THE USE OF STORYTELLING METHODS BY TEACHERS AND THEIR EFFECTS ON CHILDREN'S UNDERSTANDING AND ATTENTION SPAN

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ABSTRACT

This research was carried out to determine the effect of different storytelling methods on children's understanding and attention span of pre-school education period. The research is a quantitative study that took place in two stages. In the first stage, with the descriptive screening model, it was determined which of the different storytelling methods used by a total of 72 preschool teachers during the education period. In the second stage, the effectiveness of the four different storytelling methods that teachers stated most was examined by using comparative non-synchronized post-test design. The experimental stage was carried out with 40 children, whose ages ranging from five to six, receiving pre-school education. In the research, each of the four separate stories was presented with four different storytelling methods. As a result of the research, it was determined that the method of telling the story most frequently used by the teachers was "By reading from the story-tale book", and the method they used the least was the telling with the "Shadow puppet". When looking at the level of children's understanding of stories, it was determined that the most effective method was the method of telling "By reading from the story-tale book", and the least effective method was the method of telling with the "Story card". When the effects of the stories on the focus and attention span of the children were analysed, it was determined that the most effective method was the method of "Storytelling using the computer", and the least effective method was the method of storytelling with the story card. At the end of this research, it was concluded that the effective use of audio-visual elements in storytelling methods was the most effective factor for children to understand the story and focus on it for a long time.

Keywords: preschool education, storytelling, children's literature

INTRODUCTION

Children begin to be interested in books from the first years of their lives. Stories read, tales told, songs sung help the development of the child's interest in spoken language and writing skills. Reading books to children supports their language development (Isbell et al., 2004), and is also one of the most popular and permanent methods used to promote literacy development (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Kleeck & Woude, 2003). The stories used in the process of reading books in preschool education are the most preferred sources of children's literature in early childhood (Merchant & Thomas, 2013). Stories develop children's creativity and imagination. They broaden children's mentality and offer different life experiences to children (Cohrssen et al., 2016; Turla, 2015).

While stories support the development of children's visual perception and aesthetic values (Merchant & Thomas, 2013), they also contribute to the discovery of new words or meaningful information (Walsh & Blewitt, 2006). Storybooks allow children to make cause-and-effect sequences, and thus children learn that events follow a certain order, and that there

is a cause-effect relationship between situations (Alpöge; 2003). Reading activities in the preschool period allow children to explore their inner worlds, develop their creativity and improve their problem-solving skills (Zembat & ve Zülfikar, 2006).

It is not enough to read only the text for the illiterate preschool children to interact with the books (Cohrssen et al., 2016). The most important factor to note is how these books are read for younger ages (Teale, 2003). In informal and formal education, stories have also been mediated to convey knowledge and experience at all levels of education from past to present. However, like many things that have changed, stories and storytelling types have also changed over time (Türe-Köse, 2019). In preschool period, using story or tale books, story cards, flannel board cards and figures, television strip, puppets, digital stories, film and filmstrip, television and video, and telling only without using visual tools can be listed as storytelling types (Olgan, 2013; Turla, 2015).

Storytelling using the story-tale book is the reading of the book chosen by the teacher in accordance with the developmental levels, ages and interests of the children to the whole class, a group or a child (Beaty & Pratt, 2011). It is the most used book reading technique. Storytelling with flannel board cards and figures is a method that enables storytelling using figures on a previously prepared floor. In activities using this method, the story can be read from the book or can be told without using the book (Kocaman-Karoğlu, 2015). In storytelling with puppets, they are figures that are loved and attracted by children. Therefore, using them in storytelling enables children to listen to the story with more joy and curiosity (Lin, 2012). Storytelling with story card is the technique of storytelling with the cards prepared according to the story or the characteristics of the story (Turla, 2015).

