

Semester IV- Storytelling

I. Objectives and requirements in performing « Telling of a story of their choice » in the oral expression course in Third year university classrooms.

1. Impact of storytelling on the language aspects of the students' communication skills.
2. The extent storytelling helps in enhancing the various aspects of communication.
3. promoting Students' oral language proficiency.
4. Leading students to “the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of contexts”.
5. Bringing learners to use the oral language as the primary mediator of culture, the way in which children locate themselves in the world, and define themselves with it and within it.

Other advantages of using storytelling in the classroom

Stories :

- Promote a feeling of well-being and relaxation
- Increase children's willingness to communicate thoughts and feelings
- Encourage active participation
- Increase verbal proficiency
- Encourage use of imagination and creativity
- Encourage cooperation between students
- Enhance listening skills

Commonalities of cultures around the world

Stories reveal universal truths about the world. Through stories we see how very different people share the same life experiences and how human nature can transcend culture.

As discussed and applied in Semester III, the same scheme/framework is kept and should be put into practice ; i.e., students are meant to respect the framework that consists of developing :

- a. The linguistic skills (grammar, vocabulary, idiomatic expression, etc.)
- b. The intonation, rhythm, & stress (Voice)
- c. The behavioural skill (facial, expression, eye contact, gestures, body movement, etc.)

In addition to that : learners are required to put into practice their **performance skills** :

Thus, remember to :

- vary the volume, pitch and tempo of your voice (enunciate clearly and exaggerate expression)
- use your face, body and gestures (let your body speak)
- make your body and face respond to the tale
- have a clear focus and maintain concentration

- maintain engaging eye contact with the audience/ individual listeners
- create a charismatic presence (make the audience believe in you)
- use different, exaggerated character voices
- use your space/ be dynamic
- remember to pace yourself
- always remember to regain your style as a narrator
- use silence and pauses to add dramatic effect

II. Introduction

Storytelling is essential to the human soul. We crave, live, and love stories. Sharing stories is the foundation of knowledge, information, awareness, and understanding. The telling of stories is for everyone of every hue and every part of the world, whether old, young, rich, or poor. We need to tell and hear stories aloud. Stories are our humanity. However, it is the storyteller who makes the magic happen.

Stories are interesting and motivating, thus attracting listeners and promoting communication. As storytellers, students have the opportunity to do it all – read, write, listen, and speak. The relaxed atmosphere and lively environment created by stories encourages the students to talk and discuss with each other. They **have fun experimenting with voice, facial expressions, emotion, and gestures** that make the story “just right” for telling. As they present their story, the art of listening becomes a two way street. By using **good eye contact and body language these storytellers communicate with their audience**. As students tell and listen to a story, they become caught up in the story and forget about themselves and their nervousness. They become more self-confident in expressing themselves creatively. The activities and skills that they learn will be used across the curriculum and throughout life. When we hear the word 'storytelling' automatically people will often think of children. But these people would be surprised to know that those fairytales that we grew up with were not originally meant for kids. When we tell and listen to stories, we share experience and understand each other. We also **share personal anecdotes, values and ideas**. Sharing all these is best expressed in a story. The way our minds think is the essence of the story. Therefore, to communicate effectively, it is important to engage people, break down barriers and ensure that they remember facts. In order to do these, telling stories in some form is essential. It is frequently thought that there are positive effects in **intellectual, social and emotional development of students who are encouraged to use storytelling**. As students engage in storytelling they learn to listen, to participate in and understand narrative discourse and create a path to more sophisticated use of language, reading and writing in their everyday lives (Mallan, 1992). Somewhere else it is believed that storytelling/retelling of stories is a successful strategy to increase pragmatic oral skills, the ability to use language in specific contexts for specific purpose, leading to greater ability to write.

Storytelling is an effective tool in improving the oral competencies of students. Becoming verbally proficient can contribute to a student’s ability to communicate effectively and successfully. Negotiation, discussion, and tact are peacemaking skills. Being able to accurately express one’s thoughts and feelings is important in everyday communication. Both telling a story and listening to a well-told tale encourages students to use their imaginations. Furthermore, storytelling it is held, helps develop the imagination which in turn builds on problem-solving competencies. Therefore, developing the imagination can empower students to consider new and inventive ideas. In other words developing the imagination can contribute to self-confidence and personal motivation as students envision themselves competent and able to accomplish their hopes and dreams. With all these in mind, this research is to explore the effectiveness of using storytelling as a tool to enhance students’ communicative skills.

