Using Storytelling to Enhance Critical Listening

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Dedication

To my beautiful daughters, you are my strength, my motivation, and my endless source of happiness. Watching you grow and discover the world has been my greatest joy. You inspire me every day, and I am so proud of you. I hope that you will always pursue your dreams with passion and determination no matter how long takes you.

To my husband for his support and understanding throughout all these years. Your patience, love, and faith in me have been my rock during difficult times. You have been my confidante, my cheerleader, and my strength. I am very thankful for being part of your life and for all the sacrifices you have made to help me follow my goals.

To my mother for her wisdom, guidance, and unconditional love. Thank you because you have walked, cried, and laughed with me throughout this process.

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Finally, I would like to acknowledge the hard work and dedication I put into this project. Balancing my responsibilities while carrying out this project has not been easy. My perseverance and commitment to achieving my goals have been peerless. I am proud of the progress I have made and the skills I have developed throughout this process.

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Abstract

This action research project explores the integration of storytelling strategies to encourage critical listening among third-grade students in a public institution in the municipality of Copacabana, Antioquia. Data collection methods included student-teacher journals, initial diagnostic tests, self-assessment, interviews with the cooperating teacher, students' classwork, voice recordings, and observations from an external observer. The research was structured into two cycles that incorporated various storytelling techniques such as vivid storytelling, multisensory interaction, and visual elements. In each session pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening activities were included and designed to activate prior knowledge, provide context for the listening task, and use questions as a main strategy for encouraging critical thinking and story comprehension. In the final phase of the research, the collected data was analyzed to evaluate the effectiveness of the storytelling techniques. The results demonstrated that the use of storytelling is an effective pedagogical tool for developing critical listening skills in young learners.

Keywords: Storytelling, critical listening, listening comprehension, critical thinking.

Resumen

Este proyecto de investigación acción explora la integración de estrategias de narración de cuentos para fomentar la escucha crítica entre estudiantes de tercer grado de una institución pública del municipio de Copacabana, Antioquia. Los métodos de recolección de datos incluyeron diarios, prueba de diagnóstico inicial, autoevaluación, entrevistas con el maestro cooperador, trabajos de clase de los estudiantes, grabaciones de voz y observaciones de un observador externo. La investigación se estructuró en dos ciclos que incorporaron diversas técnicas de narración, como narración activa, interacción multisensorial y elementos visuales. En cada sesión se incluyeron y diseñaron actividades de pre-escucha, durante-escucha y post-escucha para activar conocimientos previos, proporcionar contexto para las tareas de escucha y la utilización de preguntas como estrategia principal para fomentar el pensamiento crítico y la comprensión auditiva. En la fase final de la investigación, se analizaron los datos recopilados para evaluar la efectividad de las técnicas de narración. Los resultados demostraron que el uso de la narración de historias es una herramienta pedagógica eficaz para desarrollar habilidades de escucha crítica en estudiantes jóvenes.

Palabras clave: Narraciones, escucha crítica, comprensión auditiva, pensamiento crítico.

Introduction

This action research project was carried out at the Normal Superior Maria Auxiliadora of Copacabana, an institution guided by holistic learning and Christian values. The assigned group was third-grade B, a diverse group with 46 students between 8 and 9 years old, coming from different socioeconomic backgrounds. However, the institution stands out for promoting bilingualism in higher grades. For elementary school students, the reality is different since the English class is taught by the main teacher, who covers all subjects and does not have adequate training in teaching English.

This research project began in the second half of 2023 when carrying out the observations. These observations showed that there were shortcomings in the students' critical listening, particularly related to the lack of implementation of learning strategies that satisfied the needs of the students. Furthermore, I was able to notice that the lack of trained English teachers for elementary courses further affected the second language acquisition process in this particular context. To address this issue, I decided to implement storytelling strategies to improve critical listening, as a creative way to solve the problem. These strategies proposed by Ellis and Brewster (2002) were designed to have a positive impact on students. During the first half of 2024, I developed an action plan with strategies to promote critical listening through storytelling. The plan included several strategies and was planned to be implemented over ten weeks. But, the development of the actions took seven weeks, the first cycle was developed in four weeks while the second cycle had to be developed in three weeks because of the institution schedule and festivities around Virgen Mary. During the second phase of the project, I used different data collection tools such as research journals, audio recordings, self-assessments, and external observer protocols to analyze the actions implemented. After collecting the data, I analyzed and interpreted it through a triangulation process to ensure reliable results. In conclusion, storytelling strategies were not only useful to encourage students' critical listening but also to make them aware of their learning process.

Description of the Context

This action research is carried out at the Escuela Normal Superior María Auxiliadora, a rural public school in Copacabana, Antioquia. The Normal Superior María Auxiliadora focuses on holistic learning and Christian values. With a nice infrastructure that fosters an environment conducive to learning. It has an English department for higher levels, however, at elementary levels, teaching English poses a great challenge. Despite this challenge, the institution has high-quality educators. One of them is the cooperating teacher Claudia Díaz. This dedicated educator plays a fundamental role in the educational dynamics of the third-grade classroom, where energetic and exceptional students come from diverse backgrounds. This is the perfect setting for my action research which is intended to improve critical listening fostering a creative process of third-grade students through storytelling.

The school philosophy is rooted in Christian values and the teachings of Saint John Bosco and Mary Mazzarello. This philosophy not only seeks to form well-rounded students with great educational success but also cultivates their skills to become responsible and empathetic members of society. The school has extensive sports facilities, laboratories, a library, and an auditorium. With clean and well-organized large classrooms, these spaces provide a holistic environment for both learning and well-being. Unfortunately, classrooms lack technological resources, which sometimes makes teaching and learning experiences difficult.

