



Enhancing 4th Grade Students' Oral Production Skills Using Storytelling And Open-Ended Questions.

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Introduction

In the Chilean educational framework, the Ministry of Education strongly advocates for an immersive English learning environment. The program “English in English” (MINEDUC, 2019) advocates for this, as it employs different techniques for teachers to improve their communicative skills.

Thus, it is recommended that teachers conduct classes entirely in English, aligning with the principles of the Input Hypothesis (Krashen, 1986). Krashen's theory emphasizes that prolonged exposure to comprehensible input in the target language is crucial for achieving fluency. This approach intends to immerse students in English, thereby enhancing their language acquisition capabilities.

Further supporting this viewpoint, research by Webb and Nation (2017) highlights the challenges faced in foreign language learning settings where the target language exposure is minimal. They argue that limited exposure is often a significant factor behind the less than satisfactory outcomes observed in many foreign language programs. According to their findings, adequate exposure to the target language not only facilitates a deeper understanding but also significantly improves the students' ability to use the language effectively. This suggests that for an English program to be successful, substantial, and consistent exposure to the language is essential. And in spite of students having exposure to the language, they still face issues related to their personality traits.

In order to reach this, many language teaching methodologies have aimed for the implementation of the communicative approach. The communicative approach places emphasis on meaningful and authentic communication, encouraging students to actively



engage in real-life language use. By providing learners with opportunities to interact and negotiate meaning, this approach aims to develop their communicative competence. The communicative approach recognizes the importance of integrating the four language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—promoting a balanced development of language proficiency. (Azimova, S., 2019).

In the realm of language acquisition, particularly within the framework of English as a foreign language, it becomes key to recognize the areas where learners tend to struggle the most. According to Miranda (2018), a significant challenge consistently arises in the development of oral production skills. This observation is pertinent in the context of the study, where speaking abilities were found to be the most deficient among the four key language skills.

Specifically in the context of this study, young learners engaging in language learning activities often demonstrate a proficient understanding when listening to texts, easily identifying both the main ideas and other details. Similarly, their ability to read and extract general information from written materials shows a great level of comprehension. When it comes to writing, students are capable of constructing short texts that adhere to specific grammatical structures, showcasing their grasp of the language's formal aspects. While the Chilean curriculum advocates for English fluency, there is a notable deficiency in oral English production skills at this specific context, which is particularly concerning given its proactive approach towards promoting English as a second language. The school in which this study is conducted sets rigorous standards for spoken English to prepare students for international opportunities, such as international examinations and exchange programs requiring proficient communication skills. The gap in students' ability to speak



English fluently is thought to highlight the need for targeted interventions, which consisted of storytelling and open-ended questions and which will be detailed later on. These interventions were chosen for their alignment with the communicative approach encouraged by the curriculum and their potential to better equip students for real-world engagements, thereby directly addressing the school's educational objectives. Using storytelling is aligned with the communicative approach by encouraging interactive learning, integrating multiple language skills, and enhancing content context awareness. By focusing on meaning over form, storytelling makes language learning engaging and memorable, motivating learners to participate actively. This method helps develop communicative competence by allowing learners to connect personally with the content and practice language in a meaningful, relevant way.

The difficulty and research gap mentioned above is not merely a matter of linguistic capability but also involves a complex interplay of psychological and sociolinguistic factors. Anxiety, lack of confidence, and insufficient real-time practice in conversational settings can severely restrict their ability to speak the language proficiently. (Ghafar, S., Raheem, M., 2023)

Additionally, this phenomenon not only occurs in the Chilean context, but across the world in different countries where English is taught as a second language (Kashinathan & Aziz, 2021, Velleyan, G., 2021). The importance of fostering strong oral communication skills cannot be understated, as they are crucial for effective language acquisition and real-life communication.



The use of the storytelling is to be considered in this context. Storytelling can be a powerful tool to engage students and enhance their oral production skills. However, there is room for improvement in its implementation. Current teaching practices often lack the structured integration of storytelling, which leaves a gap in fully utilizing this method to its potential. Addressing this gap could lead to significant advancements in students' communicative competence. Addressing the challenge of improving students' oral production skills requires a multifaceted approach. Teachers must not only focus on enhancing the grammatical and vocabulary knowledge of their students but also create an environment that actively promotes the frequent use of spoken English. Among various innovative techniques, storytelling has emerged as a particularly effective method (Oluwaseyi, 2023). This approach leverages the natural human affinity for narrative to engage students more deeply, encouraging them to express themselves and participate more fully in the learning process.

Techniques such as role-playing, group discussions, and the use of digital platforms for real-time communication can significantly bolster the oral competencies of students. However, the unique aspect of storytelling—its ability to captivate and hold the attention of listeners—makes it an ideal tool for teachers. By leaving behind traditional teaching and integrating storytelling into the curriculum, teachers can provide a dynamic and interactive way for students to practice their speaking skills, thereby helping to overcome their inhibitions.

The objective of this action research, focused on a private school in Temuco, Chile, is to identify the impact of storytelling on enhancing 4th grade students' oral production abilities. This study aims to explore how the structured use of storytelling can facilitate a



noticeable improvement in the students' ability to speak confidently and fluently, thereby addressing a critical gap observed in other traditional language learning approaches.

To answer the question “How can I use storytelling and open-ended questions to enhance oral production skills in 4th grade students?”, there will be four specific objectives:

- To identify the level of the speaking production skill in 4th grade students in a private school in Temuco
- To identify improvements of the speaking skill using storytelling and open questions.
- To describe students' level of motivation towards storytelling to enhance production of speech
- To reflect about the implementation of storytelling to enhance the speaking skill

The findings from this research will be analyzed towards ultimately helping the researcher motivate students to acquire personal and emotional satisfaction in second language learning and ultimately promoting oral production.



Theoretical framework

As stated previously, the communicative approach of teaching English as a second language (ESL) focuses on the use of the four skills to promote learning. Likewise, constructivism plays a key role in this research by supporting the notion that learners construct knowledge through interactions within their environment (Liu et al., 2020), which is particularly relevant in language learning. Teachers are encouraged to promote communicative skills actively, emphasizing the development of speaking skills as a crucial component. This approach acknowledges that meaningful interaction enhances learning, thus providing a solid theoretical foundation for incorporating storytelling and open-ended questions.

