

## WHAT IS STORYTELLING AND HOW IT IMPROVES SPEAKING SKILLS AMONG A2 LEARNERS

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***“IF YOU WANT YOUR CHILDREN TO BE INTELLENT READ TGEM FAIEY TALES. IF YOU WANT THEM TO BE MORE INTELLENT, READ THEM MORE FAIRY TALES” - Albert Einstein***

**Abstract.** Enhancing speaking can be very tough not only in a target language, though in native as well; because learning how to speak well and to sound attractive we all should be aware of the art of speaking and communication to succeed in a certain career. According to Frederike Klippel the way we sound when we speak a foreign language has a strong influence on the assumptions other people make about us and the judgments they make about the sort of people we are. It is interesting to note that pronunciation or the study of intonation has been relatively neglected in recent years - many courses do not deal with it specifically at all, preferring to leave it to a process of osmosis - yet most learners attach great importance to it.

**Keywords:** lecturing, drilling, worksheets, dictation storytelling, emotional intelligence, vocabulary, structure, motivation, acquisition

Our pronunciation is also intimately connected with our feelings about ourselves; our confidence (lack of it), our sense of identity, and our self-esteem. According to my experience a teacher will take a story as a suitable resource for teaching and learning a foreign language. A story is something that everybody is familiar with, a majority of people used to listen to stories and like them very much. Children want to enjoy a character's adventures and like to distinguish between good and evil. Having worked with children's stories I have made my own concept. Although a teacher works with children who are involved in learning English very much, it is very important to choose a suitable level for a certain class. They study English as their hobby and this is why they are very involved. They want to learn and the researcher has freedom to create lessons in my way. Stories give me many opportunities for practice everything children have learnt.

Storytelling is the art of narration. It is a universal tradition that is ancient, dating as far back as prehistoric cave drawings. Stories are our most traditional form of communication. They have been used to entertain, inspire, influence, and educate. Think back to Plato, who summarized his arguments in vivid myths, analogies, parables, metaphors, and allegories that took hold of people's imaginations in a much more powerful way than did his arguments! It's no surprise that storytelling is a powerful tool for teaching, so why is its full potential seldom recognized?

In our modern society, stories have not been considered integral to teaching or learning activities until recently. In the past, and even still sometimes today, stories have been perceived as lightweight, soft, and not a ‘real’ learning tool. Albeit educators occasionally relate stories to lessons, it’s mainly to connect, entertain, and share experiences, rather than educate on its own. Teaching speaking for young language learners (YLLs) is an interesting and challenging duty for teachers because YLLs are in the early age and they are interested in learning many new things, including a foreign language, and also because as Piaget (1970) stated, children are active learners and thinkers who construct knowledge from interacting with the environment.

Ever since the industrial age (and the birth of the concept of a “classroom”), teaching has been driven by the need to build a competent future workforce out of students. As the classroom has professionalized, ‘serious’ teaching techniques have dominated – from lecturing, drilling, worksheets, dictation, and rote memorization of facts. Stories have commonly been reserved for reading practice.

In the last 50 years, however, there has been somewhat of a “reflective movement” that has pushed the idea that we each possess the ability to learn and think creatively. With this movement, many new alternatives have emerged or resurfaced for the student. From Montessori to Waldorf, Reggio Emilia, and Socratic methods in the International Baccalaureate, these alternatives include more innate ways for humans to learn, including play-based learning, project-based learning, problem-based learning, and peer-to-peer instruction and debate. Aspects of all of these have been included in most modern classrooms.

In and amongst the resurrected teaching methods of the past, we have a wave of “Education through Storytelling” making its way from pre-schools, through schools to universities (and even to the corporate world!).

Really, let’s admit the fact sincerely that it is not possible to find a good job or get a good education without knowing and speaking English well. Or we should be aware of the importance of knowing foreign language and foreign languages in order to increase our living standards. After emphasizing the importance of this subject as usual, it is time to touch upon the importance of stories and news while learning a language. The reason why we emphasize stories and news separately is that children care more about stories while middle and older age groups attach more importance to news.

Meanwhile, it should be noted that the importance of stories has increased worldwide in recent years. Many institutions have started to use the power of stories in both business and school education. In this way, the efficiency and level of learning is also increasing.

