

THE IMPACT OF RETELLING SHORT STORIES ON THE SPEAKING ABILITIES OF TURKISH INTERMEDIATE EFL LEARNERS

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Abstract: English language teaching is essential for students of all ages, even adults. Adult learners can acquire new languages, and one strategy that can help them enhance their language skills is by telling short stories. In recent years, storytelling has emerged as a powerful tool for EFL adult learners to enhance their speaking abilities as educators strive to find innovative teaching methods that foster language fluency and vocabulary acquisition. As a teaching method, retelling short stories can be a highly effective way to promote active learning and student engagement, enabling adult EFL learners to develop their language skills through a process of exploration, experimentation, and reflection. This study is intended to investigate the effects of retelling short stories on the speaking abilities of Turkish intermediate EFL adult learners. The research aimed to explore how retelling short stories affects the speaking abilities of twenty adult prep school EFL learners between 18 and 25 years old. The experimental group participated in story retelling sessions for 8 weeks, while the control group solely read the same stories without engaging in retelling sessions. The study used a quantitative research approach, and data was collected through a pre-test and post-test. The results of the research clearly demonstrate that the regular practice of retelling short stories significantly enhanced the speaking abilities of intermediate EFL learners in Turkey, confirming the efficacy of this technique for language learning.

Keywords: Storytelling, Speaking skills, Retelling short stories, Adult learners, Teaching English as a foreign language.

1. INTRODUCTION

To achieve successful academic performance, students need to acquire language, as it is crucial for communication and contributes to their intellectual, social, and emotional growth. Acquiring fluency in speaking can be a challenging task for individuals who are studying English as a foreign language. As such, the current research holds significant value as it endeavors to investigate the effect of learners' storytelling on their speaking competence, which could contribute to the development of effective language learning strategies.

Students must possess strong communication skills and be able to convey information with specific communicative purposes across various genres. Retelling stories is a technique that offers students extensive exposure and the ability to enhance their speaking proficiency. By repeatedly practicing and refining their storytelling abilities, students can

significantly improve their specific speaking performance and overall language fluency. The importance of this genre in language learning highlights the need for educators to integrate storytelling techniques into their teaching methodologies. Additionally, learners can enhance their ability to identify pronunciation errors, expand their lexicon, comprehend sentence structure, and communicate fluently through retelling stories. According to Bygate (1998), speaking is a multifaceted cognitive process that distinguishes itself from other activities due to its greater demand on the central nervous system. As a result, research that evaluates the progress of language learners in enhancing their speaking skills is significant.

Speaking can be challenging to learn for many language learners, despite the fact that it is an essential component of communication. Teachers have utilized a range of teaching techniques in order to help them improve their speaking skills successfully and efficiently, with the objective of picking what would work best for their pupils. Among the different techniques used, story retelling has been found to be highly effective in helping EFL students develop their speaking skills. One advantage of using retelling stories as a language learning activity is that it allows students to utilize familiar words, thereby enhancing their vocabulary skills, as well as providing them with opportunities to practice their speaking components, such as grammar and pronunciation, within a single activity.

The main goal of this research is to determine if utilizing the retelling story method has a significant impact on the speaking skills of EFL students. The research was conducted at a university in Istanbul, and it examined the impact of utilizing storytelling on the improvement of English speaking abilities among Turkish intermediate EFL learners. The research focused on employing story retelling as a means of enhancing English speaking competence.

Research Questions

The study aims to answer the following questions:

- i. Are there any significant differences in the speaking abilities of Turkish intermediate EFL learners who retell short stories and those who don't?
- ii. In the retelling stories of the experimental group's speaking performance, which of the four main categories - general description, delivery, language use, and topic development - were observed to have the most significant improvement?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to a study by Ilham, Bafadal, and Muslimin (2020), speaking is seen as an essential language and a productive skill that EFL students should acquire, but it is also viewed as one of the most challenging. Acquiring strong speaking skills is crucial for learning a language, for effective communication, and for the development of general language proficiency since it allows us to communicate effectively in real-life situations. Nevertheless, speaking skills have frequently been neglected in the past in favor of grammar and vocabulary education in traditional language teaching techniques. Therefore, EFL students were incompetent to engage themselves clearly and fluently in everyday situations.

