

A Phenomenological Approach towards Early Literacy Development Practices of Early Childhood Teachers

Okul Öncesi Öğretmenlerinin Erken Okuryazarlık Gelişimine Yönelik Uygulamalarına Fenomenolojik Bir Yaklaşım

Eda DURUK*



Abstract

The purpose of this research is to make early childhood teachers acquire an innovative approach towards their early literacy development practices by introducing them the use of three different techniques of creative story-writing and storytelling to be used within their classrooms, making them incorporate these techniques in the implementation sessions by writing and telling their own stories, evaluating the challenges and successes that they faced in the learning-teaching process, and finally, taking a deeper insight into their perceptions towards the use of the techniques within their classroom environment. The qualitative research includes the introduction of three story-writing and storytelling techniques and implementation of them through collaborative group work. The data was comprised of semi-structured interviews, diaries kept by the participants, and observations of the whole workshop program by the researcher which were all video recorded. Content analysis was used to analyze the data. The findings indicated that such new techniques could not only support kindergarten children's early literacy development but also make it fun for the children which could activate them and increase their engagement within the activities. The techniques also yielded some developmental areas for early childhood teachers together with the strengths they offer when used in storytelling and story writing.

Keywords: Early literacy development, Storytelling, Story Writing, Language Acquisition, Teaching Language Skills, Phenomenological Research

Öz

Bu arařtırmanın amacı, okul öncesi öğretmenlerine yaratıcı hikâye yazma ve hikâye anlatma konusunda sınıflarında kullanılacak üç farklı teknięi tanıtarak erken okuryazarlık gelişimine yönelik uygulamalarına yenilikçi bir yaklaşım kazandırmak, kendi hikâyelerini yazdıkları ve uyguladıkları derslerle bu teknikleri özümsemek, bu süreçteki zorlukları ve başarılı oldukları anları değerlendirerek sınıflarında kullanabilecekleri bu üç teknikle ilgili derin bir bakış açısı kazanmalarını sağlamaktır. Arařtırma nitel arařtırma desenlerinden fenomenolojik arařtırma olarak tasarlanmıştır. Fenomenolojik arařtırma, çalışmada tanıtılacak üç hikâye yazma ve hikâye anlatma teknięinin kullanımını ve sonrasında işbirlikli grup çalışmasıyla uygulanmasını içermektedir. Veriler, yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler, katılımcılar tarafından tutulan günlükler ve tüm çalıştay programının arařtırmacı tarafından video kaydına alınmış gözlemlerinden oluşmaktadır. Verilerin analizinde içerik analizi kullanılmıştır. Arařtırmacı, erken çocukluk öğretmenlerinin öğrencilerinin erken okuryazarlık gelişimini desteklemek için bu teknikleri nasıl algıladıklarını gösteren temalar sunmuştur. Bulgular, hikâye yazım ve anlatımında yeni tekniklerin sadece anaokulundaki çocukların erken okuryazarlık gelişimlerini desteklemekle kalmayıp, aynı zamanda çocukları eğlendirerek hareket geçirebileceğini ve etkinliklere katılmalarını artırdığını göstermiştir. Teknikler ayrıca hikâye anlatımı ve hikâye yazımında kullanıldıklarında sundukları güçlü yönlerle birlikte okulöncesi öğretmenleri için bazı gelişim alanları da sağlamaktadır. Bulgular doğrultusunda pedagojik öneriler yapılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Erken Okuryazarlık Gelişimi, Hikâye Anlatımı, Hikâye yazımı, Dil Edinimi, Fenomenolojik Arařtırma

*Doç.Dr. Pamukkale Üniversitesi, Eğitim Fakültesi, İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Bölümü, Denizli, Türkiye.
Elmek: easlan@pau.edu.tr,
orcid.org/0000-0001-8564-2456

Gönderilme Tarihi / Received Date:
27 Mart 2023

Kabul Tarihi / Accepted Date:
3 Ağustos 2023

Atıf/Citation: Aral D. - Dalkılıç L. (2023).
A Phenomenological Approach towards
Early Literacy Development Practices of
Early Childhood Teachers
doi.org/10.30767/diledeara.1271570

Copyright © 2023
Dil ve Edebiyat Arařtırmaları
tded.org.tr | 2023

Extended Summary

Early literacy skills are defined as skills, knowledge, and attitudes that can be fostered between the ages of 0–5 and are the success predictors of later reading skills. Although each country has a standardized curriculum in early childhood education, the instructional approaches can differ among preschool teachers. Therefore, innovative approaches towards early literacy development practices can be a milestone in both motivating the children and fostering their language skills.

From this point of view, the present study aims to introduce early childhood teachers the use of three different techniques of creative story-writing and storytelling to be used within their classrooms, making them incorporate these techniques in the implementation sessions by writing and telling their own stories, evaluating the challenges and successes that they faced in the learning-teaching process, and finally, taking a deeper insight into their perceptions towards the use of the techniques within their classroom environment. The study is designed as phenomenological research from qualitative research designs. The phenomenological research includes the use of “3-Ss”- which are three story-writing and storytelling techniques to be introduced in the study, and implementation of them through collaborative group work in the implementation sessions right after the experts’ theoretical introductions and the following applications of the techniques. More specifically, the “3-Ss” to be used in the study are as follows: Firstly, story rope will be used as the first technique to teach how to write and tell stories by drawing out the plot of them and to make remembering permanent. Secondly, story sticks will be the next technique in the study to teach how to write and tell stories by symbolizing the heroes in the story and to make remembering permanent. The last technique of the study will be the six-piece story and it will be used to teach how to write and tell stories by taking out the main body of stories and making remembering permanent.

