

Institut Pendidikan Guru Kampus Dato' Razali Ismail

LGA3103 Stories for Young Learners

Topic 9: Storytelling Performance



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Topic 9: Storytelling Performance

1. Preparing to Present a Story



Some people can feel quite nervous before storytelling for the first time, even to children. Naturally they want to do a really good job and leave an ongoing good impression!

Here are some steps to walk through before making that first presentation.

Credit is given to Jeff Gere and his "Tell Well" system in for some of the steps provided here. (Gere, Storytelling Tools for the Classroom, 2012)

a) Getting Started – Visualisation

First we need to choose a story – as has been discussed in previous sections. We could think of a well-known folk-tale, or a story we have heard. We could choose a story we have read in a book. We could make up a story or tell a personal experience.

We need to KNOW the story really well. That does NOT mean memorise it as such. Only memorise the **sequence of events**.



And we need to be able to **visualise** it – the scenes, the characters, the actions. Visualise and be able to describe how each character moves and talks.

We need to use **imagination** to make the story real and complete.

b) Mime



Most people find mime a little awkward and even difficult. But *this is a very important step* in preparing the story for telling. As Gere says: "Bad storytelling is often static and word-based. Children respond to physical movement and it enlivens the tales. Mime forces the storyteller to start learning scenes and to visualize the story."

The facilitator should model how to mime a story first.

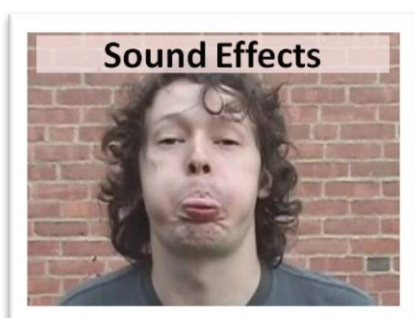
The storyteller needs to become the character and mime the action of the scenes.

After a demonstration by the facilitator, participants should go to a private spot nearby to mime and once there they should close their eyes and explore the scenes in their story. Allocate a specific amount of time (10 minutes should be enough) and tell participants to return promptly.

NOTE to facilitator

Participants may be quite comfortable to work in the course room as everyone is concentrating with their eyes closed. This would make it possible to ring a bell or give some other signal for them to return to their places.

c) Sound Effects



Hopefully by now no one is feeling embarrassed!

We want to add sound effects to the mime. NOT WORDS. And we don't want the whole story to be a series of noises! Select the parts of the story, the actions, that would benefit from having sound effects added.

The facilitator should first model making sound effects. (yes, really!)

Encourage participants to experiment with various sound effects. People will find some sounds more difficult than others. Work in groups to discuss the most suitable and recognisable sound effects to make. (Page 9 in participant's notes.)

d) Words



The important thing is not to lose the actions and sounds when we add the words.

Facilitator should model this step.

Tell part of a story using actions, sound effects and words as well.

Putting it all together

The participants should now work in pairs, telling each other their stories using actions, sound effects and words. The listener needs to give feedback. Facilitator should monitor.

Listener Feedback

The partner needs to ask questions about parts that are difficult to visualise, if it's not clear who is speaking or what is happening.

Participants should each pair up with another partner and try again.

2. Telling the Story



Of course the following aspects of storytelling also need some practice, but by now everyone is beginning to feel the need to get on with telling the story.

a) Character Voices, Faces, and Placement



We have already practised movements and sound effects, and had listener feedback to tell whether it was obvious who was doing what in the story.

Dialogue can really liven up a story, but when telling the story, it becomes tiresome for the narrator to be saying "Now the cat says ... and then the mouse says ... and then the cat says ..."

So to keep the audience informed about who is talking when, the storyteller needs to keep the characters clear in space and in relation to one another. Each character should have a position where the teller stands/sits/bends down, and each character should have specific facial expressions, gestures, and voice quality – pitch, gruffness, vocab range etc.

Facilitator should demonstrate this with a segment of story!

Participants consider a story with a couple of characters, and plan how to depict each one.

Discuss choices with their group / partner and if necessary adapt ideas.

Reflection

Ideally you should watch yourself on video after presenting a story, and examine what went right as well as wrong.

The children who are listening will reflect back to you on their faces how well you are doing. But sometimes you can get so involved in the story and trying to remember all of the aspects of your performance that it's hard to even notice accurately what the children are feeling.

Naturally you should keep a reflections journal and write down the things you did notice. How you felt before you started, as you went along, and how you felt after, and what you noticed about how the children were feeling. This will only be useful to you later if you can pinpoint what might be causing these reactions, the things you should try again and the things you should avoid.

In the workshop / class situation (at the IPG) when you are practicing, you should be working with a partner. And then you should be able to be very honest with each other about how well your various strategies are working. Is your diction clear? (Are you speaking too fast?) Are your gestures meaningful or just silly? Are your voices distinct enough? Etc.

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