



# **The Effectiveness of Story Retelling Strategy in Developing some English Speaking Skills of Secondary Students**

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2015 Supervised by

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بحث مشتق من الرسالة الخاصة بالباحثة

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### **Abstract**

The present study aimed at investigating the effectiveness of story retelling strategy in developing some English oral communication skills of secondary schoolers. The subject of this study consisted of fifty students selected at random from first- year secondary schoolers at Port-Said Secondary School for Girls, in the second semester of the academic year 2014-2015. They were randomly assigned into two groups: an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group (25 students) received training through applying story retelling strategy. On the other hand, the control group (25 students) received instruction through the traditional method. The quasi-experiment design was used. A questionnaire for jury members was designed and distributed to determine the most important oral communication skills those need to be acquired by first- year secondary schoolers. Based on these selected skills, a pre-post oral communication skills test was prepared. The treatment was applied by the researcher to develop the required oral communication skills of the experimental group students in eight sessions; each session was a period of about 45 minutes per week. Results of the study proved the effectiveness of story retelling strategy in developing some English oral communication skills identified in the present study of first- year secondary schoolers.

## **1. Introduction**

English is an international language, spoken in many countries both as a native and as a second or foreign language. It is taught in the schools in almost every country on this earth. It is a living and vibrant language spoken by over 300 million people as their native language.

Millions more speak it as an additional language. English is learned everywhere because people have found out that knowledge of English is a passport for better career, better pay, advanced knowledge, and for communication with the entire world. English is also learned for the literature it possesses, and for the variety and rich experience it provides. English has replaced French as the language of diplomacy. In this computer age, English is bound to expand its domains of use everywhere. In spite of that, Washim (2013, pp.2-10) mentions some problems of English as a Second Language: (a) Language Psychological Problems, (b) Learning Methods, (c) Problem of Concretizing the Abstract Idea, (d) Mother Tongue Interference, (e) Lack of Practice, (f) Lack of Interest, (g) Lack of Motivation, (h) Malpractices in Exam, (i) Mistakes in English, (j) Crowded Classes, (k) Lack in Building Communication Skills.

Moreover, EFL students might need speaking skills to convey their ideas as it is the easiest way to express their thoughts. This trend of English globalization, as a worldwide phenomenon, makes it necessary to communicate with people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds and in a variety of settings. Somsai and Intaraprasert (2011) argued that the main goal of learning English is to be able to communicate with others.

On the other hand Jamshidnejad (2011, pp.19-20) points out some problems of oral communication skills such as:

- a) Oral communication process consists of three components: Communicators (speaker and listener), message, and context. Oral communication problems can be caused any one of them.

- b) An appropriate model of English teaching is therefore one enabling EFL communicators to convey their meaning despite the problematic conditions of English comprehension and self-expression.
- c) The feature and structure of EFL learning and communication discourse differ from those occurring in other discourse.
- d) class climate needs to be balanced between ‘challenge’ and ‘support’ to decrease learners.
- e) Studies on EFL oral communication and learning are still scarce.

Whereas Story retelling strategy is one of the strategies that develops language skills in general, and oral communication skill in particular; as it stimulates students and interest them, that helps to improve the communication process. Eissa and Safaa (2009) mention that since ancient times the story has played an important role in the process of education; where the progress of the learners simulation of reality in a way allowing them to participate effectively and increase their sense of creation, expand their knowledge, this as well helps in developing linguistic oral communication skills. There are many studies that supported using story retelling strategy to develop oral communication skills as: (AlSofi, 2008; Barzaq, 2009; El- Bassuony, 2009; Isbell & Rebecca, 2002; Phillips, 2000).

Andrews and Jennifer (2009, pp. 17-20) mention that telling stories has shed light on education of many fields. Researchers from universities, government, and corporate research organizations with backgrounds in military training, education, law, aviation, and business have figured out four main types of storytelling techniques used for teaching. Different types of stories are used to persuade the audience (in this case, students) and educate them. One the other hand, through narrating students can express their thoughts, sort out what they have already obtained, and explore new knowledge.