In the framework of the research, the phenomenological research was applied in a total of 5 days. Practice of the research was carried out with 25 participants who were early childhood teachers and 5 experts from the field as trainers during the implementations. The data was comprised of semi-structured interviews, diaries kept by the participants, and observations of the whole workshop program by the researcher which were all video recorded. Content analysis was used to analyze the data, that is, all data was further categorized as number of participants, frequency, code, sub-theme, and main themes. Codes were grouped according to their meaning similarities and certain patterns and thus sub-themes were gathered. Finally, the “main themes” were reached by considering the meaning contents of the sub-themes. The researcher presented themes which showed how early childhood teachers perceived these techniques to foster their students’ early literacy development. As for the story rope, participants discussed the prominent features of story rope such as its visuality and pattern, entering the story with one’s whole being, story-fact connection, simplifying stories, acting as a summary, and ease of summarizing; expressions about teachers such as improving their competencies, being practical and easy, using it in writing poetry, using it in classroom routines, using in different activities, active participation, and developing storytelling competencies; and finally expressions about children such as memorability, getting into the story, having fun, arousing curiosity, memory and cognitive development, developing self-confidence, making storytelling easier, memorability, and making stories understandable. With respect to story sticks, participants’ perceptions include the prominent features of story sticks such as their appealing to the senses, including art and creativity, improving teachers’ competencies, memorability, being like a game, improving creative thinking, and its being easy to

use; expressions about teachers such as drawing attention, improving teachers' competencies, active participation, and story integration; and finally expressions about children such as allowing internalization, summarizing stories easily, having enthusiasm, making writing new stories easier, improving creative thinking skills, and memorability. For the six-piece story, participants' opinions include the prominent features of the six-piece story such as making story writing easier, using imagination, and providing guidance; expressions about teachers such as guiding how to create a story, giving cornerstones of stories, and not needing preparation; and finally expressions about children such as making stories concrete, giving cause-effect relationship, understanding basic elements, improving self-confidence, moving from the part to the whole, and memorability. The findings indicated that such new techniques to create and tell stories could not only support kindergarten children's early literacy development but also make it fun for the children, which could activate them and increase their engagement within the activities.

Introduction

Literacy development begins in early childhood with developmentally appropriate reading and writing experiences before formal schooling. Early literacy skills are conceptualized as skills, knowledge, and attitudes that develop between the ages of 0–5 and are the success predictors of later reading skills (Teale & Sulzby, 1986; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). Both reading and writing develop together as young children are exposed to activities which include verbal and written language (Morris, 1981; Sulzby & Teale, 1991). In time, children also understand that print conveys a message (Downing, 1986) and it has various purposes like informing, persuading, etc. Before kindergarten, as Downing (1986) indicates, children begin to construct meaning from print. Through direct contact with books, they also learn more complicated concepts about the structure of languages (Adams, 1990). Because children are ready and eager to learn naturally, early childhood education should provide them with innovative and valuable experiences. However, although every country has a standardized curriculum in early childhood education, the instructional approaches can differ among preschool teachers; and schools from low socioeconomic regions may sometimes feel compelled to find something motivating for their students in their instructional practices (Qi et al., 2012). It is, therefore, essential for these teachers to be equipped with various techniques through which they will contribute to their students' early literacy development. Children focus on meaning; They derive meaning from their daily lives according to what they know and the situation. In this way, once they grasp a situation, they can match words with meanings, and this process is very important in language acquisition. Drama, project work, storytelling and communicative games are the most effective activities that enable children to focus on meaning (Moon, 2000). Activities should be organized in a game-based atmosphere as much as possible. Stories and storytelling techniques offer different benefits to these young learners. Stories can improve cognition, children can develop their listening skills, have better sequencing abilities and increased language appreciation, and perform more thoughtful organization in their writing (Speaker, 2000). Studies also show that vocabulary and syntactic complexity in oral language are more well developed in children who are exposed to stories frequently (Phillips, 2000). The grammar which is introduced in storytelling becomes familiar to the child and is reflected in later reading and writing activities (Cherry-Cruz, 2001). With these in mind, in the study, it is aimed to raise awareness of early childhood teachers, by the implementation program, about the use of three storytelling techniques which can foster the effectiveness of stories for students in instructional practices and explore teachers' opinions about the techniques. These are story sticks, story rope, and six-piece story techniques.

Theoretical framework

Studies have revealed that young children construct hypotheses about how the literacy system works when being engaged in such kind of activities in the environment (Gillen & Hall, 2003). These studies show that literacy emerges long before young children begin to read and write conventionally in elementary schools. A large number of studies have found that literacy development at such early stages is important because children's emergent literacy, which brings the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that they have about literacy in early childhood altogether, anticipates their future reading success throughout elementary school (Lonigan, et al., 2008; Spira & Fischel, 2005; Davis & Qi, 2020; Cunningham et al., 2020; Cashiola et al., 2020).

