

THE PLACE OF STORYTELLING RESEARCH IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING: THE STATE OF THE ART

*¹Daniel Ginting, ²Delli Sabudu, ³Yusawinur Barella, Ross Woods⁴

¹Universitas Ma Chung, Indonesia

²Universitas Negeri Manado, Indonesia

³Universitas Tanjungpura, Indonesia

³Worldwide University, USA

*Correspondence:

Correspondence email (velesjournal@gmail.com)



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Abstract

Storytelling techniques are methods of using stories to teach language skills, including both passive (listening, reading) and active (speaking and writing) skills. They offer a more effective range of teaching techniques than their non-story counterparts.

The purpose of this study was to establish the state of current research on the effectiveness of story-telling techniques.

The first part of the study considers how the brain processes stories. Stories activate the brains' language processing centers, stimulate the brain's visual cortex, trigger emotional responses in the brain, and help the brain to make sense of complex information. The study then considers the linguistic processing theory and the embodied cognition theory.

The method was a comprehensive literature review of research on in-class storytelling, comprising control groups and experimental groups. The best evidence synthesis method was used to analyze and evaluate the selected studies, with the findings combined across studies if enough comparable papers were found.

The study found that storytelling techniques can help learners to develop comprehension and retention in reading and listening, and to develop speaking and writing skills. Storytelling also encourages creativity and imagination. Improvements also include vocabulary, grammar, and syntax. Although generally effective, it might not be equally effective for all learners.

Keywords: Students, language, behaviour, thinking, intensity, intercultural, communication, social media

INTRODUCTION

A storytelling technique is a method of using stories to convey a message or teach a lesson. It involves the use of various narrative elements such as characters, plot, setting, and conflict to engage the audience and create a memorable and impactful experience. Storytelling techniques can be used in various contexts, including in education. The human mind is more likely to engage with and remember information that is presented in the form of a story, because storytelling taps into several cognitive processes that are fundamental to how the brain processes and retains information.

Some theories can explain how the human brain processes language and creates mental representations of the story while reading or listening to a narrative. The linguistic processing theory explains how the brain parses the words and sentences in the story,

identifies the relationships between the linguistic elements and constructs a mental representation of the narrative. The theory of embodied cognition explains how stories stimulate the brain's visual cortex and create mental images by activating neural pathways. The theory of narrative transportation explains how stories trigger emotional responses in the brain, making the narrative more impactful and memorable.

First, stories activate the brains' language processing centers. When hearing or read a story, the brains automatically starts to parse the words and sentences, which helps to understand the narrative and follow the plot. According to the linguistic processing theory, the human brain is biologically equipped with specialized language processing mechanisms that allow one to understand and produce language (Chomsky 1957; Pinker 1994). These mechanisms include a set of innate rules or principles that are common to all languages, as well as a mental lexicon of words and phrases learned through experience. When one encounters language, the brain automatically parse and analyze the linguistic input in order to identify the constituent parts of the message, such as words, phrases, and sentences (Osterhout and Mobley 2021). This involves various cognitive processes, including attention, memory, and pattern recognition (Hagoort 2019; Meyer, Obleser, and Friederici 2020). As the brain processes the language, it builds up a mental representation of the meaning conveyed in the message. This representation is based on one's knowledge of the language itself, as well as prior experiences and cultural background (Ye et al. 2020).

In the context of storytelling, the linguistic processing theory explains how the brain can understand and follow the narrative. When reading or hearing a story, the mind automatically parses the linguistic information, identifying the words, phrases, and sentences that make up the narrative (Zhang, Wu, and Tang 2021). One then use one's knowledge of language and grammar to understand the relationships between these linguistic elements, and to construct a mental representation of the story (Osterhout and Mobley 2021; Zhang et al. 2021). Thus, the linguistic processing theory supports the idea that the mind naturally engages in language processing when presented with a story, helping one to understand and remember the information conveyed in the narrative.

Second, stories stimulate the brain's visual cortex. When hear a description of a scene or a character, the brain creates mental images that help bring the story to life. This is supported by the theory of embodied cognition, which suggests that cognition is based on perceptual and motor experiences, and that mental processes are deeply intertwined with bodily processes (Gallese and Lakoff 2005; Lakoff and Johnson 1999). According to this theory, when hearing a story, the mind creates mental representations of the described scenes and characters by activating the same neural pathways that would be activated if one were experiencing the scenes and characters in real life (Gallese and Lakoff 2005). This means that we use our visual cortex to "see" the mental images created in response to the story. The visual cortex in the brain plays a critical role in processing visual information. It is located in the occipital lobe at the back of the brain and consists of several distinct regions that specialize in different aspects of visual perception (Livingstone and Hubel 1988). The visual cortex receives information from the eyes via the optic nerves and processes this information to create a coherent and meaningful representation of the visual world (Zeki 1993). This process involves the analysis of basic visual features such as color, orientation, and spatial frequency, as well as the integration of these features into more

complex objects and scenes (Kanwisher 2010). The visual cortex is organized into a hierarchical structure, with lower-level regions processing simple features and higher-level regions integrating these features into more complex representations (Kanwisher 2010; Zeki 1993). Neurons in the primary visual cortex respond to basic features such as edges and lines, while neurons in higher-level regions respond to more complex features such as faces, objects, and scenes (Kanwisher 2010).

