Storytelling as a Teaching Strategy in the English Language Classroom in Iceland

Patience Adjahoe Karlsson

M.Ed. Thesis
University of Iceland
School of Education

HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS

Storytelling as a Teaching Strategy in the English Language Classroom in Iceland

Patience Adjahoe Karlsson

Storytelling as a Teaching Strategy in the English Language Classroom in Iceland

Preface

This thesis represents the final academic work required for the award of a Masters Degree in Education in the Teaching and Learning of Foreign languages, and is equal to 30 ECT. I must proudly say that this is the final work for my M.Ed. studies at the University of Iceland, School of Education.

I set to find out how storytelling can be adapted in English language classroom in lower secondary schools in Iceland, in order to enhance communicative language teaching for two language foci, writing and speaking. Twenty-five ninth graders and fourteen tenth graders participated in the study. I was the teacher as well as the researcher. Therefore, I sought the assistance of another English teacher, who served as a critic, asked provocative questions, as well as offered suggestions on the study.

Storytelling as an art is something that I have enjoyed and loved doing as far back as I can remember. When my family relocated from Accra (the capital city of Ghana) to Akatsi (a district capital in Ghana), we the children learned a new culture: storytelling. Growing up in a big house, neighbourhood children visited and told stories. My siblings and I did not understand the Ewe language then, but listening to our new friends, and with active participation during storytelling times, we began to speak Ewe in no time. Today, my siblings and I proudly speak Ewe just like our friends who were born in my native land.

My interest in storytelling as a way of communicating heightened after completing my Teacher Training College in 1997. Details can be found in the introductory part of my thesis.

There are a number of people without whose help and assistance this study would not have been meaningful or successful. My first thanks go to the Almighty God for giving me the grace to go through the course successfully even though it was not an easy journey. My sincere and greatest gratitude goes to Sodzinyade, for all her stories, companionship and food; she has proven to me that age is not a barrier to any friendship.

To my beloved husband, Þórir Karlsson and my children, you are invaluable; I greatly appreciate your support and tolerance. All thanks to your patience, this thesis has become a reality.

What could I have done without my supervisor Robert Berman? For his guidance and support, I wish to express my sincere gratitude.

My teachers at the School of Education deserve a special mention, especially Ólafur Páll Jónsson, Michael Dal, Hanna Ragnarsdóttir, Hildur Blöndal Sveinsdóttir, Marey Allyson Macdonald, and Samuel Lefever. You have guided, shaped and believed in me. Your continuous support has been my rock and I so much appreciate you all.

To my father, Francis Kwashie Adjahoe, your belief in gender equality in education, your tuition, and your sacrifices at making a better world for children is a huge success and reality. May you, Francis, be bountifully blessed in your old age!

Abstract

This thesis takes sources from existing literature, personal experiences and a classroom-based study aimed at discovering how storytelling can be adapted in the ninth and tenth grade to help achieve the goals of the National Curriculum (2007) of Iceland in regards to English language teaching, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), and specifically, to improve students' skills in writing and speaking.

My findings are based on action research design targeted at exploring the benefits of storytelling as a teaching strategy.

I used oral storytelling approach to develop writing and speaking skills in a ninth and tenth-grade class in a compulsory school in Iceland. The study was carried out over six weeks, twice a week with eighty minutes used for each lesson.

Activities involved in the study were:

a) Oral story telling sessions by teacher;
b) Writing of story outlines through prompts by students;
c) Engaging peers in discussing story outlines and deriving feedback;
d) Writing draft stories for feedback;
e) Submitting final stories for feedback and assessment;
f) Writing stories in a group; and
g) Presenting stories in groups.

A further step-by-step guide to group storytelling in the classroom, and to writing stories, are given and might be useful to any teacher who wants to try this powerful tool. Underlying theories are analysed, and implications for practice are discussed.

Table of Contents

List of tables

1   Introduction

The National Curriculum (2007) of Iceland concerning English language teaching encourages Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in its objectives. According to Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011), CLT "aims broadly to make communicative competence the goal of language teaching" (p.115). According to the Curriculum, the purpose of teaching English in Iceland is for students to be able to understand and use the language in unexpected situations, and for them to learn all the language skills (reading, writing, grammar, vocabulary acquisition, listening and speaking) in English. It acknowledges and encourages the use of storytelling.

According to research by Lefever (2009), the most popular teaching methods employed in English language classrooms at the compulsory level in Iceland are traditional, textbook-centred and teacher-directed. Lefever argues that teaching strategies recommended in the National Curriculum Guide, such as the use of games, role-plays, and theme work that promote active and creative language learning are not often used, and that the dominant language of instruction in the English classroom is Icelandic. Furthermore, conventional whole-group instruction seems to be the most dominant method used by teachers. Other activities that appeared to be used a great deal by teachers were grammar exercises, the use of workbooks and reading aloud. Lefever also notes the findings of other researchers, who have found that new teaching methods have not been widely adopted in English classrooms in Iceland. Rather, traditional whole-class instruction has dominated most teaching in Icelandic compulsory schools. These findings indicate that many English language teachers in Iceland may not be adhering to the English language objectives of the National Curriculum.

Lefever argues that such teaching methods are unsatisfactory, first because they do not include spoken interaction. Second, in regard to writing, Lefever says that it is "difficult to assess creative writing, authentic English use, and integrated language use in a written text format" (p.119), and that many students find it de-motivating to study detached items that test vocabulary and grammar out of context.

Many international studies (e.g. Bloch, 2010; Davies, 2007; Fox, 1993; Tsou, Wang & Tzeng, 2004) show that storytelling can make a significant

contribution in the language classroom to build speaking, writing, reading and listening skills. According to Haven (2000), using storytelling in the classroom is a powerful and effective way to improve and develop language skills, and moreover that activities where students participate in telling, writing, reading and listening to stories can motivate them to be active learners, developing within them a constructive approach towards English language learning.

This thesis seeks to answer the following question: How can storytelling be adapted as a communicatively focussed teaching strategy to help adolescents in the ninth and tenth grades of Icelandic lower secondary school improve their English writing and speaking skills?

1.1   Personal Narrative

This personal narrative gives a short account of the first time I experienced storytelling as a way of passing information from one person to another.

The clock on the bedroom wall struck five in the evening. I was already dressed in my brown jeans trousers, a black blouse and brown boots, and my bag was packed. I was leaving the village where I had arrived two days ago. I paced between the windows to the door several times, and finally sat down. I had to make sure no one saw me leaving, for I did not want to answer any questions from the village chief's wife. As I tapped my fingers on the tabletop, I heard a gentle knock on my door. I strode to the door and with anger in my voice I asked, "Who is it?"

"It's me, Mummy. You have visitors," said Mummy, who was the wife of the village chief of Lume-Avete, where I had been posted to teach. The sound of her voice made me angrier. Why hadn't she told me there was no electricity in the village? How was I supposed to watch TV or store my food? And what about ironing my clothes? She thought it was a privilege letting me stay in a room in her—the chief's—house? (Her "palace".) With no electricity?

"Visitors from where?" I asked and opened the door. There she stood with a flask and a kerosene lamp.

She handed them to me and said, "I made you some tea, and here is a lamp for you. I bought it especially for you." She smiled and stood there, waiting for a reaction from me.

I remembered what my Dad had said about being polite and opened minded. So I took the flask and the lamp from her and thanked her, with a smile, she smiled back and went away.

The visitors were two old women. With them were five girls and seven boys from the school. They came to welcome me to the village! As tradition demanded that younger folks are supposed to be courteous, especially to their elders, I wiped the angry look off my face and replaced it with a smile. I did not have enough chairs, so I borrowed two local mats from Mummy, spread them on the cement floor outside, and sat beside the oldest woman in the group. The rest sat facing the oldest woman and me. From that angle, I noticed one of the boys had a sack, which was filled with something.

