



# Story Telling as a Method to Improve Language Skills

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## Abstract :

Since times immemorial Storytelling has been one of the oldest modes of sharing emotions, truths and most often an elegant means of communication. Story telling could include skillful imagination or sometimes a slice of real life experiences and incidents. This age old medium of storytelling can be a marvelous tool of enhancing an individual's communication. All of us know that communication is successful with good spoken skills. In this light story telling can be amazingly instrumental in bringing out the best in a person's ability to speak well. It is an ancient and valuable art that extends around the globe. Story telling is something we all start doing at a young age. Storytelling involves a two-way interaction between a storyteller and one or more listeners. It is about using stories to engage your audience, or to make something more clear. Storytelling is everything you are saying from the first sentence to the last which leads to a singular goal.

Much before people learned how to write, they would tell each other stories. Storytelling can improve students' speaking skill. The first way to do the interaction and communication is by speaking. Applying story telling technique in speaking can generate interest, motivation to speak and share ideas with their friends in groups. Storytelling improves the speaker's comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. As a social being, people always interact and communicate with one another. Storytelling is a technique to develop multiple skills like power of imagination, confidence, fluency, problem solving attitude, team work. Story telling enhances the student's ability to speak English in terms of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehension. Most of the times speakers find it difficult because of lack of ideas, vocabulary and also sometimes for the lack of a chance to speak. Applying story telling technique in teaching could improve students' interest and motivation to speak and share ideas with their friends in groups. It is evident that Story telling has an immense potential to bring out the best from the story teller in terms of Critical thinking, analysis, creativity, Art of questioning and Language building. The best attribute that can be given to storytelling is it can cut across all cultural barriers around the globe while encouraging appreciation and tolerance to the same. \_ Storytelling can be seen as a foundation for learning and teaching. While the story listener is engaged, they are able to imagine new perspectives, inviting a transformative and empathetic experience. This involves allowing the individual to actively engage in the story as well as observe, listen and participate with minimal guidance. Listening to a storyteller can create lasting personal connections, promote innovative problem solving and foster a shared understanding regarding future ambitions. The listener can then activate knowledge and explore new possibilities.

**Key Words:** Story Telling, Communication, Enhancing Speaking, Verbal & Non Verbal Skills

## INTRODUCTION

Storytelling can be described as a social and cultural activity of sharing an experience or even an imagination creatively told .Every culture has its own stories or narratives, which are shared as a means of entertainment, education, cultural preservation or instilling moral values. The responses of the listeners influence the telling of the story. In fact, storytelling emerges from the interaction and cooperative, coordinated efforts of teller and audience. Storytelling happens in many situations, from a house hold conversation to a ritual, from a narration in the course of other work to performing in the midst of thousands of paid listeners. Some storytelling situations demand informality; others are highly formal. Some demand certain themes, attitudes, and artistic approaches.. Stories have always been a way to communicate. Stories are much easier to remember than simple facts. Stories are enjoyable; they stimulate our imagination. Oral traditions of storytelling are found in several civilizations. Story telling was used to explain natural phenomena. Oral stories passed from one generation to the next and storytellers were regarded as healers,

leaders, spiritual guides, teachers, cultural secrets keepers and entertainers. Millions survive without love or home, almost none in silence; the opposite of silence leads quickly to narrative, and the sound of story is the dominant sound of our lives, Storytelling is a means for sharing and interpreting experiences. Stories are universal in that they can bridge cultural, linguistic and age-related divides. Storytelling can be adaptive for all ages. Storytelling can be used as a method to teach ethics, values and cultural norms and differences. Stories function as a tool to pass on knowledge in a social context. Stories create magic, a sense of wonder at the world; teach us about life, about ourselves and about others. Storytelling is a unique way for kids to develop an understanding, respect and appreciation for other cultures, and can promote a positive attitude to people from different lands and religions alongside allowing children to explore their own cultural roots.

Story Telling promotes a willingness to communicate thoughts and feelings and encourage active participation. It increases verbal proficiency encourages use of imagination and creativity.

Young Learners share a remarkable variety of personal experiences, values and ways of understanding. The language they learn in the classroom is the tool they use to shape their thoughts and feelings. It is more than a way of exchanging information and extending ideas, it is their means of reaching out and connecting with other people. Stories can link not only between the world of classroom and home but also between the classroom and beyond. Stories provide a common thread that can help unite cultures and provide a bridge across the cultural gap.

*“We are all born ‘preloaded’ to be great storytellers. What we need to do is to develop the performative skills to do it in public.”*

*- Freyman, 2019*

### **Improving Verbal skills**

Storytelling has beneficial effects on verbal skills by students being able to associate meanings and emotions with words. Storytelling creates a powerful connection between the speaker and the audience. It makes the presentation or speech more than just an organized group of words that convey a message.