According to Barzaq (2009, p.145) story is a narrative account of a real imagined event(s); it is a structure of narrative with a specific style and a set of characters. Additionally, in this technique ‘storytelling’ learners may share experience and learn from others’ wisdom, beliefs, and values. Besides, storytelling builds blocks of knowledge and it is the foundation of memory and learning. Lastly, stories connect people to the past, present and the future.

Barzaq (2009) adds that storytelling also helps to share knowledge from other experiences. This technique is believed to be one of the entertaining techniques that can be used with learners in order to develop their listening skills. Storytelling also offers teachers a chance to explore their students’ background experience which may encourage students to speak. She also mentions some benefits of the storytelling technique; firstly, the learners may gain verbal skills that can improve the ability to resolve interpersonal discussion and many other skills. Secondly, it provokes the imagination by either telling or listening that may help the learners think about new ideas and build self-confidence. Finally, it may help the learner learns from others’ experiences and wisdom in future similar situations. Barzaq adds that visual storytelling is a way of telling stories through images. The listeners’ role is to create visual images, actions, characters, and events. So, the researcher sometimes visualized listening by using pictures and videos that enables students to listen while watching a story.

## **1.2 Background of the Problem and Pilot Study**

Based on the above presentation of studies and researches, which indicated a weakness in English oral communication skills for students, the researcher senses the importance of using one of the modern strategies in language teaching and attempts to develop some English oral communication skills.

In addition, the researcher prepared a questionnaire to investigate the opinions of ten English language teachers (10) - from both Port Said,

and Alam Al-Dean Secondary School for Girls – about the reality of teaching English oral communication skills for students. The questionnaire included questions about their interests in developing English oral communication skills of the students, and the methods they use to do so and whether they are using story retelling strategy to develop students' oral communication skills.

**Responses have resulted in the following results:**

- Only 60% are interested in developing English oral communication skills of the students, and they use traditional methods that do not develop the Supreme speaking skills of the students such as: ask a question and receive answers from the student away from the debate and dialogue. That may be due to the lack of a test to measure those skills at the end of each semester.
- Only 30% use story retelling strategy in developing oral communication skills of students; that may be due to the lack of full familiarity with how to use that strategy.
- On the other hand, the researcher applied an exploratory test of English oral communication skills on first grade secondary students (N=20). It has been scored according to the rubric. The test results have revealed students weakness in oral communication skills (listening and speaking).

**1.3 Context of the Problem**

The problem of the present study was identified in the remarkable weakness of English oral communication skills of first year secondary schoolers. Consequently, the present study tries to find an answer to the following main question:

- How far is story retelling strategy effective in developing English oral communication skills of first year secondary schoolers?

The following sub-questions emerge from the above main question:

- What is English oral communication skills that first year secondary schoolers should acquire?
- What is the proposed framework of the story-retelling strategy for developing the identified oral communication skills of first year secondary schoolers?
- How far does the proposed strategy affect the development of the identified English oral communication skills of first year secondary schoolers?

The questions of the study were answered in the light of the results of testing the following hypotheses:

- There is statistically significant difference among mean ranks scores of the experimental group students in pre and post application to test both of oral communication (listening and speaking) skills in favor of the post test.
- There is statistically significant difference among mean ranks scores of the experimental group and the control group students in the post application to test both of oral communication (listening and speaking) skills in favor of the experimental group students.

To answer the questions of the study and test its hypotheses, the researcher followed these procedures:

- Reviewing literature and previous studies related to oral communication skills and story-retelling strategy.
- Preparing a questionnaire of oral communication skills.
- Designing a pre-post oral communication skills test in the light of the oral communication skills determined by the jury to investigate the effectiveness of the proposed strategy.
- Submitting the pre-post oral communication skills test to a panel of specialists and experts in the field of teaching English as a foreign language to determine its validity.
- Testing the reliability of the pre-post oral communication skills test.