To overcome this problem, educators have investigated a variety of pedagogical strategies that emphasize communicative language teaching and put a strong emphasis on getting students involved in meaningful speaking activities (Warschauer & Meskill, 2013). One such strategy uses short stories as a useful resource for language learning. Retelling short stories is an excellent technique for improving speaking abilities since they have a strong narrative framework, rich language content, and opportunities for cultural exploration.

According to Karasu (2015), retelling activities involve learners summarizing a story or text in their own words. Such activities provide learners with opportunities to practice their speaking skills, improve fluency, and develop their vocabulary and grammatical accuracy. Lee (2008) demonstrated that cooperative retelling techniques for short stories can be particularly successful in enhancing students' telling abilities. Retelling also fosters creativity and critical thinking while improving understanding.

The advantages of retelling short stories as language learning techniques have been investigated in a number of studies. According to Putri, Perdhani, and Isnaini's study (2021), using life-story-retelling techniques led to significant advancements in speaking fluency. It was shown that retelling real-life stories to learners helps to foster students' accuracy in speaking skills and boosts their confidence when speaking English. Learners who engage in retelling activities may also experience an increase in confidence and motivation when speaking in English (Kim & Han, 2019).

3. RESEARCH METHOD

3.1 Research Design

A quantitative methodology was chosen for this study to investigate the impact of short-story retelling techniques as an independent variable on the speaking proficiency of Turkish intermediate EFL learners as the dependent variable. Two Turkish Intermediate EFL classes were pre-tested, given treatments, and then post-tested in this design.

3.2 Participants

Two EFL classes from Ibn Haldun University in Istanbul, Turkey, were chosen for the study. Each class consisted of 15 students. The classrooms were separated into an experimental and a control group. The experimental group had 15 participants, and the control group had the same number. Both groups were 18-25 years old, and their mother tongue was Turkish. Thus, they are considered EFL learners because they learn English as a foreign language. The learners' English level is intermediate.

3.3 Instruments

First Certificate in English test

Since its beginning in 1939, the FCE exam has undergone significant structural and content adjustments in order to meet the developing requirements of test takers. It is presently administered by the University of Cambridge Local Examination Syndicate (UCLES) and is generally considered as one of the most dependable and well recognized English proficiency examinations in a variety of multiple industries. In this study, the speaking component of the FCE exam was utilized as a pre- and post-test to measure students' speaking ability and the efficiency of the intervention. They were crucial in this research because they helped determine if a link between cause and effect existed between the two types of variables in only one group. The researcher was able to determine if the intervention resulted in an evident improvement in the students' speaking skills by testing their speaking skills before and after the intervention (retelling technique utilizing stories). The pretest assessed the students' baseline level of speaking fluency, and the post-test measured the effect of the intervention.

TOEFL iBT independent speaking rubric descriptors

The research utilized the TOEFL independent speaking rubric, which is divided into four main categories: general description, delivery, use of language, and development of the topic. The rubric's categories are given scores on a scale of 0 to 4, with a maximum score of 16. The researcher in this study found that the TOEFL independent speaking rubric was a reliable and valid tool for measuring English proficiency in a variety of contexts.

Short stories

The experimental group in this study was provided with a set of seven intermediate-level stories. These stories were carefully selected from Penguin Readers, which provides a diverse collection of stories suitable for learners of various proficiency levels. The selection process took into account cultural and religious considerations to ensure that the context of the stories was appropriate for the participants.

3.4 Data Collection

The aim of this section is to investigate the impact of retelling short stories on the speaking abilities of Turkish intermediate EFL learners. In this research, students were provided intervention from teachers for a period of eight weeks, three days weekly for 24 sessions of intervention and two sessions for the pretest and post-test. Pre- and post-test evaluations were used to collect data for this research. The pretest and posttest assessed the students' speaking abilities using the TOEFL iBT independent speaking rubric descriptors rubric with criteria for general description, delivery, language use, and topic development.

