

Original Paper

The Effectiveness of Chants and Short Stories on Primary Stage Pupils' Communication

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Abstract

The aim of the study is to investigate the effectiveness of using chants and short stories in developing the third primary graders' English communicative skills in Damietta governmental schools. In order to answer the questions of the study, the researcher adopted the quasi-experimental approach. The sample of the study consisted of 50 pupils from Dr Ahmed Zwail primary school in New Damietta city. The chants/songs and short stories were used with the study group in the second term of the academic school year (2014-2015). An oral communication test of six questions with 30 items was designed to be used as a pre-post test. The study indicated that there are statistically significant differences in mean scores of communicative skills test in favor of the post application. It also showed that there were statistically significant differences in mean scores of each of the communication skills in favor of the post application. In light of these results, the study recommended the necessity of using children chants/songs and short stories in teaching and learning. It also suggested that further researches should be conducted on the effect of songs and stories on the four skills of English language.

Keywords

Oral Communication Skills (OCS), integrated chants, short stories

1. Introduction

The English language is a system of sounds and signs organized by grammatical rules of combination to communicate meaning successfully. Oral communication is the most important aspect of the English language which is used to express thoughts, hopes, ambitions, and daily actions. Moreover, effective communication is an integral part of daily life, especially in education. It is the core of every aspect of interaction with others. According to Schady (2011) childhood period is the most rapid period of development in human life. Although individual children develop at their own pace, all children progress through an identifiable sequence of physical, cognitive, social and emotional growth and change.

Juraid, Ibrahim, Methods and Munawrah (2016) claim that the status of English as a global lingua franca has led to policy on primary English education in many non-English speaking countries. Teaching English in formal educational settings (e.g., primary schools) is a relatively new global phenomenon, and it started in Egypt in the 1990s. In addition, Thapa, Cohen, Guffey and Higgins D'Alessandro (2013) argue that pupils can learn literacy skills through instruction and practice of speaking, reading, writing and listening. Oral communication is the process of exchanging information through the sense of hearing and making meaning from what was practiced.

Jalongo (2008) assures that oral communication prepares young children for later better learning. This may be the reason why Raghavendra, Olsson, Sampson, Mcinerney and Connell (2012) submitted that it is crucial for a child to develop good communication skills in order to cope with the academic demands of school and to learn adequate literacy skills.

Communication skills help children to guide their self-inquiry and discover their individual possibilities. Children who are active communicators can incorporate the things they hear faster in their framework of knowledge than a more passive counterpart. In his own view, Tramel (2011) observed that children can also exhibit better concentration and memory when they develop good communication. Shiel, Cregan, McGough and Archer (2012) cited that oral communication is the child's first, most important, and most frequently used structured medium of communication. In addition, and most significantly, oral communication is the primary mediator of culture, the way in which children locate themselves in the world. Basically, oral communication is about communicating with other people. It involves a process of utilizing knowledge and skills in order to speak and listen effectively.

Ferrari, Punie and Redecker (2012) assert that although the curriculum places a strong emphasis on oral communication, it has been widely acknowledged that the implementation of the oral communication strand has proved challenging and there is evidence that some teachers may have struggled to implement this component because the underlying framework was unclear to them.

Children, as beginners, may face many communication problems. Salmon (2017) reveals that around half of children enter schools with a lack of communication ability. All those who have poor communication skills may face many difficulties relating to what is known as Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN).

Lindsay, Dockrell, Desforges, Law and Peacey (2010) declare that the reasons for such difficulties are various. These include families with lower socioeconomic status, children with hearing loss, brain injury, learning disabilities and for some, the cause is unknown. After they have these difficulties, many children become silent, friendless, and feel lonely and easily rejected by classmates, when trying to make friends or join a group activity.

Zhang (2009) asserts that pupils who study English as a Foreign Language (EFL) usually have limited opportunities to communicate in English outside the classroom and also have limited exposure to English speakers or members of the international community. This might be one reason for teachers to provide more situations, activities and strategies for pupils to strengthen their oral communication performance.

2. Method and Procedures

This chapter deals with all the research design, participants and instruments of the study. Also, it tackles the materials of the study, the experimental procedures and administration of the study instruments.

2.1 Research Design

The research adopted the quasi-experimental one group pre-posttest design. Children's songs and stories were used with the study group. By the end of the experiment, a pre-posttest was administrated to the study group in order to determine the effectiveness of children songs and short stories in developing pupils' communicative skills.

