

Stories and story telling in first-level language learning: a re-evaluation

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This paper proposes that in the midst of all our theories on language teaching and language learning, we might have overlooked an age-old tool that has always been at the disposal of mankind; the telling of stories. Attention is drawn to how some have found in stories and story telling a driving force of natural language acquisition, a key that can unlock the intuitive faculties of the mind. A case is being made out for the re-installment of stories and associated activities as a means of real, heart-felt functional communication in a foreign language, rather than through a direct assault on the structure of the language itself.

Met hierdie artikel word daar voorgestel dat daar opnuut gekyk moet word na 'n hulpmiddel wat so oud is as die mensheid self en wat nog altyd tot ons beskikking was, naamlik stories en die vertel daarvan. Die aandag word daarop gevestig dat daar persone is wat in stories en die verbale oordrag daarvan 'n stukrag ontdek het tot natuurlike taalvaardigheid, 'n sleutel tot die intuïtiewe breinfunksies. Daar word 'n saak uitgemaak vir die terugkeer na stories en gepaardgaande aktiwiteite as middel tot 'n egte, diep deurleefde en funksionele wyse van kommunikasie in 'n vreemde taal, eerder as 'n direkte aanslag op die taalstruktuur self.

It is not unwise occasionally to re-examine the past, to reconsider the value even of things that were abandoned. In doing this we may happen upon ideas and techniques which perhaps with some sharpening and shaping could be adapted to current needs. For example, in the history of aircraft design we have seen a curious development. The Wright Brothers designed their flying machine with a forward canard (a horizontal stabilizing and control surface placed at the front of the fuselage), but a decade or so later the canard was abandoned, its function taken over by the elevators in the tail assembly. Now, however, 80 years later, aircraft designers have found new utility in this original feature and are experimenting with aircraft of extraordinary speed and manoeuvrability, designed with a forward canard.

Just as the forward canard was replaced by the tail assembly, so also in language teaching, stories and

story telling at the most elementary level have generally been pushed back under pressure for a more immediate thrust toward conversation. Their tremendous power is not being exploited, indeed is being neglected. It is the aim of this paper to look at stories and story telling as primary components of language teaching and language learning even at the beginning level.

If the attainment of communicative competence in a language is taken as the ultimate goal of language study, and if one equates communicative competence primarily with the ability to engage in conversation with native speakers, it is easy to understand why it is that many language teachers take their primary task to be to teach their students to engage in conversation and why from early on, they are likely to eschew other kinds of texts in favour of contrived model dialogues such as the following.

A A man and a woman meet at a cocktail party in London.

Hello. My name is John Smith.
How do you do? I am Mary Brown.
Mary, where are you from?
I'm from Chicago. And you?
I'm from Pretoria.
Oh, so you're from Illinois too.
No, I'm from South Africa.

Beyond the usual practice in repeating, drilling and enacting a conversational text such as this, not infrequently there follows a battery of questions on the text. For example:

B In the dialogue, what is the name of the woman?
Where is she from?
What is Mr Smith's first name?
Where is he from?
Is Pretoria in Illinois?
Etc.

Material such as this seems defensible in that it can present a simulation of language use essential for interpersonal communication in certain social functions (e.g. meeting people, asking directions, ordering a meal, etc.) which learners can imagine they may some day face in real life. And through questions it focuses the learners' attention on specific information contained in the text and on how that information is expressed in the language. The classroom thus provides opportunity for systematic practice in communication activities.

Advantages of teaching a language with such material need hardly be pointed out, not least among them being that learners are often satisfied they are getting the refined nutrition they imagine is needed to enable them to build the communicative competence they aspire to, the ability to improvise speech—for conversation is in large part improvised speech. And instructors too, anxious to provide the tools for conversation, are satisfied that such a direct assault on conversational language leads most efficiently to the ultimate conquest, or at least to the point at which the student can effectively improvise his own end of conversations.

While recognizing the attraction of an approach that concentrates almost exclusively on teaching

conversational language, this paper presents an alternative view. It looks back on a time when a more leisurely approach to language study gave occasion for the early use of poems and stories and captivating narratives. It suggests that we look again at some of the properties and uses and values of the kind of material that has been crowded out in the rush toward conversational speech. It suggests that perhaps we are too concerned too early with getting down to the business of induction into conversational speech, and that other kinds of texts deserve more attention and perhaps different treatment than they are or were customarily given.

