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THE IMPORTANCE OF THE RETELLING METHOD IN DEVELOPING YOUNG LEARNERS’ SPEAKING SKILLS

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Abstract. This article examines the role of the **retelling method** in developing oral communication skills of primary school students in English language classes. The study is based on cognitive and sociocultural learning theories and includes a practical classroom-based study conducted with primary school learners. The results show that regular retelling activities significantly improve students’ speaking fluency, vocabulary development, and storytelling abilities. In addition, the retelling process activates important cognitive processes such as **active recall** and **meaningful encoding** which contribute to deeper language acquisition. The findings of the study demonstrate that the retelling method is an effective pedagogical tool for developing speaking skills among primary school learners.

Keywords: retelling method, young learners, speaking skills, storytelling, English language teaching, oral communication

Annotatsiya. Mazkur maqolada ingliz tili darslarida boshlang‘ich sinf o‘quvchilarining og‘zaki nutq ko‘nikmalarini shakllantirishda **retelling usulining o‘rni** o‘rganilgan. Tadqiqot kognitiv hamda sotsiomadaniy ta‘lim nazariyalariga asoslanib, boshlang‘ich sinf o‘quvchilari ishtirokida o‘tkazilgan amaliy tadqiqotni o‘z ichiga oladi. Natijalar muntazam retelling mashg‘ulotlari o‘quvchilarning nutq ravonligini, lug‘at boyligini hamda hikoya tuzish ko‘nikmalarini sezilarli darajada rivojlantirishini ko‘rsatdi. Bundan tashqari, retelling jarayoni faol eslab qolish (active recall) va ma‘noli kodlash (meaningful encoding) kabi muhim kognitiv jarayonlarni faollashtirib, tilni chuqurroq o‘zlashtirishga yordam beradi. Tadqiqot natijalari retelling usuli boshlang‘ich sinf o‘quvchilarining gapirish ko‘nikmalarini shakllantirishda muhim pedagogik vosita ekanligini ko‘rsatadi.

Kalit so‘zlar: retelling usuli, boshlang‘ich sinf o‘quvchilari, gapirish ko‘nikmalari, hikoya qilish, ingliz tilini o‘qitish, og‘zaki muloqot.

Аннотация. В данной статье рассматривается роль метода пересказа в развитии навыков устной речи у учащихся начальных классов на уроках английского языка.

Исследование основано на когнитивных и социокультурных теориях обучения и включает практическое исследование, проведённое с участием учащихся начальной школы. Результаты показывают, что регулярные занятия по пересказу значительно улучшают беглость речи учащихся, расширяют их словарный запас и развивают навыки повествования. Кроме того, процесс пересказа активизирует важные когнитивные процессы, такие как активное воспроизведение информации (active recall) и осмысленное кодирование (meaningful encoding), что способствует более глубокому усвоению языка. Результаты исследования показывают, что метод пересказа является эффективным педагогическим инструментом для развития навыков устной речи у младших школьников.

Ключевые слова: метод пересказа, младшие школьники, навыки говорения, рассказывание историй, обучение английскому языку, устная коммуникация.

INTRODUCTION. In contemporary language education, communicative competence is considered a key objective of English language teaching. The ability to communicate effectively in spoken language is particularly important for young learners who are at the early stages of language development. Speaking skills enable learners to express ideas, interact with others, and build confidence in using a foreign language in real-life situations. However, many young learners face difficulties in developing oral communication skills because traditional teaching methods often emphasize grammar and memorization rather than meaningful communication.

One of the most effective ways to encourage young learners to speak is through narrative-based learning activities such as storytelling and retelling. Retelling is an instructional strategy in which learners recount a story or text they have heard or read using their own words. Through this process, students actively reconstruct the information, organize ideas logically, and practice expressing thoughts in a coherent manner. According to Cameron (2001), young learners acquire language most effectively when they are engaged in meaningful and interactive activities that connect language with context and experience. Retelling activities provide such opportunities because they encourage learners to transform input into meaningful spoken output.