In this method, it is very important to select the story cards appropriately. Cards should be large enough for every child to see and it is important to support them with a hard material such as cardboard (Güleç & Geçgel, 2005). Storytelling using television strip is a storytelling technique with a television box and a television strip to be passed through it (Turla, 2015; Olgan 2013). In recent years, digital stories that come to the fore are storytelling methods that appeal to multiple senses that enable children to be seen again in a multiple environment and with multiple perspectives and enable children to see and perceive the world in a different way (Hess, 2014; Toki & Pange, 2014). In recent years, the digital stories that come to the fore have been the method of storytelling appealing to multiple senses that enable children to be reachable on-demand in a multiple environment and with multiple perspectives, and that allows children to see and perceive the world in a different way (Hess, 2014; Toki & Pange, 2014). Apart from these methods, teachers can choose the way of conveying stories only by telling them without using any materials.

As well as the way of telling the stories, the time of telling the stories is also a factor affecting the educational process. The appropriate environment and time are considered important (Isbell et al., 2004). In preschool education, stories are used mostly in language activities. In the study conducted by Bartan (2019), it was stated that children were distracted mostly in language activities and that preschool teachers spent time during this activity to attract attention. In this sense, the transfer of stories in different ways has become an important issue, both in order to increase children's understanding and focus on stories and to provide teachers with an effective educational process.

When the literature is analysed, there are few studies focusing on the methods used in book reading activity in the preschool education process. It has been determined that the

studies investigating which methods pre-school teachers use (Bektaş, 2010; Bay & Şimşek-Çetin, 2014; Işıkoğlu-Erdoğan & ve-Akay 2015; Cohrssen et al., 2016; Şimşek, 2017) are the studies investigating the effect of storytelling with a single method (Ergül et al., 2015; Yüksel, 2011; Kocaman-Karoğlu, 2015; Türe-Köse, 2019). In addition, no research has been found on the extent to which children understand the story or tale, or how the reading methods draw attention. For this reason, in this study, it was carried out to examine the effects of different book reading methods on children's comprehension levels and attention span.

METHODOLOGY

Research Model

The research is a quantitative study, which took place in two stages. With the descriptive screening model, in the first stage, it was determined which of the different storytelling methods used by a total of 72 preschool teachers. In the second stage, a comparative unequalled group post-test research model, one of the experimental designs, was used. In this research model, only experimental measurements (post-test) are performed (Karasar, 2009): Experimental research is accepted as the most reliable research because of the certainty of the results achieved and the relationship between the variables can be determined exactly (Ural & ve Kılıç, 2006).

Population and Sample

While determining the participants of the research, the volunteering of the individuals and their openness to cooperation were taken into consideration and in this context, the sample group was determined by convenience sampling method. Convenience sampling method is expressed as creating a study group from individuals that researchers can easily reach throughout the research (Baltacı, 2018). According to this, the research was carried out in two stages. In the first stage, firstly, with descriptive scanning, it was studied with 72 preschool teachers working in Kütahya province to determine which of the storytelling methods used by them. It was decided to conduct the research in the classrooms of the teachers who had allowed to practice in their classrooms. Parents' permission was also obtained for children, and in this second stage of the research, 59 children who received pre-school education in four different classes were selected in an independent kindergarten in Kütahya province. However, the study was completed with a total of 40 children, whose ages ranging from five to six, with 10 children from each class participating in all story sessions. The research was conducted with volunteer children by obtaining the necessary permissions from the parents of the children participating in the research.

Data Collection

In the first stage of the research, 72 preschool teachers working in Kütahya province were interviewed. To do the interview, the teacher interview form was developed by the researcher and open-ended questions were asked to determine which storytelling methods teachers used in their classrooms. Moreover, the methods of storytelling they used in their classrooms were determined.

In the second stage of the research, 10 children from each class were selected in four different classes in an independent kindergarten in Kütahya, and storytelling practices were started with a total of 40 children. Two of the groups are full-time and the other two are children who receive education in the afternoon and half-day groups. In the research, each group was separately taken to another class that was arranged before and included in the application. For each group, the same story was told on the same day, at the same time, and the necessary records were made. The researcher did this process and to do this, for both groups, the researcher read the chosen stories.