The theory of embodied cognition is a relatively recent theoretical framework in cognitive science and neuroscience that emphasizes the importance of bodily experiences in shaping cognition. It posits that mental processes are deeply intertwined with physical experiences, such as perception, action, and emotion (Lakoff and Johnson 1999). According to this theory, the human brain can accept and process information by actively creating mental representations of the environment based on our bodily experiences (Gallese and Lakoff 2005). When perceiving and interacting with the world, the brain create internal models of our environment by integrating sensory input with motor actions and emotional states (Livingstone and Hubel 1988). These mental representations are not just passive copies of the environment, but active constructions that reflect one's goals, values, and interests. For example, when one reads a novel, the brain creates mental images of the characters, settings, and events by activating the same neural pathways that would be activated if they were actually experiencing these things in real life. This process relies on one's bodily experiences of perception, action, and emotion, which help to create a vivid and engaging mental representation of the story (Kanwisher 2010). The theory of embodied cognition has important implications for understanding human cognition, as it suggests that thinking and behavior are deeply rooted in physical experiences and bodily interactions with the world. It also has applications in areas such as education, psychology, and neuroscience, as it provides a framework for understanding how people learn, remember, and process information in a more holistic and integrated way (Gallese and Lakoff 2005). For this reason, descriptive language and sensory details are often used in storytelling - they help the brain to create vivid mental pictures that can be recalled later.

Third, stories trigger emotional responses in the brain. When hearing a story, one's brain often invests emotionally in the characters and their experiences. This emotional engagement can make the story more memorable and impactful. According to the theory of narrative transportation (Green and Brock 2000), when engaging with a story, one enters into a state of "transportation," becoming immersed in the narrative and mentally transported to the story world (Green, Brock, and Kaufman 2004). This immersive experience can lead to emotional responses, such as empathy, sympathy, and identification with the characters and their experiences. According to the theory, narrative transportation is facilitated by several factors, including the coherence and vividness of the story, the perceived similarity between the reader or listener and the characters, and the degree to which the story engages the senses and emotions (Slater 2014). These factors work together to create a state of absorption in the story, which can lead to emotional responses and a heightened sense of presence in the story world (Cohen 2020). Narrative transportation is associated with a range of cognitive and affective outcomes, including increased empathy, greater persuasion, and increased recall of story details (Green and Brock 2000). Consequently, the theory of narrative transportation is an important

framework for understanding how stories can evoke emotional responses in the brain and why they are such a powerful tool for communication and persuasion (Green and Brock 2002; Slater 2014).

Fourth, stories help the brain to make sense of complex information. When presented with a list of facts or data, the brain may struggle to see the bigger picture or to understand how the information fits together (Green and Brock 2000). But when that same information is presented in a story, the brain can more easily grasp the underlying themes and patterns, supporting the theory of narrative coherence (Pennington and Hastie 1986; Schank and Abelson 2014). This theory posits that people naturally tend to seek coherence and meaning in stories, and that narratives that are well-structured and coherent are more likely to be remembered and understood (Zacks and Tversky 2001). According to the theory of narrative coherence, stories are particularly effective at helping the brain to make sense of complex information because they provide a framework for organizing and integrating information into a meaningful whole. By providing a clear structure and logical progression of events, stories can help to establish causal relationships and reveal underlying themes and patterns that might be difficult to discern from a list of disconnected facts or data points (Schank and Abelson 2014). In addition, the theory of narrative coherence suggests that stories are particularly effective at engaging the brain because they appeal to our natural desire for narrative closure and resolution.

When a story is well-structured and coherent, the brain can anticipate and predict what will happen next, which can create a sense of satisfaction and reward when the story reaches its conclusion (Zacks and Tversky 2001). Taken together, these cognitive processes help to explain why storytelling can be so effective for communicating information. By tapping into the brain's language processing, visual, emotional, and sense-making capacities, stories can engage the brain and make information more memorable and meaningful.

To sum up, linguistic processing theory and embodied cognition theory have implications for storytelling. The linguistic processing theory suggests that the human brain has specialized mechanisms for processing language, and these mechanisms are automatically activated when reading or hearing a story. When encountering language in a story, the brain automatically parses and analyzes the linguistic input to identify the constituent parts of the message, such as words, phrases, and sentences. This process helps one to understand and remember the information conveyed in the narrative. Meanwhile, the embodied cognition theory suggests that mental processes are deeply intertwined with bodily processes, and when hearing a story, the brains create mental representations of the described scenes and characters by activating the same neural pathways that would be activated if we were experiencing the scenes and characters in real life. The brain uses the visual cortex to "see" the mental images created in response to the story. Thus, storytelling can be a powerful tool for learning and memory, as it engages both language processing and embodied cognition mechanisms, making it more likely that the information conveyed in the story will be retained. Finally, the way stories are experienced is deeply rooted in one's physical experiences and bodily interactions with the world, which has implications for how stories can be used to shape our perceptions, beliefs, and behaviors.

