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DEVELOPING ENGLISH COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN PRESCHOOL CHILDREN THROUGH THE STORYTELLING METHOD

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Annotation. This article examines the effectiveness of storytelling in developing English communication skills among preschool children. Storytelling creates an engaging learning environment where children learn new vocabulary, improve listening comprehension, and develop speaking skills. The article highlights the importance of repetition, questions, visual materials, and interactive activities in language learning. Through listening to stories, answering questions, and describing characters, children become more confident and active in communication. Age-appropriate stories also encourage imagination, motivation, and participation. The article emphasizes that storytelling helps children use English in meaningful contexts and express their ideas through simple sentences. Therefore, storytelling can be considered an effective method for developing preschool children’s English communicative competence.

Keywords: storytelling, preschool children, English, communication skills, vocabulary, speaking, interactive learning.

Аннотация. В статье рассматривается эффективность сторителлинга в развитии коммуникативных навыков английского языка у детей дошкольного возраста. Рассказы создают увлекательную образовательную среду, способствующую усвоению новой лексики, развитию аудирования и говорения. Особое внимание уделяется повторению, вопросам, наглядным материалам и интерактивным заданиям. Слушая истории, отвечая на вопросы и описывая персонажей, дети становятся более активными и уверенными в общении. Рассказы, соответствующие возрасту детей, также развивают воображение, мотивацию и интерес к изучению языка. Подчёркивается, что сторителлинг помогает использовать английский язык в содержательных ситуациях и выражать мысли простыми предложениями. Таким образом, сторителлинг является эффективным методом формирования коммуникативной компетенции дошкольников.

Ключевые слова: сторителлинг, дошкольники, английский язык, коммуникативные навыки, лексика, говорение, интерактивное обучение.

Annotatsiya. Ushbu maqolada storytelling metodining maktabgacha yoshdagi bolalarning ingliz tilidagi kommunikativ ko‘nikmalarini rivojlantirishdagi samaradorligi

yoritiladi. Hikoyalar yangi so‘zlarni o‘zlashtirish, tinglab tushunish va gapirish ko‘nikmalarini rivojlantirish uchun qiziqarli ta’lim muhitini yaratadi. Maqolada takrorlash, savol-javob, ko‘rgazmali materiallar va interaktiv mashqlarning ahamiyati ko‘rsatiladi. Hikoyalarni tinglash, savollarga javob berish va qahramonlarni tasvirlash bolalarning muloqotdagi faolligi hamda o‘ziga ishonchini oshiradi. Yoshga mos hikoyalar bolalarning tasavvuri, motivatsiyasi va til o‘rganishga bo‘lgan qiziqishini rivojlantiradi. Xulosa qilib aytganda, storytelling bolalarga ingliz tilidan mazmunli vaziyatlarda foydalanish va fikrlarini sodda gaplar bilan ifodalashga yordam beradigan samarali pedagogik metoddir.

Kalit so‘zlar: storytelling, maktabgacha yoshdagi bolalar, ingliz tili, kommunikativ ko‘nikmalar, lug‘at, gapirish, interaktiv ta’lim.

INTRODUCTION. In the modern educational environment, learning a foreign language at an early age has become increasingly important. Early exposure to English can provide preschool children with opportunities to develop basic language abilities, communication skills, and positive attitudes toward foreign language learning. Since preschool children learn differently from older learners, traditional teaching methods may not always be effective for this age group. Therefore, the use of child-centred, interactive, and engaging teaching methods has become an important issue in modern foreign language pedagogy.

One of the effective approaches to teaching English to young learners is the storytelling method. Storytelling is a pedagogical technique that involves presenting language through meaningful and age-appropriate stories. Stories naturally attract children's attention and allow them to encounter English vocabulary and grammatical structures in a meaningful context. Through listening to and retelling stories, children can gradually develop their vocabulary, pronunciation, listening comprehension, and speaking abilities.

Storytelling also creates opportunities for interaction between teachers and children. Questions, repetition, role-playing, pictures, gestures, and discussions related to stories can encourage children to participate actively in the learning process. Unlike isolated vocabulary memorization, storytelling presents new words and expressions within a meaningful context, which may make language learning more memorable and enjoyable for preschool learners.

Another important advantage of storytelling is its potential to increase children's motivation and confidence. Young learners may feel more comfortable communicating when language activities are connected with familiar characters, simple plots, colourful illustrations, and playful tasks. In this regard, storytelling can serve not only as a language teaching technique but also as a means of creating a supportive and communicative classroom environment.