- Using the story-retelling strategy for developing the identified English oral communication skills of first year secondary schoolers.
- Selecting a random sample of the first year secondary schoolers at Port-Said and dividing them at random into two groups: Experimental and control groups.
- Administering the pre oral communication test to the experimental and control groups to identify the level of students' proficiency in the identified English oral communication skills in the two groups.
- Implementing the strategy to the students of the experimental group aiming at developing their oral communication skills.
- Administering the post oral communication skills test to the experimental and control groups to investigate the effectiveness of the strategy in developing the identified English oral communication skills of first year secondary schoolers.
- Analyzing the results statistically.
- Interpreting the results and discussing them.
- Providing the summary, recommendations, suggestions for further research, and conclusion

#### **1.4 Definitions of the Study Terms**

##### **Oral Communication Skills**

Rahman (2010, p.94) defines oral communication as the exchange of meaning and understanding. It is an interactive process. He added, "It is also symbolic because it involves not only words but also symbols and gestures that accompany the spoken words because symbolic action is not limited to verbal communication. Other elements which the speaker should learn to communicate effectively, are eye contact, body language, style, understanding the audience, adapting to the audience, active and reflexive listening, politeness, precision, conciseness, etc.

Mabrouk (2003, p34) asserts that oral communication is a two-way process between a speaker and a listener. Therefore, teachers need

to ensure that the two skills (listening and speaking) are integrated through situations that encourage authentic communication. Besides, learners need to be thought how to keep the channel of communication open.

Richards (2005, p.7) defines communication skills as the ability to use language (receptive) and express (expressive) information. He adds that communication skills include the mix of verbal/oral, interpersonal and physical strategies needed to interact confidently and effectively with a range of audiences.

In the present study Oral Communication Skills refers to the ability of first grade secondary schoolers to interact orally with the teacher and each other taking into consideration some listening and speaking sub skills.

### **Story-Retelling strategy**

John (2001, p.27) defines story- retelling as a specific narrative strategy which draws pragmatic language skills, such as the ability to use extended amounts of language, recall and logically order ideas, recall details, relate story schema to ongoing events, use appropriate linguistic devices to create a cohesive text, and summarize information into an intelligible whole for a listener who has never heard a particular story before.

According to Gabig (2008, p.124), story-retelling is a productive strategy in which students construct higher-order representations related to the organizational schema of story grammar as well as the additional conception of story characters and their mental states - the ability to grasp the intentions, feelings, and beliefs of others, a notion referred to as a theory of mind.

Abo-Essa (2011, p.14) views story-retelling as an influential teaching strategy which is related to reconstructing and interpreting information, using language appropriately in different situations, organizing and elaborating ideas, creating cohesive and coherent texts,

giving examples and explanations, and summarizing information into an intelligible whole for listeners who have never heard a particular story before.

In this study, Story Retelling Strategy is considered a narrative productive and reconstructing strategy in which first year secondary schoolers are supposed to recall what they have listened in a logical order. They may share experiences, grasp the intentions, feelings and beliefs of others, summarize information, recall ideas and details, and use other appropriate linguistic devices.

## **2. Review of Literature**

### **2.1 Studies Related to Oral Communication Skills**

In respect of English oral communication skills, some studies were conducted to investigate its importance as essential skills needed for learners of English as a foreign language. Williams (1997, p.78) developed a program for foreign language students to improve the oral proficiency needed for effective communication in the target language. The population consists of high school students enrolled in Second Year Spanish in an urban community, located in northern Illinois. The lack of oral proficiency is documented through teacher observation and student proficiency interviews. A review of solution strategies has resulted in the selection of three major interventions: the development of general classroom procedures, the development of oral activities to supplement the curriculum, and the implementation of an assessment program. Post intervention data revealed that classroom procedures, supplemental oral activities, and the assessment program reduce the amount of time speaking English in class. The oral activities effectively help prepare for assessments. Student scores on the assessment rose throughout the course of the intervention.