As stated by Smeda et al (2014), from ancient times to today, storytelling has been a popular educational tool for transmitting knowledge across generations. It is both a natural and effective method for sharing and exchanging knowledge and experiences. Specifically in the Chilean context, myths from Mapuche, Rapa Nui, and Chilote cultures are well-known, largely due to their educational value and inclusion in the national curriculum. Stories reveal universal truths about the world, showing how diverse individuals share common life experiences and how human nature transcends cultural boundaries (Contreras, 2020).

During this research, the key pre-steps of Storytelling as mentioned by Oluwaseyi (2023) were taken into consideration, namely:

- a. Brainstorming and discussion of the topic before reading.
- b. Key vocabulary introduction.
- c. Prediction of the story.
- d. Cultural context.



Also, the following strategies were taken into consideration:

- a. Expressive voice and gestures.
- b. Visual aids.
- c. Engaging narration.
- d. Character voices.

The steps of storytelling are discussed in the timeline section.

As for open-ended questions, they are important because they require a person to pause, think, and reflect. Also, answers include personal feelings, opinions, or ideas about a subject

By aligning the interaction patterns and teaching techniques with storytelling, we leverage a constructivist approach where students engage actively with the language. This encourages students to participate in dialogue, negotiate meaning, and express themselves (Bin As, 2016), which are key aspects of communicative competence. This method also fits with task-based learning (Sholeh et al., 2020), where tasks are designed to be relevant and communicative, mirroring real-life language use.

In order to counterfeit the oral production skill being diminished; storytelling and open-ended question were conducted. Storytelling is a powerful pedagogical tool that fosters creative thinking and expression in several significant ways. According to Mutiarani and Izzah (2015), storytelling naturally encourages listeners and speakers to visualize scenarios, characters, and settings, engaging the imagination. When students create or retell stories, they tap into their creative faculties to invent and visualize narratives, which enhances their ability to think creatively. Oluwaseyi (2023) mentions the following benefits:



- **Encouraging Perspective-Taking:** Stories often involve multiple characters with different viewpoints. By engaging with these perspectives, either through listening or storytelling, students learn to understand and express ideas from various angles. This exercise helps develop empathy and nuanced thinking, critical components of creative expression.
- **Building Narrative Skills:** Crafting a story requires structuring a coherent narrative that connects causes and effects, develops characters, and builds towards a climax. This process teaches students how to organize their thoughts, a skill that is key not only in literary contexts but also in forming and expressing complex ideas in all areas of learning and communication.
- **Enhancing Language Skills:** Storytelling pushes students to search for the right words and phrases to effectively convey their thoughts and emotions. This search enriches their vocabulary and improves their command of language, which is vital for both creative thinking and articulate expression.
- **Providing a Safe Space for Experimentation:** Storytelling can create a low-risk environment where students feel safe to explore and express unusual or innovative ideas. The fictional nature of stories allows for freedom from the usual constraints and judgments, encouraging students to think outside the box and experiment with new concepts.
- **Promoting Cultural and Self-awareness:** Through storytelling, students can explore and express both their own cultural backgrounds and those of others. This exposure broadens their understanding of the world, which can inspire new ideas and creative ways of thinking and expressing these ideas.



In order to identify the level of the speaking production skill in students, the use of the Cambridge standardized tests for the first and second objective is supported by research such as the one conducted by Höl & Fidan (2023), which states that are recognized globally for assessing English proficiency in young learners, especially in non-English speaking countries. The authors view the Cambridge Young Learners English (YLE) Exams positively, highlighting their effectiveness in providing young learners with an excellent opportunity to develop their confidence in the acquisition of a second language, which has been proven to be essential for successful learning (Moradiyousefabadi & Ghafournia, 2023). One part of the speaking test in the Cambridge Movers exam refers to listen and continue narratives based on visual prompts, which aligns closely with Storytelling. These exercises inherently demand the use of open-ended questions, which facilitate the development of spontaneous and fluent speech. This method enhances students' communicative competence by requiring them to construct and articulate coherent responses, a key skill assessed in the exam.

Additionally, there is a strong link between Storytelling and the improvement of the oral skills. This is supported by Qiu and Cheng (2021), who state that storytelling encourages more extended interaction, turn-taking, and negotiation of language issues, which are crucial for L2 learning. It also suggests that storytelling tasks better increase learners' awareness of linguistic forms and engagement with the language. Similarly, Kari (2016) confirms this association highlighting the effectiveness of activities like discussions, role plays, simulations, and storytelling in facilitating language learning. These activities encourage learners to use the language in various contexts and help in developing their speaking skills. Storytelling, in particular, is noted for fostering creative thinking and aiding in the expression of ideas.



Data collection methods, description of participants and procedures

In order for this research's objectives to be successfully achieved, the teacher in charge developed participant observation journals and conducted focus group interviews with students (qualitative approach) – as well as pre and post evaluations (quantitative approach). Thus, and as stated on the introduction of this study, this research is being conducted under a mixed approach. According to Ivankova & Wingo (2018), researchers use mixed methods research when they combine and analyze both numerical and descriptive data in a study to make their findings more believable and convincing. By using mixed methods, researchers can tackle complex research questions, find answers to different types of questions in a single study, and gain a deeper understanding of a real-life problem. Additionally, mixed methods research allows researchers to consider different viewpoints on the same issue and gain insights influenced by actual experiences and cultural factors.

In order to summarize the information, the following table is provided.



FOCUS	STRATEGY	RESEARCH QUESTION	GENERAL OBJECTIVE	SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	INSTRUMENTS
Speaking	-Storytelling	How can I use storytelling to enhance oral production skills?	To analyze the influence of oral storytelling in the oral production skills of 4 th grade students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To identify the level of the speaking production skill in 4th grade students in a private school in Temuco - To identify the influence of storytelling in the speaking skill - To describe students' level of motivation towards storytelling to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pre&Post diagnostic tests - Focus group and field notes - Reflection journals



				enhance oral production.	
				- To reflect about the implementation of storytelling to enhance the speaking skill	

Likewise, this purpose will be conducted under an Action Research approach. As stated by Watts (1985, p. 118), Action Research is a “process in which participants examine their own educational practices systematically and carefully, using the techniques of research”.

This study was conducted in a private school in Temuco, Chile. The school, a certified University of Cambridge examination center as of 2023, fosters a values-driven education. The 4th year C class of this school consists of 28 students, with an equal distribution of 14 female and 14 male students. Despite facing challenges imposed by the pandemic, particularly with having to attend first and second grade through (mostly) virtual classes, the overall communication and harmony within the class are neat. They are a close-knit group and they actively participate in class. While they have four hours of English per week, students have speaking sessions an hour per week, divided in groups of two to three



students. Students tend to demonstrate a shy attitude during those sessions, even when they attend with students they consider as friends.