The English syllabus is aligned with the Minister of Education standards and the schools´ holistic vision that integrates the English teaching and learning process, as a fundamental part of the school goals. There is a well-organized English department, at the high-school level, this department has a qualified team of teachers, a bilingual room, and a library with a good collection of books and games that help improve students' proficiency. Additionally, the school extends its commitment to foreign language education by offering Saturday courses in English and German for students of different levels. Moreover, there is a significant gap between elementary and high-school English teaching-learning processes.

Unfortunately, in elementary school, a trained English teacher is missing. Elementary school teachers are in charge of the English teaching process without appropriate training, which generates irregularities in the implementation of the syllabus.

The Students

The project centers on third-grade students. This group has 48 students, with a balanced distribution of 26 girls and 22 boys. Their ages are between seven and eight years old. They come from different socioeconomic backgrounds and family structures which are a representative sample of the local context.

During the observations in the classroom, it was evident that the students were very interested in learning English, they felt excited about different activities, such as playing, reading, listening to stories, and doing crafts (Journal entry 4, September 19). Nevertheless, it was evident that the third-grade class did not have hours dedicated to learning English due to the teachers' lack of experience. However, thanks to the implementation of this practice process, students now have two hours of English classes per week. This increased exposure will mean a significant improvement in students' language proficiency, especially their critical listening and creative process.

The Cooperating Teacher

Claudia Díaz has an important role in the third-grade classroom. She holds a bachelor´s degree in economics and a specialization in ethics and education, she has more than 20 years of teaching experience. Her teaching principles have an approach inspired by Don Bosco´s pedagogy, constructivism, and student-centered approach. As part of her teaching philosophy, Claudia prioritizes students' needs and she tries to create a positive and collaborative learning environment.

Although Claudia has a lot of experience in teaching, she faces a big challenge related to teaching English. She feels uncomfortable due to her lack of training in English, she

recognizes her shortcomings and the importance of specialized training for teaching English, but she claims to have a mental barrier that prevents her from overcoming this challenge.

Statement of the Problem

Regarding the teaching-learning process of English in the Normal Superior Maria Auxiliadora where this study was conducted, there are many challenges that the cooperating teacher and the third-grade students face every day.

Some of them were that students have difficulties understanding short sentences in English and recognizing vocabulary if it is not translated into Spanish. "When I posed questions about the class topic, students tended to provide short answers (yes or no) or remained silent. Additionally, some students showed restlessness, such as involuntary movements with their foot or hand, looking around the classroom, or playing with their pencils or erasers. Also, some students do not follow the instructions that I gave them, and on many occasions, I have to use Spanish to teach the English classes. For example, when asked to open their notebooks, some students looked confused." (Journal Entry 4, September 19, and Journal Entry 5, September 29). Something that Cameron (2001) highlights "Building up a useful vocabulary is central to the learning of a foreign language at the primary level"(p.72).

Another challenge that I noticed during this practice process, was the teaching approach used by the cooperating teacher, this was focused mainly on grammar, overlooking essential elements such as listening comprehension, and oral expression (diary entry 6, October 3). "Students can write simple sentences following a learned sentence pattern, but when I ask them to read them, they cannot do it. Also, they can´t understand simple commands such as open your notebook and close your notebook" (journal entry 6, October 3).

Furthermore, through conversations with the cooperating teacher, she affirmed that on several occasions, the classes were taught by practitioners, where the main focus was working on worksheets where students colored and made pairs of words without drawing attention to other aspects such as listening comprehension and vocabulary acquisition. Finally, when I started to teach the English classes I noticed that for some students, the

listening exercises were challenging, the students tried to understand the songs or the stories, but they struggled to provide accurate answers on specific information or make inferences about causes or effects of the issue involved in the activity "they didn't express their feelings or reflections about the class topics even in their mother language" (Journal Entry 4, September 19, and Journal Entry 5, September 29). In light of this, and as Cameron (2001) suggests "stories represent a holistic approach to language teaching a learning that places a high premium on children´s involvement with rich, authentic uses of foreign languages"(p.159). He also mentions that "storytelling can create a context in which students listen actively and develop comprehension, helping to improve their critical listening" (p.159). I decide to use storytelling techniques to encourage critical listening among third-grade students.

Several studies have been conducted on storytelling to encourage critical thinking with positive findings about storytelling as a powerful tool not only to encourage critical listening but also listening comprehension and communication skills in the classroom. For instance, Khan et al. (2022) in their research called "Effect of Storytelling on Listening Skills and Vocabulary of Preschool Children" used six stories for narration to assess listening skills and vocabulary development, the results showed "that preschool children who were exposed to storytelling with props were highly engaged in story retelling; incorporating minute details which verified listening attentively and carefully maturing their listening skills and revealed a better, meaningful, and deeper understanding of vocabulary" (p.27).

Other studies conducted by Kim and Hachey (2020b), Omoush, L. M., & Alslaiti, F. M. (2022), and Yang and Wu (2012) indicated Storytelling can improve student performance in all critical listening skills and engage students in deep and meaningful learning.

Finally, this action research aims to take advantage of storytelling techniques as an intervention strategy to improve critical listening in third-grade students. The expected result is an improvement in their critical listening. This intervention will be evaluated through pre-, while, and post-intervention activities as appropriate, as well as continuous monitoring of the

student's critical listening during the interventions, seeking to be in cohesion with the recommendations of the theory.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical basis of this action research project is centered on the utilization of storytelling as a powerful pedagogical tool to cultivate critical listening skills among third-grade students in a public institution in Copacabana, Antioquia. This background has been developed from a synthesis of pedagogical theories and research findings that emphasize the importance of storytelling in enhancing critical listening abilities in educational settings. The proposed intervention is shaped by key concepts that are fundamental to the research design and approach. These concepts include the story-based approach, storytelling, the definition of listening, and critical listening. They provide the theoretical basis for the project and guide its methodology and objectives.

