Telling Stories
How and Why to Use Storytelling in Student and Teacher Programs

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Let me tell you a story....
Little Cat Goes Fishing
Plan for the Session

Why stories in teacher preparation?

How can we use stories in teacher preparation?

Examples and discussion about how we have used stories in STARTALK programs.
Why use stories in teacher preparation?
Narrative Theory

- We are surrounded by stories in our daily lives.
- Stories are a primary and natural form through which we make sense of our experiences.
- Stories embody an implicit schema for the organization of our experience.
- Stories captivate and motivate us.

Bruner, 1987; Polkinghorne, 1988; Hymes, 1996
What makes a good story?
Stories and Language Development

- Story structure helps make language comprehensible.
- Stories offer meaningful context.
- Stories lower anxiety.
Stories and Language Development

• Stories promote emotional connections.
• Stories provide a wealth of target language input.
• Stories embody cultural products, practices, and perspectives.
Stories contain repetitive functional chunks that are the building blocks for language production, interaction, and the basis for grammatical understanding.
Stories and Teacher Development

- Successful storytelling involves a series of talents and strategies that are like a microcosm of foreign language instruction in general.

- The beginning/middle/end structure of a story models the structure of good activity, lesson and unit design.
Story Form (Egan, 1986)
Mirrors Lesson/Unit Form

Beginning
- Motivation
- Engagement of the Learner

Middle
- Activity Toward a Goal
- Participation by the Learner

End
- Outcome/Product/Solution/Resolution
- Achievement of Goal by the Learner
Elements of Storytelling

- Story line: predictable, cultural dimensions, truth about human nature, transferable to the lives of students
- Strong rhythm, rhyme, repeated patterns
- Sequential actions
- Illustrations and realia: supportive, visually appealing
Types of Stories

- Classic stories and folktales
- Popular children’s literature, especially pattern stories
- Miscellaneous stories: jokes, anecdotes, songs, games, etc...
- Invented stories
Types of Stories

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Little Cat Goes Fishing
Types of Stories

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Types of Stories

- Invented stories
The Panda Family
家
弟弟？   妹妹？
弟弟？  妹妹？
弟弟？ 妹妹？
弟弟？

妹妹？
弟弟？

妹妹？
弟弟？

妹妹？
再見！
Assessment

1. Was the story comprehensible? Turn to a colleague and briefly retell the panda family story in two or three sentences.

2. Did you learn new vocabulary? Tell your colleague how you say these words in Mandarin:
   1. Little brother: ____________________
   2. Little sister: ____________________

3. Did you learn a new cultural practice? Tell your colleague any cultural practices you observed in this story?
Summer Gatherings
Other Stories

- Panda Family Goes for Dim Sum
- Panda Is Hungry
- Would You Play with Me?
Share Your Stories
What are the challenges for novice teachers?

- Story structure
- Planning
  - Language
  - Materials
- Rehearsing
How do we prepare teachers to use stories for instruction in the language classroom?
Teach the Planning Process

- Follow backwards design;
- Make a web and identify language, culture and connections elements;
- Choose or create an appropriate storyline;
- Structure story to “milk” content to ensure maximum use of targeted language outcomes;
Teach the Planning Process

- Simplify the story if necessary;
- Build in rhyme, rhythm and repetition;
- Determine how to introduce and tell the story;
- Practice the story aloud with actions and gestures;
Teach the Planning Process

- Select manipulatives and pictures to use;
- Select follow-up activities to extend the story; and
- Perform--be foolish, have fun and take a chance!
Steps to Prepare Teachers

- Explain rationale: narrative theory and the power of stories for language learning;
- Share the importance of following basic story structures;
- Observe, analyze, and reflect upon good storytelling technique;
Steps to Prepare Teachers

- Demonstrate how to carefully plan storytelling lessons;
- Target linguistic outcomes (functional chunks, thematic vocabulary, grammar in meaningful contexts);
- Connect with the audience through eye contact and extensive use of visual support (facial expressions, gestures and realia);
- Plan interactions that promote production;
Steps to Prepare Teachers

- Offer multiple opportunities to practice with a live audience (multiple age groups, proficiency levels, etc…) and adapt instruction; and

- Lead teacher candidates in guided reflection on the storytelling activities when completed.
The universe is made of stories, not atoms.

Muriel Rukeyser
The End
Questions and Discussion

Tell Us a Story