Consider the following text, instantly recognizable as belonging to a register of "mother-teaching-child-in-lap" or "teacher-talk" encountered not infrequently in beginning language classes.

C This is a table. That is a book.
What is this? This is a table.
And what is that? That is a book.
The book is on the table.
Where is the book? The book is on the table.
Yes, the book is on the table.

This kind of language use which is characteristic of the initial hours of a "Berlitz-type direct approach" hardly resembles adult conversational speech. However, this approach does have its defenders who point out that by dealing at once with ostensible objects and their overt manipulation, and by weaving in questions which evoke obvious answers, such texts and accompanying activities can provide immediate and massive injections of comprehensible input. Such injections will lead quickly to simple responses that place little burden on the learner, yet they can result in rapid learning.

Clearly, texts A–C have their place in the ecology of speech and social interaction—including a respectable place in language teaching methodology. But now consider texts D–G below, obviously of a genre very different from the above.

D *The story of the three bears and Goldilocks*

Once upon a time there were three bears who lived in a house in the middle of the forest ...

- E One potato, two potato, three potato, four,
five potato, six potato, seven potato more.
- F One for the money,
Two for the show,
Three to get ready,
And four to go.
- G Heads, shoulders, knees and toes,
knees and toes, knees and toes
Heads, shoulders, knees and toes,
eyes, ears, mouth and nose.

It cannot be denied that these texts too have their place in the ecology of speech and social interaction—including a place in language teaching methodology—though as with text C one cannot claim that they have much in common with the language of everyday conversation.

Casual versus non-casual speech in language teaching

A teacher of mine, C.F. Voegelin, found it useful to classify all language texts as either “casual” or “non-casual” speech. He would identify texts A–C above, along with all other “talk off the top of one’s head” as of the casual variety, and texts D–G along with all other poems, stories, and other thought-out-in-advance texts as of the non-casual variety. It is this “non-casual” variety of speech and its place in the teaching and learning of language that is the focus of interest here.

If the rush to provide immediate tools for conversation allows non-conversational texts to be crowded out, such texts as C–G might well be relegated to a very minor role. It is argued here, however, that certain forms of “non-casual” speech—stories or story telling in particular—could profitably be given a much more prominent role in elementary language courses and exploited in many productive ways, even if the ultimate aim is the ability to engage in conversation. It is recognized that while giving a more prominent role to “non-casual” speech may be incompatible with making a direct assault on conversation, in the long run it may prove to be more effective in helping many learners acquire communicative competence.

What is extraordinary about non-casual texts?

Looking dispassionately at such non-casual texts as these, one might well ask what they have in them to recommend them for inclusion in a beginning language course. In order to demonstrate that there is indeed something quite extraordinary about them, I shall make some observations on the learnability and survivability of such texts, as opposed to the improvised texts of ordinary conversation. To begin with, it is worthy of note that these texts are learned (by native speakers) often on first hearing, and without rehearsal are passed on more or less word for word from person to person, and even from generation to generation. Typically transmitted in oral rather than written form, these particular texts (D–G)—and uncountable others—seem to have penetrated every neighbourhood in every corner of America. It is likely that most children raised in any part of America in the past century learned and used in some way texts D–G, and though many adults may not have heard them or spoken them for decades, yet they instantly recognize them and can probably even perform them from memory. This is certainly extraordinary.

If we look for features in the composition of these kinds of texts which conduce to ease of learning and performance and also to their survival in a person’s and a community’s memory over a very long period of time, we would probably find the following: imagery, logical organization, rhyme, rhythm, repetition, redundancy, symmetry, and the like. In short such non-casual texts as these have features in their rhetorical structure which render them learnable and memorable.

If we look for features in the content of these kinds of texts, we often find matters of intrinsic human interest. When a child hears the words “Once upon a time ...” an expectation of receiving something of special value is set up in his mind that works like magic. Or when adults hear someone say “Have you heard the story about the man who ...” or “The other day a fellow came over to my house to talk with me. His eyes were puffed up from crying ...” we usually perk up our ears with similar expectation of receiving something of intrinsic interest. And often we find that hours later we can recall the narrative. Such is the appeal and the impact of stories which contain interesting characterization, perilous situation, action, conflict, suspense, anticipation, climax, resolution, and the like.

