



THE ROLE OF STORYTELLING IN ENHANCING ENGLISH VOCABULARY ACQUISITION AMONG YOUNG LEARNERS

Dildora Bakhriddinova Oktamovna

Associate Professor, PhD

Jizzakh State Pedagogical University

e-mail address: dildora.bahriddinova86@gmail.com

Ruxshona Turdiboyeva Sanjar qizi

3rd year student of the Faculty of Philology:

English language and literature,

Jizzakh State Pedagogical University,

Jizzakh Uzbekistan

Abstract: Vocabulary acquisition is one of the most important aspects of learning English, especially for young learners who are at the beginning of their language-learning journey. Among the many teaching strategies used in English language classrooms, storytelling has gained considerable attention because it introduces new words in meaningful and fun ways. The findings show that storytelling helps children understand, remember and use new vocabulary more effectively faster than usual. It also encourages active participation, and supports the development of other language skills such as listening and speaking. This study reviews previous research on the role of storytelling in improving English vocabulary acquisition among young learners and a narrative literature review was conducted to examine relevant studies on this topic. Thus, challenges in implementing stories in classroom were analyzed.

Keywords: storytelling, vocabulary acquisition, young learners, EFL, English language teaching, active participation and story-based learning.

Аннотация: Усвоение словарного запаса является одним из важнейших аспектов изучения английского языка, особенно для детей младшего возраста, которые находятся в начале своего пути овладения иностранным языком. Среди многочисленных методов обучения, используемых на уроках английского языка, рассказывание историй (обучение с помощью рассказов) получил широкое признание, поскольку позволяет знакомить учащихся с новой

лексикой в осмысленном и увлекательном контексте. Результаты исследования показывают, что Рассказывание историй помогает детям быстрее и эффективнее понимать, запоминать и использовать новые слова по сравнению с традиционными методами обучения. Кроме того, он способствует активному участию учащихся в учебном процессе и поддерживает развитие других языковых навыков, таких как аудирование и говорение. В данном исследовании рассматриваются результаты предыдущих научных работ, посвящённых роли рассказывание историй в развитии словарного запаса у детей младшего возраста, изучающих английский язык. Для анализа соответствующих исследований был использован метод нарративного обзора литературы. Также были рассмотрены трудности, возникающие при использовании рассказывание историй в образовательном процессе.

Ключевые слова: рассказывание историй, усвоение словарного запаса, дети младшего возраста, английский язык как иностранный (EFL), преподавание английского языка, активное участие, обучение на основе рассказов.

In English language learning process vocabulary is considered one of the most important components because it lets learners to understand the language smoothly and enables communicate with others effectively. Without enough vocabulary bank, learners often struggle to express their ideas or understand spoken and written texts. For young learners, vocabulary development is not only particularly important because it helps understanding but also forms the foundation for listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Therefore, English teachers need to use teaching strategies that help children learn vocabulary in meaningful and enjoyable ways. Because children are fast to learn by enjoyment.

However, traditional vocabulary instruction in many English classrooms often focuses on memorizing word lists, translation, and repetition. Although these

methods may improve short-term memory, they do not always help learners use vocabulary in real communication.¹ To teach children it is usually better to make them participate in interesting activities that connect language with meaningful experiences. As a result, they learn more successfully and many educators have actively emphasized student-centered approaches that encourage volunteer participation. For many teachers storytelling is one of the most effective strategies for teaching English vocabulary to children. Through stories, learners encounter new words in meaningful contexts by hearing rather than as isolated vocabulary items. Stories combine colorful pictures, actions and emotions of star hero. Child remembers them through repetition. This makes learning easier for children. When they hear that one word which expresses that brave emotion by hero of the story, it will definitely store in memory².

There are some that studies have reported positive effects of storytelling on vocabulary learning. For example, Chiu and Chen (2020) found that picture-book storytelling improved vocabulary acquisition among elementary EFL learners.³ Similarly, Gao et al. (2023) reported that different storytelling approaches significantly enhanced learners' vocabulary knowledge and classroom participation.⁴ We can conclude from that storytelling can support vocabulary learning by increasing learners' motivation and providing meaningful learning experiences.

¹ Nation, I. S. P. (2013). *Learning vocabulary in another language* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

² Ellis, G., & Brewster, J. (2014). *Tell it again! The storytelling handbook for primary English language teachers*. British Council

³ Chiu, H.-H., & Chen, C.-F. (2020). A comparison of EFL fifth graders' vocabulary acquisition through Skype videoconferencing and face-to-face picture book storytelling. *Journal of Language and Education*, 6(2), 91–105.

