A Comparison Study of the Effect of Reading Instruction Using
Storytelling and Storysinging

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Abstract
The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of storytelling and storysinging on elementary school students’ reading comprehension. Forty Korean elementary school students participated in this study. PELT Jr and interviews were used to collect the data. For data analysis independent sample t-test, paired t-test, and transcribed qualitative data were used. The results of this study were as followings; 1) There is no significant difference in L2 reading comprehension between the storytelling group and the storysinging group. However, the storytelling group showed an improvement statistically in reading comprehension tests whereas the storysinging group did not. 2) Students in both groups had developed more positive attitude in learning English. They were happy and comfortable during the lessons and their motivation was enhanced to read further outside the class. On the other hand, students in storysinging group had a little difficulty in learning new melodies, rhythms and beats. It seemed that this type of attitude indirectly affected the results of the post-test in the storysinging group’s reading comprehension.

Keywords
Storytelling, Storysinging, Reading comprehension, Elementary School Students

Introduction
English is one of the most used languages in the world and it plays a key role in communication in the twenty-first century. The Ministry of Education of Korea also foresees what important role English will play in the future. Thus, Korea has implemented a system in which English has been taught from the third grade of elementary school since 1997. However, there has been some concerns raised arguing that the number of English lessons provided in elementary school is not sufficient to enhance students’ English skills. Students cannot learn English effectively with only two or three English lessons per week. Therefore, teachers have to explore effective methods to offer enough input for children.

As a teaching method using stories for ELT, storytelling develops listening skills, literacy competence, and vocabulary knowledge. The integration of classroom storytelling has been linked to reading improvement by increasing children’s comprehension and vocabulary development (Trostle & Hicks, 1998). Also, storytelling provides interaction among a storyteller and students (Zaro & Salaberri, 1985). Vygotsky (1978) emphasized that interaction between adults and young children is important to their academic accomplishment.

Another method widely used in teaching English to young learners is singing a song because it is believed that singing a song is enjoyable for children. It not only offers a less stressful environment for students, especially for those who are beginning to learn English, but it also provides a motivation for learning English.

Yustiana (2009) emphasized that a song’s lyrics gives practical meaning to young students and can become a model for them. Therefore, it can help them to acquire language and give a motivation for further learning outside the classroom. Singing a song also improves children's pronunciation, intonation, and vocabulary.

There are many benefits to teaching English through storytelling and singing a song in EFL/ESL classrooms (Gonzales, 2010, Malderez, 2010). With this knowledge, it makes sense to combine storytelling and singing together to teach English to children, which technique will now be referred to as storysinging in this study. The focus of this study begins from these two concepts, namely storytelling and storysinging. Storysinging is to use music components that is inserting rhythm, melody or beats in the stories, whereas storytelling is that a teacher tells a story using pictures or books in an interactive way.

Thus, the purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of storytelling and storysinging on fourth
grade students’ reading comprehension by comparing the methods of storytelling and storysinging.

1 Literature Review

1.1 Storytelling

Maldelez (2010) asserts that storytelling in EFL is a very powerful and helpful way to raising the level of vocabulary acquisition in EFL.

Storytelling can stimulate students’ motivation and interests. Gonzalez (2010) found that stories used for teaching English as a foreign language to children in first, second and third grade increased students’ motivation to participate in different activities.

Isbell, Sobol, Lindaur and Lowrance (2004) investigated the effect of storytelling and storyreading in enhancing young children’s reading comprehension. The results showed that both storytelling and reading stories increased reading comprehension in children aged three to five. They came to the conclusion that the group who heard the stories showed greater reading comprehension than the group who just read the stories, even though the storytelling and the story reading are similar in content.

1.2 Storysinging

Children like music because it creates a less stressful atmosphere and gives them pleasure. It makes children participate in the class more and give them more motivation.

Colwell (1994) and Madsen (1991) stated that children are likely to participate when music is involved in their learning. Colwell (1994) found that when a song with a big storybook was played to kindergartners, their level of attention and participation increased.

According to Marchionda (1995), using a song can be an effective method in raising reading comprehension. Marchionda supports that song lyrics could be used to teach comprehension of narrative text only when both the story and song have similar grammatical styles.

Madsen (1991) and Schunk (1999) point out that music used with gestures is more effective in understanding nonsense and English vocabulary for kindergartners as well as first-grade and second grade students. Many researchers have hypothesized that music can help students develop literacy skills, some reading and writing skills, and comprehension.

2 Method

2.1 Participants

Forty elementary school students participated in this study. They were all 4th grade students in S elementary school in Gyuonggi Province, Korea. There were 20 participants in the storytelling group and 20 participants in the storysinging group. A Practical English Language Test Junior (PELT jr) level 1 was conducted to confirm the level of students’ reading comprehension of the storytelling group and the storysinging group. The result of independent sample t-test on table 1 showed that there was no level difference between both groups. Therefore, the level of reading comprehension of the two groups was assumed to be equal.