Regarding the subject of English, the students exhibit exceptional language proficiency for their age.

This group of 4th-grade students from this school was specifically selected for this research due to their notable enthusiasm for the English language. While they demonstrate exceptional language proficiency in written tasks and understanding instructions, there is a noticeable hesitance and shyness when it comes to speaking the language. Despite their ability to provide complete written responses, they face challenges in expressing themselves verbally.

According to a learning styles test applied on this class, 43% of this class are auditory learners, 36% are visual learners and 21% are kinesthetic learners. To appeal to visual learners, visual support was provided during the storytelling sessions; and to appeal to kinesthetic learners, students could sit freely on the floor instead of traditional classroom setting.

Moving on to the data collection techniques; as stated by Moser and Korsjtens (2018), participant observation is a method of data collection through the participation in and observation of a group or individuals over a certain period of time. It provides researchers with ways to check for verbal and nonverbal expression of feelings and interaction. In this case, the researcher acted as a complete participant, in which the observer became part of the setting and played an inside role.



The utilization of participant observation journals and pre/post evaluations holds significant importance in this research study. Participant observation journals provide a valuable means of capturing the students' experiences, reflections, and progress throughout the process. By actively engaging in self-reflection and documenting their observations, students can deepen their understanding of their own language development and provide valuable insights for the research. This qualitative approach allows for a rich exploration of the students' perspectives and experiences, shedding light on the factors that may influence their oral production skills.

The focus group interviews conducted as part of this research involved strategically selected groups of six participants. The purpose of this selection process was to ensure that a diverse range of perspectives and opinions were represented in the interviews. Intentionally choosing participants with different language proficiency levels, learning styles and personalities helped capture a comprehensive understanding of the students' experiences and perceptions regarding their oral production skills. The inclusion of focus group interviews enriched the qualitative data by providing a platform for in-depth conversations and valuable exchanges among the participants. Discussions were recorded and transcribed afterwards (Busetto et al., 2020) and, in order to assure effective communication, interviews were conducted in the students' mother tongue (Spanish).

Also, the inclusion of pre and post diagnostic evaluations adds a quantitative aspect to the research. These assessments provide a systematic and objective measurement of the students' language proficiency levels before and after the intervention. By employing these assessment tools, it becomes possible to quantify the impact of the instructional approach on the students' oral production abilities. This quantitative data complements the qualitative



insights from the participant observation journals and helps establish a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of the teaching methodology. The pre and post diagnostic evaluations were the standardized Cambridge Young Learners exams. The purpose of these exams is to identify the level of proficiency of primary learners between the ages of 7 and 12 (UCLES, 2003a:2). The YLE tests span three ability levels: Starters, Movers and Flyers. On this occasion, since the focus of this study is Speaking, the application test was only the Speaking exam in the Movers level.

This exam is divided in three parts, such as:

- a. Introduction and Interview: This section involves simple personal questions about the child's life, such as their name, age, and interests, aimed at assessing basic conversational skills.
- b. Storytelling and Continuing a Story: The child is shown pictures that start a story and asked to continue it, testing their ability to construct a narrative and use language creatively.
- c. Describing Pictures: The child describes what they see in one or more pictures, demonstrating their observational skills and ability to use descriptive language accurately.

Each part of the exam is designed to evaluate different aspects of spoken English, from basic conversation to more creative and descriptive language use.

Likewise; according to the handbook for teachers (2018), the tests are designed to be fun for students, and to be a reliable and consistent measure of how well a student is doing in English.



In combination, the participant observation journals, focus group interviews and pre/post evaluations provide a balanced and comprehensive approach to capturing and analyzing the data. The integration of qualitative and quantitative methods allows for a better understanding of the students' oral production skills and the effectiveness of this research.

The instruments utilized in this research, including the participant observation journals and pre/post evaluations, were designed to ensure reliability and validity. They were developed by the researcher and underwent a validation process with two experienced English language teachers with postgraduate studies in the field who provided valuable feedback and suggestions for improvement. Their expertise and insights were instrumental in refining the instruments to ensure their alignment with the research objectives and the validity of the data collected.

In addition to the methods mentioned earlier, it is worth mentioning that all sessions were recorded to facilitate accurate data collection. The recordings serve as a valuable resource for reviewing and analyzing the students' oral production and language development. This approach enables a more thorough examination of the participants' language proficiency, allowing for a detailed assessment of their progress over the sessions. The use of recorded sessions adds an extra layer of precision to the data collection process, ensuring the reliability and validity of the findings in this mixed-method research study.

Data was collected during the first semester of 2023, from May to June, during English lessons on Thursdays, and based on the principles of storytelling. The timeline is as follows:



Sessions n° / Date	Session Objective	Activities and Procedures
Session 0 (diagnost ic test) <i>May 18th</i>	Identify the level of oral production skills in 4 th grade students.	Pre: Students are greeted by the teacher and introduced to today's topic and activity. While: Students are taken one by one for a Cambridge assessment speaking test, which will work as a diagnostic. Post: -
Session 0 (diagnost ic test) <i>May 19th</i>	Identify the level of oral production skills in 4 th grade students.	Pre: Students are greeted by the teacher and introduced to today's topic While: Students are taken one by one for a Cambridge assessment speaking test, which will work as a diagnostic. Post: -
Session 1 <i>May 25th</i>	Narrate a story	Pre: The students are greeted by the teacher and the seats are rearranged in a semi-circle. The keywords of the story are introduced to the students via flashcards. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breakfast • Same • Different While: The story 'The old man and the small fish' is read by the teacher. Immediately after, general questions are



		<p>asked: What was the story about? What kind of story was it?</p> <p>Post: Post-reading questions are asked to 8 different students by the teacher.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Why do you think Wen's grandfather doesn't want to change what he has for breakfast?- Do you think it's better to always do the same thing (like Wen's grandfather) or always try something different? Why?
Session 2 <i>June 1st</i>	Narrate a story	<p>Pre: The students are greeted by the teacher and the seats are rearranged in a semi-circle. The keywords of the story are introduced to the students via flashcards.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Happily• Oldest• Garden• Rescue <p>While: The story 'The story of Rama and Sita' is read by the teacher. Immediately after, general questions are asked: What was the story about? What kind of story was it?</p> <p>Post: Post-reading questions are asked to 10 different students by the teacher.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Who do you think is brave/clever/unkind/helpful in the story? Why?



