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How to Teach Narratives : A Survey of Approaches

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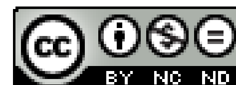

How to Teach Narratives: A Survey of Approaches

Donna Hurst TATSUKI

1. Introduction

Stories and narratives serve important functions in human life (see Saunders 1997, pp. 1-5 for reasons why) and much research supports these assertions (see Tatsuki, 2015, pp.145-149). Merely listening to stories can bring improvements in vocabulary and grammar (Paul, 2012) as well as increase levels of empathy (Zak, 2014), which has profound effects on the building of character (Kearney, 2001). Furthermore, sharing stories whether orally or in print yields improvements in speaking skills (Hwang, Shadier, Hsu, Huang, Hsu, & Lin, 2014), overall academic development (Figg & McCartney, 2010), and improved attitudes towards learning (Abdullah, 2012).

For reasons such as these narratives and storytelling are important parts of education, while at the same time we should be vigilant because "developments in media and information technology are not only providing new ways for us to gather and distribute information, they may be altering the very ways we assimilate knowledge and relate to other people" (Tatsuki, 2016). She concludes,

> …we are at a moment of transition between paper-based literacy and digital literacy that is as tremendous as the transition faced by the ancient Greeks at the time of Socrates. Human cognition and communication lost, gained and changed in the move from an oratory-based culture to a literacy-based one, but it did adapt. We have retained some of the strengths of the ancient ways, such as rhetoric and argumentation. We were able to adapt and retain our powers of analysis, critical thinking and the internalization of knowledge through reading, even though Socrates had such grave doubts about our abilities to do so. Yet it has come at a cost and so will our next transition. (p. 109)

Whether narratives are being composed or being consumed, teachers and learners can choose from a wide range of approaches. This chapter will survey and organize these approaches so that more informed choices for the best environmental fit are possible.

2. Three "Families" of Approaches for Writing and Composing

The writing and composing of narratives/stories has a very long history and the ways that authors approach this task are many. This leaves teachers and educators with a bewildering array of choices. The following sections will attempt to summarize and cluster "families" of approaches since they each offer unique features and perspectives. The approaches are categorized as follows: 1) Structural, 2) Prompt-based, and 3) Transformative.

2.1 Structural Approaches

The reason for a "structural" designation comes from the assumption that structure (the order and hierarchy) of ideas is of a higher the priority than concepts/ideas themselves in the pre-planning process. The metaphor often summoned to justify this approach is that of a human body—without the bones, the skeleton, there is no body—just a formless mass of tissue. Although there is much overlap, there are three main structural approaches: 1) Dramatic Arc, 2) Story Grammar, and 3) Component.

2.1.1 Dramatic Arc

Although Aristotle proposed a tripartite plot structure consisting of a beginning (protasis), middle (epitasis) and end (catastrophe), the five-act structure proposed by Freytag (1893) seems to be the generally accepted means of describing the arc of dramatic structure today (see Figure 1).

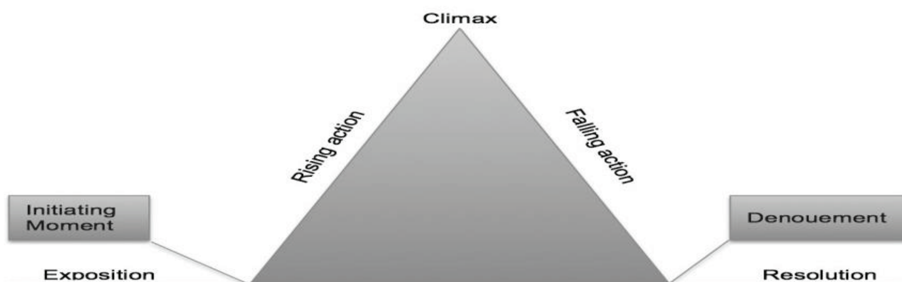

Figure 1 Freytag's (1893) Pyramid (adapted)

2.1.2 Story Grammar

Story grammars are sometimes referred to as story schemata (Rumelhart, 1980). They were conceptualized in response to observations that most stories share common characteristics. For example, most stories “involve a sort of problem solving motif” (Rumelhart, 1980, p. 313) which follows a three part structure in which the hero 1) sets a goal, 2) struggles to overcome obstacles or solve problems on the way to the goal, and 3) culminates with reaching the goal or the consequences of engaging in the struggle. What makes story grammar interesting for Rumelhart is that offers a means to “they tell us what elements “go together” to form higher elements and how one group of elements is related to another, and because they identify analogous elements in different linguistic units” (pp. 314-315). This is import not only for story telling but also for story comprehension.