Story-Based Approach

Central to the theoretical background is the concept of story-based pedagogy. The story-based approach integrates storytelling into teaching, promoting cognitive exercises for students to use communication strategies such as hypothesis generation, verification, inference, prediction, and concluding (Davies, 2007). She also emphasizes "Storytelling aids in the development of children's ability to interpret and understand events beyond their immediate experience" (p.6). This perspective proposed by Davies (2007) asserts that "Storytelling helps with listening and speaking skills. Children will learn the importance of listening, of how to communicate ideas and interact with others. They will develop their vocabulary and learn when and where to use words and phrases" (p.6).

Research conducted by Porras González, N. I. (2010) demonstrated how story-based strategies in education, especially in language teaching, can significantly improve listening comprehension and critical listening. Storytelling creates a dynamic learning environment

where students actively engage with the content, resulting in deeper understanding and retention "The children were not only motivated by the stories but, also, demonstrated their understanding of the stories and their language learning" (p.105). This approach adapts to the challenges faced by third-grade students in Copacabana, emphasizing the relevance of storytelling in my study.

Storytelling

Storytelling is a powerful educational tool that has been recognized by numerous scholars Davis (2007); Ellis and Brewster (2002); Eades (2006); Hartley (2020) and Malova (2016) for its ability to engage students, improve comprehension, and foster a deeper understanding of content. According to Ellis and Brewster (2002)," Storytelling is telling a story to people who are willing to listen. This can be telling a story from a book by reading it aloud, telling a story without a book by word of mouth in the age-old oral tradition, or telling an anecdote or even a joke" (p.25).

Storytelling conveys information, messages, or narratives through stories. It involves creating a compelling narrative with characters, plot, and context to attract and communicate with the audience (Davies 2007). As highlighted by Ellis and Brewster (2002) storytelling is not just telling stories, but a dynamic pedagogical strategy that captivates students' attention and immerses them in the learning process. It provides a context where students actively listen carefully to narratives and connect emotionally with the characters and plot (Malova, 2016).

Finally, Eades (2006) highlights the critical aspects of storytelling, like engagement, contextual learning, and critical thinking "Storytelling The teacher/storyteller still needs a commitment to communicating the narrative ideas, but the storytelling becomes dependent on the children's contributions to such a degree that the telling could not happen without their interventions. The story, then, becomes particular to that group of children, in that context, and at that time" (p.11).

Listening

According to Sousa (2016), listening is a crucial aspect of communication, especially in a classroom setting. It involves actively interpreting and understanding the speaker's message, negotiating meaning, and responding creatively and empathetically. Effective listening demands the use of interactive techniques and strategies to comprehend and respond to the speaker based on communication objectives, as explained by Brown (2007). While some studies, such as Smith et al. (2021), suggest that reading comprehension may be more critical to academic success, Vandergrift et al. (2006) argued that listening comprehension is equally vital to success in the classroom. As listening is the primary mode of instruction in most classrooms, it is imperative to recognize its importance for students' academic and personal development, as highlighted by Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011).

Listening Comprehension

Listening requires a complex and engaged process in which the listener must distinguish between sounds, understand vocabulary and grammar, interpret stress and intonation, retain the information acquired, and analyze it within the immediate and broader sociocultural context of the speech (Vandergrift et al. 2006). Schemas, defined by (Rumelhart, 1980, as cited in Mai et al., 2014), act as guiding frames and represent generic concepts stored in memory. Two main information processing approaches, top-down and bottom-up, apply the principle of schema, creating interactive processing when combined. This results in three categories of listening process models.

Bottom-up processing decodes incoming information hierarchically from phonemes to coherent texts. Top-down processing uses prior knowledge to reconstruct the speaker's original meaning. Interactive processing combines top-down and bottom-up approaches for enhanced listening comprehension by simultaneously processing prior knowledge, contextual information, and linguistic details. Mai et al. (2014). They also mention "Listening comprehension is influenced by the information that an individual has in the mind or from

stores of memory; therefore, schematic knowledge is overtly beneficial to listening comprehension and —relevant schemata must be activated"(p.1045).

Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011) define listening comprehension in a second language (L2) as the process of receiving, focusing attention on, and assigning meaning to aural stimuli. It includes a listener, who brings prior knowledge of the topic, linguistic knowledge, and cognitive processes to the listening task, the aural text, and the interaction between the two (p.980).

Listening Activities

Elmaqsuod, G. G. A. (2024) described listening activities in which the individual who listens takes part in five crucial interconnected stages. These stages include hearing, comprehending, recalling, assessing, and reacting. Additionally, listening involves important elements such as distinguishing between different sounds, acknowledging words and understanding their definitions, as well as recognizing the grammatical structures of words. Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011) suggested that listening activities can be divided into subcategories, which include pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening activities.

Pre-listening Activities. According to Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011) Prelistening activities "usually have two primary goals: (a) to help activate student's prior knowledge, build up their expectations for the coming information; and (b) to provide the necessary context for the specific listening task"(p.982).

While-listening Activities. As students listen to someone speak, they constantly evaluate and modify their expectations. They make assumptions and form opinions based on what they hear. Listening exercises typically have three main goals: to help students better understand the speaker's language and ideas, to help students pay closer attention to the way the speaker structures their speech, and to encourage students to think critically about what they hear (Gilakjani and Ahmadi, 2011). He also mentioned that activities have some of the following purposes "focus students 'comprehension of the speaker 's language and ideas; focus students 'attention on such things as the speaker 's organizational patterns; encourage

students 'critical reactions and personal responses to the speaker 's ideas and use of language" (p.982).

