



# StoryRegions

104

## Training Material “Storytelling to foster cooperation and inclusion”

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## Introduction

This training module is a compilation of material initially gathered to help partners prepare and develop their pilot projects. As such it can be of use for anyone who wants to use storytelling or storyelling methods as tool to build cooperation and/or to support learning. After a theoretical introduction to storytelling and its benefits, these guidelines focus on the potentials and applications of storytelling for networking as well as on the practical implementation. In the second part a number of exercises for different target groups and contexts are presented, followed by some practical tips. Finally these guidelines provide some suggestions for further reading and online resources.

## How to build a good storytelling project with the right methodology?

In the project StoryRegions we have agreed that the most important “storytelling methodology” to support and improve social inclusion and community building is bringing people together – people from organisations, associations, education, libraries etc – and then, when a network with stakeholders and target groups has been created, to implement storytelling as a tool within this network. At this stage a wide range of storytelling approaches and techniques can be used.

A central element in the StoryRegions project is to carry out pilot projects in the participating countries. The idea is to develop some of the prior analysis of existing practices in oral storytelling and to test this in real contexts. In this way we hope not only to gain more experience but also to see what works and how some of the principles underlying a storytelling approach are affected by the limitations of actual institutions in a range of countries and situations.

Therefore in StoryRegions we will create 2 pilot cases per partner country. Methodology, format and content will be decided by the partners in cooperation with the organizations involved, following the elements acquired during the training workshop and the objectives of the pilot project. The development of these cases will go along with action research, evaluation and feedback since these cases are a unique opportunity to evaluate the approach. This feedback will be used to update and improve the StoryRegions approach, methodology and material.

StoryRegions is a unique project in many ways. It is not just a project of how to use storytelling in different aspects (language learning, creating cultural identity etc.), it is much more than that. In StoryRegions we are actually contributing to community development and even development at a regional level. The main question therefore is: how can we best use storytelling in different socio-cultural settings?

This approach opens up for a methodology at two levels.

- 1) The first level, and what makes StoryRegions unique, is about intersectorial cooperation – to find ways of bringing people and/or different groups in society together.
- 2) The second level is more about how to use storytelling in different ways; different techniques for different situations.

## What are we talking about?

### What is a Story?

Most dictionaries define a story as *a narrative account of a real or imagined event or events*. Within the storytelling community, a story is more generally agreed to be a specific structure of narrative with a specific style and set of characters and which includes a sense of completeness. Through this sharing of experience we use stories to pass on accumulated wisdom, beliefs, and values. Through stories we explain how things are, why they are, and our role and purpose. Stories are the building blocks of knowledge, the foundation of memory and learning. Stories connect us with our humanness and link past, present, and future by teaching us to anticipate the possible consequences of our actions.

You need four main ingredients to create stories and understand the art of storytelling.

1. A person: the main character or subject. If we do not have someone through whose nose we can smell or in whose shoes we can walk, how can we bring our senses to bear on the story? Or, more precisely, awaken the listeners' memories of their own sensory experiences.
2. A place: an environment in which we hear sounds, the sun shines or the wind blows cold.
3. The dilemma: a problem. In these lies the crux of why we tell stories, we want to understand what it is to be human. Problems come in all shapes and sizes, a shoe lace might snap, a volcano erupt, the stock market crash, or a man says no at the altar.
4. The end: What was suggested in the beginning of the story is now being fulfilled. Either the dilemma is solved or not. The end reflects your reasons for telling this very story. Not all endings are happy, but you should be sure where you want to land with your story. It is your place of safety at the end of the journey.

### What is telling?

It is the live, person-to-person oral and physical presentation of a story to an audience. "Telling" involves direct contact between teller and listener. It mandates the direct presentation of the story by the teller. The teller's role is to prepare and present the necessary language, vocalization, and physicality to effectively and efficiently communicate the images of a story. The listener's role is to actively create the vivid, multi-sensory images,

actions, characters, and events---the reality---of the story in their mind based on the performance by the teller, and on their past experiences, beliefs, and understandings. The completed story happens in the mind of the listener, unique and personal for each individual.

1. **Storytelling is an interactive performance art form.** Direct interaction between the teller and audience is an essential element of the storytelling experience. An audience responds to the teller's words and actions. The teller uses this generally non-verbal feedback to immediately, spontaneously, and improvisationally adjust the tones, wording, and pace of the story to better meet the needs of the audience.
2. **Storytelling is, by design, a co-creative process.** Storytelling audiences do not passively receive a story from the teller, as a viewer receives and records the content of a television program or motion picture. The teller provides no visual images, no stage set, and generally, no costumes related to story characters or historic period. Listeners create these images based on the performer's telling and on their own experiences and beliefs.
3. **Storytelling is, by its nature, personal, interpretive, and uniquely human.** Storytelling passes on the essence of who we are. Stories are a prime vehicle for assessing and interpreting events, experiences, and concepts from minor moments of daily life to the grand nature of the human condition. It is an intrinsic and basic form of human communication. More than any other form of communication, the telling of stories in an integral and essential part of the human experience.
4. **Storytelling is a process, a medium for sharing, interpreting, offering the content and meaning of a story to an audience.** Because storytelling is spontaneous and experiential, and thus a dynamic interaction between teller and listener, it is far more difficult to describe than is the script and camera directions of a movie, or the lines and stage direction notes of a play. Storytelling emerges from the interaction and cooperative, coordinated efforts of teller and audience.

### What is Oral Storytelling?

(adapted from texts of storytellers Luis Correia Carmelo (PT) & Heidi Dahlsveen (NO))

Oral Storytelling is a non-mediated way to tell a story, which implies the co-presence of teller and listener and determines the ephemeral nature of the narrative event. Oral Storytelling only exists while the story is being told and it is unrepeatable. Therefore oral storytelling is more than the story, the music, the images or the interaction with the medium. Oral Storytelling is about what happens between people while they are sharing the story. Thus Oral Storytelling shares many features with other ways of telling a story or being together with people. As in reading a book, we are engaged in imagining the characters and landscapes in our mind in a different way than in a movie for example. As in a dance hall we are invited to participate, sharing our entertainment with others. The special thing about Oral Storytelling, however, is how these elements go together.

The context is where and how storytelling takes place. It depends on the moment of the day, the nature of the space, who is present, what they were doing before and what they are going to do next, why they are gathered together and what is the nature of their social interaction. In this way, oral storytelling stresses the experience of the event, where we are and with whom. From the tellers it requires the sensibility to find the opportune moment, to choose the story and how to tell it, or not to do it at all and just engage in dialogue with their interlocutors. From the listener it demands the ability to recognise his/her part in the game, to listen or to participate in the terms the context proposes, to relate to others, tellers and other listeners, in the best interest of the collective event.

The narrator is the person who tells the story. It is not necessarily a storyteller as we imagine: anyone able to share an experience can tell a story. Again, all depends on the context. The special thing about the narrator in oral storytelling is that it is a real person that we know and who is immediately present! In this way, Oral Storytelling demands from those who narrate a certain level of exposition, the ability to share his/her own imagery and points of view, experiencing the restraints and the freedom of affirming his/her personal and cultural identity.

For those who are listening, it implies acceptance of the other, willingness to engage in different ideas and understandings of a shared reality. The fact that the teller and the listener are present and that they acknowledge each other as persons who are sharing experiences is one of the greatest added-value oral storytelling can offer in terms of social interaction.

The narrative is how the story is delivered through any kind of storytelling. It has to do with how the narrated events are told and organised in sequence, which point of view we are invited to follow, what is described and not, what is told and what is shown. In oral storytelling the narrative is not only delivered verbally: gestures, voice and the use of space also contribute to it. How we tell the story, how we organise the narrative, can be almost entirely decided in the moment of the telling, as in the spontaneous retelling of a life experience, or it can be more based on a pre-set form, as in a story that we have already heard before, or almost completely determined by a fixed script, as in a memorised text. Nevertheless, there will be always a spontaneous element to the narrative that is a consequence of the context and of the relation between teller and listeners: spontaneous gestures, tones of voice, pauses and rhythms, interactions and interruptions... However, telling stories spontaneously, finding the words and physically performing it as the story goes on will stress the importance of the context and of the social interaction, exercising narrative and oral communication skills in a particular way.

Gestures and voice are important non-verbal elements of oral storytelling. They can give rhythm to the speech, add information or imitate characters. They can invite closeness or demand distance. They are a fundamental part of the process of oral storytelling and consequently they involve bodily expression, an essential competence in oral communication and in social performance.

The available space is also an important element of oral storytelling, and it too is closely connected to the context. What is the difference between telling a story in the classroom and taking the class to another place? What changes when the group is seated in lines or organised in a circle? The space element determines a great deal of the oral storytelling experience and it cannot be overlooked.

Nevertheless, important as are all these (and other) elements, oral storytelling is fundamentally about human relations. The way it creates communication makes it a special way of transmitting knowledge, connecting generations and building communities, a pleasant entertainment at work breaks and in social events and even an intimate performing art to enjoy in pubs, theatres and festivals. No matter where we are and why we are telling stories it always involves a moment shared by people, an opportunity to exchange experiences and ideas, to dream side by side, to imagine possible worlds. This element of oral storytelling is only achievable because of the co-presence of someone telling a story through a narrative voice and of someone who is listening.

**“The benefits of oral storytelling are as diverse as the stories we chose to tell”.<sup>1</sup>**

A number of sources have described the benefits of oral storytelling<sup>2</sup>:

- ✓ Storytelling improves listening skills and increases attention spans.
- ✓ It requires active listening and is an activity that brings an immediate reward for the listener and the storyteller.
- ✓ Storytelling improves the use of oral language and subsequently also written language.
- ✓ It improves understanding of plot, sequencing, characterisation, and other literacy competences.
- ✓ It develops visualisation and creativity.
- ✓ It allows students to strengthen their communication and social skills.
- ✓ It enhances self-esteem.
- ✓ It establishes a special bond between teller and listener, improving the teacher/student relation, but also the sense of community among students.
- ✓ It improves literacy skills;
- ✓ It strengthens comprehension;

<sup>1</sup> Munn, H. D., 1999

<sup>2</sup> Munn, H. D., 1999, Dunning, 1999, Mundy-Taylor, 2013

- ✓ It improves vocabulary, imagination, and logical thinking;
- ✓ It builds critical thinking skills as listeners compare different versions of tales or the responses of numerous characters to similar situations;
- ✓ It improves empathy with others and, with others' cultures, enabling children to resist peer pressure and make independent decisions;
- ✓ It improves group dynamics, social skills and reasoning;
- ✓ It is a relaxing activity where the children are not assessed and where the only thing required is a willingness to listen;
- ✓ It is a living context for making meaning.

