How can we make the most of the space we physically share with our students?

• playfully adapt the physical space we share
• bring sensory features such as touch, smell, taste and movement into storytelling as well as sound and vision
• get students moving and talking freely

Give learners opportunities to invent, to rehearse and to perform as they learn creatively together within a supportive, confidence-building framework.
The magic of storytelling exists and is powerful. You have to put this ritual into practice and experience for yourself how true this is. There is an energy that springs from the encounter between the voice that narrates and the ears that listen, which no longer depends on individuals, but on the circle that individuals form around the narrator. It is a magic that heals, strengthens, makes you forget, makes you fall asleep.

We need a new generation of storytellers.

Enedina Sanna Piccolo Manuale di Storytelling o Del Raccontare con la Voce (Soon to be published)
Storytelling With Our Students
Techniques for telling tales from around the world

David Heathfield
DELTA TEACHER DEVELOPMENT SERIES
physical
multi-sensory
rhythmic chants, percussion
beyond the classroom
Becoming part of the story
Learning a story together physically

Preparation
Create space for physical storytelling

1st telling: With a smile and a gesture, invite students to mime the story with you and join in with repeated phrases

2nd telling: Ask students to mirror you: repeating the same postures, same mimes, same facial expressions, same feelings, same voices, same language. Keep up the momentum!

3rd telling: Ask students to tell the story together with you – many will be ‘shadowing’ you

4th telling: Ask students to face each other in pairs and retell mirroring their partner. Remind them to keep their mimes and voices strong. Support pairs who are struggling by joining in.

5th, 6th, 7th etc. telling: Encourage students to tell it, or even teach it, to different people they know.

Next class telling: Start the next lesson by getting students into a standing circle to retell the story in unison.

Reflection
Students share their strategies for remembering the story and how these can help them on their language learning journey.
Multi-sensory approach

Individual listeners experience stories in different ways

Many describe seeing mental pictures of scenes from the story

Many feel physically close to the action and may become a main character

Auditory learners tune into the storyteller’s voice patterns and may hear sounds in their imagination

Most listeners experience different moments through a combination of senses

To enhance the experience, you can:

• refer to different senses in the oral text

• provide stimuli for these senses through movement, gesture, voice modulation, song, music, percussion, touch, use of props or costume

Avoid showing detailed pictures so that your listeners’ mental imagery is given creative freedom

There is a strong link between language, emotion and mental imagery.
Rhythmic chants, percussion

- listeners can become co-storytellers by joining in during a story
- they can chant a rhythmic repeated phrase or rhyme
- accompany it with percussion (body or instrument)

As the story progresses, listeners can move from repeating the chant after you to joining in the chant together with you to leading the chant without you. It’s a natural and fun part of storytelling.
Because chants contain strong rhyme patterns, they are highly memorable...the rhythm that is built into them allows learners to naturally acquire the rhythms of the target language...they are easy to follow and are useful models for speech

Nick Bilbrough, Stories Alive, British Council 2016
Storytelling beyond the classroom

Indoors
storytelling can happen in various indoor locations beyond the classroom from communal spaces in the school to museums and historic buildings to cafes and coffee shops

Outdoors
interconnectedness with nature in traditional stories worldwide is part of everyone’s heritage

find a comfortable, undisturbed location to suit the story

telling a folk tale in a natural environment gives students a connection between the imagined world of the story and the sensory experience of being in a parallel physical world

details of the physical surroundings may become intertwined with the world of the story and etched into listeners’ memories

through storytelling we can work towards a greener world
When learning creatively and collaboratively students soon ‘lose their inhibitions about trying out new ideas. They grow to enjoy themselves. Surprise and wonder at the richness of our inner worlds is often voiced. This experience is of course in itself deeply satisfying because so much of the work is focused around giving and receiving.

Dr Alida Gersie (Therapist and Pedagog) *Earthtales* Green Print 1992
Over time a learning community can come into being, where co-operation, sharing and the valuing of others’ contributions become a natural part of the way things are done

Alan Maley, Creativity in the English Language Classroom British Council 2015
Engage your learners emotionally, imaginatively, intellectually and playfully through your presence as a storytelling teacher.

Next course 13 – 28 March 2021

Next intensive course 9-11 April 2021
The C Group
Creativity for change in Language Education

The C Group is an independent and informal grouping of EFL professionals. It aims collaboratively to share information, promote reflection and inquiry, and encourage action through more creative and open teaching practices.

More information and membership:
http://thecreativitygroup.weebly.com
creativity_group@yahoo.co.uk
Storytelling With Our Students:
Techniques for telling tales from around the world
David Heathfield  DELTA Publishing 2014

Spontaneous Speaking:
Drama Activities for Confidence and Fluency
David Heathfield  DELTA Publishing 2005

Students’ Stories
21-part series in English Teaching Professional 2017 – 2020

Integrating global issues in the creative English language classroom:
With reference to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
Chapter 21 Storytelling for a Better World by David Heathfield
Editors Alan Maley and Nik Peachey, British Council 2017

Creating an inclusive school environment
Chapter: Storytelling for diverse voices by Alla Göksu and David Heathfield, British Council, April 2019

The Hands Up Project https://www.facebook.com/handsupproject/


Photo credit: Andreas Ravn Møller
1:87 Betula pendula
Autumn silver birch in H0 scale. Trunk in twisted cupper wire, leaves and ivy from Silhouette Mininatur
https://www.flickr.com/photos/andreasravnmoeller/15640074638/in/dateposted/

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