If we look for features in the activities which typically accompany the learning and performing of such scripts, we might note such things as the common dramatic projection of imagery through marked non-verbal means (facial and other kinetic—and even pictorial—expressions), as well as through marked verbal means (animation, accent changes, voice exaggeration and modulation—even “sing-song” effect—and the like).

And if we look also for features in the circumstances that invite such scripts to be performed, we might note that usually they are cued in the context of play, of casual, friendly get-togethers, of games or spare-time activities. Obviously they serve a different purpose than “serious” speech acts which are intended to negotiate something, e.g. ask for information, apologize, order food, or the like. The kinds of non-casual speech focused on here are certainly not the usual “English for Special Purposes” fare. They are not “let’s-get-down-to-business” pieces. Quite the opposite. Yet, though they are not “serious”, they are by no means superfluous. In fact, the ability to use appropriately such texts as these is as much a part of being human as engaging in other more “serious” kinds of social intercourse.

The above observations on the learnability and survivability of non-casual texts should catch the attention of any teacher interested in promoting efficient learning. After all, if certain kinds of text have properties which are known to enable learners to pick them up much more efficiently than others, that should be a matter of considerable interest to us. Are we not constantly looking for ways to render learning easier, more efficient and attractive?

A Swedish example

I am suggesting that much of what we find in language classrooms and language course materials disregards the properties both of texts and of learning or memory. Fortunately, there are exceptions. Just recently my attention was captured by a 1940’s vintage college-level textbook entitled *First Swedish Book* by Björkhagen, lecturer in Swedish at the University of London. Obviously not concerned immediately with modelling conversation, the author presents the language to the adult English learner through simple but artful pieces. The first

piece to appear in the book, for example, is the following:

H *The key of the King’s kingdom*

Here is the key of the King’s kingdom.
In that kingdom there is a town.
In that town there is a street.
By that street there is a lane.
In that lane there is a garden.
In that garden there is a house.
In that house there is a room.
In that room there is a vase.
In that vase there are flowers.

Flowers in the vase,
the vase in the room,
the room in the house,
the house in the garden,
the garden in the lane,
the lane by the street,
the street in the town,
the town in the kingdom,
and here is the key of the King’s kingdom.

A quick comparison of H with A–C reveals such differences as that H is relatively long and contains a relatively large number of picturable nouns, yet its grammatical and rhetorical structure is extremely simple. More importantly for learners, this piece—as any other piece of art—is calculated to excite an emotional response. Artless chunks of dialogue or insipid chunks of prose designed simply to put words and structures before the eyes of the student rarely achieve emotional impact. Furthermore, H is a whole piece, with resolution, closure. Its parts are logically integrated and structurally knit together in a way that facilitates the process of acquisition, storage and retrieval of information. So transparent is its organization that one can reconstruct it from memory after a single reading. One can imagine a kind of Cloze exercise with it, in which, with the help of pictures, the blanked out words can easily be replaced by the students.

Here is the ... of the ...’s kingdom.
In that ... there is a town.
... .. there is a street.
By lane.
In garden.
... ..
Etc.

Like a first piano piece one learns to play, this piece invites solo performance, repeated performance. Unlike scales or random chords which, no matter how skilfully played, communicate nothing of particular interest, this piece belongs in the repertoire of compositions worth playing for one's own pleasure or to an audience. It is like a flower, worthy of plucking and enjoying and even displaying in a vase. Following this most elementary piece, Björkhagen provides a succession of stories, each told in simple fashion, each presenting a gradual progression in vocabulary and syntactic complexity, each containing features which stimulate and facilitate learning, each capable of exciting an emotional response, and each worthy of repeat performances. He gives no apology for using stories to the neglect of conversational stuff. He prefers the art of the storyteller to the artless work of the writer of model dialogues and insipid, colourless textlets that generally inhabited beginning language textbooks in those days.

Looking at Björkhagen's art, one may begin to see that especially in the early stages of teaching a language, language teachers and text developers would do well to consider the emotional impact, the learnability and the survivability of the texts they present. That is, they would do well to make more use of the craft of the storyteller.

If one agrees with this, the next question might be: In the early stages of language study, what can teachers and learners do with stories (that they are not already doing) that will stimulate efficient progress in the language? My answer is that there must be quite a variety of things being done with stories that are not widely known. In the following section some of the less common uses of stories will be discussed.

