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Bill Boyle

Marie Charles

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James, Kwame, the Witch and the Golden Ball: The importance of multimodality and multiliteracies in developing young communicators.

Bill Boyle & Marie Charles

Introduction

The focus of this paper is on the reception and production of language and the judicious use of multimodal strategies and peer collaboration in supporting one child's storytelling skills. For this purpose the authors use the genre of fairytales with young children. Children love fairytales according to the research of Marsh and Millard: 'Five key reasons for children's love of fairytales: one, they generally begin with 'once upon a time' and situate the story away from the context of the child. Secondly, they often end with 'and they lived happily ever after' so offering satisfactory closure. Thirdly, they have a basic bi-polar structure which children find attractive – good/evil, handsome/ugly, kind/cruel – no ambiguity or ambivalence. Fourthly, they centre on the actions of heroes and heroines who are typical, not specific and so children can relate to them and finally good and evil are omnipresent and the differences between them apparent' (Marsh and Millard 2000, p.159).

Fairytales, as a genre of literature, have traditionally a long and somewhat turbulent history, particularly in their creation and interpretation. Indeed, as early as 1903 a book written by Dr Karl Oppel entitled the Parent's Book: Practical Guidance for The Education at Home, argued that 'fairy tales fill the imagination..with horror...terror and a belief in the supernatural' (p.2). Tatar (1999) recognised that 'cruelty and violence have been the signature of German fairy tales' (p.212). One cannot argue that these elements do not exist in these narratives, indeed they do quite consistently, and this is precisely part of their appeal for children. Fairytales are indeed inextricably linked to the idea that all human beings tell stories. Hardy (1977) describes 'narrative as a primary act of mind' (cited in Gamble and Yates, 2002, p20). She suggests that this act of storytelling is natural and this is how we make sense of our experiences. Koki (1998) takes this further by calling children the 'narrated selves of their own lives' (p.1) in which stories are 'powerful fundamental forms for the mental organisation of experience arising in development with the onset of language, memory and mental imaging' (Fox 1993, p.193).

Clearly then, this implied innate ability to tell stories appears on the surface to be simple and unproblematic. Research suggests that 'the most valuable aspect of storytelling is that it gives children experience with decontextualized language, requiring them to make sense of ideas that are about something beyond the here and now' (Beck & McKeown, 2001, p.10). The basis of the discussion is that for children, 'communication occurs through different but

synchronous modes: language, print, images, graphics, movement, gesture, texture, music, sound' (Kress 2003, p.51). To the authors, these synchronous modes form an empirical definition of multimodality², 'a multimodal approach that looks beyond language to all forms of communication' (Jewitt et al 2009 p.11) and which highlights the potential complex interactions between media, modes and semiotic resources with its inherent danger of sensory overload. To evidence the possibilities of using a multimodal teaching strategy for developing the communication skills through storytelling of a five year old, the authors conducted the following research study in a medium size (350 pupils) inner city primary school in Liverpool. This allows for detailed investigation of the interaction between changes in technology, policy, curriculum and pupil learning resources. As teachers we need to understand, be comfortable with and use efficiently in support of learning 'the many and complex modes and various settings in which communication is effected and meaning is synthesised' (Katsarou & Tsafos, 2010 p.53).