Post-listening Activities. Post-listening exercises are essential because they allow students to improve their listening skills. Post-listening exercises help students to connect what they have listened to, with their own beliefs and experiences, and promote critical and interpretive listening as well as critical thinking. These exercises also provide teachers with the opportunity to evaluate and confirm the students' comprehension and progress from literal understanding to interpretive and essential understanding (Gilakjani and Ahmadi, 2011).

Critical Listening

Critical listening is an active cognitive process that involves engaging with spoken information to understand, analyze, evaluate, and interpret the message being conveyed. It requires focusing one's attention, processing information, discerning meaning, and making judgments about the content, context, and credibility of the communication (Medd, 2023). Another definition proposed by (Cook, 2010, as cited in Yumelking, 2017) is "when students listen to a story, they use critical listening skills and learn the structure of the story" (p.1). He also mentions "Critical listener understands the spoken language through finding the fact and opinion of the story that he may accept it is true. They think critically as they listen"(p.1). Finally, Jalongo (2008) proposes, "When we say that we want to improve children's listening skills, what we mean is that we want to improve the three highest levels of listening: interpretation, evaluation, and response. These are the "higher-order" or "critical listening" skills" (p.11)

Levels of Critical Listening

Critical listening is an advanced form of listening that requires higher-order cognitive skills such as analysis, interpretation, judgment, and evaluation. According to Tubail (2015), it demands intense concentration and a deep understanding of the speech being heard. To interact appropriately with auditory speech, one needs to be able to discriminate, compare, and understand the speaker's goals. Critical listening involves recognizing and deriving relationships between different pieces of information and progresses dynamically and quickly from easy levels to more complicated ones.

Numerous studies have demonstrated the importance of critical listening and the need to teach and develop it. Critical listening encourages and develops thinking by employing scientific and practical approaches. It is closely linked to other language skills such as speaking, reading, and writing, and thus helps create them. Critically listening helps students produce, reformulate, and evaluate meanings, enabling them to renew their knowledge (McPeck, 2016).

In 2019, Sakarya Erkek et al. mentioned that "Developing critical listening skills is possible through the use of different methods/techniques and classroom activities" (p.640). They also described some characteristics of a critical listener:

1. They are active: They seek deliberate understanding and messages when they listen.

2. They are completely meticulous: They do not form an answer until the speaker finishes his / her speech.

3. They think systematically, and analytically: They resort to knowledge, claims, and reasoning.

4. They seek clarity: they ask follow-up questions until they conclude.

5. They are sensitive: They interpret the speaker's explanations to show that they understand.

6. They can empathize: They try to understand the needs, assumptions, values, and ideas of the speaker.

7. They collaborate: they seek a common path in the combination of ideas and inputs. (Sakarya Erkek et al, 2019, p.640)

In addition to academic performance, critical listening improves children's ability to converse favorably, understand others, increase self-esteem, and criticize objectively. It teaches children to efficiently use information by linking it to their schemas, critiquing, interpreting, and learning new literacies that they can use to draw logical conclusions and judgments (Kazu, H., & Demiralp, D., 2017).

Additionally, when assessing students' critical listening skills, it is important to evaluate their ability to demonstrate effective listening techniques, such as:

Comprehension. This involves comprehending spoken messages through understanding the main ideas, supporting details, and underlying themes. Assessments may include comprehension questions, summaries, or paraphrasing exercises to gauge students' understanding of the content Tubail (2015).

Analysis. Students should have the ability to analyze spoken discourse and evaluate key points, transitions, and argumentation (Tubail, 2015).

Evaluation. This involves assessing the credibility, validity, and persuasiveness of arguments, and identifying bias, logical fallacies, and unsupported assertions in spoken messages (Tubail, 2015).

Inference. Students need to develop the ability to draw logical conclusions, make predictions, and infer meaning from implicit or implied information in spoken communication. Assessments may include understanding the speaker's attitudes, intentions, or emotions based on their tone of voice or choice of language (Tubail, 2015).

Synthesis. This involves combining information from various sources to generate new insights. Assessments may include synthesizing spoken texts with prior knowledge (Tubail, 2015).

Reflection. According to Tubail (2015), students should be able to reflect critically on their listening processes and strategies. They should identify areas for improvement and develop metacognitive awareness of their listening skills.

The theoretical background presented here highlights the importance of storytelling as a pedagogical strategy for promoting critical listening skills. This foundation will guide my forthcoming action research project aimed at improving students' listening abilities through the use of storytelling techniques. By embracing these theoretical principles, my goal is to not only enhance learning but also make a positive impact on the lives of students in Copacabana, Antioquia.

Research Question

How can implementing storytelling techniques encourage critical listening among third-grade students at a public institution in Copacabana, Antioquia?

Objectives

General Objective

To encourage critical listening among third-grade students using storytelling techniques.

Specific Objectives

- To assess students' initial level of critical listening to measure the impact of storytelling techniques.
- To monitor and document the progress of students' critical listening skills throughout storytelling sessions.
- To explore the effects of various storytelling techniques on enhancing critical listening.
- To compare and analyze students' critical listening changes through storytelling sessions.

Action Plan

The development of this action plan was implemented in two cycles, the first cycle was developed in four weeks while the second cycle had to be developed in three weeks because of the institution schedule and festivities around Virgen Mary. The planned actions within each cycle line up with the school's syllabus and methodologies that focus on holistic learning and with the project goal of evaluating the effect that storytelling has on the development of critical listening of third-grade students. The participants were the student teacher, cooperating teacher, and third-grade students.

The efficacy of the interventions will be measured using a variety of data collection instruments such as an initial diagnostic test, self-assessment, interviews with the cooperating teacher, students' class work, voice recordings, external observer protocol, and student-teacher journals. These instruments were chosen to capture the progress made during the storytelling sessions and reinforce the data triangulation.