No matter what stories are told, it is possible to recognise pedagogical, personal and social benefits from the storytelling practice in the classroom. On the one hand, it helps to create a motivating learning environment and develops important skills. It also contributes to the students' personal and cultural self-awareness, being a way for them to express themselves and their ideas. Finally, it helps to create confident individuals who are capable of critical thinking, but who also understand and respect the importance of difference, and are willing and able to communicate.

### Why Tell Stories?

Extract from Tim Sheppard's webpage (UK): We have a profound need to tell and hear stories. It is how we share experience, understand each other, and create community. Every conversation is full of personal anecdote; every effort to explain shared customs and values needs a tale; every bit of wisdom is best expressed by a story. The very way our minds think is the essence of story. So to master powerful and effective communication, to engage people and ensure they remember facts, or to break down barriers of isolation within or between groups, telling stories in some form is essential. For more on the reasons why stories are told, including an introduction to the benefits for meaning, memory and healing, explore the "Call of Story" website's "Why Tell Stories" pages at <http://www.callofstory.org/en/storytelling/whytell.asp>

### Where do I find stories to tell?

Extract from Tim Sheppard's webpage (UK) "Tim Sheppard's Story Links" at [www.timsheppard.co.uk/story/storylinks.html](http://www.timsheppard.co.uk/story/storylinks.html) will give you a good start. There are many thousands of tales available online.

Read, and listen. Check your local library's folktale collections in both the children's and adult departments, plus the single folktales in children's picture-books. Don't forget the obvious - listen to storytellers! There is now a trend in the USA, but not in the rest of the world, to tell

personal stories. Creating stories and telling stories are two different skills, though, so a familiarity with what makes a good story is wise, before telling anecdotes from your life. For help with "Making Fairy Tales from Personal Stories," look at Doug Lipman's article at [http://www.storypower.com/lipman/Articles/Finding\\_and\\_Creating/fairy\\_tales.html](http://www.storypower.com/lipman/Articles/Finding_and_Creating/fairy_tales.html). Storytellers traditionally feel a responsibility to pass on the traditional tales of their culture, and the old folktales are not only finely honed, over centuries, to be guaranteed entertaining, but their structure has much to teach us about what people like.



## LEVEL 1: Networking and bringing people and organisations together

To be able to tell what storytelling means, to give a taste of its power, and to illustrate what can be achieved with it, is one of the core missions of anyone trying to promote and bring storytelling to life in a community or educational group, in schools or in empowerment or health projects.

- To organise networking events, e.g. through seminars, gatherings, storytelling evenings ... between existing and new actors with different starting points that are interested in storytelling.
- To ensure that storytelling training programs are organized for specific professions such as teachers, tour leaders, guides and library, archive or museum staff.
- To encourage storytelling projects where the library, museum and archive sector, local history societies, study groups, schools, teacher groups are involved.
- To initiate special events such as storytelling cafes, storytelling festivals and workshops that can ultimately include both national and international elements.
- To promote and support initiatives for starting training programs, courses and workshops on storytelling at universities, colleges, schools ...
- To bring in national and international intelligence about storytelling (through seminars, festivals etc.).

The competence to network and to create new connections is crucial for supporting the development of a storytelling culture within a region. The project coordinator/curator should be competent in interacting constructively with others involved in his/her working field, is able to establish relationships and to build up a network of relevant contacts to promote

storytelling. He/she has knowledge of relevant actors and networks within the region and beyond, on national and international level. In collaborating with storytellers and stakeholders of society, the curator has the ability to exchange knowledge and experience as well as to establish new contacts in a target oriented way. He or she is aware of his or her role and knows feasible approaches to establish new contacts, taking into consideration the working contexts and roles of others. He/she has internalised his/her own goals and recognises opportunities to promote these towards others. The curator has a positive attitude towards collaborating with others, is interested in the exchange of knowledge and experiences and open towards different forms and opportunities for networking to promote storytelling.

### Intersectorial cooperation – introduction

The following methodology can be used as a template for a project or just as a source of inspiration. Although the examples tend to target participants of all ages, the pattern is perfectly applicable for adults in the context of this book. This methodological pattern is founded on the interaction between a storyteller, organization and target group / public.

#### The storyteller

Many men and women have taken up the art of storytelling, either as amateurs or as professionals. Storytellers will not only perform at venues, but also try to play a key role in long-lasting projects. Many of them actively try to set up projects, such as *Storybook Dads* and *Telling...Told*. Most of the time, these projects not only provide storytellers with employment opportunities, but also satisfy their wishes to promote educational or community goals.

The storyteller is first and foremost an expert in the field of storytelling. The teller activates the public and uses his or her extensive knowledge and experience to introduce storytelling to the audience. As shown in *Jij bent aan het woord* and *Goed Gesprookjes*, storytellers will gradually start to transfer their art. They engage the project's participants to become brand new tellers on a step by step basis. This transfer shall be elaborated on in the public's chapter.

No two storytellers are alike. Some cater to businesses, others provide young and adult audiences with native and foreign tales. This diversity of opportunities can be put to use for the project. *Beleef de canon* invites elders to classrooms, which provides a chance for the project to bridge intergenerational gaps. Projects such as *Hugin & Munin* and *Telling...Told* use international tellers to enhance the projects' educational goals.

#### Some examples

##### *Storybook Dads / Storybook Mums*

Kids not only love a story told by their parents, this practice also helps develop a child's literacy. However, some parents do not have the chance to tell stories, because they are serving a prison sentence. Storybook Dads and its female counterpart Storybook Mums are two projects that help prisoners learn the art of storytelling. Their stories are recorded so they can have a positive impact on their children's education whilst staying in prison. The project

has helped hundreds of prisoners in the United Kingdom to maintain relationships with their families and lessened their chance to re-offend by keeping the participants connected to their communities.

<http://www.storybookdads.org.uk/index.html>

#### *Telling...Told*

After his experiences with the ErzählZeit Project, British storyteller and performer Christian Rogers decided to work on a project of his own. *Telling...Told* is an international initiative which brings storytelling into foreign language teaching. Schools in Brandenburg and Berlin use stories told in English to further the pupils' speaking and listening skills, along with their concentration, memory and attention. According to the creator, this project can be tyled for any age group.

<http://christian-rogers.com/christianrogers/Telling...Told.html>

#### *Jij bent aan het woord*

*Jij bent aan het woord* is Karin Wijnands' final project for the Dutch Vertelacademie. Karin wanted to use storytelling as a creative way to encourage 9-10 year old children to communicate. The project started with two lessons about storytelling for each class, followed by a chance for the pupils to tell homemade stories. *Jij bent aan het woord* paid attention to content, but also provided feedback on the pupils' way of delivering the story.

<http://www.vertelacademie.nl/projecten/afstudeerprojecten/131-jij-bent-aan-het-woord-karin-wijnands>

#### *Beleef de canon*

Reinou Vogel made the Dutch storytelling project '*Beleef de canon*' as a final project for the Vertelacademie. The course was produced for 8-12 year old children and serves as an inventive way to bring history into the classroom. It consists of four lessons, each with a specific purpose. During the first lesson pupils are introduced to storytelling and books. An eyewitness of history visits the pupils during the second lesson, with topics ranging from World War Two to the great storm. The third lesson offers children a chance to tell their own stories and produce conclusions. The fourth lesson remains available as an extra session for storytelling moments in small groups.

<http://www.vertelacademie.nl/projecten/afstudeerprojecten/84-beleef-de-canon-reinou-vogel>

#### *Hugin & Munin*

The Scandinavian *Hugin & Munin* project was implemented in corporation between storytellers from Norway, Sweden and Denmark. The unique project wanted to test if children can learn neighbor-languages by means of storytelling. Along with extensive training for young storytellers, a pilot project was started in Roskilde, Denmark in 2011. Pupils from nine schools listened to stories in Danish and neighboring languages. The international program proved to be a success, enabling all participants to improve their understanding of the Scandinavian languages.

<https://huginogmuninsprog.wordpress.com/>

## The organization

Another angle for this methodology is the organization. It is hard to define this partner, because a broad range of institutions can choose to collaborate with or even start a storytelling project. This type of partners can be split into two groups: governmental and private organisations. In the context of storytelling projects, the first group is mostly comprised of schools, libraries and institutions of higher education. This can be seen in projects such as *Mit Erzählen Schule machen*, *Sharing Stories: Sharing Understanding* and *Medieval Storytelling*. Although some schools are privately owned, all schools have to use curricula. The second group consists of a more varied range of organisations. Charities and non-profits play important role in projects such as *Tales: storytelling by children* and *Het Sprookjesproject*. There are however organisations that aren't well known partners of storytelling projects. *Kick into Reading* relied on football clubs to spread the art of oral storytelling among children. *The Brazen Head* is a good example of a business collaborating with storytellers to promote local culture.

Just like storytellers, organisations tend to take the initiative for a project. Sometimes organisations band together in partnerships to exchange expertise. It is important to note that these partners often rely on grants and can greatly benefit from using preexisting platforms. Football clubs participating in *Kick into Reading* could rely on an established system and promising results from other partners. The organisation's role in this methodological pattern can be concluded to be a largely facilitating one. Often participants are drawn from the organisations regular public. This is an important factor for the methodology. Storytellers should use the organization's knowledge of the public to improve the project.

## Some examples

### *Mit Erzählen Schule machen*

The German Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München recognizes the power of storytelling in education. This is why student teachers of the LMU have promoted storytelling in Munich's Primary schools. In doing so, the aspiring teachers' weekly storytelling sessions strengthened pupils' vocabulary and communicative skills. LMU's student teachers received training during seminars to thoroughly prepare themselves for the project.

[https://www.uni-muenchen.de/aktuelles/medien/spotlight/2013\\_meldungen/erzaehlen\\_hauck\\_thum.html](https://www.uni-muenchen.de/aktuelles/medien/spotlight/2013_meldungen/erzaehlen_hauck_thum.html)

### *Sharing Stories: Sharing Understanding*

When a Welsh storyteller was dropped into an English for Speakers of Other Languages class by chance, the idea for this project was born. ESOL classes were popular enough among migrants but certain groups proved more difficult to reach. Women and older people seemed to lack incentives to join the ESOL courses. Sharing Stories: Sharing Understanding decided to employ two ways of storytelling in ESOL classes. The first method consisted of regular classes with a smaller amount of participants. The second method was a 'drop-in'

approach which proved to be very popular. Beyond the Border published a booklet about the project which provides extensive information and course material.

[http://www.learningandwork.wales/sites/niace\\_cy/files/files/NIACE%20Sharing%20Stories%20LR%20English%20\(2\).pdf](http://www.learningandwork.wales/sites/niace_cy/files/files/NIACE%20Sharing%20Stories%20LR%20English%20(2).pdf)

#### *Medieval storytelling: Engaging the Next Generation*

The full name of this project is 'Medieval Storytelling: Engaging the Next Generation'. It is a collaborative skills development program funded by the Arts & Humanities Research Council. Medieval Storytelling's intended audience consists of research postgraduates and Early Career Researcher from the United Kingdom, who learn the art of storytelling. The participants can use this valuable skill to improve their ways of conveying their research to the general public.

