STORYTELLING AS A MEANS OF TEACHING EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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The research investigates the ways in which storytelling enhances cognitive engagement, critical thinking, linguistic development, and emotional involvement, ultimately leading to improved language acquisition and communication skills. Drawing upon theoretical frameworks from cognitive psychology, educational linguistics, and neuroscience, the study demonstrates that narratives facilitate learning by embedding linguistic structures within meaningful contexts. Empirical evidence substantiates the claim that storytelling activates multiple cognitive and emotional pathways, thereby enhancing information retention, motivation, and active participation. Storytelling proves to be vital in promoting social interaction, knowledge negotiation, and peer scaffolding within collaborative learning environments.
The research methodology comprises a comparative analysis of traditional communicative approaches versus modified storytelling techniques implemented with first-year university students majoring in English translation at Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University. Both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered through structured assessments, semistructured interviews, and classroom observations. Statistical analysis affirmed the positive influence of storytelling-based instruction on students' language proficiency, revealing significant improvements in the experimental group's speaking skills, levels of engagement, and retention of lexical and grammatical structures. The task-based storytelling activities, which enable learners to actively create narratives, engage in problem-solving, and enhance their creative and analytical thinking skills facilitate students' ability to contextualize language use by immersing them in authentic and semi-authentic discourse patterns. Incorporating storytelling into foreign language instruction aligns with modern pedagogical frameworks that prioritize experiential learning, student-centered approaches, and multimodal engagement.

Keywords: academic engagement, communicative competence, foreign language learning, storytelling, task-based learning.

Problem statement. Storytelling is one of the most enduring forms of human communication, widely acknowledged as an effective pedagogical tool. Narrations are processed as cohesive units, which activate multiple areas of the brain, associated with the cognitive and emotional dimensions of storytelling's impact [11: 3484; 4: 1468], for example, increased retention in contextual learning can be explained by the fact that the information embedded in a story becomes more accessible as it is encoded in a meaningful context, allowing students to remember it more easily. Critical thinking and real-world problem-solving skills are enhanced when students are forced to analyze and evaluate situation challenges or dilemmas, explaining the pros and cons of any solution they come up with. Experiencing events from another's point of view fosters empathy, increases student engagement through emotional connections with characters and plots, and broadens students' understanding of diverse cultures and human experiences. Emotional investment in a story heightens attention and supports long-term memory holding because it enforces motivation. Therefore, perspective, narrative, interaction, and medium act as a baseline for the evaluation of the effectiveness of storytelling in communication [4: 1466].

Analysis of current research. Numerous authors provide insight into the benefits of telling stories. Neuroscientists have demonstrated that we understand the world in terms of story-like causal relations [7: 8286], behaviourists have ground that stories frame human cognition [5: 156], cognitive psychologists have acknowledged that stories are crucial to the construction of the self [7: 8286], and management researchers have claimed storytelling as an essential element in what makes ideas memorable [8: 27]. The art of storytelling is focused on a desire to connect with the audience meaningfully and purposefully, regardless of its size and composition [8: 28]. This connection is deeply grounded by contextual behavioural research, which reveals that people are more receptive to stories than pure data analysis [5: 155].

The methodology of foreign languages teaching is focused on successful learners' participation in all areas of communication [2; 3; 6; 9]. The scholars deeply analyze the various aspects of storytelling technique: its communicative significance as ability to

describe real life or imaginary events on the base of a text [12]; an interpersonal educational aspect as knowledge and experience exchange through narrating a story to transmit ideas, define concepts, establish cause-and-effect relationships [1]; implementation of the multimodal tools for the digital storytelling technique [2].

The topicality of the recent research is explained by the prominence of academic engagement that goes beyond "surface learning" like content memorization and fulfilling requirements to achieve a passing grade for a course [12: 630]. Being involving and inspiring stories motivate as they encourage a positive attitude to learning a foreign language, lead to the acquisition of general social experience, evoke vivid contexts that enrich both cognitive and emotional intellects introducing new vocabulary and grammatical constructions through "universal topics" which surpass the "utilitarian" level of educational dialogues or common use issues [12: 630]. Academic engagement happens when students "dive deeply" into learning activities, when they are "mentally and emotionally absorbed" by the study materials, and often when interacting with peers [1].

