INVESTIGATING EFL PREPARATORY SCHOOL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARD USING STORYTELLING TECHNIQUE

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Abstract

Education should be about improving the quality of people's lives and to do so we must better understand what students want to learn and why. As a result of the rapid pace of change in today's information age, adult learners who are already in or soon to be entering today's jobs need to find ways to quickly learn and apply new information in order to stay competitive. Storytelling has emerged as one such teaching method that has proven to be an effective teaching pedagogy and learning process.The purpose of this study was to research and describe how storytelling as a teaching and learning method has a positive impact on the learning and information retention for adult students. The study aims at investigating Iraqi EFL preparatory school teachers' perceptions toward using storytelling technique for learning English. To fulfill the aim of the present study, a sample of (150)Iraqi EFL preparatory school teachers taken randomly from different schools . To achieve the aim of the study , teachers' questionnaire consists of (20) items is applied as instruments .From the analysis of the data, a t-test analysis shows a statistically significant difference according to teacher perceptions toward using storytelling technique. It is recommended to use storytelling technique since they are very effective especially for the adults students and it is very helpful for the teacher as a procedure for learning language .

Introduction

1.1   The Problem and its Significance

Storytelling and its role(s) in society predates written human history as oral storytelling was the only tool available to people to preserve and share cultural customs, beliefs and heritage. Story proved to be the oldest and the most substantiated means for humans to remember and story information (Abrahamsen, 1998). Thus, storytelling proved to be a highly effective way of coding knowledge in oral cultures because it made them more memorable and easily passed on to others. In fact, Abrahamsen claims that civilizations survived as a result of storytelling because they ensured the continuity of life experiences to subsequent generations.

According to Andrews and Hull (2009), learning is the most creative when it be in community and social environments that give authentic social basis about how to apply knowledge. In this regard, they demonstrated that stories provide a instrument to provide knowledge in a social way. Other theorists consider storytelling synonymous with and from the perspective of narrative inquiry whether is it written down or provided orally (Denning, 2005; Heo 2003, Rossiter, 2002)

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In particular, Caine et al. (2005) promote storytelling in today's classrooms because it links well with brain-based and neuroscience research on how the brain learns best.

Atta-Alla (2012) said that storytelling is a means for sharing and interpreting experiences. Stories are so important in that they can fill a gap in, linguistic, cultural and divides. Storytelling technique can be adaptive for all ages leaving out notion of age segregation. Storytelling can be used as a method to teach values of society, ethics and cultural norms and differences.

1.2 Aims

This study aims to Investigating EFL Iraqi preparatory school teachers' perceptions toward storytelling technique in their classes.

1.3 Value

The study can be useful in :

a-It can be explored teachers' and perceptions toward language use by storytelling technique in the EFL classroom.

b-The study shows the values of storytelling as a teaching technique for improving teachers' proficiency.

1.4 Limits

The study is limited to the Iraqi EFL preparatory school teachers of both sexes (males and females).

1.5 Definitions of Basic Terms

1.5.1 Teachers' Perception

Fullan & Hargreaves (1991:31) stated that teachers' perception is teachers thought process as the base for what teachers do in every day practice. It is what teachers believe, what teachers think and what teachers' do-at the their classroom that ultimately improve kinds of students learning .

1.5 .2 Storytelling

Storytelling is the use of stories or narratives as a communication tool to value, share, and capitalize on the knowledge of individuals. Stories provide a powerful metaphor, framework, and set of practical processes for resolving issues, educated ourselves, and pursuing our goals. Storytelling can be a powerful element of communication process , being equally as textbooks and essays (Ohler,2013:7).

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Definition of storytelling

Firstly , a story is defined as a narrative account of a real or 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 that , stories build blocks of knowledge and it is the foundation of memory and learning , lastly , stories connect people to the past , present and the future (Barzaq, 2009:6-7) .

Storytelling is a form of communication that predates written human history as a means of teaching lessons and passing history down from one generation to another. Storytelling techniques can humanize learning. They offer students the opportunity to communicate as minded characters. Stories touch students emotions and make them laugh, cry, fear, and get angry. (Rossiter, 2002).