<https://medievalstorytelling.co.uk/>

#### *TALES: storytelling by children*

The 'TALES: storytelling by children' program was commissioned in 2007 by Axis: Ballymun for the development of story skills among 10 year olds by professional tellers. Located in Dublin, the incentive aims to transform listening communities into telling communities through the use of examples and new stories made by and for children. Ballymun's seven Primary schools each send one class. During the six week program, participants attend a single one-hour workshops each week. According to a 2011 evaluation by Colm Hefferson, the project significantly improved pupil's learning on a broad range of domains. The document provides a wealth of information on storytelling in a primary school and offers valuable critique from multiple parties.

[https://www.spd.dcu.ie/site/education/staff\\_details/documents/Hefferon\\_C\\_11.pdf](https://www.spd.dcu.ie/site/education/staff_details/documents/Hefferon_C_11.pdf)

#### *Kick into Reading*

It is not always easy to engage children into reading and storytelling. Kick into Reading found an extraordinary way to tackle this problem. The project, based in the United Kingdom and started in 2002, used the charisma of football coaches and players to spark an interest in reading and storytelling among local children. Professional storytellers provided training for the role models, who in turn brought storytelling to up to 16200 children according to a 2007 report. Entire families were drawn to the gatherings, which proved to be an effective way to boost the number of public library visits and the interest of pupils in their schools.

[http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/assets/0000/0824/PLRS-KiR\\_Interim\\_Report\\_2007.pdf](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/assets/0000/0824/PLRS-KiR_Interim_Report_2007.pdf)

#### **The target group / public**

A project's target group or public can be the most diverse partner, including people of all ages and backgrounds. In general, the public will almost never take the initiative for an oral storytelling project. As a partner, the public is known as a recipient. During most projects, there is an important change. *Warp & Weft*, *Jij bent aan het woord* and *Goed Gesprookjes* show the transformation of the public. With the help of the storyteller, the initial pure

recipients gradually change into brand new tellers. The process is seen as a durable and critical goal of this methodological pattern.

Although the public starts out as a recipient, it can still provide a key element as a partner in a project. The goals intended for the public can be split into two categories. Short term goals are simple aims to provide the public with a fun activity. In the long term, organisations and storytellers have more complex goals for a project. Most of the time, these long term goals are either educational, or focus on community-building. The former is represented by projects such as *Catching Words* and *Warp & Weft* which clearly want to improve the public's cultural knowledge and language skills. The latter has examples such as *Het Sprookjesproject* and *Het Sterkste Verhaal van Nederland*. More often than not these two types of goals are used in the same project and are mutually beneficial. Projects such as *Goed Gesprookjes* give parents a better chance to communicate with their children, which benefits both generations.

### Some examples

#### *De Gouden Vertelpas*

The Dutch 'Een School Vol Verhalen' foundation offers multiple storytelling projects. One of these is 'De Gouden Vertelpas', a contest within schools to tell the best stories. 9-12 year old pupils participate in a 12-week program to strengthen their storytelling skills. At the end of the project, a contest determines which pupil wins the 'gouden vertelpas'. This trophy provides free access to several cultural institutions as the winner becomes the school's storytelling representative. The 'ambassador' can even travel to other schools along with a group of pupils to exchange stories.

<http://www.eenschoolvolvanverhalen.nl/projecten.html>

#### *Warp & Weft*

Storyteller Anne Pitcher was able to set up a project for a Scottish Primary School with the help of a Creative Scotland grant. During the two-month project the children became oral storytellers as they learned about local history through the story 'How the Clocoderick Stone came to be in a Kilbarchan field'. The participants then retold the story using the storyboard method. Each pupil tells one part of the story while they hold a board. Singer songwriter Ewan McVicar helped the children develop two songs that show the rich heritage of Kilbarchan.

<http://annepitcherstoryteller.com/creative-scotland-funded-kilbarchan-primary-school-storytelling-song-project/>

#### *Medieval storytelling: Engaging the Next Generation*

The full name of this project is 'Medieval Storytelling: Engaging the Next Generation'. It is a collaborative skills development program funded by the Arts & Humanities Research Council. Medieval Storytelling's intended audience consists of research postgraduates and Early Career Researcher from the United Kingdom, who learn the art of storytelling. The participants can use this valuable skill to improve their ways of conveying their research to the general public.

<https://medievalstorytelling.co.uk/>

### *Het Sprookjesproject*

'Het Sprookjesproject' or 'Sprookjes van Heinde en Verre' is a Dutch project started by Vluchtelingenwerk Midden-Nederland. The project hosts multiple storytelling groups with a focus on fairy tales. Migrant or refugee women with children are given an opportunity to meet each other and exchange stories from their cultural backgrounds. A report on a partner of 'Het Sprookjesproject' states that the initiative prevents social isolation and enables women to enhance their grasp of the Dutch language.

<http://fontys.surfsharekit.nl:8080/get/smpid:27153/DS1/f>

### *Het Sterkste Verhaal van Nederland*

This Dutch initiative was started by the Tilburg Cowboys to strengthen the local oral storytelling tradition. Hosted in a small café specially designed for the project, two teams of three people meet each Sunday to tell good stories which deserve to be repeated. According to the Tilburg Cowboys, stories become better each time they are told. This goes against the principle of digital storytelling, which often ends the development of the story after the production. This unique project draws its storytellers directly from the public, which makes it an exception for the methodological pattern.

<http://www.tilburgcowboys.nl/project/12/het-sterkste-verhaal-van-nederland>

### *Goed Gesprookjes*

This Belgian project was centered around a month-long storytelling period in all classes of the Open School Antwerpen for adults in May 2014. Educators used the diverse audience to their advantage, gathering and exchanging fairy tales from many countries. Goed Gesprookjes helped the participants improve their grasp of the Dutch language and offered opportunities for better bonds between the attendants. The project's website contains a blog archive with course material and ideas for the future.

<https://goedgesprookjes.wordpress.com/>

What we have done in the StoryRegions project is to stress the intersectorial aspect, where the storyteller, the organization and the target group / public is interacting in a new way. The common ground can be a problem, an issue or a possibility that one of these three actors want to raise. This is the goal of the pilots we are going to organise. Once this first step of methodology, the intersectorial cooperation, has been made there are several storytelling techniques that can be implemented to solve the problem/issue or realize the possibility that was the starting point of the cooperation.



## LEVEL 2: Storytelling techniques

In the previous section we have described how intersectorial cooperation is the most effective methodology for bringing people and groups together in order to create community building, language learning etc. with the help of oral storytelling. To support and improve social inclusion and community building is bringing people together – people from organisations, associations, education, libraries and so on. And then, when a network with stakeholders and target groups has been created, it is time to implement storytelling as a tool within this network.

At this stage a wide range of storytelling approaches and techniques can be used. In the following section we will give some examples of useful storytelling techniques that can be used for different purposes. Some of these techniques were practised during a five days long training course in Turin, Italy, as an activity within the StoryRegions project.

### The beginning – creating trust

Sit in a ring. It reminds to an ancient era, and everyone is seen and heard, no one is more important and the other. Pick a photo that you like and then just tell why you took that picture, why you like it. *This exercise works as a trigger and open up the minds of the participants.*

### Next step – body and soul

Put the chairs in a ring. One person stands in the middle, asking questions. People that are involved in the answer have to rise up and take a new place. Another exercise is to look at a person and send claps and sounds, that he/she has to replicate and exchange with another person in the ring, and so on. *This exercise gets the participants loosening up, forgetting prestige. Even if we have different languages, culture, religion, sex etc. we have so much in common, we are pretty alike.*

### Into the Narrative

The participants are still in the ring. A small ball is thrown between the participants, and together with the ball flies a word from the thrower. The receiver is then catching the ball and passes it on with another word that he/she associates with the previous one. Another exercise could be between two people, where the first one is asking this question: "What do I have in my pocket?". The other one answers something incredible/unbelievable (the moon, an airplane, Mount Everest etc, and then the first person says: Yes, that's right" and then tell

a short story about how this item got into the pocket. *This exercise makes it easier to use your imagination; it can be totally crazy and nothing is wrong with that.*

### **Into storytelling – creating a story**

In a ring the participants are creating a story together. The Storytelling Curator starts: "Once upon a time it was a" ... Person A takes over the story and ends up with the phrase: "And every day he/she/it" ... Person B takes over and continue the story, with the last words: "But one day" ... Person C takes over: "And today..." Person D takes over and ends the story. Another example: Person A tells person B a story about a memory (on a theme). Person B gives the story back where A is a hero. A third example: Person A, B and C creates three stories where they change tasks (beginning, middle, end). *These types of exercises make the person aware of the structure of a story, how it is composed, how you can add things to make it more interesting.*

Some useful hints to keep in mind using storytelling

- *First of all:* people want connection!
- *Find/create one story:* every project based on storytelling should try to find *one* story that covers the project/idea. The goal is to find the thread, something that can help participants to relate to themselves. In some cases folktales can be a good start.
- *Personal stories:* when you have to relate with personal stories, always try to create an atmosphere to get the *true* stories. Make clear that it is about storytelling – it's not a therapy; then you can set the explicit rules to create a space of trust.
- *Finding right stories.* The story of "Heureka!", the way Archimedes discovered the physical law, it's a perfect sample of using a story to explain an abstract concept. It's an exercise you can develop inside a group of participants: the storyteller can show how to find stories (on books, websites, songs, sayings etc).
- *After the storytelling project:* make sure that you can follow up the project after the end. People who are involved are making an investment – you have to make your part and take care of it.

Here are fundamental reasons that storytelling helps you improve your presentation skills:

1. Storytelling teaches you to think on your feet. When you learn to be a good storyteller you must learn to adjust your energy and pace to match the audience reaction.
2. Storytelling teaches you to be spontaneous. As a storyteller, you learn to rely on your ability to "see" a story as it happens.
3. Storytelling helps you to think about the deeper meanings of your content. As you adapt personal and world stories to your presentations, you will start thinking deeper about the meaning of your communications.

All cultures use storytelling. Storytelling is a universal language and a core-skill for all presenters. My best public-speaking tip: seek out learning and coaching in the art of storytelling and work stories into all your presentations.

Telling a story implies:

- Choosing the story, discovery of a rich treasure of stories;
- Searching for your own story treasure room: anecdotes, local stories, life stories, ... ;
- Creating and writing your own story;
- Looking for other stories or story tellers: senior citizens, other cultures, minority groups ...
- Preparing the story: Not just memorizing a text but: looking for the 'core message', the structure, thinking about narratives, the images, the emotions involved, building tension, the end ...
- Before telling: Connecting with space, and audience;
- The telling: The technical elements: voice, intonation, pronunciation;
- The linguistic elements: proper language: mother tongue or foreign language;
- Content: giving meaning;
- The interactive and emotional elements.