The development of communicative competence at the preschool stage requires regular opportunities for children to listen to English and use it for meaningful communication. Therefore, investigating effective methods for developing young learners' communication skills is particularly relevant. This article focuses on the use of storytelling in

English language teaching and examines its potential for developing the communicative skills of preschool children.

The main purpose of this study is to explore the pedagogical effectiveness of storytelling in developing preschool children's English communication skills. Particular attention is given to vocabulary development, listening comprehension, speaking practice, children's motivation, and active participation during English lessons.

Literature view. Storytelling has been widely recognized as an effective approach to early language education because it provides learners with meaningful and contextualized language input [3, 9]. Researchers in the field of language teaching emphasize that young learners acquire language more effectively when they are exposed to understandable language through engaging and purposeful activities [2, 6]. Stories provide repeated exposure to vocabulary, sentence patterns, and common expressions while maintaining children's attention and interest [3]. Unlike isolated vocabulary exercises, storytelling presents language in a meaningful context, helping children understand how words and expressions are used in real communication. Moreover, familiar characters, interesting events, and colorful illustrations can encourage children to participate actively in the learning process.

According to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, children's cognitive and language development occurs through social interaction and support from more knowledgeable individuals [8]. In foreign language teaching, storytelling can create opportunities for interaction between teachers and children through questions, repetition, prediction, and discussion. Teacher guidance can gradually help children participate in communication that they may not initially be able to perform independently. For example, teachers can begin by asking simple questions about characters and pictures before encouraging children to describe events or retell parts of a story. These activities provide opportunities for children to learn from the teacher and their peers while developing their confidence in using English.

Krashen's Input Hypothesis also provides a theoretical basis for using stories in foreign language learning [5]. Children need comprehensible input that is slightly beyond their current level of language competence. Carefully selected stories, supported by pictures, gestures, repetition, and familiar contexts, can make English input understandable for preschool learners while gradually introducing new vocabulary and language structures. Repeated exposure to key words and expressions allows children to recognize language patterns and understand their meanings more easily. In addition, listening to stories in a supportive classroom environment can reduce anxiety and create a more positive attitude toward learning English. However, teachers should ensure that stories are appropriate for children's ages, interests, and existing language abilities.

Bruner's concept of scaffolding is also relevant to storytelling-based language instruction [1]. Teachers can support children's understanding by using visual materials, modelling pronunciation, asking simple questions, and repeating key expressions. As learners become more confident, teacher support can gradually be reduced, allowing children to participate more independently. For instance, at the beginning of a lesson, a teacher may tell a story and explain unfamiliar words through pictures or gestures. Later, children can complete

familiar sentences, predict what will happen next, identify characters, or retell the story using their own words. Such gradual support allows learners to move from guided participation toward more independent language use. Storytelling therefore offers opportunities to adapt teaching strategies to children's different learning needs and levels of confidence. Listening to a story can strengthen comprehension, while answering questions, repeating expressions, and retelling events can encourage speaking. Therefore, storytelling can be considered an appropriate methodological approach for creating meaningful English language learning experiences for young learners.

Previous research on young learner education indicates that storytelling can contribute to vocabulary acquisition, listening comprehension, pronunciation, speaking development, and motivation [3, 4, 7]. Isbell et al. (2004) examined storytelling and story reading in relation to young children's oral language complexity and story comprehension [4]. Their research is relevant to understanding how storytelling activities may support children's oral language development. At the same time, storytelling should not be treated as a technique that automatically produces the same results for every learner. Its effectiveness may depend on the teacher's methods, the complexity of the story, the frequency of storytelling activities, and the opportunities children receive to use the target language.

Furthermore, the educational value of storytelling can be increased through carefully planned follow-up activities. Teachers may organize role-playing, picture sequencing, matching tasks, simple dialogues, and group retelling after presenting a story [3, 9]. These activities encourage children to recall information, use newly learned vocabulary, and communicate with classmates. Role-playing is particularly useful because children can imitate characters and practise common expressions in a meaningful situation. Picture sequencing can help them understand the order of events and develop the ability to describe actions. Such activities also provide teachers with opportunities to observe children's comprehension and speaking progress.