The Clockwork Orange Experiment

I recently read an engaging report by Professor Rudy Lentulay of Johns Hopkins University, who was invited to teach a class in Russian for twenty minutes a day, two days a week, to six-year old children. Lacking any previous experience of teaching small children, he was hesitant to accept the invitation. For one thing, he wondered what children could learn of a language under such a limited schedule? Perhaps over weeks and months they could learn to count to ten, name the months of the year and some parts of the body, sing a

couple of songs, and say hello and goodbye. But he was not satisfied with that and he did not see how he could keep little children entertained with such unmotivated memorization. He had just finished reading Anthony Burgess' novel *Clockwork Orange*, in which teenagers use almost 200 slang words—all of them Russian words. The reader, as well as the teenagers in the story, must learn the meaning of these words from context. From this was born an idea to make a game out of learning Russian, a word game that even small children could play. So Lentulay accepted the job.

From the first day he made story telling the focus of the course. Each week he told a story with Russian words sprinkled here and there—at first sparsely, then gradually more and more abundantly, each story using as much as possible of the vocabulary and grammar employed in previous stories. Since the learners were children just beginning first grade, nothing was written for them in English or Russian. They had to get the words and their meanings not through translation but only through visual and verbal context. However, to enable the present reader who may not know Russian to follow the story and to grasp the magnitude of the task this extraordinary teacher attempted during those first two brief classes, we provide a list of the Russian words and phrases used in the story.

Da yes
Okno window
Mjach ball
Dom-Doma house-houses
Djevochka-Djevochki girl-girls
Babushka-Babushki granny-grannies
Trubka-Trubki chimney-chimneys
Mama-Mamy mother-mothers
Uzhasno! terrible!
Eto ... This is a ...
Eto ... Ili ...? Is this a ... or a ...?
Njet no
Dvjer-Dvjeri door-doors
Ulitsa street
Ruka-Ruki hand-hands
Malchik-Malchiki boy-boys
Chelovjek-Chelovjeki man-men
Roditjeli parents
Papa-Papy father-fathers
Shto eto? What's this?
Gdje ...? Where is the ...?
Vot ... Here is the ...
Eto ..., da? This is a ..., right?

Each Russian word was introduced in multiple contexts. For example, on introducing the word *okno*, he would not give its English translation, but rather would point to a window and say such things as: "Look out the *okno*. This is an *okno* and that is an *okno* too, isn't it? Johnny, go over and touch the *okno*. Mary, can you point to the *okno*? Count every *okno* in the classroom. How many do you see? Can you find a picture of an *okno* in the room? What is an *okno* made of?" And similarly with three or four other words such as *malchik* (boy), *djevochka* (girl), words that would be part of the story. Here is a picture of a *djevochka*, a very pretty *djevochka* in a red dress. And here is a *malchik*. The *malchik* is running. Ann, are you a *malchik* or a *djevochka*? How about Alan, is he a *malchik* or a *djevochka*? Lisa, what is the name of the *malchik* sitting there by the *okno*?

Thus with skilful use of verbal and non-verbal context, the teacher engaged these young learners in playful but meaningful use of some of the new expressions. The children were expected to adopt it and substitute each new expression for its English equivalent. The "game" was to catch someone using an English word or phrase where the Russian equivalent already put into circulation was called for. Central to the activity was the story, which he began to tell with the aid of simple drawings after introducing only half a dozen words in this fashion.

A broken *okno*

This is a story about some *malchiki* and *djevochki* and a *mjach* and a broken *okno*, an angry *chelovjek* and a kind *babushka*. What do you suppose happens in the story? One day some *malchiki* and *djevochki* were playing *mjach*. One *malchik* hit the *mjach*. The *mjach* sailed up very high. Here is the *mjach* high in the air. And here is a *dom*. Here is the *dvjer* of the *dom*. Here is the *trubka* of the *dom*. And here is a glass *okno*. Do you think the *mjach* will crash through the *dvjer*? No, the *mjach* won't crash through the *dvjer*. Do you think the *mjach* will come down through the *trubka*? No, the *mjach* won't come down through the *trubka*. Do you think the *mjach* will crash through the glass *okno*? Right.

To keep the new words in circulation, he would later interject questions like the following:

1 Who climbs down the *trubka* of your *dom* and brings you presents?

- 2 An *okno* is made of glass. Can a *dom* be made of glass, too?
- 3 Is a *dvjer* sometimes made of glass?
- 4 What was it that broke the *okno* in the story? Was it a *dvjer* or a *mjach*?
- 5 If a *mjach* hit a *dvjer*, do you think it would break it?