		<p>- How do you think the characters feel in these parts of the story?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">When the King tells Roma and Sita to leave Ayodhya.When Ravana takes SitaWhen Hanuman tells Rama he found SitaWhen Rama and Sita return to Ayodhya.
Session 3 <i>June 8th</i>	Narrate a story	<p>Pre: The students are greeted by the teacher and the seats are rearranged in a semi-circle. The keywords of the story are introduced to the students via flashcards.</p> <p>While: The story 'The Myth of Icarus' is read by the teacher. Immediately after, general questions are asked: What was the story about? What kind of story was it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">LabyrinthMinotaurWingsFeathersWaxCandleMelt <p>Post: Post-reading questions are asked to 8 different students by the teacher.</p>



		<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Did you like the story? Why?b. What was the most exciting part?c. What was the saddest part?d. Do you know any other Greek myths? What happens?
Session 4 <i>June 15th</i>	Narrate a story	<p>Pre: The students are greeted by the teacher and the seats are rearranged in a semi-circle. The keywords of the story are introduced to the students via flashcards.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Library• Turkey• Literature• Wide (river) <p>While: Teacher reads the story “The Project”. Immediately after, asks general questions. What was the story about? What kind of story was it?</p> <p>Post: Teacher asks the following post-reading question to 5 (or more) different students.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">a. The project was a success because Katy, Mike and Harold worked together in a team. When do you work in teams? Do you like working in a team?
Session 5 <i>June 15th</i>	Narrate a story	<p>Pre: The students are greeted by the teacher and the seats are rearranged in a semi-circle. The keywords of the story are introduced to the students via flashcards.</p>



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Country • Big • Trip <p>While: The story “The road to Hope” is read by the teacher. General and one or two specific questions are asked</p> <p>Post: Post-reading questions are asked to 8 different students by the teacher.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The family is going on a trip. Everyone is feeling <i>bored/excited/tired</i>. Why? b. Mum and Dad don’t know how to get to Hope. They are <i>happy/angry/surprised</i>. Why? c. Jay and Kay don’t know how to get to Hope. They are <i>afraid/bored/happy</i>. Why? d. Yvonne knows how to get to Hope. She is <i>calm/worried/tired</i>.
Session 6 <i>June 20th</i>	Identify the level of oral production skills in 4 th grade students.	<p>Pre: The students are greeted by the teacher and introduced to today’s topic.</p> <p>While: Students are taken one by one for a Cambridge assessment speaking test, which will work as a post-test</p> <p>Post: -</p>
Session 7 <i>June 22nd</i>	Identify the level of oral production	<p>Pre: The students are greeted by the teacher and introduced to today’s topic.</p>



	skills in 4 th grade students.	While: Students are taken one by one for a Cambridge assessment speaking test, which will work as a post-test Post: -
Session 7 <i>June 23rd</i>	Analyze the impact and impressions of the implementation of a “Storytelling technique” through open questions.	Students, selected by the teacher, are asked open questions regarding how they felt during each session. (Focus group interview)



Results

The research findings of this action research project were divided into the following categories – each according to the specific objectives mentioned in the previous section.

- a) The level of the speaking production skill
- b) The influence of storytelling in the speaking skill
- c) participants' perceptions of their willingness towards storytelling to enhance oral production.
- d) reflections about the implementation process.

To identify the level of proficiency of the students, pre and post tests were applied and analyzed through a quantitative approach. As mentioned earlier, a rubric from the Cambridge – Young Learners speaking exam (Movers – A1 level) was used to evaluate the proficiency of speaking production skills and to examine the impact of storytelling on the development of those skills. This evaluation is divided into three parts and took about 10 minutes per pair of students.

A detailed analysis of an instrument was conducted using an online measuring device. This instrument was chosen to gain deeper insights. The findings, detailed below, offer a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between storytelling and oral production skill – displaying the mean scores per category.



Pre & post Speaking test			
	Pre test mean score	Post test mean score	% of change
Vocabulary	3,8	4,07	+6%
Pronunciation	3,85	4,4	+11%
Interaction	3,96	4,07	+4%

Table 1. Pre & post diagnostic test results

The table above provides a comprehensive summary of the assessment conducted on the students regarding the enhancement of speaking skills in English. The rubric is designed to assess various dimensions of language such as vocabulary, pronunciation and interaction.

Through this approach, the assessment aims to provide a complete understanding of the students' competencies, contributing to a general perspective on their speaking skills in the English language.

Examining the figure, we can see students have made progress on the three areas specified. Even though the most prominent advance is in pronunciation, both vocabulary and interaction were affected positively as well.



Pre-interventions, students had a mean score of 3,8 in vocabulary, 3,85 in pronunciation and 3,96 in interaction. After the interventions, scores went up to 4,07 in vocabulary, 4,4 in pronunciation and 4,07 in interaction.

The aspect most significantly influenced by the implementation was pronunciation, in a +11%. Students were perceived as more comfortable and fluent while speaking.

Secondly, vocabulary exhibited the second-highest level of improvement.

Interaction, while the third most affected aspect, started from a relatively high base. This indicates that students initially exhibited a positive attitude towards participation and engagement in learning activities. The students maintained a commendable level of interaction throughout the assessment, both before and after the implementation.

It's important to note that all students were provided with guidance on the assessment criteria for both the pre and post-tests. This ensured that they were aware of the expectations and could approach the evaluation with a sense of preparedness.

Another focus of the study was motivation. The instrument were focus group interviews. These interviews were transcribed and carefully reviewed using axial and open coding, which helped sort the information into broad categories and connect them.

To make this process smoother, a software called CMAP Tools was used. This computer program assisted in applying coding techniques and helped create a visual representation – namely, a conceptual network. This network shows and highlights the main points discovered during the analysis.

