

Diverse learners, inclusive teaching

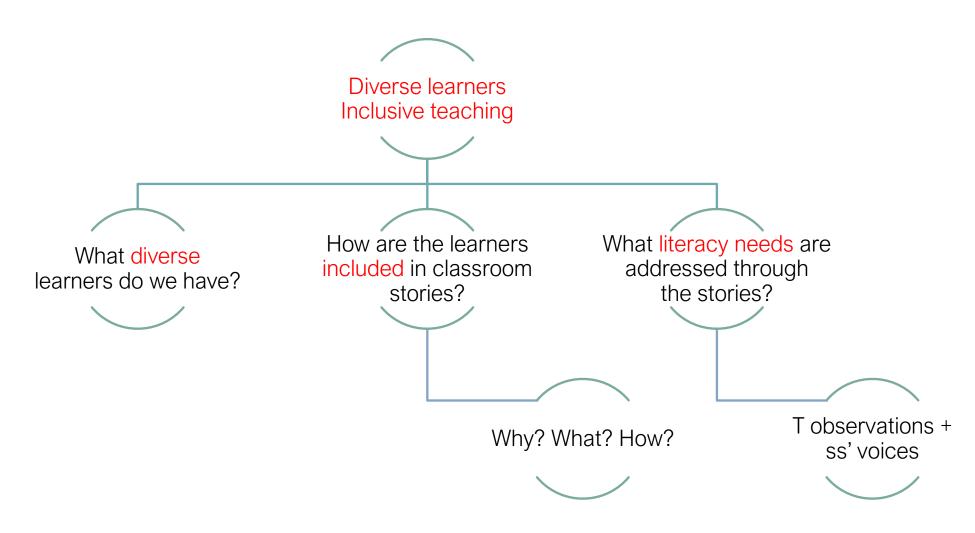
A learner-story-based approach with ESOL beginners for multi-literacy development

WANG Yi

28-11-2020







Wang, Y. (2020). The stories they tell. *Modern English Teacher, 29* (2), 78-80. https://www.modernenglishteacher.com/the-stories-they-tell

LEARNER PROFILES

- China, Cambodia, Burma, Thailand, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Syria, Somalia, Congo, Morocco, Ethiopia, Columbia, Ecuador ...
- Age range: 20s to 70s
- Male & female, single & married, parents, grandparents ...
- Education: zero to university degree
- English proficiency: Pre-literate to A2
- 'A basic literacy learner': still learning to read a short simple text and struggles to write a simple sentence independently. (Spiegel & Sunderland's, 2006. p.15)









DEFINING LITERACY

"A person is literate who can, with understanding, both read and write a short simple statement on his (her) everyday life." (UNESCO, 2008, p.18)





• [In the adult context] A person's literacy refers to the extent of their oral and written language skills and knowledge and their ability to apply these to meet varied demands of their personal study and work lives.

(Tertiary Education Commission, 2009, p. 58)

Digital literacy	Digital literacy comprises the technical ability to use, at basic level, a computer and the internet; understand and critically evaluate digital media; and create content and communications (Standing Council on Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment, 2012).
Financial literacy	Financial literacy is the ability to make informed judgements and effective decisions on the use and management of money. It covers everything from having financial knowledge to having the understanding, confidence and motivation to make financial judgements and decisions (Commission for Financial Literacy and Retirement Income, 2012).
Health literacy	Health literacy means the capacity to "obtain, process and understand basic health information and the services needed to make the appropriate health decisions," (Ministry of Health, 2010, p.iii).

Numeracy	Numeracy is the bridge between mathematics and real life. A person's numeracy refers to their knowledge and understanding of mathematical concepts and their ability to use their mathematical knowledge to meet the varied demands of their personal, study and work lives, (Tertiary Education Commission, 2009, p. 59).
Language	The term Language was initially included in 'LLN' as a reference to English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). This 'L' has to some extent been dropped, with any references to language proficiency included in the general term 'literacy'.
e-learning	This term refers to learning that is facilitated by electronic technologies. It includes the usage of computers and handheld data storage and transmittal devices including mobile phones. It is often used to facilitate distance learning, (Fletcher, Nicholas and Davis, 2010).

LEARNERS' LITERACY NEEDS AS IN TERTIARY EDUCATION COMMISSION (2009, P. 58)

WHY LEARNER STORIES?

- ... it is a basic principle of the learner-centered curriculum that class time should be used to teach "those aspects of the language which the learners themselves deem to be the most urgently required" (Nunan, 1988, p. 3).
- that it is important that teachers who intend to foster autonomous learning attend to the personal relevance of the language that is being learned. (Benson, 2016, p. xxxiv)
- ... Autonomy resides in being able to say what you want to say rather than producing the language of others ... (Macaro, 2008, pp. 59-60)

What stories?

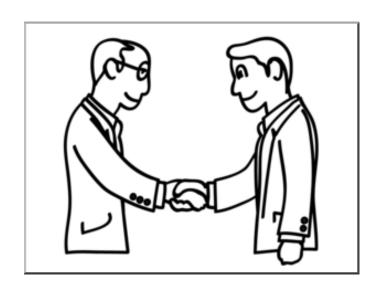
A simple answer to this question is ANY.

MY STORY

- Born & educated in China
- Came to NZ in 2009
- Taught English in China for 14 years from secondary to tertiary
- 2009 2020 in NZ as
 - a visiting scholar
 - student (TESOL / CAT / PhD in applied linguistics)
 - ESOL teacher and researcher



THE START OF LEARNER STORIES



- What's your name?
- Where are you from?
- How long have you been in New Zealand?
- How long have you been studying at Wintec?

Hi, my name is Wang Yi. I'm from China.