Maynard(2005:1) defined stories as the tool people transfer their experience, the opinions of others. .Maynard (2005 :2-3) believes that stories are important for societies, politics, and education. Stories are how people understand themselves and their worlds.

Stories provide a powerful metaphor, framework, and set of practical processes for resolving issues, educated ourselves, and pursuing our goals (Ohler,2013:8).

2.2 Storytelling as brain-based learning

According to the authors of Brain / Mind Learning Principles in Action (Caine, R., Caine, G., McClintic, C., & Klimic, C., 2005:233), educators must employ three elements of brain-based learning in order for effective learning to take place:

1) Relaxed Alertness: A state of mind that should be created in brain-based classrooms so students can attain levels of higher order thinking. An atmosphere of low threat and one that creates a sense of community contribute to a state of relaxed alertness.

2) Planned Immersion: The creation of an environment where students are exposed to or engaged in experiences relative to the objectives of the course or particular lesson.

3) Active Processing: Utilization of learning methods that encourage the students to reflect and integrate the information in a manner that is personally meaningful .

While the subject of brain-based teaching is not particularly new, a teaching method that meets brain-base learning theories that has been receiving increasing attention is narrative storytelling .

Additionally, storytelling as an effective teaching and learning method is touted by a number of other educational theorists and researchers who underscore storytelling as a reflective, transformative, and/or experimental teaching pedagogy. Storytelling is a form of communication that predates written human history as a means of teaching lessons and passing history down from one generation to another (Rossiter, 2002:24). In addition, narrative storytelling provides the basic structure of how we create meaning out of our existence and everyday lives.

Moreover, neuroscience is discovering that the brain is wired to organize, retain and access information through story and that every relationship experience and object is recorded in the mind as a story (Caine et al. 2005:46). Consequently, stories lay the foundation of how people communicate to each other and are now being touted as a powerful means for increasing learning information retention and transfer in today's classrooms and business settings (Denning, 2004; Kaye & Jacobson, 1999; Morgan & Dennehy, 1997; Richter & Koppett, 2000).

Educational researchers offer a number of perspectives on why and how storytelling is a successful learning and teaching tool. In particular, Caine et al. (2005:33) promote storytelling technique in today's classrooms because it links well with brain-based and neuroscience research on how the brain learns best.

2.3 What are the characteristics of valuable story ?

Barzaq (2009:15) assured that storytelling technique is an educational tools because they are give moral lessons ,positive ideas, styles , good models and entertaining and they depend on humans behavior and their experience that is considered a vital source of knowledge. Bausch(1994 : 29-80) listed many characteristics for a valuable story as follows :

1-Stories help the teacher to create contexts in which the language is useful and meaningful.

2- A good story can establish the feeling of connecting to religion and for a believer to the God.

3- The use of innovative story telling technique in the classroom can increase enthusiasm and reinforce previously presented didactic information. It is also a positive, interactive alternative method of teaching and information sharing.

4-Stories could have a binding power and enhanced people to understand the all part of a universal , regardless of race or color.

5- Using stories as a teaching technique that might suit students with interpersonal intelligence because they provide an excellent setting for interaction between students.

6-Stories use a special language. Stories use all kinds of language conventions to make the story vivid and memorable.

7-In order for the teacher to invent motivating and fun language learning experiences for students, story technique can be used to link the spare time of the students to learning. By using story telling technique in foreign language learning students can learn grammar, vocabulary and oral skills unconsciously in a supervised situation.

8-Stories improve in the listeners the right-brain imagination. Stories bring about a balance for the listeners to use the right side of the brain.

2.4 Storytelling as a teaching method

Armstrong By (2010:80) stated that storytelling techniques have been traditional literary which relied on an individual author or storyteller to craft worlds and characters to inhabit them .the tradition of storytelling was a vital basis for communicating values between people.