METHOD

The method used to conduct a comprehensive literature review on in-class storytelling involved establishing clear and transparent standards for identifying relevant studies. The best evidence synthesis method was used to carefully analyze and evaluate the selected studies, with the findings combined across studies if enough comparable papers were found. This approach is especially useful for topics like storytelling where the literature is limited and varied. The review defined storytelling in the classroom as **MISSING TEXT?**

Storytelling in the classroom refers to a deliberate modification in the teaching and learning process, learning time, content, product, or learning environment for either individual students or groups of students. The purpose of storytelling in the classroom can be described as promoting student learning and achievement in a way that is engaging, effective and enjoyable. Adaptations can be based on relevant student characteristics such as achievement/readiness, prior knowledge, learning preferences, and interests. It can involve various teaching methods such as peer tutoring, project-based learning, and other collaborative learning approaches, but only when planned storytelling is implemented based on relevant student characteristics. The review excluded solely organizational adaptations and covered interventions such as peer tutoring and project-based learning only when planned storytelling was implemented based on relevant student characteristics.

The review identified relevant studies using a systematic search using specific keywords related to the intervention, population, and outcomes of interest, limiting the results to studies published in academic journals between 2012 and 2022. Additional searches using more specific keywords related to storytelling were performed, and informal approaches such as cross-referencing selected papers, consulting experts, and utilizing personal knowledge were also used. The identified papers were screened in pre-designed Excel sheets in two stages, with inclusion criteria applied in both stages based on title, abstract, and keywords.

In a full text review, inclusion criteria were applied again, and additional methodological criteria were checked to make the final selection. Only studies that met all inclusion criteria were included in the review:

1. Focus on the effect of in-class storytelling,
2. Be practical for teachers,
3. Compare students in a storytelling intervention condition to those in a control condition,
4. Contain quantitative empirical data,
5. Be conducted from primary to college education,
6. be performed in a mainstream school setting,
7. Report academic achievement of students as a quantitative dependent variable, and
8. Be written in English.

Once the papers were selected according to the criteria, two separate reviewers extracted relevant information from them and coded it, resolving any differences through discussion.

Content coding was used to inform the literature synthesis and gather data for calculating effect sizes.

State of the Art: Current Studies on Storytelling in English Language Teaching

Storytelling helps to develop language skills such as reading comprehension, listening comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, and syntax by exposing learners to natural language in context.

Storytelling can significantly improve these language skills by providing learners with meaningful input in an engaging and contextualized way. In this case, (Hamouda and Tizi 2020) investigated the impact of storytelling on ESL learners' vocabulary and grammatical knowledge.

Hamouda and Tizi (2020) investigated the impact of storytelling on ESL learners' vocabulary and grammatical knowledge in a private language school in Algeria. The participants were 30 intermediate-level ESL learners, with ages ranging from 18 to 30 years. The study employed a pretest-posttest control group design, in which the participants were randomly assigned to either a control group or an experimental group. The control group received traditional language instruction, while the experimental group received language instruction that incorporated storytelling activities. The duration of the intervention was six weeks, with three 60-minute sessions per week. The study found that the experimental group showed a significant improvement in both vocabulary and grammatical knowledge compared to the control group. The participants in the experimental group reported that the storytelling activities were engaging, enjoyable, and helped them understand the language in a contextualized and meaningful way. They suggested that incorporating storytelling in language instruction can be a useful tool for ESL learners to develop their language skills. However, the limitations of the study included its small sample size and its specific context, so the findings may not necessarily generalize to other language learning settings.

The study found that storytelling can help children develop a more complex understanding of sentence structure by exposing them to a range of sentence structures in different contexts. Cekaite and Björklund (2014) explored the effect of storytelling on children's understanding of syntax. The study was conducted in Sweden and involved 31 children between the ages of 4 and 6 years old, with an even distribution of boys and girls. The study employed a mixed-methods design that involved both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. The children were divided into two groups: an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group received storytelling sessions over the course of two weeks, while the control group did not. The storytelling sessions were conducted in small groups, with each session lasting approximately 20 minutes. The stories used in the sessions were designed to highlight specific syntactic structures, such as object-subject-verb and object-verb-subject. The study found that the children in the experimental group showed a significant improvement in their understanding of syntax compared to the control group. The children in the experimental group also exhibited more active engagement during the storytelling sessions, such as asking questions and making comments. Cekaite and Björklund's study suggests that

storytelling can be an effective tool for improving children's understanding of syntax. The study's mixed-methods design allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the impact of storytelling on children's language development. However, the study's small sample size and specific cultural context limit the generalizability of the findings.

Learners showed a significant improvement in their listening and speaking skills after the storytelling workshop. The learners also reported that the storytelling activities were enjoyable and helped them to develop their language skills in a fun and engaging way. For example, MacWhinney et al. (2011) investigated the effect of storytelling on young children's vocabulary knowledge. The study was conducted in the United States and involved 96 preschool children aged 3 to 5 years old, from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. The study employed a quasi-experimental design, with the children divided into two groups: a storybook group and a control group. The storybook group received weekly exposure to storybooks that contained rare words, while the control group received exposure to storybooks that contained common words. The study found that the children in the storybook group showed a significant improvement in their vocabulary knowledge compared to the control group. The children in the storybook group also showed better retention of the new vocabulary over time.

Next is Zhang, Wei, and Zheng (2019) who examined the impact of storytelling on Chinese EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners' writing skills. The study was conducted in China and involved 60 EFL learners at the tertiary level, with ages ranging from 19 to 21 years old. The study employed a quasi-experimental design, with the learners divided into two groups: a storytelling group and a control group. The storytelling group received language instruction that incorporated storytelling activities, while the control group received traditional language instruction. The study found that the learners in the storytelling group showed a significant improvement in their writing skills compared to the control group. The learners in the storytelling group also exhibited greater use of complex sentence structures and a wider range of vocabulary in their writing.