I have been in New Zealand for 10 years.

I'm a teacher. I teach English at Wintec.

Let me tell you something about my family.

I have a small family, only three people: my husband, my son and me.

My husband is a business man. He works in China.

My son is a student. He studies at Auckland University.



Hi, my name is Fatima. I'm from Morocco.

I have been in New Zealand for 10 months.

I'm a student. I study English at Wintec.

Let me tell you something about my family.

I have a small family, four people: my husband, two daughters, Ahd and Douaa, and me.

My husband is an electrical technician. He works in New Zealand.

My daughter Ahd is a student. She studies in Peachgrove.

My daughter <u>Douaa</u> is a student. She studies in Hamilton East.

Self & family

Work

Week 2 Tue. afternoon: jobs

Wang Yi is a teacher. She teaches English at Wintec. Elena is a **clean**er. She works for a **clean**ing company. Gao is a **business**man. He does import and export. Karely is a **business**woman. She does marketing.

Nadia is a housewife. Blanca is a housewife. They are housewives. They work at home and make their home nice, so they are the homemakers. Lu Lin is a soldier. He works in the army to protect his country. Alice is a student in New Zealand, but she was a doctor in China. She worked in the hospital to help people with their health. Gary is a student in New Zealand, but he was a civil servant in China. He worked in the city council.

Week 2 Thursday 1 August 2019

My Sunday routine

My name is Wang Yi. I'm from China. I am a teacher. I teach English at Wintec from Monday to Friday. I don't work on Saturday and Sunday. On Sunday, I get up at 8 o'clock in the morning. I do my laundry at 8.30. I have breakfast at 9 o'clock. Then I go to church at 10.30. I have lunch at midday. At 1 o'clock in the afternoon, I take a nap. At 2 o'clock, I have coffee with my friend. Then I go for a walk at 4 o'clock. At 6 o'clock, I have dinner. Then in the evening I watch TV at 8 o'clock, and I read a book at 10 o'clock.

- What are you going to do in the term break?
- I'm going to on _____...
- I'm going to on _____.
- I'm going to on _____...

Week 12 Tuesday 15/10/2019 – Welcome back (after term break)

- Good morning, everybody / everyone!
- Good morning!.
- Welcome back to school!
- Thank you!...
- How are you today?
- I'm very well. Thank you.
- How was your holiday? Did you have a good holiday?
- Yes, I did. I had a great holiday.
- Did you go somewhere for the holiday? Did you stay at home and have a wonderful time with your family?
- Yes. I went to Auckland / Wellington / Cambridge

Break & holiday

Special days

Week 10: festivals & celebrations (24/09/2018)

Today is Monday, 24 September. It's 15 August by the lunar calendar. It's a special day for Chinese people. It's called Moon Festival. It's in the middle of autumn, so it's also called Mid-Autumn Festival. On this day, the moon is full and bright. People get together to have a family reunion. They watch the moon, and eat mooncake. They do many different activities to celebrate the festival.

We're from different countries, and we all have our own special days and festivals.

Habiba, Asha & Shamis:

What's the most important festival in your country? A special of	<mark>day</mark> in Somalia is
by the Somalian calendar. It's in the middle	of summer, so it's also called
Festival. On this day, people get together to	have a family
They watch the independence	<u>, and</u> eat
, cakes and different sweets. On this day, pe	ople are happy.

Welcoming a new student

29/05/2018 Tuesday: A new student Dion

Topic: A new student Dion

Today we have a new classmate. His name is Dion. He's from Thailand.

Two years ago, he <u>came</u> to New Zealand to have a look. He <u>lived</u> with his mum in a small town near Nelson in South Island. His mum <u>opened</u> a restaurant in the town. She <u>owns</u> the restaurant, so she <u>is</u> the <u>owner as well as manager</u> of the restaurant. She <u>is also</u> a chef.

Last month, he <u>came</u> to Hamilton because he <u>likes</u> a city better than a small town. He <u>doesn't</u> <u>like</u> Auckland because it's too big, too busy, and too expensive. So, he <u>chose</u> Hamilton. He <u>likes</u> Hamilton because it's a nice city and not too big.

Now he's studying English at Wintec. He <u>wants</u> to speak and write good English. He <u>started</u> yesterday. He <u>chose</u> Wintec because it's free for him to study English here. Also, Wintec <u>has</u> good teachers, and his <u>friends</u> study here.

He's a good boy. He's only 21 years old, but he is studying and working. He's a chef, and he works in a Thai restaurant in Rototuna. He works with two other chefs. He works at night from 4 pm to 9 or 10 pm.

Hearing someone sick

- Hi, Luz, how are you?
- Oh, not very good. I had a headache and a stomachache, and pain in my arm.
- I'm sorry to hear that. I hope you're feeling better now.
- Thank you very much.
- Take care (of yourself), and get well soon.

When someone was late ...

Today is 10 September Wednesday. We have English classes with Teacher Wang Yi. **However**, she was late today **because** the lift in her office building was <u>out of order</u>. She needed the lift **because** she had many books and dictionaries, and they are very heavy. **Because of that**, she apologised to the class – she said, "I'm sorry I'm late", but the students were very kind and they said, "That's fine. No worries, teacher". So there was no problem, and everyone laughed.

Then, Asha was late. She was late because she takes a bus to come to school every day but today the bus was late.

Next, Luz was late. She was late because she got a sore arm, so she made an appointment with the doctor and she went to the hospital.

Finally, Mariamu was late. She was late because her son was sick.

It's a sad thing to hear someone is sick or unwell. When that happens, **first**, people often say 'I'm sorry to hear that.' **Then** they often ask 'What's the matter/problem?' **At last**, people say 'Take care, and get well soon.'

