



Training storytelling ability for students majoring in preschool education at Thai Nguyen College

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Abstract

The article is based on theories of storytelling and the storytelling ability requirements for students, conducting a survey on the current state of teaching and training storytelling skills for students majoring in Preschool Education at Thai Nguyen College. From the assessment of the current situation, we propose three solutions: Strengthening the design of literary appreciation and creative storytelling exercises; Teaching - learning theory combined with storytelling practice; Cultivating literary appreciation and expressive storytelling ability through practical classes. These solutions not only help students grasp and develop storytelling skills but also enhance their oral language expression and positive and effective thinking skills, meeting the requirements of the new general education.

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1. Introduction

Storytelling plays a crucial role in shaping and developing various essential skills for students. It helps them develop the ability to analyze and synthesize information, as well as skills in summarizing and expressing themselves. Additionally, storytelling also trains oral communication skills, expands vocabulary, and conveys emotions in a fluent and authentic manner. These skills also enable students to embody characters while telling stories and understand the significance of each narrative. Storytelling not only influences intellectual development but also positively impacts students' ethical and emotional aspects, contributing to the formation and reinforcement of personal qualities and characteristics ^{[1], [6]}. In the context of preschool education, storytelling skills serve not only as entertainment but also as a vital tool for the comprehensive development of children, encompassing language, cognitive abilities, social skills, and ethics. Especially for preschool teachers, the ability to tell stories is considered an important aspect of teaching profession. To meet the industry's outcomes, training storytelling skills through relevant courses during the preschool teacher training process is necessary and should be conducted regularly ^[7].

The article is based on theories of storytelling, storytelling skills, and the current situation of training storytelling skills for students. It aims to propose solutions for enhancing storytelling skills for students majoring in Preschool Education at Thai Nguyen College. The goal is to equip them with the necessary abilities and skills to meet the educational requirements in preschools.

2. Content

2.1. Storytelling and the requirements for students' storytelling ability

2.1.1. Storytelling

Storytelling is a method of conveying information, ideas, or experiences through spoken or written words to narrate a specific story or event ^[11]. It is a common form of sharing information that has been prevalent from ancient times to the present day.

When storytelling, the storyteller can employ various elements such as dialogue, emotional descriptions, and language to create an imaginative

the storyteller can employ various elements such as dialogue, emotional descriptions, and language to create an imaginative space for the listener or reader. Stories often carry a message, lesson, or specific purpose, such as making an impression, entertaining, or educating the audience. The goal of storytelling may be to captivate the listener's attention, convey a clear message, establish a connection between the storyteller and the audience, or even preserve memories of an important event or story [5, 6, 11].

2.1.2. Requirements for students' storytelling ability.

a) Improving the the ability to perceive literary works.

Literary works are unique, complex artistic creations with multiple meanings. Storytelling texts in the storytelling sub-discipline at the primary school level are outstanding literary works, selected typically, with high artistic and humanistic qualities. To fully grasp the essence of these works, teachers need to enhance their ability to appreciate literature. When reading a literary work, teachers should not only understand but also be moved by the prominent artistic values, profound and sublime aspects embedded by the author in their intellectual offspring. Teachers need to thoroughly comprehend the storytelling text through its multi-meaning language, rich expressiveness, and master the characteristics of the literary genre, specifically in this context, stories. Subsequently, they can appropriately apply storytelling techniques and use the right narrative language [11].

By appreciating storytelling texts effectively, teachers can empathize and express thoughts about the fate of each character in the story. This, in turn, allows them to convey these positive emotions to students through their expressive storytelling. A strong appreciation for storytelling texts also helps teachers draw meaningful lessons for students after narrating a story, assisting them in cultivating a rich inner world [6, 8].

b) Improving the art of storytelling

A skilled storyteller has the immediate ability to convey emotions. If the story has engaging content and artistic elements, and the storyteller employs effective storytelling techniques, the storytelling lesson is likely to be successful.

Artistic storytelling makes an immediate impression. Artistic language strongly influences the soul and development of students. Teachers need to refine their artistic expression, using vivid and compelling words to capture students' attention during storytelling classes. To achieve this, teachers should grasp the following aspects [2, 3, 4, 8, 11]:

+ Grasping the plot: To narrate a story smoothly, teachers need a clear understanding of the plot, distinguishing between important and auxiliary plot points. When telling the story, focus on key highlights to make a deep impression on students' minds. Avoid getting off the subject in unnecessary details to help keep the story from becoming confusing and lengthy. Teachers can use the picture system in textbooks to help students better understand the main details and events in the story.