Pedagogical requirements :

Students are required to choose a story which does not go over 10 minutes, therefore avoid long ones (such as literary ones because they are lengthy and so much detailed with more than one setting and several characters, etc.)

Students are also required to respect the framework that we agreed on since the first semester, i.e., while telling their stories, students are to exhibit the various skills of the framework mainly :

a.the linguistic/verbal skills

b.the vocal/the voice skills

c.the behavioural/visual skills

The choice/selection of the story ought to be rigorous and exhibits **relevance** and **interest**. These two criteria would play an important role in attracting the audience's attention and raise their interest and curiosity. With regard to this aspect an Indian proverb says : "Tell me a fact and I'll learn. Tell me the truth and I'll believe. But tell me a story and it will live in my heart forever."

The following are some more objectives when using storytelling in the classroom :

- To enable the students to learn English language skills
- To enhance their confidence and speaking skill
- To increase the student's knowledge of vocabulary, structure, context and grammar
- To create interest and develop listening comprehension
- To improve pronunciation and intonation
- To enhance the skills of connecting to content, connecting to learners and modeling
- To create fluency in speaking and to think about narration in writing
- To encourage interaction and share culture

Nature of Stories

What is a story? In essence, a narrative account requires a story that raises unanswered questions or unresolved conflicts; characters may encounter and then resolve a crisis or crises. A story line, with a beginning, middle and end, is identifiable. Stories can bring abstract principles to life by giving them concrete form. Students cannot always be given direct experience with psychological concepts, but stories might come close.

A story tends to have more depth than a simple example. A story tells about some event – some particular individuals, and something that happens to them. Stories engage our thinking, our emotions, and can even lead to the creation of mental imagery (Green & Brock, 2000). Individuals listening to stories react to them almost automatically, participating, in a sense, in the action of the narrative (e.g., Polichak & Gerrig, 2002).

Purpose of Stories

Stories can serve multiple functions in the classroom, including sparking student interest, aiding the flow of lectures, making material memorable, overcoming student resistance or anxiety, and building rapport between the instructor and the students, or among students themselves.

It may be difficult to remember a list of isolated concepts and definitions, but recalling the flow of a research story may be easier for students. Stories may also help create vivid mental images, another cue for recall. As stories provide natural connections between events and concepts, some other parts of the story may be recalled by just mentioning one part of the story which help evoke the other parts of the story. A story may provide a non-threatening way to ease students into learning. A narrative opening may seem simple and straightforward, allowing students to relax and grasp a concrete example before moving into more technical details of a theory or finding. Sometimes stories can even be about the learning process; tales of previous students who struggled but then succeeded might serve as inspiration for current students.

Telling a story from experience can create a more personal student-teacher connection

This rapport can lead to a positive classroom climate. As long as every class session isn't another chapter from someone's autobiography, students enjoy seeing a glimpse of the human side of their professors. In class discussion, for instance, adopting such an opening may inspire reciprocity and help create an atmosphere where students are more willing to share their opinions and experiences.

FINDING AND SELECTING STORIES

There are a wealth of sources for teachable stories - current events, history, television programs, classic literature or drama, and personal experience. There is a wide variety of literature to choose from: the great body of traditional literature (folktales, myths and legends, hero tales, fables, and drolls) and modern literature (such as the literary fairy tale, fantasy, fiction, and nonfiction, including biography). A long story can be broken down and told serially, or a single incident from a book may be selected for telling. Finding stories one likes to tell may take more time than learning them. The storyteller reads constantly in search of new material. Re-reading is important, too, because a story that may not appeal to the storyteller at first reading may appeal at another time.

Tips for Telling a Story : Here are some tips to help telling a story:

Just before you tell: Review the Story Learning Note Sheet. Mentally walk one-by-one through the scenes to make sure the scene images jump sequentially into your mind.

1. Rehearse the opening and closing paragraphs as the last thing you do before you tell. These are two of the places where tellers are most likely to stumble. Often tellers rush into a story before they are really ready to begin and blow the opening. As a teller nears the end of their story, they think, *Alleluia! I'm going to make it. Only a couple of paragraphs to go.* And their mind rushes prematurely back into their seat, abandoning their mouth and body, which must stumble unguided through the close. Mistakes on that final scene leave a bitter taste in the teller's mouth.

2. Pause before you start. After you stand and announce that you are going to tell a story, pause, breathe, and smile while you check to make sure that the images for the first scene are there and ready to use.