Many people were late today, but we learned many useful words and sentences from their stories.

When the planned lesson didn't fit ...

Different students doing different things

Today we're having a special class. Different students are doing different things. Andrew, <u>Asiya</u> and Eliana are doing the progress tests, because they didn't come to class yesterday and missed the tests.

Some students are writing about a river in their country. They are doing that to prepare for next Friday, which is the last day of this semester. We will have an 'end-of-semester' concert (party) to celebrate our success.

Some other students are still writing about the topic 'yourself and your classmate'. That was the topic and homework of last week. They might have been busy with other things, so they haven't finished their homework. Now they're working hard to catch up.

We're doing different things today, but it looks everybody is very busy. The teacher is happy because we're working hard.

19/06/2018 - English language learning experience

20/06/2018

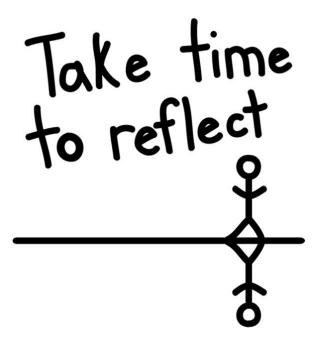
Today we're talking about language learning. I can speak three languages: Chinese, English and a little bit Japanese. Chinese is my mother tongue (my first language), English is my second language. I learned Japanese in the university, but I have forgotten a lot because I don't use it.

u.

I started learning English in China from middle school when I was 12 years old. Then I studied more English at university, and more in New Zealand. I have been learning English for more than 30 years. I also teach English, so English is my language for work. Of course, I use English every day for life as well.

e)

It's not easy to learn a language. There are so many words, so many rules, and so many skills. I try very hard to remember them, but then I forget, and forget again. Sometimes I feel very



- #1. Our new class
- #2. Self and family
- #3. My work
- #4. Hamilton / Hillcrest / Wintec / my house
- #5. My Sunday routine
- #6. Term break One-day trip to Auckland / My last travel to China
- #7. Special days and celebrations
- #8. Daily greetings (welcome back, day, date, weather ...)
- #9. Weekly book reading



- #10. Picnic & shopping
- #11. Labour Day Weekend
- #12. Healthy food / lifestyle
- #13. Hearing someone sick
- #14. Someone being late
- #15. Enjoy your lunch
- #16. A new student Dion / Another new student Eliana
- #17. My language learning experience
- #18. A special class (different students on different tasks)

How were the stories developed, used and reused?

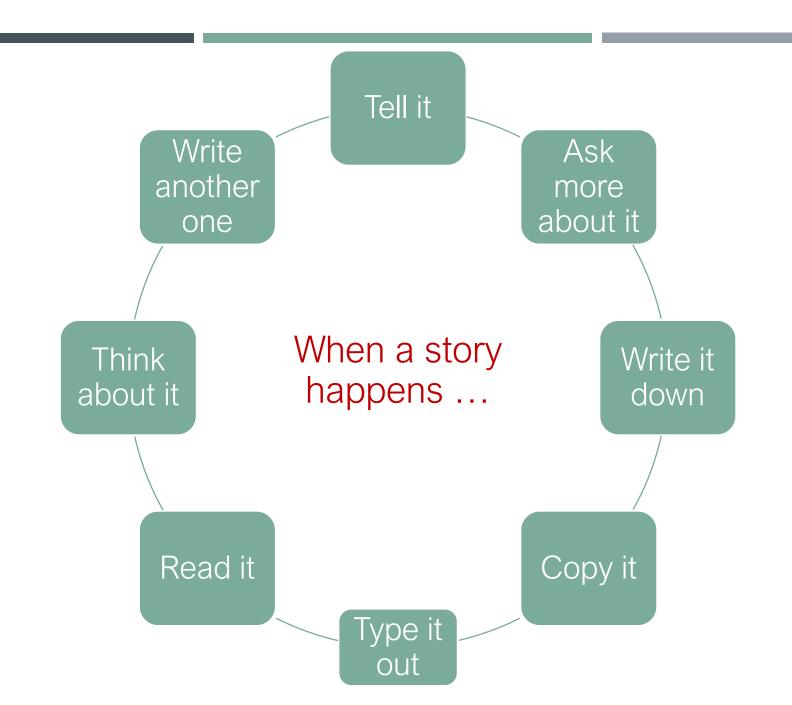
Pre-structured



T-SS co-constructed

- What's your name?
- Where are you from?
- How long have you been in New Zealand?
- How long have you been studying at Wintec?

- Where are you from, Mpundu?
- I'm from Congo.
- Where is Congo, everybody? Asia?
- No, no, no. South Africa.
- Ah ... now do you have any questions about Mpundu?
- And anything else? ...



,		In NZ	In home country		In NZ	In home country	
1.	Wang Yi		•	15. Wahe Da		-	
2.	Elena -	J.	*	16. Nury	,	*	
3.	Gao -	J	*	17. Ali	,	v.	
4.	Karely -	,	*	18.	,	*	
5.	Nadia -	,	*	19.	,	*	,
6.	Blanca	*	*	20.	-		,

Ask and answer

4.	Did you learn English in your home country?
	I started to learn
	I started to learn
	I started to learn when I was a baby.
3.	When did you start to learn those languages?
	They are
2.	What are they?
	I speak languages.
1.	How many languages do you speak?

True? False? Not Given?

- 1. The topic today is language learning.
- 2. WY speaks two languages: English and Chinese.
- 3. WY started to learn English in primary school.
- 4. WY has been learning English for 12 years.
- 5. WY uses English for both work and life.
- 6. WY doesn't like English because it's too difficult.
- 7. WY only learns English in class.
- 8. Learning English is easy for WY.
- 9. Learning English is interesting for WY.