During the first cycle the stories for each session were chosen, ensuring that the selected stories were engaging and designed to progressively encourage students' critical listening. Following that, the storytelling sessions were initiated, with each session being developed in three stages according to Ellis & Brewster (2002) and Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011) Storytelling activities can be divided into subcategories: pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening activities. The development of the pre-listening, while listening, and post-listening involved activating prior knowledge, providing context for the listening task, and the use of questions as a main strategy for encouraging critical thinking and story comprehension. Specific tasks related to elements of the story were worked on by students and shared their reflections with the class.

During the second cycle storytelling strategies were continued. In this cycle, reflections on topics such as self-esteem, self-care, and different types of families were made by the students. These topics allowed the opportunity to foster listening comprehension and critical listening through subjects connected with their context. The gap in critical listening was

intended to be closed by this action plan, creating a transformative educational experience for third-grade students.

Development of Actions

This action research aims to use storytelling techniques as an intervention strategy to improve critical listening in third-grade students. The development of the actions for this study took seven weeks, the first cycle was developed in four weeks while the second cycle had to be developed in three weeks because of the institution schedule and festivities around Virgen Mary. The expected result is an improvement in the students' critical listening.

During the first week, students were informed about the project and were given the consent form to seek their parents' approval for participation. Also, during this week the materials for the project were organized, including the lending of the big books selected, the diagnosis activity, the student teacher journal template, the external observer protocol, and the student´s self-evaluation. In the second week, I implemented the listening diagnosis test but this diagnosis didn't work because the diagnosis created was based only on evaluating listening skills such as keyword recognition, general understanding, sequence of events, prediction, inference, identification of emotions, and contextual vocabulary. But leaving aside the critical listening aspects that are very relevant to the investigation.

For the third week, I implemented the first storytelling session the story that I chose was The Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle. The objective for this session was to monitor and document students' critical listening (this activity was used as baseline data) and to determine if incorporating storytelling strategies could encourage that skill set. This intervention was evaluated through pre-, while, and post-intervention activities. During the pre-listening, I encouraged students to make predictions about the title and introduced new vocabulary. During the session, predicting and comprehending questions were used, and interactive discussions allowed students to engage with one another. There was a table for students to fill in the journal tracking the path of the caterpillar; this activity gave me the

possibility to evaluate students' listening comprehension, general understanding of the story, and sequence of events that according to Feldman et al. (2013) " A teacher can collect the work of a particular pupil in order to study his/her development (all the work, or a selection of the best, or an arbitrary selection)" (p.81).

Finally, in post-listening activities, students had to write a short reflection about the story where I evaluated the level of critical listening based on Tubail (2015) critical listening is an advanced form of listening that requires higher-order cognitive skills such as analysis, interpretation, judgment, and evaluation.

For the fourth week, I used the story A Color of His Own" by Leo Lionni. The objective of this session was to monitor and document students' critical listening improvements and explore the effectiveness of storytelling techniques. During pre-listening, I encouraged predictions, I used brainstorming to introduce the new vocabulary. During listening, comprehension questions were posted, as well as reflective questions about partners' similarities and uniqueness. Finally, we made a class list of similarities and uniqueness. For the post-listening, students drew a self-portrait where they had to describe their uniqueness, and at the end, they shared what they drew with the class.

In the second cycle, I continued with the storytelling sessions. In week five I introduced the book It's Okay to Be Different" by Todd Parr. The objectives were to continue monitoring and documenting students' critical listening improvements and explore the impact of visual storytelling techniques. As a pre-listening activity, I implemented a discussion about differences and similarities to introduce new vocabulary. While reading I made pauses to discuss key points of the story and talked about the message of inclusion conveyed in the story. As a post-listening activity, students had to create an *It´s Okay book,* using the sentence model "It's okay to_____" they had to create at least 10 sentences. At the end of the class, students shared their books and made a reflection about the importance of accepting differences.

The session six involved "I Like Me!" by Nancy Carlson. The focus of this session continued to be to monitor and document improvements in critical listening through storytelling techniques. In this case, the pre-listening discussion was centered on self-esteem

and self-care, I used prediction based on the book cover. While reading I asked comprehension questions and discussed personal preferences and things students like about themselves. I encouraged them to think about the daily routines that they do that demonstrate their self-care and self-esteem. In the post-listening activity, students had to create a daily routine, using a model that I had given to them, in this activity they had to draw the routines that demonstrated their self-care and self-esteem.

In week seven, the final session involved a storytelling session with "The Family Book" by Todd Parr. The objective was to collect data that allowed me to determine if my implementations were effective by comparing the diagnostic activity with this activity. During pre-listening activities, I used predictions based on the title and pictures. While listening, I asked questions about the story and characters and what they thought and felt. Also, I asked the students about the importance of accepting differences and reflecting on their families. Post-listening involved a reflective activity where students created a family book and wrote about what makes their family special. Also, I implemented a self-assessment where students had to reflect on their performance and improvement during this implementation.

In each session, I wrote the details and relevant aspects of the class in my journal according to Feldman et al. (2013) "The research diary is one of the most important research methods and is very commonly used by teachers doing research. It also makes a good way into research." (p.11). Based on the data gathered I created a student self-assessment, and external observer protocol. This tool gave me a new perspective on the developed session (Feldman et al., 2013), these external observers protocols were filled out by my cooperating teacher and sometimes by my advisory teacher, that in Feldman et al. (2013) words "By acting as an observer, a fellow teacher or an external critical friend can provide a new perspective on the classroom, if only by having 'blind spots' different from those of the teacher." (p.90). I also used a voice recording to keep the students' interactions and reflections during the sessions as Feldman et al. (2013) suggested "tape recordings can be valuable in giving insights into pupils' thinking" (p.95).