Z.N. Ghafar qualitative and quantitative research that examined the function of storytelling during L2 acquisition supports the conclusion that storytelling as an effective pedagogical tool improved language skills for learners who expressed interest and pleasure in participating in storytelling activities, while learners who showed little or no interest in storytelling made little progress. During the study, it was also seen that the participants who lacked proficiency in English exhibited significant stress due to the need to narrate stories and frustration stemming from their inability to fulfill requirements and complete them in the classroom [6: 784-785]. Z.N. Ghafar's provisions confirm Carmen M. Amerstorfer's and Clara Freiin von Münster-Kistner's claims that students' academic engagement depends on various factors that intertwine and overlap. Components influencing academic engagement can be cognitive, metacognitive, affective, social, task-related, communicative, and foreign language-related. Positive interpersonal relationships enhance individuals' enthusiasm for learning, which benefits sustainable learning success and self-confidence [1].

Tangent research has been conducted by Muhammad Rahimi and Kenneth Keng Wee Ong to systemize the growing body of literature on factors influencing student engagement. The study exploring expert

teachers' cognitions and practices of teaching English speaking and their students' experiences and engagement has demonstrated that student academic engagement in language learning is malleable to several factors, comprising teacher attributes, pedagogical approaches, learners' characteristics, peer dynamics, technology employment, task attributes, and learning environments [10]. Whereas engaging teacher characteristics and teaching strategies comprise a demonstration of approachability, enthusiasm for the target language, and care for students' learning as well as establishing credibility. To specify the claim among teaching approaches that positively impact engagement task-based learning, need-supportive teaching practices, strategy instruction, and problem-based learning have been identified. Yet learners' self-evaluations, previous language learning experiences, personality traits, beliefs regarding English language learning, and daily affective, cognitive, and physical states, peers' emotional and cognitive support as well as their collaborative work towards achieving their shared objectives have been proved to increase significantly the academic engagement. Nonetheless concerns about making mistakes in the presence of peers and feeling ashamed to demonstrate excessive effort or enthusiasm have decreased engagement. Task characteristics, that is degree of challenge, options, sequencing, and focus have been defined by the authors as the features that affect students' engagement: tasks perceived as either too challenging or not sufficiently challenging prompt disengagement. Furthermore, the affordances of technology like video gaming, synchronous computer-mediated communication tools, authentic web-based language resources have heightened engagement. To sum up, the learning context, specifically affordances of the living and study environment are stated to effect academic engagement [10].

The aim and tasks of the research. The study aims to investigate the impact that storytelling plays in enhancing the communicating abilities of students in foreign language. Storytelling as an instructional technique for imparting knowledge of other languages requires a degree of engagement between the storyteller and the audience, therefore learning process using the storytelling approach is seen through academic engagement of the students into the communication process of the acquisition of a foreign language. Our theoretical assumption supports the general hypothesis that the storytelling technique should be implemented in a modified version as a part of the holistic communication methodology to activate lexical units, grammatical

constructions, and to develop speaking skills in a variety of communicative contexts to comply with the learning outcomes prescribed by the foreign language study program [12: 631]. To achieve the aim, a range of tasks should be solved: to define the phenomenon of storytelling; to identify modern tools for implementing the narrative technique into the foreign language teaching in higher school; to recommend the effective methods of work with narrative stories for their inclusion in the methodology of foreign language teaching.

Methods of the research. To conduct a comprehensive study on the implementation of the modified storytelling technique into effective foreign language teaching, we used a set of methods: 1) a literature review to summarize recent research on the topic and support the author's claims regarding the implications of the modified storytelling technique; 2) the observational method to assess the intensity of language and communication skills and students' emotional responses; 3) the qualitative comparative method to analyze key indicators related to the development of communication skills (including both communicatively significant factors and those that do not necessarily hinder basic communication, such as errors at the phonetic, lexical, grammatical, syntactic, logical, and semantic levels); 4) the descriptive method to present the findings of the study. A basic qualitative research design was chosen to collect data from expert teachers and their students through semistructured interviews, non-participatory observations, and focus group discussions, facilitating further analysis and systematization in line with the study's objectives. The content analysis method is carried out by selecting, comparing, sorting, and combining topically related data from the references.