Over the past fifteen years or so, the interactions of teachers and pupils have changed in significant ways and remained the same in equally significant ways. The teacher now uses as a main resource the interactive white board, and has instantaneous access to and use of image, colour and layout to an extent which was not available ten years ago. In the main however, children's classroom experiences within current pedagogical styles are still based on mono-modality (Myhill, 2006; Wyse 2007, Gooch 2008) and on a didactic pedagogy (Alexander 2009, Authors 2010). For example, theories of reading and writing instruction were based on the child reading mono-modal or print-based text. Case study research by Nilsson (2010) explored the written outcomes of 'Simon', a nine year old boy who 'finds schoolwork boring and seldom participates in classroom activities. Through establishing a well planned multimodal learning environment based on digital storytelling which allowed Simon to experience making, drawing, painting, taking photos, music and communication, the child became interested and motivated and produced his own digital stories. Interestingly Nilsson then asks: 'Is Simon literate?' She explicates with: 'If literacy is limited to forming and decoding letters then Simon is not. If understanding literacy as a social and cultural activity where semiotic means of different kinds are used for producing texts in processes of expressing and creating meaning and communicating, then Simon is highly literate' (Nilsson 2010, p.9). The message is that 'writing in a monomodal manner was not possible for Simon and that reading and writing were obstacles rather than tools for him' (Nilsson 2010, p.9).

Nilsson's research evidence led her to the conclusion that in school, 'learning to write is reduced to conquering a code, the exercise becomes a surface imitation of genres and texttypes without being rooted in what is the core of language' (Nilsson, 2010 p.2). Instead of being founded on and around the needs and interests of children as they naturally develop and on their activity,' writing is given to them from without, from the teacher's hands this situation recalls the development of a technical skill such as piano playing: the pupil develops finger dexterity and learns to strike the keys while reading music, but he is in no way involved in the essence of the music itself' (Vygotsky 1978, p.117). These theories have been

supported by a range of strategies which reinforce the monomodal model eg, print based word lists. Critical approaches to multiliteracies³ and multimodality are 'currently conceived as key alternatives to addressing failures in traditional language reading pedagogies in preparing pupils for interactions in the cross-cultural and technologized world' (Hibbert 2009, p.204). To the authors each child who enters a classroom comes from a context, an environment, a world in which 's/he is surrounded by multimodality' (Kress et al 2001). The contrast in experience and the reduction of pedagogy from multi to mono is 'likely to alienate young people and may diminish the development of their full scholastic potential' (Hibbert *ibid*, p.204). Literacy in educational contexts is most often approached as a motor skill and not as a complex social, cultural and creative activity' (Nilsson 2010 p2).

Although the authors advocate the use of multimodality in its empirical definition to support learning we are aware of the potential limitations to knowledge construction related to digital multimodality. The replacement of narrative knowledge-based teaching by digital technology is a flawed paradigm because of its assumption of a 'one size fits all' undifferentiated pedagogy (Alexander 2004), and an over-reliance on technology. Ohler makes the point that 'the problem for many students is their focus on the power of the technology rather than the power of their stories. Some students are engaging the medium at the expense of the message, producing a technical event rather than a story' (Ohler, 2006, p.45). To develop children as communicators, literacy teaching needs to be re-thought and teachers need to 'renegotiate its general objectives' (Katsarou & Tsafos 2010 p.50). 'A school that prepares students for the contemporary dynamic communication landscape by using multimodal approaches to learning, turns its students into active producers and readers/listeners of multimodal texts in a manner that will allow them to become critically literate through understanding that a text is not a transparent window on reality but is constructed' (*ibid*, p. 50). This strategy based on active involvement of the learner in his/her own learning (Perrenoud 1998) will enable those students to 'develop agency as a communicator rather than opting for media-promoted passivity' (Dufflemeyer & Ellertson, 2005 in Katsarou & Tsafos 2010 p.50). Our research in actively involving 'James' in his own learning through his immersion into the genre of fairytales is essentially rooted in that philosophy. We advocate that teachers adopt a balanced pedagogy between the exposure of the child to traditional books rather than the modern over-reliance and dominance of technological resources, The recent history of educational systems (eg international test score comparisons, league tables, e-testing, minimum competency standards measurement on accountancy models, etc) has shown that the failure to involve pupils as active producers and participants in learning, results in a model which is negative ie prescribed and standardised styles of pedagogy and assessment, reduced curriculum breadth and experiences.