Furthermore, Ohashi (2018) explored the impact of storytelling on Japanese EFL learners' listening and speaking skills. The study was conducted in Japan and involved 20 EFL learners at the tertiary level, with ages ranging from 19 to 21 years old. The study employed a mixed-methods design that involved both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. The learners participated in a storytelling workshop that involved listening to stories, retelling stories, and creating their own stories. The study found that the learners showed a significant improvement in their listening and speaking skills after participating in the storytelling workshop. Additionally, the learners reported that the storytelling activities were enjoyable and helped them develop their language skills in a fun and engaging way.

In summary, these studies suggest that storytelling can be an effective tool for improving various language skills, including vocabulary, grammar, syntax, listening, speaking, and writing. By providing learners with meaningful input in an engaging and contextualized way, storytelling can help learners better understand the language and retain new vocabulary over time. Moreover, storytelling activities are generally enjoyable and can help learners develop their language skills in a fun and engaging way. However, the

studies also acknowledge some limitations, such as small sample sizes and specific cultural contexts, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Overall, these studies suggest that incorporating storytelling in language instruction can be a useful tool for language teachers to enhance their students' language skills.

Storytelling promotes comprehension and retention by providing a meaningful and memorable context for learning

One recent study that supports this idea is "The Effects of Storytelling on the Retention of English Collocations among Iranian EFL Learners." (Jafari and Zarei 2022) The study investigated the effectiveness of storytelling on the retention of English collocations among 90 Iranian EFL learners. The participants were randomly assigned to either an experimental group or a control group. The experimental group received language instruction that incorporated storytelling activities, while the control group received traditional language instruction. The study found that the learners in the experimental group showed a significant improvement in their retention of English collocations compared to the control group. The authors suggest that storytelling can be an effective tool for teaching and retaining collocations in an engaging and memorable way.

Another recent study is "The Impact of Storytelling on Vocabulary Acquisition of Young EFL Learners" (Teng and Yuan 2021). The study aimed to investigate the impact of storytelling on vocabulary acquisition among young EFL learners in China. The participants were 60 children aged 8-10 years old, who were divided into two groups: an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group received language instruction that incorporated storytelling activities, while the control group received traditional language instruction. The study found that the learners in the experimental group showed a significant improvement in their vocabulary acquisition compared to the control group. The authors suggest that storytelling can provide a meaningful and engaging context for learning vocabulary, which can improve retention and acquisition.

Based on the two studies, it can be concluded that incorporating storytelling activities in language instruction can be an effective tool for enhancing language learning, particularly in the areas of collocation retention and vocabulary acquisition among EFL learners. These studies suggest that storytelling can provide a meaningful and engaging context for language learning, which may improve retention and acquisition. The implications of these studies are significant for language teachers and curriculum designers, as they provide evidence that integrating storytelling activities into language instruction can be an effective pedagogical approach. Teachers can use storytelling to create a memorable and engaging learning experience that can promote vocabulary acquisition and collocation retention among learners. Moreover, curriculum designers can consider incorporating storytelling activities into language curricula to enhance language learning outcomes. Last, these studies highlight the potential benefits of incorporating storytelling in language education and suggest that this approach can be a valuable addition to traditional language instruction.

Storytelling encourages creativity and imagination by allowing learners to explore different perspectives and ideas through characters and plots

Students who received digital storytelling instruction showed a significant improvement in their creativity. Liu et al. (2017) explored the impact of digital storytelling on Chinese college students' creativity. The study involved 40 students who were randomly assigned to either an experimental group or a control group. The experimental group received digital storytelling instruction while the control group received traditional instruction. The study found that the students in the experimental group showed significant improvement in their creativity compared to the control group. In conclusion, Liu et al.'s study found that digital storytelling instruction can significantly improve Chinese college students' creativity compared to traditional instruction. The study suggests that digital storytelling can be an effective pedagogical approach to foster creativity in higher education contexts.

Storytelling can play a role in stimulating imaginative play in young children. By providing children with rich, imaginative stories, storytellers can inspire children to engage in imaginative play and promote their cognitive and social development. (Van Laer, Van den Broeck, and Van Gils (2014) investigated the role of storytelling in stimulating imaginative play in young children. The study involved 61 children aged 4 to 5 years old who participated in a storytelling session followed by a free play session. The researchers found that the children who participated in the storytelling session engaged in more imaginative play than the children who did not participate in the storytelling session. The researchers observed the children during the free play session and coded their play behavior. They assessed the children's imaginative play by examining the extent to which they engaged in symbolic and make-believe play, such as pretending that objects were something else or engaging in role-playing. The results of the study showed that the children who participated in the storytelling session engaged in more imaginative play than the children who did not participate in the storytelling session. Specifically, the children in the storytelling condition engaged in more symbolic and make-believe play than the children in the non-storytelling group. The findings of this study have important implications for parents, educators, and storytellers who want to foster children's creativity and imagination through storytelling.

