

**FORMATION OF COGNITIVE SKILLS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN PRIMARY
EDUCATION WITH APPLICATION OF STORYTELLING**

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Abstract: The given article discusses the use of storytelling as a teaching approach in order to develop students' cognitive skills in foreign languages in primary education. The authors have analyzed a variety of teaching techniques and provided a thorough comparison of the effects and differences in the outcomes of students' progress before and after the analysis is carried out.

INTRODUCTION

The development of cognitive skills in primary education is a crucial aspect of fostering intellectual growth and academic success. Cognitive abilities such as memory, attention, problem-solving, and critical thinking play a fundamental role in early learning, particularly in foreign language acquisition (Swain & Lapkin, 2005). Research suggests that storytelling is an effective pedagogical approach that engages multiple cognitive processes, enhances retention, and fosters linguistic competence (Cameron, 2001).

Storytelling provides a structured yet imaginative medium for language exposure, allowing children to internalize vocabulary, grammar structures, and pronunciation in an engaging way (Ellis & Brewster, 2014). Unlike traditional rote memorization techniques, storytelling fosters meaningful learning by creating context, stimulating curiosity, and encouraging participation (Wright, 1995). This study investigates the impact of storytelling on cognitive skill development among primary school students learning a foreign language, focusing on memory, attention, problem-solving, and creativity.

This study aims to:

- Examine whether storytelling enhances cognitive abilities in primary school students learning a foreign language.
- Compare the effectiveness of storytelling-based instruction with traditional textbook-based methods in vocabulary retention, attention span, and problem-solving.
- Analyze students' engagement and motivation in foreign language learning when exposed to storytelling techniques.

Methodology

A quasi-experimental design was employed, comparing two groups of young language learners:

- Experimental Group (Storytelling-Based Learning): Engaged in interactive storytelling sessions.
- Control Group (Traditional Learning): Taught using conventional textbook-based methods.

This mixed-method study incorporated both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques to assess cognitive development and student engagement.

The study involved 60 primary school students (aged 7–10 years) from two classrooms learning a foreign language (English as a Foreign Language - EFL). The participants were divided as follows:

Experimental Group (n = 30) – Exposed to storytelling-based instruction.

Control Group (n = 30) – Taught using traditional vocabulary drills and grammar exercises.

The experimental group participated in 12 weeks of storytelling-based instruction, with sessions held twice a week for 45 minutes each. Activities included:

- Picture books and illustrated stories (Ellis & Brewster, 2014).
- Role-playing and dramatization to enhance memory retention and verbal expression (Slattery & Willis, 2001).
- Sequencing activities to improve logical thinking (Nation, 2013).
- Creative storytelling exercises, where students constructed and shared their own narratives.

The control group followed a traditional approach, focusing on:

- Vocabulary memorization through word lists.
- Grammar exercises and sentence drills.
- Reading comprehension without interactive elements.

To evaluate cognitive skill development, the following tools were used:

- Pre- and post-tests assessing vocabulary retention, attention, and problem-solving.
- Observational checklists tracking student engagement and participation.
- Qualitative interviews with teachers and students about their learning experiences.

Discussion

Storytelling holds immense importance in fostering students' oral speech in preliminary education due to its multifaceted benefits. Below we can see a comprehensive analysis of why storytelling is a valuable tool in developing students' oral communication skills:

- Language Acquisition: Storytelling provides a natural and immersive way for students to be exposed to a wide range of vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and sentence structures in context. This exposure aids in language acquisition and helps students internalize language patterns more effectively than traditional grammar drills.

