performance of primary schoolers. The two groups' pre-posttest design was adopted in this study. The participants of this study were 40 EFL schoolers from Abu Satty Primary School at Abu Hammad, Sharkia Governorat, Egypt. They were divided into two groups: control and experimental. Each group included 20 schoolers. Three instruments were developed and conducted: a questionnaire for measuring the English language performance limited to the four language skills in addition to vocabulary and grammar and a rubric measuring those skills. They were validated by a panel of jurors. Based on these skills, a test of English language performance was developed and used as pre/post-test. During the experiment the researcher used tasks and activities based on the storytelling approach. They were taught through the sessions to develop the schooler's English language performance. By the end of the experiment, the test was administered to both groups to find out the effectiveness of the storytelling approach. Findings of the study were statistically analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software (SPSS). Significant differences were found between the mean scores of the pre/posttest of English language performance in favor of the post test of the experimental group.

Keywords: English language performance- Storytelling approach-Primary pupils or schoolers

عنوان البحث: فاعلية المدخل القصصي لتنمية الأداء اللغوي في اللغة الإنجليزية لدي تلاميذ المرحلة الإبتدائية

إعداد

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المستخلص:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى معرفة مدى فعالية المدخل القصصي لتنمية الأداء اللغوي في اللغة الإنجليزية لدى تلاميذ المرحلة الابتدائية.وقد اعتمدت الدراسة المنهج شبه التجريبي بتطبيق الاختبار القبلي والبعدي. المشاركون في هذه الدراسة هم ٤٠ تلميذا من تلاميذ المرحلة الابتدائية من مدرسة أبو ساطي الابتدائية في أبو حماد – شرقية. تم تقسيمهم إلى مجموعتين: الضابطة والتجريبية ، وكانت كل مجموعة مكونه من ٢٠ تلميذا. تم إستخدام ثلاث أدوات في الدراسة: استبيان صمم لمهارات أداء اللغة الإنجليزية (المفردات والقواعد والقراءة والاستماع والتحدث والكتابة) ونموذج تقييم لجميع هذه المهارات التي وافقت عليها لجنة التحكيم. بناءً على هذه المهارات ، تم تطوير اختبار أداء اللغة الإنجليزية واستخدامه كاختبار قبلي واختبار بعدي. خلال فترة التجربة ، استخدم الباحث المهام والأنشطة في ضوء المدخل القصصي في التطبيق الميداني لتطوير أداء اللغة الإنجليزية للتلاميذ. بحلول نهاية التجربة ، تم تطبيق الاختبار على كلا المجموعتين لمعرفة مدى فعالية المدخل القصصي. و قد تم التعامل إحصائياً مع نتائج الدراسة من خلال الحزمة الإحصائية لبرنامج العلوم الاجتماعية (SPSS). وقد كانت هناك فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية بين متوسطي درجات الاختبار القبلي والبعدي للأداء اللغوي في اللغه الإنجليزية لصالح الاختبار البعدي للمجموعة التجريبية ، لذلك كانت نتائج الدراسة إيجابية وتم قبول الفرضيات.

الكلمات المفتاحيه: الأداء اللغوي في اللغة الانجليزية , المدخل القصصي, تلاميذ المرحلة الابتدائية