



[picture retrieved from <https://images.app.goo.gl/aD2e6kg9j3qzLHaVA>]

Abstract

From authentic teacher input to authentic student output: an interactive storytelling workshop in which you develop an exciting story(line) to take home to activate and engage your learners during your next lesson. Together with other participants, practise (digital) storytelling by using personal experience and pictures. Come listen, tell & share!

Ten tips to improve your storytelling

Tell, tell and tell! The more practice the better. Telling stories is the best way to improve your storytelling skills and to make the flow and details of your story better.

Ten tips to improve your storytelling skills in class:

1. **PERSONAL** – Tell a story that is personally relevant to you. Human interest literally means gaining interest from your listeners. Stories about people's embarrassing moments are very popular, for example, as they cause **strong feelings** just like for the person who experienced this moment. Strong feelings mean strong reaction and much retention. When people recognise a situation, they can relate to it much more.
2. **CURIOSITY** - Keep your audience engaged by the use of an **unexpected / mysterious / intriguing** element. **Curiosity** leads to engagement. Important characteristic of a good story is that it raises questions like why and how, making the listener an active listener (active brain).
3. **RELEVANCE** - Relate the story to your teaching context, your learners and the content to teach.
4. **OBSERVE** - Listen to and watch your audience to keep your pacing and pausing right.
5. **VISUALISE** - Use pictures, an object, draw on the board, but also use facial expressions and gestures!
6. **DRAMA** - Act out your story, exaggerate, use colourful language (Roald Dahl) and details, bring your story alive! Use your voice to stress important aspects and use the right intonation pattern to show enthusiasm and engagement.
7. **SIMPLE STRUCTURE** – This creates **flow** in your story and keeps your audience engaged until the end. Don't add too many details that make you deviate from your main storyline!
8. **STRONG END** – Try to finish your story with a twist, give some food for thought, etc.
9. **PASSION** – share a story that you personally like or a topic that you have a passion for – your enthusiasm will enthuse your class.
10. **HUMOUR** – Even serious or sad topics are more digestible with some sense of humour.

Practical improvement of your story

Circle at least one parameter per column to work with.

Purpose in ELT	Genre	Improvement (10 tips)
introduce theme / topic of a lesson, e.g. <i>difficult situations at work</i>	anecdote	personal
introduce the content of a listening* / reading exercise, e.g. <i>what can happen when two strangers meet</i>	joke	curiosity
introduce the genre of a reading text or listening* fragment, e.g. <i>anecdote of (horrible) holiday experience</i>	fairytale	relevance
use story as a listening* exercise, e.g. <i>find out what happened and who was to blame.</i>	news story / current affairs	observe
prepare for speaking or writing task, e.g. <i>a sample pitch, a shared folding story.</i>	(childhood) memory	visualise
	plot of book/film/youtube clip	drama
	other...	structure
		strong end
		enjoy
		humour

* listening implies both listening and watching



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9



10

Some practical ideas to try out with your students

Inner outer circle

Students practise their stories by telling and retelling them to new classmates to memorise all the details and discover what version of their story works best. After several rounds they have repeated words and phrases a few times and have also worked out the best structure of their story.

Shared story

Pupils each throw one story cube and build a story together inspired by the images on their own dice. One student starts and each in turn adds one sentence. Can be done using a specific genre like fairytale.

Digital version on <http://foldingstory.com>

Very short story

Use Twitter to have pupils write very short stories in one or two lines. Use examples from @VeryShortStory to inspire them. Or have them write a 'VeryShortReview' on one of this person's tweeted stories. Use word count since Twitter now allows longer tweets than 141 characters!

CLIL

When teaching CLIL or content-based learning, use (well known) stories to explain subjects in a simple way like The Very Hungry Caterpillar or use a metaphor like soldiers defending your body against bacterial attacks by the enemy, building defence walls (repairing wounds), etc.

Visualise and present

Ask your learners to make a story using e.g. LEGO, a mindmap or a moodboard with photos. This way they think of a story to tell or information to share in a more holistic way. Next, they can use the visual information to support their presentation.

Useful links

- <https://www.nytimes.com/guides/smarterliving/how-to-tell-a-good-story>
- Podcast The Moth / Echt gebeurd (real life stories)
- Twitter: @veryshortstory
- Online tools: storybird.com
- <https://www.storyboardthat.com/>
- for story writing and inspiration: <https://www.inklestudios.com/inklewriter/> (tool to write interactive tales) and <http://foldingstory.com/> (group storytelling game)

Useful reading

This workshop was inspired by Jamie Keddie's work and stories. Find out more about his work on <http://jamiokeddie.com/>

If you would like to use stories in your classroom, use this elaborate book:

Heathfield, D. (2017) *Storytelling With Our Students: Techniques for telling tales from around the world*, DELTA Publishing Teacher Development Series ISBN 978 1 905085 87 3