While this concept puts more emphasis on early literacy practices, there is another increasing concern about the "academic push down" in preschools (Gallant, 2009). The high academic expectations have given rise to concerns about the literacy instruction practice in kindergartens (Joyce et al., 2003). Furthermore, a growing body of research also claims that most teachers lack disciplinary knowledge and pedagogical skills to foster children's acquisition of basic language skills (Bos, et al., 2001; Cunningham et al., 2004; Moats & Foorman, 2003). In their study, Vellutino, Scanlon, and Jaccard (2003) noted that environment and instruction are the two basic reasons for literacy problems. According to them, while environmental reasons include poor oral language development, the number of books available at home, parental attitudes, and parental models, instructional factors include the lack of a suitable literacy environment in schools, ineffective instructional methods, and the lack of knowledge teachers have about the language and structure. Research has shown that difficulties with language skills mainly result from inefficient and inaccurate language processing (Moats & Foorman, 2003; Rayner, Foorman, Perfetti, Pesetsky, & Seidenberg, 2001); on the other hand, when children are instructed more effectively through various methods, the results have been consistently positive (Blachman, Tangel, Ball, Black, & McGraw, 1999). There has been an increased number of studies in the existing literature pointing out the importance of instructional methods on early literacy development. However, no studies have been carried out to investigate early literacy development practices of preschool teachers, especially on storytelling. Therefore, the aim of the present study is to investigate the perceptions of early childhood teachers about the 3-Ss, the use of story rope, story sticks, and the six-piece story in story-writing and storytelling, during their storytelling processes with kindergarten children. The research questions are: What are the perceptions of early childhood teachers on the use of story rope in the early literacy development of their students?

What are the perceptions of early childhood teachers on the use of story sticks in the early literacy development of their students? What are the perceptions of early childhood teachers on the use of six-piece story in the early literacy development of their students?

Methodology

Research Design

The study was designed within a phenomenological framework to understand and describe the phenomenon, which is the use of the 3-Ss in early childhood education, and thus, have a deeper insight into the teachers' experiences with them (Creswell, 2007; Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The perceptions and experiences of early childhood teachers' practices regarding the use of 3-Ss on early literacy development were examined through in-depth analysis of semi-structured interviews, diaries, and observations.

Participants

A phenomenological study should include a relatively homogenous group of participants (Creswell 2007) and their selection in such studies should have meaningful experiences of the phenomenon being examined (Creswell 2007; Moustakas 1994). Purposeful sampling and criterion-based selection were used in the study. The criteria were two-fold: firstly, the participants were to be chosen from early childhood teachers working at public schools in various low socioeconomic regions of Turkey considering the widespread effect of the project in the country. Secondly, they were supposed to have a maximum of 10 year-experience in the field for the sake of the manageability of the study and long-lasting learning outcomes for their students, which were all the objectives of the TUBITAK 4005 project. Participants were all given codes and demographic information is provided in Table 1. During the sample selection, through a web address created by the researcher, the aim, focus and program to be implemented in the study were announced. Next, a pre-interview was conducted to select the participants. The questions were developed by the researcher and five experts participating as trainers in the study to focus on the willingness of participants to participate in the study and their readiness to do the activities. The study was conducted with 25 early childhood teachers. There were five male and twenty female participants. Their length of experience in the field ranged from four to ten years. All of them were working at public schools and they all had their graduate degree from the early childhood education department.

Code	Age	Gender	Years of Experience	City of school
P1	24	Male	2	Diyarbakır
P2	24	Female	2	Rize
P3	25	Female	3	Van
P4	25	Female	3	Erzurum
P5	25	Female	3	Trabzon
P6	26	Male	4	Tekirdağ
P7	26	Male	4	Konya
P8	26	Female	4	Ankara
P9	27	Female	5	İstanbul
P10	27	Female	5	Şanlıurfa
P11	27	Female	5	Burdur
P12	27	Female	5	Isparta
P13	27	Male	5	Edirne
P14	28	Female	6	Samsun
P15	28	Female	6	Çanakkale
P16	29	Female	7	Aydın

P17	29	Male	7	Gaziantep
P18	30	Female	8	Denizli
P19	30	Female	8	İzmir
P20	31	Female	9	Kayseri
P21	31	Female	9	Adana
P22	31	Female	9	Sinop
P23	31	Female	9	Elâzığ
P24	31	Female	10	Kırkkale
P25	31	Female	10	Manisa

Table 1. *Demographic information of the early childhood teachers*

They were informed on the project's website that once they applied to the project as a participant, they would be accepted as having confirmed all the process to be conducted in the project on a voluntary basis. Participants had their first experience in writing and telling stories by using the 3-Ss techniques while attending the 5-day implementation. After each implementation, the participants were asked to write and tell their own stories with the application of 3-Ss techniques within the groups. These activities provided meaningful, significant, and unique experiences of the phenomenon for the study.