The oldest woman turned to me. "My name is Sodzinyade. I am Godwin's grandmother," she said, pointing at one of the boys. "We came to welcome you and to bring you these items." She beckoned Godwin to bring the sack, and out of it, he pulled food items like cassava, plantain, sweet potatoes, banana and mangoes. I thanked them and brought a bucket of water to wash the mangoes. We sat on the mats and ate all of them. While we ate, Sodzinyade said she wanted to tell us a story. The expertise with which the people changed the sitting position to a circular form suggested that it was part of their culture; it was something they were used to doing.

The story was about a lady teacher from Accra, who was posted to a similar village as mine. The teacher, whom Sodzinyade called "Missy," encountered some minor problems in adjusting in the village, but with the help of the villagers, she adjusted pretty well. The story was sometimes interrupted by a group member with "I was there that day when Missy…," and who then told a part of the story where Missy was doing something, for instance looking for the electrical sockets in her room, which were not there. Then the person sang about electricity or electrical appliances, and usually the group would join the singer to sing and danced in a circle, after which Sodzinyade would chant, "Yooooo" (signalling all to be silent), "You were the socket on the wall that day," and everyone would laugh, and she would continue the story.

Every Thursday evening Sodzinyade came to my house with her group, sometimes with new people, to continue the story. The story went on about how Missy lived so happily in the village, involving herself in communal activities and hanging out with the villagers. I started to be curious when she started telling about a farm the villagers made for Missy, because they had suggested making a maize farm for me. Sodzinyade continued her story by telling about activities that went on in the village.

As time went on, I started to understand that Sodzinyade was not just telling me stories, she was reporting about what went on in the village. Since I always left the village on Fridays and came back on Mondays, I began to look at Sodzinyade's stories as updates of information about what went on in the village in my absence. I became good friends with Sodzinyade and her group to the extent that on Thursdays I prepared food from the items they brought the previous day with help from some members of the group. They would come at dinnertime and eat with me, after which we would enjoy ourselves listening to Sodzinyade's stories. Her stories developed to the point that Missy fell in love with one of the village people, was married and lived in the village happily ever after.

Disappointed, I left Lume-Avete for further studies, and Sodzinyade never saw the falling in love and marriage part of her story come true.

As I read the suggestions made in the National Curriculum (2007) on foreign language teaching on using storytelling and role play, I decided to discover how I could use Sodzinyade's method of storytelling as an instructive pedagogy in the English classroom to encourage communicative teaching to improve students' writing and speaking skills.

2   Theoretical Background

In this chapter I will discuss some relevant psychological theories with regards to learning as well as the requirements of the National Curriculum (2007) relating to storytelling.

2.1   What is storytelling?

Storytelling is an oral activity where language and gestures are used in a colourful way to create scenes in a sequence (Champion, 2003). However, storytelling consists of more than just telling stories. It may include not only creating a story but also the use of pictures, acting, singing, story writing and so forth. Isabel et al (2004) have written that

> Stories are pervasively used as a powerful and promising educational means for teaching and learning. Stories draw the learners' attention and thus can convey certain messages more easily to them. In storytelling, the words are not memorized, but are recreated through spontaneous, energetic performance, assisted by audience participation and interaction. (p. 158)

2.2   History of storytelling in Iceland

Records of storytelling have been found in many ancient cultures and languages, including Sanskrit, Old German, Latin, Chinese, Greek, old Slavonic and Icelandic (Neijmann, 2006).

The Icelandic Sagas, described as the most remarkable vernacular literature in medieval Europe (Pálsson, 1992), are stories of Norwegian kings and actual or renowned heroes, both men and women, of Iceland and Scandinavia, composed in prose, generally by unknown authors. It is said that these stories were widely recited by storytellers before being committed into writing (Davies, 2006). According to Ross (2000), the most famous account of storytelling in Iceland is that of Þorgils saga of Hafliða in Reykhólar in 1119. This saga is a description of an entertainment at a wedding feast. There is evidence that Icelanders looked upon their sagas as heroic literature in which the characters serve as role models for ordinary

people. These sagas also provided role-play materials for young children. This suggests that storytelling with role-play has been part of Icelandic culture since the 13th and 14th centuries (Ross, 2000).

2.3   Storytelling in the English language classroom

Studies have shown that storytelling has made significant contributions to speaking and listening in building language skills. For example Fox (1993), Davies (2007), Bloch (2010) Tsou, Wang and Tzeng, (2004) demonstrate the confidence with which children can structure narrative orally and experiment with language through storytelling.

Based on his study, Haven (2000) identified storytelling to be powerful, motivating and effective, stating that "Factual and conceptual information is learnt faster and better, and will be remembered longer, recalled more readily, applied more accurately when that information is delivered as a well-told story" (p.75).

Woolfolk, Hughes and Walkup (2008) argue that storytelling can incorporate various types of materials, such as musical instruments, costumes, pictures, real objects, ornaments, computers, the Internet, and of course the school book.

2.4   Communicative Language Teaching and Storytelling

The National Curriculum (2007) of Iceland encourages the teaching of communication in foreign languages, i.e. for students to able to understand and use the language in unexpected situations.

Since its inception in the 1970s, Communicative Language Teaching, or CLT, has taken more account of how language is used as a means of communication than previous teaching approaches had done. Littlewood (1981) defines CLT as a teaching method that pays "systematic attention to functional as well as structural aspects of language, combining these into a more communicative ability" (p.1).

Richards (2006, p.3) expands on this, arguing that CLT includes knowing:

1. how to use the language for a range of different purposes and functions;
2. how to vary our use of language according to the settings and participants;
3. how to produce and understand different types of texts (e.g. narratives, reports, interviews, conversations); and

4. how to maintain communication despite having limitations in language knowledge.

The most obvious characteristic of CLT is that everything is done with a communicative purpose (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). In a communicative classroom, students use the language and activities like role-playing, games and problem solving. Usually in a CLT classroom dialogues are not memorized; rather, the focus is on communication. Isbell et al (2004), explain that in storytelling the words are not memorized, but are recreated through dialogue to retell the story from students' understanding.

In other words, the aim in CLT is for language students to be able to produce and understand what is appropriate to say, how it should be said and when it should be said (Larsen-Freeman, 2000), with an overall goal of developing communicative competence in the target language.

Functioning in a communicative setting can be developed by creating classroom activities in which students must negotiate meaning, use communication strategies, correct misunderstandings, and work to avoid communication breakdowns. Meaning and comprehensible pronunciation is paramount in CLT (Richards, 2006).

Storytelling shares important characteristics with CLT. For example, both storytelling and CLT emphasize learner-centeredness, as well as cooperative and collaborative learning. Henniger (2005) states that, in the storytelling classroom, activities are planned to encourage students' writing and speaking skills through meaningful, real-world experiences. For example, children practice writing and speaking by writing and telling stories to an audience of their classmates. This sounds a great deal like CLT, in which students may share information and achieve their learning goals as a group or team (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Similarly, during the preparation of group storytelling, students share and discuss ideas, and assign roles according to members' inclinations to create a story. They build a spirit of teamwork and cooperation to achieve one common goal, a story.

Further parallels may be seen in Henninger's (2005) discussion of storytelling, which is seen as encouraging learners to use the language for a range of different purposes and functions as they tell stories based on different topics and themes. In addition, depending on the audience and settings, learners learn through storytelling to choose their language appropriately. For example, a story told to fellow students in a classroom setting may employ informal slang, whereas stories told to an audience of parents in a school assembly would probably not. Furthermore, learners

learn how to use different texts to tell different kinds of stories. Finally, storytelling encourages learners to learn to maintain communication to entertain their audience (e.g. use of gestures) despite limitations in their language knowledge. All of these characteristics may be found in descriptions of CLT. Cummins and Davidson (2007) argue that the most familiar way to enhance CLT in the language classroom is through storytelling because of its shared characteristics with "everyday spoken manifestation in personal narratives, anecdotes, recounts, tall tales and other subtypes" (p.869).

2.5   Task Based Language Teaching

Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is essentially a way to organize a CLT syllabus. According to Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011) one of the objectives of a teacher who uses TBLT is to facilitate learning by encouraging students in a range of tasks that have a clear outcome. Larsen-Freeman and Anderson explain that in TBLT the role of the teacher is to:

> Choose tasks, based on the analysis of students' needs that are appropriate to the level of the students and to create pre-task and task follow-up phases that are in line with the abilities and needs of the students. The teacher also monitors the students' performance, and intervenes as necessary. The roles of the students are to communicate with their peers to complete a task (p.156).