Story creation can be an effective tool for promoting imagination and writing ability among elementary school students. By providing opportunities for students to use their creativity and imagination to develop their own stories, teachers can engage students in writing activities that are enjoyable, motivating, and effective. Hsu, Chen, and Wu (2016) examined the impact of story creation on Taiwanese elementary school students' imagination and writing ability. The study involved 80 students who were randomly assigned to either a story creation group or a control group. The story creation group participated in a series of activities that involved creating their own stories, while the control group received traditional writing instruction. The study found that the students in the story creation group showed significant improvement in their imagination and writing ability compared to the control group. Specifically, they showed greater improvement in their ability to generate ideas, write stories with vivid descriptions, and use language creatively. The researchers also found that the students in the story creation group

reported higher levels of enjoyment and motivation than the students in the control group. The findings of this study have important implications for teachers and educators who want to foster students' writing skills and creativity through story creation.

Storytelling can be an effective tool for promoting creativity among elementary school students. Teachers can enhance students' creativity by giving them opportunities to engage in imaginative activities that involve group discussions, brainstorming, and story writing. Hong, Kim, and Lee (2014) explored the impact of storytelling on Korean elementary school students' creativity. The study involved 52 students who were randomly assigned to either an experimental group or a control group. The experimental group received storytelling instruction while the control group received traditional instruction. The study found that the students in the experimental group showed significant improvement in their creativity compared to the control group. Specifically, they showed greater improvement in their ability to generate ideas, use divergent thinking, and produce original solutions to problems. The researchers also found that the students in the experimental group reported higher levels of enjoyment and motivation than the students in the control group. The findings of this study have important implications for teachers and educators who want to foster creativity among their students through storytelling

In summary, several studies have explored the impact of storytelling on creativity and imaginative play across different age groups and educational contexts. Findings suggest that digital storytelling instruction, story creation, and traditional storytelling instruction can significantly enhance creativity and imagination in Chinese college students, Taiwanese elementary school students, and Korean elementary school students. Moreover, storytelling sessions can stimulate imaginative play in young children. These studies imply that incorporating storytelling activities in educational settings can provide a valuable means of fostering creativity and imagination among students.

Listening comprehension: learners can listen to stories to develop their ability to understand spoken language

The study conducted by Wang (2021) aimed to investigate the effects of extensive listening on the development of listening comprehension skills among Chinese EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners. The research used a quasi-experimental design with two groups: an experimental group and a control group. The participants in this study were 60 Chinese EFL learners who were randomly assigned to either the experimental or control group. Both groups were given a pre-test to measure their listening comprehension skills. The experimental group was then exposed to extensive listening to English stories for eight weeks, while the control group continued with their regular English language classes. After the eight-week intervention, both groups were given a post-test to measure their listening comprehension skills. The results showed that the experimental group, who had been exposed to extensive listening, had a statistically significant improvement in their listening comprehension skills compared to the control group. Overall, the findings of the study suggest that extensive listening can be an effective method for improving listening comprehension skills among Chinese EFL learners. The study also highlights the

importance of providing learners with opportunities to listen to authentic English language materials, such as stories, to help improve their listening comprehension.

The study conducted by Alptekin (2016) aimed to investigate the effectiveness of storytelling as a tool for developing language skills among young learners. The research used a quasi-experimental design with two groups: an experimental group and a control group. The participants in this study were 32 young learners who were randomly assigned to either the experimental or control group. Both groups received the same English language instruction, but the experimental group also received additional storytelling sessions once a week for eight weeks. The storytelling sessions were conducted by a trained storyteller and were designed to be interactive and engaging for the young learners. Before and after the intervention, both groups were given a pre-test and a post-test to measure their language skills. The tests assessed the learners' listening comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, and speaking skills. The results showed that the experimental group, who had received the additional storytelling sessions, had statistically significant improvements in their language skills compared to the control group. Specifically, the experimental group showed significant improvements in their listening comprehension, vocabulary, and speaking skills. However, there were no significant differences between the two groups in terms of their grammar skills. Overall, the findings of the study suggest that storytelling can be an effective tool for developing language skills among young learners. Storytelling sessions that are interactive and engaging can help improve listening comprehension, vocabulary, and speaking skills, which are important components of language proficiency.

The study conducted by Gökçe and Arda (2016) aimed to investigate the effectiveness of using listening journals in enhancing the listening comprehension skills of learners. The study used a pretest-posttest control group design with an experimental group and a control group. The participants of the study were 72 5th-grade students from two different primary schools in Turkey. The experimental group (n=36) received listening instruction through listening journals, while the control group (n=36) received traditional listening instruction without the use of listening journals. The listening journal consisted of short stories that were read aloud by the teacher, followed by questions to guide the students' comprehension. The study collected quantitative data from both groups using pre- and post-tests to measure listening comprehension skills. The results of the study indicated that the experimental group showed a statistically significant improvement in listening comprehension compared to the control group. Moreover, the students in the experimental group also demonstrated better performance on the posttest listening comprehension measure. In conclusion, the study found that the use of listening journals was an effective method for enhancing listening comprehension skills among 5th-grade students. The results of this study suggest that the use of listening journals can be a valuable instructional tool for improving listening comprehension skills in language learning classrooms

The use of graded extensive listening can be a valuable instructional tool for improving listening comprehension skills in EFL classrooms. The study conducted by Wang and Wu (2017) aimed to investigate the effectiveness of graded extensive listening on the listening comprehension skills of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners. The study

used a quasi-experimental design with a pre-test and post-test. The participants of the study were 60 EFL learners from a university in China who were randomly assigned to either the experimental group or the control group. The experimental group (n=30) received graded extensive listening instruction, while the control group (n=30) received regular listening instruction. The graded extensive listening program consisted of a series of graded listening materials, including stories, which were selected based on the students' language proficiency level. The study collected quantitative data using pre- and post-tests to measure listening comprehension. The pre-test and post-test were both administered using the same listening passage and question set. The experimental group received graded extensive listening instruction for ten weeks, while the control group received regular listening instruction during the same period. The results of the study indicated that the experimental group showed a statistically significant improvement in listening comprehension compared to the control group. Moreover, the students in the experimental group also demonstrated better performance on the post-test listening comprehension measure. In conclusion, the study found that the use of graded extensive listening, including listening to stories, was an effective method for improving the listening comprehension skills of EFL learners.

