

USING STORYTELLING TO TEACH ENGLISH TO YOUNG LEARNERS: AN ANALYSIS OF THREE EFFECTIVE STORIES

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Annotation: This article explores the role of storytelling in teaching English to preschool and early primary learners. Focusing on three popular children's stories – "Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?", "We're Going on a Bear Hunt", and "The Enormous Turnip" – it discusses how visual, auditory, and kinesthetic activities can be implemented to build vocabulary, improve listening comprehension, and engage young students. Each story is analyzed with corresponding learning activities and outcomes.

Keywords: storytelling, young learners, English teaching, vocabulary development, interactive activities, visual learning, preschool, primary education

Introduction

In the early stages of language acquisition, storytelling is one of the most effective pedagogical tools available to educators. Stories are familiar, engaging, and emotionally resonant for young learners. They provide a natural context for introducing new vocabulary, grammatical structures, and cultural content. This article examines the implementation of storytelling in English language teaching (ELT) to preschool and primary school children, focusing on three well-known tales: "Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?", "We're Going on a Bear Hunt", and "The Enormous Turnip." The stories are chosen for their repetitive structure, vivid imagery, and compatibility with interactive and multimodal learning approaches.

Main Body

Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See? Author: Eric Carle

Main Themes: Identification of color. Recognition of animals .Use of simple and repetitive question-answer language patterns.

Target Language Skills: Vocabulary Development: Names of colors (such as brown, red, yellow) and common animals (such as bear, bird, duck)

Sentence Formation Practice: Question: "What do you see?" Answer: "I see a [color] [animal] looking at me."

Engaging Classroom Activities with Child-Friendly Approaches:

➤ Animal Coloring Activity How to do it:

Give children outline pictures of the animals featured in the story (like a bear, a bird, or a duck). Guide them to color each animal using the specific color mentioned in the book — for instance, a brown bear, a red bird, or a yellow duck.

Why it works: By connecting each color to a familiar animal, children learn vocabulary visually. This hands-on task also supports their fine motor

➤ Choral (Group) Reading How to do it:

Read the book aloud as a group activity. The teacher can read the questions or the narrator parts, and students can respond together by repeating the animal phrases.

Example: Teacher: "Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What do you see?"

Children: "I see a red bird looking at me."

Why it works:

Repeating phrases aloud improves students' speaking fluency, confidence, and pronunciation.

The rhythmic and predictable structure of the text helps children internalize sentence patterns naturally.

➤ Flashcard Matching Game How to do it:

Create two sets of flashcards — one with colors and one with pictures of animals. Mix the cards and invite students to match the correct color with its corresponding animal (like red with bird, yellow with duck).

Why it works:

Matching games make learning active and playful. This activity enhances memory, visual recognition, and categorization, which are key skills for early language learners.

The book's repetitive question-and-answer format makes it an excellent tool for introducing English to young learners. Its predictable structure boosts confidence, while visual aids like pictures and flashcards help children connect words with images. These multisensory activities — involving sight, sound, and movement — support early language development and keep students interested and involved in the learning process.

2. We're Going on a Bear Hunt – Michael Rosen

Themes: Nature, exploration, directional language Language focus: Verbs (go, look, see), prepositions and directions (over, under, through)

Example Activity:

Action Storytelling: Children physically act out the story.

Sound Imitation: Learners create sound effects for each environment (e.g., “swishy swashy” for grass).

Obstacle Course: Mimics story journey using classroom props.

Explanation: The story's rhythm and repetition make it ideal for Total Physical Response (TPR).

It encourages full-body engagement, aiding kinesthetic learners.

Book Title: The Enormous Turnip Type: Traditional Folk Tale

Main Themes: Family and relationships. Cooperation and teamwork. Concepts of size and strength.

Language Focus: Vocabulary: Family members (grandfather, grandmother, granddaughter, etc.)

Adjectives: enormous, big, small Verbs: pull, help

Example Classroom Activities with Child-Friendly Explanations:

➤ Role Play (Acting Out the Story) What to do:

Students take turns pretending to pull the enormous turnip, just like in the story. They can act as different family members who join one by one to help.

Why it's helpful:

Role playing encourages children to engage physically and socially. It makes the story come alive, strengthens speaking skills, and teaches cooperation in a fun way.

➤ Sequencing Cards What to do:

Provide students with cards showing the characters from the story. Learners put these cards in the correct order, based on when each character appears to help pull the turnip.

Why it's helpful:

This activity develops logical thinking and story comprehension. It helps children understand sequence and order while reinforcing vocabulary about family and actions.

➤ Size Comparison Sorting What to do:

Give children different objects or pictures and ask them to sort these into groups such as small, big, and enormous.

Why it's helpful:

Sorting activities support understanding of size-related adjectives. This hands-on experience helps children better grasp comparative language in a concrete way.

The Enormous Turnip is a wonderful story that highlights the importance of working together as a family. The repeated structure and simple language make it easy for young learners to remember new words and ideas. Through role play and interactive tasks, children learn

vocabulary related to family members, actions, and sizes, while also developing social skills like cooperation and teamwork.

Conclusion, Storytelling in ELT for young learners is a powerful strategy that integrates cognitive, emotional, and linguistic development. Through interactive activities such as dramatization, drawing, chanting, and sequencing, children engage meaningfully with new language in a way that is both fun and effective. The three stories analyzed here exemplify how well-selected literature can enrich English instruction, especially when coupled with multimodal and age-appropriate teaching methods.

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