Before the main application, a pilot study was conducted with a group of 10 children who were not included in the sample, using a story and different storytelling methods. As a result of this application, two basic corrections were made in the application plan to determine the level of understanding of children. Firstly, when determining the level of children's understanding of the story, it was determined that it was necessary to discuss with the children separately so that the children did not affect each other and secondly, it was determined that children should be asked the level of comprehension questions without forgetting the story and without being distracted. In this sense, two teachers who had a master's degree in preschool education and were informed about the research also helped the researcher.

The role of the researcher was just being helpful when the questions were asked. The data collection was carried out in 20 sessions in which the pilot and main applications were carried out. Each session lasted for about 20 to 25 minutes from the beginning to the end. Each group listened to four stories in four different ways. The telling of the stories took an average of 5 to 7 minutes.

Analysis of data

In the research, the data were analysed in three stages. In the first stage, the answers of 72 preschool teachers about the methods used in telling stories were analysed with descriptive statistics and their frequencies were calculated. In the second stage of the research, stories were told to the children with the four storytelling methods that teachers use the most and video recordings were kept in this process. In order to determine the level of comprehension of children, participating in the research, about the story, after each different storytelling method, the question "What was in the story, can you tell me the story you listened to?" was asked and the level of understanding the stories of the children were tried to be determined. In the answer to the question asked, the child was expected to be able to tell the characters, places and events in the story in the order in the story. In this way, an answer was prepared for each story and an assessment was made according to how much of this answer can be given by children. If s/he tells the whole story without jumping the characters, events and places without jumping, it is well understood and scored as 2 points. If s/he skips some of it but s/he can still tell the story with what s/he remembers, it is understood at an intermediate level and scored as 1 point. If s/he cannot remember it, the story is not understood and scored as 0 points. Especially in this process, in the collection of the data, no intervention was made when the children summarized the story in order for children not to be a reminder or a confusing story.

In three stages of the research, it was aimed to determine the attention span of the children during their storytelling by examining the video recordings. For this, all the children

were followed and their actions while listening to the story were noted. Likewise, the records were examined and notes were taken by a field expert other than the researcher. In this way, it is tried to be determined in which storytelling method how many seconds or minutes the children start to get distracted. While analysing this data, each group was handled separately and the average of the time of the first distracted child and the time of the last distracted child were calculated for each story.

RESULTS

The data collected in this part of the study were analysed and the results were presented in tables**.**

Storytelling Methods that Preschool Teachers Use the Most

In this section, the analysis of the data obtained with the observation form prepared to determine the attention span of preschool children is included. When Table 1 is examined, it is seen that the methods used by preschool teachers in storytelling are gathered under 14 different methods. It was seen that the method of telling the stories that all the teachers who participated in the research mostly applied was "By reading from the story-tale book". It was determined that all teachers participating in the research used this technique. When the table is examined, other methods used by teachers are Finger puppet, Story card, Computer, Hand puppet, Straight narration, Sock puppet, Stick puppet, Demonstration, Flannel board card, Digital story, Ring puppet, By overhead and Shadow puppet.

Table 1
Storytelling Methods that Preschool Teachers Use the Most

Methods	f
By reading from the story-tale book	72
Finger puppet	55
Story card	50
Using the computer	44
Hand puppet	32
Through plain expression	29
Sock puppet	21
Stick puppet	18
The demonstration	11
Flannel board card	8
Digital story	6
Ring puppet	3
By overhead projection	2
Shadow puppet	1

After scoring the answers given by 40 children who participated in the study to the questions about understanding the story in Table 2, the mean scores of these scores were taken for each group and the method of storytelling. When the table was examined, it was determined that the children in each group had a high level of understanding of the story when the method "By reading from the storybook" was used. In applications made with this