There are certain outstanding characteristics of TBLT that are similar to the teaching language through storytelling, or the Storytelling Method. Both TBLT and the Storytelling Method follow three phases.

1. The first phase begins with the teacher introducing students to the language they will need to complete the task. The task must be meaningful and relevant in order for students to relate tasks to everyday life experience. In the Storytelling Method, the teacher starts with oral storytelling, followed by introducing students to the language they will need for their stories.
2. The second phase is the active participation of students (e.g. telling stories and discussing story ideas), the teacher monitors and intervenes where and when necessary. The outcome of the task must be clear to enable both teacher and students to identify when the task is successfully completed.

3. The final phase is focused on addressing problems that may have arisen in students' learning or reinforcing the students' learning, through feedback (Larsen-Freeman &Anderson, 2011).

When using the TBLT approach, the following three significant circumstances need to be present:

1. Learners need to be exposed on a regular basis to the target language in a significant social or communicative situation, i.e. much comprehensible input needs to be present in the classroom.
2. Learners need to be given the opportunity on a frequent basis to actively use the target language in communication situations, i.e. the opportunity to produce comprehensive output.
3. Learners need to be strongly motivated to learn the language, or else they will fail to make a long and sustained effort, which is needed to enable them to acquire the lexical and grammatical system of the target language.

One significant characteristic of task-based teaching is that, apart from the fact that it is centred in CLT, it "does not follow a particular function, or even a particular form of the language" (p.153). According to Davies (2006) and Henninger (2005), with the Storytelling Method of teaching, students are surrounded with English language in the classroom through active discussion and participation. This motivates and encourages them to make a long sustained effort to learn English.

The Storytelling Method that was used for this thesis has similar characteristics as TBLT. Schnank (1988) argues that a TBLT approach is evident in the Storytelling Method through two interdependent mechanisms: the task environment and the storyteller. According to her, "the task environment provides a student with engaging, motivating activities, the teacher monitors the task environment, looking for opportunities to present tasks that will help students to learn" (p.105). In order to present cases that will help students learn from their interactions, Schnank suggests that teachers using storytelling should help students to choose story topics that expose them to a variety of situations.

2.6   The National Curriculum, CLT and Storytelling

The English teaching objectives of the National Curriculum (2007) are similar to those of CLT. For example, the National Curriculum states that students should be able to:

1. Write various types of text in seamless prose.
2. Apply basic grammar points in speech and writing.
3. Write continuous text in appropriate language on familiar topics and follow the main traditions regarding structure: introduction, body and conclusion.
4. Communicate effectively, participate in discussions on familiar topics, and express themselves appropriately according to their situation.
5. Handle unexpected situations, using the language in authentic situations.
6. Present short prepared speeches on topics they know, and explain their views.
7. Generally, be able to understand when two people interact.

Clearly, both CLT, and by extension storytelling, are at home in the National Curriculum.

2.7   Learner Autonomy and Storytelling

As the saying goes, "You can lead a horse to water but you can't make it drink." In the English language classroom, teachers can make available all the necessary conditions and input, but learning can only take place when learners are interested and willing to do so. Learners may not always take active part in the learning process when forced or knowledge is "dumped" on them; rather they may passively "play along," waiting for the lesson to be over. For learners to take active part in the learning process, they need to understand and acknowledge that success in learning depends as much on them as on the teacher. That is, both students and teacher share responsibility for the outcome (Scharle & Szabó, 2000).

Learner autonomy in language teaching is an approach in which students take charge of their own learning. It is hinged on the understanding that giving students the opportunity to be responsible for their own learning may actually motivate them to learn, and the more involved students become in the learning process, the greater and longer lasting their learning will be (Aşık, 2010; Benson, 2003). Learner autonomy is in fact one of the main features of storytelling as a teaching strategy, for it redefines the roles of students and teacher (Palfreyman & Smith, 2003). In storytelling as in learner autonomy, after the teacher has made available all of the necessary learning conditions and inputs through prompts, introduction, reminders and outlines, the students themselves collaborate

independently with peers and group members to create a story that appeals to their audience. Students therefore understand that the teacher serves as a facilitator who guides them, but the successful outcome depends as much on the students as on the teacher.

2.8   Multiple Intelligences (MI) and Storytelling

In 1983, Howard Gardner proposed the theory of multiple intelligences as a theory that differentiates intelligence into various specific models instead of viewing it as a single general ability (e.g. writing, reading or speaking ability) (Gardner, 1993). Gardner identifies eight separate intelligences as logical mathematical, linguistic, music, spatial relations, bodily kinaesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal and naturalist (Gardner 2006). Gardner sees linguistic intelligence as "the kind of ability exhibited in the fullest form, perhaps by poets, (p.49)". In addition, he emphasise that linguistic ability is the most dramatic example of one puzzle of human learning with which we learn to carry performance (Gardner, 1991). As discussed earlier on, I consider poetry as a form of storytelling because reciting poetry fits Champion's (2003) explanation of storytelling (for that matter poetry) as an oral activity where language and gestures are used in a colourful way to create scenes in a sequence (Champion, 2003). In an instructional context, storytelling provides opportunities for language learners to use their Multiple Intelligences as basis to learn. Through appealing to different intelligences in storytelling, students have opportunities to build on their individual strengths in order to consolidate, expand and deepen their learning.

All students come to school with different sets of developed intelligences. Students have both strengths and weaknesses. The emphasis is not on what strengths and weaknesses students have, but rather how teachers can appeal to many types of strengths. According to Woolfolk et al (2008), the fact that a student might be weak in one area (e.g. vocabulary), does not mean that the student is weak in all the other skills in language (e.g. speaking). Therefore, Gardner (2006) wrote that, "the purpose of school should be to develop intelligences and to help people reach vocational and avocational goals that are appropriate to their particular spectrum of intelligences" (p.50).

The multiple intelligences theory suggests a major transformation in the way teachers can help students achieve their aim as learners. It encourages teachers to present lessons in a wide range of ways using music, cooperative learning, art activities, role-play, multimedia, field trips, inner

reflection and so forth in their lessons because it will result in a broader scope of human potential in students (Woolfolk et al, 2008).

Citing Gardner's eight intelligences, Henninger (2005) argues that lessons should be "balanced with different kinds of language practices" so that "every pupil could benefit" (p.8). According to Henninger, storytelling activities may call upon all eight intelligences, as listed in Table 1.

Table 1 MI and Storytelling

Intelligences	Activities
Logical Mathematics	Classifying words, bringing picture of the story in the right order, solving puzzle, filling in the gaps.
Linguistics	Playing with words, word games, writing of poems, stories, picking up memorised words from a story easily, writing a story or letter.
Music	Inventing songs and playing sounds, playing instruments, making music to demonstrate the rightful mood of the story.
Visual/Spatial	Remembering things by image, drawing of pictures, creating of flash cards, working with colours, designing of storybook.
Bodily-kinaesthetic	Using body language, moving, mimes, gestures and performance.
Interpersonal	Working in cooperation with others, pair and group work to discuss storyline and to tell the story to the audience (fellow students), role play, chorusing, chanting, hooting, clapping, and whistling together.
Intrapersonal	Communicating of feelings, writing of poems, having own space while listening to the story.
Naturalist	Including life experience within the environment in stories, using right environment to depict (season) story setting, knowing and including things from the environment in stories.

2.9   Project-Based Learning (PBL)

Project-Based Learning (PBL) is a natural partner of the Multiple Intelligence theory because student projects draw on a variety of abilities and allow for

several bases to learning, often revealing meaningful, complicated work over time. PBL is an instructional approach that organises learning around projects that keep students motivated and interested (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). The creation of group stories where students work in teams over time, exhibits characteristics of PBL in storytelling methods. According to Henninger (2005), "Stories are motivating and fun and can help develop positive attitudes towards foreign language and language learning" and that "they can create a desire to continue learning" (p.6).