Presentation of the main material. Research suggests that storytelling is "the interaction, voice, gestures, facial expressions, and eye contact used to connect a tale with listeners" [6: 781]. The definition highlights the importance of the interaction between the narrator and the audience, connection based on the audience's emotional feedback. The process of storytelling refers to enacting or representing reality from the standpoint of a subjective artistic perspective aimed to trigger emotional responses which are considered prominent in storytelling: an engaged audience that interacts with the narrative flow of a story perceives the narrative as an emotional experience in the process of a mental model creating. Thus, a story is told by "an outsider, who imbues the narrative with meanings and

explanations, or comments upon the representation or flow of events" [7: 8285]. Michael Weber has affirmed that "whoever tells the best story wins", asserting that magic that best incorporates "story" in an effective, engaging, meaningful fashion will produce the most impactful result [7: 8286].

An intriguing point is that storytelling engages not just people's intellect, but mostly their feelings: a bald recitation of facts invariably lacks the impact (and the enduring power) of a coherent narrative that awakens our emotions [1]. The concept of narrative transportation theory introduced by Richard Gerrig describes a phenomenon that people will forget about reality in a psychological sense since they are distracted by a story; therefore; the changes in their mental states will have a persuasive effect on people's behaviors and their reflection of the narrative [5: 155].

Over the last decades, researchers and educators have exhibited a growing interest in the concept of academic engagement as a way to improve disaffection, to avert student boredom, to enhance students' motivation and involvement in educational activities, to increase successful student achievement levels, and to understand students' positive development tendencies [10]. Engagement is a complex term that emphasizes students' patterns in motivation, cognition, and behaviour. Carmen M. Amerstorfer and Clara Freiin von Münster-Kistner (2021) have studied the construct extensively and offered the dimensional framework of the diverse in its definitions and coverage engagement phenomenon [1]:

1. Cognitive engagement encompasses thinking activities related to students' involvement and participation in academic tasks: paying attention, acquiring, processing, and storing information, and retrieving information from memory.

2. Metacognitive engagement refers to the strategies students utilize to manage and reflect on their cognitive processes: short- and long-term planning, coordinating learning tasks, evaluating progress and outcomes, and addressing knowledge gaps.

3. Affective engagement defines the management of emotions in the learning process, for example, handling feelings of boredom and curiosity, acknowledging and controlling anxieties, fostering and maintaining interest and motivation, and demonstrating empathy.

4. Social engagement involves building supportive networks with peers and teachers, cultivating positive relationships, contributing to group efforts, and being available to assist others in need.

5. Task engagement significantly influenced by individual interests, motivation and personal attributes such as resilience and perseverance is defined by the manner and intensity of mastering academic skills, setting achievable goals, and recognizing prospective rewards.

6. Communicative engagement includes both receptive activities, such as attentive listening and observing body language, gestures, and facial expression, and productive activities, which involve constructing and presenting arguments, countering opposing views, and expressing agreement or disagreement.

7. Language engagement, as distinguished by the authors, is strongly connected to communicative and affective engagement. It adds complexity to academic engagement by considering students' self-reflection and individuality. Foreign language engagement is marked by students' efforts to use a foreign language for academic purposes, encompassing general language skills (reading, listening, writing, and speaking), linguistic knowledge and ability (vocabulary, spelling, pronunciation), metalinguistic awareness (academic style, tone of voice, contextual appropriateness, cultural and regional variation), and psychological aspects (foreign language anxiety and willingness to communicate) [1].