### **Children and Parents like Stories**

In other words, it would be much more efficient to achieve this by relying on the power of stories rather than teaching boring and grammar rules to a primary or high school student. Telling stories will mean processing grammatical rules into the primary school student’s subconscious without being aware of it. Especially if this

story is about a subject that interests those students or that they like, right? □ Generally we know that children like stories and their parents do like news.

According to researches, people learn faster between the ages of 2 and 6. If we also use the power of stories at this age, it is possible to accelerate the learning process. It sounds good to think that children who learn fast also learn with things they love. As you have already understood English with stories is crucial.

### **Benefits of Using Stories for Language Learning**

In line with these facts, we should say that recent researches also conducted by international research organizations proves that people learn every subject more easily through stories. Additionally, the method of learning through stories, which develops imagination and facilitates learning, is gradually being added to the modern education systems of countries. In this context, we have all heard that jobs paying thousands of dollars to employees with high storytelling power are becoming more common globally.

Furthermore, in some schools, letters, reading and writing are taught together with stories, starting from kindergarten. At this point, it should be noted that the studies and applications carried out so far prove the power of this method. If we consider that children's imagination has no limits and their desire to learn about the subject they are curious about, the power of stories will become more meaningful. So, learning English with stories topic is important.

If we have cleared up your hesitations about believing in the power of stories, it is time to use this power effectively in learning a foreign language □ First of all, we have to admit that we cannot make much progress with boring vocabulary memorization or grammar workbooks. Because it is obvious that when people do not have fun and show interest, their learning process slows down considerably. At this point, virtual English teachers and zoom lessons which have become easier to access in the digital world, come to help.

We no longer need to travel miles to learn something. In this context, there are many new generation English teachers and instructors who use the power of words in the learning phase.

### **Effortless Stories Style Learning English**

In this regard, the most important example we will give you is A.J. Hoge who has been using stories on grammar and speaking practices for almost 20 years. A.J., who developed the language learning system using stories covering different subjects with the Effortless English system he founded is an important representative of this movement.

He offers its users different sections of each subject in English with comments and narratives in its system. He, also teaches English to those who listen to his attractive story and narratives about the different words and grammatical structures he sprinkles into his short narratives.

### **Why Learn English with News is Important**

After stating that children and young people are more willing to learn a foreign language through stories, now it is the turn of parents □ Let us state from the

beginning that we cannot reject that there may be some parents who are willing to learn through stories just like their children. However, according to research, parents need news that interests them more than stories when it comes to learning English. In other words, learning that language through news will help people who are trying to learn English at middle and older ages.

Think please about that which one would be easier for a football-enthusiastic adult who is trying to improve his foreign language to study boring grammar books for hours or to read an article containing interesting news about Messi's football career? Along with this, it is clear that a person who reads a news about Ronaldo's inspiring career story will feel a different pleasure of learning while learning new words or grammar rules subconsciously, without even realizing it. Recently, the number of resources teaching English with news in the digital world has been rapidly increasing.

Proving the success of this system and increasing adult interest in the subject will further increase the popularity of this new digital system.

### **English with News Have Advantages**

In this context, if we list the advantages of learning English through news:

- It allows us to follow current news and helps us to be aware of the world and country's agenda at all times.
- Since the news will change according to the current agenda, the English words used in the news will also change according to the current situation. In other words, the system of learning that language with news will help us keep our vocabulary up to date, just like the system of learning English with stories.
- Because news generally differs according to categories, students with different interests will definitely find and read a news that suits their interests.
- Due to fact that the news is not written in a difficult language system, those who read the news will follow it quickly and fluently and will not get bored.

### **How Storytelling Improves Creative Thinking in English**

As we mentioned before, the human brain activates imagination when it hears stories. Thanks to his imagination, he learns much more easily. In this context, both linguists and educators have recently begun to use the power of stories more in learning foreign languages. On the other hand, let's consider that the world is becoming increasingly global and digital. At this point, if we adapt the imagination and digital skills of the famous Gen Z to learn that language, the point which we will reach will be the phenomenon of learning English with stories.

Globally, learning English through narratives has gained immense popularity among children and young people and has become a new trend.

