Hazırlık Sınıfı Öğrencilerinin Dil Becerilerini Hikâye Anlatımıyla Öğrenmeye Yönelik Tutumları

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Öz

Çalışmanın amacı hazırlık sınıfı öğrencilerinin dil becerilerini hikâye anlatımı aracılığıyla öğrenmeye karşı tutumlarını ortaya çıkarmaktır. Bu çalışmanın örneklemini bir devlet üniversitesinden İngilizce seviyesi A2 olan 48 öğrenci oluşturmaktadır. Yaşları 18 ve 22 arasındaki Türk öğrenciler örneklem olarak seçilmiştir. Örneklem ana dilleri Türkçe olan 25 kız öğrenci ve 23 erkek öğrenci içerir. Öğrencilerin hikâye anlatımına olan tutumlarını incelemek için likert ölçekli bir anket uygulanmıştır. Geçerlilik ve güvenilirlik endişelerinden dolayı anket Kim ve Mcgarry tarafından daha önceden hazırlanan ve uygulanan bir tutum testinden uyarlanmıştır (2014). Sonuçlar öğrencilerin hikaye anlatımı etkinliklerine olumlu tutumları olabileceğini ortaya çıkarmıştır. Katılımcılar hikâye dinleme etkinliklerine diğer hikâye anlatımı etkinliklerine olduğundan daha fazla ilgi gösterdiler. Genel olarak dinleme ve okuma becerilerinde kendilerini yetkin hissettikleri ve konuşma aktivitelerinden ziyade dinleme aktiviteleri yapmaktan keyif aldıkları bulundu. Son olarak, katılımcıların hikâye anlatımı etkinliklerini sınıfta kullanmanın sadece çocuklar için değil yetişkinler için de faydalı olduğunu düşündükleri bulundu.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Hikâye anlatımı, tutum, beceriler, kelime, ilgi

Students' Attitudes in Preparatory Schools toward Learning Language Skills through Storytelling

Abstract

The aim of the study is to find out preparatory school students' attitudes toward learning language skills via storytelling. The sampling of the study consisted of 48 students with A2 language proficiency level at a state university. Turkish students between the ages of 18 and 22 were selected as the sample. The sampling included 25 females and 23 males whose mother tongues were Turkish. A Likert scale questionnaire was administered to investigate the students' attitudes toward storytelling. Due to validity and reliability concerns, the questionnaire was adapted from an attitude test which was designed and used by Kim and Mcgarry (2014). The results revealed that students might have positive attitudes toward storytelling activities. The participants showed more interest in listening to stories than they did in any other storytelling activities. Overall, they felt competent in receptive skills and enjoyed doing listening activities rather than speaking activities. Finally, the participants were found to believe that using storytelling activities in the classroom is not only beneficial for young learners, but also for adults.

Key words: Storytelling, Attitude, Skills, Vocabulary, Interest

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Introduction

Stories have always captivated people. They have been used for a variety of purposes since the time of the early civilizations. We often recall the fascinating stories which our ancestors recited at family gatherings. There are several reasons why these stories are enchanting as well as how we recall all those details years afterward. We find ourselves thinking like the narrator or storyteller when we read or listen to a narrative. To put it another way, they are processed by our brains in the same manner that real-life experiences are processed. When we try to learn vocabulary in context-deprived texts in classrooms, we only employ a portion of our brain. However, if we try to learn vocabulary through the brimful of stories that we create and share in the classroom, other aspects of the brain, such as our senses, can be activated. Therefore, students might become thoroughly immersed in the world they hear about or read about. For many years, storytelling exercises have been employed in the classroom for this reason. Besides, numerous linguistic advantages exist in storytelling activities including access to meaningful sentence structures and improvement of pronunciation. There is also a strong connection between storytelling activities and vocabulary learning. As Pathan (2013) revealed storytelling assists EFL learners in expanding their vocabulary and motivating them to learn the four language skills more effectively. One of the pivotal factors influencing students' achievement in storytelling activities is their attitude. Therefore, it is crucial to delve into the students' perspectives on storytelling. In traditional style language teaching, there has always been a lack of concern about affective factors such as motivation, interests, or attitudes. Consequently, there is a lack of data concerning the attitudes of students toward storytelling activities. It is important to understand students' perspectives on storytelling activities. This study investigates the attitudes of preparatory school students towards storytelling in learning English.