Methodology

To evidence the possibilities of using a multimodal teaching strategy for developing the communication skills through storytelling of a five year old, the authors focused on the genre of fairytales. 'In most cases personal stories are bland and uninspiring and invite little comment from others. In contrast the retellings of oral and fairytale stories more often containing literary phrases are accompanied by gesture and sometimes character voices' (Harrett 2002 p.19). We conducted the following research study in a medium size Multiliteracies: The New London Group (2000, p.9) argue that literacy pedagogy now must account for the burgeoning variety of text forms associated with information and multimedia technologies. (350 pupils) inner city primary school in Liverpool. The focus was on the reception and production of language and the judicious use of multimodal strategies and peer collaboration in supporting the child's storytelling skills over five sessions of 30 minutes each. The authors had selected three fairytales (Hansel & Gretel, Rapunzel, The Frog Prince) to use over the five sessions. Five separately sourced illustrations for each of the three fairytales were selected by the authors to use as an integral part of the conversations with the child. The authors were mindful of the impact of fairy tales on one child's storytelling skills to 'reflect a greater increase in ability to understand and remember stories..' (Salvetti, 2001, p.80). However the importance of understanding children's stories as conceptual structures as proposed by Applebee (1978), alongside the recognition of true narrative, must be delineated. Applebee's (1978) study of children's storytelling recognises that there are 'modes of organisation' that make up six major stages of narrative form: 'Heaps, sequences, primitive narratives, unfocused chains, focused chains and true narratives' (p.72). Of these, Vygotsky's 'heaps' is the least complex in form and is rooted in the child's perception and is essentially unrelated to the characteristics of the material to be organised (p.57). For example, 'a girl, a boy and a mother and the piggy and then a horse, etc' (Applebee, 1978, p72). The 'true narrative' which Vygotsky (1962) describes as 'incidents are (now) linked both by centring and by chaining are thus more fully controlled' (in Applebee, 1978, p.69). These stages of development are sequential and there are obvious links of progression to be applied at each stage. However Applebee recognises the dangers in placing children neatly in each stage and category and argues that 'these can apply recursively' (p.72).

Equally important is the area of narrative structure in children's storytelling. An accepted expectation is for children to have an appropriate beginning, middle and end to their stories. Teachers need to be conscious of the balance between structure (as above) and 'such a reception of language allows...greater possibilities of production of language' (Kingman 1988, Chapter 2, para 23).

Limitations of the methodology include the small scale of the study (one child, James, with facilitator, Kwame) negating the generalisability of the conclusions and the possible 'outsider-researcher' effect of a limited understanding of the child and his learning needs, the sequential steps in that learning and the ability to plan multimodal experiences to match and support that learning. This requires balanced support for the affective and cognitive domains

of the child. It demands that teachers have a theoretical construct of learning with the child at the centre rather than a focus on one size fits all methodology and planning (Boyle & Charles 2010).

The authors worked with James and the rest of his guided group in a quiet area of the classroom for the sessions. In each of the five sessions, the authors took observation notes (based on author) and recorded the dialogue at each session and for reliability compared their recorded observations at the end of each of the five sessions. We were looking for clear developments in narrative structure and wanted to move away from the simplistic 'beginning, middle and end' strategy, so we incorporated Gamble & Yates' (2002) model of narrative structuring. It is delineated in four ways: (i) Exposition (the scene is set and characters are introduced); (ii) complication (the characters' lives become complicated in some way); (iii) climax (this is the point in the story where suspense is at its highest); (iv) resolution (provides a solution for the complication – though this is not necessarily a happy one) (p.39).