Mergendoller, Markham, Ravitz, & Larmer (2006) encourage teachers to plan activities in PBL to respond to questions or solve problems outside the classroom, for instance writing stories that relate to events outside the classroom environment. Students get the opportunity to solve problems or create results when they work with projects in collaboration with others, helping them to develop their own interpersonal intelligence and to value their peers' intelligence. Students then use the intelligences to complete the work or project at hand, "not as ends in themselves" (Krechevsky & Seidel, 1998. p.27).

2.10 Process Writing and Storytelling

Implementing process writing can take many forms depending on the writing task. Story writing is one of the forms in which process writing can be implemented. In story writing students are encouraged to create story outlines; make drafts; revise the drafts through peer or teacher feedback; and edit their work. When they are satisfied with the final draft, they share the work with their fellow students (Moore, 2001).

Johnson and Johnson (1999) look at process writing as a shift from the kind of writing exercise where the focus was put on the finished texts to the process of creating writing, e.g. from what is written and what grade it is worth, to how to write and to develop as a writer. The basic importance in process writing is on creating quality content and learning the techniques of writing.

With process writing, students usually work through stages of the writing process as follows: Students start from the planning stage where they generate ideas for their writing. Secondly, they spend time to compose a rough draft. After the drafting stage, students move to the revising stage where they are encouraged to reread their work, share it with partners or group members and then make changes based on feedback. The subsequent stage requires students to make mechanical corrections to improve their writing. The final stage of the writing process, sharing, is reached when the

work is in its final form. These stages are not sequential because writers move back and forth between these stages while writing.

Moore (2001) demonstrates the steps in story writing process as follows:

1. Prewriting: Takes place before writing begins. It is the time to become motivated and collect words, thoughts, facts and questions to use when writing. This step draws on the writer's experiences. Brainstorm possible topics and formats. Discuss the intended audience. Determine the point of view of the story.
2. Drafting: This is writer's first expression of ideas in written form. The writer creates an outline for the story and then writes a rough draft.
3. Responding: The writer reads the story to make sure that it makes sense. The writer may share the story to get another person's response.
4. Revising: The writer changes the rough draft to state ideas more clearly. This is the time to look at phrases and words that express the writer's ideas in a more precise and interesting way.
5. Editing: This is the point at which the writer checks the mechanics such as grammar, punctuation and spelling.
6. Rewriting: The writer re-writes to include all the changes made during the revising and editing stage.
7. Publishing: The writer presents the final story in finished form. It is shared with others in some way. This sharing with others is a motivating factor for students, as well as an important element in the writing process (p.2).

The above seven steps in story process writing share clear characteristics in process writing as described by Johnson and Johnson (1999). Moore (2001) further argues that it is imperative in story process writing to encourage students to learn the parts that make a story. First, she argues that before undertaking the main writing task, teachers need to elicit students to identify that stories have three main parts, which are beginning, middle and end. In addition, Moore indicates that before the main story writing process, teachers need to explain parts of what makes a good story to their students. She identifies these parts of story as characters (e.g. people, animals, creatures etc.), settings (location and time in which the story takes place), plots (including problems, incidents or actions that affects the characters and cause a reaction or a search of

solution or conclusion) and finally, solution and conclusion (resolution of the problem or final outcome of the story).

In my study, I employed other teaching strategies like project based learning, task based learning, and process writing, and I tried to use those teaching strategies in a way that would acknowledge Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences.

2.11 Putting it all together

According to Dulop (1997), when the Storytelling Method is used with other methods such CLT, learner autonomy, TBLT and process writing, it enhances language learning. In order to achieve the objectives of the National Curriculum (2007) regarding English teaching, I intended to motivate students to tell short stories, and communicate their story ideas during story writing to make the lesson CLT-based. Furthermore, my intention was to guide students to choose tasks that would motive and engage them in a meaningful way in order to provide them with the opportunity to learn from their task environment in order to employ TBLT as discussed by Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011), above.

In addition, I put students in groups of mixed ability according to their intelligences, making sure that each group had members with different abilities or who were stronger in one of the eight intelligences mentioned by Gardner (1993) above. To encourage an autonomous learning environment in the classroom as argued by Benson (2003) and to encourage and motivate students to take charge of their own learning, I made use of prompts, introductions, reminders and outlines, and motivated students to collaborate independently with their peers (group members) to create a story that would appeal to their audiences.

To follow the guidelines of Mergendoller, Markham, Ravitz, Larmer (2006), and Larsen-Freeman (2000) in creating PBL lesson, I directed and motivated students through fun and hands-on activities to create projects in collaboration with peers or group members; this helped students to develop their own interpersonal intelligence, which in effect gave them the opportunity to value their peers' intelligence.

In order to guide students through the process of writing for this thesis, I followed Moore's (2001) and Johnson and Johnson (2009) outline of story process writing to encourage students to learn the basic process of writing. To sum up, I used the above established and proven approaches and

theories discussed under the umbrella of storytelling as a teaching strategy to achieve the goals of the National Curriculum (2007).

3   Methodology

This chapter covers an overview of methods used in the study. Areas covered include an argument in favour of the chosen method, a prologue to the main study, research design, population and sampling, data collection and analysis.

As an English language teacher, I have wondered how I could enhance CLT. Many academic articles (e.g. Henniger, 2000; Scala, & Schroder, 1997 & Fox, 1993) provide ways that storytelling can be employed in the language classroom to enhance CLT, and so I decided to explore this approach. My main goal in carrying out this study was to address the perceived underutilization of CLT in the English language classroom in Iceland, and to use storytelling as a way of enhancing CLT in a way that would fit with the objectives of the Icelandic National Curriculum (2007). Therefore, I based my study on Action Research to give me a practical way to examine my own teaching in order to explore whether and how I could employ storytelling to achieve the aims set by the National Curriculum (2007) of Iceland.

3.1   Prologue to the main study

Prior to this study, in November 2009, I conducted an 80-minute classroom-based study during my final teaching practice in a grade ten class to determine whether stories with familiar themes were more effective than those with unfamiliar themes for teaching English listening to Icelandic adolescents. Two stories were used for this preliminary study. One was Hansel and Gretel, a popular European story by the Grimm brothers and a story well known to the students. The second story was Ghanaian story entitled "How wisdom came into this world," featuring Ananse the spider, a popular story character in Ghana.

One thing I realised during this initial study was that storytelling was exceptionally influential. Students actively participated in the lesson to construct knowledge. Storytelling encouraged communication and I realised it may be a teaching technique that could be used in Iceland with ninth and tenth grade students, keeping in mind that the stories would need to be culturally and linguistically appropriate. This directly linked to

the assertion of Siew and Chwen (2010) that storytelling has potential in facilitating constructivist learning in which learners are given the opportunity to construct knowledge in a learning environment via stories.

Students' work suggested that both stories were effective in teaching English to adolescents in Iceland. The class teacher and teaching practice supervisor's comments also suggested the effectiveness of both stories. However, after consulting with the course tutor, I realised that eighty minutes was too short a time to ascertain the effectiveness of the method. For that reason, I decided to do a study over a six-week period, to find out how well storytelling could be used as a teaching strategy in the English classroom in lower secondary school in Iceland to enhance CLT and help students improve their writing and speaking skills.

3.2   What I did in the six weeks period

1. I told a story that required students to collect "the parts of speech," which I had hidden throughout the classroom.
2. I told a story from the students' course book.
3. I told a Ghanaian folktale.
4. Students then wrote two stories,

A. One was an individual activity in which students created their own fantasy story.

B. The second was written in a group, on chosen themes. Here, students had the option of what theme to write the story about, how to present it, for instance a musical work, poem, acting, painting etc.

In addition, I took a survey to gauge students writing interest. Furthermore, I administered   goal-setting activities (form) on which students wrote goals they wanted to achieve during the six weeks that I was there. The final survey focused on how students thought their goals were achieved. I wrote in my research diary, took videos of students during every step of the study (sometimes my critical friend took video when I was busy) comments from students and my critical friend and my observations to evaluate the effectiveness and /or weakness of the method.