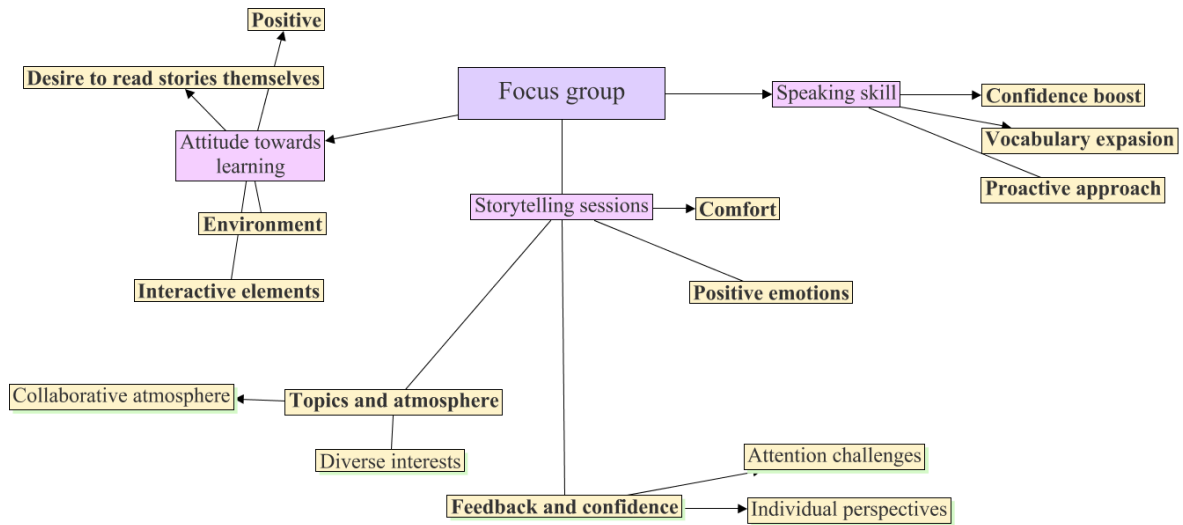


Figure 1. Motivation in students.

Students were asked questions in Spanish so they could understand the questions better and also replied in Spanish in order to explain themselves better, but due to the nature of the research responses will be paraphrased.

At first, students were asked about their feelings and preferred aspects of the storytelling sessions. Participants described the sessions as evoking t

tions such as excitement and joy, creating an enjoyable and engaging atmosphere. The conversational nature of the sessions contributed to a sense of comfort and relaxation, fostering open participation. A student mentioned how “nice it was to sit on the floor and listen to stories” (S07).

Additionally, participants valued the interactive elements, including engaging in discussions with the post-reading questions, which fostered a sense of connection among



the group. Participants consistently expressed positive emotions, comfort, and appreciation for the interactive and diverse elements within the storytelling sessions, contributing to an overall positive and engaging experience. As one student mentioned, “we had fun and we learned a lot. I am going to miss the sessions” (S02).

Students were also consulted about the perceived improvements in their speaking skill. They reported varying degrees of improvement in their speaking skill through answering storytelling questions, "I felt more confident expressing myself during the storytelling discussions in the final sessions." (S04). This improvement in fluency was echoed by six others, on the same group.

Additionally, participants felt an expansion in their vocabulary, attributing this enhancement to the deliberate reinforcement of specific words and expressions both before and after the sessions. As one participant noted, "I learnt new words that I did not know before" (S01). The interactive nature of storytelling facilitated an environment where participants felt comfortable asking about unfamiliar words, contributing to a proactive approach in language learning.

As for the topics covered in the stories, participants expressed diverse interest in themes and stories during the storytelling sessions. The variety, ranging from classic narratives such as Icarus' story to contemporary and interactive stories contributed to a diverse atmosphere.

Finally, in regards to their confidence in speaking after the implementation, participants shared diverse perspectives.



While most participants recounted positive experiences, one individual conveyed a sense of not feeling a significant improvement. "I didn't feel a substantial change, because it was difficult for me to pay attention sometimes and if I stopped listening for a minute, I would get lost." (S01). This perspective highlights the variability in individual responses and suggests that the impact of storytelling sessions may differ. It might be recommendable for future implementations to ask for constant feedback with students during the sessions.

It is important to note that this group of students usually present a positive attitude towards learning, and it may be different with a group of students who are not as collaborative. Four students expressed their desire to read stories themselves for the class in the future.

As a summary for this specific objective and analysis, the discussions revealed consistently positive experiences with storytelling sessions. Participants expressed joy and excitement, attributing these emotions to the engaging nature of the sessions. Speaking skills were perceived to be improved by the students, with enhanced fluency and vocabulary acquisition noted. In general, this approach contributed to an interesting atmosphere, promoting a proactive approach to language learning. Overall, the findings highlight the positive impact of storytelling sessions on participants' emotional experiences, language skills, and practical learning.

In relation to reflection, the following map was analyzed with the CMAP Tools software.

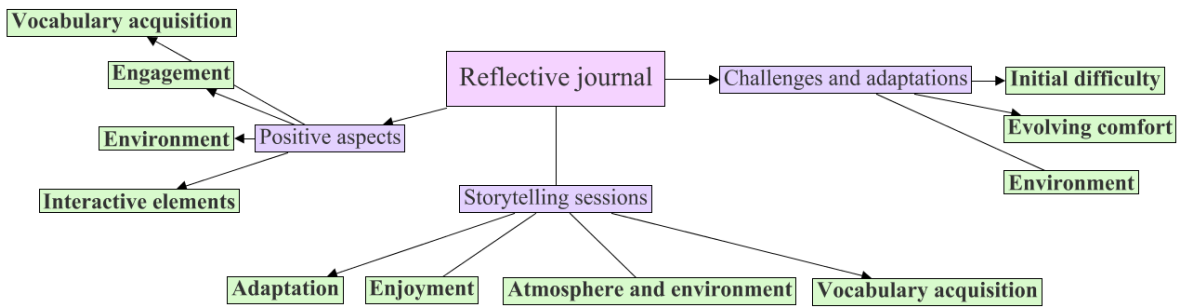


Figure 2. Reflection on the teaching practice.

Other than the principal focus, two other main categories emerged during this analysis. The first is related to the challenges and adaptations made during the initial sessions, while the second focuses on the positive aspects and outcomes observed in later sessions.

Initially, it was challenging to capture the students' focus during the storytelling sessions. However, as the implementation progressed, it became much easier to engage them. *“(during the first session) it was a bit chaotic to introduce what we were going to do. Students were a bit loud and chaotic”* (entry 1). This adjustment may indicate an evolving comfort and familiarity with the storytelling format, highlighting the adaptability of the students. *“I felt more confident during today’s session. Students already knew what we were going to do and asked to switch seating as soon as I arrived to the classroom”* (entry 4).

A noteworthy positive aspect was the students' enjoyment of creating a cozy atmosphere during storytelling sessions. They brought blankets and cushions, choosing to sit on the floor to listen. This physical adjustment seemed to enhance the overall experience, contributing to a more immersive and enjoyable storytelling environment. As



one student mentioned, “my favourite part was to listen and bring cushions. It was different from what we are used to, and it kind of helped me concentrate more” (S01).

