

## **STORYTELLING: A PATH TO IMAGINATION AND CREATIVITY IN THE PRIMARY ENGLISH CLASS**

*Gloria Barreto Correa*  
glorembar@hotmail.com

**S**torytelling has been used as a means to help students of a private school improve their communicative skills. To achieve this goal, we have designed activities that enable students to use English actively and at the same time get in touch with literature. We expect to change students' attitudes towards English and to motivate them to develop proficiency in the foreign language through storytelling. In doing so, we are innovating our teaching practices by incorporating a tool that can provide students with both the means and the motivation for using the language and thus develop their communicative skills.

### **Introduction**

The idea of developing this classroom research is a form of self-reflection in order to improve our educational practices. It plays an important part in reflective teaching as personal and professional development occur when we teachers review our experiences in a systematic way, evaluating our teaching methods as well as the materials used in class to establish which ones best suit our students and our curriculum. It is then expected that this research will enable us to evaluate our pedagogical knowledge to use storytelling in the English class.

### **Key theoretical principles**

The use of literature is an answer to the need to expose children from an early age to

an understanding of the way language functions. Stories are an essential part of all cultures around the world. The tolerance and comprehension of different cultures through a wide variety of cultures produce very positive results because all children enjoy stories, myths and legends. Listening to tales recorded in foreign languages and telling tales and traditional legends nurtures their curiosity and their inner capacity to listen and read for meaning. As can be seen, storytelling helps us to change traditional classes into very interesting ones.

There are further reasons why teachers use storybooks. Among those reasons we can point out some listed by Ellis and Brewster (1991):

- Stories can help students develop positive attitudes towards language learning.
- They exercise the imagination. Children can become personally involved in a story as they identify with the characters and try to interpret the narrative and illustrations.
- Stories provide a way to link fantasy and the imagination with the child's real world.
- Listening to stories in class is a shared social experience. Storytelling can help build up the child's confidence and encourage social and emotional development.
- As children enjoy listening to stories over and over again, repetition allows natural language acquisition.
- Listening to stories allows the introduction or revision of new vocabulary and language patterns.

Rapunzel

Author: Brothers Grimm

Name: Date: November 19 02  
 COURSE: 2nd Level ISmael perdomo  
 school

think we are going to have  
 a baby



sample 1. Rapunzel (used with permission)

Puss in Boots

Author Charles Perrault  
 course: 204 Primari level  
 Name Angi Katherine Guamiro  
 once upon a time an old man He had three so  
 father said I am dying Listen These are my  
 last words what can a cat do?  
 Dick → windmill cat said "I bring you this from  
 Harry → don key The Prince of catabas  
 Tom → cat puss, Puss walked bravely towards  
 The castle who are you? what do you want?



Sample 2: Rapunzel (Used with permission)

## The process

This project has been developed with students of 2nd elementary level at a public school located in the south of Bogotá. To begin with, we have worked with two tales that have captured the attention of all the pupils and stimulated their interest: *Rapunzel* and *Puss in Boots*.

Stories were read using different strategies to make students focus on meaning (inferring, predicting, and guessing). I showed the students the cover of the books to generate their desire to read the stories. In this activity my students used their linguistic intelligence by using language forms to ask for and give information. We also commented on the colourful pictures to help students grasp the ideas contained in the stories. Also, we stimulated storytellers. Their reports encouraged the class to check meaning and details and to exchange ideas about their understanding of the texts. Furthermore, the students drew pictures about the plot of the stories. Most of them accompanied their drawings with some sentences according to the reading. Finally, their papers were displayed around the classroom and volunteers were invited to show them and to retell the stories to the whole class. As can be seen in the samples, some students focused on summarising the stories (sample 1) while others included in their written works the most significant aspects, that is to say, the details that caught their attention (sample 2).

## First findings

So far, the results have shown that students like stories because they are exploited through

varied and interesting activities during the whole class. Stories have enhanced students' motivation; they have helped us to keep the student's attention, stimulated visual memory and improved their imagination and fantasy. Likewise, they have reinforced their speaking skills through different exercises like: retelling the story, drawing and describing pictures, word exercises, remembering and describing some scenes of the stories. In addition, stories have provided meaningful alternatives to teach new vocabulary which is then recycled in the retelling activities we have engaged in.

Regarding comprehension I should point out that I have observed that students show understanding of the texts we read not only through formal linguistic patterns, but also by drawing pictures about them.

To sum up, story telling is an authentic resource of the written language. Children like hearing stories and they are always creating and telling them. Storytelling is a great option to successful learning because it is a good way to interact with children and encourages interaction among them. Also, the stories make children develop their imagination to be more creative and at the same time they awaken their interest and habits about reading.

## References

Ellis, G. and Brewster, J. (1991). *The Storytelling Handbook for Primary Teachers*. London: Penguin English.