

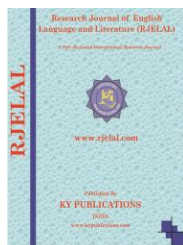


STORY TELLING- A TOOL FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACQUISITION FOR YOUNG LEARNERS

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Abstract

Storytelling, an age old form of communication offers a less anxious environment for young learners to learn English similar to the process of learning a native language. English language proficiency is required for prospective students to secure a job and fare well in indigenous and international platforms. In this scenario, storytelling proves as an effective pedagogical tool to hone the learner's LSRW skills. Story telling has more positive impact as they captivate attention of the listener, build communities by binding belief systems, emotions, ideas and experiences in an entertaining and memorable mode. Story telling allows the students to employ narrative structures, imagery and vocalization. Learners use voice, intonation, pitch, body language, facial expressions, gestures, eye contact and interaction during the process of storytelling. Story telling also fosters Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Speaking (TPRS) by Blaine Ray as it focuses more on acquiring language from a natural interaction with language like spontaneous communication. Story telling also employs the Goldilocks Zone for language learning making it challenging enough for the student to encourage maximum learning by creating interest in the learner. It also triggers the brain's motivational cycle and also helps them to be better communicators by indulging in story telling with focus on Albert Mehrabian's 7-38-55 Rule of Personal Communication.

Key Words: Storytelling, TPRS, Goldilocks Zone, Albert Mehrabian's 7-38-55 Rule of Personal Communication

Story telling is the oldest form of communication. The form of traditional story telling has encapsulated a varied skill set through the centuries. Children to adults, everyone gets easily connected to stories. In an era of wall to wall media, story has evolved as an important medium to connect: In a classroom, teachers and facilitators grab the students' attention through stories or the arena of Business, where Brand story telling has

become a fashion which is directly proportional to the profits the company makes.

Story telling is the new strategy employed by every presenter to get confidence of the audience, their attitudes, mind sets and their behaviors. Human beings have been sharing stories from the beginning of human civilization. Story telling has more positive impact as they captivate attention of the listener, build communities by binding belief

systems, emotions, ideas and experiences in an entertaining and memorable mode.

In the environment of Engineering or professional courses, English language proficiency is required for prospective students to secure a job and fare well in indigenous and international platforms. Students have to hone their English proficiency skills to present their technical ideas to reach the global audience. In addition to proficiency in English, students have to hone their skills like critical thinking, problem solving i.e. Process skills to get adaptable to the changing global scenario.

In this scenario, storytelling can be employed as an effective pedagogical tool for acquisition of English for special purpose and also as second language. Story telling serves a better purpose when compared to any other traditional method. Story telling has many advantages when compared to traditional method of learning English. Learners find this method engaging, interactive and fun filled one as there is an interaction between the teller and the listener.

This paper mainly focuses on:

1. How does story telling improve the LSRW skills of the learners?
2. Is story telling an effective pedagogical tool for improving English language proficiency?

Stories create a conducive and comfortable environment for students and it makes the context a low anxiety one thereby motivating the learner to feel free and shed his/ her fear towards language learning. The learner focuses on narrating the story instead of the language. This enables the process of learning the language unconsciously.

In general, storytelling helps the learner to augment their vocabulary and develop one's language structures. In addition, the learner contextualizes the new words and uses it in a different scenario. The process of storytelling assists the narrator in learning and remembering grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation of words. Story telling facilitates the learning of English similar to the process of learning one's mother/ native tongue. It enables the learner to focus on listening, the primary

requirement of learning any language. Learners acquire the basic sentence structures, vocabulary and employ it in variety of situations.

According to Naom Chomksy, the Language Acquisition Device (LAD) is the imaginary "black box" which exists in the brain. These days, LAD is referred as the Universal grammar as it includes all the principles universal to language learning. Samples of natural language are required to trigger / stimulate LAD and the learner would be able to discover the language structure of the language he/ she is trying to learn and matches it with the instinctive knowledge of grammatical relationships in the particular language environment.