2.2 Materials

Ten NoBuYoung books, which are well-known series in Korea, were used in this study. The list of the books used in this study was shown on table 2 below.

2.3 Procedure

The study was conducted for a period of 10 weeks. The class met once a week for 40 minutes. Students in both groups were taught with the same procedure. The only difference was the presentation and practice parts of the lesson. To be more specific, the storytelling group focused on reading the stories; Follow-up reading with a teacher, a whole class reading, a group reading, and an individual reading were conducted. On the other hand, the storysinging group focused on singing the stories; a whole class singing, a group singing, and simple activities such as standing up or clapping their hands when students heard specific words while they were singing were conducted. The students also listened to the storysong a couple of times, and they sang until they knew the song well. The students took
turns to sing the song in different ways, or chose the group that sang the song best without looking at the lyrics.

In this study, PELT Jr level 1 was administrated twice, before and after the instruction to measure students’ reading comprehension. SPSS version 12.0 was used to analyze the scores of the reading section in PELT Jr level 1. To be more specific, independent sample t-test, paired t-test were conducted to investigate the effect of methods of storytelling and storysinging. Student interviews and a teacher interview were conducted to look into the students’ attitude in each class.

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Reading Comprehension

The results of reading comprehension test for the storytelling group and storysinging group were shown in Table 3. There was no significant difference in reading comprehension between the storytelling group and the storysinging group (t=-0.3827, p=0.7041), even though the storytelling group received a higher reading comprehension score than the storysinging group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variables</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>Storysinging</td>
<td>39.70</td>
<td>17.20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0.3827</td>
<td>0.7041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>Storytelling</td>
<td>41.95</td>
<td>19.89</td>
<td>20</td>
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</table>

Still, it is necessary to consider how each group is affected by the two different methods. Thus, paired t-test was administrated as well. Table 4 shows the results of paired t-tests of the storysinging group and the storytelling group. The results showed that there is a meaningful difference in reading comprehension of the storytelling group, but no significant difference in reading comprehension of the storysinging group. To be more specific, the storytelling group showed nearly a five point improvement in their reading comprehension, whereas the storysinging group showed no improvement statistically.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variables</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>Storysinging</td>
<td>36.45</td>
<td>16.06</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>-1.3852</td>
<td>0.1820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>Storytelling</td>
<td>39.70</td>
<td>17.20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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3.2 Interviews

Students in storytelling group said that stories were very interesting and easy to understand, and they could make educated guesses on the meaning of unknown words with the teacher’s aides through gestures or facial expressions. They sometimes looked for the story they had listened to outside of class because they wanted to know whether they could understand the book without the teacher’s help. When they looked at the storybook again, they were able to better understand the difficult words, and comprehend the overall message of the stories better because of the aids provided earlier by the teacher. Regardless of the students’ English proficiency level, they enjoyed listening to stories. Furthermore, students had a positive attitude in learning English as a subject.

Students in storysinging group said a story with a song was fun and interesting. When they were given enough opportunity to practice a storysong, they would be satisfied in knowing that they could remember all the lyrics of the song. They thought that the stories seemed easier to comprehend that learning new words were not as difficult. In addition, they wanted to keep learning English and their interest in learning English as a subject increased more. However, sometimes the students had difficulties in learning the melodies, beats or rhythms, especially when they faced unusual melodies. They often thought that they needed more time to memorize the lyrics and to practice the song. They have to learn the melody and English lyrics at the same time. Therefore, teachers should consider the amount of lesson contents that students are supposed to learn in a class and try not to overwhelm the students with too much work.

The teacher who taught a storysinging group was interviewed after this experiment. She said that the students seemed to be interested in learning a storysong in the first lesson. Students also participated more actively when a melody was easy to sing. However, they looked confused and got bored easily when a melody sounded strange, or when it was not easy for them to sing. She also commented that the melody was not the only unique factor that affects students’ attitude in learning. She thought that beats or rhythms are also important factors in storysinging. In order to maintain the students’ interest, beats or rhythms should be cheerful rather than being slow and heavy.

4 Conclusion

The results of this study highlight the effects of storytelling and storysinging by analyzing the scores of reading comprehension and the attitude of 4th grade students in learning English.
First the results of this study showed that there is no significant difference in students’ reading comprehension between the two groups, the storytelling group and the storysinging group. However, the storytelling group showed an improvement in their reading comprehension, whereas no major improvement was shown in the storysinging group when comparing the pre- and post-reading comprehension results.

Second, students in both groups had developed positive attitude in learning English. They were comfortable during the lessons, and showed a great interest in learning English. Besides, their motivation to read further outside of class was shown. On the other hand, students in the storysinging group had a little difficulty in learning new melodies, rhythms, or beats.

Thus, through the results of this study, important points regarding instructions on students’ attitude in learning English has been established. The students’ personalities and the amount of lesson contents are very important toward the attitude students may have in learning English. Therefore, teachers should consider students’ personalities and the amount of lesson contents in a class.

**References**