After an initial discussion with James, an enthusiastic child but a reticent contributor to whole class oral discussions, a summer born four year old (see Sykes, Bell & Rodeiro (2009) for negative performance effects on summer-born children), the authors decided to work with him. The initial conversation focussed on James's awareness of fairytales and it suggested that he had had no exposure to them and was reluctant about revealing the depth of his knowledge. When asked: 'Do you know the story called Hansel and Gretel?' James replied 'No'. 'Have you heard the story about a girl called Cinderella?' James's reply 'No'. 'What about another girl with very long hair called Rapunzel?' James's reply 'No'. It was noted that continuing with the questions may have caused James to feel inadequate so the questions were stopped. James's response reflects Williams' comment on the danger of expecting children to respond to text in a certain way: 'Personal response as though they were universal features of childhood.' (in Hunt, 1999, p.157). The opposite actually applies and 'it is crucial that teachers recognise that initial engagement with a text is usually a private event' (Vandergrift, 1995, p.1), allowing children time and opportunities for reflection and assimilation.

At the beginning of the study the authors investigated James's current storytelling ability by conducting two baseline exercises. To aid his storytelling in the baseline exercise, the only prompts used were 'tell me the story of...', 'how did the story start? And 'who was in the story? The baseline was established through recording and transcribing James's version of the story of Spot the Dog. He was shown only the front cover of the story book and then asked to tell the story. He said:

'He hides, he looks for his mum, he is in the basket.'

The following day James was shown the cover of 'Where's my bear?' Again he was asked to tell the story. He said:

‘The big bear is in the woods, and the little boy is frightened, then they go home.’

Research sessions

The first session involved the author reading the Hansel & Gretel fairytale to James. This took, with actions and showing of the book’s illustrations, about 15 minutes. James at the conclusion of the fairytale asked spontaneously ‘Can we read that again?’ The authors read the fairytale again. This desire to hear the story again indicates a real sense of enjoyment of fairytales from James (Marriot, 1991, p.9). Seneschal’s research evidences the enhanced impact on young children of expressive language in fairytales’ (in Saracho & Spodek, 2002, p. 64). Further, McKeown (2001) discusses the importance of ‘aural comprehension’ and argues that ‘this ability is usually very high in children’ (p.10). Gamble and Yates (2002) recognise that ‘understanding of a written text is much higher when it is read aloud by a skilled reader’. (p.122). After the re-reading of Hansel and Gretel, James wanted to look more closely at the illustrations in the book to re-establish in his mind who the characters were.

Vandergrift’s observation that ‘initial engagement with a text is usually a private event’ (Vandergrift, 1995, p.1) is reflected in James’s reaction to this sequence from session one. James commented on the characters: ‘She’s a horrible mum and there’s the witch.’ However, when the authors then asked James to ‘tell me the story of Hansel and Gretel’, James replied: ‘I don’t know it’ thereby confining his thoughts to himself on this ‘private event’. Consider a Year 1 (aged 5-6) classroom in which the teacher was reading the story ‘Abiyoyo’. After the part of the story in which Abiyoyo is introduced as ‘a giant called Abiyoyo as tall as a tree and he could eat people up’ the teacher asked ‘who is Abiyoyo?’ Her intent was that the children describe Abiyoyo and why people fear him – because he eats people. However in the excerpt below it is clear that children do not get very far into these ideas. The discussion that ensued after the teacher’s initial question of ‘Who is Abiyoyo?’ follows:

Child S: A monster.

Teacher: Did the story say he was a monster?

S: It’s a big green man.

T: A big green man. But does the story say what the big green man was?

S: He is tall.

S: A giant.

T: He is a giant and he is as tall as a ----.

Class: Tree.

T: Tree. OK so what is this all about?

S: Monsters.

T: What is this story all about?

S: Giant.’

(Beck & McKeown 2001 p.15).

Here is another example of what starts out as a monosyllabic response to personal storytelling in the context of a theme on personal histories and the development of that storytelling through a multimodal intervention (audio-tape):

First version: 'I just feel ...pop...that's all'.

but when the child listens to himself and his peers telling stories he produces 33 words as follows:

Second version: 'I been to the park after that I play swing then I play slides with my sister then after that I play football after football I been swimming after swimming I been home'
(Harrett 2002 p 21).