Literature Review

People have shaped the dynamics of their societies through the life lessons inherited from stories. Storytelling has always been of great importance in terms of the survival of precious stories. Additionally, it has been a medium for entertainment. In the classroom, it is very important to use storytelling activities because creating stories helps students make sense of contexts and vocabulary items. It is possible to create opportunities for students to contextualize the target language because stories are also full of language chunks, synonyms, and other context clues. According to Wright (1995), the language is transformed into their own when students construct and narrate stories in their second language. Our brain uses stories to draw a connection between the world we know and the one we create by analyzing the language. Additionally, children learn through play and the exercise of their imagination, and understanding and enjoying a story require the use of these instincts (Malderez, 2010). According to Mason, stories are significantly more enjoyable and engaging than traditional classroom instruction (2005). In another study, Kirsch revealed that the students enthusiastically took part in storytelling activities, remembered particular lexical items after the activities, and kept them for a long time (2016). It is very important to find the right tools when working on storytelling. According to Pardede (2011), stories are efficient only if teachers properly organize how to use them. Pardede (2011) points out that students' profiles, the lesson objective, and the content of the story are some of the essential points to consider in choosing the appropriate short stories for the learners. Saka suggests that students have a greater comprehension of the same event when they look at it from a different perspective (2014). Her research revealed that while students were reading a short story, they sometimes had the feeling or the idea of the character as if they were their own. According to the findings of the study, storytelling might be as effective as more traditional methods. Storytelling also has a strong influence on critical reading. It is a good asset for educators to help learners improve their literacy skills. Belet and Dala (2010) pointed out that storytelling enhanced students' ability to analyze events from unique perspectives and helped them to improve their ability to question and establish cause-effect connections in stories. Gallets also found that storytelling and story reading both helped develop the understanding, remembering, and comprehension skills of the children (2005). Zevenbergen and Whitehurst found that storytelling has also positive effects on listening comprehension. Stories and tales are powerful and valuable listening materials for developing listening comprehension and literacy knowledge in both primary and second languages (2003). One of the advantages of storytelling is that it enables the integration of various interactive tools in the classroom. Consequently, teachers don't have to rely on traditional classroom tools. In research from Verhallen et al. (2006), this advantage was emphasized suggesting that modern facets of screen media including music, video, and sounds contribute to the children's ability to retain story components (2006). Besides, with the help of technology, it is possible to use storytelling outside the school. As Yang and Wu stated, students are provided with genuine scenarios through digital storytelling tailored to their personal experiences, making the content seem meaningful and worthwhile (2012). Learners also make sense of their learning and improve their sense of meaning and experience in light of these scenarios. Tahriri et al. (2015) hold the view that digital storytelling might be a suitable pedagogical option as it is very important for teachers to work on different aspects of language to provoke learners' interest. Similarly,

Amelia and Abidin suggest that learners' interest and engagement in learning are enhanced by the use of digital storytelling on a tablet (2018). Learning through technology is getting more and more common in classrooms. Additionally, digital storytelling can be used to create collaborative classroom dynamics. Kristiawan et al. (2022) illustrated that digital storytelling facilitates a more collaborative classroom thanks to the elements it may offer to learners such as working together in solving problems, distributing the roles equally in completing tasks, and respecting the ideas of others. Bastug (2014) found positive structural correlations between attitudes to reading, reading comprehension, and academic growth. Finally, it is believed that attitude plays a facilitator role in student achievement. Therefore, the attitude factor should be taken into consideration for future research.

Purpose of the Study

Numerous studies suggest that there are various benefits of using storytelling in the classroom, such as providing rich contexts and chunks for language learners (e.g. Wajnryb, 2003; Garcia, 2017), motivating and engaging language learners (e.g. Barret, 2005; Kelleher et. al, 2007; Sadik, 2008), and increasing vocabulary knowledge (e.g. Leong et. al., 2019), creativity and discussion abilities (e.g. Napier, 2010; Campell, 2012; Tanrıkulu, 2021). However, there is an insufficient number of studies focusing on students' attitudes to storytelling activities. The aim of the study is to find out prep school students' attitudes to storytelling.

Research Question

What are prep school students' attitudes toward learning language skills through storytelling?

Methodology

The present study aims to explore the attitudes of Turkish prep school learners of English toward learning language skills through storytelling. A quantitative research design was adopted to investigate the attitudes of prep school students toward storytelling. The data gathered from the 5-point Likert scale questions in the "Storytelling in English" questionnaire, which was used after the implementation of six-week storytelling, were entered in SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). The data were analyzed descriptively. Thus, the study is descriptive in nature. The percentages were made use of to analyze the data.

In the first part of the questionnaire adapted from Kim and Mcgarry (2014), participants received a set of questions regarding some information about their background. The researcher was able to collect more information about the participants' demographics with the application of these questions. A 5-point rating scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree) was used in the questionnaire. The survey included one part for demographics and background information such as age, department, gender, etc.

In the second part of the questionnaire adapted from Kim and Mcgarry (2014), questions regarding the participants' attitudes toward storytelling were asked. A five-point Likert scale was used in the questionnaire. There were 18 items in this part. These items also aimed to reveal to what extent the participants are interested in storytelling, enjoy different storytelling activities, and believe that these activities helped them to improve their different language skills.