Some other story grammar approaches to the creation of narratives combine the basic three-part structure (beginning, middle, end) described by Aristotle (1450b27) in his *Poetics,* with linguistically oriented discourse features. Part of the motivation behind this approach is to ensure that the story is comprehensible. An example of this is seen in Bowles (2010, pp. 67-75, see Table 1) wherein he shows how the strategic use of discourse markers is employed to shape the story, whether written or spoken. These discourse markers can affect the story in two ways: to convey the hierarchical structure of time, and to create a sense of joint purpose between the listener and the teller.

Table 1. Story structure and discourse features (adapted from Bowles, 2010, pp. 67-75)

preface	A proposal to tell a story	"Have you heard the one about___?"
	Foregrounding common knowledge	"Remember__? Tell them/let me tell you about___.
body	Discourse markers (DM)	
	Temporal DM	so/then/after/
	Attitude signal DM	I mean/you know/mind you/oh
	Reference	nouns, pronouns, renominalization
	Markers of time	verb tense (usually past, but sometime narrative present)
closings	Comment/summary	"___never___again."
	Summary/ evaluation	"___happily ever after."

The layer of discourse markers (mentioned as the second means of affecting the story) is required in order to maintain audience attention and get across the feelings/beliefs of the characters. They are called *tellability* and *attitude markers* (2010, pp. 77-91). *Tellability markers* include repetition, formulaicity, prosodic effects, imagery/detail, direct speech, ellipsis, metaphor/metonymy, irony and hyperbole. *Attitude markers* include intensity, interactional remembering, and story formulations.

2.1.3 Component

The famous science-fiction writer, Orson Scott Card (2010) believes that "All stories contain four elements that can determine structure: milieu, idea, character and event. While each is present in every story, there is generally one that dominates the others" (n.p.). These correspond roughly to the elements included in story grammars known as setting, theme, character and plot. The difference, however is that one of these elements become the focus (or obsession) of the writer/teller and thereby control the shape of the remaining narrative.

According to Card (2010), "The milieu is the world—the planet, the society, the weather, the family, all the elements that come up during your world-creation phase" (n.p.); the story is initiated by the time and place and the story ends when the main "arriving" character leaves that time or place (returns home, to normalcy). As for his second element, "Idea stories are about the process of seeking and discovering new information through the eyes of characters driven to make the discoveries" (n.p.); the story begins with a question and ends with the answer. Third, "character stories focus on the transformation of a character's role in the communities that matter most to him" (n.p.); the story begins when the character becomes dissatisfied with their current role and instigates the process of change.

The story ends when the transformation process (struggle) ends, regardless of whether the character is satisfied with the role (new or renewed) they come to inhabit. Finally, "in the event story, something is wrong in the fabric of the universe; the world is out of order… a previous order—a "golden age"—has been disrupted and the world is in flux, a dangerous place" (n.p.); the story ends in one of three ways: the establishment of a new order; a return to the old order; or a decline into complete destruction and chaos.

Regardless of which element is focused on, the teacher can offer ways to enhance the learner's/writer's ability to maintain one primary focus. For example, some teachers and materials writers want to help learners to make a distinction between a simple series or list of events and significant events, which combine to create a meaningful plot. Fink (2016) recommends using comic strips as a method to focus attention on significant events. Figure 2 provides some sample blank comic frame pages (Unurban, 2015), but teachers or students can create their own frames.