Data Analysis

This research follows an action research methodology that according to (John Elliott, 1991, as cited in Feldman et al. 2013), action research is 'the study of a social situation to improve the quality of action within its' (p.4). In this action research study, 48 students participated. The data was collected from different sources including Student-teacher journals, audio recordings, students' self-assessments, external observer protocols, and students' work. I followed the process suggested by Feldman et al. (2013), which involves a four-stage process: reading, selecting, organizing, and presenting the information, followed by analyzing and drawing conclusions.

After conducting storytelling sessions, I organized the information into summary sheets and highlighted themes and categories relevant to my research question. This facilitated the comparison and data analysis. I did this for all the data collected. After that, I compared the initial interventions used as baseline data and the final activity to analyze changes in students' critical listening.

Finally, I began triangulation of data as Feldman et al. (2013) mention "Triangulation is an important method for contrasting and comparing different accounts of the same situation" (p.115). This triangulation was made with all data sources to ensure trustworthiness, as proposed by Feldman et al. (2013). This analysis helped me understand the potential impact of implementing storytelling strategies on critical listening in the given context.

Findings and Interpretations

The current research investigates how using storytelling techniques can encourage critical listening in third-grade students. This chapter describes the data analysis process carried out after using the selected instruments to gather information during the implementation of my teaching intervention. These tools included student work, student-teacher journals, students' self-assessments, external observer protocols, and audio recordings. Which according to Creswell and Poth (2017) allowed an inductive and deductive process. Once the analysis process was complete, the results were organized into three categories: story comprehension, critical listening development, and student engagement.

Story Comprehension

This category describes how the implementation of storytelling improves the listening comprehension process in third-grade students. (Vandergrift et al. 2006) emphasized that listening comprehension "is a highly integrative skill. It plays an important role in the process of language learning/acquisition facilitating the emergence of other language skills" (p.436). Listening comprehension is essential for developing critical listening skills, as it allows children to first understand a story, deconstruct it, and apply situations to their reality. It is the post-listening exercises that help students connect what they have heard with their own beliefs and experiences, thus promoting critical and interpretive listening, as well as critical thinking (Gilakjani and Ahmadi, 2011).

Hence, for this study, listening comprehension was defined as the combination of skills, processes, and strategies that students used to acquire and analyze information, as well as the reflective process. During the diagnosis activity, I assessed students' listening comprehension, general understanding of the story, and sequence of events. This diagnosis test was divided into three parts, the first part was a table that students had to fill in the journal tracking the path of the caterpillar, in the second part students had to organize a series of

images according to the butterfly cycle and in the third part students had to color some images according to what they understand about the story. The following table describes the criteria I used to assess the listening comprehension process during each session. This first evaluation, results in a basic understanding, showing difficulty in some students in remembering details and understanding sequences.

Table 1. *Listening Comprehension story "The Very Hungry Caterpillar"*

Criteria	Poor	Min	Fair	Good	Excellent
Comprehension of Content					
Identifies main ideas and key details from the story		1	19	21	5
Retention of Information					
Remembers and recalls key information from the story		1	4	36	5
Analysis and Evaluation					
Interprets and applies information from the story		1	14	27	4

However, during the development of my pedagogical intervention, this process was improving, as shown by the results of session four in which the students showed a notable improvement in retelling and comprehension, demonstrating a better understanding of the story. For this story, students had to write 10 sentences using the sentence pattern "It is ok", for that task, they had to recall the main topic of the story which was about similarities and differences and they had to apply the story information with their experiences.

Table 2. *Listening Comprehension story "It's Okay to Be Different"*

Criteria	Poor	Min	Fair	Good	Excellent
Comprehension of Content					
Identifies main ideas and key details from the story			3	18	23
Retention of Information					
Remembers and recalls key information from the story			3	21	20
Analysis and Evaluation					
Interprets and applies information from the story			3	18	23

The external observer, who on this occasion was the advisor teacher, mentioned that most of the class showed understanding of the story read in class, when asked for details they could answer in Spanish what it was about (External observer, May 8th, 2024). She also

mentions student retention of information "Yes, they were able to retain information since when they finished reading they gave their opinions regarding the topic discussed, this means that they remembered the story in general." (External observer, May 8th, 2024).

Also, in my journal I wrote "Students demonstrated an understanding of the plot and character motivations and were able to infer and predict with much more accuracy." (Journal entry, May 8th, 2024). In this way, the students had a considerable improvement regarding comprehension, they made inferences and were able to relate the stories told to their lives, which shows that comprehension, information retention, and reflection evolved during the application of the project.

Critical Listening Development

To respond to the specific research objectives, this category reveals how students were able to progress in critical analysis, the expression of opinion, and assuming a critical stance towards their reality encouraged by reflection on issues heard in the listening activities. Critical listening is a process that consists of understanding, analyzing, and evaluating what is said, as stated by Tubail (2015).

As evidence, the analysis of the data obtained in the first intervention revealed that students showed some critical listening skills, but there is still room for improvement. "Some reflections show the student's ability to evaluate and articulate their thoughts with the themes of the story such as in the very hungry caterpillar story when the students can see the caterpillar's journey from it was an egg to becoming a butterfly. Some students demonstrate that they have a certain development of critical thinking." (Journal entry, April 17th, 2024). "Some students interpreted the caterpillar's journey as a metaphor for personal development, highlighting a deeper level of critical thinking." (Journal entry, April 17th, 2024).