What <u>do</u> you <u>do</u> ?	I' <u>m</u> a teacher. / I <u>teach</u> English.
What <u>are</u> you <u>doing</u> ?	I'm teaching my Easy English class.
What <u>do</u> you usually <u>do</u> at the weekend?	I <u>meet</u> my friends.
What <u>did</u> you <u>do</u> last weekend?	I <u>watched</u> an English movie at home.
What are you going to do next weekend?	I'm going to visit my son in Auckland.
What do you do?	l
What are you doing?	1
What do you usually do at the weekend?	1
What did you do last weekend?	1
What are you going to do next weekend?	I

Match questions with answers

How many languages does WY A. Yes, she did. speak? B. No, it's difficult. What languages does WY speak? C. Yes, it's very interesting. Did she learn English in her home D. She can listen and watch something on the internet. When did she start learning English? E. Three. Where did she start learning English? F. Chinese, English and a little bit Japanese. How long has she been learning G. When she was twelve years old. English? H. In the middle school and at university in Is it easy for her to learn a language? China.



- How was your holiday? Did you have a good holiday?
- Yes, I did. I had a great holiday.
- Did you go somewhere for the holiday? Did you stay at home and have a wonderful time with your family?
- Yes. I went to Auckland / Wellington / Cambridge

Past Future Present

٠	Time -	Activities	Time .	Activities
In the	8:00 am	Get up	e e	
morning .	8:30 am	,	e.	
	9:00 am	,	v	
	10:30 am		e ²	
	12:00 am	,	e ²	e e
In the	1:00 pm	,	e ²	
afternoon	2:00 pm	,	e ²	
	4:00 pm	÷	e ²	÷
In the	6:00 pm	,	e ²	
evening .	8:00 pm	,	e.	
	10:00 pm	,	J.	÷

Write about your Sunday <mark>routine</mark>

GRAMMAR

What are	you go	ing to d	<mark>o</mark> in t	he term l	oreak?

- l'm going to on _____.
- I'm going to on _____.
- I'm going to on _____.





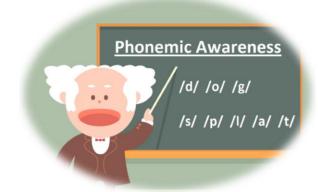
Leo came to Hamilton last month. He likes living in a city, but he doesn't like very big cities like Auckland.

Let's learn some big words ©

- 1. Special
- 2. Festival
- 3. Celebrate
- 4. Independence
- 5. Various
- 6. Different
- 7. Difficult.
- 8. Enjoyable

Let's look at some small words ©

- 1. The <u>frist / first / fist</u> day
- 2. In china / Chian / China
- 3. <u>Dance / dence</u> and sing
- 4. Muslims go to the Mosque to pray / play
- Watch independence video / vedio
- 6. Family get together / to gether
- 7. Everyone / every one is happy
- 8. Finish / fanish / furnish praying



12Nov 2019 Tue

Today we have a new student. Her name is Mpundu. She is from Congo. Congo is in South Africa. It's very far. It takes 22 hours to fly from Congo to New Zealand. She came to NZ two weeks ago. She's been in NZ for only two weeks. So we say, 'Welcome to NZ, Mpundu'. Mpundu speaks two languages: one is Kinynrwanda, and the other is Swahiri.

Kiona:

The most important festival in my country is Eid al-Fitr. Everyone gets up early in the morning. Then go to mosque to pray. When they finish praying, families and friends eat lunch together.

Iman & Samir:

Eid al-<u>Fitr</u> is a special day for all <u>Muslims</u>. It's after <u>Ramadan</u>. It changes every year. Early in the morning, Muslims start praying Eid prayers. They celebrate by wearing <u>new clothes</u>, eating <u>sweets</u> and giving kids some <u>gifts</u> and <u>money</u> to make them happy. Also friends, relatives and neighbours greet each other, and all the family get together to have a big <u>feast</u>.

Suhad

Ramadan 2018: At the end of Ramadan, Muslims celebrate the Eid al-<u>Fitr</u>. Eid al-<u>Fitr</u> in Arabic literally means festival of <u>breaking</u> the fast. Depending on the actual start date of Ramadan and the new moon sighting on the 29th night of Ramadan, Eid al-<u>Fitr</u> this year falls between Thursday June 14 and Saturday June 16. During the month of Ramadan, Muslims won't eat or drink between <u>dawn</u> and <u>sunset</u>. This is called <u>fasting</u>. Fasting is important during Ramadan, as it allows Muslims to live their lives.

Anna

Every year on 15 August in China, people celebrate the moon festival. There are various activities. We enjoy moon cakes and various fruits while enjoying the moon with our family.



Week 10: festivals & celebrations (24/09/2018)

Today is Monday, 24 September. It's 15 August by the lunar calendar. It's a special day for Chinese people. It's called <u>Moon Festival</u>. It's in the middle of autumn, so it's also called Mid-Autumn Festival. On this day, the moon is full and bright. People get together to have a family reunion. They watch the <u>moon</u>, and eat mooncake. They do many different activities to celebrate the festival.

We're from different countries, and we al	l have our own special da	ys and festivals.
Habiba, Asha & Shamis:		
What's the most important festival in you	r country? A special day i	n Somalia is
by the Somalian calend	ar. It's in the middle of su	ımmer, so it's also called
Festival. On this day, pe	ople get together to have	e a family
They watch the indepe	endence	, and eat
, cakes and different sw	eets. On this day, people	are happy.
Kiona:		
The most important festival in my country	<i>י</i> is Ev	eryone gets up early in the
morning. Then go toto	pray. When they finish p	oraying, families and friends
together.		
Iman & Samir:		
Eid al-Fitr is a special day for all	. It's after	. It changes

Week 6 (Wed): CPL (05/09/2018)

Pathway English Stream D - Computer class

Step 1: Type the following text into your Word document.