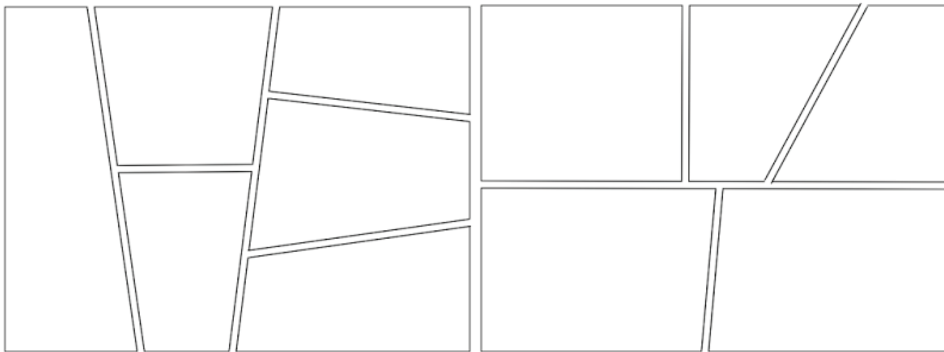

Figure 2. Two sample comic frame pages (adapted from Unurban, 2015)

The writing and telling process is integrated with the creation of the comic strip storyboard. This will be discussed further in in the next section regarding approaches that are prompt-based.

2.2 Prompt-based Approaches

Professional story creators and writing instructors alike have tackled the problem of finding the inspiration for a story or that initial "spark" to ignite writing/telling in a variety of ways. This section will summarize four of the most popular prompt forms: visual, physical object, random-component, and initial sentence story-starters.

2.2.1 Visual Prompts

The English idiom, "a picture is worth a thousand words" dates back to 1911 (Flanders, 1911) although in 1927 it was characterized as an ancient Chinese proverb "so that people would take it seriously" (Barnard, 1927). Regardless of its provenance, pictures and other images are valuable for the stories they can inspire. However, using a visual prompt is not just a matter of describing the elements in an image—the image activates a story schema for the writer/teller to use as a resource.

Visual Prompts can take many forms: Single image, image sequences, and cognitive primers. Single image prompts encompass many media (photographs, sketches, paintings, murals, frescoes, internet memes, etc.), and many subjects (landscape, portrait, still life, abstract, and non-objective). Image sequences can include comic strips, video segments, or any other collection of images used either serially or randomly—the secret is that meaning is created from the sequence.

Figure 3. Comic strip story prompt

Take for example the comic story in Figure 3. Although this story was originally designed and told by a pair of Japanese students, I asked a group of English learners in Italy to use the story as a basis of their own storytelling. This other group applied their own understandings and interpretations of the images and came up with a different version that reflected their own cultural symbols and assumptions.

2.2.2 Physical Object Prompts

There is usually a story behind the objects we carry around with us—sometimes sentimental (lockets, watches, rings), sometimes pragmatic (keys, wallets, business card holders). Our possessions carry their own context of use as well as the circumstances by which they came into our lives. In storytelling workshops, trainers find that personal objects can evoke some of the most tender and poignant stories because of their nearness and dearness to us. The contextual frame provides a structure within which the story unfolds. These stories are usually effective because they reveal a hitherto unseen aspect of the teller/writer while being grounded in something familiar and "relatable" for others, since chances are that the listeners also have their own connections to similar objects.

"Found" objects (not personal possessions but rather ordinary objects with some unusual feature also provide a possible stimulus for a story. One example is a set of paint color chips. Paint sellers create hundreds of hues and shades of paint and for their inventory purposes assign numbers to each one. However, in order to sell a can of paint to a customer, they need to play a little psychological game—they need to allow the color to evoke a vision or concept. Therefore they give fanciful names to their subtle shades of colors. In the hands of a storyteller, these color names become the fodder for place names, character names, event abstracts or even story titles.

Figure 4. Paint chips with creative color names (SICO, 2016)

Consider the colors in Figure 4. These are just a small sample of the hundreds of colors (and color names) on one paint company website. Already we see the inspiration for a possible fairy tale (Dragon's Blood), or a romance (Love Letter,

Valentine Card, Cupid's Red), or a mythical legend (Bloody Mary, Jawbreaker), or an exotic location/town name (Etruscan Villa, Maraschino).