method in all groups, it is seen that the 1st group received ($\bar{x}$ = 1,87), 2nd group received ($\bar{x}$ = 1,96), 3rd group received ($\bar{x}$ = 1,88) and 4th group received ($\bar{x}$ = 1,92) mean scores. When looking at the average of the total scores of the method "By reading from the storybook" ($\bar{x}$ = 1.91), it is seen that the children reached the highest mean score with this method. In applications made with the "finger puppet" method, it is seen that the 1st group got ($\bar{x}$ = 1.36), 2nd group got ($\bar{x}$ = 1.44), 3rd group got ($\bar{x}$ = 1.42) and 4th group got ($\bar{x}$ = 1, 68) mean scores. When looking at the mean of the total scores of the "finger puppet" method, it is seen that this method has ($\bar{x}$ = 1.45) score. When the table is examined, in the applications made with the "Story card" method, it is observed that the 1st group had ($\bar{x}$ = 1,19), 2nd group had ($\bar{x}$ = 1,30), 3rd group had ($\bar{x}$ = 1,28) and 4th group had ($\bar{x}$ = 1.44) mean scores. When the mean of the total scores of the "Story card" method is examined, it is seen that it had ($\bar{x}$ = 1,0) score. Looking at the scores of this method, it was determined that it had the lowest score among other storytelling methods. Considering the scores of this technique, it was determined to have the lowest score among other storytelling methods. Finally, in applications made with the "By using the computer" method, it is seen that the 1st group had ($\bar{x}$ = 1.32), 2nd group had ($\bar{x}$ = 1.53), 3rd group had ($\bar{x}$ = 1.54) and 4th group had ($\bar{x}$ = 1.70) mean scores. When looking at the average of the total scores of the "By using the computer" method, it is seen that it had ($\bar{x}$ = 1,52) score.

Table 2
The Effect of Different Storytelling Types on the Understanding Levels of Preschool Children

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Means $\bar{x}$
Reading from the story-tale book	1,87	1,96	1,88	1,92	1,91
Finger puppet	1,36	1,44	1,42	1,68	1,45
Story card	1,19	1,30	1,28	1,44	1,30
By using computer	1,32	1,53	1,54	1,70	1,52

In Table 3, when the different storytelling methods of 40 children in the four groups participating in the research are used, the mean time of focusing and attention to the stories is given in minutes. When the table is examined, in the applications made with the method of "By reading from the story-tale book", it is seen that first group had ($\bar{x}$ = 2,42sec), the second group had ($\bar{x}$ = 3,21sec), the third group had ($\bar{x}$ = 3,14sec) and the fourth group had ($\bar{x}$ = 3,09sec) mean scores. When looking at the average of the total duration of the "reading from the storybook" method ($\bar{x}$ = 3.06sec), it is seen that this had the second-highest average time among storytelling methods. In applications made with the "Finger puppet" method, it can be seen that first group had ($\bar{x}$ = 2,33sec), second group had ($\bar{x}$ = 2,56sec), third group had ($\bar{x}$ = 3,04sec) and fourth group had ($\bar{x}$ = 3, 02sec) mean time. When looking at the average of the total duration of the "Finger puppet" method, ($\bar{x}$ = 2.54sec) is seen to have the third-highest average time among storytelling methods. When the table is examined, in the applications made with the "Story card" method, it is seen that first group had ($\bar{x}$ = 2,12sec), second group had ($\bar{x}$ = 2,25sec), third group had ($\bar{x}$ = 2,19sec) and fourth group had ($\bar{x}$ = 2,13 sec) mean time. When looking at the average of the total duration of the "story card" method ($\bar{x}$ = 2.40sec), among the storytelling methods, .it is seen that it was in the last row considering the mean time. In applications made using the method of "By using the computer", it can be seen that the first group had ($\bar{x}$ = 3,44sec), the second group had ($\bar{x}$ = 4,01sec), the third group had ($\bar{x}$ = 3,57sec) and fourth group had ($\bar{x}$ = 3, 48 seconds) mean time. When looking at the average of the total duration of the " By using a computer " method, it is seen that it has the highest mean time among storytelling methods.

