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The Effectiveness of Azarbaijani Folktales on the Reading Performance of Turkish-speaking Students with Dyslexia

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Abstract

Aim: The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of telling Azerbaijani folktales on the reading performance of Turkish-speaking students with dyslexia. The research was semi-experimental and had a pretest-posttest design with a control group. The statistical population consisted of 16 primary school students (five girls and 11 boys) with dyslexia who were referred to the Center of Learning Disorders in Naqdeh city and had received a diagnosis of dyslexia. The students were selected by convenience sampling and then randomly assigned to the experimental or control groups (n=8 per group). Both groups filled out the Reading and Dyslexia Test at the beginning and end of the study. A folktale-telling intervention was performed in the experimental group once a week for eight sessions. The results of the multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) showed that the mean reading performance (reading words, word chains, rhyme test, naming images, text comprehension, word comprehension, phoneme reading, non-word reading, letter cues, and category cues) increased significantly in the experimental group ($p < 0.05$). The results thus suggest that folktales offer an effective way to improve reading performance in students with dyslexia.

Keywords: Folktales, Reading Performance, Dyslexia.

Introduction

Dyslexia is a specific learning disability (Snowling et al., 2020) that is usually diagnosed in childhood (Mandke et al., 2022). This disorder causes serious problems in the student's way of learning and has various other consequences, such as spelling disorders, difficulty in decoding words, and failure to achieve mastery over reading (Yang, 2022). Fluent reading is also one of the main problems faced by children with dyslexia (Adavi et al., 2022). Research shows that when children with reading problems receive early diagnosis and interventions, up to 70% can experience improvements through special education or remedial education programs, which shows the importance of appropriate early intervention for dyslexia (Yang, 2022). The treatment of individuals with specific learning disorders is a very challenging task, and many approaches, including storytelling, claim to treat and help these patients.

In psychology, stories are discussed from three different aspects: (1) As a diagnostic tool, (2) as an educational tool, and (3) as a therapeutic technique (Karimi Sani et al., 2020). In the present research, storytelling is used as an interventional approach to examine the reading performance of students with dyslexia.

Stories are composed of several narratives that happen simultaneously, and every story is set in a cultural context and is influenced by the cultural discourses of its particular geographical region (Chan et al., 2022). Research has shown that storytelling skills are linked to reading, writing, and academic success. This study also assumes that the repetitive nature of folktales, their simple storyline, and their familiarity with the audience may help them remember and learn words, and as such, folktales can be used as an effective way to introduce

new words or word combinations and to better understand the language (Hettiarachchi et al., 2022). Finally, storytelling can be an effective and helpful method for students with dyslexia, who also struggle with reading problems.

Methodology

This semi-experimental research has a pre-test-post-test design and a control group. The statistical population consisted of students with dyslexia in the second grade of primary school (five girls and 11 boys) who were referred to the Center of Learning Disorders in Naqadeh city in 2021-22 and received a diagnosis of dyslexia. A total of 16 students who were registered in this center were selected by convenience sampling and were then randomly assigned to experimental and control groups. Eight students were allocated to each group. The experimental group students participated in folktale-telling and reading sessions while the control group did not receive any interventions. MANCOVA was used to analyze the data. All the data obtained in this study were analyzed using SPSS 26.

To comply with ethical principles, the parents of the children were assured about the confidentiality of their data, and the eligibility criteria were also taken into consideration. The inclusion criteria were: (1) Obtaining permission from the parents, (2) The child demonstrating a potential for improvement by attending the sessions, and (3) Having a diagnosis of dyslexia based on the center’s records. The exclusion criteria were: (1) The parent's lack of consent to continue the intervention in any of the sessions and at any step of the treatment process, (2) The child taking medications used for stimulating attention, and (3) Absence from more than one session of the storytelling program.

Results

Examining the mean and standard deviation of the reading performance scores in the pretest and posttest stages separately for each group showed that the scores of reading performance and its subscales were significantly higher in the experimental group than the control group in the posttest.

Before performing the MANCOVA, its assumptions were examined. The Shapiro-Wilk test was used to measure the normality of the hypotheses, and Levene's test was also used to check the assumption of homoscedasticity. Finally, MANCOVA was used, since its assumptions were fully established.

Table 1 presents the results obtained using the MANCOVA.

Table 1. The results of the MANCOVA for the post-test comparison of the two groups

Components	Source	SS	Df	Ms	F	Sig	Eta
Reading words	Group	709.267	1	709.267	75.474	0.001	0.950
	Error	37.590	4	9.397			
Word chains	Group	796.532	1	796.532	16.979	0.015	0.809
	Error	187.649	4	46.912			
Rhyme test	Group	820.760	1	820.760	92.976	0.001	0.959
	Error	35.311	4				
Naming images	Group	4240.278	1	4240.278	624.980	0.0001	0.994
	Error	26.379	4	6.595			
Text comprehension	Group	4167.270	1	4167.270	16.664	0.015	0.806
	Error	1000.333	4	250.083			
Word comprehension	Group	404.290	1	404.290	218.740	0.0001	0.982
	Error	7.393	4	1.848			
Phoneme reading	Group	406.918	1	406.918	31.080	0.005	0.886
	Error	52.370	4	13.092			
Non-word reading	Group	205.913	1	205.913	7.912	0.048	0.664
	Error	104.103	4	26.026			
Letter cues	Group	2033.899	1	2033.899	43.290	0.003	0.915
	Error	187.935	4	46.984			
Category cues	Group	1396.904	1	1396.904	42.022	0.003	0.913
	Error	132.968	4	33.242			

According to Table 2, the two groups showed significant differences in terms of the reading performance subscales. Telling Azarbaijani folktales was thus effective on the reading performance of Turkish-speaking students with dyslexia.

Discussion and conclusion

The purpose of this research was to investigate the effectiveness of telling folktales in improving the reading performance of students with dyslexia. The results of the multivariate covariance analysis showed that telling stories is effective on the reading performance of students with dyslexia, which is consistent with the findings reported by Khazraie et al. (2022), Barwasser et al. (2021), Tahmasebi & Ahmadi (2022), and Kotaman (2020). This improvement can be explained by noting the following: First, during the process of telling folktales with an emphasis on learning and repeating new words (listening and writing) and using a diverse range of stories to sing, the child is encouraged to learn the shape of the letters, the writing style and the pronunciation of the words and to also pay more attention to correct words. Together, these factors contribute to a better understanding of texts in children with dyslexia. Second, as demonstrated in other studies (Hettiarachchi et al., 2022), telling folktales can positively impact the child's learning and remembering of words due to the repetitive nature of the stories, their simple storylines and their familiar feeling. The familiar setting of folktales makes them an effective learning tool for introducing new vocabulary and word combinations to children and causes an overall improved understanding of the language and reading performance.

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