2.2.3 Random Component Prompts

Based on the assumption that the would-be writer has been exposed to other stories and therefore is familiar with common tropes Taylor (2000) suggested two different activities using random component prompts. The most interesting and complete activity involved selecting words from six different lists. Here are a few examples selected from Taylor's lists (pp. 161-2):

1. Places: a stable, a forest, a well, an island, a castle, a poor man's hut, a tower, a prison cell, a restaurant, etc. (any other place).
2. Creatures: a witch, a fairy, a troll, an angel, a snake, a talking horse, a cat, an eagle, the devil, etc. (any other creature)
3. Tasks: to make the princess laugh, to find a missing bracelet, to solve a riddle, to win the race, etc. (The task list might optionally be skipped since it narrows the story range)
4. People: a cook, a thief, a king/queen, a poor woman, a baby, a carpenter, a lumberjack, etc. (any other class or occupant)
5. Things: a pot of gold, a key, an apple, a broken cup, a harp/other musical instrument, a map, a lamp, a stone, etc. (any other tool, food or object)
6. Magical Things: three wishes, a cloak/ring that makes the wearer invisible, a magic mirror, a love potion, etc. (any ordinary object can be given special powers in a folktale)

Taylor suggests giving the whole list to students so that they can choose by themselves but an alternative is to cut the list items up and put them in a bag or jar (one container for each list) and have each student (or group) randomly select one strip from each container. This makes the writing/storytelling a greater challenge because the items might not typically go together so an extra layer of explanation and story weaving will be required to make them all fit together.

The other activity suggested by Taylor was the simplest and employed sets of component cards. Here is an example in Table 3.

Table 3. Component Cards (adapted from Taylor, 2000)

A set of cards for creating a story			
a poor man	a medicine man who sells fake remedies	the poor man's sick daughter	a bottle of green liquid
a wise man	an old cottage	a truthful beggar	a gold coin that had been lost in a stream

To use the component cards, a couple of approaches possible: In one variation, the writer (or a cooperative writing group) would take one card (randomly) and begin the story focusing on the contents of the card, whether it be an object, a person or a location. As each successive card is added the storyteller needs to adjust and find some way to reconcile this new piece of information with the story thus far. In the other variation, the writer (or group) looks at all the cards and tries to put them in some kind of order before telling a coherent tale.

The company that produces "Rory's Story Cubes" has capitalized on this random component method. However, rather than lists of words, they put symbols and simple images on the six sides of their cubes.

Figure 5. Example of Rory's Story Cubes

The storyteller casts the dice (either one at a time, or all at once) and must use the images that face upward to create their tale. The good thing about using images (rather than word prompts) is that even young, pre-literate storytellers can use them. Accordingly, the story that is created will be commensurate with the age and verbal

sophistication of the teller. This is especially useful in classrooms with mixed ability students.

Trebing (2013) recommends typing out a story while someone is telling it (whether using these cubes or not) and then creating a book, complete with a cover and possibly illustrations. Such a practice is popular to promote adult literacy—the person tells a story and the instructor transcribes it to form the basis of motivated reading. It is consider to be "motivated" because the teller always wants to learn to be able to read his or her own story.

2.2.4 Initial, Story-Starter Prompts

Whether you are a professional writer or a teacher of writers, using a "given" starter sentence or paragraph prompt sometimes unlocks the imagination and removes writer's block. One of the most famous (or perhaps infamous) starter sentence/phrase is "It was a dark and story night," which has been lampooned in the following endlessly looping joke:

> It was a dark and story night when the first mate turned to the captain and said, "Tell us a tale." So the captain said, "It was a dark and story night when the first mate turned to the captain and said, "Tell us a tale." So the captain said, "It was a dark and story night… (Repeated until everyone laughs)

However, Wright (n.d.) suggests using a variety of prompts: 1) the sentence prompt, which can be used either at the beginning to start the story or as the final sentence, thus inspiring the tale in reverse; 2) dialogue prompts, in which a short dialogue sets the scene or establishes a conflict; and 3) story titles, which can evoke everything from milieu to characterization to the hero's challenge. Her website offers nearly 600 prompts but is only one site in dozens more offering these ideas freely for teachers and writers.