Jenny is our teacher. She teaches English at Wintec. She's married. She lives with her husband and children. She also has a cat. She likes photography and animals. She takes a lot of photos of animals.

Step 2: Change the font to 'Times New Roman' in font 24 and green colour.

Step 3: Write a new paragraph about you and your family. Try to answer the following questions:

- · What's your name?
- · What do you do?
- Who do you live with?
- How many people are there in your family? And who are they?
- · What do they do? And what do they like?

Step 4: Change the font to 'Calibri (body)' in font 36 and blue colour.

Step 5: Read each other's writing and see if you learn something from (and about) others.

Step 6: Save your document on One Drive.

Happy writing, & happy typing!



- Typing practice instructions:
 - Font size 22 for the title, 18 for the main text
 - Use bold (B) for the title and linking words
 - Use italics (I) for the names of the two items
 - Use <u>underline</u> (<u>U</u>) for verbal phrases
 - Highlight important information about when, where, and who
- When you finish your work, share with your teacher on One Drive or send it by email.

Pathway English End-of-year Party

Tomorrow (on 26th November 2020) we're going to <u>have our end-of-year party</u>. It is from 11am to 1pm in A.205 at Wintec. We will <u>have shared lunch</u> with our classmates and teachers. We can bring our families and friends, and we also invite the <u>CfL</u> director and managers.

At the party, we will **first** sing a song together to welcome everybody.

Then, we may get a certificate if our attendance is good.

Next, our class will perform two items: one is a play called "a trip to the doctor"; the other is a tongue twister called "Betty Botter bought some butter".

Finally, we will eat, drink, talk, and laugh. We hope to have a good time.

29/05/2018 Tuesday: A new student Dion

Today we have a new classmate

Two years ago, he <u>came</u> to New near Nelson in South Island. His restaurant, so she is the <u>owner</u>

Last month, he <u>came</u> to Hamilto <u>like</u> Auckland because it's too bit Hamilton because it's a nice city

05/06/2018 – Two new students

Last week, two new students joined our class. They were Leo and Anna.

Tonic: A new student Dion RECYCLE

aland two years ago and vns a restaurant in a Queenston close to his me to Hamilton last g cities like Auckland. He in a restaurant.

30/05/2018 Wednesd

1. Today we <u>have</u> another new

2. One year and a half ago, she Hamilton. She has three child of the girls has got one child, she looks too young to be like

3. Eliana <u>has</u> a business doing manicure and pedicure. She <u>doesn't have</u> a fixed workplace.

She <u>works</u> on call – when someone <u>needs</u> her service, they <u>call</u> her to <u>come</u> to their house to <u>provide</u> the service.

is from Congo. Congo is Congo to New Zealand. two weeks. <u>So</u> we say,

'Welcome to NZ, <u>Mpundu</u>'. <u>Mpundu</u> speaks two languages: <u>one</u> is <u>Kinynrwanda</u>, and the other is <u>Swahiri</u>.

Mpundu has her family in NZ. She has four brothers. They are 35, 28, 20, and 15. She also has a sister. We don't know the girls' age. It's a secret. Is she single or married? We don't know. It's a secret. In NZ, people don't ask girls' age and marriage.

e)

Some classmates <u>asked</u> why she <u>came</u> to New Zealand. She <u>didn't want</u> to <u>talk</u> about that. She <u>said</u> that's her privacy. We <u>understand</u> and <u>respect</u> that, as we all <u>have</u> some personal stories that we <u>don't want</u> to <u>tell</u> others.

ų.

New Zealand <u>is</u> multi-cultural country. People who <u>live</u> here <u>come</u> from many different countries, so we <u>should respect</u> each other's <u>culture</u>. Sometimes we <u>should be</u> careful with some questions. For example, it's not so good to <u>ask</u> too personal questions, such as age or marriage.

Diversity & Cultural Awareness



Post-stories

Lucy, a single mum from Colombia on understanding it is OK for women not to answer questions about their age or marriage

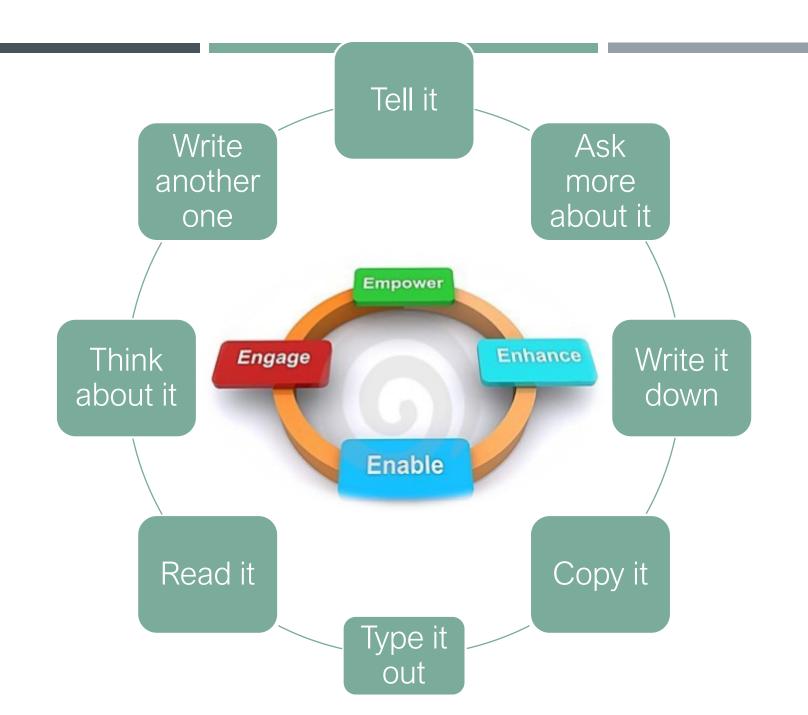
"... Ah I see ... Thank you so much, Teacher, [for] tell[ing] me this. People always ask me [these], and I [did] not know what to say ..."