The impact of storytelling on the general development of receptive and productive foreign language communication ability has been the subject of the experimental teaching of Oral and Written Communication Practice for the 1st year students majoring in English translation using the modified storytelling technique in the practical sessions during the first term of 2024-2025 academic year in Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University. The total number of participants with the EFL level of proficiency ranging from B1 to B2 was 75. The participants were divided into 2 groups: the experimental (40 students) following the instruction with application of modified storytelling task-based approach and the control one (35 students) taught via traditional communicative foreign language teaching approach. Taking into account the topical and contextual communicative significance as well as lexical-grammatical and syntactic content on the stage of experimental teaching, the following special teaching aids have been selected to implement: educational and authentic literary texts

focused on content-plot and chronotype semantical and grammatical features for independent and collective reading and translation analysis; task-based system of practical exercises to involve participants in discussion and a collective storytelling, i.e. focus change, retell the story neutrally, empathically, visualize the possible future outcomes, as if you were a presenter / observer / character in a story, etc.; ads and commercials where the influencer presents the product with the task to analyze the pragmatics of the persuasive effect on the consumers, identify the cognitive metaphors and triggers (focal point, body language, emotional appeal, visual paths, colour psychology, symbolism, social proof, etc.); tests for each communicative task. A range of narratives, such as fables, stories and abstracts of the novels based on firsthand experiences were presented to the learners of the experimental group. They had the opportunity to create and share their own experiences with the teacher and other students and react to written and spoken questions on the stories they heard. Both qualitative (questionnaires, oral interviews, and field notes) and statistical (twice a week, for an hour each session) methods were used to collect and analyze the data.

To verify the results of the modified storytelling technique use, the comparative analysis of students' academic achievements was conducted during the final control of the winter session of 2024-2025 academic year. The participants of the experimental group (EG) showed the following results: 25 students achieved the high-level ranging from A (100-90 points) to B (89-82 points); 12 students – medium level with C (81-75) and D (74-69); 3 students – lower-level E (68-60 points). The results of the control group (CG) participants are the following: 10 students proved high level range; 14 students – medium, 8 – lower level and 3 – failure FX (35 points).
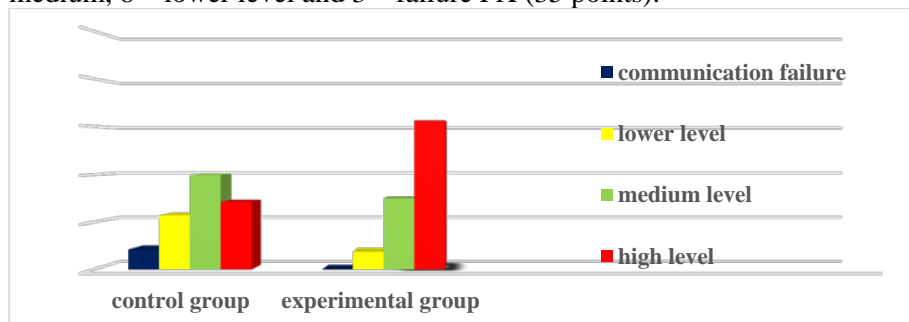

Fig. 1. Oral and Written Communication Practice Credit Assessment

The qualitative analysis of obtained results allowed to state that no students in the EG demonstrated communication failure during the credit assessment at the end of the term. The tendency of high-level range rise is obvious with the gradual shift from the medium to high level and a sharp decrease in lower-level results. Yet the CG students demonstrated the tendency of average leveling to medium and lower grades.

Levels of speaking skills	Number of students				The difference in the levels of formation
	EG		CG		
high	25	62.5%	10	28.6%	+33.9
medium	12	30.0%	14	40%	-10
lower	3	7.5%	8	22.9%	-15.4
Communication failure	0	0.0%	3	8.5%	-8.5
Total	40	100%	35	100%	

Table 1. Comparative characteristics of the level of speaking skills

The statistical reliability of differences between learning outcomes in the EG and CG was determined using Pearson's chi-square test. To reject H_0 hypothesis of no difference and to accept H_1 hypothesis of statistical reliability of differences, we compared: $\chi^2 emp. > \chi^2\ 0,05 = 11.573 > 7.815$ $\chi^2 emp. > \chi^2\ 0,01 = 11.573 > 11.345$. The variable $\chi^2 emp$ is reliable if $P=0.05$: $11.573 > 7.815$, and even more reliable if $P=0.01$: $11.573 > 11.345$. The findings confirm our initial assumption about the influence of modified storytelling technique on developing effective speaking skills.