⁴ Gao, Y.-L., Wang, F.-Y., & Lee, S.-Y. (2023). The effects of three different storytelling approaches on the vocabulary acquisition and response patterns of young EFL students. *Language Teaching Research*, 27(5), 1078–1098.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to review previous research on the role of storytelling in enhancing English vocabulary acquisition among young learners. Specifically, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. How does storytelling support English vocabulary acquisition among young learners?
2. What benefits of storytelling have been reported in previous studies?
3. What challenges do teachers face when implementing storytelling in English language classrooms?

Materials and methods:

In this study, a **narrative literature review was implemented** to examine the role of storytelling in enhancing English vocabulary acquisition among young learners. A narrative review was selected because it allows researchers to summarize, compare, and interpret findings from previous studies to provide a comprehensive understanding of a specific topic.

Relevant literature was collected from several academic databases, including **Scopus, ERIC, Google Scholar, Web of Science, and Science Direct**. The search was conducted using keywords such as *storytelling, young learners, English vocabulary acquisition, English language teaching (ELT), English as a Foreign Language EFL, active participation and story-based learning*. To ensure the quality of the review, specific inclusion criteria were applied. Only peer-reviewed journal articles and academic books published between **2015 and 2025** were selected. The reviewed studies were searched and focused on whether they are about storytelling as a teaching strategy for young learners in English language classrooms.

Each study was carefully read and analyzed, after the literature was collected. Comparison was used for findings to identify similar patterns and find more ideas. A **thematic analysis** approach was used to organize the literature into three major themes: the role of storytelling in vocabulary acquisition, the impact of storytelling

on learners' motivation and classroom participation, and challenges in implementing storytelling in English language teaching.

The found materials presented in this review are based on the analysis of previous research rather than original experimental data. By comparing evidence from different studies, this review provides a broader understanding of how storytelling supports vocabulary learning and offers practical implications for English language teachers working with young English language learners.

Results:

The review of the selected literature indicates that storytelling has a positive impact on English vocabulary acquisition among young learners. Although the studies were conducted in different educational contexts, most reported similar findings regarding the effectiveness of storytelling in English language teaching. Three major themes emerged from the analysis: (1) storytelling supports vocabulary acquisition, (2) storytelling increases learners' motivation and classroom participation, and (3) teachers face several challenges when implementing storytelling below:

1. Storytelling supports vocabulary acquisition

Most of the reviewed studies found that storytelling helps young learners understand and remember new vocabulary more effectively than traditional teaching methods. Cameron (2001) explains that children learn vocabulary best when words are introduced in meaningful contexts rather than through isolated memorization.⁵ Similarly, Ellis and Brewster (2014) argue that stories present vocabulary naturally through characters, actions, and events, making it easier for children to understand the meaning of unfamiliar words.⁶ Recent empirical studies support these views.

⁵ Cameron, L. (2001). Teaching languages to young learners. Cambridge University Press.

⁶ Ellis, G., & Brewster, J. (2014). Tell it again! The storytelling handbook for primary English language teachers. British Council.

Chiu and Chen (2020) reported that elementary school learners who learned vocabulary through picture-book storytelling achieved better vocabulary outcomes than those taught through conventional instruction.⁷ Gao et al. (2023) also found that storytelling improved vocabulary learning by exposing learners to repeated and meaningful language input.⁸

These findings suggest that storytelling provides meaningful language input, repeated exposure to vocabulary, and opportunities to use new words in context, all of which contribute to more effective vocabulary learning for children.

2. Storytelling increases motivation and classroom participation

Another common finding in the reviewed studies is that storytelling increases learners' motivation and encourages active classroom participation. Stories naturally attract children's attention through interesting characters, pictures, and imaginative events. As a result, learners become more willing to listen and answer questions of teacher in English.

According to Shin and Crandall (2014), storytelling creates a positive classroom atmosphere where learners feel more confident using English.⁹ Wibowo et al. (2024) also reported that storytelling encouraged learners to participate actively in discussions, role-playing, and story-retelling activities.¹⁰

⁷ Chiu, H.-H., & Chen, C.-F. (2020). A comparison of EFL fifth graders' vocabulary acquisition through Skype videoconferencing and face-to-face picture book storytelling. *Journal of Language and Education*, 6(2), 91–105.

⁸ Gao, Y.-L., Wang, F.-Y., & Lee, S.-Y. (2023). The effects of three different storytelling approaches on the vocabulary acquisition and response patterns of young EFL students. *Language Teaching Research*, 27(5), 1078–1098.

⁹ Shin, J. K., & Crandall, J. (2014). *Teaching young learners English: From theory to practice*. National Geographic Learning.

¹⁰ Wibowo, A. N., Apritha, S. D., & Permata, F. D. (2024). Exploring the use of storytelling technique to enhance English vocabulary for young learners. *Journal of Applied Language and Literacy Studies*, 3(2). <https://doi.org/10.32497/jolali.v3i2.5907>

These studies demonstrate that storytelling not only supports vocabulary development but also promotes learner engagement and confidence. Stories improve communicative interaction between student and teacher.