Regardless of what kind of prompt is chosen, the next step is writing. Certainly solo writers make up the majority of the writers using this method, but the method is amenable to use by groups. The writing group arranges itself into a wherein one person at a time adds a line/sentence/paragraph and then passes the story along to the next person in the circle, thus creating a cumulative story. Each writer needs to read

the previous parts of the story to understand what has been established and in order to add something that is coherent. Although the story is supposed to be finished once it has passed through the groups' hands an agreed number of times, the resulting writing could be used as an idea generator for other stories, or a revised tighter version.

2.2.5 Question Prompts for Impromptu Storytelling

In the past decade, movements have started to capture and archive stories since they are recognized to be an important human resource. One example is StoryCorps (https://storycorps.org) whose mission is

> …to preserve and share humanity's stories in order to build connections between people and create a more just and compassionate world. We do this to remind one another of our shared humanity, to strengthen and build the connections between people, to teach the value of listening, and to weave into the fabric of our culture the understanding that everyone's story matters. At the same time, we are creating an invaluable archive for future generations. (https://storycorps.org/about/)

StoryCorps advocates an interviewing format to warm up, gain trust and then elicit impromptu stories with others. StoryCorp is public service group that started in 2003 by setting up a storytelling booth in grand central station in New York. It has since set up interviewing-storytelling locations in four cities across America (an appointment must be scheduled for interview-storytelling) and in 2015, with the assistance of a prize from TED, it launched the StoryCorps App. Thanks to this App, the collecting and archiving of precious stories is possible anywhere, anytime.

2.3 Transformations and Retellings

This approach differs from the previous two categories in a significant way—it assumes the existence of a model or base story (usually well-known) upon which a new story is to be modeled, altered or augmented. Every time a story is retold verbally, one could say that the retelling makes it a new story even though the main story elements stay the same. However, skillful retellings require planning and should be considered creative works in their own right.

This approach is also a pedagogical "nod" to Joseph Campbell's (1949) famous notion of *monomyth*, the theory that all stories are some kind of departure from or variation of a single great story—that stories are a part of human inheritance and that they live within us at the genetic level, to be passed on for as long as there are tellers to tell and hearers to hear.

Figure 6. Hero's Journey summarized by Vogler (2007)

Vogler (2007) summarized Campbell's stages of the hero's journey in the form of a diagram, which mimics Aristotle's three-part dramatic arc structure (see Figure 6, a public domain image (Heroesjourney.svg)).

Booker (2004) has further boiled down the ideas of Campbell to theorize that there are really only seven basic plot lines in all stories:

1. Overcoming the Monster: The hero's task is to fight against an evil/opposing force to save his/her people or homeland (e.g., Beowulf, Seven Samurai, The Hunger Games).
2. Rags to Riches: The hero starts poor but through struggle and many ups and downs ends wealthy (e.g., Cinderella, Jane Eyre, Great Expectations).
3. The Quest: The hero (accompanied by some sidekicks) begins a journey to

obtain some meaningful object or to arrive in some important destination and has to resist/survive many temptations throughout (e.g., Iliad, The Lord of the Rings, Indiana Jones).

4. Voyage and Return: The hero visits a foreign land, survives many trials and tribulations, then returns home only enriched through the experience (e.g., Odyssey, Alice in Wonderland, Goldilocks and the Three Bears, Gulliver's Travels).
5. Comedy: The central idea is a triumph (over adverse conditions in which conflict becomes increasingly complex and confusing) that brings the hero to a happy ending (e.g., A Midsummer Night's Dream, Bridget Jones Diary, Sleepless in Seattle).
6. Tragedy: The hero has a major character defect (pride, naivety, jealousy) that leads to their demise (e.g., Macbeth, Othello, Anna Karenina).
7. Rebirth: The struggles of the hero forces him or her to change and improve themselves (e.g., The Frog Prince, Beauty and the Beast, A Christmas Carol).

Booker faced criticism since his seven plots failed to account for some very established works of literature. Many writers and storytellers even today continue to depend on a comprehensive list of 36 dramatic situations (Polti, 1916) that are likely to appear in a story or theatrical performance. Therefore, the task of the storyteller or writer is to identify which of these prototypical tale formats captures the essence of the story they want to relate. Once that is done, the telling becomes simpler since there is a default structure with only a need to revise details. To be a good storyteller means one needs to be a consummate story consumer too.