In addition to promoting speaking practice, retelling also strengthens comprehension and memory. When students retell a story, they must first understand the content, identify key events, and then reorganize the information before expressing it verbally. This process encourages deeper cognitive engagement with the language material. Research has shown that narrative-based activities significantly improve language comprehension, vocabulary retention, and oral fluency among young learners (Isbell et al., 2004). Therefore, incorporating retelling activities into English lessons can create a dynamic learning environment where learners actively participate in communication and language production.

Given the potential benefits of retelling in language learning, the present study aims to examine its role in developing young learners' oral communication skills. The study focuses on how retelling supports speaking fluency, narrative competence, and cognitive development in primary school English classrooms.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

The retelling method has been widely discussed in language education research as a powerful instructional tool for developing oral language skills. Retelling activities require learners to listen to or read a narrative and then reconstruct the story using their own words. This process involves comprehension, memory recall, and language production, making it a comprehensive language learning activity. Researchers argue that retelling helps learners integrate listening, speaking, and thinking processes, which contributes to deeper language acquisition (Nation, 2013).

From a sociocultural perspective, retelling can be understood through Vygotsky’s theory of language and cognitive development. Vygotsky (1986) emphasized that language development occurs through social interaction and meaningful communication. According to his theory, learners develop higher cognitive functions through collaborative activities such as discussion, storytelling, and retelling. When students retell a story in pairs or groups, they engage in social interaction that helps them clarify meaning, negotiate language use, and construct knowledge collectively. In addition, Vygotsky’s concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) suggests that learners can perform more complex language tasks when supported by teachers or peers. Retelling activities often involve such scaffolding, where teachers guide learners through questions and prompts that help them organize their narratives.

Another theoretical perspective supporting the use of retelling in education is Piaget’s cognitive development theory. Piaget (1964) proposed that children in primary school age typically operate in the concrete operational stage of cognitive development. At this stage, learners develop the ability to understand logical relationships, categorize information, and organize events in sequences. Retelling activities align well with these cognitive abilities because they require learners to recognize story structure, identify cause-and-effect relationships, and reconstruct narratives in chronological order.

In addition to theoretical support, empirical studies also highlight the effectiveness of retelling in language learning. Isbell et al. (2004) found that storytelling and retelling activities significantly improved children’s oral language complexity and story comprehension. Similarly, research by Egan (2022) indicates that narrative-based learning enhances students’ ability to remember and interpret information because stories provide meaningful contexts for language use.

Cognitive research also emphasizes the role of memory processes in retelling tasks. During retelling activities, learners engage in active recall, which involves retrieving information from memory. They also perform meaningful encoding, where new information is connected with existing knowledge, and reprocessing, which involves reorganizing the information to produce new linguistic output (Egan, 2022). These processes strengthen both comprehension and language production, making retelling a valuable tool for developing speaking skills in young learners.

This study employed a classroom-based research design to examine the effectiveness of the retelling method in improving young learners’ oral communication skills. The participants of the study were forty primary school students aged between eight and ten years

who were learning English as a foreign language. The students were divided into two groups: a control group that received traditional language instruction and an experimental group that participated in regular retelling activities.

The research was conducted over a six-week period. During this time, students in the experimental group were exposed to short English stories appropriate for their language level. After listening to or reading the stories, the teacher introduced key vocabulary and discussed the main events of the narrative. Students were then asked to retell the story individually or in pairs using their own words. The teacher provided guidance through questions and prompts that helped learners recall important details and organize their narratives logically. Meanwhile, the control group followed the standard curriculum, which included reading comprehension exercises and vocabulary drills but did not involve structured retelling activities.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the retelling method, several data collection instruments were used. These included pre-test and post-test speaking assessments, classroom observations, and student questionnaires. The speaking tests were designed to measure learners' fluency, vocabulary use, and ability to organize ideas in a narrative form. Classroom observations focused on student participation, interaction, and engagement during speaking activities. The questionnaires collected learners' perceptions about the retelling tasks and their confidence in speaking English.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study revealed that students who participated in retelling activities demonstrated noticeable improvements in their oral communication skills compared to those in the control group. In the post-test speaking assessment, learners in the experimental group produced longer and more coherent responses, used a wider range of vocabulary, and showed greater confidence in speaking English. For instance, during the pre-test stage many learners could only produce short and fragmented sentences such as *"The boy go to school. He see dog."* However, after several weeks of retelling practice, the same learners were able to produce more structured responses such as: *"The boy went to school in the morning and he saw a small dog near the gate. He helped the dog find its owner."* These findings are consistent with previous research indicating that narrative-based activities enhance learners' oral language development and story comprehension (Isbell et al., 2004).