Techniques used in the study

As discussed earlier, in the study three techniques are introduced and practiced with the participants, namely story rope, story sticks, and six-piece story (3-Ss). The use of 3-Ss in story-writing and storytelling are among the innovative techniques to be used in storytelling which can contribute to early literacy skills of kindergarten children. Story rope, as the first technique, is used to teach how to write and tell stories by drawing out the plot of them and to make remembering permanent. Figure 1 shows the use of it in a story.

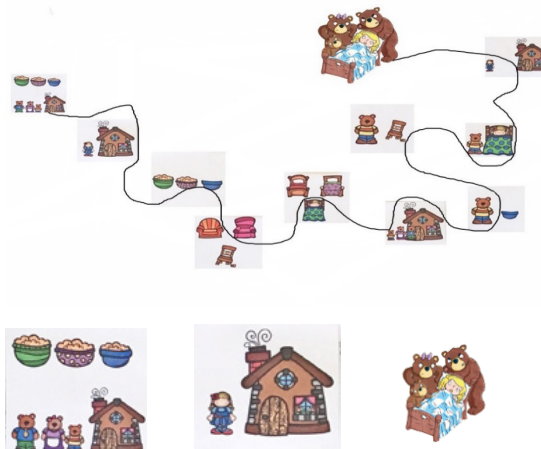


Figure 1. The Use of Story Rope in a Story

It is a method used in existing or original stories. A rope shape is drawn on a blank A4 paper as above. Symbols representing the sequence of events and characters in the fairy tale are drawn on the rope (e.g., the king is symbolized with a crown). Afterwards, the three most important events of the tale are included in the photo frame. The second technique that can be used in storytelling, as shown in Figure 2, is the use of story sticks. It can be used to teach how to write and tell stories by symbolizing the heroes in the story and to make remembering permanent.



Figure 2. The Use of Story Sticks in a Story

It is also a method used in existing or original stories. The sequence of events in the story is determined. Figures representing heroes are symbolically attached to the wooden stick using residual materials. Imaginary heroes turn into original objects with this work, and the rate of recall increases. The last technique to be used in the study is the six-piece story. As given in Figure 3, it can be used to teach how to write and tell stories by taking out the main body of stories and making remembering permanent.

1. Who is the hero? What are his/her characteristics?	2. What is the hero's dream or problem he/she wants to solve?
3. What are the obstacles the hero runs into?	4. Who helps the hero?
5. What does the hero do to solve the problem?	6. What happens at the end of the story? A happy or sad ending?

Figure 3. The Use of Six-piece Story in a Story

It is also a method used in existing or original stories. An A3 size paper is divided into 6 equal parts. A story is created with the answers given by asking the following questions for each frame. Pictures are drawn representing the answers given to each square. Thus, words become images and become permanent. Figure 4 illustrates the use of this technique.



Figure 4. The Use of Six-piece Story in the Giant Story

Each of these techniques was introduced to the participants and they were followed by different activities as discussed in the next section.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data was comprised of semi-structured interviews, diaries kept by the participants, and observations. First, the participants were told that, during the 5-day implementation program, they were supposed to keep diaries right after each implementation day regarding the use of each story technique of the day. Next, they were informed that observation of the whole implementation program was going to be handled by the researcher which would be all video recorded. Third, a semi-structured interview schedule was prepared by the researcher and five experts from the field to gather data about the perceptions of early childhood teachers about the use of short stories in early literacy development and the techniques they had learned in writing and telling stories to their kindergarten children.

Table 2 presents the schedule of the implementation. As mentioned earlier, the whole 5-day implementation program provided above was video-recorded and at the end of each day, participants were asked to keep a diary of the day giving their comments and opinions about each activity conducted.

Table 2. *The schedule of the implementation program*

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
30 minutes	30 minutes	30 minutes	30 minutes	30 minutes
Games that increase Group Dynamics	Games that increase Group Dynamics	Games that increase Group Dynamics	Games that increase Group Dynamics	Games that increase Group Dynamics

2 hours	1 hour	2 hours	2 hours	2 hours
Introduction to Storytelling	Using voice in Storytelling	Using the technique, story rope in storytelling	Using the technique, six-piece story in storytelling	Using the technique, story sticks in storytelling
30 minutes	1 hour	45 minutes	45 minutes	45 minutes
collaborative group work	Use of body in Storytelling	collaborative group work	collaborative group work	collaborative group work
30 minutes	1 hour	2 hours	2 hours	2 hours
Evaluation of the Day	Use of environment in Storytelling	Group presentations about their storytelling with a story rope	Group presentations about their storytelling with six-piece story	Group presentations about their storytelling with story sticks
	Evaluation by semi-structured interviews	Evaluation by semi-structured interviews	Evaluation by semi-structured interviews	Evaluation by semi-structured interviews

All data consisting of video recordings of the whole program and audio recordings of the semi-structured interviews obtained were transferred to the NVivo 10 program. The semi-structured interview data were analyzed via the content analysis method for research purposes. Since descriptive phenomenological data analysis often makes use of the main themes of experiences (Ersoy, 2016), at the end of the content analysis, objective evaluations have been sought to be made about the content; thus, revealing the implied data (Creswell, 2003). In data analysis, the following process was applied; defining the phenomenon, organizing the data collection tools, data collection, interpretation of the data after the analysis, and its reflection in the report (Mayring, 2011; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Figure 5 reflects the data analysis process:



Figure 5. Data Analysis

In the analysis of data, coding according to concepts extracted from the data approach is preferred which was suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1998). The reason for the use of this approach is the idea that recourse to the participant's testimony can reveal his or her mind map more effectively. Depending on the content analysis, all data was further categorized as number of participants, frequency, code, sub-theme, and main themes. Codes were grouped according to their meaning similarities and certain patterns and thus sub-themes were obtained. Next, the "main themes" were reached by considering the meaning contents of the sub-themes (Neuman, 2012).