Furthermore, students expressed enjoyment not only in the storytelling itself but also in the pre and post-questions associated with the stories. This engagement suggests that incorporating interactive elements enhances the overall appeal of the sessions, making them more participatory and enjoyable for the students.

In addition to the enjoyment factor, the implementation of storytelling led to the acquisition of new vocabulary. Students were exposed to a variety of words and expressions through the stories, contributing to their language development.

Moreover, the implementation facilitated post-story discussions led by the teacher. These discussions provided a platform for students to share their thoughts and reflections on the stories “Their answers were thoughtful, showing they connected well with the characters” (E02). This interactive element not only reinforced comprehension but also encouraged students to express themselves and engage in meaningful conversations.



Discussion

The findings of this paper were conducted as to answer the initial research question – namely, how can storytelling help improve oral production in 4th grade students. In this section, results will be discussed per objective.

The first objective was about identifying the students' speaking skills. The scores, as they were not particularly low, can be attributed to the familiarity of the students with the type of questions and structure of the examination.

The aspect most significantly influenced by the implementation was pronunciation. This result could be attributed to the students' heightened comfort level during conversations and the familiarity they had developed with these types of questions. Given that it was not the first time they encountered such inquiries, it is plausible that students felt more at ease. Also, due to the nature of the interventions and the procedure of open-ended questions related to storytelling, students were more prepared on how to answer questions. This is supported by Qiu and Cheng (2021), that state that storytelling encourages more extended interaction, turn-taking, and negotiation of language issues, which are crucial for second language learning.

Overall, these results resonate with Fikriah (2016), who indicated significant improvements in young learners (primary school students) speaking skills with Storytelling - particularly in pronunciation, fluency, accuracy, and comprehension - demonstrating the effectiveness of the storytelling technique in language learning.

The improvement on vocabulary may be attributed to the deliberate reinforcement of specific vocabulary both before and after the storytelling sessions. Moreover, the



interactive nature of storytelling allowed students to inquire about unfamiliar words which made them acquire more vocabulary. Zuhriyah, (2017) also highlights the effect of storytelling in vocabulary, as students in their study went from a 43% of success in vocabulary to a 82% of success after the interventions.

The results for the second and third objective, related to how storytelling can influence oral production in 4th grade students and their level of motivation, confirm the association between Storytelling and the improvement of the oral skills. This objective is in direct relation to the research question - how I can use storytelling to improve oral production skills. As per the research journals, and as it was stated in the results section, students' pre-disposition to participate in the storytelling sessions and to answer question improved greatly with time.

Kari (2016) confirms this association highlighting the effectiveness of activities like discussions, role plays, simulations, and storytelling in facilitating language learning and oral production. These activities encourage learners to use the language in various contexts and help in developing their speaking skills. Storytelling, in particular, is noted for fostering creative thinking and aiding in the expression of ideas.

Lastly, and mainly, the findings further support the idea of Bin An (2016), whose research's results showed significant improvement in the speaking abilities of the students, highlighting the effectiveness of storytelling in ESL learning. Students taught with storytelling not only developed better speaking skills but also had positive responses towards this teaching method.



Students, as per their focus group answers, were more confident and eager to participate after the interventions. The interventions increased students' confidence in speaking. It is correlated with to Hardianti (2019), that after being given treatment related to storytelling, students felt more confident in practicing and using their English. This finding aligns with the goal of enhancing speaking skills, showcasing a positive impact on language acquisition. These are the essentially the same benefits expressed by Oluwaseyi (2023).

As for the researcher's action research process in itself, the results from the reflection journal show a positive effect on the researcher's attitude and predisposition to improve speaking through storytelling. These benefits resonate greatly with the findings of the study. As per the researchers' own experience, it was found that integrating storytelling into the teaching practice significantly enriched the researchers' experience as an educator. It was observed firsthand how this technique aligned with the communicative approach, enhancing the ability to create an engaging and interactive classroom environment. Storytelling made lessons more dynamic and enjoyable, which, in turn, increased satisfaction and motivation as a teacher.

It also allowed the researcher to connect more deeply with the students and see tangible improvements in their communicative skills. This method also provided the researcher with valuable insights into the benefits of using narrative techniques in language instruction, reinforcing the researchers' belief in the importance of meaningful and authentic communication in the classroom.



By demonstrating significant advancements in students' speaking abilities, the study provides empirical support for storytelling's efficacy in these students' language acquisition. It implies that educators should consider incorporating storytelling techniques into the curriculum to foster a more interactive, engaging, and effective language learning environment.

Finally, these findings imply that storytelling can significantly boost learners' confidence and willingness to participate in language learning. The success of storytelling in improving speaking skills suggests that as learners become more proficient, they also become more confident and willing to use the language. In retrospective, it could have been made even more interactive with different dynamics such as games and turn-taking in the warm up.



Conclusion

The initial research question as aimed as how can the researcher improve their teaching practice with storytelling as a method to improve the oral production skill in young learners from 4th grade in a private school in Temuco. Through a series of structured storytelling sessions, supported by pre- and post-assessments, focus group interviews, and reflection journals, the research sought to understand how this method could foster improvements in students' oral proficiency in the English language.

The findings of this study indicate that storytelling can significantly enhance the oral production skills of 4th grade students. The data collected from pre- and post-assessments revealed marked improvements in vocabulary, pronunciation, and interaction among the students (although not all in the same way, as discussed on the discussion section). Moreover, the qualitative insights from focus group interviews and reflection journals highlighted an increase in student motivation, confidence, and willingness to participate in English conversations. The interactive and immersive nature of storytelling helped create a conducive learning environment where students felt comfortable experimenting with and using the language – leaving room for these strategies. Thus, it might be an idea to include storytelling in the curriculum – or to create a flexible curriculum design.

Another implication of this study is that these results support the incorporation of storytelling in the design of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) frameworks. By highlighting storytelling's impact on oral language skills, it suggests that UDL strategies could be enriched with narrative-based activities to cater to diverse learners. Storytelling aligns with UDL principles by providing multiple means of engagement, representation,



and action & expression, thus advocating for its inclusion as a versatile tool in language teaching practices.

Despite the challenges encountered, the overall positive outcomes underscore the potential of storytelling to enhance language learning. In relation to the last paragraph, the main limitation was the fact that -due to school's restrictions- the curriculum needed to be followed and the stories to be read needed to be from the class' textbook. In the future, without this limitation, it would be even better to include different interactive games – as well as digital storytelling, role-plays, dramatization or story-based games to maintain high levels of engagement.