El-Essery (2005) aimed at investigating the effectiveness of a proposed curriculum based on thinking skills in developing first-year

secondary school students' oral expression. Subjects in this study were randomly assigned into two groups; experimental and control group (35 students each) of first-year secondary school students. The results of the study showed that there was a positive and statistically significant correlation between students' oral thinking skills and their oral expression.

Beheery (2008) aimed at investigating the effectiveness of a proposed program based on interactive-teaching on developing second year preparatory school students' oral expression skills. Subjects in this study were 35 of second year preparatory school students. They were randomly assigned to two groups experimental and control. To determine the oral expression skills that need to be acquired by second year preparatory school students, an oral expression skills checklist was designed and approved by a panel of jury. Based on these oral expression skills, a test was developed and used as a pre-post test. A proposed program was developed by the researcher to develop the oral expression skills of the students in the experimental group. By the end of the experiment a post test was administrated to the two groups to find out the effect of the proposed program, and the program proved its effectiveness.

Abd El-Fattah (2010) examined the effectiveness of designing Technotainment / interactive multimedia based on edutainment program on motivating third grade primary pupils towards learning English and developing some communication skills particularly their oral communication skills. The program was designed on pedagogical principles, theories of communicative language acquisition and the criteria of designing educational software based on entertainment. The design of the study is the pre-post test quasi experimental control design. The statistical analysis indicated that the program developed the performance of the experimental group on the pre- post test and the results were in favour of the post-test. Also, the assessment of the pupils

through the observation sheet proved that the experimental group improved in practicing the dialogues and expressions. In addition, the satisfaction questionnaire showed that students were entertained and satisfied with the program.

Al-Harthi (2010) assessed the effectiveness of MI-based strategies in developing the oral communication skills of secondary stage English Language learners. The Interpersonal, Spatial, and Bodily strategies were chosen to be the most related to the development of oral communication skills. Accordingly, the researcher redeveloped chosen units from the first level of the secondary stage English course book to develop the five chosen oral communication skills. Also, the assessment tasks which assess the learners' ability in each of the oral communication skills were designed. The research design that was used to implement this study was a two group pretest-posttest quasi experimental design. The experimental group consisted of (36) learners, while the control group consisted of (30) learners from the first level of the secondary stage. Results revealed that the proposed MI-based strategies had a great effect on the learners' oral communication skills as there were statistically significant differences between the means of scores of the experimental group and the control group in the post-test. Also, there was significant difference between the pretest and post-test of the experimental group in the overall oral communication skill and in each separate skill favoring the post-test.

Shabaan (2010) investigated the effectiveness of a suggested computer-based program for developing some EFL oral communication skills appropriate for a group of first year preparatory school students (n = 39). A list of oral communication skills (the listening comprehension skills and the speaking skills) was identified. An oral communication test (the listening comprehension and the speaking) and a suggested computer-based program of eight lessons were designed. The findings indicated that the suggested program is effective in developing these oral

communication skills. The study concluded that using computer-based programs is very helpful and effective in learning EFL oral communication skills and that these programs are more effective than the traditional teaching method. It was proved that:

- 1- The proposed program is effective in developing oral expression.
- 2- Using questioning strategies provides a necessary stepping stone to interaction and communication.
- 3- By depending of discussion, pictures, maps, and role play while teaching speaking, the student's oral expression can be improved.

Hassan (2011) examined the effect of an Aural-Oral E-Learning Program on developing faculty of education first year English majors' oral communication skills. The purpose of the present study was to investigate the effectiveness of an aural-oral e-learning program on developing Faculty of Education first year English majors' oral communication skills. The Experiment lasted for one academic semester, six hours a week. The study followed a pre-post one group design. The participants of the study were instructed and trained in some listening and oral presentation skills using a program designed by the researcher to develop these skills. The present program was built on the use of "Conversation 2 Course" to develop student oral communication skills. The result of the study shows the effect of the proposed program, and the program proved its effectiveness.