Conclusion. Overall, the research supports the conclusion that using storytelling as a teaching tool helps improve students' foreign language proficiency providing them with opportunities to work on particular lexical-grammar language skill sets or overall receptive and productive skills through being involved into contextualized activities. The study indicates that motivating students to actively engage in the learning process and encouraging them to be storytellers significantly impacts language acquisition, fosters productive interactions in the classroom, widens the students' zone of proficiency, and gives them comprehensible input. Storytelling is crucial for enhancing memorization since it is entertaining, engaging, and highly contextualized via multimodal techniques. Our

findings corroborate previous mainstream educational research that has found a high sense of belonging, positive interactions, appreciation of student contributions, learner-centered classrooms, clear directions, constructive feedback, abundant opportunities for students to exercise, and teachers' flexibility to students' needs and interests facilitating student engagement in learning.

Prospects for further research. While the study affirms the effectiveness of storytelling as a pedagogical strategy, it also acknowledges its limitations, particularly in terms of scalability and integration with emerging digital learning tools. Future research should explore incorporating digital storytelling techniques, leveraging the affordances of virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) to create immersive, interactive, and contextually enriched foreign language learning experiences. Such advancements could further enhance student engagement and retention while expanding the applicability of storytelling-based methodologies across diverse educational contexts.

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СТОРІТЕЛІНГ ЯК ЗАСІБ НАВЧАННЯ ЕФЕКТИВНОЇ КОМУНІКАЦІЇ ІНОЗЕМНОЮ МОВОЮ

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Метою статті є з'ясування значення сторітелінгу у вдосконаленні комунікативних компетентностей студентів з англійської мови як іноземної шляхом інтеграції модифікованих технік оповіді в навчальні методики. Експериментально доведено, що сторітелінг сприяє когнітивній залученості, критичному мисленню, лінгвістичному розвитку та емоційній участі, що покращує засвоєння іноземної мови та навички комунікації. Наукову розвідку обґрунтовано теоретичним положеннями та емпіричними даними когнітивістики, нейропсихології та методики викладання іноземних мов, згідно яких сторітелінг, вбудовуючи мовні структури в змістовні контексти, активує численні когнітивні та емоційні механізми, покращуючи запам'ятовування інформації, підвищуючи мотивацію та залученість. Водночас сторітелінг відіграє важливу роль у розвитку соціальної взаємодії, створенні спільного навчального середовища.

Методологія дослідження зосереджена на порівняльному аналізі традиційних комунікативних підходів та модифікованих технік сторітелінгу, експериментально застосованих на практичних заняттях з усного та писемного мовлення до першокурсників спеціальності «Переклад» у Київському столичному університеті імені Бориса Грінченка. Збір даних здійснено через структуровані оцінювання, напівструктуровані інтерв'ю та спостереження на практичних заняттях. Статистичний аналіз результатів експериментальної групи свідчить про значне покращення мовленнєвих навичок, рівня залученості та засвоєння лексичних і граматичних структур. У статті здійснено аналіз окремих навчальних завдань, заснованих на модифікованій техніці сторітелінгу через взаємодію з автентичними та напівавтентичними мовленнєвими зразками, що сприяють розвитку критично-аналітичного та творчого мислення у продуктивному процесі створення оповіді. Інтеграція сторітелінгу у викладання іноземних мов відповідає сучасним педагогічним концепціям, що акцентують увагу на дослідницькому навчанні, особистісній орієнтації, творчому підході та активній залученості до співпраці.

Ключові слова: *академічна залученість, вивчення іноземних мов, комунікативна компетентність, навчання на основі завдань, сторітелінг.*

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