Validity, Reliability and Ethics

For the sake of the validity of the qualitative study, Guba's criteria were considered, which are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2006;

Mills, 2003). First, data from different sources, such as observation, participants' diaries, and semi-structured interviews were obtained and analyzed in the study. Next, for the semi-structured interview questions, expert opinions were received from five experts who also participated in the project as trainers with their experience in the field. For the content list, views of two experts in the Department of Language Education were received. Various data were collected and supported each other; thus, confirmability was enabled. For the reliability of the study, the researcher followed the suggestions outlined in the literature (Gay et al., 2006). In the process of analyzing the semi-structured interviews, (a) four of the audio recordings were randomly selected and listened to by a student having her Ph.D.; ensuring control; (b) a reliability study was conducted with the same student, who has a doctorate ELT and has studies on qualitative research. Four randomly selected interview texts with the theme and subthemes created with the NVivo output were shared with an expert from the field of ELT. The expert was asked to find the themes and subthemes specified in the text by reading these texts. In addition, experts were asked to examine the theme and content compatibility of the interview sections under the theme and subthemes. After these examinations, the researcher and expert came together and made comparisons. There was no disagreement between them. As mentioned earlier the study was conducted based on a project. The call for volunteer participants was announced on the website created for the project. On the website, details about the implementation program, data collection tools, and an article on the project's widespread effect were all provided. It was added that when participants apply for the project and fill in the online questionnaire by clicking on the "I agree" button they would be considered as having confirmed all the process. Before conducting the semi-structured interviews, the participants were informed about the research process and asked for their consent again. Participants' personal information was not included in the study. This research was funded by Grant 218B470 from the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TUBITAK).

Results

The data comprised semi-structured interviews, diaries kept by the participants, and transcribed audios of the recorded sessions of implementations; they were all analyzed, and the results are given in terms of content, codes, subthemes, and main themes.

The results concerning the use of story rope

The first research question was, "What are the perceptions of early childhood teachers on the use of story rope in the early literacy development of their students". The main reason for the first research question is to have a deeper insight into the early childhood teachers' perceptions about the use of the story rope technique after the 5-day implementation program. When Table 3 is analyzed, participants' views gather around; (1) the prominent features of story rope such as its visuality and pattern, entering the story with one's whole being, story-fact connection, simplifying stories, acting as a summary, and ease of summarizing; (2) expressions about teachers such as improving their competencies, being practical and easy, using it in writing poetry, using it in classroom routines, using in different activities, active participation, and developing storytelling competencies; and finally (3) expressions about children such as memorability, getting into the story, having fun, arousing curiosity, memory and cognitive development, developing self-confidence, making storytelling easier, memorability, and making stories understandable. Table 3 reflects the themes related to participants' perceptions of the use of story rope.

Table 3. *Early childhood teachers' perceptions on the use of story rope*

Content	Code	Subtheme	Main theme
It is a technique that will definitely work very well in storytelling with the visuality and pattern it offers to children. P5	Visuality and pattern		
With this technique, the storyteller enters the story with her whole being. P17	Entering the story with one's whole being		
The rope used in the technique actually symbolizes the story-fact connection. P13	Story-fact connection	Prominent features of story rope	Strengths of the technique
Telling a story using this technique allows us to think about the story once more and tell it by simplifying. P25	Simplifying stories		
The use of pictures containing the main subject of the story in the story rope actually presents the summary of the story. P21	Acting as a summary		
It's much easier to summarize stories with this technique. P9	Ease of summarizing		
It will also be very useful for children to remember a story that has been told before. P8	Memorability		
This technique is very effective in getting children into the story. P14	Getting into the story		
It is a technique that children will have a lot of fun with. P18	Having fun		
It is a technique that will definitely arouse curiosity in children. P23	Arousing curiosity	Expressions about children	Developmental areas it offers for children
This technique will support memory and cognitive development in children. P20	Memory and cognitive development		
Children's storytelling with this technique will also develop their self-confidence. P12	Developing self-confidence		
Children will be able to easily tell the stories they have heard once with this technique. P24	Making storytelling easier		
I found that keeping the story in mind with this technique is not that difficult for children. P2	Memorability		