- Contextual Understanding: Stories offer a meaningful context for language learning, making it easier for students to grasp the subtleties of language use. By encountering new words and phrases within a narrative framework, students are better able to understand and remember them.
- Cognitive Development: Engaging with stories stimulates various cognitive processes such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and inferential reasoning. Students are encouraged to make connections between different story elements, predict outcomes, and analyze character motivations, all of which contribute to their overall cognitive development.
- Emotional Engagement: Stories evoke emotions, empathy, and a sense of connection with the characters and events being narrated. This emotional engagement not only makes the learning experience more enjoyable but also enhances students' ability to express themselves emotionally in the target language.
- Cultural Awareness: Stories often reflect cultural beliefs, values, and practices, providing students with insights into the cultural context of the language they are learning. By exploring stories from different cultures, students develop a broader perspective and a deeper appreciation for cultural diversity.
- Listening Skills: Listening to stories hones students' listening skills as they follow the narrative, understand dialogue exchanges, and infer meaning from tone and intonation. This practice is essential for improving students' overall listening comprehension and their ability to understand spoken language in real-life situations.
- Speaking Confidence: Storytelling encourages students to actively participate in oral communication by retelling stories, discussing plot points, or even creating their own narratives. This process helps build students' speaking confidence, fluency, and pronunciation skills in a supportive and creative environment.
- Memory Retention: Stories are inherently memorable due to their narrative structure, characters, and plot twists. By associating new language concepts with memorable story elements, students are more likely to retain and recall vocabulary and grammar rules over time.
- Creativity and Imagination: Storytelling nurtures students' creativity and imagination by inviting them to visualize scenes, invent characters, and craft their own narratives. This creative engagement not only enhances language skills but also fosters students' overall cognitive and imaginative abilities.

Impact on Memory and Retention

Memory plays a critical role in foreign language acquisition, as learners must retain vocabulary, grammar structures, and pronunciation rules (Baddeley, 2003). The experimental group demonstrated a 25% higher recall rate than the control group, suggesting that storytelling aids in long-term memory formation by embedding words in meaningful contexts (Nation, 2013).

Enhancement of Attention and Focus

Attention is essential for effective learning, particularly in young children who may struggle with prolonged focus (Goswami, 2008). Students in the storytelling group exhibited higher engagement levels, as observed through sustained eye contact, active listening, and participation

in discussions. The immersive nature of storytelling captivated students' attention, reducing distractions compared to traditional learning (Cameron, 2001).

Development of Problem-Solving and Critical Thinking

Storytelling naturally fosters problem-solving skills, as students must analyze character decisions, predict story outcomes, and suggest alternative endings (Swain & Lapkin, 2005). The experimental group outperformed the control group in problem-solving tasks, demonstrating stronger cognitive flexibility and analytical reasoning. This aligns with previous research emphasizing the role of narratives in developing children's logical thinking (Wright, 1995).

Increased Creativity and Imagination

Creativity is a key cognitive skill that storytelling nurtures by allowing children to construct their own narratives. Students in the experimental group produced more original and coherent stories in the foreign language, demonstrating higher linguistic confidence and imaginative thinking compared to the control group (Ellis & Brewster, 2014).

Student Engagement and Motivation

Interviews and observational data revealed that students in the storytelling group were more motivated and confident in using the foreign language. Unlike the control group, where learning felt mechanical, storytelling created an emotional connection to language, reinforcing intrinsic motivation (Krashen, 1982).

Results

Cognitive skill	Experimental Group (Storytelling-Based Learning)	Control Group (Traditional Learning)
Vocabulary retention	85% (High recall rate)	60% (Moderate recall rate)
Attention span	Increased focus	Moderate engagement, occasional distraction
Problem-solving Ability	Strong analytical thinking	Less developed problem-solving strategies
Creativity	High originality in storytelling activities	Limited creative expression
Student Engagement	High participation and enthusiasm	Moderate engagement, passive learning

These findings indicate that storytelling significantly enhances cognitive skills in foreign language learning among primary students.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the effectiveness of storytelling as a cognitive-enhancing tool in foreign language learning. Memory retention, attention span, problem-solving, and creativity were notably higher in the storytelling group, reinforcing the idea that narrative-based learning fosters deeper cognitive engagement (Ellis & Brewster, 2014).

Incorporating storytelling into foreign language education for primary students offers a multifaceted approach to enhancing cognitive skills. Through narrative, children engage not only with language but also with critical thinking, creativity, and empathy. Storytelling fosters an immersive learning environment where vocabulary acquisition and grammatical structures are contextualized, making them more memorable.

Moreover, the interactive nature of storytelling promotes collaboration among peers, encouraging communication and social skills essential for language learning. As students narrate, retell, and create their own stories, they build confidence in their linguistic abilities while developing essential cognitive competencies.

Ultimately, the integration of storytelling in language curricula is not merely a pedagogical tool; it is a powerful vehicle for holistic development. By embracing this approach, educators can cultivate a generation of learners who are not only proficient in foreign languages but also equipped with critical cognitive skills that will serve them well beyond the classroom.

Future research should explore longitudinal effects of storytelling on language proficiency and examine its application in multilingual learning environments. By integrating storytelling into primary education, teachers can transform language learning into an interactive and cognitively enriching experience.

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