Sampling

The study was conducted at a state university in Istanbul, Turkey. The sample of the study was preparatory school students. Convenience sampling was used in this study to determine the participants because of time limitations. Three classes from a state university were included in the study. Each class had 16 students. The sample of the study consisted of 48 students between the ages of 18 and 22. There were 25 female and 23 male students in the study. The departments of the participants were 100% English-medium. The mother tongue of the participants was Turkish. The proficiency level of the students was A2 according to the Common European Framework of Reference. They had been studying at prep school for six months when the study was conducted. Students had English lessons five days a week. They had five 35-minute lessons each day. Each class had three different teachers, all of them covering different skills or books. The instructor administering the storytelling activities was a twenty-seven years old male who graduated from the English Language Teaching department of a state university. Due to the intensity in the curriculum pacing, students only received 35-minute storytelling activities each week for six weeks in total.

Procedure

Before the implementation of storytelling in the classroom, the instructor showed students different kinds of storytelling activity samples for two weeks. During this period, the participants watched some videos about different kinds of storytelling activities, read sample written worksheets, and listened to example audio tracks. In

the first two weeks of the storytelling period, the participants got familiar with the idea of storytelling with the guidance of the instructor. Then, in the following two weeks, the participants were first handed out reading texts in class. They were asked to read these stories. The instructor removed the final part of the reading texts. Then, the students were asked to complete the stories in pairs. They wrote their version of the stories. Lastly, the participants exchanged their papers and tried to comment on each others' stories. In the next two weeks, the participants listened to narrative stories first. Then, students tried to complete the rest of them taking the context of the stories into account. After completing the rest of the stories, they presented their version in class in groups of four in front of the class while others listened to their classmates. The students also explained why they believed the stories would continue that way. After a four-week storytelling implementation, the researcher used a questionnaire to find out the participants' attitudes toward storytelling.

Results and Discussion

In this study, the researcher investigated the attitudes of the students towards storytelling with the participation of 48 prep school students. The data were analyzed descriptively with SPSS. The percentages and frequencies were taken from the analysis to reveal the findings. From the analysis, it is shown that most of the participants were interested in storytelling activities. Participants' particular preference for storytelling activities was listening to stories. Table 1 illustrates the self-assessment of proficiency level.

Table 1: Self-competence and language skills that the participants want to improve

	I feel competent in...	I want to improve...
	f	*f*
Listening	*19*	*15*
Speaking	*5*	*40*
Writing	*14*	*8*
Reading	*31*	*21*

The participants also specified the language skill they would like to improve. They were allowed to select more than one option. It is no surprise to see that students felt confident in their reading and listening skills. As stated by Sreena and Ilankumaran (2018) language is received and the meaning is decoded for easy understanding of the message. Imagination is increased through listening and reading. Language learners often find receptive skills easier than productive skills because understanding often precedes production. However, receptive skills are as important as productive skills because they contain abundant input that learners are supposed to interpret. Gabrielatos (1998) makes clear that the major purpose of a receptive skills program is to improve learners' capacity to understand and interpret input using their existing language knowledge, rather than to teach more grammar and vocabulary.

Table 2: The participants' interests in storytelling activities

Strongly agree (5), Agree (4), Neither agree nor disagree (3), Disagree (2), Strongly disagree (1)

Items	1	2	3	4	5
I am interested in storytelling.	4,2	8,3	35,4	29,2	22,9
I am interested in listening to stories.	0	4,2	27,1	43,8	25
I am interested in telling stories.	8,3	20,8	43,8	16,7	10,4

According to the results, while 52,1% of the participants (strongly) agreed that they were interested in storytelling activities, 68,8% were particularly interested in listening to stories, and 27,1% were interested in telling stories. These findings may suggest that students are more likely to engage in storytelling activities that include listening skills. One of the benefits of listening to stories is that it is effective in improving students' comprehension skills. Moradi and Chen (2019) suggest that hearing stories can form and affect early learning and the nature of

intelligence. It is also suggested that digital storytelling might be influential in apprehending the message of the context, especially at the elementary level.

Table 3: The participants' enjoyment of the storytelling activities

Strongly agree (5), Agree (4), Neither agree nor disagree (3), Disagree (2), Strongly disagree (1)

Item	1	2	3	4	5
I liked the use of storytelling in the classroom.	4,2	12,5	22,9	41,7	18,8
I enjoyed listening to stories in class.	0	4,2	10,4	35,4	50
I enjoyed telling stories.	4,2	29,2	31,3	16,7	18,8
I enjoyed the classroom activities in the classroom.	0	8,3	18,8	45,8	27,1

While 60,5% of the participants either agreed or strongly agreed that they liked the use of storytelling activities, 85,4 of the participants either agreed or strongly agreed that they enjoyed listening to stories in class. These results might suggest that students' attitudes may change negatively if the activities involve tasks that require telling stories. There are many studies on why many language learners suffer from anxiety in situations where they are expected to speak the target language. Many language learners feel tense while speaking the target language due to peer pressure, lack of self-confidence, methods used in classes, etc. According to Woodrow, anxiety is clearly an issue in language learning and has a debilitating effect on speaking English for some students (2006). Language anxiety may interfere with four language skills. However, learning speaking skills is the most anxiety-stimulating situation learners might face (Mulyani, 2018).

