



## Encouraging Young Learners to Learn English Through Stories

Veerpal<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Brij Govind<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, Sunrise University, Alwar

<sup>2</sup> Associate Professor, Sunrise University, Alwar

**Article Info:** Received: 12-07-2023 / Revised: 14-08-2023 / Accepted: 23-08-2023

**Address for Correspondence:** Veerpal

**Conflict of interest statement:** No conflict of interest

### Abstract

Reading is a crucial skill for every language learner. Young students who are inspired to study English via narrative do so because they want to broaden their horizons, spark their early excitement, and increase their knowledge of the rich usage of the language. There's no denying the importance of stories in helping kids learn to read and write. Children's development as whole people is fostered via reading aloud to them, not only in terms of academic achievement (Ai Lian Kim, 2008). Learning to read at a young age is crucial. This article explores the benefits of using tales to engage and motivate students in learning English.

**Keywords:** Young learners, Reading, Learning English, Stories

### Introduction

The use of narrative in the classroom to teach English has gained widespread acceptance and popularity. It is a comprehensive method for teaching and learning a foreign language based on the idea that students need to engage with actual content in order to acquire it (Mourao, 2009). When we use tales to teach a language, we are doing something considerably larger and more essential than teaching a language" (Wright, 2003: 7).

I think that stories, in their broadest meaning, have an important role to play in the education of the young child, especially in the formation of language. The teacher, I argue, can create the kind of learning environment that not only stimulates and carries the children along on the crest of their interest and enjoyment, but also offers meaning potential without which the learning of language is rigid, by drawing from a story "bank" rich in all manner of literary genres and crossing a variety of cultures.

Since stories are so important to kids, they've been formally included into the language classroom so that instructors may use them in

their lessons. According to Eccles (1999), the teaching and study of English is crucial in many industrialized and growing civilizations since it is a fantastic instrument for obtaining information and communicating with diverse individuals. Children's natural curiosity and openness to new experiences make them ideal learners of foreign languages.

Young children may better absorb a new language via the medium of stories. According to Ellis & Brewster (2002), reading aloud to youngsters is one of their favorite activities. The repetition helps the learner retain new vocabulary while reinforcing previously acquired vocabulary. There is a lot of repetition of important terms and constructions in many tales. This helps kids remember everything that happened in the tale, which in turn helps them learn to anticipate what will happen next. Story contributions might be sparked by repetition as well. Collie and Slater (1988) argue that narratives provide the ideal entry point for students into the study of literature. Teachers may benefit greatly from the tools provided by stories for contextually examining literary

elements. Using stories, children's image stories, the use of tales for learning, electronic books, and children-specific materials, Alstad and Tkachenko (2018) aimed to investigate the theoretical and practical aspects of language acquisition.

### Literature Review

Rahiem, M.D.H. (2021), Digital storytelling combines the age-old craft of storytelling with a variety of cutting-edge mediums, such as digital photos, graphics, music, and sound, to convey tales in the author's own voice. There are a wide variety of creative uses for digital storytelling in the classroom, from elementary school to higher education. Students benefit from digital storytelling, and educators are given the opportunity to try new and effective teaching techniques. While storytelling has long been recognized as an effective method of teaching, digital stories are still uncommon in the context of early childhood education. The researcher investigated the application of digital storytelling in elementary school classrooms by focusing on a storytelling-art-science club in Jakarta, Indonesia. This group is unusual in that it makes use of digital storytelling as part of its early childhood education initiatives. In-depth interviews with four educators, document analysis, and twice-weekly observations of storytelling activities with 35 and 37 children were used to obtain qualitative data. Teachers' digital literacy should be bolstered, ICT tools should be made available in schools, and the government should provide some funding for updating school facilities. Additionally, the study recommends adapting curricula to keep up with technological advances and giving students practice with their use.

Learning relies heavily on the presence of agency. As Lantolf (2011) puts it, "instilling some sense of successful agency" in the learner is key to effective teaching. In fact, van Lier argues that the whole process of L2 acquisition is equivalent to agency. Since "learners actively engage in constructing the terms and conditions of their own learning" (Lantolf & Pavlenko, p. 145), agency may also be applied to the classroom setting. When a person is caught between competing goals and needs to make a decision, Sullivan and McCarthy point out, the

role of agency takes center stage. Children, as Bozhovich explains, can "understand perfectly well the advisability and even necessity of a requirement with which they are confronted, but nevertheless refuse to submit to it simply because it comes into conflict with other needs and impulses that they are simultaneously experiencing" (p. 68).

Lantolf, J. P., Swain, (2020), Vygotsky used the word "perezhivanie" to stress the nondeterministic nature of the social environment's impact on an individual's development. Since the development of a learner depends on interactions involving their whole selves, including their feelings, thoughts, and experiences, as well as their own subjective interpretations of those things, this concept may help us understand and account for the variety of paths that learners in the same setting take. As a factor of the past that has a significant bearing on the learner's perception of their own agency in the present, perezhivanie may be an integral part of the learner's sense of agency. The term "double dialogicality" may be used to describe this exchange from a dialogically-informed viewpoint. Numerous research in the area of psychology lend credence to the idea of perezhivanie by showing that our brains are always engaged in predictive processes, in which our attention is driven by prior experiences (for a review, see Hutchinson & Barrett, 2019). As in the Vygotskian statement above, scientists often use the metaphor of a "filter" to illustrate the pervasive influence of memory and emotion on all aspects of human cognition.