Can I bring my sister and cousins to this class?

Mark & Zara, a
 Syrian couple who studied with me twice, 2018 on the ILN programme and 2019 at NZCEL Level 3













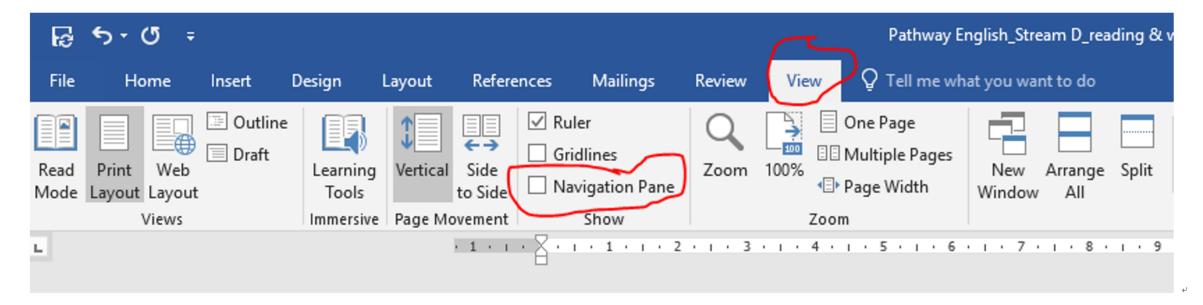
Creating these stories, what's the workload like?

Wang Yi's Notes:

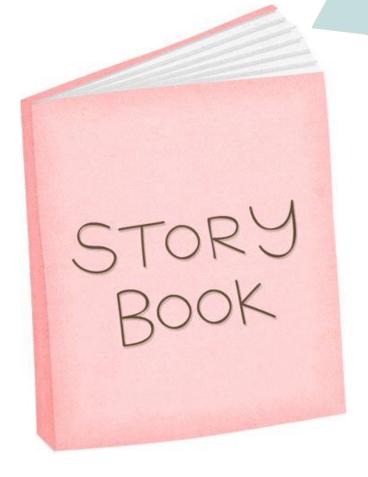
This is a living document, changes ongoing.

Topics organised on a weekly basis, starting week at the bottom.

Weeks / Topics formatted in 'headings', 'show or hide' by clicking 'Navigation Pane' under 'View'. See below:



WHAT'S NEXT?



I want to add my family photos to the story.



- Embedding digital literacy into ESOL beginners' classroom language learning: An action research project
- Refugee-background students' trajectories in NZ: Before, during and after ESOL
- The impacts of English language learning for older Chinese immigrants: Learner narratives

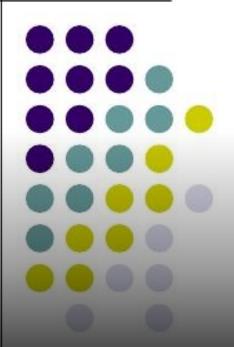
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THANK YOU

Any questions?

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- Appendix:
 Wang, Y. (2020). The stories they tell. Modern English Teacher, 29 (2), 78-80.
 https://www.modernenglishteacher.com/the-stories-they-tell
- For many teachers in the ESOL community, it is not uncommon that learners are from diverse cultural and educational backgrounds, but teaching is required to be inclusive. A potential challenge in this is finding 'right' teaching materials which cater for each individual learner's needs, especially learners with limited literacy. I encountered this when teaching an Intensive Literacy and Numeracy course (ILN, see Tertiary Education Commission, 2017) two years ago in a New Zealand language centre. In seeking a solution, I started to create my own resources using bits and pieces of classroom chats with students about their everyday life. As this turned out nicely interesting and rewarding, a learner-story-based approach took shape. Key to the approach is acknowledging what students bring into class, providing opportunities for their voices/stories to be heard, and helping them to build up competence and confidence to 'write/ speak up' their own stories in English.

THE LEARNERS

The learners under discussion are groups of refugees and migrants who are living in New Zealand permanently and will be here for life. Geographically they are from various places in Asia, Africa and South America – China, Cambodia, Burma, Afghanistan, Syria, Morocco, Columbia, to name a few – the number of countries reaching 10 for a class of under 20 students. Their situations differ greatly, aged from early 20s to over 70, in all kinds of family roles including singles, parents and grandparents, families being together in NZ or with part of them elsewhere. With previous education ranging from professional degrees to zero formal schooling, their English is between pre-literate to CEFR A2. Many of these learners fall into Spiegel & Sunderland's (2006: 15) description as 'a basic literacy learner', who is 'still learning to read a short simple text and struggles to write a simple sentence independently.

DEFINING LITERACY

• While the term literacy is much used to describe one's language competence, a broad definition of literacy highlights its close association with one's everyday life. According to UNESCO (2008: 18), 'A person is literate who can with understanding both read and write a short simple statement on his (her) everyday life.' New Zealand Tertiary Education Commission (2009: 58) states similarly, emphasising the ability to apply language skills and knowledge to 'meet the varied demands of their personal study and work lives'; they then advocate for an Embedded Literacy and Numeracy (ELN) approach calling for multiple skills in one course so as to provide learners with 'the competence, confidence and motivation needed for them to succeed at work and in life' (Tertiary Education Commission, 2016). To conclude, it is perhaps fair to say that the primary role for an ESOL teacher is to help learners to tell own their stories.

