



# **TEACHING ENGLISH THROUGH LITERATURE AND STORYTELLING TO 5TH AND 6TH GRADE PUPILS: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE**

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## **Abstract**

This study investigates the effectiveness of literature-based instruction and storytelling in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) to 5th and 6th grade pupils. Grounded in communicative language teaching and constructivist theory, the research evaluates the impact of storytelling on vocabulary acquisition, speaking fluency, and learner engagement. A quasi-experimental design was implemented with 60 participants divided into control and experimental groups. Data were collected through pre- and post-tests, observation protocols, and motivation questionnaires. Statistical analysis revealed significant improvements in vocabulary and speaking performance in the experimental group ( $p < 0.05$ ). Qualitative findings indicate increased engagement, confidence, and classroom interaction. The study concludes that storytelling and literary texts provide an effective pedagogical framework for enhancing communicative competence among young EFL learners and recommends their systematic integration into primary education curricula.

**Keywords:** Storytelling, literature-based instruction, EFL, young learners, communicative competence, vocabulary acquisition, primary education.

## **Introduction**

The increasing global significance of English necessitates the development of effective teaching methodologies, particularly in early education. In many EFL contexts, including Central Asia, traditional grammar-based instruction remains dominant, often limiting learners' communicative competence.

Young learners (ages 10–12) require interactive and meaningful learning experiences that align with their cognitive and emotional development. Storytelling and literature-based instruction provide such environments by embedding language in narrative contexts that promote comprehension, retention, and engagement.

Previous research demonstrates that storytelling enhances vocabulary acquisition, motivation, and communicative skills by presenting language in meaningful and memorable contexts. However, empirical studies focusing specifically on middle primary learners (grades 5–6) remain limited. This study aims to address this gap.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Theoretical Framework**

This research is grounded in three key theories:

- Communicative Language Teaching (CLT): emphasizes interaction and real-life communication
- Constructivism: learners actively construct knowledge through meaningful experiences
- Krashen's Input Hypothesis: language acquisition occurs through comprehensible input

Storytelling aligns with these frameworks by providing contextualized input and encouraging active participation.

### **2.2 Storytelling and Vocabulary Acquisition**

Storytelling is recognized as a powerful pedagogical tool for vocabulary learning. Studies show that narrative-based instruction significantly improves vocabulary retention and comprehension among young learners.

Experimental research indicates that students exposed to storytelling demonstrate better long-term vocabulary retention compared to those engaged in isolated exercises. Similarly, classroom-based studies report substantial increases in vocabulary scores following storytelling interventions.

### **2.3 Storytelling and Speaking Skills**

Storytelling also enhances speaking proficiency by encouraging learners to retell stories, express ideas, and participate in discussions. Research confirms

measurable improvements in fluency, pronunciation, and confidence after storytelling-based instruction.

## **2.4 Literature-Based Instruction**

Literary texts provide authentic language exposure and cultural context. When adapted to learners' levels, stories facilitate comprehension while maintaining linguistic richness. Literature also promotes critical thinking and interpretive skills.

## **3. Methodology**

### **3.1 Research Design**

A quasi-experimental design with pre-test and post-test control groups was employed.

### **3.2 Participants**

The study involved 60 pupils (ages 10–12):

- Experimental group: 30 students
- Control group: 30 students

Participants had comparable English proficiency levels (A1–A2).

### **3.3 Instruments**

- Vocabulary test (multiple-choice and matching tasks)
- Speaking assessment rubric (fluency, accuracy, pronunciation)
- Motivation questionnaire (Likert scale)
- Classroom observation checklist

### **3.4 Procedure**

The experiment lasted 8 weeks (3 lessons per week).

Experimental group:

- Exposure to short stories and adapted literary texts
- Teacher-led storytelling sessions
- Activities:
  - Retelling stories
  - Role-playing
  - Creative storytelling

### **Control group:**

- Traditional instruction (grammar exercises, textbook reading)

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

- Quantitative data: analyzed using independent and paired t-tests
- Qualitative data: analyzed through thematic coding

## **4. Results**

### **4.1 Quantitative Findings**

- Vocabulary scores increased significantly in the experimental group ( $M = 79.1$ ) compared to the control group ( $M = 62.3$ )
- Speaking fluency improved by approximately 28%
- Statistical tests confirmed significance ( $p < 0.05$ )

These findings are consistent with prior studies demonstrating the effectiveness of storytelling in vocabulary acquisition .

### **4.2 Qualitative Findings**

**Three major themes emerged:**

#### **1. Enhanced Engagement**

Students showed higher attention and interest during storytelling sessions

#### **2. Increased Confidence**

Learners demonstrated reduced anxiety in speaking tasks

#### **3. Active Participation**

Students participated more actively in discussions and role-play

Storytelling created a positive and interactive learning environment, supporting previous findings.

## **5. Discussion**

The findings confirm that storytelling and literature-based instruction significantly improve both linguistic and affective aspects of language learning.

### **5.1 Pedagogical Benefits**

- Provides contextualized input
- Enhances memory retention

- Promotes communicative competence
- Increases motivation and engagement

Storytelling creates a natural environment for language acquisition by linking vocabulary with meaningful contexts .

## **5.2 Implications for Teaching Practice**

Teachers should:

- Integrate storytelling into regular lessons
- Use age-appropriate literary texts
- Encourage student-centered storytelling activities

## **5.3 Challenges**

- Limited availability of suitable materials
- Need for teacher training
- Time constraints in curriculum

## **6. Conclusion**

This study demonstrates that teaching English through literature and storytelling significantly enhances vocabulary acquisition, speaking skills, and learner motivation among 5th and 6th grade pupils.

Storytelling represents a pedagogically sound and empirically supported approach that aligns with modern communicative teaching principles.

## **7. Limitations and Future Research**

### **Limitations:**

- Small sample size
- Short intervention period

### **Future research should:**

- Explore digital storytelling tools
- Conduct longitudinal studies
- Investigate writing skill development

## References

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