2.2 Participants of the Study

The participants of the study were 50 pupils enrolled in the third year, Dr Ahmed Zewail primary school, New Damietta city. They were aged 8-9 years old during 2014/2015 academic year. They were treated as one quasi-experimental group, having a pre-posttest before and after the experimental procedures.

2.3 Variables of the Study

The study included the following variables: a) The independent variable is represented in the integrated chants/songs and short stories. b) The dependent variable is represented in the development of the third graders' English communication skills.

2.4 The Instruments and Materials of the Study

The researcher used the following instruments: a) An oral communication skills checklist. b) An oral communication skills test. c) A teacher's guide based on the integrated songs/chants and short stories.

2.4.1 The Oral Communication Skills Checklist

The checklist aimed to determine the oral communication skills necessary for 3rd primary graders. The checklist was constructed in light of the following:

- 1) Reviewing previous studies concerned with EFL oral communication skills, especially those related to integrated songs/chants and short stories in teaching EFL in the primary stage.
- 2) Reviewing the syllabus directives of time for English book of grade three.
- 3) Consulting supervisor's curriculum planners about what is suitable for the primary stage pupils. The checklist relied on the 3rd-grade syllabus (Time for English) oral skills (listening & speaking). These Oral Communication Skills (OCSs) were extracted from units 7 and 8 in addition to the literature MOE directives. The OCSs checklist contained oral communication skills (listening & speaking).

Checklist validity

To validate the checklist, it was submitted to a panel of juries in curriculum and methods of teaching EFL. The juries were asked to evaluate the checklist in terms of clarity, readability and its suitability for 3rd-year pupils' communication skills. The jury members validated the checklist items and their comments were modifying some items to suit 3rd primary stage pupils such as 8, 12, 14, 16 and 19 items of the first version of the checklist.

2.4.2 An Oral Communication Skills Pre-post test

It aims to determine the participants' (OCSs) level in their entry level as to oral communication skills before the test administration. The oral communication skills test was constructed in light of the following resources:

- 1) Reviewing the previous studies concerned with EFL tests, especially those related to communication skills.
- 2) Reviewing literature of teaching oral communication skills.

The oral communication skills pre-posttest consisted of 6 questions; two questions for speaking skills, two questions for listening skills, one question for grammar and one question for vocabulary. Each question consisted of five items. So, the total items of the pre-post test were 30.

To validate the OCSs test, the researcher submitted the test to a panel of the jury who are specialized in curriculum and methods of teaching EFL. The jury members were asked to validate the test and judge the clarity of its questions and their suitability for the pupils' levels and what these questions aimed to measure. They were also asked to add, omit or modify any question(s) as they saw fit. According to the jury's remarks, modifications were made.

The reliability

The reliability of the test was computed using the test-retest method before administrating the test to the participants of the study. It was administrated to 20 pupils on 3rd November 2014. Four weeks later, on 30th November 2014, the same test was applied to the same group under the same conditions. Then, the correlation coefficient between the first and the second administrations of the test was calculated using the correlation coefficient analysis as shown in Tables 1 and 2. The reliability coefficient was 0.87 as shown in Table 3 which was statistically significant at 0,001, thereby reflecting test reliability.

Table 1. Internal Consistency of OCT Items (Person Correlation)

Items of speaking	Correlation	Items of listening	correlation	Items of grammar	Correlation	Items of vocab.	Correlation
1	0.427*	11	0.393*	21	0.650**	26	0.421*
2	0.506**	12	0.607**	22	0.641**	27	0.541**
3	0.522**	13	0.678**	23	0.579**	28	0.613**
4	0.249	14	0.806**	24	0.650**	29	0.794**
5	0.464**	15	0.694**	25	0.697**	30	0.368*
6	0.444	16	0.468				
7	0.750*	17	0.401*				
8	0.362**	18	0.491**				
9	0.553**	19	0.495**				
10	0.519	20	0.763**				

Table 2. Total Correlation of Oral Communication Skills

Skill	Alpha Cronbach	Split-Half
Speaking	0.62	0.55
Listening	0.76	0.84
Grammar	0.64	0.66
Vocabulary	0.42	0.59
Total	0.87	0.84

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3. Reliability Coefficient of Oral Communication Test

Skill	Total correlation
Speaking	0.890**
Listening	0.931**
Grammar	0.699**
Vocabulary	0.825**

Test scoring

The researcher graded the pupils' oral communication skills in the pre-post test and the mean score was calculated. The following procedures were applied to score the test:

The listening test is marked in terms of listening skills. The total score out of 10 on the whole test divided as follows:

-A score out of 5 on the part (listen and number).