Students have four hours of English a week, which helped to apply this strategy once a week without falling behind on contents and curriculum.

Also, the school facilitating the library and exposing the students helped to motivate and activate them. Not every school has the characteristics mentioned before, so accommodations ought to be made before applying the same procedure. For future references, it may be worth noting that limitations such as time, sample size and school locations are important to before applying this exact Storytelling methodology to students.

In conclusion, the study demonstrates that storytelling is an effective pedagogical tool for improving the speaking skills of young English learners. By integrating storytelling into the curriculum, the researcher could provide meaningful and engaging opportunities for students to practice and develop their oral language abilities. This, in combination with constant positive feedback and different assessment methods, worked great with students.



Overall, this researched acknowledged the value of storytelling in language education and provided practical insights for its implementation in a classroom setting.



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Appendix

Pre test – Speaking.

Movers Speaking

Summary of Procedures

The usher introduces the child to the examiner. The examiner asks how old the child is.

- 1 The examiner asks the child to describe several differences between the two Find the Differences pictures, e.g. 'This is a bird but this is a cat.'
- 2 The examiner tells the child the name of the story and describes the first picture e.g. 'Fred is sad. He can't play football. His ball is very old. His mum's saying, "Take the dog to the park."' The examiner then asks the child to continue telling the story.
- 3 The examiner demonstrates how to do this task with the first set of four odd-one-out pictures and then asks the child to choose one picture in the other three sets and say which is different and why. For example, 'These are all animals, but this is a sweater.'
- 4 The examiner asks questions about the child, e.g. 'Who's the youngest in your family?'



Movers Speaking



MOVERS SPEAKING. Find the Differences



Movers Speaking

MOVERS SPEAKING. Picture Story



Movers Speaking



MOVERS SPEAKING. Odd-one-out



Post test – Speaking.

Movers Speaking

Summary of Procedures

The usher introduces the child to the examiner. The examiner asks how old the child is.

1. The examiner asks the child to describe several differences between the two Find the Differences pictures, e.g. 'Here it's a cloudy day, but here it's a sunny day.'
2. The examiner tells the child the name of the story and describes the first picture, e.g. 'These pictures show a story. It's called, "Fred loves food". Look at the pictures first. (Pause) Fred's at home with his family. They're in the kitchen and Mum's giving him his dinner.' The examiner then asks the child to continue the story. The title of the story and the name of the main character(s) is shown with the pictures in the candidate booklet.
3. The examiner demonstrates how to do this task with the first set of four odd-one-out pictures and then asks the child to choose one picture in the other three sets and say which is different and why. For example, 'You don't eat a book. You read it.'
4. The examiner asks questions about the child, e.g. 'Who's the youngest in your family?'



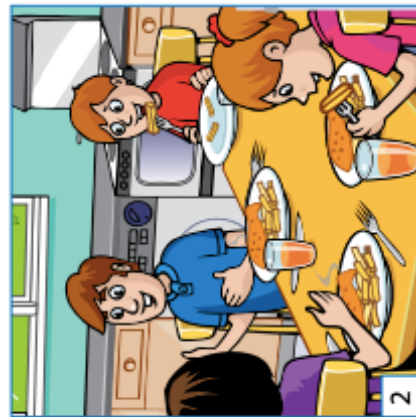
Movers Speaking



MOVERS SPEAKING. Find the Differences



Fred loves food



MOVERS SPEAKING. Picture Story

TEST ONE



Movers Speaking



MOVERS SPEAKING. Odd-one-out



Reflection journal.

Entry 1.

Today was our first storytelling session, and it was quite an experience. As the last hour of the day, it was a bit chaotic to introduce what we were going to do. Students were a bit loud and chaotic. I was a bit nervous about how it would go, but I decided to rearrange the seats into a semi-circle and hoped for the best.

We started by introducing some key vocabulary for the story using flashcards: breakfast, same, and different. This helped to grab their attention, and slowly the noise began to subside. Sitting on the floor seemed to create a cozy atmosphere, which I think helped calm them down and get them more focused.

Reading "The Old Man and the Small Fish" was a lot of fun. The students were really attentive and seemed to enjoy the story. When I asked them what the story was about and what kind of story it was, their answers showed they were really engaged. It was great to see them so involved. Most answers were in Spanish, except for (redacted), a bilingual student.

After the story, I asked some deeper questions to eight students, like why they thought Wen's grandfather didn't want to change his breakfast and whether it's better to always do the same thing or try new things. They were a bit shy, but as we went along, their confidence grew, and their answers were thoughtful and insightful.

Overall, despite the initial chaos, the session turned out well. The students seemed to enjoy the storytelling, and their responses were very encouraging. I'm looking forward to more sessions and seeing how their oral skills improve with time.

Entry 2.

Today's session went smoothly. The students settled down quicker than last time when we arranged the seats in a semi-circle. We kicked off with the flashcards for key words: happily, oldest, garden, and rescue, which got them engaged right away.

Reading "The Story of Rama and Sita" was a hit. The students were attentive and clearly understood the story, as shown by their answers to my questions about its content.

After the story, I asked ten students detailed questions about who they thought was brave, clever, unkind, or helpful, and why. Their answers were thoughtful, showing they connected well with the characters. However, again, most answers were in Spanish. I helped them to answer in English by repeating after me what they had said, but in English.

We also discussed how the characters might have felt during key moments.



The students' insights were quite impressive. For example, one student said they thought Rama felt a mix of sadness and determination when he was told to leave Ayodhya, which sparked a discussion among the group. Another student mentioned that Sita might have felt a mix of fear and hope when she was taken by Ravana, which was a very perceptive observation.

There were a few moments of distraction here and there, but overall, the students were more focused and engaged than in the previous session. I think the variety in the storytelling and the interactive discussions are helping them stay interested. I'm excited to see how their comprehension and oral skills continue to develop as we progress.

Entry 3.

Today's session was a bit challenging. The weather was bad, which led to lower attendance and the students being a bit louder than usual. However, we managed to get started by arranging the seats in a semi-circle and introducing the key vocabulary for the story "The Myth of Icarus" using flashcards. The words were labyrinth, minotaur, wings, feathers, wax, candle, and melt. Despite the initial noise, the students seemed intrigued by the new words.

Reading "The Myth of Icarus" was a captivating experience, even though the group was smaller. The students listened attentively and showed a good understanding when I asked what the story was about and what kind of story it was.