Stories become much more understandable for children with this technique. P16	Making stories understandable		
This technique is one that early childhood teachers should definitely know. P1	Improving teachers' competencies		
The story rope technique is very practical and easy to apply in the classroom. P9	Being practical and easy		
I will use this technique not only in stories but also in writing poetry. P11	Using it in writing poetry		
I intend to use this technique not only in stories but also in classroom routines. P19	Using it in classroom routines	Expressions about teachers	Developmental areas it offers for teachers
I can also use this technique in many different activities. P5	Using it in different activities		
Thanks to this technique, teachers will be able to have students' active participation in their classes. P22	Active participation		
This technique will make a great contribution to teachers' storytelling competencies. P23	Developing storytelling competencies		

The participants explained their views about the three main themes of the first research question with the following examples from their descriptive statements:

With this technique, the storyteller enters the story with her whole being. P17 The use of pictures containing the main subject of the story in the story rope actually presents the summary of the story. P21 It is a technique that children will have a lot of fun with. P18 It is a technique that will definitely arouse curiosity in children. P23 Thanks to this technique, teachers will be able to have students' active participation in their classes. P22 I can also use this technique in many different activities. P5

The results concerning the use of story sticks The second research question was, "What are the perceptions of early childhood teachers on the use of story sticks in the early literacy development of their students". The second research question serves for the deeper analysis of early childhood teachers' perceptions about the use of the story sticks technique after the 5-day implementation program. As seen in Table 4, participants' opinions are grouped around; (1) the prominent features of the story stick such as its appealing to the senses, including art and creativity, improving teachers' competencies, memorability, being like a game, improving creative thinking, and its being easy to use; (2) expressions about teachers such as drawing attention, improving teachers' competencies, active participation, and story integration; and finally (3) expressions about children such as allowing internalization, summarizing stories easily, having enthusiasm, making writing new stories easier, improving creative thinking skills, and memorability. Table 4 presents the themes related to participants' perceptions of the use of story sticks.

Table 4. *Early childhood teachers' perceptions on the use of story sticks*

Content	Code	Subtheme	Main theme
Turning the stick into a story with the materials they created allows them to internalize the story. P17	Allowing internalization		
While children symbolize the heroes on the story stick, they also summarize the story. P24	Summarizing stories easily		
It is a technique that all children in the classroom will use with enthusiasm. P10	Having enthusiasm		
It will be very useful for students in writing a new story. P9	Making writing new stories easier		
This technique improves students' creative thinking skills. P15	Improving creative thinking skills		
With this technique, children can easily remember stories. P18	Memorability	Expressions about children	Developmental areas it offers for children
Children will never forget the stories they have symbolized with this technique when they tell them again. P20	Memorability		
It is a technique that will increase the motivation of the students. P13	Increasing motivation		
It is a technique that will enable children to develop their storytelling skills and tell them without stress by having fun. P25	Developing storytelling competencies		
It is a technique that teachers can easily draw the entire class into. P1	Drawing attention		
Every early childhood teacher should know this technique. P23	Improving teachers' competencies	Expressions about teachers	Developmental areas it offers for teachers
It enables teachers to integrate the story into the lesson much more effectively. P11	Story integration		
This technique appeals to the senses of children. P2	Appealing to the senses		
It is a technique that children will love very much because it includes art and creativity. P19	Including art and creativity		

It is a technique that develops the competencies of teachers. P7	Improving teachers' competencies	Prominent features of story sticks	Strengths of the technique
Thanks to this technique, the stories are memorable. P24	Memorability		
I liked it because it is like a game. P8	Being like a game		
It is a technique that teaches how to create the essence of the story through creative thinking.	Improving creative thinking		
I never thought of a technique that would be so easy to use and so effective. P21	Easy to use		

The participants gave their opinions about the three main themes of the second research question with the following examples from their descriptive statements:

This technique improves students' creative thinking skills. P15

With this technique, children can easily remember stories. P18

It is a technique that will provide teachers with the active participation of children. P6

It enables teachers to integrate the story into the lesson much more effectively. P11

This technique appeals to the senses of children. P2

It is a technique that children will love very much because it includes art and creativity. P19

The results concerning the use of six-piece story The third research question was, "What are the perceptions of early childhood teachers on the use of six-piece story in the early literacy development of their students". The third and the last research question aimed to have a detailed analysis of the early childhood teachers' perceptions about the use of the six-piece story technique after the 5-day implementation program. When Table 5 is analyzed, participants' comments cluster around; (1) the prominent features of six-piece story such as making story writing easier, using imagination, and providing guidance; (2) expressions about teachers such as guiding how to create a story, giving cornerstones of stories, and not needing preparation; and finally (3) expressions about children such as making stories concrete, giving cause-effect relationship, understanding basic elements, improving self-confidence, moving from the part to the whole, and memorability. Table 5 shows the themes related to participants' perceptions of the use of six-piece story.