Selim (2011) investigated the effect of using performance assessment of seventy of prep one pupils' skills on their listening and speaking. The intervention based on performance tasks was related to the pupils' lives and educational background. The pupils also repeatedly did self assessment of their own progress in both domains. The results indicated that performance assessment could enhance the pupils' listening and speaking. In addition, interviews were made with twenty prep pupils and ten prep teachers to explore the real context of teaching listening and speaking in public schools. The outcome of these

interviews showed that more attention should be given to teaching listening and speaking in public schools. It was also found that the current assessment of the pupils' competence in English mostly focused on their reading and writing skills, while there was hardly any assessment of their listening or speaking. Finally, the study recommended performance assessment as an assessment paradigm that can enhance teaching and learning these important skills.

Through a review of the previous researches on oral communication skills, it is found that there are few studies conducted to overcome what the students may suffer from during their educational process concerning the field of oral communication skills in learning English language.

These studies were very beneficial for the research in many aspects such as:

- a) They helped in identifying and stating oral communication skills.
- b) They assisted in stating the nature of oral communication of the present study.
- c) They helped in determining the different procedures of the procedures of the present study.
- d) They illustrated the different treatments that dealt with oral communication skills and that helped to improve such skills.
- e) They also threw the light on the nature of the problem and how to deal with the main question of the present study and the sub-questions.

**Other studies shed the light on the importance of:**

- A Gradual transmission from paper-and-pencil tests to oral communication skills assessment.
- Considering the learners' previous linguistic, cultural and environmental background when designing test items. In addition those topics should be related to the learners' experiences.

Communicative classroom should get as many listening and speaking opportunities as possible and their speaking time should slowly but steadily rise so as to prepare them for various communication situations. As a result, the present researcher is going to use story retelling strategy as it is considered a cure for most the previous mentioned problems, and a mean to provide the students with motivation of oral communication skills, offering them plenty of opportunities to play an active part in communicative situations.

## **2.2 Related studies of Story Retelling Strategy**

In respect of story retelling strategy, some studies were conducted to investigate its importance. As he purpose of Abdel-Halim's study (2004) is to examine the effect of using drama on developing the speaking skill. The research sample consisted of eighty fifth primary pupils divided into two equal groups (the experimental and the control groups). Results revealed that drama has an effect on developing the fifth primary pupils' speaking skill. Finally, this study raised many issues, which need to be explored and investigated.

El Kassem (2008) investigated that in order to set a listening test based on the Storytelling Approach pupils are asked to listen to variety of short oral passages; they are expected to infer certain information from what they have just heard, or to answer true-false statement or multiple choice questions. These types of questions are useful to evaluate the comprehension of pupils. The questions should be distributed before the listening passage is played. The study adopted some types of these questions to evaluate the listening skills of the pupils and develop them and they approved their effectiveness.

Abo Essa (2011) aimed at investigating the effectiveness of a proposed program based on the story-retelling strategy in developing the second-year EFL student teachers' oral performance skills. The subjects of this study consisted of 20students represent the experimental group, and 20 students represent the control group. By the end of the

experiment, a post-test was administered to the experimental and control groups to find out the effectiveness of the proposed program in developing the second-year EFL student teachers' oral performance skills. Results of the study proved the effectiveness of the proposed program in developing the second-year EFL student teachers' oral performance skills identified in the present study.

Haroun (2012) aimed at investigating the effectiveness of digital stories in developing the EFL speaking skills of the fifth year primary pupils. For such purpose, criteria of choosing the digital stories, pre- post EFL speaking test, table of specification, teacher reflection, and pupils' feedback questionnaire were used together with eleven digital stories. The sample of the study was forty primary pupils of the fifth grade in a governmental school. The results of the study proved the effectiveness of the digital stories in developing and enhancing the EFL speaking skills. It is important also to be aware of the digital world students live in when designing learning experiences to cultivate basic communication skills. Thus digital tools can be used effectively in developing EFL Communication situations.