WHAT STORIES?

A simple answer to this question is ANY. Each individual learner joins the class with a train of 'historical' stories, about themselves, their families, cultures, moving to a new country and so on. They also have current news to share (e.g. studying a new course or getting a driver's licence) as well as facing varied challenges (e.g. getting a ticket or not understanding the doctor). Apart from these physical or worldly matters, they also (unavoidably) encounter other crosscultural problems, maybe causing mental confusion or discomfort (e.g. cultural appropriateness of some questions). All these real-life situations and scenarios could be brought into class for discussion, consultation and further process; most importantly, these are truly valuable authentic learning resources. The following is a list of topics I have discussed with my 'basic literacy learners', many of which were written up into stories – briefly or substantially – for students to further study or practise on (numbering not indicating sequence but for referencing purpose).

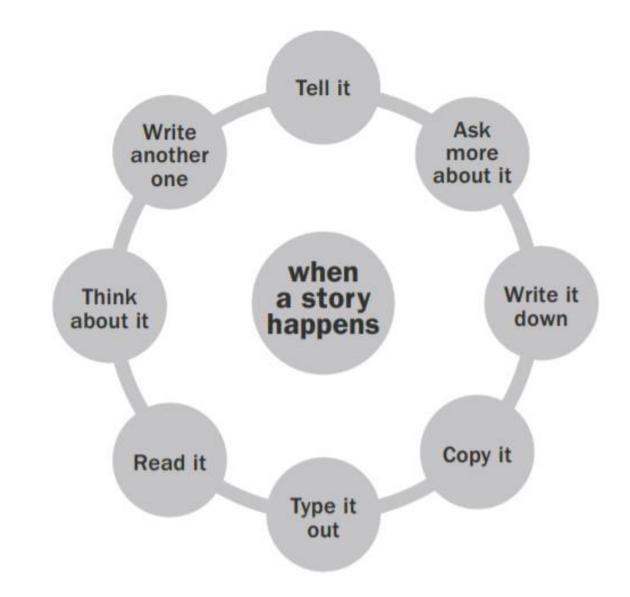
- #1. Our new class
- #2. Self and family
- #3. My work
- #4. Hamilton / Hillcrest / Wintec / my house
- #5. My Sunday routine
- #6. Term break One-day trip to Auckland / My last travel to China
- #7. Special days and celebrations
- #8. Daily greetings (welcome back, day, date, weather ...)
- #9. Weekly book reading n

- #10. Picnic & shopping
- #11. Labour Day Weekend
- #12. Healthy food / lifestyle
- #13. Hearing someone sick
- #14. Someone being late
- #15. Enjoy your lunch
- #16. A new student Dion / Another new student Eliana
- #17. My language learning experience
- #18. A special class (different students on different tasks)

- As shown, some of these topics are general 'old ESOL friends' (e.g. #2), some more specific and quite local (e.g. #4), some directly students' personal stories (#16), and some on really small episodes (e.g. #13 and #14). However, they all can be made into proper learning stories, big or small, long or short, in the form of conversation or composition, depending on the purpose of learning and language/skills targeted. The following provides two examples on topics #3 (jobs, simple patterns, everyone included) and #14 (unexpected and unpleasant situations made into a happy learning story with many language points to pick up).
 - #3 Alice is a student in New Zealand, but she was a doctor in China. She worked in the hospital to help people with their health. Nadia is a housewife. Blanca is a housewife. They are housewives. They work at home and make their home nice, so they are the homemakers.
 - #14 Today is 10 September Wednesday. We have English classes with Teacher Wang Yi. However, she was late today because the lift in her office building was out of order. She needed the lift because she had many books and dictionaries, and they are very heavy. Because of that, she apologised to the class she said, "I'm sorry I'm late", but the students were very kind and they said, "That's fine. No worries, teacher". So there was no problem, and everyone laughed. Then, Asha was late. She was late because she takes a bus to come to school every day but today the bus was late. Next, Luz was late. She was late because she got a sore arm, so she made an appointment with the doctor and she went to the hospital. Finally, Mariamu was late. She was late because her son was sick. It's a sad thing to hear someone is sick or unwell. When that happens, first, people often say 'I'm sorry to hear that.' Then they often ask 'What's the matter/problem?' At last, people say 'Take care, and get well soon.' Many people were late today, but we learned many useful words and sentences from their stories.

HOW ARE THE STORIES DEVELOPED, USED AND REUSED?

The flow chart illustrates a complete cycle from (someone) telling a story to (everyone) producing a new one. Please note not all stories necessarily go through all these steps, nor do they go in the given sequence – nothing fixed or linear, but a basket of options only.



Tell it

The story initiator could be a student (e.g. #13 when Luz came in late saying 'sorry I late because I sick') or me (e.g. #7 when it happened to be the Chinese Moon Festival). In the student's case, make them the centre and the teacher (using the whiteboard if necessary) and help them to make every point clear to everyone. For example, when a new student named Mpundu was introducing her two languages Kinynrwanda and Swahiri, we tried hard to 'study' the unusual words, syllables, pronunciation, and linking words 'one ... the other ...'.

