Storytelling: Practice makes Perfect (Workshop)

X.TED ELT Conference, at TED Mersin College 28th April 2018

Choosing and Remembering Stories

If you want to learn some stories for yourself, and build a repertoire, here are some tips to help you do it. Look at books like Mary Medlicott's Tell It or Pie Corbett's Speak Out!, from which some of these points are taken.

1. Listen to other storytellers

Never miss a chance to hear others tell stories. Tellers may be professionals, or might also include friends, colleagues, teachers, relatives or neighbours. When you hear a story that really appeals to you, try to jot down the key points of the story straight away, and practice it while you can still hear the teller's voice. Always credit the teller if you retell the story again in public.

2. Read as much as you can

Sources of traditional stories include picture books, thematic collections ('A Book of Giant Stories'), geographical collections ('Tales from Russia') and others. Many useful source books may be out of print; but public libraries may still stock then. Remember: you'll almost certainly need to read many stories before you find one that really appeals to you, and wants you to tell it. Keep reading!

3. Draw a Story Picture Map

Pictures of characters and events, perhaps with 'prompt words', will suit visual learners.

4. Make a Storyboard

Try drawing a strip cartoon of the main events in the story, perhaps with captions.

5. Write out a Story Skeleton

Reduce these as much as possible – say to six points. For example: Bears leave house until porridge cools. Goldilocks comes in, tries porridge. Too hot, too cold, just right. Repeat with chairs and beds.

6. Act out the Story

Use simple actions or gestures to help your memory (and the listener!). For example: Lifting a spoon for trying the porridge, wriggling hips for trying the chairs...

7. Recording the Story

Make an audio recording; you could leave spaces after each sentence, then replay it and repeat them. A useful approach if you learn by listening. Later, if you're feeling brave, try videoing yourself!

8. Practise, Practise, Practise!

Tell the story to yourself as much as possible (don't worry if people see you muttering!). It doesn't matter if your retellings are slightly different each time. Maybe a friend would offer to listen to you?

9. Work with Partners or Groups

Retell the story to a partner; maybe they can tell it back afterwards, or help with prompts. You could also tell it simultaneously, as though looking in a mirror. In a group, or 'Story Circle', you take turns saying the next sentence or event.

10. Nearly Ready!

Tell the story to your family or friends before 'going public'. If you're still unsure, have the book (or card prompts) near to hand first time, but try to discard these as soon as possible. Enjoy Yourself!