One way to start early (even before one has read extensive literature) is the focus on folk and other stories encountered during childhood and use them as the basis of a retelling or transformation. One good example of this is the "Fractured "Fairy Tale." The name "Fractured Fairy Tales" originated with an animated series of stories narrated by Edward Everett Horton and was included as a regular feature on the Rocky and Bullwinkle Show from 1959 to 1964.

I watched these as a child and was deeply impressed by the way the writers took a familiar/conventional fairy tale or children's story and twisted or reinvented some

element of the storyline (often by including some modern reference) to create a humorous retelling. At present authors and educators who very likely grew up watching and being influenced by these originals are using the name freely for their own books, articles and lesson plans (e.g., Kinsella, n.d.; Jacobs, 1999) offering minimal or sometimes no citation of the creators of the original series (e.g.; ReadWriteThink, 2016; Scieszka, 2016; Tamura, 2016).

A fractured fairy tale is created as follows: take a conventional fairy or folk tale and make some kind of a change in order to transform the story in an unexpected and possibly humorous way. The next sections explain the types of changes along with examples of stories (especially the "Cinderella" story, which has more than 500 versions in Europe alone) already done in this manner. Whether they are retellings or amazingly similar tales, Ashliman (1987) has compiled thousands using the Aarne-Thompson classification system (later edited by Uther in 2004).

2.3.1 Setting Shift

The setting of a story refers to the time and the place. Changes in one of these elements will start a cascade of other changes that may alter the story in interesting directions. According to research on picture book versions by Northrup (2000), the classic Cinderella story has been retold in a variety of locations: Africa, America (North and South), Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. Yet each story retains the basic components of

> …an evil stepmother and stepsister(s), a dead mother, a dead or ineffective father, some sort of gathering such as a ball or festival, mutual attraction with a person of high status, a lost article, and a search that ends with success. (p. 1)

As noted in the previous section, Booker (2004) sees Cinderella as an example of the "Rags to Riches" basic plot type. Therefore it is quite natural for this story to appear and reappear the world over.

Shifts in time settings are interesting too since regardless of the direction of time travel (forward or back), the writer will need to find a way to avoid anachronisms by researching carefully the time selected. An example of a reset time (and place) for the Cinderella tale is *Cinder-Elly* (Minters, 1994).

2.3.2 Character Transformation

Transformations of the central or peripheral characters can be done in all seriousness but often they are treated as humorous parodies. The transformations can affect gender, age, ethnicity (although ethnicity change is usually connected to a shift in the place setting) or even "species." Examples of gender transformations of the Cinderella type include *Prince Cinders* (Cole, 1987) and *Sumorella* (Takayama, 1997). Species changes are seen in *Big Foot Cinderrrrrella* (Johnston, 1998) and *Dinorella: A Prehistoric Fairy Tale* (Edwards, 1997) where the protagonist in each is a sasquatch and a dinosaur respectively.

2.3.3 Plot Changes

Although to create a retelling, it is not possible to stray too far from the original plot structure, it is possible to alter things like the point of view (POV) from which the story is told. Using Cinderella again as an example there are some good instances of POV transformations: *Cinderella's Rat* (Meddaugh, 1997) told from the perspective of one of the rats who was magically transformed in to a footman by the fairy god mother and *Cinder Edna* (Jackson, 1994) a tale from Cinderella's next door neighbor named Edna. Another famous example is *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* (Scieszka, 1989) in which the story is told from the POV of the Wolf, who claims it was all a misunderstanding and that he had been framed.

3. Approaches for Sharing

Whether the story is in written form or exists in memory as an oral telling, there is a range of ways to share it. Among the oral options are read aloud, recitations, dramatic performances and storytelling, while written sharing depends on the choice of print or digital media.

3.1 Oral Sharing

3.1.1 Read Aloud

For most of us, the first experience of read-aloud was in the presence of our mothers or fathers who would read a bed time story. The warmth and magic of such an intimate exchange may continue to affect us many years later. Research shows that reading aloud to children positively impacts not only their development of literacy (Hayes, 1988; Hayes & Ahrens, 1988; Massaro, in press) but also their well-being (Duursma, et.al., 2008). Later, our teachers may have decided to share one story with

the whole class and therefore read a chapter a day to us—again we were captivated (Oeini, et al, 2008).