Storytelling technique as a teaching and learning activity supports active processing of information in a number of ways. First, according to Rose and Nicholl(1997:42), the vivid images stimulated by storytelling promote character identification thus engaging the student as an active participant in the learning process. When learners are engaged in this way, storytelling improved understanding and makes the learner to apply and doing what they have learned in the work setting. What's more, storytelling appeals to all learning styles including auditory, visual and kinesthetic and many of the intelligence areas including spatial, linguistic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligence (Caine et al., 2005:35). Second, active processing is necessary for long-term information retention.

Again, because storytelling is often an entertaining, visual, experiential, and emotionally evoking activity, students are much more likely to retain the course content taught in story format settings (Denning, 2004; Kaye & Jacobson, 1999; Morgan & Dennehy, 1997; Richter & Koppett, 2000).

Moreover, storytelling technique enhances the classroom environment and atmosphere. A good story can relax learners and reduce fears because they are entertaining and at times, humorous. According to Richter and Koppett (2000:54) a well told story can bring about a sense of community and belonging in learning communities better than most traditional teaching methods. storytelling engages students on a level that many teaching methods do not (Rossiter, 2002:31).

2.5 Digital Storytelling

This type of story regarded as a modern expression of the ancient art of storytelling. It consists of exiting images, music, narrative and voice together, which give the deep idea ,meaning and wonderful color to characters, situations, and insights. Using digital stories through media has become easier with a different media tools, and it is an creative technique for learners to enhance cultural information (Rule, 2008: 1-2) The educational uses of digital storytelling are :

- This type can link text and images with narration for student to make a short digital move .

- Digital Storytelling technique is a web-based tool that offers teachers and students' frictionless access to digital images and materials that enable them to construct thoughts and effective ideas.

- Digital storytelling technique is easier for students to use, so the focus of the activities can be on the storytelling and sharing others' knowledge and experiences .

- Moreover, digital storytelling enhances students to share and connect their cultural information and stories.

Digital storytelling helps students develop planning and critical thinking skills that are transferable to many endeavors .Also , they allow today's students to pursue academic content in their own language (Ohler,2013:15).

One can define digital storytelling as the process by which people of all ages and experience communicate with others' stories lives or imagination. Digital storytelling, this new type has emerged with accessible media production techniques using computers, digital cameras, iPod, iPad and software. This new technological technique allows people to share their stories and ideas over the Internet. One can think of digital storytelling as the modern extension of the ancient art of storytelling but now woven together with images and digital sound. (Porter, 2007:3)

2.6 Components of an effective story

A variety of theories exist about how stories are constructed to optimize learning are offered in professional literature. Morgan and Dennehy (1997) assert that components of an effective story embrace five sequential components:

1) The setting: a description of the time, place, characters and context so you provide something the audience can mentally image a part of.

2) Build up: a sequence of events that warns the listener that something (usually some type of conflict) is about to happen. This creates suspense, interest and attention.

3) Crisis: the climax or high point of the story. This is also the place to introduce a new element and for a turning point.

4) Learning: point out what the central character(s) learned. Here lies the lesson of the story.

5) How change ensued in the character(s) behaviors, awareness, abilities: the storyteller focuses on the learning to be retained by the listener and is cautioned to not assume that the listener always understands the lesson of the story.

2.7 Merits of storytelling

In their book, Learning through Storytelling in Higher Education, McDrury and Alterio (2003:51), tout the merits of storytelling technique as a teaching pedagogy due to its ability to engage learners in reflective learning and that this quality of reflection is especially beneficial for young professionals and others seeking work-based learning

experiences. Moreover, they espouse the merits of storytelling as a successful exercise in reflective learning thus making it especially useful as an experiential learning tool.

Storytelling technique enhances the classroom environment and atmosphere. A good story can relax learners and reduce fears because they are entertaining and at times, humorous. According to Richter and Koppett (2000:71) a well told story can bring about a sense of community and belonging in learning communities better than most traditional teaching methods.