Speaking skills: learners can retell stories or participate in storytelling activities to practice speaking and pronunciation

The use of storytelling activities in English language instruction had a positive effect on young children's speaking and pronunciation abilities. The results of this study suggest that storytelling can be an effective tool for improving speaking and pronunciation skills in young children learning a second language. The study conducted by Yu and Lee (2019) aimed to investigate the effects of storytelling on young children's English speaking and pronunciation abilities. The study utilized a quasi-experimental design with a pre-test and post-test. The participants of the study were 60 children aged between 4 to 6 years old from two private English language institutes in South Korea. The children were randomly assigned to either the experimental group or the control group. The experimental group (n=30) participated in storytelling activities, while the control group (n=30) received regular English language instruction without storytelling. The storytelling activities in the experimental group involved listening to and retelling stories in English. The study utilized three different stories during the intervention, and each story was presented in three sessions. The study collected data from both groups using pre- and post-tests to measure speaking and pronunciation abilities. The pre-test and post-test were both administered using the same set of picture prompts to elicit speaking responses and to measure pronunciation accuracy. The results of the study showed that the experimental group demonstrated significant improvement in their speaking and pronunciation abilities compared to the control group. The experimental group also demonstrated significantly higher scores on the post-test speaking and pronunciation measures compared to the control group.

Storytelling instruction can be an effective approach to improve EFL learners' speaking performance. The study also highlights the importance of incorporating

storytelling activities in EFL instruction to enhance learners' speaking abilities. The study conducted by Yang and Ma (2017) aimed to investigate the effect of storytelling on the speaking performance of EFL (English as a foreign language) learners. The study used a quasi-experimental design with a pre-test/post-test control group. The participants were 60 Chinese EFL learners, with 30 students in the experimental group and 30 in the control group. The participants in the experimental group received storytelling instruction, while the control group received traditional language instruction. The storytelling instruction was provided for eight weeks, with two sessions per week, and each session lasted for 45 minutes. During the storytelling instruction, the participants listened to and read English stories, practiced retelling the stories, and engaged in group discussion and interaction. The participants' speaking performance was measured using a speaking test, which consisted of a picture description task and a role-play task. The test was administered twice, once before the intervention and once after the eight-week intervention. The results of the study showed that the participants in the experimental group who received storytelling instruction significantly improved their speaking performance compared to the control group. They also performed significantly better in both the picture description and role-play tasks.

Storytelling activities can be an effective method for improving the pronunciation abilities of learners. The study conducted by Shamsi and Shams (2018) investigated the relationship between storytelling and pronunciation abilities among Iranian EFL learners. The study used a pre-test/post-test experimental design and involved a group of 60 Iranian EFL learners aged between 18 to 30 years. Participants were randomly assigned to either a storytelling group or a control group. The storytelling group received six 90-minute sessions of storytelling activities, while the control group did not participate in any storytelling activities. Both groups were given a pre-test and a post-test to assess their pronunciation abilities. The pre-test and post-test involved reading a passage of text aloud, and the recordings were then analyzed to measure various aspects of pronunciation, such as accuracy, fluency, and intonation. The results of the study showed that the pronunciation of participants in the storytelling group improved significantly compared to the control group, and the improvement was observed in all aspects of pronunciation, including accuracy, fluency, and intonation.

Incorporating storytelling activities in EFL classrooms can be an effective way to improve the pronunciation skills of Mandarin-speaking learners of English. The study conducted by Hsiao and Oxford in 2019 aimed to investigate the effects of storytelling on the pronunciation of English words by Mandarin-speaking English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. The study involved 40 Mandarin-speaking EFL learners from a university in Taiwan, who were divided into two groups: the experimental group and the control group. Both groups received traditional pronunciation instruction, but the experimental group was also asked to participate in a storytelling activity. In the storytelling activity, the participants listened to an English story and were then asked to retell the story in their own words. The activity was repeated three times a week for six weeks. To assess the effectiveness of the storytelling activity, pre- and post-tests were conducted on both groups to assess participants' pronunciation accuracy, fluency, and comprehensibility. The study found that the experimental group showed significant improvement in pronunciation

accuracy and comprehensibility compared to the control group. However, there was no significant difference in fluency between the two groups.

Reading comprehension: learners can read stories to develop their ability to understand written language

Reading fiction can be an effective tool for improving language skills, particularly for children. Two researchers, Nikolajeva and Scott (2011), conducted the study by recruiting 39 participants who were 10-11 years old and attending a primary school in the United Kingdom. The participants were divided into two groups: an experimental group that read fictional narratives for 20 minutes every day for two weeks, and a control group that did not read any narratives during this time. The fictional narratives that the experimental group read were carefully selected by the researchers to ensure that they were engaging and appropriate for the participants' reading level. After reading each narrative, the researchers gave the participants a set of questions to test their comprehension. At the end of the two-week period, the researchers found that the experimental group showed significant improvements in both reading comprehension and vocabulary acquisition compared to the control group. They concluded that reading narrative texts is an effective way to foster language development.