3.3   Action Research

 McNiff and Whitehead (2002) define Action Research as a "a particular way of researching your own learning" (p.5), meaning that Action Research is a procedure through which practitioners gather information about their

teaching and seek practical ways to improve it. McNiff and Whitehead used the words "researching your own learning" (p.5) because Action Research is done by the practitioner with the core objective of improving his or her own teaching and the students' learning, i.e. it is a "systematic investigation conducted by practitioners to provide information to immediately improve teaching and learning" (McNiff, 2008, p.329).

Creswell (2008) states that as teachers we use Action Research when we have a specific educational problem to solve and that Action Research can use data collection based on qualitative or quantitative methods, or both. In addition, he argues that, in education, Action Research should involve teaching and learning, and that the researcher should centre on something he or she feels enthusiastic about improving. In Action Research, teachers, counsellors, and administrators design, carry out, and use the results of the study in their immediate work environment; the professional (e.g. teacher) does the research with the main purpose of improving or changing his or her future actions. It addresses specific,

Action Research	Cyclical, not linear process	Action Research Steps:
	Observe…do… observe…adjust …do again	1. Identify and limit the topic 2. Review the related literature 3. Develop the research plan 4. Implement the plan and collect the data 5. Analyse the data 6. Develop an action plan 7. Share and communicate the result, and 8. Reflect on the research process
	Eight steps to provide guidance	
	Steps may be skipped or rearranged if appropriate	

practical issues and seeks to obtain solutions to a problem. One of the focuses of this study is to improve my action as an English teacher, by

addressing the issues of apparent underuse of CLT in the English classroom, and to seek a solution to the problem.

Mertler, C., A. (2006, P.21) provides a pictorial definition of action research as follows:

In the conclusion of this study I elaborate on how I have fulfilled all of the steps involved in conducting Action Research. For now, I will discuss how this study has met the basic process involved in conducting Action Research as indicated by Mertler (2006).

Action Research involves more than just doing activities. Mertler (2006, p.2) identifies the basic process of conducting action research as follows:

1. Identifying an area of focus
2. Collecting data
3. Analysing and interpreting data and
4. Developing a plan of action

3.4   Identifying an area of focus

The purpose of this study was specifically to determine how storytelling may be adapted as a communicatively focussed teaching strategy to help adolescents in the ninth and tenth grades of Icelandic lower secondary school improve their English writing and speaking skills as reflected in the Icelandic National Curriculum (2007). This purpose meets the basic criteria of Action Research, which requires addressing specific, practical problems, in order to obtain solutions.

Moreover, this focuses on teaching and learning, which Creswell (2008) indicates is a criterion necessary for Action Research. In addition, I am enthusiastic about improving my teaching as an English language teacher through storytelling methods. This meets another criterion set by Creswell, which is that the research should involve something the practitioner seeks to change or improve.

3.5   Data Collection

My research diary, which was a book and my computer, was my main source of data collection. In the diary, I wrote comments relating to issues of the research from students and my critical friend. In addition, I logged events (e.g. date and a note about the contents). Furthermore, I described in detail complex situations that I deemed to be relevant to the research. For instance, I logged a detailed description of a situation when a female

student who claimed she was not good in English explained to me about an argument in her group. I normally recorded my observations and quotations from the students and my critical friend into my research diary after each lesson, which helped to remind me of things I might have forgotten or overlooked. A research diary helps to provide documentary data that we can return to and reflect on (Metler, 2006).

With permission from the gatekeeper and critical friend, I videotaped and took pictures of students in their classroom situation and during group presentations so that I could play the video repeatedly to retrieve accurate and vital information for the study, and to show as physical evidence of the method. McNiff and Whitehead (2010) argue that multimedia (e.g. video and pictures) "can bring scholarship to life as well as provide authentic evidence base for claim to knowledge" (p.166). My videos and pictures serve as authentic evidence to knowledge claimed.

Another way I collected data was through observation. I watched what was happening in the classroom and systematically recorded my observations. McNiff and Whitehead (2010) speak of the first step of Action Research as the investigation stage, where we take stock of what is happening, or observation. My aim was to observe myself in company with the students to see whether I was exercising my educational influence in their thinking, and theirs in mine. I focused on students' interaction, participation, collaboration and socialisation, as well as on whether students were smiling, laughing and generally reacting to the stories I told them, for that informed me of how I was influencing them.

Survey of writing interest and awareness

	A lot	Some	A little	Not at All
1. I like to write stories				
2. I am a good writer				
3. Writing stories is easy for me				
4. Writing to friends is fun				
5. Writing helps me in school				
6. I like to share my writing with others				
7. I write at home				
8. What kind of things do you like to write about?				
9. How have you improved as a writer? What can you do well?				
10. What else do you want to improve in your writing?				

Source: (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996)

On writing skills, I administered two questionnaires to students after each lesson. In the structured close-ended questionnaire items, students were asked to mark the appropriate box matching the correct answer. Two questions required students to give opinions. The ten items were:

The objective of the questionnaire was to identify students' interest in story writing, their attitude towards writing in general and their writing weaknesses. The questionnaire further helped me as the teacher to know what help, or which resources, to bring to each individual.

I collected students' written exercises and photocopied them, to discover whether students improved over time in their brainstorming, peer reviews, writing of drafts and final versions of their stories or not. Another way I collected data was through observation. I observed the courage with which students told their stories during storytelling times and the social way they argued on story topics. I also observed the empathetic way with which students helped each other (especially those that were too shy to speak before the class and those that were not good in English) and the zeal with which they presented their stories in groups.

Finally, I interviewed my critical friend in between lesson to record her views in my research. Sometimes I recorded her view (if I had only a five-minute break) in order to save time. The interviews helped me to identify whether I needed to change something before the next lesson began. Creswell (2008) identifies data collection in Action Research as research diaries, photographs, pupils' work, observations and interviews among others. The type of data collected meets the criteria Creswell discusses.

McNiff and Whiteshead (2010), and Metler (2006), rightly argue that when using questionnaires in Action Research, it is more effective to use both closed and open questions. On closed-ended questions, Metler argues that it requires less space for the answer, and the answers are easier to tally. As a result, it is unlikely to get back answers that fall outside the specified range. Open questions, McNiff and Whitehead argue, require more space for answers, and even though they are time consuming to analyse they do close possibilities because they set "boundaries for possible answers" (p.162).

3.6   Analysing and interpreting data

Mertler (2006) argues that in Action Research, the decision about which data analysis to use depends on whether the data is qualitative or quantitative. Most importantly, he argues that the kind of data analysis

used "must match the research questions being addressed and hopefully, answered by the study" (p.28). This means that the type of data analysis used should be in line with the research questions and ultimately seek to answer the study. In addition, Mertler argues that in Action Research descriptive analysis may suffice. Inferential analysis may however, be required when comparing groups or measuring relationships between variables. Finally, he points out that the analysis of Action Research is less complex and more detailed than other, formal, research studies.

The findings part of this study will show how after collecting all the needed data, I interpreted what students and my critical friend did and/or said as evidence of the success of the study. I used numbers to create a table out of which I made a chart in order to give a graphic insight to the study, especially when I compared the results from one of the questionnaires administered. I included students' work, my research diary, and other data sources in the analysis, for the creation of the chart to explain the learning process of students and views of my critical friend. This is in line with how Mertler (2006) and Creswell (2008) identify analysing data in Action Research.

3.7 Developing a plan of action

Action Research works through an orderly sequence of reflection and action, which is referred to as the action plan. The action plan according to McNiff (2010) reads like this:

- My concern to do this study/ what would I like to improve?
- Reasons why I did this study
- What I hope to improve with this study
- Who can help me and how?
- What evidence can I show to prove that my action has brought improvement?

Why I am concerned

As an English language teacher, I became greatly concern when I read Lefever's (2009) article that showed the underuse of CLT in the English language classroom in Iceland. I devoted my time to find other teaching methods that could enhance the learning of English. Therefore, I strove to take action that would bring some improvement to my teaching and contribute to the academic community by using one of my favourite methods, storytelling, through which I learnt the Ewe language. This is in

line with McNiff's (2010) explanation of Action Research involving finding ways to improve one's practice.