The monosyllabic responses of the children viewed within a socio-linguistic perspective, it could be argued, are all that could be expected. Surely it also indicates that this is what the children are used to contributing. Possibly this is all the teacher anticipates receiving from the child and that within the limits of time allowed in her plan, all that she really wants. The teacher's pedagogy has created a learning environment of discrete entities ie 'text', 'knowledge', 'teacher' and 'child/learner' leading to 'children's own knowledge and experiences in this situation having to defer to the status conferred by the teacher on text features' (Kirby, 1996 p.9). This leads to the children being forced to play a continual guessing game of 'what is in the teacher's head?' 'Kirby's research also evidenced that 'the teachers began to understand in a deeper way the difficulties children faced when asked to respond to de-contextualised language, as much as the language may have appeared explicit to us as adult readers' (ibid, p16). The authors feel that whole class scenarios can be unrealistic arenas to enable children to develop as storytellers because the teacher imposes demands of pace and coverage in place of reflection and measured shared composition. Session one only contained one story telling episode as the authors were concerned about cognitive overload (Graves 1994) because of James's age and a desire to nurture his affective domain development: 'Affect is a student's internal belief system' (Tait-McCutcheon, 2008 p 507).

The second session, the following week, began with the authors recapping the previous storytelling session. They asked James 'What was the story called that I read to you last time?'

James said: 'The Gingerbread Man'. In using these words instead of the title of the story (Hansel and Gretel), James appeared to be making an inter-textual link but at the expense of omitting the central characters' names and the title of the story because the house to which the witch takes the children is made of gingerbread. James then retold the Hansel and Gretel story in more detail: 'The lady put a boy in a cave, the girl was going in a (sic) oven, they went to bed.' The pattern of the research was to show pictures to structure the story re-telling in each of the sessions. James was shown five pictures, one at a time, to stimulate his narrative recall of the story.

Insert Figures 1-5 Hansel and Gretel story

This multimodal structuring to his story telling ability (see below) produced a much richer version of the story from James:

‘Once upon a time the boy and the girl went to bed, the mum was in the forest, then they came back home, then they seen (sic) the gingerbread house and the witch locked them in the cave, they found the treasure. They brought them back to the dad.’

The use of illustrations develops and extends James’s storytelling skills within the multimodal linking of thinking, images and visual connections (Zitlow, 2000). Senechal et al state that ‘intervention studies using picture books have shown positive effects in pre-school children’s narrative production based on books and pictures’ (2008, p.42). A note of caution is interposed by Beck & McKeown (2001) in that ‘children can ignore the linguistic content and respond just from the visual’ and meaning can be compromised when ‘the pictures are in conflict with what is going on in the text’ (p.15). However Beck & McKeown qualify this comment and state that he has observed teachers using pictures judiciously and timing their inclusion. This produced responses that were linked directly to the text being read. It is here that strategising judiciously plays a key role in developing children’s responses, especially if we consider how young children develop. Many four and five year olds would effectively ‘switch off’ when listening to a story if the pictures were not available. Zitlow (2000) reminds us that we all think and learn by using images.

At the end of the session, James was read a new fairytale called ‘Rapunzel’. He made a repeated request for ‘Can we read that again?’ On the third session in response to a request to retell Rapunzel, James appeared somewhat reluctant to engage with the story as a whole. The use of illustrations did not enable James to elaborate the narrative structures of Rapunzel. For example, James’s reductionist version of the story was: ‘A witch cuts the girl’s hair off, the end.’

James was asked ‘Who else is in this story?’

He replied ‘I don’t know’.

Authors: ‘Where did the witch put Rapunzel to live?’

James: ‘I don’t know.’