With the development of portable, miniaturized sound systems (ipods, etc.) publishing companies saw a product niche opening—they began creating audio books—famous novels and other works read aloud by famous narrators (or occasionally by the authors themselves). It has been found that students who are struggling to learn to read can be assisted/scaffolded to read beyond their current abilities through the intervention of audio books (Beers, 1998) and offer them the experience that fluent readers take for granted (Stone-Harris, 2008). Second language learners have also been found to benefit from audio books (Chang, 2011; Talalakina, 2012).

According to Baskin and Harris, there are numerous benefits:

- Introduce students to books above their reading level
- Model good interpretive reading
- Teach critical listening
- Highlight the humor in books
- Introduce new genres that students might not otherwise consider
- Introduce new vocabulary or difficult proper names or locales
- Sidestep unfamiliar dialects or accents, Old English, and old-fashioned literary styles
- Provide a read-aloud model
- Provide a bridge to important topics of discussion for parents and children who can listen together while commuting to sporting events, music lessons, or on vacations
- Recapture "the essence and the delights of hearing stories beautifully told by extraordinarily talented storytellers" (Baskin & Harris, 1995, p. 376)

Considering these benefits, it makes sense for learners to not only be exposed to stories through read-aloud, they should consider sharing their written stories by reading aloud to each other—or by recording their own stories in their own voices in order to listen to themselves.

3.1.2 Recitations

Reader's theatre is a performance art in which players perform literature while holding scripts in their hands. Oral interpretation is the more general term for a dramatic reading that carries the emotional and esthetic message of a piece of literature through the voice but does not use movement or sets or other visual techniques.

The process for oral interpretation involves the selection of a piece of "worthwhile" literature, which is then trimmed down to fit a 10-minute time limit and is then performed by one or two performers. Apparently there are many stringent rules for oral interpretation performances of the purist forms but teachers in an EFL context could be forgiven if they relax the rules for the sake of inclusiveness. Reader's theatre includes more performers, is less rule-governed and encourages the performance of original works of literature—therefore this category of oral interpretation is particularly well suited for the sharing of student created stories.

3.1.3 Dramatic Performances

Scripted plays and dramas start with stories as their starting point. However, rather than being told in one voice or from one point of view, multiple players give voice to the various characters—the plot is carried by speech and physical action rather than a description of events by an omniscient teller. Student stories get a new life through a dramatic treatment and encourage cooperative communicative efforts.

Improvisations are also dramatic performances but they are created spontaneously, ostensibly with no planning, preparation or script. A key word, concept or other stimulus is given to a player (or players) and from the moment the "ball is dropped" they rely on their wits and reactions to spin the tale or explore the story space. The extemporaneous aspect of this kind of performance is what makes it different from storytelling, which is discussed in the next section.

3.1.4 Storytelling

Storytelling has been reserved for last in this section on oral approaches for sharing stories and narratives. The reason for this is that storytelling is the most spontaneous and potentially interactive of the oral approaches. This is because the story teller must be aware of the audience at all time to ensure not only that they are

understanding and following the narrative but also to make personal connections—to ensure that the story will incite a personal response and activate related memories and feelings in each member of the audience. Research shows that storytelling results in enhanced story comprehension and memory (Gallet, 2005)

Master storytellers suggest the following steps to select, learn and then share stories (adapted from suggestions by Holt (1981) and Bellingham (2010)):

1. Select the right story: Make sure the story is meaningful to you if you want it to convey meaning to others.
2. Commit the story to memory: If the story is in written form, read it many times so that the ideas, images and events become etched in your memory. Do not plan to memorize word-for word but do become very familiar with the story in its written form. Consider recording you own voice reading it aloud and listen to that many times. Think carefully about how to start and end the story since the beginning will hook your audience and the end will convey the power of the story to your audience. Play with the story a bit to find ways to tell it that fits your speaking style.
3. Practice by your self: Before telling your story to others you need to take care that your delivery is smooth and that you can communicate confidence. Some practice in front of a mirror, some while driving alone, others to their pets or to willing family members. Exercise your vocal range (high, low, loud, soft), speech rate (fast, slow), and show emotions in your voice—practice exaggerating at first and then find the balance.
4. Tell the story and refine your skills: For your first time telling the story try to find a critical but kind audience. Some suggestions include, schoolchildren, a small group of friends or even one friend over a cup of coffee. This will be a chance to get used to making eye contact—look in the audience for people who are connecting with you and tell the story to them. Make a mental note of what parts of the story the audience responded to and what parts seemed to lose their interest—you can change that part the next time you tell it. After that find any opportunity to share the story (campfires, pubs, family gatherings, public speaking clubs, etc.) and continue refining the delivery.
5. In case of slips or memory blanks: Do not admit a slip or mistake—try to work it into the story, or work around it since small slips will not change the story in