At this stage, if we list some of the advantages of learning English with stories;

- You do not need to physically attend a course. There are many free resources online that teach English through stories.
- You don't have to memorize boring grammar rules. While listening to stories, you subconsciously learn grammatical structures without realizing it. Since stories usually take place in the past tense, you will learn Past Tense, Past Continuous and Past Perfect Tense very well and understand their logic.



- You don't need to study that language for hours. You can quit whenever you get bored and continue later. As long as you allocate consistent time, even if it's half an hour, every day. – Stories support your imagination as well as teaching English. So, as long as you continue to learn it consistently through narratives, your imagination will strengthen and expand.

To sum up, finally; all the people who speak English will be advantageous in today's world where global competition and the movement of workforce between countries is increasing. In line with this fact, speaking a foreign language will put you ahead in terms of studying abroad or working abroad.

Research conducted in this context shows that; Learning English with news for parents and learning English with stories for young people has very positive effects.

We owe this renaissance of the importance of storytelling in teaching to the renowned psychologist Jerome Bruner. He was originally a professor at Harvard and then Oxford, and was courted by both Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, and later by members of the British parliament to take on Thatcher (who was the then education minister). Bruner's research on child cognitive development and education has had deep impacts on early childhood education on both sides of the pond.

Storytelling is clearly having a renaissance in the media and our corporate world. Storytelling is also crucial in academic settings, especially when it comes to learning second languages.

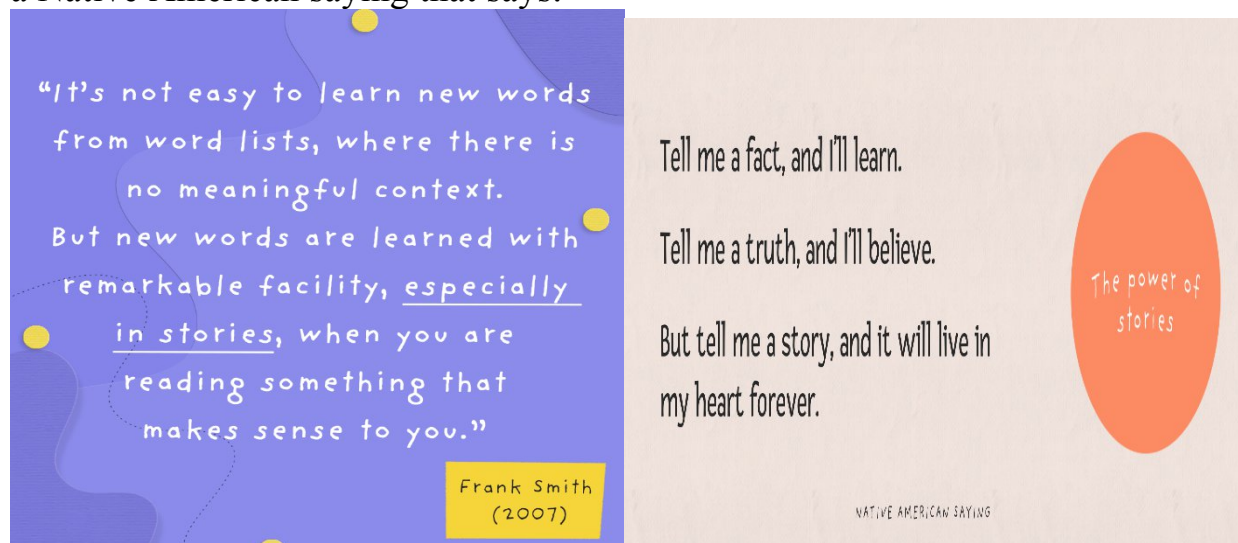
Here are the top reasons why storytelling is important in second language acquisition:

- **Engagement:** Unlike many traditional delivery methods for delivering content (think textbooks and powerpoints!) stories are deeply engaging to the human mind - we are wired to want to listen to stories. Because we want to do it, even crave to do it, this means that we're paying attention to the material in a much deeper way, and when a student truly pays attention, it leads to better learning outcomes.

