

## THE ROLE OF CHECKING RETELLING IN TEACHING ENGLISH

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### Abstract

Retelling is a very important strategy especially in the English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom. This study investigates the effectiveness of retelling as a reading strategy for university students of ESL. Three A2 level, two B1 level and three B2 level students participated in the study. They were divided into two groups (Group A and B) according to their English language competence and other factors. Their retelling outcomes including oral, and written during a 2 month period were collected and analyzed. During the study, students were being taught stories and asked to retell the stories orally and/or in writing through creative activities. The results show an improvement in the story structure, length of the retelling, reading comprehension, and confidence. Major improvement in vocabulary growth was found. Self-evaluations and observations indicate that the participants enjoyed story readings, their attitude toward reading became more positive, and they gained self-confidence. The results suggest that retelling could be a potentially useful reading strategy for ESL learners when creative activities are used.

**Keywords:** retelling, creative, develop

### INTRODUCTION

The aim of this article is to show that retelling, that is, the reader's recall and transformation of a text after it is read, is effective for English as a Second Language (ESL). Retelling has been found to significantly improve the story comprehension, sense of story structure, and oral language complexity of NSE (Koskinen et al, 1988; Morrow, 1984, 1985, 1986; Stoicovy, 1997). This study will examine the effect of the retelling strategy on reading comprehension, vocabulary development, and attitudes toward reading of A2, B1 and B2 ESL learners by analyzing the oral and written products of ESL students

Some experts are in favor of using retelling for the English class, they find retelling just a useful technique. We also found out that retelling is not merely a technique; it is a flexible strategy which can be used according to teachers' and learners' needs. It has a lot of benefits in order to develop language skills. Article suggests three important findings about retelling:

1).Retelling is an active procedure that involves children in the reconstruction of text 2 and also allows interaction between adults and children (Morrow, 1985),

2) Oral retelling of what has been listened to or read results in increased comprehension and recall of discourse (Gambrell, Koskinen, & Kapinus, 1984 ; Lipson & Wixson, 1997), and

3) Retelling encourages both integration and personalization of content, helping children see how parts of text interrelate and how the text meshes with their own experience (Gambrell, Pfeiffer, & Wilson, 1985).

In short, prior research suggests that retelling has many benefits and merits which will help learners engage in reading and provide their literacy growth. Retellings can help a lot ESL learners to develop speaking skills and not only speaking skills. Therefore, in the current study we will try to examine whether retelling does help ESL learners' literacy development. Retelling will be examined as a comprehension strategy that could help ESL learners grow in their learning and develop their comprehension and oral skills. In particular, this study will deal with retelling stories (narratives) since these provide a context for learners to interact orally, and in writing thereby giving students natural opportunities to communicate and offering them the cultural schema which ESL learners might not otherwise have.

Retelling is an activity to help students focus on their understanding of what they read and challenge them to communicate what they have learned to others. Retelling can come in the form of an oral presentation or a written assignment and involves attention to the main narrative components including character, setting, problem, events, solution and theme. Retelling, which is considered a postreading or postlistening recall in which readers or listeners tell what they remember either orally or in writing or illustrations (Kalmbach, 1986), is perhaps one of the simplest and most powerful ways to enhance children's comprehension and their desire to read (Searfoss et al, 1994)

### WHY USING CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

Reading activities consist of the following stages: pre-reading, while-reading and post reading activities, in this article we focus on one of the while-reading activities, retelling, more precisely how to check retelling in a creative way. Some experts do not consider retelling as a vital part of the learning process, but others are in favor of it. Retelling asks students to recall as many details from the story as they can. This is an important strategy at the early reading level, as it builds foundations of comprehension and story structure that can be extended into inferential interpretations at higher levels.

Retelling requires from the reader to organize text information in order to provide a personal rendition of it. Retelling has been found a significantly improve story comprehension, sense of story structure, and oral language complexity (Koskinen et al, 1988).

Retelling encourages readers to attend to the meaning of the text, reinforces elements of story structure, such as characters, setting, plot, encourages communication and oral language developments. As an assessment strategy retelling demonstrates what the students understand and remember about the story, reveals what the students consider important about the story, indicates what the students know about the story structure and literary language, demonstrates the students' vocabulary and oral language development.

It is also important to teach the students how to retell a story, and what will be expected of their retelling, we can use different techniques to check retelling. Below we give some activities how to check retelling in a creative way, it helps us to avoid rote learning and boring process of checking retelling.