After the story, I asked eight students some post-reading questions:

- Did you like the story? Why?*
- What was the most exciting part?*
- What was the saddest part?*
- Do you know any other Greek myths? What happens?*

Their answers were thoughtful and varied. One student found the part where Icarus flies for the first time the most exciting, while another felt that his fall was the saddest moment. A few students even shared other Greek myths they knew, which sparked a lively discussion.

Despite the challenges with the weather and noise, the session turned out well. The students were engaged and seemed to enjoy the story and the discussions. I'm looking forward to more sessions and hope for better attendance next time.

Entry 4.

Today's session went really well. I felt more confident during today's session. The students already knew what we were going to do and asked to switch seating as soon as I arrived in the classroom. This made the transition smoother and set a positive tone for the session.



We started by introducing the key vocabulary for the story "The Project" with flashcards: library, turkey, literature, and wide (river). The students were engaged and seemed eager to learn the new words.

Reading "The Project" was enjoyable for both the students and me. They were attentive and answered the general questions about the story promptly. They understood what the story was about and the type of story it was.

After the story, I asked five students a post-reading question:

The project was a success because Katy, Mike, and Harold worked together in a team. When do you work in teams? Do you like working in a team? The responses were insightful. One student shared how they enjoyed working in teams during group projects in class because it allows them to share ideas. Another mentioned that they sometimes find teamwork challenging, because some students work more than others. However, question was quickly redirected to a positive note.

Overall, the session was a success. The students were engaged, and their responses showed a good understanding of the story and the benefits of teamwork. I'm looking forward to continuing like this in the final session.

Entry 5.

Today marked our final storytelling session, and it was quite a journey. As usual, we began by greeting the students and arranging the seats in a semi-circle. The key vocabulary for "The Road to Hope" was introduced with flashcards: country, big, and trip. The students were immediately interested, which set a positive tone for the story.

Reading "The Road to Hope" went smoothly. The students listened attentively, and I asked a few general questions to ensure they were following along. Their responses showed good comprehension, and it was clear they were engaged with the story.

After the story, I asked eight students specific post-reading questions.

Overall, this session, like the others, was a positive experience. Despite the many challenges we faced along the way, such as weather issues, varying attendance and some other difficulties, the students consistently showed growth in their engagement and oral production skills. This storytelling journey has been rewarding, and I'm proud of the progress we've made together.

Throughout these sessions, I noticed a significant improvement in the students' willingness and ability to include more English in their answers. Initially, many of them relied heavily on Spanish, but over time, they started incorporating more English vocabulary and phrases into their responses. By this final session, several students were able to answer almost entirely in English, showing a great deal of progress and confidence in using the language.
Letter of consent.



**Carta de Autorización para Proyecto de Innovación Pedagógica
Impacto del "Storytelling" en mejorar la habilidad de producción oral en estudiantes de 4to año
básico.**

Sra. Andrea Rodríguez
Sra. Carola Matus
Directora Académica
Gestora Pedagógica, ed.básica
Presente

De mi consideración, solicito a Ud. la autorización para realizar una investigación acción que tiene por objetivo el mejorar las habilidades de producción oral en estudiantes del 4to año básico C del establecimiento educacional. La investigación será llevada a cabo durante el primer semestre del presente año y será conducida por la profesora de asignatura profesora Ximena Vásquez Romero, candidata a Magíster en Didáctica del Inglés en Educación Parvularia y Educación General Básica de la Universidad Católica de Temuco.

El estudio es de carácter cualitativo y los datos serán obtenidos utilizando una prueba inicial para identificar el nivel de producción oral de los y las estudiantes del 4to año C antes de la intervención pedagógica, en la cuál -a través de la técnica conocida como "Storytelling", es decir, relatar historias en inglés- se trabajará en reforzar las respuestas en inglés para mejorar la producción oral. Posteriormente, se aplicará una serie de entrevistas grupales para conocer las opiniones y actitudes que tienen los estudiantes hacia la instrucción mencionada y un test similar al aplicado al inicio. Se ha contemplado una clase (de 45 min.) a la semana durante seis semanas para implementar este proyecto de innovación en las que el enfoque se centrará en una investigación y reflexión sobre el propio proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje del curso. Estas estrategias -en caso de ser necesario y a modo de cautelar que todos los estudiantes puedan acceder a esta estrategia - serán compartidas con el profesor paralelo de 4to A y B, sr. Alexis Silva. Además, las lecturas estarán alineadas con el currículum que actualmente se está trabajando.

Para garantizar la correcta conducción del proyecto -y cumpliendo los requerimientos éticos de la investigación con personas-, antes de iniciar la investigación se les solicitará un consentimiento informado a los apoderados para que autoricen a sus hijos e hijas menores de edad a participar.

Los datos de los participantes serán estrictamente anónimos y de carácter privado y los resultados de este estudio sólo serán utilizados con fines académicos.

Una vez concluida esta investigación, ustedes como representantes del Colegio Bautista de Temuco y los apoderados de los estudiantes participantes tendrán derecho a conocer los resultados, los que deberán ser solicitados a la investigadora responsable, profesora Ximena Vásquez Romero. Este estudio no representa ningún riesgo físico, psicológico o académico para los estudiantes, por lo que el objetivo principal apunta a mejorar los resultados académicos de la enseñanza de inglés, junto con contribuir positivamente a la comunidad educativa.

Agradezco de antemano la acogida y valioso apoyo que usted pueda brindar a este proyecto.



Saludos cordiales,

Ximena Vásquez Romero
Investigadora Responsable

Proyecto de Innovación: Impacto del "Storytelling" en mejorar las producciones orales en estudiantes de 4to año básico.

AUTORIZACIÓN DIRECTOR(A)

Yo _____, a nombre de _____,
autorizo la participación de este establecimiento en el proyecto "nombre del proyecto".

El propósito y naturaleza de la investigación me han sido explicados por la investigadora responsable, Ximena Vásquez Romero, me han quedado claras las implicancias de la participación de nuestro establecimiento en el proyecto y se me ha informado de la posibilidad de contactar ante cualquier duda al investigador responsable del estudio Ximena Vásquez Romero, email: xvasquez2022@alu.uct.cl y/o a la directora del programa del magíster en Didáctica del Inglés en Educación Parvularia y Educación General Básica cuyo email de contacto es lubilla@uct.cl

Nombre del Responsable: _____

Firma del Responsable: _____

Fecha : _____