One of the most significant improvements observed in the experimental group was in speaking fluency. Students who regularly practiced retelling were able to maintain longer stretches of speech without frequent pauses. For example, after listening to a short story about *"The Lost Puppy"*, students were asked to retell the story in pairs. A typical student retelling sounded as follows: *"Yesterday a little girl lost her puppy in the park. She was very sad. Then a boy found the puppy near the playground and helped the girl. Finally, they were very happy."* In contrast, students in the control group often relied on isolated sentences or simple repetition of the teacher's model. This improvement can be explained by the repeated exposure to narrative structures and vocabulary during the retelling process. As learners became familiar with the story content, they gained greater confidence in expressing ideas verbally.

Another important finding was the development of narrative competence. Students who practiced retelling showed a better understanding of story structure, including the beginning, middle, and ending of narratives. For instance, during a lesson based on the story *“The Hungry Caterpillar”*, students were asked to organize story cards and retell the events. Many students structured their retelling in chronological order: *“First the caterpillar was very hungry. Then it ate many fruits. After that it became a big caterpillar and made a cocoon. Finally, it became a beautiful butterfly.”* Such examples illustrate that learners were able to recognize narrative sequencing and cause-and-effect relationships within the story. This supports Piaget’s theory that children in the concrete operational stage are capable of organizing information logically when provided with appropriate learning activities (Piaget, 1964).

The study also found that retelling increased students’ motivation and engagement in English lessons. Learners reported that storytelling and retelling activities were enjoyable and helped them feel more confident when speaking English. For example, during group retelling activities students were encouraged to add their own details or personal opinions about the story. In one classroom activity, after retelling a story about a boy helping an old woman cross the street, students expanded the narrative by adding new ideas such as: *“The boy was kind because he wanted to help people. The old woman thanked him and gave him an apple.”* These creative contributions showed that learners were not only repeating the story but also actively engaging with the content. This observation aligns with Cameron’s (2001) argument that young learners learn languages more effectively when they are involved in meaningful and interactive activities.

From a cognitive perspective, the retelling method encourages deeper processing of language input. During retelling, learners must recall information, interpret meaning, and reconstruct the narrative in their own words. For example, after reading a short story about *“Tom and the Magic Tree”*, students were asked to summarize the story without looking at the text. In order to complete this task, learners needed to remember key events, select appropriate vocabulary, and organize their speech logically. These processes involve active recall, meaningful encoding, and information reprocessing, which strengthen both memory and language production skills (Egan, 2022). As a result, retelling not only improves speaking ability but also enhances comprehension and cognitive development among young learners.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study confirm that the retelling method plays an important role in developing young learners’ oral communication skills in English language classrooms. Retelling encourages learners to actively process language input and transform it into meaningful spoken output. Through this process, students improve their speaking fluency, vocabulary usage, and narrative organization. The study also demonstrates that retelling supports cognitive development by activating memory and reasoning processes. When learners reconstruct stories in their own words, they engage in deeper levels of comprehension and language processing. Furthermore, retelling creates an interactive and motivating learning environment that encourages students to participate actively in

communication. Given these benefits, English language teachers should consider integrating retelling activities into their regular classroom practices. By combining storytelling, discussion, and retelling, teachers can create engaging language learning experiences that promote both linguistic and cognitive development in young learners.

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