Table 5. *Early childhood teachers' perceptions on the use of six-piece story*

Content	Code	Subtheme	Main theme
It helps children tell stories as it concretizes stories. P15	Making stories concrete		
It is a very effective technique for children to understand cause effect relationships in the story. P7	Cause effect relationship		

With this technique, students will understand the basic elements that make up the story. P20	Understanding basic elements	Expressions about children	Developmental areas it offers for children
This technique gives students confidence in storytelling. P11	Improving self confidence		
Thanks to this technique, students will learn going from the part to the whole. P13	Moving from the part to the whole		
Children never forget the main events of the stories told with this technique. P5	Memorability		
It's a very effective technique for even teachers to understand how the story is constructed. P9	Guiding how to create a story		
Since I did not know this technique before, I realized that I missed some things while writing a story. P17	Giving cornerstones of stories		
As a teacher, this technique was the technique I felt closest to because it was both easy and systematic, without requiring any materials. P24	Not needing preparation	Expressions about teachers	Developmental areas it offers for teachers
This technique will help us a lot in providing an effective educational environment. P2	Effective education		
It is now very easy to write a story with the guidance of this technique. P23	Making story writing easier		
This technique is encouraging in writing and telling stories using imagination. P18	Using imagination	Prominent features of six-piece story	Strengths of the technique
This technique guided me very well about the topics that I should not skip while writing the story. P4	Providing guidance		

The participants talked about the three main themes of the third research question with the following examples from their descriptive statements:

It is a very effective technique for children to understand cause effect relationships in the story. P7 With this technique, students will understand the basic elements that make up the story. P20 As a teacher, this technique was the technique I felt closest to because it was both easy and systematic, without requiring any materials. P24 This technique will help us a lot in providing an effective educational environment. P2

This technique is encouraging in writing and telling stories using imagination. P18

This technique guided me very well about the topics that I should not skip while writing the story. P4

When codes and subthemes are examined together in all three research questions, the participants point out the strengths of the techniques and developmental areas they offer for both teachers and children.

Discussion and Conclusions

Based on the results of the study, early childhood teachers' experiences with the educational use of 3-Ss in the 5-day implementation program yielded various benefits. These benefits can be categorized under the themes of different strengths of the techniques introduced and a handful developmental areas they offer for both teachers and children. Thus, early childhood teachers should be aware of the innovative techniques to be implemented within the classroom environment so that they can not only foster children's first language acquisition but also monitor and self-regulate themselves as teachers of upcoming generations.

All kindergarten children deserve effective literacy instructional practices in early literacy development. Providing early childhood teachers with new and innovative practices is important so that the curriculum designed serves the best teaching and learning practices through various techniques. To promote enriched literacy experiences of children, instruction which covers innovative practices in literacy instruction during early childhood education is crucial, which is more promotive than later remediation. Every child is unique, and they display different styles, different identities, and different needs in educational environment. Literacy instructional practices are the milestones in early childhood education in which techniques increasing children's interest, motivation, and active engagement should be planned in the curriculum and utilized efficiently. The use of 3-Ss, namely story rope, story sticks, and six-piece story writing are among these techniques which can enable active participation of children in storytelling and story writing. Children will have persistence and patience in these activities as techniques will seem like a game for them and they will remain in the on-task behavior until the end of the activity. The positive opinions of the participants show that the 3-Ss are innovative and effective techniques in early literacy development as instructional practices. This study suggests guidelines for early childhood teachers on how these techniques can be integrated into the classroom environment and what outcomes they might have in the end. The results of the study might help teachers better understand the gains of using such techniques to promote literacy development in early childhood education. To conclude, early childhood teachers should be knowledgeable about innovative approaches in education, and they should be equipped with a repertoire of effective and motivating teaching techniques to contribute to their students' early literacy development. Using such kind of techniques, they can trigger children's first language acquisition and develop their competencies in the language by means of activities which cater around students' needs and interests.

Suggestions

The study showed that story rope, story sticks, and 6-piece story are three effective techniques in story writing and storytelling. As expected from 21st century skills, further studies can be conducted to incorporate these techniques with the use of technology, create digital stories, and enhance digital literacy development in early childhood education. In addition, future studies can compare the effectiveness of the techniques with one control group in an experimental study to examine the early literacy developments and differences in the groups in terms of students' literacy outcomes.

Acknowledgement

This research was funded by Grant 218B470 from the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TUBITAK). The author gives her special gratitude to the project team, Prof. Dr. Recep Şahin Arslan, Dr. Seher İşcan, and teachers of Preschool Education Hürriyet Burhan, Münire Kiriş, Ebru Öztürk, Kezban Zor, and Filiz Kansız.