Table 4: The participants' beliefs in storytelling

Strongly agree (5), Agree (4), Neither agree nor disagree (3), Disagree (2), Strongly disagree (1)

Item	1	2	3	4	5
Using stories was favorable to me.	0	10,4	33,3	31,3	25
Stories are for children, not for adults.	64,6	16,7	16,6	0	4,2
Overall, storytelling was enjoyable in the classroom.	0	6,3	16,7	52,1	25

Another point to mention is that the participants, who were between the ages of 18 and 22, think that stories are not only for children. It is widely known that stories have a strong influence on children's understanding of the world, ability to develop their cognitive skills, and practice the language. The benefits of stories don't vanish as we get older. Similarly, stories are a primary form of entertainment and instruction in every part of life. Also, the percentages show that 77,1 % of the participants think that storytelling was enjoyable in the classroom.

Table 5: The impact of storytelling on students' achievement from their point of view

Storytelling helped me to improve my...

Items	1	2	3	4	5
Listening skill	2,1	8,3	8,3	37,5	43,8
Speaking skill	2,1	8,3	14,6	43,8	31,3
Reading skill	0	10,4	18,8	27,1	43,8
Writing skill	4,2	12,5	25	27,1	31,3
Pronunciation	2,1	2,1	18,8	41,7	35,4
Vocabulary	0	6,3	14,6	35,4	43,8

Table 5 indicates the percentages in students' answers regarding their point of view about the impact of storytelling activities on their language skills achievements. As we can see above, storytelling had the weakest effect on their writing abilities, while vocabulary improvement was found to be the clear-cut benefit of storytelling. Only 6,3 % of the students believed that storytelling had no impact on their vocabulary improvement.

Table 6: The students' preference for storytelling in the classroom

Strongly agree (5), Agree (4), Neither agree nor disagree (3), Disagree (2), Strongly disagree (1)

Items	1	2	3	4	5
Storytelling must be taught in a language classroom.	2,1	6,3	37,5	27,1	27,1
I am confident to tell a 10-minute story.	25	22,9	27,1	12,5	12,5

In total, while 54,2 percent of the participants have a positive attitude toward the use of storytelling, a considerable number of students are hesitant about the use of storytelling activities in the classroom. The reason why they are hesitant about this may be due to the lack of presence of various storytelling activities. They received some storytelling lessons during the term, however, they might have found these activities dull. Another reason might be because of the expectation in the classroom. In other words, they may have given more importance to traditional style language learning to pass their exams. Table 6 also indicates the confidence level of the students in telling a ten-minute story. Most of the participants were found to be self-insufficient. It might be due to their lack of narrative knowledge, motivation, or anxiety level. The instruments in the study didn't include the measurements suited to find an answer to the reason. Therefore, there is not enough evidence to analyze the reason. However, it might be a good option for further research.

Conclusion

The objective of the study was to investigate the students' attitudes toward storytelling. In the study, it was analyzed in terms of its effect on language skills, vocabulary, pronunciation, and the level of interest of the students. In the first part of the questionnaire, it was revealed that the majority of the students feel competent in receptive skills such as listening and reading. Additionally, among 48 prep school students, while 40 of them want to improve their speaking skills, only a few students want to improve their writing skills. The participants showed a good deal of enthusiasm toward using storytelling activities with listening. Glonek and King (2014) mentioned that teachers telling students tales instead of typical lectures to impart crucial bits of information and content may discover that the usage of such narratives boosts students' engagement and memory retention. Therefore, if we intend to use storytelling activities in the classroom, the starting point might be using listening activities. Another important point is that the majority of the students believed that storytelling activities are not only for children but

also for adults. There is a stereotype that only children like stories. However, there are a lot of benefits of stories for adults, too. For example, using storytelling in reading activities might expand students' vocabulary knowledge while attracting them to read more. As Nation points out (1997) achievement in reading and its associated skills encourage students to enjoy language learning and place a high value on their English studies.

The main limitation of the study was the amount of data obtained from the sample. It is hard to make a generalization from such a small-scale study. In addition, there is insufficient information about the likely relevance between participants' profiles and the research outcomes. In conclusion, while the study suggests that most of the students in the study showed a positive attitude towards learning language skills via storytelling, further research on the students' attitude to storytelling and other possible factors influencing attitudes such as gender or proficiency level may provide more convincing information.

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