As Lentulay described it:

The stories were simple, repetitious and loaded with the vocabulary under study. Designed to run four or five class meetings, (the stories and associated activities) always ended on a high note or a note of suspense. Some ... were taken from Russian folk-tales, others were my own invention, while two of the most popular stories were adaptations of Gogol's *The Nose*, and Pushkin's *The Bronze Horseman*. Songs and poems were frequently incorporated within the framework of the stories ... The last week of class I told them a whole story, entirely in Russian, using most of the vocabulary we had covered.

People familiar with Burling Readers have commented that Lentulay's story telling is simply an "Oral Burling Reader". The idea of it may seem preposterous to the more conventionally minded, but one wonders what kind of success Lentulay might have achieved had he attempted to teach the children the same material within the same amount of time by word list memorization or by pointing and naming and then repetition drill, or by pattern practice, or by any other means. One also wonders how his technique might be used with older learners. But the **Clockwork Orange Experiment** remains as an engaging example of creative teaching with stories.

Accounts of successful language learners

As a matter of scientific interest, it has been seen necessary to document the language learning success of superior adult language learners in order to secure some measure of what maximum success in language learning is, what the very gifted can achieve under ideal conditions, and how they have gone about the task. Learned journals and other accounts of language learning that are made available to the public will surely contribute to this knowledge.

One person renowned as a “genius” at learning languages, one whose demonstrations of language learning have astounded people all over the world, is Kenneth Pike, Professor Emeritus of Linguistics at the University of Michigan and Senior Linguist of the Summer Institute of Linguistics. A biography of him, *Kenneth L. Pike: Scholar and Christian*, tells of his going into the mountains of Oaxaca, Mexico, as a young Christian missionary in the mid-thirties to live among the Mixtec Indians. In his very early struggles to learn this unwritten language, he learned a very short, simple story about a skunk. He studied it carefully and from it began to figure out the Mixtec way of putting a sentence together. The biographer explains:

The story he had memorized ... became a tool for making friends. The town president liked that tale so much that he'd walk up to Ken's house just to hear him tell it again. In the market, in the store, wherever Ken went, the fellows would ask him to repeat it for them.

Actually, San Miguel was quite a story-telling community. The men would sit around and tell each other stories, and Ken became one of the main performers. He wrote their tales down and they would shout with laughter when he read them back to them. He found that he had to memorize them to be able to read them in a way that sounded more or less like a Mixtec talking, but it was worth the time it took. It not only helped him to make friends, but it taught him the language.

He told the stories so much that his friends memorized them too. Then whenever Ken, in ordinary conversation, would use a phrase from a story, the men would recognize its origin and roar in approval.

Each new story he learned was regarded as a treasure. Telling Bible stories he described as “just plain fun”. Old Narciso, Nalo, and Leto were the ones who listened most frequently. Ken told them, for example, about Gideon's army with its earthenware crocks and torches. When the trumpets sounded, the crocks were broken, the men shouted, and the enemy got scared and ran (Judges 6-7). As Ken's friends listened, their eyes

opened wide with amazement. Their reaction thrilled Ken, especially because Narciso wanted to buy a Bible.

Pike is not the only missionary whose genius at language learning was nourished by story telling. Another missionary biography, Burgess' *The small woman* tells the legendary story of Gladys Aylward, an English servant-girl who went on her own to China with hopes of serving the Chinese people as a Christian missionary. By good fortune, Miss Aylward was taken in by an old lady missionary in the mountains of Shansi, where together they established a wayside inn for travelling muleteers. She used her position as a hostess of the inn to learn Chinese—in fact, four dialects of Chinese—in an extraordinarily short time. How she went about doing this is the interesting thing. Almost from the first day, she told Bible stories as the muleteers ate and rested from their day's travel. At first she told only stories of utmost simplicity, or as much as she could learn during the day, but gradually, as her mastery of the language increased, she expanded and elaborated them until she could tell them well in all the dialects. (Of course this was not all she did in learning the language, but this is the part the biography focused on.)