3.5 The Experimental Procedure

Prior to the intervention, both groups were given a speaking pre-test. The intervention lasted eight weeks, with each group attending one fifty-minute session every week. Throughout each session, teachers presented the procedures of the study, and students were instructed on the story structure via a presentation. The pupils were then given a week to read each story. After a week of reading the assigned story, all pupils were asked to retell it during a ten- to fifteen-minute session.

Throughout every session, students were requested to tell the story they had the previous week, followed by questions regarding comprehension from the teacher. The students were then given the next story, and that continued for eight sessions, with summary and comprehension questions based on the prior story at the start of every session. The experimental group was exposed to this procedure, whereas the control group was not, and both groups had the same teacher and stories. When the 8-week study concluded, a speaking post-test was given to both groups. The TOEFL independent speaking rubric was used to assess students' speaking performance. The pre-test and post-test data from both groups were analyzed to determine the treatment's effectiveness in the experimental group.

4. RESULTS & DISCUSSIONS

To determine if there has been an improvement or not, the researcher first assessed both groups' speaking performance and learning progress. The researcher compared student speaking performance before and after the intervention. Table 1 displayed the experimental group's pre-test with a mean score of 9.07, and the control group's pre-test score was 8.73. While the standard deviation of the experimental group's pre-test was 1.280 and the control group's pre-test score was 1.387. The p value was 0.500, indicating that no significant statistical difference was found in the pre-test scores between the experimental group and the control group. Both groups got a final evaluation following the completion of the intervention for eight weeks. The table below also shows the post-test results for both groups. While the experimental group's mean post-test score was 13.60 and the SD was 1.242, the control group's mean post-test score was 9.87 and the SD was 1.407. The p value was 0.000, indicating that there was significant statistical differentiation in the post-test scores between the two groups. This result is consistent with previous studies that showed the effectiveness of using story retellings in language learning (Brown & Yule, 1983; Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002).

Table 1: Groups Statistics and a Sample of T-Test

Groups		N	Mean	SD	Sig	t
Pre-test	Control group	15	8,73	1,387	,500	-,684
	Experimental group	15	9,07	1,280		
Post-test	Control group	15	9,87	1,407	,000	-7,703
	Experimental group	15	13,60	1,242		

According to the findings in Table 2, we can see that all speaking sub-skills in the experimental group have improved; however, "language use" and "delivery" sub-skills improved the most compared to the other sub-skills. "Language use" and "delivery" sub-skills were ranked first and second, respectively, with variances of 1.53 and 1.4. The experimental group students' who had the retelling of short stories strategy for eight weeks enhanced their language performance in syntax, grammar, and vocabulary. The effective improvement in delivery in the post-test, on the other hand, shows that the students' fluency, intonation, as well as the pronunciation of the words have all greatly improved. These findings are consistent with a previous study that demonstrated the benefit of using the story-retelling strategy to improve language use (Becker, 2001).

Table 2: The Outcome of the Experimental Group

Category	Test	Mean	Category rank by improvement
General Description	Pre-Test	2,20	3
	Post-Test	3,00	
Delivery	Pre-Test	2,33	2
	Post-Test	3,73	
Language Use	Pre-Test	2,20	1
	Post-Test	3,73	
Topic Development	Pre-Test	2,33	3
	Post-Test	3,13	

5. CONCLUSION

The goal of the research was to investigate the potential effects of short story retelling technique on Turkish intermediate EFL learners' speaking abilities. The researchers came to the conclusion that telling a short story to students could be helpful for their speaking abilities, depending on the outcomes of the previously mentioned data analysis. The outcomes confirmed previous research (Aliakbari & Mohsennejad, 2014; Moosavinia, 2011) that supported the use of story retelling in EFL classes as a way of enhancing students' speaking skills. The findings will help EFL students develop their speaking abilities through the presented technique. It will help teachers improve their students' speaking skills and increase their proficiency in speaking in terms of pronunciation, intonation, and speaking speed. The benefit of this study is to enlighten EFL teachers and familiarize them with this helpful technique to enhance the speaking ability of EFL students. It would be beneficial that teachers use short-story retelling as a part of their teaching in order to make students better at their speaking skills, based on the study's outcomes.

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