Reasons why I did this study

One of my core objectives as a teacher is to make the learning process for my students as fun, communicative, memorable and as academic as possible. The type of language learning process that I was exposed to when I was young influences the stand I took. Traditional teaching methods where the teacher is regarded as the one with all the power was the kind of teaching method that I was exposed to from pre-school to college. One major thing the traditional method lacks is student communication and authentic use of the target language.

Those who helped me and how

A class of twenty-five ninth grade students, and another class of fourteen tenth grade students from the same lower secondary school were purposefully selected to participate in the study. This was because according to the requirements of the National Curriculum (2007), students at these grade levels are expected to have learned English for four (ninth graders) and five years (tenth graders), and as noted by Arnbjörnsdóttir (2007), most of them know at least colloquial English, which could be used as a background to introduce storytelling.

I used convenient sampling in selecting the site and the participants for the study. Creswell (2008) explains convenient sampling as kind of sampling techniques that focuses on selecting participants that are easiest to recruit for a study instead of selecting large population of participants that are representative of entire population.

I sent letters (see Appendix 9.1.4) seeking permission to conduct the study at one of three different schools. Upon receiving two positive replies, I chose the school that was closest. After I received consent from the head teacher who served as the gatekeeper to the school, I discussed the study with the English language teacher responsible for those grade levels. She was interested in the study because she wanted to use storytelling in her teaching.

3.8   A Critical Friend

It is very important in a profession, especially when undertaking a project that is intended to improve your professional practice, to have a friend or colleague who is a member of your professional community to serve as a critical friend. This person can be assigned to work, push, and examine the

project, not only critiquing, but also giving advice, and support the project and make sure that things are not overlooked and misinterpreted. Such friends should have empathy for your research situation and relate to their concerns, but should be able to provide rich and honest feedback at the same time. Such friends are what Altrichter, Posch & Somekh (1993) call critical friends.

A critical friend is a trusted person who asks provocative questions, provides data to be examined through another lens, and offers criticism of a person's work, as a friend. Every friend can criticise, but a critical friend does not only criticise but also gives suggestions as to how to improve. Critical friends remind the friend of what they have already accomplished, point out how far they come and assist them towards the next goals (Leithwood & Hallinger, 2002).

My critical friend was the English teacher for the ninth and tenth grade classes in the study; therefore, she was very experienced in teaching English to that grade level. I have known her during my teaching practice through which we became friends and she was interested in the project because she said that she would like to see it succeed and use it in her own teaching. She was honest enough to tell me when she thought I was doing something wrong by suggesting how she thought I could improve. However, she also commended me when I did things well. She truly reflected all the characteristics of a critical friend as identified by Gregoire & Jungers (2007) and Leithwood & Hallinger (2002).

4 Procedure

This section covers the main procedure for the study and provides a systematic guide to teachers, administrators or any educationists who wish to emulate this study.

4.1 Writing

Students wrote two stories within the first three weeks of the study: one in groups, on themes that were chosen by each group, and the other an individual writing exercise in which students, with the help of the teacher, created their own individual fantasy stories.

To encourage autonomous learning in the classroom as described by Benson (2003), during the individual story writing, students had the opportunity of writing about themes and topics of their choice. In addition, during group story writing, groups came to agreement through discussion and decided on what theme to write the story about, and how to present it, for instance through a musical work, poem, drama, painting etc. The lesson for that day ended with a discussion about the components of storytelling, which students identified based on the structure of the story of English part of speech As the discussion continued, students realised that storytelling encompasses more than just a beginning, middle and an end. A mind map of what they agreed their stories should look like was drawn (I drew it in my research diary during recess, as a reminder). The mind map looked like Figure 1.

Out of the discussions about what makes a good story, students with the help of the researcher created this rubric, which I recorded in my research diary, as a basis on which their written exercise should be assessed:

- 2 points - punctuation
- 5 points - structure and content
- 2 points – grammar
- 1 points - structure variety

Encouraging students to come up rubrics to assess their story gave them the opportunity to take charge and to be responsible for their own learning. This was designed to motivate them to learn, and be more involved in the learning process. Aşık, (2010) and Benson (2003) argue that

when students get the opportunity to take charge and be responsible in their learning process, they become motivated and take a more active part in the process, and as a result their learning lasts longer.

The beginning

The Middle

Introduce Character
1. Two Characters
   Good vs. Bad
2. Describe their apearance and personalities: What makes them good or bad.
3. Set the Scene
   Place and Time
   When and where (now, past or future)
   What is the problem?

The Story

How the hero deals with the problem

Character sorts out the problem, or not, and story finishes

The End
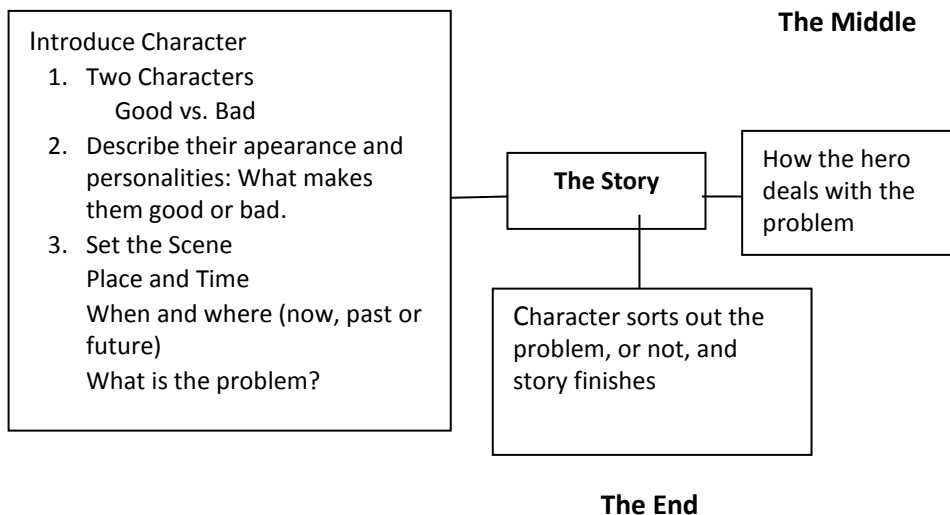
I followed Moore's (2001) suggestion on the prewriting stage of story writing by giving students brainstorming exercises in the form of prompts, reminders and encouragement to help them structure the stories and map out exciting events, key turning points, critical or dark moments, problematic scenes and a solution. Students had free choice of what topic or themes to write their stories about. They were encouraged to write words in Icelandic that they found difficult to write in English, and later look them up in an Icelandic-English dictionary; this was done to encourage students to put their ideas down without having to worry too much about writing correctly or finding the right English words. They wrote down story ideas, which were later discussed in class.

Following the prewriting stage, setting and characters were developed using a brainstorming exercise:

- Close your eyes and think about a place- a village, town a country, a city, in a forest- just a place. Open your eyes and write it down.
- Think about two people, one male and the other a female. Give them names.
- What do they look like? Open your eyes and describe them in writing.

Next, the story's setting was developed. Students were asked to do the following:

- Imagine a place, a village, a city or even a world. How do you get to that place? Through a door, a hole, a box, ... how? Open your eyes and write it down
- In that world, what can you see, hear, smell, feel, or taste? Open your eyes and write it down.

The next step was characterization. Again, students were prompted as follows:

- A fairy-tale character appears. Where, How? Open your eyes and write it down.
- Pay attention to a rustling in a tree, a sound from behind. Does it crash in front of you? Open your eyes and write it down.
- Imagine what the fairy-tale character looks like. Describe it.

Something is about to happen...

- What does the character do to you?
- Is the character nasty?
- Does it run after you?
- Is it friendly? If yes, do you help him do something?
- Is the character hurt? How? Write it down.

Subsequently, a problem is created.

- Does the character capture you?
- Does it take you to its home, a cave, on a tree, in a space ship?
- OR
- Do you meet a problem when you try to help it?

Finally, and ending is written.

- How did you solve the problem?
- Did you run away? How?