In summary, the reviewed literature provides a theoretical and methodological basis for using storytelling in preschool English language education. The ideas associated with Vygotsky, Krashen, and Bruner help explain why interaction, comprehensible input, and gradual teacher support are important in language learning [1, 5, 8]. Research on young learners also highlights the potential value of stories for developing vocabulary, comprehension, and oral communication [2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9]. However, successful implementation requires appropriate story selection, active teacher guidance, and regular opportunities for children to practise English. Therefore, storytelling should be organized as an interactive teaching method rather than simply reading a text aloud. When integrated systematically into preschool lessons, it can provide children with engaging opportunities to develop their early English communication skills.

Methodology. This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to examine the potential of storytelling as an effective method for developing English communication skills among preschool children. The research focuses on the use of stories as a meaningful and interactive context for introducing new vocabulary, improving listening comprehension,

encouraging oral communication, and developing children's confidence in using English. The qualitative descriptive approach is appropriate for this study because it allows the researcher to observe children's language-learning experiences and describe their participation in storytelling activities in a natural classroom environment.

The participants in the study are preschool-aged children who are beginning to learn English as a foreign language. At this stage of development, children often learn more effectively through visual materials, repetition, movement, play, and interaction with others. Therefore, storytelling activities are designed to reflect children's developmental characteristics, language abilities, interests, and everyday experiences. The stories are selected according to several criteria, including age appropriateness, linguistic simplicity, cultural familiarity, and opportunities for interaction. Particular attention is given to stories containing basic vocabulary, short sentences, repetitive expressions, familiar characters, and easily understandable events. These features help children follow the storyline and gradually become familiar with frequently used English words and phrases.

The storytelling process is organized into three main stages: pre-story, while-story, and post-story activities. Each stage serves a specific purpose and contributes to the development of children's receptive and productive language skills.

During the pre-story stage, the teacher prepares children for the story by introducing its main topic, characters, and key vocabulary. Pictures, flashcards, real objects, gestures, facial expressions, and simple questions are used to attract children's attention and activate their prior knowledge. For example, before telling a story about animals, the teacher may show pictures of familiar animals and ask children to identify them in English. This preparatory stage helps children understand essential vocabulary and creates a positive learning atmosphere. It also encourages curiosity and motivates learners to participate actively in the following activities.

The while-story stage focuses on listening comprehension and meaningful interaction. The teacher tells or reads the selected story using clear pronunciation, appropriate intonation, facial expressions, gestures, and visual materials. Repetition is an important feature of this stage because young learners need repeated exposure to new words and expressions before they can use them independently. The teacher emphasizes key vocabulary and familiar sentence patterns throughout the story. Children are encouraged to predict what may happen next, identify characters, respond to simple questions, imitate sounds, and repeat important phrases. Short pauses may be introduced to allow children to process information and express their ideas. These techniques support active listening and help maintain children's attention throughout the storytelling process.

The post-story stage emphasizes active language production and the practical use of newly introduced vocabulary. After listening to the story, children participate in activities such as retelling short parts of the narrative, role-playing familiar characters, matching pictures with words, answering comprehension questions, completing simple sentences, and describing characters or events. For example, children may act out a short dialogue between two characters or use simple expressions to describe what a character is doing. Pair work and

small-group activities can also be included to provide opportunities for communication with peers. These activities encourage children to use English in meaningful contexts rather than simply memorize isolated words. The teacher provides positive feedback, models correct expressions when necessary, and encourages children to communicate without fear of making mistakes.

Data for the study can be collected through classroom observations, teacher notes, children's oral responses, participation in storytelling activities, and performance in simple vocabulary and speaking tasks. Observation focuses on how children respond to stories, whether they recognize and use newly introduced words, how accurately they understand basic questions, and how willingly they participate in individual and group activities. Teacher notes may record examples of children's spoken language, difficulties encountered during activities, and changes in their confidence or engagement. Vocabulary and speaking tasks can provide additional information about children's ability to recognize familiar words, produce short expressions, and communicate simple ideas related to the story.

The main indicators used to examine children's communication development include vocabulary recognition and use, listening comprehension, pronunciation, ability to answer simple questions, production of short sentences, willingness to speak English, and active participation in classroom interaction. These indicators provide a practical framework for describing children's responses to storytelling activities. Particular attention is given not only to linguistic accuracy but also to communicative confidence, as young learners may initially understand more English than they can produce independently.

The collected observations are analyzed descriptively to identify recurring patterns in children's participation and language use during storytelling activities. The analysis considers the ways in which children respond to repeated vocabulary, visual support, teacher questions, and opportunities for role-play or retelling. Observations from different stages of the storytelling process can be compared to describe which activities appear to encourage greater participation and oral expression. Where appropriate, examples of children's responses may be used to illustrate observed patterns. However, any conclusions about improvement should be based on documented classroom evidence rather than assumptions about the effectiveness of storytelling.