The following evidence was taken from the first intervention and we can appreciate the students´ initial level of reflection: "Mientras participaban en la actividad previa a la escucha discutiendo el título del libro y haciendo predicciones, muchas de sus respuestas eran

superficiales y carecían de profundidad. A lo largo de la lección, algunos estudiantes expresaron sus pensamientos sobre el viaje y las transformaciones de la oruga, pero sus reflexiones a menudo reiteraban observaciones básicas en lugar de proporcionar análisis más profundos." (external observer, April 17th, 2024). Moreover, and as part of the post-listening activities, the students wrote a short reflection about the story, showing a certain level of reflection. **Student A:** "yo aprendí que uno no puede comer tanto". **Student B:** "yo aprendí que nos debemos moderar con la comida y en todo". **Student C:** "yo aprendí que todos tenemos un ciclo o proceso de vida" and **Student D**: "La reflexión es que tenemos que tener paciencia porque la oruga tuvo paciencia para que se volviera mariposa" (Students work April 17th, 2024). According to Davies, A. (2007) "You can almost see students working through the logical process, anticipating what comes next and discovering the real meaning of the tale (p.6).

After four interventions working on critical listening, the last intervention revealed an improvement in fostering deeper critical analysis and expressing opinions. In this time the story used was "The Family Book" by Todd Parr, this story depicts the diversity of family structures in a way that is easy to young readers to understand. This improvement was corroborated by my cooperating teacher as an external observer: "Los estudiantes expresan sus opiniones acerca de sus familias incluso tratan de utilizar el vocabulario aprendido para mencionar algunos miembros de la familia en Ingles." (External observer, May 15th, 2024). She also mentioned "Los estudiantes comprenden el cuento y lo relacionan con su vida diaria, generando reflexiones acerca los comportamientos, actitudes y sentimientos de los miembros de la familia" (External observer, May 15th, 2024).

Additionally, in the class voice recordings when I showed a family with an adopted son and I asked them, how would you feel if you were adopted?" what do you think if one of your classmates were adopted? do you treat them differently?" some students said: **Student A**: "Ser adoptado es una situación muy difícil y antes de burlarse o rechazarlo uno debe preguntarle si lo puede ayudar". **Student B:** "Si no tienes nada bueno que decir, es mejor no decir nada". **Student C:** "Es que uno como niño no decide tener un solo padre o una sola

madre o tener padres adoptivos, eso es una situación de adultos, pero debemos ser empáticos con nuestros compañeros si eso les pasa". **Student D:** "Cada uno tiene una familia diferente y cada uno de nosotros es diferentes y debemos aprender a aceptarnos como somos y aceptar a los demás" (Voice recording May 15th, 2024).

Vandergrift et al. (2006) suggested that to become a critical listener, one needs to do more than just listen for the main ideas and details. Students should also try to analyze, evaluate, and appreciate what they hear, while also attempting to understand the speakers' intended message. This is in line with the reflections posted in my journal: "One impressive moment was when I showed a family with two dads. I asked them, "How do you think the children in this family feel? How would you feel if your family looked like this?" one student answered: Yo no me sentiría diferente, me sentiría feliz porque tengo unos padres que me quieren, no hay nada de malo en ser gay o lesbiana, lo importante es el amor (Journal entry, May 15th, 2024).

Additionally, as a part of the artifacts for gathering data, I implement a "Self-assessment" to foster students' reflection in their learning process during this pedagogical intervention. As Andrade (2000) mentioned, self-assessment is a formative assessment process in which students reflect on the quality of their work, compare it with specific objectives and established criteria, and review accordingly. Another definition was proposed by Jalongo (2008). Self-assessment is essential in developing critical listening skills. It encourages students to reflect on their listening processes, recognize their strengths and weaknesses, and take proactive steps to improve their abilities.

This self-assessment took place during the final intervention and served as a probe of students' reflections about their progress during the storytelling sessions.

Table 3. Self-Assessment
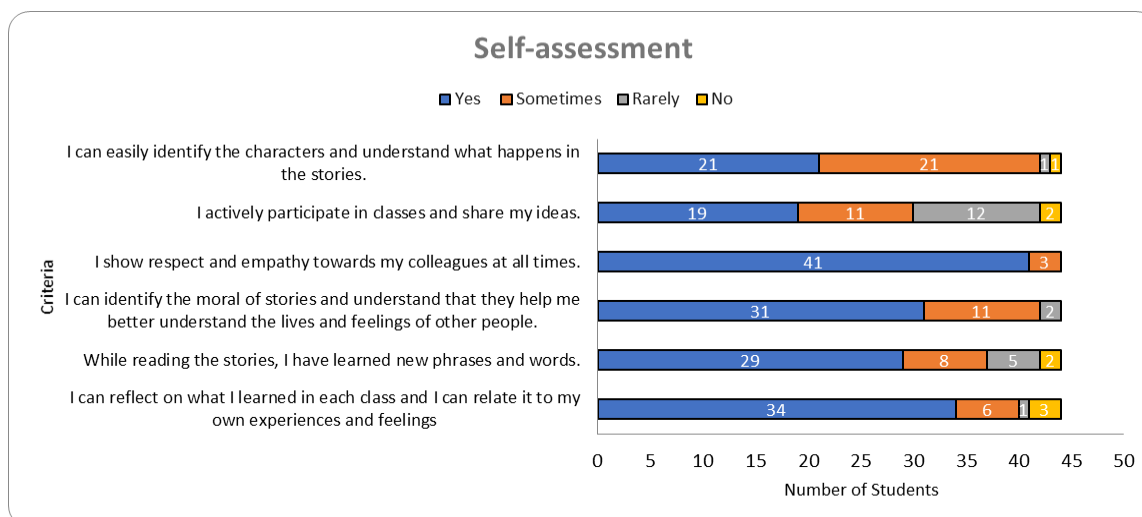
In addition, this evaluation tool is already used by the cooperating teacher, she uses it every day as part of the aptitude and attitude evaluation of the students, which is quite positive since this device is more accurate, and has useful information about student reflection process. She also mentioned "Alentar a los estudiantes a reflexionar sobre las historias contadas, establecer objetivos y utilizar estrategias para superar los desafíos, promueve la conciencia metacognitiva y les permite a los estudiantes apropiarse de su propio aprendizaje" (External observer, May 2th, 2024).