Reading aloud has the ability to allow the listener to share their feelings, which may help them learn, as suggested by Robin (2015). Therefore, tales are a powerful tool for teaching young students since they encourage active participation from the reader. According to Pyun & Lee, when people hear a story told by one person, they tend to tell it themselves, but in their own unique way. This is because each person brings his or her own unique perspective to the telling of the story.

It is clear that tales have become a part of our lives, and therefore it is reasonable to suppose that they play a significant role in the education

of young students, as Deligianni-Georgaka and Pouroutidi (2016) put it. Even the youngest students may gain knowledge and understanding through classroom tales. This is because, at this point in their education, adolescents are receptive to acquiring new vocabulary and making an effort to comprehend the world around them.

### Why Story Books?

There is consensus among educators that teaching language arts by reading aloud to elementary school kids has a good effect on their linguistic growth (Morrow, 1992). In their discussion of children's literature, Weinreich and Bartlett state that "the child... must be regarded as a necessary condition which the author relates to, consciously or unconsciously" (2000:127). McDowell (1973) argues that the phrase "children's literature" encompasses novels intended for, and read by, the demographic of a society known as children. When defining "children's literature," Oberstein (1996: 17) defines it as "a category of books the existence of which absolutely depends on supposed relationships with a particular reading audience: children." According to Hollindale (1997:30), "children's literature" is "a collection of texts that share certain characteristics of imaginative interest and are activated as children's literature when read by a child." "Children's literature is fiction written for children to read for pleasure, rather than for didactic purposes," writes Ghosn (2002: 172). According to Huck, et al. (1997: 5), "the imaginative shaping of life and thought into the forms and structures of language" is what makes up children's literature. According to Galda and Cullinan (2002: 7), reading "entertains and... informs," "it enables young people to explore and understand their world," "enriches their lives and widens their horizons," and "children learn about people and places on the other side of the world as well as ones down the street" through literature. They can go back and forth through time, allowing them to reconnect with loved ones, make new connections, and see exotic locales. They may learn about themselves, form their own ideals, and fantasize about other futures. "good quality trade books written especially for children from birth to adolescence, covering topics that are

relevant and interesting to children," write Tomlinson and Lynch-Brown (2002:2). According to Lewis (2001), picture books are beneficial for youngsters for the following reasons:

When compared to previous generations, it is probable that those born in the first few years of the twenty-first century will have a deeper and more nuanced grasp of visual imagery and the many ways it might be used. Moving and static images, both on their own and in various mashups with words and noises, fill their environment. They have to operate in this kind of environment (p.59).

Ghosn (2002: 173) summarizes the reasons why authentic literature is valuable for children:

- Since children are naturally attracted to tales, reading authentic literature may offer a stimulating, meaningful setting for language acquisition.
- Learning a language is aided by reading literature. It's a great way to expose students to the language in its most authentic form and to expand their vocabulary.
- Literature may help kids get ready for school by improving their reading comprehension and critical thinking abilities.
- Literature has the potential to act as a catalyst for positive change; quality works that address universal human experiences are helpful to children's emotional growth and the formation of empathetic relationships across cultures.

### How to select story books?

Children's books, according to Brown (2004), "expose pupils to new, illustrated vocabulary in context; offer repetition of essential words and phrases that students may grasp and learn to manipulate; and create a feeling of success.

Smallwood (1988:66) states that "age-appropriate theme," "simple language," "limited use of metaphor and unfamiliar experiences," "use of rhyme," "unambiguous plot," "realistic but simple dialogue," "potential for reading aloud," "brevity," and "good illustrations" are all important considerations when choosing

children's literature for language learners. Smallwood includes the following additional criteria:

- Does the book help meet curriculum objectives or enhance the thematic units being studied?
- Is the book's content appropriate to the children's age and intellectual level?
- Does the book use language that is at or slightly above the level of the learners?
- Does the book contain repeated, predictable language patterns?
- Are there clear illustrations that help the story?
- In addition to these criteria Steinbeck (2008) lists the characteristics of using stories with young learners as:
  - Stories should be action oriented
  - Stories should be personal (the use of familiar characters, the pre- and post-activities should make use of the personalization technique.
  - Stories should not be too detailed, both in terms of the story and the visuals used.
  - Stories should allow for context extension.
  - Stories should use comprehensible input (the language that is at the right cognitive and linguistic level) so that the output is more structured.

Heide Niemann (2002), when selecting a story book for young learners, states that the following questions will support parents to direct their ways.

- Are different types of storybooks (animal stories, fantasy stories ...) represented in the classroom?
- Are there differences in the style of the illustrations between the books?
- Are the main characters boys as well as girls?
- Is the book (psychologically) suitable for the age group?
- Can children identify with the main character or with any other character?

- Will there be links to their personal experiences?
- Is the book fun, has it got humor in it?
- How does the language match the children's language skills?
- Does the book match cross-curricular topics?
- Is it a book the children can read themselves?
- Is it a book they can read words or passages from?
- Is it a book they can understand without reading the text?

According to Vardel, Hadaway, and Young (2006: 735) the most important criteria in selecting books for learners

English as a second language is that they are appropriate in relation to age, interests, and maturity.

### Conclusion

Young children are inspired by tales, and those stories may make school a joyful experience for everyone. For young children, stories are the best possible way to learn a new language. Children like tales because they are simple and straightforward. Young students of a foreign language have a fantastic resource in stories to help them become fluent.

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