Ask more about it

- This is the key session for the whole class to co-construct the story where there are ample opportunities for students to ask questions, negotiate meaning and clarify points. Meanwhile, I stand aside facilitating the discussion; when opportunity comes, I 'lift' the discussion to an upper level. The extract below illustrates.
 - T: Where are you from, Mpundu?
 - M: I'm from Congo.
 - T: Where is Congo, everybody? Asia?
 - Ss: No, no, no. South Africa.
 - T: Ah ... now do you have any questions about Mpundu?
 - S1: Er ... Mpundu (mispronunciation), do you have a family?
 - M: Yes ... I have a family, I have four brothers and one sister.
 - Ss: Four brothers! How old? And how old are you?
 - T: Well, hang on ... is this a good question? Do you have to tell people your age?

Write it down / Copy it

• I write on the computer (use MS WORD for easy editing and tracking) and students copy onto their notebook. It may be the full story, or a frame with missing information for students to fill in, depending on the aimed length and complexity of the story. Key to this step is converting the verbal ideas to written language. Here students diverge dramatically, with some copying almost at the same pace as me typing, but the slow ones forming letters/words like drawing pictures, spending minutes on a single sentence. This is not a problem; instead it creates opportunity to differentiate support in subsequent other activities catering for individual needs; for example, let the finishers move on to read aloud (independently or in pairs or threes) to practise pronunciation (often the fast writers are weak speakers), which in the meantime frees the teacher to help the slower ones. For those who cannot finish copying in class, they can either take a photo to continue after class, or a printed hardcopy is provided for them to back up.

Type it out

This is designed for digital literacy. Students have a computer hour every week, when they are asked (with written instructions) to transfer to MS WORD what they have copied or taken a photo of in class. One Drive is introduced as part of study skill training. Like copying, this is not an easy job for many students – especially the elderly and those who have received limited education – but provides a starting point. n

Read it

This can be silent reading or reading aloud – individually or in pairs or groups as mentioned earlier – and frequent choral reading.
 Emphasis is laid on letter-sound matching, pronunciation, grouping words to meaningful units, pausing, rhythm, stress, intonation, and recognition of full stops for sentences.

Think about it

• Follow-up questions are designed to check students' understanding of meaning; commonly used items include gap-filling, true or false, short answer questions, question-answer matching. There is also considerable potential for targeted grammar practice (e.g. past simple for recounting weekend activities), vocabulary consolidation activities (e.g. identifying basic-buteasily-going-wrong words: first/frist/fist).

Write another one

- After the story has been processed in varied ways, often in the end students are asked to produce a similar piece of work. Depending on learners' capabilities, this can be a full creative composition, a modelled one following the learnt pattern, or a framed one only needing some words substitution. This can be assigned as homework or as an extended activity for early finishers to work on in class or for all, plenty of space for flexibility and autonomy. Below are two examples of students' final writing based on their initial thoughts followed by frameworks I provided.
 - Kiona: The most important festival in my country is Eid al-Fitr. Everyone gets up early in the morning. Then go to mosque to pray. When they finish praying, families and friends eat lunch together.
 - Iman & Samir: Eid al-Fitr is a special day for all Muslims. It's after Ramadan. It changes every year. Early in the morning, Muslims start praying Eid prayers. They celebrate by wearing new clothes, eating sweets and giving kids some gifts and money to make them happy. Also friends, relatives and neighbours greet each other, and all the family get together to have a big feast.

Described above is a complete cycle from a chat on an idea for the composition of a story. This is not the end, however, and the best bit of this approach is the stories' recyclability. The written-up stories, both the original models and learners' reproduction, are recyclable. A piece of model writing for one group of students can be used as model reading for another group, and stronger learners' reproduction writing can be an immediate second model for their weaker peers – no worries of them copying others' work; when they seriously copy, copying is meaningful, and useful, at least better than not doing anything due to incompetence or lack of confidence. When learners are trusted and appropriately supported, their autonomy wakens.

WHAT LITERACY NEEDS ARE ADDRESSED?

Obviously, the language study and practice opportunities embedded in the story 'cycles and re-cycles' are enormous, involving multiple skills at all levels from forming a letter/making a sound to discourse analysis. However, it is not just about language; the most rewarding or worth-pursuing part for me is recognising learners' value – every single one's. By including them all in the stories, acknowledging everyone's contribution and showing appreciation of their culture, it is hoped that they all feel respected and cared for. It is also believed that genuine conversation and discussion enhances collaboration, peer support and class dynamics as well as building up teacherstudent rapport, all of which working together makes a truly safe, friendly and supportive learning community. Although a semester's study this way may not make dramatic changes in learners' language ability, benefits can be expected in that after a few positive experiences of using an alien language to talk about their life, these 'basic literacy learners' are motivated and their confidence is built up. This should help to develop their competence and eventually lead to their success, at work and in life.

- As this article draws to a close, I would like to tune back to three learners 'poststories':
 - Students A & B, a Syrian couple who studied with me twice, 2018 on the ILN programme and 2019 at NZCEL Level 3
 - 'We loved those stories. We learned a lot from them, and we used them at Level 1 and Level 2.'
 - Student C, a single mum from Colombia on understanding it is OK for women not to answer questions about their age or marriage
 - '... Ah I see ... Thank you so much, Teacher, [for] tell[ing] me this. People always ask me [these], and I [did] not know what to say ...'
- The stories are going on. As I was finishing up, a Moroccan woman brought in the word 'kebab', her Afghanistan buddy followed to clarify (with pictures) that Moroccan kebab is what we often label as 'sausage', and a Colombian woman (first day joining the class) added 'tortillas' (the wrap going with the 'kebab' or 'sausage') and taught us it should be pronounced as 'tor-ti-jjus' (in Spanish) not 'tor-ti-llas'. Y
- I did not use to believe 'basic literacy learners' can do this, but as I listen to them more, now I do. They amazed me.



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