+ Grasping the principles of pause: Knowing when and how to pause during storytelling is a way to express the story's meaning. Teachers need to cultivate the skill of pausing naturally, appropriately, and in accordance with the author's original intentions. Furthermore, it's essential to distinguish between two voice modulation techniques: expressive pauses and logical pauses.

+ Controlling speed and intensity: Adjusting the rhythm is

crucial in storytelling. Whether to tell the story quickly or slowly, loudly or softly, and emphasizing at important points depends on the specific content of the story. Teachers need to train this skill to accurately reflect the story's content. Adjusting the speed and intensity of the voice is an important skill in storytelling, including regulating volume, tone, and pitch to suit the story's content.

+ Managing intonation for each story: Each story has distinct intonations, and teachers need to keenly identify this diversity in each story. Helping students recognize and express the characteristic intonations of each character, along with the ability to immerse themselves in the roles, is crucial. If done well, the world of characters in the story will come alive vividly before the students.

+ Utilizing non-verbal elements: Non-verbal elements such as eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, and posture play a role in enhancing the atmosphere and soul of the storytelling. They help teachers directly convey emotions and enthusiasm to students.

In summary, teachers need to grasp the elements of the art of storytelling to enhance the quality of teaching classes, expand the inner world, and instill interest and passion in students.

2.2. Teaching content of storytelling in the Preschool Education program

Storytelling is a crucial component within modules such as Teaching Theory, Practical Vietnamese, Language Development Methods, Children's Literature, etc. [10, 11].

In the Preschool Education program, these modules hold a particularly significant position, bearing the specialized characteristics of the training speciality. The objective of these modules is to equip students with fundamental knowledge about methods, forms of storytelling teaching organizing for preschool children, and to cultivate expressive storytelling skills. Through this, students develop self-awareness, self-learning, and the necessary competencies to meet the demands of a preschool teacher.

2.3. Current status of training storytelling skill for students majoring in Preschool Education

2.2.1. Purpose and methods of research

In November 2023, we conducted a study on the literary perception and storytelling skills of students majoring in Preschool Education at Thai Nguyen College. The research aimed to understand the perceptions of teachers and students regarding the development of storytelling skills for preschool education students and propose directions for improvement. We employed survey questionnaires for teachers and assignment sheets for students on relevant issues.

The survey content for teachers focused on designing exercises to develop reading comprehension, perceptual and expressive skills, as well as the ability to analyze literary works for students. For students, we focused on four main areas: language perception, imagery, meaning, and ideas conveyed in literary works. The survey results were summarized as follows:

2.2.2. Research results

During the survey and collection of opinions from teachers regarding the design of exercises to enhance reading comprehension, perceptual and expressive skills, as well as the analysis of literary works, we observed that each module, teachers required students to perform exercises and practices related to literary perception, such as reading comprehension,

dynamic storytelling, expression, and analysis of literary works. However, the survey results also indicated that many criteria directly related to the design of exercises to enhance literary perception skills for students did not meet expectations: 3 out of 6 teachers (50%) believed that the design of literary perception exercises was lacking; 2 out of 6 teachers (33.3%) disagreed that this was consistently implemented; 3 out of 6 teachers (50%) did not emphasize encouraging students to express thoughts and emotions before telling a story; 3 out of 6 teachers (50%) focused on requiring students to memorize the story for fluent storytelling.

"This indicates that some teachers have not invested adequately in designing exercises for literary appreciation or have only assigned tasks for self-study and research without integrating the development of storytelling skills. This has led to an attitude of underestimating students' performance in understanding literary works and is also one of the reasons for students' lack of engagement, showing a passive approach in exploring and discovering the meaning of the story before narrating.

The survey on students' reading comprehension skills revealed that quite a few students failed to meet the exercise requirements. For example:

- Language perception exercises require students to explore the effectiveness of word usage, vivid sentence construction, and vivid descriptions in the stories 'Three Girls' and 'Uncle Black Bear and Two Rabbits.' In the section on explaining the meaning of descriptive language, up to 5 students left the paper blank, accounting for a rate of 10%.

- In an exercise on imagery perception (requiring students to identify valuable suggestive images and details and present their perceptions of the images in the story), only 5 students performed at a satisfactory level, accounting for 10%; 80% of students achieved a passing level, and 10% did not pass;

- In an exercise on perceiving the meaning of the literary work, only 4 students achieved a good level (8%), with the majority achieving an average level (46 students, accounting for 92%); most students only discussed the content of the literary work;

- In an exercise on perceiving the author's ideas, 2 students submitted blank papers, accounting for 4%.