### Storytelling as a Pedagogical Tool

Interaction, independence, and experience-based learning are all shown to be important for adults, while trust is necessary to ensure the ideal classroom environment. We have also examined how the storytelling process can be structured.

Our discussion now turns to how to link the worlds of adult learning and storytelling. We argue that storytelling responds to the unique needs of adult learners, providing a flexible and creative structure, which can work well in the adult classroom. We agree with Marsha Rossiter that the narrative approach of storytelling carries implications for both method and content (Clarke and Rossiter 2008). Ultimately, when used as a pedagogical tool, storytelling can be useful to adult learners in a number of ways. Through a review of the literature on the use of storytelling in different adult training contexts, we have concluded that, when used as a pedagogical tool, storytelling:

- 1) Helps learners conceptualize the learning process
- 2) Empowers the adult learner
- 3) Facilitates communication
- 4) Inspires personal growth
- 5) Engages the adult learner

A closer look at each of these themes will show why storytelling is an ideal tool for courses designed for the adult learner.

### Helping Learners Conceptualizing the Learning Process

M. Carolyn Clarke and Marsha Rossiter, proponents of narrative learning theory, argue that stories are ideal for helping adults conceptualize the learning process. Similarly, Peg C. Neuhauser suggests that stories are effective as educational tools because they are

“believable, rememberable, and entertaining” (Neuhauser 1993). With stories, abstract concepts or ideas can be communicated in understandable everyday language through the angle of human experience. Nanci M. Burke, in her work with at-risk students, has found that “oral sharing” allows her students to conceptualize life experiences. “For many individuals,” she explains, storytelling yields great insight and a deeper understanding of the world around us, a way of knowing, a searching for meaning and a means of reflection” (Burk: 6).

### Humanizing Learning

After having taught accounting for years, Gary L. Kreps was having trouble keeping students interested. He found that storytelling served not only as an instructional tool to facilitate the learning process, but that it also allowed him to connect with his students:

“Stories personalize my classes, encourage a sense of camaraderie among class members, help illustrate key concepts and theories, and enliven class interactions. The stories help to build a personal bond that transcends the traditional class situation. We all become part of a very special narrative community. We become friends and confidants, as well as valued classmates. I strongly encourage other instructors to develop ways to use stories, to personalize, enrich and humanize their classes” (Kreps: 11).

Storytelling thus allows adult learners to relate to their trainer and each other as human beings, and not just in the typical teacher-student relationship. Another advantage of storytelling is that it brings the human element to the learning process itself, showing that learning is not just the memorization of facts, but that it can sometimes involve an emotional component. As Maxine Alterio argues, storytelling encourages students to “integrate feeling and thought, the subjective and objective ways in which we make judgments about our world” (Alterio: 2).

### Empowering the Learner

One of the benefits of the shared experience created by using storytelling as a pedagogical tool is that this environment of confidence helps learners to recognize the value of their own experiences and knowledge. As Burk explains, sharing stories allows students to: “realize the relevance, validity, and efficacy of their cultural heritages and learning abilities, regardless of cultural differences” (Burk 7). Because they are active participants in the storytelling process, students have a “voice” in the learning experience and can therefore be more engaged and proactive learners (*ibid.*). As their unique skills and experiences are given value, learners will feel that the contributions they make in the classroom are equally respected.

### Facilitating Interaction

One particularity of storytelling is that it is an interactive endeavor. While telling a story empowers learners on the individual level, it also facilitates communication within the group. This interaction contributes to the creation of a community of trust, as we discussed earlier, but it also encourages cross-cultural exchange. As Burk remarks, storytelling gives learners

and trainers: “the opportunity to cultivate a learning environment open to multicultural dialogues that may provide an understanding of different customs, beliefs, and viewpoints”. From a strictly pedagogical point of view, the exchange that comes when storytelling is used in the classroom can serve as a learning tool. In a language learning classroom for example, Cooper and Stewart argue that one of the ways in which teachers affect the acquisition of language skills is through modeling. This is the process in which an instructor demonstrates to students what they need to do (saying a word first to demonstrate the correct pronunciation, for example). According to Cooper and Stewart, without interaction between students and teachers, modelling has less impact (Cooper and Stewart 1982). Storytelling serves as a creative way for students to participate in this process.

### Promoting Internal Growth

Though storytelling is an interactive experience, it can also promote growth and change on the individual level. Susan E. Butcher argues that stories encourage thinking “outside the box”, which may help learners to reconsider things they may have never before questioned. According to Alterio: “Storytelling is an ideal teaching and learning tool, for it takes seriously the need for students to make sense of experience, using their own culturally generated sense-making processes” (Alterio: 2).

The importance of “reflective dialogue” is another recurring theme in adult learning theory. According to William Isaacs, the author of *Dialogue and the art of thinking together*, reflective dialogue is a process in which: “a person becomes willing to think about the rules underlying what he or she does and the reasoning behind thoughts and action and to see more clearly what has been taken for granted” (Isaacs: 38). Storytelling can facilitate the reflective dialogue process. As McDury and Alterio put it: “Our capacity to express ourselves through narrative forms not only enables us to reshape, reassess and reconstruct particular events, it allows us to learn from discussing our experiences with individuals who may raise alternative views, suggest imaginative possibilities and ask stimulating questions” (McDrury and Alterio 2002).

### Engaging the Learner

Because it is an active process, storytelling reduces the passivity of learners. Speaking from his own teaching experience, Frances Miley emphasizes the ability of storytelling to encourage unenthusiastic students to become more engaged and to take responsibility for their own learning (Miley 2009). This is possible because storytelling provides a familiar reference point that can be drawn upon in the learning of a new subject, promoting confidence in adult learners. Simply put, “interested students are engaged students” (Miley: 357). As we have seen, there is a strong theoretical foundation to support the application of storytelling as an educational tool. For storytelling to effectively be applied as a tool, however, a concrete methodological approach for how it can be used in the classroom is necessary. Through our interviews with a number of professional storytellers, we have found several trends that stand out in the methodological approaches they use when incorporated storytelling into adult training. Below is a methodological structure created based on these

common themes. It is not necessarily a chronological order that a course involving storytelling must follow, but rather a list of the different approaches that the storytellers we spoke with seem to find important. The insights from the storytellers include both general methodological approaches and specific techniques and activities that are used in these approaches.

### Storytelling as a Pedagogical Tool: A Methodological Approach

(Extracts from Sheherazade)

As we spoke with storytellers to see how they use stories in a training context, several trends stood out in the methodological approaches they employed when incorporating storytelling into adult training. Below is a methodological structure created based on these common themes. It is not necessarily a chronological order that a course involving storytelling must follow, but rather a list of the different approaches that the storytellers we spoke with seem to find important. The insights from the storytellers include both general methodological approaches and specific practical activities that are used in these approaches.

Preparation/Warm-Up	Technical Activities	Workshop	Performance
Establishing the goals of the training	Training on physical movement/gestures/breathing		
Creating the ambiance of the training (candles, room set-up, etc.)	Word games/work on speaking	Activities that explore specific themes/relate storytelling to goal of course	Trainees practice telling their own stories to each other and listening to the stories of others
Establishing confidence between participants	Techniques for delivering and remembering a story		
Preparing participants to think creatively (often done by starting with a story)	Emphasis on the importance of both practical and technical activities		

#### Preparation/Warm-Up

Many of the storytellers we spoke with agree that a preparation phase is vital to the successful use of storytelling in the classroom. They find it very important to give learners a chance to “warm up” before working with stories in a training course, especially if they are new to telling and listening to stories as an adult. “Warming up” activities need to not only prepare them for the work that will follow, but also to put them at ease and relieve tension and nervousness they may have.

Four key “warming up” steps were mentioned in our interviews:

- Establishing the goals of the training
- Creating the ambiance of the training (candles, room set-up, etc.)
- Establishing confidence between participants
- Preparing participants to think creatively (often done by starting with a story)

### Establishing Goals

The storytellers we interviewed in Ireland noted that before storytelling can be used in the classroom, trainers must first be confident in telling stories and enjoy what they are telling. It's useful, they say, if the trainer knows the background of the trainees and are able to find stories that will resonate with them. Caroline Sire, a French storyteller, states that before a new training with adults, she asks each learner what they expect from the training and what needs to happen for them to feel satisfied so she can structure the training accordingly. Bulgarian storyteller Leah Davcheva has a less structured routine that changes depending on the particular training course, but she is always alert of the sensitive nature of some stories told by learners. When it is appropriate, she speaks with learners before the start of a training course to see how they feel about the issues that will potentially be addressed during the course.

### Creating Atmosphere

According to Davcheva, creating the right atmosphere is a crucial step to the successful use of storytelling in an adult training context. She argues that trainers need to be sure to know the context of their classrooms (learners' backgrounds, goals, etc.) and fully grasp what is required when deciding what story to tell or inviting others to tell. In other words, customizing or asking for a story to be customized to the group is essential. Willingness to be vulnerable with the group is another prerequisite, she insists. Authenticity is important in engendering trust. Related to this is the congruence between the story one tells and their behavior. Trainers need to remember that they should elicit more stories than they themselves tell. Openness, respect and withholding judgment are also important. Finally, Davcheva adds, a trainer needs to be sure to allow enough time for story sharing when designing a training course.

### Establishing Confidence

For storytelling to be used successfully in an adult learning environment, adult learners have to feel comfortable sharing their stories with others. French storyteller Jacques Combes recommends reassuring learners of the value of what they have to say. He says adult trainers should put learners at ease and be sure to take their life experiences into account (if they have had a difficult migrant experience for example). Combes also finds that a good group dynamic is very important to a successful course. In his current course with recently arrived immigrants, he focuses on creating conviviality among the students so that they are more open and trusting with each other. He does this through exercises (on the body, the imagination, speaking, etc.) and through group meals in which each student brings a traditional dish from their respective countries.

Like Combes, British storyteller David Heathfield focuses on building group trust in his courses. His strategy for doing this is to start off by being sure that learners have the same goals in mind when participating in his course. He is sure to make the purpose, structure and content of the course as clear as possible in the description people read when they sign up. He also finds out about the expectations and wishes of participants before and at the start of the course and leads regular group reflections throughout the program. To make the environment secure for learners, Heathfield sets clear boundaries so that they are able to be playful, experiment and take risks all while feeling supported by him as a trainer and by the other participants. After a course is over, he follows up by making himself available to communicate about learners' experiences and questions.

Combes and Heathfield are not the only storytellers to emphasize the importance of establishing confidence when using storytelling in an adult training. Eirwen Malin, a storyteller based in the United Kingdom finds it necessary to ensure that rapport between the trainer and students is built quickly. Malin suggests a comfortable quiet environment and if possible, having a small numbers of students. Similarly, Suse Weisse thinks that relaxation is key to forming a group identity. She recommends giving learners the opportunity to listen to a story at the beginning of a training course. Johan Einar Bjerke, on the other hand, has a holistic perspective on teaching. The German storyteller always starts his courses by telling an initial story to give students an idea of what they will be learning and of the context of the course. This story serves as a backdrop for the activities that will follow.