any important way. If you forget something important you can add it later. Also, feel free to pause and think if you have momentarily lost the thread of the story. The audience might appreciate a pause to think too. It could be a dramatic pause, in fact.

6. Enjoy yourself: How you feel is how your audience will feel. Although some nervousness is fine since it will keep you alert and at optimal performance condition, do your best to relax into the telling—this is supposed to be fun for you and everyone!

3.2 Written Sharing

3.2.1 Print/Paper-based

Once a story has been drafted a written, it is a small step to move towards sharing or publishing. Thanks to word processing and printers, desktop publishing options are numerous and the products can be of very high quality. Templates and other software can assist with creating visually pleasing products. The magic of holding a printed story in hand is hard to resist and only gets more compelling with the addition of artwork, illustrations or original photographs. There are costs involved of course; the more profession looking the product, the more costs involved. The benefit of such cost and care however is that story writers will be more motivated to edit and perfect their products since a larger audience will see them.

Products created in this way can also be published on line. In effect they are paper-based products that are read on a screen. This enables wide distribution with virtually no cost. Although they are technically digital (they exist as data, not as concrete paper-based works) they should not be confused with digital storytelling which will be described the next and final section.

3.2.2 Digital

According to Stanley and Dillingham (2011), digital storytelling is “storytelling that contains some mixture of computer-based images, text, recorded audio narration, video clips, or music” (p. 25). They believe that students will be more engaged in learning and this will improve rates of literacy by harnessing digital media, (Stanley & Dillingham, 2011).

However, to their credit, Stanley and Dillingham posit,

> …the learner's storytelling is more important than the technology. Technology can enhance a story. However, an engaging story with an interesting beginning, problem, solution, and ending should be the driving force behind any project…. No technology or special effects can replace a well-developed story complete with literary elements and personal voice. (2011, p. 25)

In order to make this approach work, it is important to ensure that learners remain aware of their language use by following an inquiry based, socio-constructivist approach. Such an approach will "expose them to contextualized meaningful language-in-use, allow[ing] them to communicate authentically while integrating their skill use/development in meaningful communicative contexts" (Tatsuki, 2016, p. 107). In their chapter, Cinganotto and Cuccurullo (2016) recommend the use of digital storytelling as a way to document both teaching and learning experiences. In so doing, the telling of a story becomes a story of learning/teaching, and a means of making a more concrete reflection. As such this foreshadows some of the issues in part two of this volume.

4. Conclusions

There is no doubt that narratives, stories and storytelling hold a key position in human development. The myriad of means to teach the art and science of storytelling is further proof that educators have been taking seriously its importance. The business world and other disciplines have increased their own awareness of the power of stories in recent years and therefore are searching for ways to ensure their employees/institutional members harness that persuasive power. As we transition into more pervasive digital communications, stories and our ability to tell them might become a crucial instrument that enables us to adapt and thrive.

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How to Teach Narratives:

A survey of Approaches

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ABSTRACT

The teaching of narratives is not new but it has taken a number of different shapes. In order to appreciate the myriad of approaches one must also decide on the productive focus (written, or spoken) since the language choices and complexity varies in each. Whether it is a story to be told or a story to be read, however, creating a good structure seems to be a universally agreed upon requirement. Furthermore, most agree that story creation works well as a collaboration whether at the planning stage or later at the editing stage. This chapter is an exhaustive compilation of the various approaches available for the teaching of how to write and perform narratives.

KEYWORDS: narratives, storytelling, story grammar, ELT methodology, creativity