3. Challenges in implementing storytelling

Although the reviewed studies highlight the benefits of storytelling, they also identify several difficulties. One of the most common challenges is the limited availability of suitable English storybooks and teaching materials, particularly in schools with limited resources. Teachers may also need additional preparation time to select appropriate stories and design follow-up activities. Because children get bored easily from one story that was repeated and want to hear another in this century. Another challenge is teacher experience. Despite these challenges, most researchers agree that the advantages of storytelling outweigh its limitations. With appropriate teacher preparation, suitable and well-planned classroom materials and activities, storytelling can become an effective strategy for improving English vocabulary acquisition among young learners.

Discussion:

The findings of this review demonstrate that storytelling provides an engaging environment for vocabulary learning among young learners. Rather than teaching through isolated word lists, it is better to tell children the story that connects language with real-life situations, making new words easier to understand and remember. Repeated exposure to vocabulary during storytelling activities, such as retelling stories, role-playing, and classroom discussions, further strengthens long-term retention and encourages active language use. The review also shows that storytelling promotes learner engagement, confidence, and participation by creating enjoyable learning experiences. These findings support the theories of Cameron

(2001), Nation (2013) which emphasize meaningful input, repetition, active learning, and social interaction as key factors in language acquisition.¹¹

However, the successful implementation of storytelling depends on teacher's skills to select suitable materials. Only in this case managing classroom time effectively and applying appropriate instructional strategies. Works brilliantly.

Conclusion:

This article concludes that storytelling is an effective approach for supporting English vocabulary development in children. By combining language learning with meaningful experiences and interactive activities, storytelling helps children build vocabulary while encouraging positive attitudes toward learning English. In order to maximize these benefits, teachers should incorporate age-appropriate stories into regular classroom practice and receive adequate training in storytelling techniques as mentioned in previous researches. However, to grab young students' attention interesting story itself is not enough. For making the student pay attention, teachers' rich gestures and body articulation should be active and expressive. Because children feel themselves more secure and engaged during the lessons when there is a warmth of a teacher. Such emotional involvement not only captures learners' attention but also helps them understand, remember and use new vocabulary more confidently. As a result, storytelling serves as a powerful instructional strategy that promotes vocabulary acquisition while fostering young learners' long-term interest in learning English.

Acknowledgement: The author would like to express sincere gratitude to all researchers and authors whose studies contributed to this literature review especially special appreciation is extended to academic supervisors while reading that researches. Their valuable guidance and encouragement was beneficial throughout

¹¹ Nation, I. S. P. (2013). *Learning vocabulary in another language* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

the preparation of this article. The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this study and that no external funding was received.

References

1. Brilianti, A. E., & Sugirin, S. (2024). Boosting young EFL learners' English vocabulary acquisition by utilizing puppet pictures as storytelling media. *Journal of Foreign Language Teaching and Learning*, 9(2), 161–179. <https://doi.org/10.18196/ftl.v9i2.21622>
2. Bruner, J. (1986). *Actual minds, possible worlds*. Harvard University Press.
3. Cameron, L. (2001). *Teaching languages to young learners*. Cambridge University Press.
4. Chiu, H.-H., & Chen, C.-F. (2020). A comparison of EFL fifth graders' vocabulary acquisition through Skype videoconferencing and face-to-face picture book storytelling. *Journal of Language and Education*, 6(2), 91–105. <https://doi.org/10.17323/jle.2020.10082>
5. Ellis, G., & Brewster, J. (2014). *Tell it again! The storytelling handbook for primary English language teachers*. British Council.
6. Gao, Y.-L., Wang, F.-Y., & Lee, S.-Y. (2023). The effects of three different storytelling approaches on the vocabulary acquisition and response patterns of young EFL students. *Language Teaching Research*, 27(5), 1078–1098. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168820971789>
7. Harmer, J. (2015). *The practice of English language teaching* (5th ed.). Pearson.
8. Juita, L., Putri, M. R., Ameliaa, A. R., Andika, W. D., & Fatiyah, N. (2025). Story telling method to improve early childhood vocabulary. *Jurnal Ilmiah Penelitian Mahasiswa*, 3(3), 49–57.
9. Nation, I. S. P. (2013). *Learning vocabulary in another language* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
10. Shin, J. K., & Crandall, J. (2014). *Teaching young learners English: From theory to practice*. National Geographic Learning.

11. Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.
12. Wibowo, A. N., Apritha, S. D., & Permata, F. D. (2024). Exploring the use of storytelling technique to enhance English vocabulary for young learners. *Journal of Applied Language and Literacy Studies*, 3(2).
<https://doi.org/10.32497/jolali.v3i2.5907>