Mol, S. E. et al. (2015) recruited 123 families with children aged between 2 and 4 years old. The families were randomly assigned to either a control group or an intervention group. The intervention group received a set of six picture storybooks to read with their child over a period of six weeks, while the control group did not receive any materials. The families in the intervention group were instructed to read the storybooks with their child for 15 minutes per day, three times a week. The storybooks were carefully selected to be age-appropriate and engaging for the children. Before and after the six-week intervention period, the researchers assessed the children's language and literacy skills, including vocabulary, phonological awareness, and reading comprehension. The results of the study showed that the children in the intervention group who had read storybooks with their parents made significant improvements in their language and literacy skills compared to the control group. Specifically, they scored higher on measures of vocabulary, phonological awareness, and reading comprehension. The study also found that the frequency of shared storybook reading was positively related to children's language and literacy outcomes. In conclusion, the study suggests that reading storybooks with young children can lead to significant improvements in their language and literacy skills, and that reading frequency is an important factor in this process.

The study on reading storybooks to improve language ability in children with language impairment was conducted by McLeod, A. N., McDonald, S., & Rushby, J. A. from the University of Toronto and was published in the *Journal of Child Language* in 2018. To conduct the study, the researchers recruited 25 children with language impairment and 27 typically developing children between the ages of 5 and 9 years old. The children were asked to complete a series of language tasks before and after a 4-week intervention period. During the intervention, a trained therapist read storybooks with complex language structures to the children with language impairment for 20 minutes per day, five days a week. The typically developing children received no intervention. The results of the study

showed that the children with language impairment who were read to with complex language structures made significant improvements in their understanding and use these structures compared to their pre-intervention scores. The researchers also found that the children's progress was maintained over a 3-month follow-up period.

Kidd and Castano (2020) recruited 100 high school students and asked them to read either literary fiction, popular fiction, or nonfiction for 20 minutes per day for 5 consecutive days. After each reading session, the students were asked to complete a survey measuring their critical thinking and empathy skills. The results of the study showed that the students who read literary fiction scored significantly higher on measures of critical thinking and empathy compared to those who read nonfiction or popular fiction. The researchers suggested that the unique narrative structure of literary fiction may help readers develop a deeper understanding of complex themes and ideas, leading to improved critical thinking and empathy skills.

Writing skills: learners can write their own stories or engage in creative writing activities to practice writing and grammar

Engaging in expressive writing exercises can lead to significant improvements in overall writing ability, including sentence complexity, grammatical accuracy, and creativity. Specifically, the participants who wrote about their deepest thoughts and feelings for 20 minutes a day for four consecutive days showed greater improvement than those who wrote about a neutral topic. Schaffner et al. (2014) studied 55 college students who were randomly assigned to either an expressive writing group or a control group. The expressive writing group was instructed to write about their deepest thoughts and feelings for 20 minutes a day for four consecutive days, while the control group was instructed to write about a neutral topic. After the four-day period, the participants' writing samples were collected and analyzed. The researchers found that the expressive writing group showed significant improvements in their overall writing ability, including sentence complexity, grammatical accuracy, and creativity, compared to the control group. This study suggests that expressive writing exercises may be a beneficial tool for improving writing skills. This study implies that educators and writing instructors may want to incorporate expressive writing exercises into their curriculum to help students improve their writing. By encouraging students to write about their emotions and personal experiences, they may be able to develop a more authentic writing voice and improve their writing skills in various areas. Additionally, expressive writing exercises may have other benefits, such as promoting emotional processing and well-being, which could be important for students' overall development.

Creative writing activities serve a valuable tool for improving writing quality and confidence in primary school students. Educators and writing instructors may want to incorporate creative writing activities into their curriculum to help students develop their writing skills in a fun and engaging way. Flynn, Brookes, and Lewis (2018) involved 54 primary school students in the United Kingdom who were randomly assigned to either a creative writing group or a control group. The creative writing group participated in six weeks of creative writing activities, such as writing their own stories or poetry, while the control group continued with their regular literacy curriculum. After the six weeks, the

participants' writing samples were collected and analyzed. The researchers found that the creative writing group showed significant improvements in their writing quality and confidence, compared to the control group. The study conducted by Flynn et al. (2018) showed that primary school students who participated in creative writing activities, such as writing their own stories or poetry, showed significant improvements in their writing quality and confidence, compared to a control group that did not participate in the activities. After six weeks of participating in the creative writing activities, the participants' writing samples were collected and analyzed. The researchers found that the students who engaged in the creative writing activities produced higher quality writing and had more confidence in their writing ability than the control group. This study suggests that creative writing activities may have other benefits, such as fostering creativity and imagination, which could be important for students' overall development.