In the entries made in my journal, I was able to show that self-assessment has been a tool that provides very important value to the teaching-learning process since it allows students to reflect on their process (Personal journal entry, May 15th, 2024). "The self-assessment activity provided me with valuable information about student's perceptions of their progress and served as a starting point to adapt future interventions where I can meet their needs more effectively" (Personal journal entry, May 15th, 2024).

Certainly, this evidence demonstrates that students improve their critical listening during storytelling sessions.

Student Engagement through storytelling

Storytelling strategies that I implemented were vivid storytelling which uses descriptive and exciting language to tell the story, changing the tone of voice and making facial expressions, multisensory storytelling which uses music or sound effects, and visual storytelling which uses visual elements such as images, flashcards, or puppets to complement that narration. The use of these strategies shows enhanced student engagement. Most students demonstrated increased enthusiasm and participation during storytelling sessions, actively listening and interacting with the materials. They enjoyed the creative activities and were excited to share their thoughts and ideas: " (Journal entry, April 24th, 2024).

Moreover, in the external observer protocol my advisory teacher remarks this statement "*La profesora utilizo muy buen lenguaje corporal para contar la historia, también utilizó muchas preguntas para orientar la comprensión de cada página y relacionar el contenido con las vidas de los estudiantes. Otra de las estrategias fue dar sus propios ejemplos de autoestima, cómo ella se cuidaba, esto ayudó a que los estudiantes se entusiasmaran en participar y contar sobre ellos*" (External observer, May 8th, 2024). Additionally, my Cooperating teacher made similar comments about this strategy, "La profesora usó muy buenas estrategias, el uso de imágenes y canciones hace que los niños mantengan la atención e interactúen con mayor facilidad con el texto" (External observer, April 17th, 2024).

Besides, these strategies were accompanied by interactive questions, according to Richards and Schmidt (2013), the use of questions in the ESL learning process is a powerful tool that encourages active participation, critical thinking, and deeper comprehension. They also state that by asking questions, teachers can guide students to think more deeply about the content, clarify their understanding, and engage more with the materials (Richards & Schmidt, 2013).

Moreover, during the storytelling sessions as part of the strategy to keep students engaged and focused. I asked evaluative questions, divergent questions, and global questions that encouraged students to listen and think critically about the story actively. For example, I paused at key points and asked, "What do you think will happen next?" or "Why did the character do that?". These types of questions as Richards and Schmidt (2013) suggested elicit student responses that vary or diverge and require students to make an evaluation and understand the details of a text.

Furthermore, I apply the model suggested by Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011) and (Ellis & Brewster, 2002) pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening activities "This model incorporates opportunities for reflection, experimentation, and further reflection in which children can plan, do, and review as follows by thinking about what they are going to do and why, and about what they already know with the story" (p. 22). This played a crucial role in maintaining students' interest and engagement.

However, a few students occasionally struggled to stay engaged, needing additional encouragement and support as I mentioned in my journal "The storytelling sessions were enjoyable for the students, it is important to complement them with other activities to maintain the student's interest." (Journal entry, May 15th, 2024). And also, my cooperating teacher remarks: "Durante las sesiones se pudo evidenciar que algunos estudiantes estaban un tanto dispersos, esto llevó a que en algunos momentos se viera perjudicada la organización del grupo, es importante realizar pausas para retomar la atención de los estudiantes" (External observer, May 15th, 2024).

Conclusions

This action research project explores the integration of storytelling strategies to encourage critical listening among third-grade students. The study includes strategies such as vivid storytelling, multisensory interaction, and visual elements in storytelling sessions. Each session included pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening activities designed to progressively develop students' critical listening skills.

The findings demonstrated that the storytelling approach significantly improved students' listening comprehension skills. Initially, students express a basic understanding of the stories, struggling with details and sequence. However, as the storytelling sessions progressed, students showed notable improvement in retelling and comprehending stories, identifying main ideas and key details, retaining information, and analyzing and evaluating content.

Moreover, the intervention fostered the development of students' critical listening skills. In the beginning, students' reflections and responses were superficial. Over time, students began to demonstrate deeper critical thinking. They became critical at interpreting and evaluating stories, relating them to their own experiences.

Besides, the use of storytelling strategies significantly improves student engagement. Most students showed enthusiasm and participation during storytelling sessions. They actively listened, interacted with the materials, and shared their thoughts and ideas. The strategies used, such as interactive questions helped maintain students' interest and facilitated a deeper connection with the stories.

Recommendations

Regular self-assessment practices can encourage students to reflect on their learning progress. Integrating self-assessment activities into the curriculum fosters metacognitive skills, empowering students to set goals, monitor their progress, and proactively enhance their listening abilities.

While the majority of students respond positively to storytelling, some may need additional support to remain engaged. Teachers should be attentive to these needs, employing diverse instructional strategies to sustain interest. Consistent feedback and positive reinforcement are essential for maintaining student motivation and participation.

Future research should explore the long-term impact of storytelling techniques on students' critical listening skills. Additionally, studies could analyze how the cultural context influences storytelling, and how this influence affects students' listening comprehension and development of critical thinking.

Moreover, is important to continue investigating the impact of storytelling on other language skills, such as speaking, writing, and reading. This study could reveal whether storytelling enhances overall language proficiency or is more effective for specific skills.

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