### **Techniques and Approaches**

Preparation activities could include physical movement, games to encourage safety and creativity, name games, voice warm-up activities and concentration exercises, among others. Telling a story is also a great way to start a course because it gives learners the opportunity to just listen and enjoy while conveying the simple joy of telling a story. Afterwards, they can share feedback on what they liked about the story.

Physical activities could include having learners walk around in the learning space. The trainer first tells them to walk as if they are being led by different body parts (nose, chest, hips, etc.). Then, he or she encourages them to exchange simple sentences with each other such as "What are you doing here?". They should practice saying the same sentence in different ways: speaking through their teeth, full-lips, wide open mouth, etc. to give the same words very different meanings.

Finally, to create the right atmosphere for story sharing, it is a good idea to adjust the learning space before the course begins. The typical classroom set up of rows of desks facing the front may not be conducive to encouraging sharing, so it may be better to have learners sit in a circle and to light candles or to have some other "ritual" to set the scene.

### **Technical Activities**

Technical activities are the "meat and bones" of the storytelling process. These activities allow students to improve their storytelling skills while also working on skills more closely related to the main goals of the course. In a language classroom, for example, speaking

exercises can make for a better story and also improve language skills. Our storytellers find the following types of activities important:

- Training on physical movement/gestures/breathing
- Word games/work on speaking
- Techniques for delivering and remembering a story
- Emphasis on the importance of both practical and technical activities
- Importance of Dialogue

One of the challenges inherit in storytelling is the process of going from the written language to conveying ideas orally. Caroline Sire emphasizes the importance of working with learners so that they are able to listen to words not only for their meaning, but also their sound (rhythm, word choice, etc.).

Storyteller Fred Versonnen argues that it is important to make learners familiar with the concept of “natural storytelling”. The trainer should show learners “the door” that leads them to the way of storytelling by opening it just a crack and allowing them to go through it themselves, he explains. In addition to technical language and communication skills, Suse Weisse emphasizes that there are also emotional level skills that can be developed in a course involving storytelling such as self-confidence and openness.

According to Diane Sophie Geerts, a workshop should always be a subtle mix of theoretical contribution and practical applications. Every workshop should take into consideration respect and integration of each person, she argues. The capacities of every participant should be valued so that they can use the proposed tools freely and without fear. Like Weisse, she emphasizes both technical and emotional elements of storytelling, highlighting that a training involving storytelling should consist allow learners to discover not only the richness of storytelling, but also the more technical aspects of oral expression.

The importance of dialogue is emphasized by a number of storytellers. One related theme in adult learning theory is the notion that facilitation by definition should be collaborative. Storyteller Margaret Wenzel incorporates this notion into her work with adults, highlighting that learners bring their own expertise and experience to a course. “I say, ‘I am the storyteller and you are guides. Let’s meet in the middle,’ ” she says. “They notice that they are appreciated in what they already know, and through this training, they get the possibility to reflect upon their work.” This collaborative approach has yielded results for Wenzel and her students. “They use the theory, which is the conclusion of our work together, in their profession and practice,” she explains.

### Techniques and Approaches

A number of storytelling activities focus on improving technical skills. One helpful skill for learners to develop is being able to remember a story by learning it according to a basic “skeleton” of the plot (description of setting, conflict, resolution, etc.). To develop more elaborate storytelling skills, trainers can use the “guided tour” activity with their learners. In this activity, after listening to a story, learners, working with a partner, will walk around the

room. One partner will serve as a tour guide and give a detailed description of what he or she sees, drawing on details from the story (the castle and its shining minarets, the dark forest, the hermit's cave, etc.). The person that is being guided asks questions and always wants to know more.

Other activities focus on promoting dialogues. Games such as "Gossiping", "Interrupter" and "Fortunately/Unfortunately," all have this purpose. Gossiping, for example, is a humorous exercise where people sit in duos and extemporize on a story they have all listened to, filling the gaps by gossiping (ex: "Have you heard what that Snow White was up to recently? Living in a commune with these seven strange men, apparently they were in the diamond trade..."). In the activity, "Interrupter," there is one main storyteller who improvises a story and several interrupters who occasionally interrupt with an unrelated word that has to be incorporated into the story. Similarly, "Fortunately/Unfortunately" is a group storytelling activity. One person starts improvising a story and speaks for about a minute. He ends his part of the story with "fortunately..." or "unfortunately..." and the next person takes over the story.

## Workshop

Fred Versonnen argues that storytelling is an essential part of the teaching process. He links the characteristics of a good storyteller with those of a good educator: knowing your audience, being interesting, etc. He explains:

"When I give courses in a training for teachers. I always ask: 'Who are the teachers that you remember from your youth? The students give two categories of teachers: the ones were very bad and the one who were very good. We won't talk about the first category but about the second. When I ask them why they think these teachers were very good, they give two reasons. The first reason is their ability to be very human and the second reason is there capacity to teach their subjects in a passionate way, in a narrative way."

Like Versonnen, we feel that storytelling can be a part of almost any curriculum. The workshop portion of an adult training involving storytelling thus focuses on the specific goal of the course and how storytelling can be used to achieve it. Some examples of course topics that would be ideal for storytelling include language learning and courses promoting the integration of at-risk groups. The possibilities for incorporating storytelling into adult learning are endless.

Storyteller Aideen McBride gives the example of how storytelling could benefit adult learners with low literacy levels to learn a new language. McBride believes that storytelling could be a way for them to expand their vocabulary and become comfortable with the language before they even have to open a book. She explains that storytelling is a: "very honest and informal way of teaching where you can 'slip the message in' without intimidating your trainees. If you have people who are nervous or scared by the formality of learning," McBride continues, "all that can be left aside while the story is being told." Erwen Malin asserts that exploring similarities and differences among stories from different cultures can provide a starting point for discussion and could thus be used as a tool to enhance inclusion and intercultural dialogue.

## Techniques and Approaches

Incorporating storytelling can liven up learning activities. Rien Van Meensel suggests, for example, that storytelling could be used in a language learning context. "If you use stories in a classroom in a language course, you can introduce expressions such as 'she is as beautiful as ..,' Van Meensel explains. "Learners can retell the story from another point of view. The teacher can create a situation in which the learners are interested in the story, so they will broaden their vocabulary in the language they are learning."

## Performance

In the performance step of a training involving storytelling, learners have the opportunity to tell their own stories to each other and listen to the stories of others. Choosing the right story is very important. Versonnen says that when trainers are telling their own stories, they need to learn how to do three things: tell a story in images, share their passion, and create excitement, suspense and tension when telling a story. Nick Bilbrough typically ends a week-long course with the participants giving a performance of a story that they had been working on all week. In the context of a language learning situation, working on these stories would be interspersed with examples of different ways of using stories in language teaching.

## Techniques and Approaches

Because telling a story alone in front of an audience can be intimidating for some learners, it is helpful to allow them to prepare ahead of time. Trainers can have learners form trios. Each trio would be told a different short story. They would then re-tell the story to each other, dividing the story into beginning, middle and end. Then, the trainer would mix the trios up so that there would be three different stories in each trio. Each person would tell his or her story to the two other members of their trio. In the end, everyone would have told a full story to an audience and have learned three new stories.

Doris Reininger suggests that a preparation activity that could be useful for smaller groups would be to allow learners to work on dialogue exercises in pairs to give them more confidence before passing on to the monologue phase. She emphasizes the importance of giving the narrator time to tell his story, even if it is not linguistically perfect and encouraging the other learners to be patient as well.

Caroline Sire uses the performance period of her trainings to encourage self-reflection. She likes to work with biographical accounts by approaching them from different angles, having the students participate in memory activities in which they tell the stories of others and are able to take a step back from their own experiences as they share their story with others.

## Conclusion

Through a review of the literature on adult learning needs and a reflection on the principles of storytelling, we have endeavoured to create a methodological approach for using storytelling as a pedagogical tool. Ultimately, as we have sought to outline, storytelling can be used in a number of ways in an adult learning context. The scholarship on the use of storytelling in a classroom setting has highlighted its multi-functionality. Alterio, for example, argues that

when narrative is used in thoughtful, reflective and formalized ways, it can: "encourage co-operative activity; stimulate students' critical thinking skills; capture complexities of situations; reveal multiple perspectives; make sense of experience; encourage self review; construct new knowledge" (Alterio 3). Ultimately, she argues:

"To learn through storytelling is to take seriously the human need to make meaning from experience, to communicate that meaning to others, and, in the process, learn about ourselves and the worlds in which we reside. Meaningful storytelling processes and activities incorporate opportunities for reflective dialogue, foster collaborative endeavor, nurture the spirit of inquiry and contribute to the construction of new knowledge" (ibid).

Like Alterio, we assert that storytelling can foster cross-cultural communication.

Using storytelling as a pedagogical tool does pose certain challenges, however. Telling and hearing certain stories can elicit strong emotions and spark memories of painful experiences. Confidentiality is also an important issue to consider when personal stories are shared. To handle these potential challenges, the storytellers we spoke with have proposed a number of practical tips, such as creating a supportive classroom environment and discussing themes to be dealt with in advance.

Communications professor Michael R. Elkins once wrote: "A teacher who knows only one teaching strategy is like a chef who knows only how to prepare one meal"<sup>3</sup>. For trainers looking for a new approach to include in their classroom, storytelling is a useful addition to add to their repertoire. Ultimately, when used correctly in the adult learning context, storytelling can be a creative outlet for learners and a powerful pedagogical tool for trainers.

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<sup>3</sup> Elkins, M. (1996). "To Lecture or not to Lecture: General semantics to the rescue." Journal of the Illinois SPeech and Theatre Association, XL VII, 41-43

## Practical exercises

### Preparatory phase – Warming up exercises

#### Exercise 1: Morning circle

Target group: Native speakers or level A2 +

Objectives: Monologues

Sharing everyday life experiences

Practicing sentence structures

Taking the floor

Material: None

Shape: Group exercise, standing in a circle

Duration: 10 minutes

Content and procedure:

Participant 1 stands in the centre of the circle and tells about one or another incident from this morning, e.g. "This morning I have seen a group of blind children who got on the bus." Participant 2 releases participant by tapping him/her on the shoulder, taking his/her place in the circle centre and telling about an own observation and so on. This exercise can easily be done over and over again. With an experienced group or when exercises last longer, in most cases links or connections between own observations derive from themselves.

Variant: Participant 1 starts with a true observation, participant 2 amends the observation and it goes on and on like that. The participants are free to choose whether they want to add true observations or freely make up supplements.