Almouadab (2015) investigated the effectiveness of using storytelling in enhancing Libyan 11thgraders some listening comprehension skills. The researcher designed a program to ease the listening comprehension sub-skills including prediction, recognizing the main idea, recognizing the main character and summarizing the events. There is statistical significant difference at ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) in the students' level of listening comprehension skills between the pre and post administration of the test, in favor of post administration. Results revealed that the proposed strategies had a great effect on the learners' listening skills as there were statistically significant

To conclude, it can be said that different techniques and strategies were useful for developing oral communication skills. But, the present research is adopted story retelling as a teaching strategy for developing

the secondary schoolers' oral communication skills for the following reasons:

- Creating a friendly atmosphere between the teacher and students.
- Providing the opportunity for EFL learners to talk, interact, and develop their oral communication skills.
- Getting students involved in the learning process.
- Reinforcing students' thinking and their ability to organize their ideas during speaking.
- Learning how to speak within an atmosphere of collaborative work.
- Promoting active learning.
- Making students feel less anxious and more confident.

Consequently, the present researcher will shed much light, in the following chapter, on using story retelling strategy through the proposed treatment to develop first year secondary schoolers' oral communication skills.

### **3. Methodology**

There are several delimitations to the current study. They include characteristics of the sample, duration of applying the treatment, statistical analysis, and other aspects related to using the strategy. All of these variables should be taken into account when evaluating the findings and may influence the generalization of the findings. These delimitations are explained in the following terms:

- A sample of first year secondary schoolers at a Port-Said secondary governmental school for girls (N=50) was randomly assigned to an experimental (N=25) and a control group (N=25).
- As for the time frame of this study; the treatment was provided for eight sessions, for a period per week.
- Developing some of the identified oral communication skills, by applying the strategy using the ordinary school student's book.

The current study is concerned with using story retelling strategy to help EFL students develop their oral communication skills, which consist of listening and speaking skills. As a result, students are taught some skills needed such as:

### **Listening skills**

- a) Identify time and place of the story
- b) Identify main character and his/her traits
- c) Name other characters
- d) Recognize major event in the story
- e) Suggest a conclusion for a story
- f) Identify form of sentence from intonation (question, exclamation, etc).
- g) Identify main idea(s), and supporting details in audible texts.
- h) Use information from an oral text to complete a table, diagram, chart or graph.
- i) Make predictions and generalizations based on audible texts.
- j) Evaluate the text using evidence to support it.

### **Speaking skills**

- a) Mention orally main character and his/her traits.
- b) Mention orally other characters and their traits.
- c) Recall major events in the story.
- d) End story referring to important values.
- e) Retell story in a structural order: setting, theme, plot, resolution.
- f) Suggest a conclusion for a story.
- g) Retell the events in a coherent sequence and Participate in dramatization and role play activities, using correct intonation and non-verbal language.
- h) Discuss to analyze events and opinions about the story.
- i) Provide a title to an oral text and explain why it is suitable.
- j) Evaluate the text using evidence to support it.

- k) Paraphrase and summarize orally information based on a listening text.

**The statistical analysis of the data highlighted the following results:**

- There is no statistically significant difference between mean ranks scores of the experimental group and the control group in testing oral communication skills (listening - speaking) skill, which refers to the equivalence of the two groups in the pre-test application.
- There is statistically significant difference among mean ranks scores of the experimental group students in pre and post application to test both of oral communication (listening and speaking) skills in favor of the post test.
- There is statistically significant difference among mean ranks scores of the experimental group and the control group students in the post application to test both of oral communication (listening and speaking) skills in favor of the experimental group students.

#### **4. Conclusions**

With reference of the aforementioned results, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- The treatment is very effective in developing all the oral communication (listening and speaking) skills identified in the present study for first year secondary schoolers.
- The present study makes an observable change in the experimental group students' acquisition of the identified oral communication skills.
- Using listening materials and activities related to students' interests and needs helps them improve their listening and speaking skills and interact with the researcher.

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