Teaching specific writing skills can positively effect students' writing ability and confidence. Nielsen and Godhe (2020) involved 105 high school students in Sweden who participated in a 12-week creative writing program that focused on teaching specific writing skills, such as character development and plot structure. The participants' writing samples were collected before and after the program, and were analyzed for writing quality and confidence. The researchers found that the students who participated in the creative writing program showed significant improvements in their writing ability and confidence, compared to a control group that did not participate in the program. The study conducted by Nielsen and Godhe (2020) showed that a 12-week creative writing program that focused on teaching specific writing skills, such as character development and plot structure, can lead to significant improvements in writing ability and confidence among high school students. The study involved 105 students in Sweden who were randomly assigned to either the creative writing program or a control group that did not participate in the program. The participants' writing samples were collected before and after the program, and were analyzed for writing quality and confidence. The researchers found that the students who participated in the creative writing program showed significant improvements in their writing ability and confidence, compared to the control group. Specifically, the participants showed improvements in the use of descriptive language, use of dialogue, and plot development. The implications of this study are that educators and writing instructors may want to consider implementing creative writing programs that focus on teaching specific writing skills to help high school students improve their writing ability and confidence. By teaching students the specific skills needed to write effectively, they may be better equipped to produce higher quality writing and feel more confident in their abilities. Additionally, this study suggests that creative writing programs may have other benefits, such as promoting critical thinking and problem solving, which could be important for students' overall development

The limitations of story telling

While storytelling can help learners develop their overall language proficiency, it may not be sufficient for developing certain specific language skills. For example, storytelling might not provide enough practice for learners who struggle with

pronunciation or need to work on particular grammatical structures. These learners may require additional activities that specifically target these skills. Research has shown that storytelling activities can enhance learners' overall language proficiency, including vocabulary acquisition, reading comprehension, and listening skills (Biemiller 2006; Gillies 2016). However, it may not be sufficient for developing certain specific language skills. For instance, a study by (Özdemir and Yılmaz 2018) found that while storytelling had a positive impact on learners' listening comprehension, it had limited effect on their pronunciation skills.

To supplement storytelling activities, teachers may use pronunciation drills, phonics exercises, and grammar instruction to help learners improve their pronunciation and grammatical accuracy (Derakhshan and Shams 2016; Kazemian and Sabouri 2017). In addition, teachers can provide learners with opportunities for structured practice and feedback, such as role-playing, oral presentations, and peer feedback sessions, to help learners further develop their language skills (Sousa 2016).

Many stories used for language learning are simplified or adapted for learners, which can limit exposure to authentic language. Simplification may involve using simpler vocabulary or sentence structures, omitting complex grammar, or altering cultural references. While these adaptations can make the stories more accessible to learners, they might not provide the same level of exposure to authentic language that learners would encounter in real-life situations. One study that highlights the limited access to authentic language in language learning materials is by (Peacock 1997). The study found that language learners may be exposed to limited and controlled language input, which might not reflect the complexity and diversity of real-life language use. Similarly, a more recent study by Kuo and Anderson (2010) examined the use of authentic versus adapted materials in a language learning classroom. The study found that learners exposed to authentic materials showed greater improvement in their language proficiency than those exposed to adapted materials. These studies suggest that while adapted stories can be useful for language learners, they may not provide the same level of exposure to authentic language as unadapted materials. Therefore, language teachers need to use a variety of materials, including authentic materials, to expose learners to the complexity and diversity of real-life language use.

While storytelling can be a fun and engaging way to learn a language, it may not be equally effective for all learners. Some learners may not be interested in or engaged by storytelling activities, which can limit their ability to learn from them. This could be due to various factors, such as personal preferences or individual learning styles. For these learners, alternative methods of instruction may be necessary to keep them engaged and motivated. Studies have shown that learners' motivation and engagement play an important role in language learning success. For example, a study conducted by (Hiver and Al-Hoorie 2017) found that learners who were highly motivated and engaged in language learning activities showed greater language proficiency gains than those who were less motivated or engaged.

Furthermore, research has shown that individual learning styles can also affect learners' engagement with language learning activities. For example, some learners may

have more visual or kinesthetic styles, and may require more hands-on or interactive activities to stay engaged. In order to address these limitations, teachers can consider incorporating a variety of activities and approaches in their language instruction. For example, they may use games, songs, videos, or other multimedia resources in addition to storytelling activities to appeal to a range of learning styles and interests. They can also give learners opportunities to practice specific language skills through focused activities or exercises, in addition to the more holistic approach of storytelling. Overall, it is important for language teachers to be flexible and adaptable in their instruction, and to be responsive to learners' individual needs and preferences. By incorporating a range of activities and approaches, teachers can create a more engaging and effective language learning environment for all learners.

CONCLUSION

Storytelling can be an effective tool for improving various language skills, including vocabulary, grammar, syntax, listening, speaking, and writing. The implications of these studies are significant for language teachers and curriculum designers, as they provide evidence that integrating storytelling activities into language instruction can be an effective pedagogical approach. Curriculum designers can consider incorporating storytelling activities into language curricula to enhance language learning outcomes.

1. The use of graded extensive listening, including listening to stories, was effective for improving the listening comprehension skills of EFL learners as the impact of storytelling on creativity and imaginative play across different age groups and educational contexts.
2. The unique narrative structure of literary fiction may help readers develop a deeper understanding of complex themes and ideas, leading to improved critical thinking and empathy skills. The students who read literary fiction scored significantly higher on measures of critical thinking and empathy compared to those who read nonfiction or popular fiction.
3. Students who participated in the creative writing program showed significant improvements in their writing ability and confidence, compared to the control group.
4. Teachers can consider incorporating a variety of activities and approaches in their language instruction. And they may provide opportunities for learners to practice specific language skills through focused activities or exercises to maintain the limitation of storytelling technique.

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