#### Exercise 2: Question, answer, comment

Target group: Native speakers, or level A2 +

Objectives: Practicing modal verbs and other grammatical peculiarities

Practicing conjugations

Word order in questions and answers

Training action-reaction

Material: Ball

Shape: Group exercise, standing in a circle

Duration: 4 - 8 minutes

Content and procedure:

1. Starting questions are sent from participant to participant with the impulse accompanied by a ball throw. It is about fast reactions and the collection of auxiliary verbs. ("Do you have?" "Do you want?" "Do you need?" "Do you like?" "Can you?" "May you?")

- Now the questions shall be completed. The receiver of the question replies, the participants on the right and on the left of the receiver repeat the answer in the third person, e.g. "Are you good at cooking, Are you a good cook?" "Yes, I am good at cooking" "Yes, he is good at cooking". Then the receiver asks a new question and throws the ball.

**Variant:** The participants on the right and on the left may as well conjugate in another way, e.g. "We are good at cooking as well". Or they may comment with an indirect answer, e.g. "He said that you were good at cooking" – there are no limits to the ideas of the language teacher.

### **Exercise 3: Meditative warm-up**

**Target group:** Adult Learners

**Objectives:** The story does not just happen 'in front' with the storyteller: just as much work is being done by the audience, the act of listening is just as important as telling. This exercise draws attention to the underlying silence beneath all stories, and participants are allowed to meet each other in a non-verbal way.

**Material:** Chairs

**Shape:** Group exercise, sitting in a circle

**Duration:** 2 minutes

**Content and procedure:**

- Sitting in a circle, the trainer invites participants to meet with the eyes; a short but sustained acknowledgement of everyone in the circle. Try not to miss anyone out.
- Do it again, but this time start by looking at the hands, then move up to the eyes.

Simple yet powerful, this is recommended to 'bring inward' a group that is quiet chatty and unfocused.

### **Exercise 4: Musical Chairs**

**Target group:** Adult Learners

**Objectives:** Presentation exercise, icebreaker

**Material:** Enough chairs to have one less chair than participants

**Shape:** Chairs are arranged in a circle in the centre of the room

**Duration:** 15 minutes

**Content and procedure:**

The group forms a circle, in which there are fewer chairs than participants, for example if there are 10 participants, there should be 9 chairs. They then walk around the chairs until the trainer says "stop." The remaining person who is unable to find a chair has to stand in the

middle of the circle. He/she has to say a statement (ex. "I speak more than two languages," "I wear glasses", "I love horror movies," etc.). Everyone who agrees with or matches the statement has to then stand up and find a new chair. This leaves a new person in the centre of the circle without a chair and the process begins again.

### **Exercise 5: Make sentences**

Target group: Beginners, native speaker or language learners

Objectives: Sentence structure

Material: Several objects

Shape: Circle

Duration: 20 minutes

Content and procedure:

Pass around an object and charge someone successively with a task: ask a question, tell a lie, a truth, a shout, yesterday was, tomorrow will, one day it will, the most beautiful/saddest memory, make it talk,... e.g. a rose, a book,...

### **Exercises 6: Samson and Delilah**

Target group: Adult Learner

Objectives: To create an open and relaxed atmosphere and also to sharpen concentration

Material: None

Shape: Group exercise, divide class in 2 groups. Line them up across from each other with their backs to each other

Duration: 8 minutes

Content and procedure:

1. The warming-up is a variation of the children's game 'paper, stone, scissors'. The storyteller mimes this game. As some learners might know the game, they can more easily understand its system.
2. The storyteller introduces the characters from the story of Samson and Delilah. The lion is strong. He can't be beaten, except by Samson. Samson has more power, and his power is hidden in his hair. No one knows his secret... except Delilah. She has power over Samson, because she has scissors. So Delilah is stronger than Samson, Samson is stronger than the Lion and the Lion is stronger than Delilah.
3. Every character has its own gesture:
  - Samson: a battle cry and clenched fists
  - The Lion: roar as a lion

- Delilah: make a movement of scissors with your fingers

4. Both groups in silence choose a character. When they are ready, they line up across each other, turning their backs to each other. The storyteller counts to three, the learners turn and all together make their gesture or sound. If the first group has chosen Samson and the second Delilah, then the second group has won, and so on...

### Exercise 7: Name game with stories

**Target group:** All ages, particularly good with adult learners

**Objectives:** This game is an unpretentious storytelling ‘babbling’ exercise designed to kick start talking in a safe and fun way. It also helps group members to get to know each other’s names, to begin concentrating on a shared activity together, creating focus and connection. Laughter strengthens the bonds in the group.

**Material:** Chairs

**Shape:** Chairs in a circle with no tables

**Duration:** 15 - 20 minutes

**Content and procedure:**

Half of the group sits on chairs in a circle, while the other half stand behind these chairs, with their hands behind their own backs. One chair is left empty, but with a participant behind it. The person behind the empty chair says the name of someone sitting in the circle. The person named dashes for the empty chair while the person behind their chair tries to stop them fleeing by catching them before they leave their seat. As participants get the hang of the game it gets harder to attract someone without them being caught. At this point whoever is behind the empty chair starts making up a little story and ‘drops’ a participant’s name into it, to catch the ‘catchers’ unawares. After a while, let those who sit and those who stand up swap.

### Technical activities

The first exercises are technical storytelling activities. They help the learner to put their images (sound, taste, smell...) into language, or to see the frame of the story more clearly. Then we focus on exercises that have a more ‘language training’ form. It can be useful to draw the attention of the learner on certain language aspects to prevent them from making mistakes or having trouble with this aspect when actually telling the story. The storytelling exercises are often linked to a story the trainer told previously, or a story that might follow. Therefore trainers should see these exercises as examples and use them in a creative way and adapt them as needed.

### Exercise 1: On the trail of the senses

**Target group:** Advanced participants, native speakers or up from level B1

**Objectives:** Describing sensations  
Stimulating the imagination of the participants

Participants practice speaking freely
Material: Pencil and notepad
Shape: Circle of chairs, without tables. This is partly a group exercise
Duration: 20 minutes

Content and procedure:

1. The trainer announces an imaginary journey and asks the participant to close their eyes. "Imagine you are on holiday. Imagine you are on the beach. In front of you lies the wide sea, under your feet there is warm, soft sand. The sky is clear blue. What does it smell like here? Can you hear anything? What else do you see besides the sky and the sea? What do you feel on your skin, in your hair? How do you feel? Do you have a certain taste on your tongue?" The trainer asks the participants to open their eyes again and to return to the learning environment. Provide room for feedback and questions.
2. For the next storytelling exercise the 5 senses are assigned to 4 groups: a) Hearing; b) Taste and smell; c) Touch; d) Sight. The participants are divided into four groups as well (A,B,C,D). In a mutual conversation they collect sensations from their category.
3. In a plenary session, the ideas of the participants are collected.

Variant: describing sensory perceptions of different places (fictitious (e.g. haunted castle, paradise) or real (e.g. mountain peak, train station, wine cellar), spontaneous associating in the group is also suitable for participants with good language skills.

Further advances on the exercises:

1. Each group receives a card with a (real, well known) place. In the small groups the participants collect sensations from all categories (A, B, C, D) and subsequently give the other participants a description of the place without naming it. The rest of the group can guess.
2. Practice the description of sensory perceptions through re-narration of a familiar story (see exercise "chain fairy tales")

## Exercise 2: Use of the voice

Target group: Beginners, native speakers or language learners

Objectives: Make one's voice heard and shows that by using your imagination your voice changes

Material: No material needed

Shape: Chairs in a circle

Duration: 50 minutes

Content and procedure:

The trainer starts with some voice exercises and then teaches a simple song to be sung in a circle afterwards. The participants need to sing the song imagining various situations:

- Singing in the shower
- Your partner/friend is sick, has ended the relationship
- You are lost in a forest and a wolf is crying
- You won a song contest and you are singing the winning song

Questions: What is the difference? Did the situation have an influence on the way you used your voice? Describe the changes.

### **Exercise 3: Working on listening skills**

Target group: Beginners, native speakers or language learners

Objectives: To learn the difference between listening and hearing  
To be conscious that you can influence listening yourself

Material: No material needed

Shape: In pairs, back to back

Duration: 20 - 30 minutes

Content and procedure:

A good storyteller needs a good listener. There is a difference between listening and hearing. How do you show you are listening? Just hearing means only your sense of hearing works and that you are able to catch sounds and noise. Listening means you are willing; you are attentive and focussed. Carry out this exercise in pairs, whispering a secret (true or not) back to back. Afterwards turn the chairs, but let one person fiddle, talk, and wriggle while the other one is talking. Later show interest by gestures, eyes, facial expression, words. Alternate.

### **Exercise 4: Three pluses, three minuses**

Target group: Unemployed adults

Objectives: To improve oral presentation skills  
To reveal own personal characteristics  
To get to know each other better

Material: Small empty paper cards for each participant

Shape: Circle of chairs, small group exercise with 3-4 participants

Duration: 20 - 30 minutes

Content and procedure:

Participants are encouraged to think about and write down on both sides of the paper cards 3 positive and 3 negative sides of their character and to think how to stress the positive or bypass the negative, if they present themselves. Each participant in the group presents their positives and negatives in front of others through stories. The session is moderated by the storyteller joining one or another group.

### **Exercise 5: Telling a favourite recipe**

Target group: Language learners from level 2 +

Objectives: Explain the recipe in the target language.

Use learned vocabulary and learn new words

Learn to make associations

Learn to 'flavour' their language with emotions and senses

Material: Black board

Shape: Sitting in pairs

Duration: 30 - 40 minutes

Content and procedure:

1. 10 minutes: The storyteller describes his/her favourite recipe, using all of the senses (taste, sight, sound, smell, touch). The recipe should be told so that the listeners would like to prepare or eat it at once.
2. 5 minutes: The storyteller asks the learners to explain their favourite recipe to their partner, helping by asking additional questions: Which sounds do we hear when preparing the recipe? How do the ingredients feel on your tongue, in your mouth, between your fingers? How does it feel to cut the ingredient, to stir the pot? What does the meal look like? What colours do you see? How does it smell? How does it taste? The questions could be written down or projected on the board.
3. 15 minutes: The learners share their favourite recipe with a partner. They can move to another partner and tell it again. The trainer walks around and helps out when necessary. If the teacher wants to correct mistakes on form, it should be clear to the learners what form they should focus on.
4. 10 minutes: When the learners have heard different recipes, they form larger groups and tell the group what recipe triggered their interest most? What would they like to prepare or eat?

### **Exercise 6: Reduce the story**

Target group: Language learners from level 2 +

Objectives: Separate the essential parts from additional parts

Reflect on the real heart of the story. What is this story about?

Unravel the bones of the story

Material: Paper and pen  
 Shape: Sit in pairs  
 Duration: 25 minutes

Content and procedure:

The trainer tells a story and then asks the learners to reduce the story they just heard in:

- 7 sentences (10 minutes)
- 3 sentences (5 minutes)
- 1 sentence (1 minute)

The learners share this last sentence with the group.