- **Context:** Unlike with rote learning such as grammar books, the learner hears new words in a story in context. This means they are focused on the story, not the grammar. So long as they generally understand the gist of the story, they are compelled to follow the story. As they are swept up in the story, they are less likely to get caught up in focusing on single words, and that which they don't know, they are likely to be able to deduce its meaning by engaging in what's actually happening in the story – the context. When learners are using the context to deduce meaning they are actively participating, which results in better retention.

- **Communication:** Stories develop the student's ability to communicate. By hearing stories, the student is being exposed to a lot more new vocabulary than would ever be possible in the routine of everyday life, enriching their vocabulary bank immeasurably. They don't just learn isolated lists of words, they learn how, when, and in what context they are said.

• **A deeper, personal connection:** Just like with children learning their native language, stories can connect us to a second language on a deeper level. There is a Native American saying that says:



More subject knowledge is not enough to get employed. Good communication skill in general and in English language in particular has an upper hand to succeed in this competitive world.

Defined storytelling as a knowledge management technique, a way of distributing information, targeted to audiences and a sense of information, she added that stories provide natural connection between events and concepts and finally, she added that visual storytelling is a way of telling stories through images.

Stories often connect us not only on a brain level but a heart level. They elicit an emotional response, connecting us with the language authentically, far beyond the words on the page. Stories cause children to discover meaningful messages as they learn about virtues, culture, and traditions while building empathy and compassion for the language and people.

**Stories build empathy and cultural awareness.**

When we learn a second language we're often not just wanting to learn the language in isolation, we want it as a passport to have insights and a connection to another culture, to another perspective. Stories are uniquely good at creating empathy for other individuals and societies, they are great vehicles for creating cultural awareness. One familiar way that stories build empathy can be seen in the movie *Coco* which came out in 2017.

*Coco* is the story of Miguel, a young boy who, although living, finds himself in the Land of the Dead. Through its intriguing and compelling storyline and vibrant colors, the movie entertains viewers of all ages. Not only that, but it educates its viewers on the Day of the Dead!

You could try to explain 'Día de Muertos' to a non-Latino child, but it will likely just be understood intellectually, as something outside of their own realm of life... there will be no personal connection.

However, when a child watches a movie like *Coco*, they get caught up in the flow of the story... They begin seeing through the eyes of protagonists like Miguel and understanding a new cultural perspective.

In a study called "How Does Fiction Reading Influence Empathy?", researchers observed participants' empathic levels when reading fiction and nonfiction texts. Participants were split into a fiction or nonfiction group, assigned the appropriate texts, and given relevant empathy assessments to complete when the stories were finished.

The researchers found that when readers were transported into a fiction text, meaning they were drawn into the story, their empathy levels increased over time.

In the brain, imagined experiences are processed in the same way as real experiences. Even if they are unrealistic or fantastical, we connect to stories emotionally as if they were real experiences; and, when we connect, it is inevitable that our empathy for others will increase. Fiction allows us to be transported into another person's mind, to feel their emotions as if they were our own, even when their culture and life circumstances are very different from our own.

**"War has built empires, but it is empathy and love that has sustained the human species."**

#### **EXAMPLES OF DIGITAL STORYTELLING IN EDUCATION**

How we communicate stories has evolved greatly over the centuries: from oral traditions of word-of-mouth tales, to the emergence of the printing press and radio, to our modern-day era of technology rich with animations and visual effects.

Educational technology is a powerful, modern way to engage children in learning languages while tapping into their natural engagement with screens.

In its truest sense, "technology has given us the ability to practice our intrinsic nature as visual individuals".

**Digital storytelling brings narratives to life by combining audio, video, still images, and tactile interactions to tell a story.**

Most of us have experienced the three types of learning: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. Your children (and you!) are bound to fall into one of these categories. The beauty of digital storytelling is that it doesn't matter which way you learn best! Interactive digital stories can appeal to each of the three modes of learning.

If you're a visual learner, you will understand the story through still or video images. If you're an auditory learner, you can understand the story through the speaker's voice. If you're a kinesthetic learner, the interactive nature of the story will have you touching characters, moving them around, and triggering animations that delight. They establish an interest, they instruct, they involve, and they inspire us.

He found that listening to stories on audio, such as language learning podcasts, can be enjoyable, but the lack of visuals often causes the younger learner to lose interest quickly, they seem to require 'more cognitive strain to process the story'. They are just "too cold".