The authors reflected on their observations of James in this third session. Following the principle of allowing children time and opportunities for reflection and assimilation, teachers should be able to recognise that ‘initial engagement with a text is usually a private event’ (Vandergrift, 1995 p 1). As Fenwick observes (1990.p 54) ‘children’s responses are like an iceberg, nine tenths of which is submerged beneath the surface.’ By implication, some teachers’ expectations can either shut down or open up possibilities for response (Carey, Wolf & Mieras, p.133). It is important that teachers should scaffold (Bruner 1983) the discussion in order for children to learn the nature of narrative and thereby facilitate their participation

(Salveti 2001 p.77). In short, children see through quiz-like questions and produce limited responses that consequently lead those teachers to perceive that the child's insight is limited. Similarly Marriott (1995) argues that 'Why' questions, children find very difficult to answer and to explain reasons for a particular judgement is a very sophisticated skill (higher order)' (p.92). The researchers discussed the way forward after a session in which James appeared to have 'stood still'. One route was to introduce James to visual literacy (drawings, illustrations) to stimulate his interest in storytelling and its linguistic content (QCA, 2004, p.4). Beck & McKeown support the view that 'children can more readily derive information from pictures in comparison to text language' (2001, p.11). However, the decision was made to introduce a more orally capable peer to group in session 4 for the 'social mediation of knowledge' (Vygotsky 1978) ie supporting James through his zone of proximal development. 'By interacting with a peer who tells stories in a developmentally more advanced form than the child, the child enters his/her zone of proximal development.' (Vygotsky 1978, in Cassell, Ryokai and Vaucelle, 2002). Sometimes the multimodal strategy needs a socially mediated support element – in this case, we determined on peer collaboration as the additional variable.

At the end of session three, James was read a new story, 'The Frog Prince'. For session four, the authors introduced a more capable peer (Kwame) and at the start of the session asked James to retell the story of Hansel and Gretel for Kwame. Authors: 'James, Kwame does not know the story of Hansel and Gretel. Please tell it to him and use the pictures to help you.' James said 'Once upon a time there was a little girl and a little boy, they left their house, then they saw the gingerbread house, the witch locked them in a cave. 'I'm going to eat you.' She put the girl in the oven and they found the treasure and went home to daddy.' James, who had been read the Hansel & Gretel story in session 2 ie two weeks ago, had internalised that story and was able to recount it to Kwame without textual support from the teacher.

In comparing James's storytelling in session one and now in session four, the inclusion of character speech indicates a deeper understanding of the story and characterisation. The increase in vocabulary and evidence of audience awareness is noteworthy. This corresponds with the effects of peer collaboration in storytelling in Jordan, Snow and Porche's research (2000, in Saracho & Spodek, 2002, p.82) indicates 'a moderate effect on vocabulary, story comprehension and story sequence.' In this session James is encouraged by the authors to retell Rapunzel's narrative to Kwame. James demonstrates both willingness and excitement as he talks: 'The witch cut the girl's hair off. Let down your golden hair, the girl married the prince.' It is significant that as this is James's second retelling event in this session, the cognitive burden (Graves, 1994) is being demonstrated by the reduced nature of his narrative output.

However, the authors note how James inserts distinct phrases within his storytelling as in Hansel and Gretel. This is particularly significant when one recalls James's previous lack of participation without the direct involvement of a collaborator. This again signals the importance of peer collaboration as proposed by Vygotsky (1978) and Cassell et al (2002). As

a cautionary note it must be remembered that James (any child) will not produce full versions of a story on every occasion as there are limitations to peer collaboration even within group situations.