#### **Exercise 7: Draft a lookout (APB) for one of the characters (or even animals)**

Target group: Advanced language learners  
 Objectives: Combining imagination and everyday life  
                  Applying own vocabulary  
                  Describe a person  
 Material: A card with additional questions (see content and procedure)  
 Shape: Learners work in pairs firstly, then in a semi-circle telling in front of the group  
 Duration: 15 minutes

Content and procedure:

10 minutes: Learners prepare the exercise. In pairs they first choose the person that has gone missing. The following questions could be written on a card to help them when preparing:

- Where was the person last seen?
- What was she/he wearing when she/he disappeared?
- How was her/his mood at that time?
- What does the person look like?
- What are the last facts we know about the person? What was he/she doing?
- Has anyone noticed something about the person? Do you have more details?
- Is there a message for radio or television?
- Which standard phrases do you use when addressing an audience on radio or TV?

5 minutes: The two learners bring their story in front of the group.

Comment: This exercise can be part of a whole set of storytelling exercises, where every pair completes different exercises. Afterwards, each pair shares their storytelling task with the group. If it is a large group, the trainer can ask two groups to draft an APB, but for different people.

### **Exercise 8: Gossip about one of the characters of the story**

Target group: Advanced language learners (from A2+)

Objectives: Combining imagination and everyday life

Being able to turn an objective event in a subjective story

Use specific vocabulary to distinguish between positive or negative words

Telling skills

Material: A card with additional questions (see Content and procedure)

Shape: Learners work in pairs firstly, then in a semi-circle telling in front of the group

Duration: 15 minutes

Content and procedure:

10 minutes: Learners prepare the exercise. In pairs they first choose the character they will gossip about. The following questions could be written on a card to help them when preparing:

- Who are you? Who do you gossip to?
- What is it you can't believe?
- What did you see, and when, and where?
- Why do you disapprove of this behaviour?
- Why do you gossip? What advantage does it give you?

5 minutes: The two learners bring their story in front of the group.

### **Exercise 9: Tell the story from another point of view**

Target group: Language learners from level 2 +

Objectives: Imagination; re-telling the story adapting it a little and adding new elements

Material: None

Shape: Sitting in pairs

Duration: 10 minutes

Content and procedure:

10 minutes: The storyteller gives an example of alternative viewpoint from another character of the story. It could be a person, but also an animal or even an object, or an element of nature such as a river, a tree... The learners prepare their story.

10 minutes: The learners share their story with the group.

### Exercise 10: Name 5 actions, 3 descriptions, 3 objects, 3 feelings

Target group: Language learners from A2 +

Objectives: Define actions, objects, feelings and take descriptions from the story

Material: Pen and paper

Shape: In pairs

Duration: 10 minutes

Content and procedure:

7 minutes: The storyteller asks learners to write down 5 actions, 3 descriptions, 3 objects and 3 feelings from the story they have just heard. The storyteller can give an example to clarify the difference between them.

3 minutes: The learners bring their presentation for the group.

### Workshop

In adult learning, the workshop is the setting where the specific goals of the course and storytelling methods come alive. In the exercises below storytelling is used to achieve the objectives of the training. Grammar structures, word clusters, tenses as well as creativity and imagination all come together.

### Exercise 1: A treasure from my childhood

Target group: Beginners, native speaker or language learners up from level A2

Objectives: Creating room for creative thinking and concentration

Introduction to the world of fairy tales and storytelling

Listening to standard language

Practicing the understanding of complex sentences and following the path of a short story

Revealing something personal

Sharing a memory and getting to know each other

Material: The Brothers Grimm story *The Golden Key* as an input

Shape: Circle of chairs without tables, partly a group exercise

Duration: 20 - 30 minutes

Content and procedure:

1. The moderator tells the fairy tale of the golden key. The open end "and now we have to wait until the boy has opened the lid to see what is inside the box" is being

discussed in the group. The participants collect suggestions and ideas of what could be inside the box.

2. The moderator asks the participants to remind themselves of the time when they were a child themselves. Imagining that you have had a treasure chest when you were a 8 year old child. What was or would have been inside? Was there a favourite toy, a sweet, a beautiful stone or a secret letter?
3. The participants form pairs and tell each other what is hidden in the treasure chest of their childhood. The described treasure can correspond to a true memory or may be an imagined treasure as well. Important is, however, the child's perspective.
4. Back in plenary the fairy tale or just the end of the fairy tale is being told again. Each participant is taking a turn at giving an insight into his/her treasure, this time by miming the object. That way the participants do not need to speak yet in front of the group and it prevents duplication of step 3.

### **Exercise 2: How did you get here?**

Target group: Beginners, good to start with a new group, native speakers, or level A2 +

Objectives: Monologues

Practicing past perfect tense

Revealing something of yourself

Bringing imagination to everyday life

Shape: Circle of chairs, without tables followed by a group exercise

Duration: 10 minutes

Content and procedure:

1. The participants are asked to form pairs. They begin by telling their partner how they arrived here today. In the main, the majority of the story should be true with one incident a lie - a product of their imagination.
2. The participants tell in plenary how their partner has got here today.
3. Plenary exercise: participants must identify the lie in the story

### **Exercise 3: Everyday chain**

Target group: Beginners, native speakers, or level A2 +

Objectives: Monologues

Practicing past perfect tense

Combining imagination and everyday life

Applying own vocabulary

Experiencing collective creativity

Material: Cards with an everyday place written on it

Shape: Circle of chairs without tables, partly a group exercise

Duration: 20 - 40 minutes

Content and procedure:

1. The participants form small groups of 3 - 5 participants depending on group size. Each group receives a card with an everyday place written on it (e.g. swimming pool, coffee shop, train station, hairdressing salon, etc) As preparation they compile how it smells, sounds, looks like, and which feelings and tactile impressions they associate with that place. To the rest of the group the place is not revealed, they have to guess based on the description.
2. The cards are collected again by the moderator and spread in a row visible for all.
3. Exposition (PLACE 1) // 1. encounter (PLACE 2) // 2. encounter (PLACE 3) // 3. encounter (PLACE 4) // 4. encounter and the end (PLACE 5). Depending on how many places have been described, it might be better to build two different, shorter chain stories.
4. In new small groups or altogether in plenary, a new chain story is being created. It starts in the morning and ends at night – on which protagonist do we agree, whom does he/she meet in the mentioned places, what does he/she experience there – everyday or fantastic features are allowed!
5. Advanced participants should be given the possibility to develop their own variations of this everyday story. It is being told either in pairs or alone in front of the group.

#### Exercise 4: Everyday story

Target group: Beginners, native speakers, at least level A2 +

Objectives: Monologues

Using modal verbs

Combining imagination and everyday life

Applying own vocabulary

Experiencing collective creativity

Material: Cards (2 colours) and pencils

Shape: Circle of chairs, without tables, partly a group exercise

Duration: 15 - 30 minutes

Content and procedure:

1. The participants are provided with two cards (one of each colour) - on the first card they shall write a person or an animal, as well as something that it is good at. On the second card the participants write a person/an animal, as well as something that it likes a lot or does not like at all (e.g. grandpa is good at telling stories / the dog does not like cries of children)

2. The cards are being collected and small groups are formed of 3 - 5 participants depending on group size. Each group receives two cards of each colour. Now they shall develop a joint story. One card is raised to the protagonist, the other persons/animals and their skills or needs shall be implemented in the course of the story.
3. Back in plenary, the cards not yet used are revealed one after the other. In the circle a story is being developed spontaneously, in which the persons/animals appear which have been noted on the cards. *This exercise is suited for advanced participants or must be strongly guided by the moderator.*

### **Exercise 5: Tell me about telling!**

Target group: Native speakers, at least level A2 +

Objectives: Monologues

Sharing memories

Getting to know other cultures

Tying in with own experiences through Storytelling

Thinking about the culture of storytelling

Shape: Circle of chairs without tables, partly a group exercise

Duration: 15 - 30 minutes

Content and procedure:

1. The moderator asks the participants to recall their childhood. A place where, as a child, they could listen to adults telling or speaking. Were there adults who were telling each other's stories? Were there stories or narratives that were directed to you as a child? Who was telling? How did his or her voice sound?
2. Participants are asked to form small circles of 4 – 7 people, and move close together. Who likes to share one of his/her memories? On which occasion were stories told? What were the contents of the stories or narrations?
3. In a small circle, the conversation can be continued: Why do you think the adults told the children stories? What is the significance of Storytelling in different cultures? What value do you yourself place on Storytelling?

### **Exercise 6: The house you grew up in**

Target group: Beginners, native speaker or language learners

Objectives: Creating room for creative thinking and concentration

Telling from internal images, memories

Sharing a memory and getting to know each other

Material: None

Shape: Chairs in pairs, opposite each other

Duration: 20 - 30 minutes

Content and procedure:

Exercise in pairs: Think about the house you grew up in. Search your memories and think about a special event during your youth in that house. Then your partner opposite you asks questions to make the inner images appear more clearly. GO to the place you liked best. A door opens and a story comes out. Eyes closed. The partner helps you when you are telling and trying to make the image clear. What did you see, hear, feel, smell? What was beautiful, what moved you? Afterwards share only the story in the group (no guided tour in the house).

Help/assistance: Pick one place. If this is easier, you can close your eyes while trying to remember it. Was it a house in a town or in a village, a big house with many rooms or just a small house? In which period in your life did you live in this house? When was it? Was there a garden? Was there a fence? What was the facade like? What did the front door look like? What was the colour of the house? Do you also see specific details? Go inside the house now, walk through the door (or walk round the back like the way you used to). Look what the house is like and see what you remember of it. Was there a corridor? A small hall? What rooms were in the house? Take a look in the kitchen: do you still know the way it was arranged? In your thoughts you walk through the house and try to pick up the atmosphere, the scents, the noises, the images. Also pay attention to interesting details in the house. Perhaps you don't remember exactly the way it was, but you might still remember the front doorknob, the string in the letterbox to open up the door...are there also people in your favourite place?

### **Exercise 7: Reduce the story**

Target group: Language learners from level 2 +

Objectives: Learn to separate the essential parts from additional parts  
 Reflect on the real heart of the story, what is this story about?  
 Unravel the bones of the story

Material: Paper and pen

Shape: Sitting in pairs

Duration: 25 minutes

Content and procedure:

The story teller asks the learners to reduce the story they just heard in

- 7 sentences (10')
- 3 sentences (5')
- 1 sentence (1')

The learners share this last sentence with the group.

## The Performance

The performance aspect of storytelling can provide learners with an opportunity to tell their own stories to each other and listen to the stories of others. A performance for an audience can be intimidating for some learners and is not an essential requirement in the process therefore it is often useful to facilitate learners in pairs or trios as this can be less daunting. A performance is a fulfilling way to complete a storytelling workshop but is often optional as practical reasons may be an obstacle.