It is noticed that shyness is overcome to a large extent through story telling. Overthinking gets the mind preoccupied and it becomes difficult to be able to concentrate on the speech and end up fumbling. Not being shy and behaving normally helps them imagine the story and process the tale. When they learn to tell tales, they take their speaking skills to a whole new level - they learn to speak clearly, with intention and care for their audience. Storytelling improves students speaking skills, communication skills, language knowledge, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation accent etc. Storytelling, as an instructional tool and process, enhances the development of language proficiency. It also fosters some essential competencies of lifelong learning such as learning to learn, interpersonal and intercultural competence as well as cultural awareness and expression.

Stories are meant to be told and shared, as a vital part of our cultural heritage. Children today are perhaps better read, and read to more, than previous generations. Yet schools have tended to neglect the oral tradition in favor of the written text. Exploring the place of storytelling in the classroom may encourage children to create and tell oral stories - not only for their entertainment, but more importantly as a means for making sense of their world. The power of children's imagination as a force for learning should not be undervalued. Storytelling is a way of harnessing that power to allow children and teachers to engage in creative and imaginative learning. Storytelling has contributed significantly to the development of speaking and listening skills and in establishing students' confidence so that they can compose a story and experience with the language. The results showed that storytelling helped in improving the five linguistic skills in the classes. These skills include listening, speaking, reading, writing and oral interaction.

Students learn to respond profoundly to stories and experience change in their attitudes and perceptions. This leads to active interaction in and out of the classroom.

Involving the use of storytelling shows that promote language skills, develop language proficiency, improve students listening comprehension, and reading comprehension, builds vocabulary, enhances grammar learning, develops students literacy and oral language skills, enriches students' learning experience, stimulates students to voice their ideas and thoughts, empowers students' critical and visual thinking, improves social interaction and language outcomes.

Storytelling creates a positive, collaborative and supportive classroom environment where students improve listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. This increases the understanding of the story in a social context. Students learn the social aspects of language through observation and collaboration in storytelling.

### **Language skills**

Storytelling is essential to improving listening, speaking, reading comprehension and writing skills. In a study of the effectiveness of storytelling-based instruction to enhance English listening and speaking skills of sixth grade students in Taiwan by Jenprai, (2013) the results indicated that students' English listening and speaking ability taught by storytelling based instruction was significantly higher than the other students taught through regular instruction. It also highlighted that learners' attitudes towards English lessons after learning through storytelling-based instruction were highly positive.

**Reading**

Storytelling has an impact on silent reading as well. Storytelling successfully brings the pupils to the stage of enthusiastic independent reading. It requires a substantial amount of time for story listeners to become readers. Research findings from a study of sustained silent reading in foreign language acquisition carried out by Lee (2011) show that storytelling is a substantial initiative. It is the path to independent reading and extensive reading. It is the most enjoyable and a powerful means for extended language acquisition. Extensive reading in the form of in-class sustained silent reading is the most crucial element for enhancing students' academic language and written one. There is a progressive path for acquisition of skills that harmonizes with first language progression.

**Listening**

Storytelling helps students to become active listeners. Humans need to communicate. Personal experiences make storytelling a natural way to design lessons that help students improve their English language skills. Conversational storytelling is a delightful experience for both the instructor and the learners once they get into it. Raising awareness of the generic characteristics of conversational storytelling enables learners to share their own stories with their classmates. Different techniques add more benefits to stories and promote greater fluency, retelling activities and exercises that extend to using adjectives, idiomatic expressions, and direct speech. In addition, active listening creates a real interactive environment that enhances the development of higher-order language skills.

Oral communication that includes: empathy, feedback from the audience, engagement with the audience, responses to questions from the audience.

**Body Language**

A claim made by Mokhtar et al., (2011) is that stories are entertaining and inspiring, thus attracting listeners and boosting communication. As storytellers, students have the opportunity to do it all: read, write, listen, and speak. The comfortable and lively environment formed by stories motivates the students to speak and converse with each other. They enjoy experimenting vocally, with facial expressions, sentiments, and gestures that formulate the perfect story. As they present their story, the art of listening becomes a two-way street. By using good eye contact and body language these storytellers interact with their audience. As students tell and listen to a story, they get caught up in the story and forget about themselves and their anxiety. They become more self-confident and express themselves creatively. The activities and skills that they learn will be used across the curriculum and throughout life.

Voice adjustments, tone of voice, eye contact, presenter's posture in the room are all instrumental in enhancing spoken skills. Interpersonal communication includes: emotional intelligence, body language, posture, sensitivity to the audience demonstrated through appropriate behavior and active listening. Facial Expressions and Eye Contact: Face can reveal the emotional feelings of people such as happiness, sadness, hatred, disgust, anger, fear, etc. For example, a student's confused state of mind in a classroom can indicate that he/she needs further explanation while a smile or nodding may suggest that explanation will not be necessary. Eye contact is also very crucial storytelling and face-to-face conversations, as it indicates the involvement with the listener. It also helps to regulate conversational interactions, detachment, nervousness that the person is facing.