Ethical considerations are also taken into account when working with preschool children. Activities should be conducted in a safe, supportive, and age-appropriate environment. Appropriate permission should be obtained from parents or legal guardians when required, and children's identities should remain confidential when observations are reported. Participation should be encouraged through positive reinforcement, without placing unnecessary pressure on children to speak or perform.

Overall, this methodology provides a structured framework for exploring the role of storytelling in developing basic English communication skills among preschool learners. By combining carefully selected stories, interactive classroom activities, systematic observation, and descriptive analysis, the study seeks to explain how storytelling may support vocabulary

development, listening comprehension, oral expression, and confidence in early foreign-language learning.

Results and discussions. The analysis of storytelling-based English language activities indicates that storytelling can have a positive influence on the development of preschool children's communication skills. When children are exposed to simple stories supported by pictures, gestures, repetition, and teacher interaction, they become more willing to listen to and use English during classroom activities. The meaningful context provided by stories helps children understand new vocabulary and language expressions more naturally.

One of the most noticeable outcomes is the improvement in vocabulary acquisition. Instead of learning individual words separately, children encounter vocabulary in meaningful situations connected with characters, actions, objects, and events. Repeated exposure to the same words throughout a story helps children recognize and remember them more effectively. For example, words related to animals, colours, family members, food, toys, and daily activities can be introduced through short and repetitive stories.

Storytelling also contributes to the development of listening comprehension. During storytelling activities, children need to listen carefully in order to understand the characters, events, and sequence of the story. Visual support, gestures, facial expressions, and changes in intonation make the teacher's speech more understandable. As a result, children can gradually improve their ability to identify familiar words and understand the general meaning of simple English utterances.

Another important result concerns speaking development. Post-story activities such as question-and-answer exercises, role-playing, repetition, and retelling give children opportunities to produce English themselves. At the initial stage, children may repeat individual words or short expressions. With continued practice, they can gradually produce simple sentences and respond to basic questions. This demonstrates that storytelling can create a bridge between receptive language skills and productive communication.

The results also suggest that storytelling can positively influence children's motivation and classroom participation. Preschool learners are naturally attracted to stories, characters, pictures, and imaginative situations. When English lessons are presented in the form of an interesting story, children are more likely to participate actively and maintain their attention. This supports the idea that emotional engagement is an important element of successful early foreign language education.

The findings are consistent with Vygotsky's view that language development is strongly connected with social interaction. During storytelling, children communicate with the teacher and their peers, receive support, and gradually become more independent in using English. Similarly, Krashen's concept of comprehensible input can be applied to storytelling because stories provide children with understandable language supported by context, visual materials, repetition, and gestures.

However, the effectiveness of storytelling depends on several factors. Stories should be short, age-appropriate, linguistically accessible, and interesting for children. Excessively complicated vocabulary or long narratives may reduce children's attention and comprehension.

Teachers should therefore select stories carefully and combine storytelling with interactive activities. Regular repetition is also important because preschool learners need multiple opportunities to hear and practise new language.

Overall, the results demonstrate that storytelling is not simply an entertaining classroom activity but a potentially effective methodological tool for developing preschool children's English communication skills. Its combination of meaningful input, repetition, interaction, visual support, and emotional engagement creates favourable conditions for vocabulary development, listening comprehension, speaking practice, and active participation. Therefore, systematic integration of storytelling into preschool English lessons can contribute to the gradual development of children's communicative competence.

Conclusion. In conclusion, storytelling can be considered an effective and engaging approach to developing English communication skills among preschool children. The analysis suggests that age-appropriate stories, supported by pictures, gestures, repetition, questions, and role-playing activities, can improve children's vocabulary, listening comprehension, speaking ability, motivation, and classroom participation. Storytelling provides meaningful language input and encourages children to understand and use English in familiar contexts. Furthermore, interactive storytelling activities help develop children's imagination, creativity, confidence, and willingness to communicate with others. Teachers play an important role in selecting suitable stories and organizing activities according to children's ages, interests, and language abilities. To achieve better results, storytelling should be integrated systematically into preschool English lessons and combined with other interactive teaching techniques. Overall, storytelling offers valuable opportunities for early language development and can establish a positive foundation for children's future foreign language learning and communicative competence.

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