### Exercise 1: Storytelling walk through town

Target group: Language learners from level B1 +

Objectives: Using own memories to build a new story

Telling a story in front of the group at a place in the city (out of the safe surrounding of their learning environment)

Material: Cards in three different colours. This exercise can only be done with a story that takes place in the city where the learners are.

Shape: Initially working in a circle; then learners spread over the classroom for preparation

Duration: 55 minutes preparation with a minimum of 90 minutes for a story walk

Content and procedure:

1. 25 minutes: Instruction and first reflection. The storyteller has numbered cards in 3 colours (e.g. green 1, yellow 1, red 1). He/she explains the instructions written on the cards. The numbers on the cards correspond, so the memory should correspond with the episode in the story and with the place. In our story, a memory about fish should correspond with the part in the story about the fish market and will be told on the very spot where the fish market was held in previous time.
2. 10 minutes: On the first card there are questions that recall some memories. The memories should have some link with the episode from the story that the learner is going to tell and with the place in the city where the learner will tell his part of the story. After the instruction about the cards the storyteller distributes the remembrance cards (just one colour, for example green). The learners get some time to think about their memories.
3. 10 minutes: The second card states the episode from the story that the learner will tell. The storyteller explains about this card and distributes these "episode cards" (1 colour, for example blue) and gives the learners some time to remember the part and how they will tell it.
4. 5 minutes: the third card (in yet another colour) states the place where the learner will tell his part of the story. The storyteller asks whether they know this place in the city.

5. 15 minutes: individual preparation by learners. The storyteller/trainer circulates and gives help when needed. The storyteller points out that every story has the following elements: who, what, where, when, how, why?
6. 15 minutes: the learners sit in pairs and tell each other the story they have built.
7. 90 minutes: an actual walk. The storyteller takes the learners through the city. At the appointed places, determined beforehand by the storyteller, the learners tell their part of the story to the group (and to walkers-by). The story does not have to be told chronologically, it is in the order of the place that will determine which part of the story will be told.

#### Advice for the new storyteller

- You can: People have been telling stories for thousands of years. The art of storytelling will never die. You tell stories every day. Maybe you have already noticed how easy it is to capture the listeners. You can.
- Rehearse: Tell the same story over and over again. Find people to listen. The story will change - you will change - as the story becomes more and more yours. Through rehearsing you will find yourself more secure in the storytelling and more able to embroider it in your own way.
- Select stories intuitively: The story that you are instinctively attracted to is your story. Or the one you find yourself marvelling at, or the one that keeps pestering you without you knowing why. Allow a story to choose you. Be sensitive to its own logic and what you find you want to say with the story. Change it so it fits you but without altering "the bones". Make the story yours.
- Distinguish "the bones" of the story: The story has a plot - a skeleton that is independent of the setting or the context it had when you found it. Expose these "story bones", maybe through short notes or bullet points in drawings or text. Then fill out the skeleton with new flesh: your own settings, your details, your interpretation of the idea.
- Do you have to keep "the bones" in old stories?: Traditional material is ours and we can do what we want with it. But there are strong reasons to respect a material that has passed from mouth to mouth for centuries - sometimes thousands of years. Many stories are not understandable until you start to tell them. These stories were never intended to be literature.
- Storytelling is imagery: a language of the senses. Imagine going from place to place in the story: what do you see? What kind of light is there in each place? What time of day is it? How does it smell? What you see and experience with your senses allows the listener to experience the story in their mind's eye. Therein lies the trick.
- Memory techniques: to really see the story, scene by scene with all its details, is the way to remember stories of all lengths. See and experience them as if they are places you have been to, not something abstract you have memorised.

- Oral storytelling is not text: It is never about learning a text by heart. A text may have been the source for a story, but put it away as soon as possible and begin to tell it orally.
- Beginning and end: be clear on how to start your story and how to end it. These are the two abutments that allow you to safely move around as you want, in between them. In the beginning and the end of the story is also found its meaning and your ideas - what you want to say by telling it. The end ties together all the strands that you started unravelling at the beginning.
- Warning about explanations and using more abstract language: especially in the beginning of the story. You will see right away that you do not have the listeners with you, that they quickly get tired. It is the images that enthrall, that are the real storytelling language. The sooner you can give them the first image at the start, the better. And let the story end in silence rather than attempting to explain it. Stories speak for themselves; that is part of their magic.
- Being a storyteller is not a role: The storyteller is you, and the story comes from within you. You have chosen it and made it yours, or you have created it. It is this that makes storytelling unique. The meeting between the narrator and the listener is genuine and authentic. Therefore, everything should be as much you as possible; your voice, your accent, your gestures, and your posture.
- Ask someone to listen: Skilled and loving criticism is gold. Start a storytelling group where you will listen and give each other feedback.
- The lie is a friend who can tell a deeper truth than cold reality. This is the secret behind all cultural expression. Storytelling is always subjective. "A good lie can go from Baghdad to Constantinople while the truth is looking for his sandals", as the Arabic proverb says.
- Who can say what is truth?: Did you have a mean grandmother who never would have told you a story? If you want to weave one into your story, then invent a new one. It is never too late to have a happy childhood.
- But there may of course be facts you want to convey, absolutely. Nothing is more appropriate than weaving facts into a story. Wrapped up in a story, facts are far less forgettable.
- When to speak truth and when to lie?: It is most important to clarify the purpose of your presentation. What do you want to achieve? Fact is no end in itself, nor fiction. They are your tools.
- Storytelling is communication: Eye contact is important, you read in the eyes of the listeners how you should angle the story. How your listeners are placed is important, a horseshoe set-up all on the same level is ideal. The room should have regular, uniform illumination, not salon darkness as at the theatre. The meeting with the other listeners is part of the magic. You can develop the communication and pull the listeners into the story in different ways; with looks and gestures, direct address and improvised editing. It strengthens the contact and makes listeners even more alert.
- Your story is changing and becomes a little different for each new listener. Good that is, just as it should be.

- Storytelling is created together: the listeners are not passive recipients. On the contrary, they are working hard to create the world you evoke. The meeting of the teller and listener in storytelling is creative and energising. But, beware, show respect for the listeners. They remain attached because they accept the contract between you in the situation (or because they are forced). The power of storytelling is strong: the narrator has the power to manipulate the listener's inner imagery. Be aware of it and make sure that your listeners feel comfortable.
- Forgotten something in your story: No problem, you can change the story, and it will most likely still work. Probably no one has noticed. Or ask the listeners - they will surely help you willingly and quickly, once they are inside the story.
- The response from the listeners is a receipt of your storytelling. Did you not catch them? If so, don't say to yourself "Oh, they weren't interested". Instead say: "Oh, I want to become a better storyteller."
- Nervous? It is not visible. No one knows about it except you, so do not talk about it. Breathe calmly and use the energy in the tension, it gives you focus.
- Be proud of yourself. It is infectious. It evokes respect. Everybody needs meetings with people who stand for what they convey, with good self-esteem. If you get applause, receive it happily.
- What can you tell: Parables, wisdom stories, fables, jokes, anecdotes, fairy tales, myths, old legends and urban legends - all constitute traditional material that has passed from mouth to mouth for centuries. It is yours; you own it together with all people of the world. It is an inexhaustible treasure, but make the story your own; do not copy the details.
- Your own memories, experiences, observations, life stories and family stories. This is perhaps the most important treasure of untold, unique stories. But be personal, do not be private.
- Site history: What has happened here? Are there site-specific stories like tales, ghost stories, anecdotes? And what are the stories about your school, your work or your company? How was it born? How did it overcome crises? What stories are in its successes? What anecdotes reflect its soul, purpose or vision? What values do you want to convey? Maybe you have a story about an object and its history. You can convey an interpretation of all this with your storytelling.
- Literature and author-written fairy tales: If the author is alive, you need to ask for permission. Beware that if there are storytellers who tell their own stories, they may have copyright.
- Facts: to weave facts into a story is fun and effective. Just do not forget the recipe for a story. Even a stone can be the main character; you just have to give it some human characteristics.
- Make stories yourself: anything can become a story. Let your imagination run free and pick up whatever comes to you.
- What you tell need not be in any way remarkable, unique or ingenious. Quite the contrary, tell with joy and dedication, that's enough. That's the best.

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## Recommendations from Storytellers

« Guerir par les contes » *Nouvelles clés* n° 42

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## Online Resources

Norwegian suggestopedy organization's webpage ([www.norsksuggestopediforening.no](http://www.norsksuggestopediforening.no))

Homepage of Georgi Lozanov (the founder of Suggestopedy): <http://dr-lozanov.com/en/en1.htm>

Silent books: A handbook on wordless picture books packed with narrative power by Rose-Marie Lindfors:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/bxluxurymus7is6j/Silent%20Books%20ENG.pdf?dl=0>

Resources for Storytelling. This guide, produced by Dr Jenny Moon, is a set of resources for students and teachers. There are two elements in oral storytelling – the story and the performance (telling):

[https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/storytelling\\_0.pdf](https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/storytelling_0.pdf)

The Stranger: final booklet of an LLP project about stories of strangers and being strange, including methodology discussion and guidelines: <https://issuu.com/valbonetti/docs/booklet>

Story arts: Storytelling activities and lesson ideas. Educational website designed for teachers, librarians and students. It explores the use of storytelling in the classroom: <http://www.storyarts.org/lessonplans/lessonideas/index.html#radio>

9 creative storytelling methods: <http://mashable.com/2014/07/01/rewriting-storytelling/#CzNgFj27gPq5>

8 classic storytelling techniques for engaging presentations:  
<http://www.sparkol.com/engage/8-classic-storytelling-techniques-for-engaging-presentations/>

Tim Sheppard's storytelling resources for storytellers: <http://www.timsheppard.co.uk/story/>

Effective Storytelling - a basic manual: <http://www.eldrbarry.net/roos/eest.htm>

Unesco: Teaching and learning for a sustainable future. Module 21: Storytelling.  
[http://www.unesco.org/education/tlsf/mods/theme\\_d/mod21.html](http://www.unesco.org/education/tlsf/mods/theme_d/mod21.html)

Large number of stories, and resources: <http://www.surlalunefairytales.com/>

Folklore and Mythology. Electronic Texts: <http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/folktexts.html>

Retellings of American folktales, tall tales, myths and legends, Native American myths, weather folklore, ghost stories, and more. <http://www.americanfolklore.net/>

Tales of the Punjab. Told by the people, by Flora Annie Steel:  
<http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/steel/punjab/punjab.html>

Stories told by Richard Martin: <http://tellatale.eu/video.html>

Aaron Shepard's World of Stories. Folktales, Fairy Tales, Tall Tales, Myths, Legends, and More. <http://www.aaronshep.com/stories/index.html#folk>