Storytelling technique engages students on a level that many teaching methods do not (Rossiter, 2002:26). Not only do learners hear the information, but they are immersed in the content on a deeper and richer level through emotional and personal connections and visual imagery (Abrahamson, 1998; Morgan & Dennehy, 1997:31). The fact that stories evoke emotions adds to their learning effectiveness because learning experiences associated with emotions are more easily stored and recalled (Morgan, 1997; Weiss, 2000:91). Similarly, Perry (2000:43) supports this premise stating that when stories stir emotions, the cognitive parts of the brain are activated to store the new information.

Storytelling has many of the benefits of experiential learning due to the level of active engagement created (Richter & Koppett, 2000:11). The vivid images stimulated by storytelling promote character identification thus engaging the student as an active participant in the learning process. When learners are engaged in this way, research reveals improved understanding and makes learners to apply and doing what knowledge they have acquire in the real life situations.

The merits of storytelling technique as an effective teaching and learning strategy are well documented. As stated by Caine et al. (2005:124) "there is a notable difference in the engagement of students (at any age) between when a story is told and when facts are simply presented" .

Nurussaniyah (2010:61) assured that storytelling techniques are valuable techniques to make students improve their oral language effectiveness. She added that students may move from being mere listeners of stories to beginning storytellers in an interactive way. Storytelling technique also promote all language skills like speaking listening ,reading ,and writing skills. She argued that storytelling can be used by using four skills depending on the situation of students and atmosphere of place.

Wallace (2000:436) noted that, "the phenomenon of storytelling technique actually becomes a common language that facilitates meaningful communication; we can hear and understand each other's stories because we can usually recognize ourselves in the stories of others no matter how varied our cultural backgrounds".

3. Procedures of the Study

3.1 Population and Sample

The population of this study is (1500) male and female teachers of English at the intermediate level in the intermediate and secondary schools at Baghdad Governorate

The sample is (150) teachers have been chosen according to stratified Random sampling . The sample represents(10%) of the whole population, therefore, (10%) has been chosen randomly from the two general Directorates of Education Al-Resafa (1),and Al-Karkh (1).

3.2 Instrument

In order to achieve the aims of this research, a questionnaire has been constructed to be the main instrument used .

3.2.1 Construction of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire or opinionnaire is one of the many ways through which data can be collected. questionnaire is a way of getting information about subjects by asking them to answer certain questions rather than by observing their behavior (Khan, 2011: 99).

In order to gain information about the EFL preparatory school teachers' perceptions toward using storytelling a questionnaire has been constructed drawing on the following sources:

- Related literature: They are books, journals, and articles related to the problem of the research .

- Consulting specialists in the fields of ELT, and linguistics. The rating scale includes the following options: always(1) , often (2), sometimes(3) , rarely(4) , and never(5), as shown in (Table 1).

(Table 1)

Questionnaire for preparatory School Teachers

	Components and Items	always	often	some-time	rarely	never
1	Storytelling technique can stimulate students imagination.					
2	It can increase students' efficiency in the using of certain grammar rules in their context.					
3	Develops critical and active listening skills.					
4	Develops concentration and attention skills.					
5	Promotes students communicative competence					
6	Motivates high-order learning outcomes and thinking skills.					
7	Can satisfy students' needs					
8	Familiars students with using language in the real situations.					
9	Encourages students to create their own stories and later write and illustrate stories.					
10	Makes language learning meaningful as it helps students acquire cultural literacy.					
11	Can increase students percentage of learning new vocabulary					
12	Improves students' ability of story structure, comprehension and oral language complexity.					
13	Can focus on students' language proficiency more than textbook do					
14	Creates more attractive learning					

	atmosphere.						
15	May direct students towards different cultural content						
16	Storytelling makes the lesson learnable						
17	Contributes to a relaxed classroom atmosphere						
18	It can be integral part for learning language skills						
19	It can motivate students for problem solving						
20	It can promote listening skill						

3.2.1.1 Face Validity of the Questionnaire

One element of content validity is face validity which refers to whether the data collection tool looks as if it measures the construct under question and where each item on a questionnaire is examined for relevance based on the judgment of practitioners and academics(Griffiths ,P. ,Mooney ,Gail, P.,2011:113).

In order to ensure the face validity of the questionnaire, its first version has been exposed to *the experts in the fields of linguistics and methodology of teaching EFL .