**Critical Thinking**

Storytelling can teach by imparting truths. But storytelling can also teach by inviting people to think for themselves and to create their own truths. When people come up with interpretations and support them with reasons, they are doing what is called critical thinking. And when different people work together to create responses to stories, they do something more—like problem-solving, and self-reliance, and respect for diversity, and the habit of cooperation—skills and habits that people who don't live in democratic societies often don't have and wish they did. So, we should talk about confidence, intonation, dramatization, and, above all, stop feeling self-conscious. Ultimately, nobody cares whether we did it well, so-so, or poorly, but rather that we were committed to the story. Practice will gradually improve our technique. Of course, planning is basic, because some people think that standing up and improvising is easy, but if you haven't practiced a lot, it can be quite difficult. Consider who your audience is because knowing them is the key to be a winning story teller.

**The Art of Questioning**

Asking apt questions is probably one of the most important and powerful skills for being a speaker. Questioning makes the story teller understand the product from within. Questioning is not just about being aware of the different kinds of questions it's possible to ask. The real skill in questioning is knowing how to use the different kinds of questions which will make speaker walk out with a lot of takeaways. You can begin to develop this skill by thinking about how you might combine different types of questions. This means knowing how questions can complement each other, which may not be as simple as it sounds. It needs practice before the skills can really be developed.

## Visualization

Many communities have commented on the importance of visualization in storytelling. If visualization is a form of storytelling, then the audience is its protagonist and the setting its analytical scope. A successful visual creates a world its audience will immediately recognize as their own, with familiar terminology, organization, and concepts of favorable conditions. Storytellers tend to be integrating complex visualizations into their narratives in growing numbers and important elements in storytelling visualization. Storytelling allows visualization to reveal information as effectively and intuitively as if the viewer were watching a movie. As long as people have been around, they have used stories to convey information, cultural values, and experiences. Storytelling can involve self-discovery, incorporating models, ethical principles, canons of literature, and social standards. In education, a storyteller can improve and strengthen the literacy of students. Also, the storyteller can engage audiences so they feel a desire to read, write, act, and draw. Audience members can learn to express themselves critically and imaginatively with techniques they may learn from the storyteller.

## Suggestions

In story telling it's important to be creative for which a storyboard can be suggested. Ideal way is to draw it out while listening to music or reading something for inspiration. A good story always has ups and downs. Pull people along, and introduce suspense, just like in a fairy tale.

Intensify the story with vivid language and intonation. Tap into people's emotions with language. Use metaphors, idioms, and parables that have emotional associations. Leo Widrich's article entitled, "*Which Words Matter Most When You Talk*" and studies on intonation performed by Ingrid Johnsrude

Tell your story in front of a friendly audience and get feedback. Gauge your pace, and take note of the story's length and your use of language. There could be anxiety but underneath it all, we are all born storytellers. Remember a story always has to have a beginning, middle, and end.

Good stories are about challenge or conflict. Without these elements, stories aren't very interesting. The compelling part of a story is how people deal with conflict so start with the people and the conflict. Start with a person and his challenge, and intensify human interest by adding descriptions of time, place, and people with their emotions. Plan your story starting with the takeaway message. Think about what's important to the audience. The ending is the most important point of the story. This is the message we want to deliver, and the one that will linger with the audience.

## Conclusion

The concept of storytelling basically accomplishes the aspect of comprehending the finer points in narrating a story and explaining the significance of storytelling in children and young people.

Story telling is an art that has mental, social and educational benefits on children. Stories are one of man's chief means of communication stories are for telling by everyone with experience to share with those who have an aptitude to hear. Man learned to express his own feelings, what he observed around him, the behavior of others, his dreams, his beliefs to other people. Telling stories was sharing experiences, real or imaginary. Before printing began, storytelling became the chief means of recording and transmitting events that took place as well as ideas to be shared.

These days, children are exposed to different forms of communication media like the cinema, television, radio, telephone and computer. But the storyteller is still an indispensable agent of socialization. Storytelling, like singing, is an art that can be cultivated. It is a creative art. Storytelling is one of the most valuable activities in school or at home. Parents too play a significant role in making their children imbibe the art of Storytelling from their childhood by and reading or telling stories to them..

It also gives children an opportunity to become acquainted with the best of literature and Increases a child's knowledge and experience. It creates in children a desire to know about the lives of other people and know their culture. Develops the ability to be good listeners and it stirs their imagination and become creative. Gives pleasure and enjoyment to children. When telling a story themselves, the children learn to organize and express themselves clearly, at the same time building confidence in their ability to face an audience.

In conclusion Storytelling is an art of bringing a story to life through the inflection in one's voice, rhythm, facial expressions and hand movements which in itself is a complete act of communicating an event or sequence of events to an audience using the tool called language.

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