-A score out of 5 on the part (look and say).

The speaking test is marked in terms of speaking skills. The total score out of 10 on the whole test divided as follows:

-A score of 5 on the part (listen and say the answer).

-A score of 5 on the part (listen and act the conversation).

-Scores given by two raters are summed and divided by two to get the average.

3. Results

3.1 The First Hypothesis

There is a statistically significant difference at ≤ 0.05 level in the mean scores of primary stage pupils' overall group overall Oral Communication Skills (OCS) post test.

To test the hypothesis, the researcher performed an independent sample T-Test on the post test scores of

the experimental group on overall communication skills. Table 4 shows the results of this t-test.

Table 4. Paired Samples Statistics of Total Mean Scores and Correlations (First Hypothesis)

Test	N	Mean	St.D.	DF	T	Significant
Pre-test	50	21.52	5.59	49	2.64	≤ 0.05
Post-test	50	24.14	3.02			

Table 4 shows that the experimental mean score of the posttest is higher than those of the pre-test. This table shows that the experimental group's mean score of total pre-test is (21.52), whereas the mean total post-test score is (24.14). The t-value is (2.64), which is significant at the ≤ 0.05 level.

The former results indicate that there is a statistically significant difference between the participants' mean score in the pre-test and their mean score in the post-test, regarding oral communication skills in favor of the latter. So, the first hypothesis was verified.

The above table shows that there was a statistically significant difference between the subjects' mean score in the pre-test and their mean score in the post-test; regarding oral communicative skills (listening & speaking) in favor of the latter. So, the first hypothesis was verified.

3.2 The Second Hypothesis

There are statistically significant differences at ≤ 0.05 level in each of the (OCS) tests including listening and speaking.

To investigate this hypothesis, the researcher performed a t-test on the post test scores of the experimental group on each of the oral communicative skills (listening & speaking).

Table 5 shows the results of this T-Test.

Table 5. Paired Samples Statistics of Mean Scores and Correlations (Second Hypothesis)

Skill	Pre-measurement		Post-measurement		DF	T-test	p.	Sig.
	M	SD	M	SD				
Speaking	5.6	2.18	7.04	1.55	49	3.36	0.002	Sig.
Listening	7.56	2.25	8.44	1.21	49	2.18	0.034	Sig.
Grammar	4.28	1.06	5.46	1.19	49	2.88	0.038	Sig.
vocabulary	4.06	1.02	5.20	1.13	49	2.69	0.049	Sig.

The above table shows that there was a statistically significant difference between the subjects' mean score in the pre-administration (before applying the study) and their mean score in the post-administration (after applying the study); regarding each skill of oral communication skills (listening and speaking) in favor of the latter. So, the second hypothesis was verified. Also, there was a

statistically significant difference between the subjects' mean score in the pre-administration (before applying the study) and their mean score in the post-administration (after applying the study); regarding grammar and vocabulary, but it was not as high as the oral communication skills mean scores.

4. Discussion of the Results

The purpose of the study was to investigate the effectiveness of chants/songs and short stories in developing English communication skills (listening & speaking skills) of the third graders. In light of the finding of this study, it can be stated that the main result was that children's songs and stories were highly effective in the students' levels of communication skills.

The first hypothesis: Table 5 shows that there is a statistically significant difference between the subjects' mean score in the pre-test and their mean score in the post-test; regarding oral communicative skills (listening & speaking) in favor of the latter.

This means that the suggested study helped in developing the oral communication skills of the 3rd primary graders as their performance in the post-test is better than their performance in the pre-test.

This result came out of involving the pupils in a variety of activities (chanting, story-telling, role-play, repetition, video shots and school broadcast) that were included in the experiment presented in the chants/songs and short stories activities. So, these activities encouraged the pupils to practice chanting and story-telling independently and fluently which reflected on their EFL oral communication skills.

