



Narrative

Acknowledging the important role that personal, written, oral and digital stories play in all our lives. They support both the production and comprehension of narratives through active processes, especially play.

When young learners listen to oral stories, share written stories, dramatise fairy tales and folktales they are learning the patterns and structures that underpin narratives. Typically, narratives have a structure that includes a beginning scenario, an event, incident or complicating circumstance (often referred to as the problem) and a resolution of the problem or circumstance. For example, in fairy tales there is usually a villain or evil character who perpetrates an act that is resolved through the interventions of a heroic figure. Such stories often contain social and moral messages about justice, fairness and care. They also provide scope to critically reflect on the qualities associated with characters and to challenge gender stereotypes.

Play is a vehicle for young learners to express ideas, enact roles observed in the home and in the community, to imagine and pretend. In dramatic play, as young learners take on various roles they learn to negotiate storylines and expand on ideas through their interactions with other players and play objects. Such opportunities help individuals to make sense of the world and their place within it.

Strategies to build young learners' understanding of narrative

Young learners' capacity to produce and comprehend narrative structures can be supported with a range of multi-modal classroom practices.

- Repeated daily exposure to rich literature that reflects young learners' cultural heritage, and exposes young learners to cultures other than their own, broadens young learners' cultural understandings of story structure.
- Dramatisation of familiar stories helps young learners to learn about the structure of a story through action, movement, expression and voice. Such experiences provide outlets for creativity, and self-expression to flourish.
- After the lunch break (when time to settle may be needed) is an ideal opportunity for short class stories told by the teacher. While young learners rest quietly they visualise the unfolding adventure as the teacher makes up a story that includes class members in the storyline.

- Encourage beginning writers to draw their story and dictate the narrative. This gives young learners opportunities to share the depth of their narrative knowledge when the task of writing may not match their oral narrative skills.
- Talk about the descriptive language authors use in their stories to capture the reader's attention. Brainstorm interesting ways to start a story and create story-starter cards to support writing.
- Model writing a story for the class that lacks the qualities you want to explore with young learners. Use the poorly structured story as a springboard for discussion about the structure a narrative requires to make it interesting, for example the who, what, where, when and how of the narrative.

Resources to support narrative development

- Dress ups
- Story artefacts.....feather, a coin, hat, nest selected from a 'treasure chest'
- Puppets (hand, shadow, masks)
- Puppet theatre
- Finger puppets
- Felt board and felt board characters
- Story map (white board, cardboard, digital)
- Clipboards and pens (story maps)
- Small world figures
- Story charts
- Story stones (young learners' select stones with the images they want to use in the development of their narrative)
- Photographs
- Photo stories
- e-books
- Claymation

<http://creativeeducator.tech4learning.com/lessons/digital-storytelling>



Narrative competence is ‘the understanding of story events as temporally sequenced and causally motivated.’ Narrative production is ‘the ability to produce longer, more coherent and more linguistically complex stories.’¹

1 Baumer, S., Ferholt, B., & Lecusay, R. (2005). Promoting narrative competence through adult-child pretense: Lessons from the Scandinavian educational practice of playworld. *Cognitive Development*, 20, p.579. Retrieved from: <http://lchc.ucsd.edu/Projects/BAUMERPromNarrativeComp.pdf>