In this scenario, as the learner is a young adult, who already has basic knowledge about English grammar, structures and vocabulary; LAD is stimulated, storytelling motivates the learner to indulge, imagine and enact the situations, enables impromptu responses and provides ample opportunities towards improving language.

According to Regina Ress, storytelling engages the multiple intelligences and the whole learner. There is a wide scope for linguistic learning as it provides listening and speaking experience to the learners. Story telling allows the students to employ narrative structures, imagery and vocalization. Learners use voice, intonation, pitch, body language, facial expressions, gestures, eye contact and interaction during the process of storytelling. (Dyson & Genishi, 1994)

In the context of English language acquisition by Engineers and professionals, TPRS method – Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Speaking is very effective. This TPRS method created by Blaine Ray focuses more on acquiring language from a natural interaction with language like spontaneous communication. Stephen Krashen in his theory of Second Language Acquisition mentions that the process of language acquisition need not require a conscious use of grammatical structures. Second language acquisition requires a meaningful interaction in the target language and not giving importance to utterances but the message. He strongly advocates comprehensible input in low anxiety situations which will enable the learner to

engage in meaningful discourse thereby facilitating an opportunity to learn the language.

In this process of language learning using the TPRS method, the activities employ the Goldilocks Zone for language learning. Here the learning task is challenging enough for the student to encourage maximum learning by creating interest in the learner and triggering the brain's motivational cycle.

TPRS method follows three steps like 1. Define target words/ phrases 2. Tell a story 3. Assign a reading activity. At an undergraduate level, facilitators can assign these three steps to the learners and the role of teacher has to be a motivator. It is one of the methods to assist the learner in language learning. Learners progress gradually in contrast to the traditional way of language learning.

Albert Mehrabian's 7-38-55 Rule of Personal Communication has to be imbibed by the learners as effective communication encompasses words, body language and tone. In this context learners when evolve in the process of storytelling, demonstrate the following skills mentioned by Heather Forest:

- a. Body language, gestures and Facial Expressions: the learner employs non-verbal communication adding to the meaning of the situation.
- b. Concentration is clear, engaging the audience, maintaining a very good eye contact with the listener and having a stage presence.
- c. Characterization: students use dialogue so as to make the listeners imagine or create their characters in mind.
- d. Voice: Students use the right pitch, volume, intonation to create interest among the listeners. They also focus on pronunciation and enunciation.
- e. Use of Space: The student appears relaxed, comfortable and confident in front of the audience.
- f. Pacing: The student employs a required pace to present the story effectively and efficiently and create interest among the fellow students (listeners).

Teachers / facilitators use rubrics to measure their improvement by marking them against the parameters like – use of voice, facial expression, gestures, body language, fluency, audibility, pace, characterization, choice of words etc. The teachers can give inputs on the basic story structure, choice of words and innovate ways to use language, body language, voice and presentation tips.

Story telling process is an effective method for language acquisition by the learners offering a low anxiety environment motivating the learner to come out of their fear zone and participate. This method is a holistic approach for indulging the learner to learn a language similar to the process of learning mother tongue. Young learners who already have basic grammatical knowledge and sentence structures would innovate their presentation skills, use new vocabulary and create constructive comprehension. Students at an undergraduate level especially in India, who are not comfortable to express their ideas in English, storytelling can be employed to help them to take their first step to express and gradually this comfortable environment would help the learners to face the global challenges.

In conclusion, Storytelling at any level of learning would yield better results owing to its motivation coupled with low anxiety ecosystem. Learners would explore and hone their higher order thinking skills. Research has to be carried to employ digital storytelling and brand storytelling and to be made a part of the curriculum. Learners would find this method a fun filled one and gradually become confident with the usage of the language with its grammatical structures and vocabulary. They use it in real world situations with more confidence and express their ideas, thoughts and opinions. Teachers have a crucial role in identifying the right stories to make it challenging enough for the learner to step out of their comfort zones, explore and ignite their latent skills. Guided learning practices by the teacher would assist the learner in the right path. Story telling provides holistic development to the learner as it combines individual / personal development, social and real life scenario.

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