Chants and stories helped them understand and learn new conversations. The pre-test means score was 21.52 and the post-test mean score was 24.14 with a difference at the $p \leq 0.05$ level. This could mean that chants and short stories were effective in the pupils learning process. The second point of significance is the use of chants and short stories linked to teaching English through music, body movements, rhythm and amusement. With regard to the nature of primary stage pupils, chants and short stories played an important role in their learning process a gradually in their creativity. The result of the first hypothesis agrees with the results of:

a) Chocova (2013), Aina (2012)-Rosa (2011), Virjee (2011)-Sangadah (2010), Refiee (2010), Chen and Chen (2009)-Liu (2008), Siskova (2007), Mardliyaton (2007), Rtnasari (2007), Lee (2004), El-Nashar (2003) and Ankey et al. (2002).

b) Torun's (2014), Karlsson (2012), Zigardyova (2006), Rosberg (1995) and Abd El-Muteleb (1990).
in the following points:

- Chants/songs and short stories are important to encourage pupils to participate in classroom activities.
- Chants/songs and short stories are important to enrich pupils' EFL.
- Chants/songs and short stories are important to improve and develop pupils' OCSs and creativity.

• Chants/songs and short stories can be used as a tool to teach young learners throughout various activities.

Concerning the second hypothesis, Table 6 shows that there is a statistically significant difference at ≤ 0.05 level between the subjects' mean score in the pre-test and their mean score in the post-test in each of the oral communicative skills (listening & speaking) tests in favor of the latter.

A point of significance is using chants and short stories are near to the Natural Approach to teaching English to young learners. The mean score of speaking skill in the pre-measurement was 5.6 and 7.04 for the post-measurement. This difference is significant at $\leq .01$ level ($p = 0.002$). This could mean that pupils were more likely to report an improvement in their speaking skills and that chants and short stories help them improve their language as a whole. The mean score of listening skill in the pre-measurement was 7.56 and 8.44 for the post-measurement. This difference is significant at ≤ 0.01 level ($p = 0.034$). This also could mean that pupils listening skills improved and they benefited from listening to the chants and short stories which were included and used during the study. The mean score of grammar in the pre-measurement was 4.28 and 5.46 for the post-measurement. This difference is significant at ≤ 0.05 level ($p = 0.038$). This also could mean that pupils' grammar improved and they benefited from listening to the chants and short stories which were included and used during the study. The mean score of vocabulary in the pre-measurement was 4.06 and 5.20 for the post-measurement. This difference is significant at ≤ 0.05 level ($p = 0.049$). This also could mean that pupils' vocabulary improved and they benefited from listening to the chants and short stories which were included and used during the study.

This means that the suggested study helped in developing oral communication skills (listening & speaking). This, in turn, led to developing EFL performance. This can be interpreted as a result of using the proposed study as it helped pupils to enhance their communication skills and so be able to develop EFL oral performance. The chants and stories used included short and long vowels which helped pupils to improve their listening and speaking skills (long o as in *boat, snow, home, coat, window, note* and long u as in *blue, glue, True, flute, June, tube*).

The results of the second hypothesis are consistent with the results of many researchers such as Chen and Chen (2009) and Radwan (2008) results showed that the majority of students were interested in learning English songs and short stories and their learning motivation increased. For learning performance, students felt that their English ability especially listening ability have improved after listening to the songs and stories.

This result agrees with the study of Radwan (2008) in the following points:

- interaction with other pupils has an effect on developing oral communication skills.
- classroom chanting and story-telling could represent a technique for motivating participation, promoting creativity and testing language skills in a meaningful context.

- using oral activities leads to creativity.
- providing pupils with efficient learning strategies.
- assisting learners in identifying their own preferred ways of learning.
- developing skills needed to negotiate the curriculum.
- encouraging pupils to set their own objectives.
- overcoming some language learning problems of the primary stage pupils.
- helping pupils to be creative learning EFL in and out of the classroom.

5. Conclusions

The outcome of this study substantiates an initial belief regarding the fact that the study group learners were able to comprehend the integrated chants/songs and short stories and provide some fluent oral communication skills. In fact, even though the learners started from a slightly lower level of English, they improved their oral communication skills (listening & speaking) and performed the songs and short stories successfully.

However, in order to obtain better results, the researcher believes that there is an urgent need to develop new materials and resources adapted to non-native young learners. If the existent materials are to be used in the EFL classroom, and just to mention some of the paths to explore, they need to include higher quality sound, chants/songs and slower storytelling pace. Graded pedagogical tasks responding to the learners' age and the developmental stage would also be necessary.

Finally, suitable chants and short stories for children are needed, both from a cognitive and communicative perspective, and, perhaps more importantly, to ensure their relation to the syllabus and the nature of children.

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