#### Activity 1

Title	The WH questions used in retelling
Aim	To develop students ability to come up with short/concrete answers To develop a more natural narration
Level	Elementary and above
Language focus	Language of narration
Stage	Practice/ checking content
Procedure	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Teacher divides the students into two groups</li> <li>2. Teacher asks the groups to look through the text</li> <li>3. Teacher gives the slips with the questions: <b>Group one:</b> Who is Helen? What does she do at 8 o'clock? When does she have breakfast? What does she do in the afternoon? <b>Group two:</b> what does she do in the evening? When does she go to the theatre? What does she do at 12? Why</li> </ol>

	<p>do you like Helen?</p> <p>4. Teacher warn the students to remember their questions: they stand opposite to each other ask and answer the questions: for each right question and answer they get points.</p> <p>5. In case of mistakes other sts correct and get extra points</p> <p>6. Recap: freer practice: Teacher asks the studentsmgggu0cjy, to compare their lives with Helen's: Helen is a singer but I am a student. Helen gets up at eight bit I get up at 9</p>
Reflection	Activity worked well. The instructions were clear and specific, all the students were involved and they enjoyed the whole process.

Activity 2

Title	Narrative as a rumour / from Ruth Wajnryb“ stories ‘
Aim	a.develop students’ concentration skills ; b.guide sts towards noting down the differences between the rumour and the actual info given in the content of the text and relate them.
Level :	Elementary and above
Language focus	Language of narration
Stage	Practice / checking the content
Procedure	<p>1.teacher tells the sts that she turned the paragraph into a rumour and asks them to listen and note down the differences</p> <p>2. teacher starts the rumor the following way: Guess what , my teacher met Franky the Monster he has got a very small head and five big blue eyes. He has got six arms and seven hands.....</p> <p>3.students are responsible for giving actual info , they listen and add the missing info or recap the differences between the rumour and the paragraph itself</p>
Reflection	The activity worked well but it was very noisy, I didn't divide the sts into groups, they were shouting as they wanted to present the actual info and get more points.

There are many other activities that can also be used to check retelling, the most common feature of these activities is to bring enjoyable, motivational, encouraging atmosphere into the speaking classes. With the help of these activities, students step into action and are exposed to use the language they learn commucatively.

## METHODS

To find out how effective checking retelling through creative activities is three A2 level, two B1 level and three B2 level students participated in the study. They were divided into two groups (Group A and B) according to their English language competence and other factors. Their retelling outcomes including oral, and written during 2 months period were collected and analyzed by the authors.

## RESULTS

As it was mentioned above this article examined whether retelling is an effective reading strategy for ESL learners. The study set out to answer the following research questions:

1. Should checking retelling be used and how ?
2. To what extent and retelling products show evidence of increased use of story structures and improved learner vocabulary?
3. What other skills do checking retelling help students to develop?

To answer the first research question, students' feedback was analyzed, all students are in favor of using checking retelling but only through creative activities, to avoid rote learning.

As for the answer of the second question, students' overall reading comprehension improved in spite of individual variation. At the end of the study, some students could independently retell stories with various structural elements, including a detailed explanation of the plot and the theme. The question about story structure had a positive answer. There was a noticeable improvement regarding their use of the story structural elements. At first, their retellings did not have the structural elements which made their retellings somewhat unrelated to the original story. However, by the end of the study, almost everybody could retell the story they read with various story structures. Regarding the vocabulary question, the vocabulary growth was varied among students. This study did not provide a strong evidence of a vocabulary growth in all students. However, it is noteworthy that most of them made continuous efforts to use newly learned words in their retelling and in their self-evaluation.

As for the last question, the study showed that along with the development of speaking skills, it also promotes the development of social and emotional skills in students, increasing their creativity, imagination, productivity and self-confidence. Studies have shown us how important it is to integrate checking retelling into the teaching process.

## CONCLUSION

In the new paradigm of learning, the role of student is more important than teachers. We need to have interactive teaching and this changing role of education is inevitable. In the fast developing 21st century various innovative methods are being introduced to check retelling in a creative way. Today, through the innovation and development in the field of language teaching, foreign language teaching has become more student-centered, the methods, techniques, activities are all chosen according to needs and expectations of students and it is more based on communicative method.

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