The experts have been requested to judge whether the components of the questionnaire are suitable or not. In the light of the experts' views some items have been added and others have been omitted. However, the items 33 & 6 from the teacher' questionnaire have been changed .

And, the final form of the teachers' questionnaire consists of 43 items distributed into five components: 1.=4 , 2.=19 , 3.=3, 4.=8 , 5.=8.

3.2.1.2 Construct Validity

All validity is construct validity .that is , construct validity is usually defined as the characteristics of a test with scores that reflect the construct a test is intended to measure (Frey,2014:20).

In order to find out the construct validity, the questionnaire has been applied to the pilot sample. Then, the construct validity has been achieved by using "Pearson Correlation Formula" .

The jury of experts were:

- Prof, Satha Alsaadi, University of Baghdad, College of Education for women.

- Asst. Prof., Huda Hadi, M.A Language and Linguistics, University of Baghdad, College of Education for women .

- Inst .Liqa'a Habeb Aboud , PH.D University of Diyala, College of Education / Department of English.

- Inst, Hiba Esmail Gharib , PHD, Language and Linguistics, University of Sulaimanyah.

3.2.1.3 Reliability of the Questionnaire

Reliability means the consistency of measurement of an item ,using a similar measurement procedures and the reliability of the results. A questionnaire is reliable when it yields the same results over a given time (Baumgarten,2013:4) .

However, the questionnaire has been read ministered to the same pilot sample after two weeks. The statistical manipulation of the data has been achieved from the two administrations. By using Pearson Correlation Coefficient formula the result yields 0.81 ,whereas ,by using Alpha Cronbach Formula the result yields 0.82 .

3.2.1.4 Pilot Administration of the Questionnaire

After ensuring the validity of the questionnaire, a pilot version is administered to a sample of Twenty English language teachers have been chosen randomly from different intermediate school for the pilot administration. Regarding the time allocated for The pilot sample is excluded from the total sample of the study .

3.2.1.5 Final Administration of the Questionnaire

The Final version of the questionnaire was distributed to the participants at the mid of February 2 017 .The teachers were asked to give their views on the items according to scale. The period of distributing and receiving the copies of the questionnaire lasted from the mid of February to the mid of March 2017.

4.Data Analysis and Results

4.1 Results

 In order to achieve the aim of the study which reads "Investigating Iraqi EFL preparatory School Teachers' Perceptions toward using storytelling technique ". The responses of the subjects were investigated by using the mean and the hypothetical mean formula .

The weighted means for all items are above 4.00 and their weighted percentiles are above   90 % ,and as shown in Table(4-2)and graphic

 (4-2) .

This proves that there is statistically significant differences at in the Iraqi EFL preparatory school teachers' perceptions toward using storytelling technique.

Table (2) : Weighted Mean of the Questionnaire items

No. of item	Weighted mean	Weighted percentile
14	4.24	85.00
10	4.30	86.00
13	4.31	86.00
11	4.54	91.00
17	4.56	91.00
5	4.58	92.00
8	4.60	92.00
1	4.66	93.00
6	4.67	93.00
16	4.67	93.00
20	4.67	93.00
7	4.69	94.00
12	4.71	94.00
9	4.73	95.00
19	4.77	95.00
15	4.79	96.00
18	4.81	96.00
4	4.84	97.00