Through practical teaching experience, we have observed that the main reason for the students' limited reading comprehension skills is their restricted knowledge and living standards. Particularly for students from ethnic minority backgrounds, they lack understanding of literature, and their vocabulary and Vietnamese grammar knowledge are not enriched. This leads to difficulties in expressing perceptions from artistic texts, as they cannot fully comprehend the language, sentence structure, and imagery in the literary works. This is also the main reason for the students' limitations in perception skills.

The survey results on students' storytelling skills in the story "Uncle Black Bear and two Rabbits" noted that many students' storytelling lacked expressiveness and flexibility in language use when presenting the story. Some students still made pronunciation errors, making their storytelling disjointed, especially among students from ethnic minority backgrounds.

The requirements for students' storytelling skills were evaluated at various levels. The statistical results showed that 10% of students (05 students) achieved an excellent level with a deep understanding of the artistic value of the work,

flexibility in language use during storytelling, and the ability to embody and convey emotions sincerely. 8% of students (04 students) did not meet the requirements due to forgetting the story, lack of confidence, and unclear storytelling. 12% of students (06 students) achieved an average level due to not fully grasping the value of the work, resulting in storytelling that resembled reading and lacked creativity in expression. 24% of students (12 students) achieved a good level with the ability to express emotions but were unable to fully embody the emotions of the author. The survey results indicated that many students faced challenges in perceiving language and imagery in the story, as well as a lack of deep understanding of the story's content, making it difficult to convey sincere emotions while storytelling.

2.4. Some solutions to practice storytelling skills for students majoring in Preschool Education

2.4.1. Strengthening the design of literary appreciation and creative storytelling exercises

For students majoring in Preschool Education, developing the ability to appreciate literature and understand literary works is crucial, laying the foundation for engaging storytelling skills. Literary appreciation and understanding involve a profound comprehension of literary works, establishing a connection between the author and the reader in approaching the aesthetic beauty of literature.

Students with strong literary appreciation skills will be able to "perceive the artistic value and aesthetic beauty of the work," enabling them to intelligently read artistic works... Storytelling skills are a specialized activity in approaching literature. In the process of honing storytelling skills, the foundation of literary appreciation and understanding is of paramount importance. Therefore, to enhance storytelling skills through courses, teachers should focus on developing students' literary appreciation and understanding, increasing exposure to literary works to cultivate a habit of reading and remembering content. For instance, teachers can design exercises encouraging self-study, research, and presentation in class. These exercises should be integrated into both theory and practice, aiming to stimulate students' enthusiasm for exploring the content, meaning, human values, and aesthetics of the stories. This approach helps students gain a deep understanding of the plot and narrate it in a creative and expressive manner.

The design of exercises for literary appreciation and storytelling skills is crucial to help students read and understand literary works more profoundly, thereby improving their storytelling skills comprehensively.

2.4.2. Teaching - learning theory combined with storytelling practice

The objective of theoretical classes in the storytelling course is to equip students with fundamental principles and methods for honing storytelling skills for preschoolers, encompassing Storytelling Methods, Dramatic Skills, and Expressive Skills. The purpose is to help students become self-aware learners and researchers, applying knowledge to develop their professional skills.

To aid students in mastering this theoretical content, teachers should emphasize assigning self-study tasks and research, requiring students to explore related issues according to the detailed curriculum.

Developing literary appreciation and storytelling skills for students not only demands the teacher's ability to convey

knowledge but also requires a combination of theory and practice. As instructional designers for student activities, teachers can integrate theory with practice, allowing students to experience and develop both their literary appreciation and storytelling skills creatively.

House; 2016.

2.4.3. Cultivating literary appreciation and expressive storytelling ability through practical classes

The main goal during practical classes on storytelling is to cultivate creative pedagogical skills for students majoring in Preschool Education. The content and development of literary appreciation and storytelling skills are integrated into practical activities, such as:

- Storytelling practice classes: Students apply knowledge from theory to hone storytelling skills, including language usage, tone, and practical preparation, summarizing content, and determining the narrative tone.
- Practice classes "Teaching storytelling for preschool children": Students design lesson plans and presentations, expanding their pedagogical knowledge and refining teaching skills.

These practical classes not only broaden students' subject knowledge but also enhance pedagogical skills, preparing them to become preschool teachers with a high level of professional competence.

3. Conclusion

Storytelling is not only a creative art but also a specific requirement in Preschool Education. Developing storytelling skills cannot be separated from the development of literary appreciation. Implementing these proposed solutions in storytelling courses will help students in the Preschool Education program at Thai Nguyen College hone their expressive skills in spoken language actively and effectively.

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