3. Pause when you finish. Don't move when you finish the story. Stay standing where you are, breathe, smile, and acknowledge the adulation of the crowd.

4. Stand to tell. Many beginning tellers feel conspicuous, presumptuous, and excessively formal when they stand to tell. However, sitting ties up part of your orchestra and makes many gestures and all body movements awkward.

5. Focus on the story. While you tell, focus on the story, not on your performance of it, not on what you look or sound like telling it. Pretend you are *living* the story and are aware of nothing else.

6. **Avoid stories in the round.** Keep the audience in front of you. Avoid gathering your audience into a circle or placing listeners behind or beside you. When you tell you want to look at your audience. If they are all around you, your head has to bounce from side to side faster than at a sizzling tennis match.

7. **Pause regularly.** Regularly pause, smile, and make sure the images of the next scene are ready to go in your mind. We usually rush stories and adding pauses is good both for the audience and for you.

8. **Ignore yourself while you tell.** You can't afford to think about whether you look silly or you're sweating. The more you think about yourself, the less you are focusing on the story and the less energy you are putting into your telling. Focus on the story as if you *were* the story and the characters.

9. **Be aware of listeners.** The only thing you should ever be aware of while you tell other than the story is the audience. Are they locked into the story, mouths dropped open, eyes glazed over and turned inward to watch the wondrous movie they are creating in their minds? Are they growing restless? Are you going too fast, or too slow, for their needs? Do they need review and explanation?

10. **Celebrate your successes.** Remember that the first telling of a new story is always the most stressful. It is still a new story. You want the first telling to go well, and it will. But it won't be perfect. Rather than being overly critical of your performance and revisiting each mistake, identify what worked and what both you and the audience liked as much as you search for the aspects of your story that need revision.

11. **Never apologize for a story or your telling of it after you finish.** Never tell your audience all the things you think you did wrong. The audience doesn't want to hear it. You will discount their experience of the story, which might be very positive. They will suddenly feel swindled and cheated, instead of gloriously satisfied with you and your story.

Gestures that should be used while telling

Watch a group of people talk. You can tell who's talking by watching each person's hands. The hands of the talker will be in motion. **Gestures** are a natural part of all oral communication.

Gestures therefore:

- Add a sense of natural comfort
- Add tremendous amounts of energy to a storytelling performance
- Provide an important form of detailed, visual information
- Make the teller appear more confident, comfortable, and natural
- Contribute to how a story is told

It is fine to say, "Create detailed images of each scene and character and gestures will take care of themselves." gestures are typically the first victim of nervousness. A teller's hands always want to run and hide at the first sign of stress and discomfort. The more one knows about gestures, the less likely his hands will be to succumb to their own cowardly urges.

What are gestures?

They are movements by hand, body, or face intended to provide information to an audience. This definition excludes nervous gestures, ticks, mannerisms, and habitual movements, which provide either no information or counterproductive information to a listener.

- As visual elements, gestures pack far more information into each second of story time than do words *gestures communicate efficiently*.
- Being visual, gestures translate more directly into specific, powerful images in the listener's mind than do words *gestures communicate effectively*.
- Gestures engage different sensory organs than words and can be transmitted simultaneously with words to create a complementary cacophony of densely packed information to flood the listener with imagery and energy *gestures communicate powerfully*.

There are **five ways** a teller can use gestures:

1. Information gestures provide basic descriptive information (size, place, shape, position, direction, etc.). Information gestures are the result of detailed images in the mind of the teller.

2. Character-related gestures show how a character moves, postures, thinks, and acts and provide powerful character personality and sensory information for listeners. Character gestures spring from vivid images of story characters in the teller's mind.

3. Action gestures depict the action and events of a story. Action gestures arise from the teller's detailed images of the settings and events of the story.

4. Emphasis gestures add emphasis to specific moments in a story and are usually pre-planned and listed in the Orchestra Notes column of the Story Learning Note Sheet.

5. Audience asides are gestures and facial expressions tellers use to convey their own feelings and reactions to listeners outside the context of the story. It is as if the teller steps outside of the story for a moment and visually comments on the story to listeners.

Watch how you and others naturally weave these five types of gestures into everyday speech. Pay particular notice to which of these categories of gestures you use extensively and which you tend to omit from your own speech. While none of them is essential to the effective telling of a story, it is important to know if you naturally shy away from one or more types of gestures so that you can plan around them during story preparation. Also watch to see if you frequently use gestures that do not fit into one of these five categories. Such gestures are probably counterproductive nervous habits and worth breaking.

References

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