References

- Adams, M. J. (1990). *Beginning to read: Thinking and learning about print*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Blachman, B., Tangel, D., Ball, E., Black, R., & McGraw, D. (1999). Developing phonological awareness and word recognition skills: A two-year intervention with low-income, inner-city children. *Reading and Writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 11, 239–273
- Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (2007). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods* (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson Education.
- Bos, C., Mzther, N., Dickson, S. Podhajski, B., & Chard, D. (2001). Perceptions and Knowledge of Preservice and Inservice Educators About Early Reading Instruction. *Annals of Dyslexia*, 51, 97–120.
- Cashiola, E. B., Bulotsky-Shearer, R. J., & Greenfield, D. B. (2020). Bidirectional associations between preschool classroom behavior and language and literacy skills. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, 40(3), 143–158. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0271121420948603>
- Cherry-Cruz, Teresa. (2001). Tell me a story! Enhancing literacy through the techniques of storytelling. *ASHA Leader*. 6 (23), 4-7.
- Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Cunningham, A. E., Perry, K. E., Stanovich, K. E., & Stanovich, P. J. (2004). Disciplinary Knowledge Of K-3 Teachers and Their Knowledge Calibration in The Domain of Early Literacy. *Annals of Dyslexia*. 54(1), 139–167.
- Cunningham, J. E., Hemmeter, M. L., & Kaiser, A. P. (2020). The relation between teachers' positive behavior support and language support. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, 40(3), 131–142. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0271121420943653>
- Davis, A. N., & Qi, C. H. (2020). A longitudinal examination of language skills, social skills, and behavior problems of preschool children from low-income families. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, 40(3), 172–186. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0271121420946104>
- Downing, J. (1986). Cognitive clarity: A unifying and cross-cultural theory for language awareness phenomena in reading. In D. B. Yaden, Jr. & S. Templeton (Eds.), *Metalinguistic awareness and beginning literacy* (pp.13-29). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Ersoy, A. F. (2016). Fenomenoloji. Ahmet Saban & Ali Ersoy (Eds.), *Eğitimde nitel araştırma desenleri*. Anı.
- Gallant, P. A. (2009). Kindergarten Teachers Speak Out: “Too Much, Too Soon, Too Fast!” *Reading Horizons*, 49(3), 201–220.
- Gay, L. R., Mills, G. E., & Airasan, P. (2006). *Educational research. Competencises for analysis and applications*. Pearson Education Ltd.
- Gillen, J., & Hall, N. (2003). The Emergence of Early Childhood Literacy. In N. Hall, J. Larson, & J. Marsh (Eds.). *Handbook of Early Childhood Literacy*. (pp.1–12). London: Sage Publication.
- Joyce, B., Hrycauk, M., & Calhoun, E. (2003). Learning To Read in Kindergarten: Has Curriculum Development Bypassed the Controversies? *Phi Delta Kappan*, 85(2), 126–132.

- Lonigan, C. J., Schatschneider, C., & Westberg, L. (2008). Identification Of Children's Skills and Abilities Linked to Later Outcomes in Reading, Writing, And Spelling. *Report of the National Early Literacy Panel*. Washington, DC: National Institute for Literacy.
- Mayring, P. (2011). Nitel sosyal arařtırmaya giriş. (Adnan Gümüş and M. Sezai Durgun, Trans.). Bilgesu.
- McMillan, J. H., & Schumacher, S. (2006). Research in education evidence-based inquiry. Pearson.
- Mills, G. E. (2003). Action research: A guide for the teacher researcher (2nd ed.). Merrill Prentice Hall.
- Moats, L. C. & Foorman, B. R. (2003). Measuring Teachers' Content Knowledge of Language and Reading. *Annals of Dyslexia*, 53, 23–45.
- Moon, J. (2000). Children Learning English. Oxford: Macmillan Heinemann.
- Morris, D. (1981). Concept of word: A developmental phenomenon in the beginning reading and writing processes. *Language Arts*, 58, 659-668.
- Moustakas, C. 1994. *Phenomenological Research Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Neuman, W. L. (2012). Toplumsal arařtırma yöntemleri: Nicel ve nitel yaklaşımlar III. Cilt (5th Ed.). Yayın Odası.
- Phillips, Louise. (2000). The seeds of children's creativity. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood*, 25 (3), 1-6.
- Qi, C.H., Kaiser, A.P., Marley, S.C., & Milan, S. (2012). Performance of African American preschool children from low-income families on expressive language measures. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, 32, 175–184. doi:10.1177/ 0271121411415426
- Rayner, K., Foorman, B. R., Perfetti, C. A., Pesetsky, D., & Seidenberg, M. S. (2001). How psychological science informs the teaching of reading. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 2, 31–74.
- Speaker, Kathryne. (2000). The art of storytelling: A collegiate connection to professional development schools. *Education*, 121 (1), 184- 187.
- Spira, E. G., & Fischel, J. E. (2005). The Impact of Preschool Inattention, Hyperactivity, and Impulsivity on Social and Academic Development: A Review. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 46, 755–773.
- Strauss, A. L., & Corbin, J. M. (1998). Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory. Sage.
- Sulzby, E., & Teak, W. (1991). Emergent literacy. In R. Barr, M. L. Kamil, R. B. Mosenthal, & P. D. Pearson (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research (Vol.2, pp. 727-757)*. New York: Longman.
- Teale, W. H., & Sulzby, E. (1986). *Emergent literacy: Writing and reading. writing research: multidisciplinary inquiries into the nature of writing series*. Ablex Publishing Corporation, 355 Chestnut St., Norwood, NJ 07648.
- Vellutino, F. R., Scanlon, D. M., & Jaccard, J. (2003). Toward distinguishing between cognitive and experiential deficits as primary sources of difficulty in learning to read: A two-year follow-up of difficult to remediate and readily remediated poor readers. In B. R. Foorman (Ed.), *Preventing and remediating reading difficulties: Bringing science to scale (pp. 73–120)*. Baltimore: York.
- Whitehurst, G. J. & Lonigan, J. C. (1998). Child development and emergent literacy. *Child Development*, 69 (3), 848-872.