2	4.91	98.00
3	4.95	99.00

Graphic 4-2

Weighted Mean and Weighted Percentile Questionnaire items
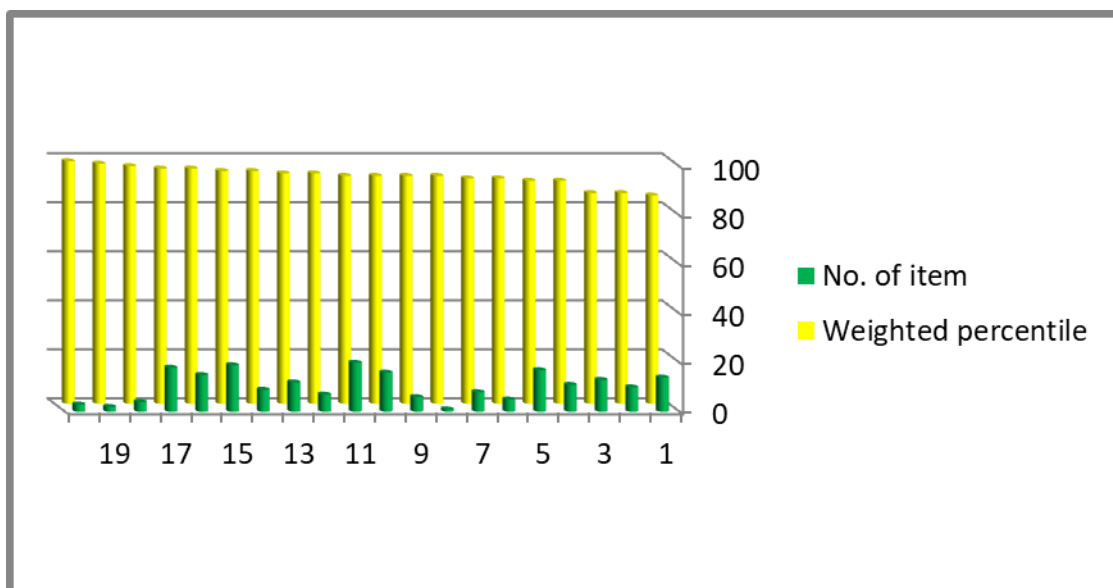
4.2 Discussion of the Results

The research sought to disclose teachers` reasons for using storytelling technique for adults in an English language class. Some of the Iraqi EFL preparatory school teachers have negative perception towards using storytelling technique as a learning technique. Some of them think that the storytelling is nothing more than losing time and that it does not have any educational value on student language acquisition.

The others believe that storytelling has its educational value in classroom activities, but use it rarely in their classes. Finally, there are few teachers who recognize the values and advantages of storytelling on student's motivation, and learning language skills .

This research has likewise been based on the supposition that adult learners need to competitive in today's find ways to quickly learn and apply information in order to stay job market. Research on storytelling as an effective learning tool may assist students in reaching their learning goals within the limited time frame available.

4.3 Conclusion

In short, the data collected and the subsequent analysis have yielded the following major conclusions:

Teachers have positive perspectives towards using storytelling technique as an aid in promoting the oral proficiency of their students. The teacher's gender does not affect his/her perspective towards using storytelling as an aid in promoting oral proficiency. The teacher's experience does not affect his/her perspective towards using storytelling as an aid in promoting oral proficiency. The teacher's qualification does not affect

his/her perspective towards using storytelling technique as an aid in promoting oral proficiency.

Particular emphasis was placed on the learning theories and past studies on storytelling as learning and teaching method .It is highly evident that storytelling technique has played a core role in human lives and cultures that has been and remains central to the human experience today. Research confirms that it is undoubtedly an effective means of conveying and learning new information and educational theorists agree that storytelling is our fundamental human way of making meaning of our lives and experiences. As a result of the rapid pace of change in today's information age, adult learners who are already in or soon to be entering today's jobs need to find ways to quickly learn and apply new information in order to stay competitive.

The results of this study indicate strong support for the use of storytelling technique as a teaching and learning method. When learners are exposed to storytelling in a class setting they are highly engaged in the learning process and are practicing reflective learning as they process information on a deeper, more meaningful level.

4.4 Recommendations

Based on the conclusions made, the following recommendations are forwarded:

1-The Ministry of Education is recommended to train teachers on the different methods of storytelling.

2-Syllabus designers have to allocate time and give more emphasis to the using storytelling technique when they design any text for language learning .

3- English language teachers should use storytelling as an aid in promoting their students' oral proficiency along with other language skills.

3-English language teachers should develop their skills in language teaching by using novel techniques in teaching such as web sites ,educational sources, and promote online webinars to share ideas

and exchange experience for effective teacher development through collaborate extensively with colleagues.

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