The brainstorming exercise was part of my lesson plan that I kept in my computer for future reference. After this brainstorming exercise, students paired up to share their story outlines. I videotaped students during this process, and sometimes, when I could, took pictures of them to help me go

back to the video and the picture for vital information for analysis. The main purpose of pairing students to share their story outline was to encourage them to negotiate meaning, use communication strategies, correct misunderstandings, and work to avoid communication breakdowns with their peers. Larsen-Anderson (2000) argues that doing this helps to develop communicative competence in the target language.

First Draft

Students came to class in the beginning of the second week of the study with Icelandic-English, and English-Icelandic dictionaries. There was one girl in the ninth grade who came with a Polish-English dictionary. Some of the students used online dictionaries. After brainstorming, students were encouraged to convert their outline ideas into a draft. Moore (2003) agrees that drafting is the writer's first expression of ideas in written form and that drafting enables students to describe their characters and the community in the story in detail, and to develop subplots, thus enriching the main story. I returned the rubric that the class generated back to students to guide their writing. I asked students to work individually but encouraged them to ask for assistance from either their peers or the teacher, which they did. I kept the rubrics that the class generated in my computer for future reference.

Feedback

Feedback was twofold. First, students got responses from peers after sharing their drafts. The second aspect of feedback was teacher based, in the form of grades and written comments related to work done in accordance with the rubric. The focus was on creating stories rather than on finished texts. As Johnson and Johnson (1999) argue, process-writing focuses on how to write and develop as a writer, unlike the traditional writing exercise that focuses on what is written and what grade it is worth. This process shifted the focus from the finished texts to the process of creating stories. This confirms what Johnson and Johnson (1999) rightly argue, which is that process writing focuses on how to write and develop as a writer than on what is written and what grade it is worth. I photocopied some of the written drafts in my computer for future reference.

Among some of the comments given were the following:

- Excellent story opening etc.
- Excellent- you have made good changes.

- Excellent, you have checked and corrected most of the spelling mistakes.
- Great effort, use the dictionary to check spelling.
- Excellent story, look the Icelandic words up in the dictionary, I cannot wait to read the final version.

I logged every written comment that I gave students in my research diary with the name of student. This was to help me link the comment to students at the final stage of the stories to see how they had developed as writers.

A self-assessment and goal-setting exercise was added to the draft, requiring students to assess themselves on what they did well and what they could improve. The objective of the self-assessment exercise was for students to set realistic goals regarding writing and active participation in class work, and to responsibly work towards achieving those goals. See Appendix (Heading 9.1.1) for the exercises. Drafts with feedback were returned to students to use as revision to guide their writing of the final version.

After the feedback, I encouraged revision by using the feedback that their peers and I had provided. I especially asked students to consider words and phrases that express thoughts precisely and interestingly. After that, I taught students how to set their computer language to English so that their grammar, punctuation and spelling was automatically checked. All of these procedures cover what Moore suggests as the responding, revising and editing steps of the writing process.

Final Version

Some of the students were too shy to share their final drafts with others. Instead, they came and talked to me about their stories and asked how I liked them. The more outgoing students freely shared their stories. Sharing stories with others is what Moore calls publishing. She argues that sharing stories with others serves as a motivating factor as well as an important stage in the writing process.

4.2   Speaking

Speaking is a vital element in learning a language. Acquiring communicative skills helps students to express themselves and learn how to follow social and cultural rules suitable in each communicative situation. In speaking, students are inclined to get something done, they explore ideas, they work out some aspect of the world, or just be together (Richards, 2006). The National Curriculum (2007) states that the aim of teaching

speaking is to advance students' communicative skills so that they can function well in authentic situations. Below, I discuss how I used story writing to enhance speaking in ninth and tenth grade in an Icelandic compulsory school.

Class definition of storytelling

Based on the story writing exercises, students discussed what storytelling meant in their opinion. The following are some of the ideas that came up. They said that storytelling was when we:

- talk about our experiences, but through an imaginary person
- create a magical world and talk about something that went on in that world
- talk about something we learn in a story form in a funny way
- talk about our friends without mentioning their names
- talk about our problems
- talk about what we want to see happen
- tell about things we learn like science and life skills, in a story form, to make them funny and interesting.

This exercise gave students the power to construct their own meaning of storytelling through experience. This supports one of Henniger's (2005) arguments that storytelling activities encourage students to construct meaning in line with real-world experiences.

Group work

I created two seven-member groups in the tenth grade, and five five-member groups in the ninth grade. I asked each group to include music or poems in their stories, just as I had learned in Lume-Avete, to make the story and presentation more fun and to encourage all areas of intelligences as identified by Gardner (1983; 1991; 1993).

To encourage students to use the target language in an authentic situation, and to introduce them to the language they would need to complete the task of storytelling, I told them two extra stories. Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011) explain that the first phase of Task Based Learning has the teacher introducing students to the language they will need to complete the task. One of the stories, which was from their course book, was about a shooting event in the house of the popular British singer Robin Williams, and the other, a Ghanaian folktale. The Ghanaian folktale was about a devoted citizen of a village where people were dying due to

famine, who went on a quest to an evil land to claim a magical ring from an evil king in order to attract rainfall for their land to yield food and to stop the famine. In the Robin Williams' story, I told the beginning of the story and each group were encouraged to end the story in their own words. In the second story, I told the beginning and the end of the story and students were encouraged to create the middle. Some of the shy students told short but vivid endings and middle parts, whereas the more outgoing students gave longer and more vivid components. I observed students throughout the story, both when I was telling the stories and when their peers were telling one, to see their reaction. Students' reactions (smiling, laughing, some students even writing new words down, etc.) suggested that the method was effectively communicative.

Criteria for creating the group

To focus on students' various intelligences, I came up with criteria to create groups so that each group comprised as many intelligences as possible. In each class, I drew the following table on the board, which I logged in my research diary for reference, and students chose under what preference they wanted to be placed.

Singing	Talking	Acting	Drawing	Writing

Friends wanted to be in the same group but after explaining to them the benefits of being with other members with different abilities for good results, students agreed to be in groups according to mixed ability, and to build new friendships. In this way, the full use of students' multiple intelligences as suggested by Gardner (1991; 1993) and Smidt (2007) was encouraged.

Story ideas

As students gathered in groups to discuss and reach consensus about their story topics and themes, I moved among the groups, occasionally sitting with a group to listen and contribute to the group without communicating my preference, creating the likelihood for students to ask questions and make suggestions. This was the noisiest class during my stay in the school. There were arguments as to why certain topics were not acceptable; students were freely communicating their views in support of their ideas or against some story ideas that their peers suggested. These arguments, discussions and communication of students' views characterise the basis of

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Task Based Learning (TBL) and Project Based Learning (PBL).

This classroom environment, where students used English for communication, fits the characteristics of a CLT class as Richards (2006) explained in the theoretical framework. Most of the time, students spoke English, but sometimes, when I was sitting with groups, I heard some other group speaking Icelandic, which my critical friend brought to my attention. I noticed, though, that there were two particular students, one in tenth and the other in ninth grade, who always went quiet whenever I got closer to their groups or sat with their groups. When I asked the tenth grader why she was quiet, this was what ensued between us:

S: I'm not good in English
As I persisted, she said this:
S: I say we write about a ghost girl, she kill policemen and other men on highway, many of them.
T: Why was the ghost killing only policemen and other men?
S: Ok, uuuhhh Police rannsaka the problem, and then they e..e..e... they eee...."
T: found
S: aahaaaa, they found that girl was killed some months ago, and police don't do anything to catch the ....e e...
T: Murderer
S: yea, the murderer who was a man, so girl ghost, kill men and police on the highway, because murderer kill her there. And we can say how it ends, but the boys don't want it, so I say aaahh, I keep quiet.

Right after the lesson, I stayed behind and described the scene as best as I could in my research diary, to use as data for the study as McNiff and Whitehead (2010) suggest should be done in Action Research.

The three boys who wanted to tell a different story overpowered the girl. The group later agreed to write a fairy-tale story about a silly prince who was required by the laws of his kingdom to go on a quest to rescue a princess from a dangerous tower so that he could become king.