An approach to language learning that incorporates story telling

I am excited about an approach to language learning of which I became aware only recently. It is particularly interesting to me because it takes into account many things about language learning that are not often recognized in language classrooms. Developed by Brewster and Brewster and set forth in their book *Language acquisition made possible* (nicknamed LAMP), the approach is built on the foundational principle that, at least for people taking up or intending to take up residence in a foreign country, language learning involves joining a new social group. The main challenge is not “How do I learn a language?” but “How do I join a social group in a foreign culture?” The approach lays great stress on the fact that normal language acquisition is a social, not an academic activity, and that if we ignore the natural forces that shape language we may cause a pathology of results that is typical of language learned in classrooms. Social factors tower over cognitive, biological, instructional ones. A teacher's or a learner's preoccupation with the

linguistic end of language is one of the things that often gets in the way of the natural forces of the mind, the personality and the socializing drives that shape language. In other words, such an approach goes counter to fundamental facts about language acquisition. The challenge then is to encourage and utilize to the fullest extent possible the intuitive abilities of the mind to absorb a language in a natural, functional way, through engaging in communicative activities that lead to socialization into a new society and culture.

In the LAMP approach, the learner uses stories and the telling of stories to help establish social relationships with people in the new language community. Story telling and the forming of bonds with native speakers in the society provide the driving mechanism of this approach to language learning. Learners must find speakers of the language they intend to learn, and use the language learning situation itself to find friends among these people. Perhaps the first day he can learn to say only:

Hello.

I am learning (language).

I am learning to tell a story.

This is all I can say.

Till tomorrow.

His goal from the very first day is to meet people, in shops, homes, wherever he can find a comfortable moment to reach out to them. With each contact, he says what he has prepared to say in the language. The next day he can perhaps add the first part of a simple story. For example:

Hello.

I am learning to tell a story.

Can I tell it to you?

Once there was an old man.

He was very lonely ...

That is all I know so far.

I'll tell you more tomorrow.

Goodbye.

This is of course a very gross characterization of what the LAMP approach entails, but it is enough to give an idea of the principles that motivate it and of its initial steps and direction. LAMP explains in detail how the learner can go about preparing to meet people and tell stories. Obviously if the programme is carried out, within a few days a learner

has met many people, told a story many times, each day with increasing complexity and skill, and perhaps started on a second story. One can safely assume that Björkhagen, Pike and Aylward would agree with the basic principles underlying the LAMP approach.

Conclusion

In the recent history of language teaching, we are keenly aware of hearing the advice of experts in different fields suggesting ways to improve language teaching. The descriptive linguist advised: "Look to a better description of the structure of language." The expert in instructional principles advised: "Look to the principles of instruction." The communicative syllabus proponent advised: "Look to teaching strategies and techniques that stress meaning rather than form." The neurolinguist advised: "Look to see how language is organized in the brain and processed by the brain." The expert in child language development advised: "Look to the natural model of child language acquisition." The humanist advised: "Teach the whole man."

All of these, and many others, of course, have given sound advice. And in designing curricula for academic language study, language teachers have tried to respond to the logic and persuasion of each of these. We have tried to improve our sequencing and explanation of linguistic structure, we have tried to incorporate sound principles of instruction without losing sight of the cognitive and other human parameters of the learner. We have experimented with sundry strategies and techniques, each founded on a different mix of ideas and principles. And still we seek a better understanding of language learning and we know there is much more we must learn and do if we are to find more effective ways of bringing it about.

The questions always tease us: What else can we do in our language instruction programmes beyond, or beside, what we are already doing, to promote more efficient learning for more learners? What principles, beyond or besides those we now base our teaching on, should guide our language instruction? This paper does not set forth a new synthesis nor promise a better solution. As I have emphasized, what is treated herein is nothing new. I have considered stories and their telling as part of lan-

guage teaching and language learning at the first level, suggesting that perhaps we are neglecting a powerful tool our predecessors used with success, and cautioning that in our preoccupation with communicative competence we may be becoming too concerned too early with getting down to the business of induction into conversational speech. I have proposed that language teachers and learners give stories and story telling a more prominent place and perhaps a different treatment in their programmes of instruction and learning than they have been giving them of late. I have tried to show reasons for my conclusion that in non-casual texts and associated activities we may find, as some of our predecessors did, a more effective means of getting at real, heart-felt, functional communication in a foreign language than through a direct attack on the improvised speech of conversation. And I have brought attention to how some have found in stories and story telling a driving mechanism of natural language acquisition, a key that can release the intuitive faculties of the mind and the socializing drives that shape language and lead to joining a social group in a foreign culture, forming bonds with native speakers in the society.

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The manner of speaking is full as important as the matter, as more people have ears to be tickled, than understanding to judge.

— Lord Chesterfield