Table 3

The Effect of Different Storytelling Types on Attention Span of Preschool Children

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Means $\bar{x}$
Reading from the story-tale book	2,42 sec.	3,21 sec.	3,14 sec.	3,09 sec.	3,06 sec.
Finger puppet	2,33 sec.	2,56 sec.	3,04 sec.	3,02 sec.	2,54 sec.
Story card	2,12 sec.	2,25 sec.	2,19 sec.	2,13 sec.	2,40 sec.
By using a computer	3,44 sec.	4,01 sec.	3,57 sec.	3,48 sec.	3,53 sec.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In this part of the study, the analysed results and discussions are included. In this study, which examines the methods used by preschool teachers in storytelling and the effects of these methods on children's understanding of the story and attention span, it is seen that the methods most used by teachers are gathered under many different methods. It was seen that the method that all teachers participating in the research applied the most was by telling "by reading from the story-tale book". It has been determined that all teachers participating in the research use this method. Other methods used by teachers were finger puppet, story card, by using a computer, hand puppet, plain expression, sock puppet, club puppet, demonstration, flannel board card, digital story, ring puppet, overhead projection and shadow puppet. When the literature on this situation is examined, similar results are encountered. In his research, Bektaş (2010) reached the conclusion that undergraduate graduate preschool teachers tell stories with the most finger puppets, storybooks and story cards. Bay and Şimşek-Çetin (2014) determined that preschool teachers use storybooks, story cards, puppets, technological tools and different materials while telling stories.

Robin (2008) mentioned that the information literacy, visual literacy and media literacy of children who take an active role in the book narration process, which is supported with visual and audio elements. Throughout the process, the difference of active and meaningful participation in the process has been highlighted by the studies rather than just being a listener (Heo, 2009). In this context, it is seen that the research results are in line with the literature.

When the effects of the methods used by preschool teachers in storytelling on the level of children's understanding of the story, it was determined that the children in each group had a high level of understanding of the story when the technique of "reading from the story-tale book" was used. One result of the study was that the technique of "storytelling by using the computer" is the second effective method that affects children's understanding levels. Another result of the research was that the technique of "finger puppet" is another effective method that affects children's understanding levels. When the effects of the methods used by preschool teachers in storytelling on the level of children's understanding of the story were examined, it was determined that the least effective applications were made with the "Story card" technique. When the literature on this situation is examined, researches reaching similar results can be seen. In the study conducted by Türe Köse (2019), it was reached the conclusion that the effective listening skills of children develop in the book reading narratives that are supported with visual and audio elements. Effective listening is the most effective way to understand what is told.

When the effects of the methods used by preschool teachers in storytelling on the focus and attention span of the children, it is seen that the method of "telling using the computer" has the highest average attention span among the storytelling methods. When the literature on this situation is examined, similar results are encountered. Gök (2010), in his research, came to the conclusion that when preschool teachers use information technology tools in the sufficient time and in a controlled manner, they have a positive effect on children's interests and attention levels. Ökten and ve Sauner-Leroy (2016) say that when written expressions are supported with visuals, it is easier to make sense and attract attention, thus increasing the attention span. In her research, Türe Köse (2019) concluded that book reading activities, which are not supported with visual and auditory elements, attracted attention for a short period of time, but the attention span of children was long in narratives that were supported with visual and audio elements. This situation is thought to stem from the effective use of audio-visual elements in the method of "storytelling by using the computer".

Another result of the research is that the applications made with the technique of "Reading from the story-tale book" have the second-highest average attention-getting time. Özyürek (2007) stated that one of the most effective methods of gathering students' attention is the effective use of sound. It is thought that the teachers who continue to read the book by reading from the story-tale book, use their voices effectively while reading the book, increase the attention span. Also, research suggests that reading audiobooks to children improves their vocabulary, independent reading and writing and listening comprehension.

Another result of the study is that it is observed that it has an effect on the time of attention gathering in the applications made with the "Finger puppet" technique. When the effects of the methods used by preschool teachers in storytelling to focus on the stories and attention span of the children, it is seen that the "Story card" technique has the lowest average attention span among the storytelling methods.

CONCLUSION

Reading activities in preschool education contribute to all areas of the development of children. The process of reading the book should be designed in the best way. According to the results of this research, in order for the children to understand the story being read and give their attention to the story, it will be realized by presenting the visual and audio elements appropriately for the purpose and using the voices of the teachers effectively. Another important point is that preschool teachers need to improve their story reading skills. It is thought that the fact that teachers receive effective book reading training and use their gestures and mimics will enable children to both understand the stories and follow them carefully.

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