Cartoons, on the other side of the spectrum, are lively and colorful but often overstimulating for the child's brain. The 'fast-moving media renders imagination

and integration less necessary'. They are just "too hot". This makes a lot of sense to us. It explains why oftentimes plonking your toddler down in front of the TV doesn't seem to lead to much learning, and why reading illustrated children's stories are 'just right' and persist as such a uniquely powerful teaching tool for young kids.

But how do illustrated stories perform when they are digitized to be lightly animated and interactive? A study from psychologist Erik Thiessen at Carnegie Mellon University demonstrates that there might be a direct link between these interactive, animated books and the amount of the story a child remembers.

The research shows that children could remember 15-20% more information when read to from books with digital animations and interactions (especially ones related to the plot and action). The theory behind this is that the amount of information absorbed by the child's mind is proportional to his level of engagement in the learning process!

So, why interactive, lightly animated stories are so excellent for learning a new language!

Most of the teachers believe that there is no universal rule for teaching speaking and it only depends on a teacher conducting the lesson to make it unique, useful and effective. There are no universal techniques developed by teachers or researchers which could possibly be the model for all. Number of them said that it usually depends on particular situation, class, age, level, and even nationality or the cultural background as well. Surprisingly, these concerns were confirmed by some of the teachers who have comparatively more experience. This shows that each teacher who is conducting speaking skills lessons or sessions should himself or herself try to come up with the best ways and techniques to teach the class. Accordingly, it is essential to note that, while observing some of the teacher's lessons (who are experienced already) I witnessed the clear instance of what is stated above. They all had different techniques and strategies which fit their needs in regards with their classes.

Furthermore, the work of the Canadian educator Kieran Egan (2011) provides insights about educational development that are especially applicable to elementary and middle school language programs. Egan describes development in terms of the characteristics that determine how the learner makes sense of the world. He thinks of educational development as a process of accumulating and exercising layers of ability to engage with the world. As individuals develop, they add new layers of education without leaving behind the qualities characteristic of earlier layers. As he puts it, "Each stage contributes something vital and necessary to the mature adult's ability to make sense of the world and human experience". Egan distinguishes four educational layers: the mythic layer, the romantic layer, the philosophic layer and the ironic layer. The final stage, the ironic layer, is made up of essential contributions from all the earlier stages, governed by the ironic orientation to the world.

Ages 4 to 5 through 9 to 10 years:



•For these early elementary-school learners, emotions have primary importance. The students always want to know how to feel about what they are learning. They make sense of things through emotional and moral categories (e.g., good versus bad, happy versus sad, etc.). Young children are drawn into a topic or an idea through simple polar opposites. For example, they find it hard to resist the appeal of very tiny versus really huge, freezing 21 cold versus burning hot, a wicked witch versus the perfect princess, and so on. Once presented in this way, concepts can be developed by filling in between the poles. The world of the imagination is vivid and real to these children, so they move easily in and out of a world where animals talk or activities take place on a magical trip to another world. •Learners in the mythic layer often believe that the world thinks and feels as they do.

To sum up, finally; all the people who speak English will be advantageous in today's world where global competition and the movement of workforce between countries is increasing. In line with this fact, speaking a foreign language will put you ahead in terms of studying abroad or working abroad.

Research conducted in this context shows that; Learning English with news for parents and learning English with stories for young people has very positive effects. Listening to and reading stories isn't just great for entertainment and memory & concentration span, by stimulating imagination, curiosity & wonder, by building empathy & social-emotional literacy, by opening doors to new cultures & traditions, by building listening & literacy skills.

The storytelling method incorporates the four communicative skills along each session and it integrates almost two communicative skills in each activity. Storytelling as a learner centered method takes into account student's characteristics such as the age and conceptual level of learners, their needs and interest, their language level and previous language-learning experience

(Dujmovic, 2009). In storytelling, it is crucial to catch learner's attention by presenting them some previous activities to increase vocabulary, practice pronunciation, body language techniques and vocalization (Peck, 1989). While the story is developed, some dramatic pauses take place in certain times accompanied with voice changes and body movements to act characters and especial situations of the story.

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