At the end of this session (session 4), both James and Kwame were read the Frog Prince. At the beginning of the fifth session James was asked to retell the Frog Prince story from last week's session. James continued to take the initiative as he had in the last session and commenced a sequence of questions for Kwame about the Frog Prince as follows: Do you know the prince? Do you know the golden ball? Do you know the king? The water and the pond? Here James is probing Kwame's awareness of the story, utilising the same structure of questioning which the authors had used with him initially. James continued but in narrative rather than questioning mode: 'The frog came in and jumped on the table and ate the dinner. 'Open the door and let the frog in'. 'I am tired, I want to sleep on the pillow.' The wicked witch turned the prince into a frog.' Here James is demonstrating characteristics of three stages of Applebee's modes of organization of storytelling, ie sequences, primitive narratives and unfocused chain (Applebee 1978) and is including more direct character speech, in this instance three direct quotations from the story. Ryokai et al's research (2003) evidenced that children who played with a virtual peer used more quoted speech and temporal and spatial expressions (p.195).

Kwame, having retained the initial questions from James, now got space to respond and asked: 'What happened to the ball?' James replied 'The princess threw the ball high in the sky and then it fell into the pond.' This example of true collaboration and the dialogic process in action (Wells 2001, Authors 2010) demonstrates the potential for supporting the internalisation of narrative communication. This is further demonstrated as the two boys continue in the session and James starts, unprompted by the authors, to retell the Rapunzel story to Kwame. It would seem that James has now engaged with storytelling as a process which he wants to share with his peer.

James: 'Once upon a time Rapunzel's mum and dad went in the witch's garden and then she caught Rapunzel's dad.' 'Go and get Rapunzel' 'Rapunzel went up the ladder'.

Kwame interrupts: 'No it was the witch who goes down the ladder.'

James: 'Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your golden hair.' Then they got married and the witch died.

It is interesting that James chooses to ignore Kwame's correction and hastily concludes the story. The whole exchange in this session between James and Kwame exemplifies the dialogic process as outlined in Wells (2001). It is also significant that James and Kwame did not need an intervention from the authors at this stage to stimulate their storytelling.

Conclusion

This small scale research study has focused on a limited investigation of the impact of fairytales on one child's storytelling skills in multimodal and multiliteracy contexts, in this case the integration of speaking, listening and reading. Salvetti reminds the reader that the impact of fairytales on children's storytelling skills 'reflects a greater increase in their ability to understand and remember stories' (Salvetti 2001 p.80). Gamble & Yates (2002) strongly correlate children's understanding of written texts as much higher when read aloud by a skilled reader (p.122).

The implications of failing to acknowledge and implement the importance of time and silence are evidenced in the first storytelling session. It is accepted that this one example cannot claim to be conclusive but a response from James of 'I don't know', immediately after he has listened to a story, strongly suggests his need for time and reflection (Vandergrift 1995, Fenwick 1990). Teachers need to be cognisant of the importance of children being given time for immersion and reflection as a means of deepening their responses to story situations. Wells (1984) cautions avoidance of intervening or supplying solutions or meanings far too quickly (cited in Jones 1988, p.56).

The comparative results of James's sessions are significant. A range of modalities are strategically introduced and incorporated. Illustrations are introduced in session 2 and continue to be used throughout each of the sessions. Their inclusion allied to other modalities (talking with Kwame, listening to the story, action and movement by storyteller, dramatic story sound effects) support and scaffold a significant improvement of James's storytelling skills from his efforts in his baseline and first session. Using a synthesis of Gamble and Yates' (2002) narrative model and Applebee's six major stages of narrative form, James progressed from being initially located at the 'heaps' stage to demonstrating evidence of moving towards more developed stages of narrative form (Applebee 1978). James's movement in and out of the development stages without being 'rooted' or located firmly in one stage demonstrates the fluidity and progressive nature of linguistic development.

A natural extension in strategy for James and Kwame to progress further would be working in a guided group situation. This would enable 'an organisational approach where attention can be given to particular children who may require additional support or challenge to ensure that they continue to progress' (Williams, 2008 p.67). However, we would attach a caveat to Williams' definition: the guided group strategy should not be misconstrued as a group of children requiring special needs support; the opposite in fact, a guided group is the optimal teaching, learning and assessment situation in which the lead professional in the classroom is focused on individual[s] learning support.

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