The second student, Jóhanna, (all names are pseudonyms) in ninth grade said:

"Ég skil hvað þú ert að segja, en ég get ekki sagt orðin á ensku" (I understand what you are saying but I cannot say the words in English).

With her explanation in Icelandic, I asked one of her group members (Ingvar) who was very fluent in English to help her tell me in English what she just said. She frowned, but then repeated after her peer and told me what she had just said and giggled at the end of the sentence. I used Ingvar thereafter as a peer tutor to encourage her to contribute in the group, most of the time (at least when I went around) in English. It was interesting to see how she handled the situation. Each time she repeated something from Ingvar, she would laugh and cover her face with her palm, and her group members laughed too, telling her how well she was doing. In this way, making use of Ingvar as a peer tutor to assist Jóhanna enabled her take active part in the lesson.

After the groups' story ideas, I gave students a self-assessment form in which they were to write what they and other members contributed to their groups in regards to story ideas and structure (See Appendix: Heading #6). The purpose of giving them a self-assessment form was for them to identify how well they contributed to their group work, to motivate them and to encourage them to make more contributions to their group.

Group story outline

During the next lesson, students discussed in groups how they were going to present their stories. In one group in the ninth grade and the another in the tenth grade, students decided just to have scripts with pictures to act on (picture reading). However, in five groups, students decided to write the stories down, following the steps in the written exercises in their previous lesson, so that each group member could have a copy of the story after the presentation. Five story outlines and two scripts with some sketches representing the pictures they intended to draw were handed to me at the end of the lesson, for assessment and feedback. Students handed in the assessment form, which I went through and gave written comments to motivate them. Drafts of the stories for the groups who decided to write the stories were also handed to me for correction.

Assigning roles

Group members came to an agreement after lengthy discussions as to what roles each member should take. It turned out that the original criteria under which the groups were formed changed in most of the groups. According to students, some of the members were better at playing certain roles than the original roles assigned in the creation of the group. In some cases, group members thought some other students should take certain roles (e.g. acting, drawing, etc.) other than the ones originally assigned. Students later discussed their decisions with me, explaining that those

students were taking certain classes such as singing or acting, and were already good in those areas. I allowed them to change roles if they were comfortable and better in playing those roles other than the original roles since that would bring out the strongest intelligences in them.

Even though students sat in groups, they performed different roles, such as drawing, writing songs, looking for rhythms on the internet to go with songs, writing lyrics, or making musical noises here and there. I sent students to the school's sound room for their musical rehearsal. All groups communicated their final scripts and stories with me for corrections and suggestions before presenting them. Students accepted some suggestions and rejected others.

Putting work together

After the final versions, I checked groups' stories and scripts. Students then made posters on which they pasted their drawn pictures according to the beginning, middle and end of their stories. Some groups decided to also paste copies of their stories on posters so that after they were posted on walls, other students from other classes could see and read the stories they had created. Students did their final rehearsal of their stories, ready for presentation in the next lesson.

Presentation of group stories

Students came to school more dressed up than usual on the day of their presentation. Students' enthusiasm, smiling faces and the way they carried themselves suggested that they were proud of the stories and were happy to show what they had created. The presentation started with group members saying their names, the title of their stories, and reasons why they decided on those story topics. Stories had both narrators and actors. One student from each group narrated the story; other students pointed to the pictures with a pointer; others sang or recited poems; and the more outgoing students became the actors for the stories. Group members who had drawn pictures for their group stories introduced themselves as the artists. The whole process brought Gardner's Multiple Intelligences theory to life in the classroom that day.

At the end of the presentation, students were given five minutes to respond to a questionnaire generally about how they liked telling and writing stories and the storytelling method in teaching them (see Appendix:9.1.5)

5 Findings

This chapter will discuss the findings from my class work on storytelling as a strategy to improve students' writing and speaking skills and to encourage communication in the classroom. The chapter is organised into sub-chapters and with the focus on writing and speaking skills in accordance with the theoretical framework.

5.1 Writing

This section is focused on the findings from the story writing exercises in my study. I will discuss the findings from the brainstorming exercise, the draft and the final version of the stories students wrote.

5.1.1 After the Brainstorming exercise

After the brainstorming exercise, I paired students to discuss their story outlines while I circulated, listening to what they discussed. Some of the boys suggested science fiction and action stories, which the girls found boring, whereas the girls were more interested in love stories and stories based on morality, which the boys found uninteresting. Students were allowed to add to or delete from their stories after receiving peer feedback because either they found more ideas that they wanted to add or something they needed to delete.

The class was expectedly noisy just as a communicative class (Richards, 2006) was supposed to be. Students were especially excited that they had the option to express their own ideas, which contributed to the enthusiasm with which they responsibly did their writing exercise.

Table 2 depicts answers derived from the goal setting activity, showing in students' own opinions, what they could do and the goals they wanted to achieve during the study.

Based on students' answers to question 1a in Table 2, it is clear that many were motivated to identify what writing strengths they had, and what areas needed to be strengthened. According to students, this was their first written exercise in which they were guided to write. They were happy about what they wrote, became more relaxed, and had fun learning

after this exercise, which could be because they felt good about themselves, knowing that they could write stories.

Table 2. Results from goal setting form-Question 1a

	Students' answer	Number of Students
What does this sample show that you can do?	I can be creative	8
	I can use my power of imagination well	8
	I can write a story	5
	Everything is possible if you make the effort	6
	Need more writing lessons	12
Total number of students		39

Table 3. Results from goal setting form-Question 1b

	Students' answer	Number of students
Write about what you did well	Good story title	6
	Good story ideas	15
	Good spelling	4
	Created realistic world	5
	Put words together (sentencing)	3
	Good character description	6
Total number of students		39

As presented in Table 3, it is clear that students realised they did something good with the exercises. Most of them said they provided good story ideas. Equally, all students saw themselves to have done something good with storytelling/writing method. Even Jóhanna answered this question. She was among six students who said they wrote good story ideas.

This section of the activities is what helped me identify students' weaknesses to provide help and assist them in their writing exercises. Based on students' answers, I was able to identify in which areas students were weak and could assist them to learn by directing them to sources and

resources like writing in Microsoft Word and setting the program to "English", so that the computer could automatically help with punctuation, grammar and sentencing.

Table 4. Results from goal setting form-Question 2

	Students' answer	Number of students
Think about realistic goals. Write one thing you need to do better. I need to...	Come up with better story ideas	3
	Improve my spelling	18
	Describe my characters better	2
	Learn more English	1
	Have good imagination	1
	Be more specific	1
	Make correct sentences	6
	Improve my grammar	7
Total number of students		39

5.1.2 Students' Drafts and Final Version

Most students changed the order of their stories after peer and self-assessment. Some of them re-visited the story map the class created in the beginning of the study, and changed the organisation of their stories to match the process outlined on the story map, while others corrected the grammar and vocabulary. This made their writing more fluent, more structured and less ridden with grammar and other mistakes. The rewriting of stories to include all the changes made during the revising and editing stage is the second to final stage of the story writing process that Moore (2001) explains in the theoretical part of this thesis. This helped students to use advice and feedback to make their final writings even better.

I focused my feedback on students' drafts on two areas: organization and grammar. Organization considerations included whether the title related to the main story; whether students' introductions were interesting or catchy; and how the story developed from its beginning through its middle to its end. All thirty-eight (one student was absent) students used the class rubric that was created by the class as a guide while writing.

As for grammar and style, students used a rubric provided. I looked at whether students used a capital letter to start new sentences; whether

they used full stops at the end of sentences; whether they used different words to start sentences; and whether they used speech marks for conversations. I corrected only a few grammatical errors to prevent students from being confused and discouraged from writing. There were still a lot of stories with spelling mistakes at this stage, which I notified the students concerned to fix in their final version. In order not to discourage students' interest and their new zeal towards writing, I directed them only to use spell check in the Word documents, to help correct their spellings for their final version. Two dyslectic students in the ninth grades had almost every word spelled wrong, but they were the ones with the longer stories and with very stunning drawings.

According to the English language teacher, my writing exercise was the first time students in the ninth and tenth grade did such a detailed writing activity. Based on this information, I decided not to use self or peer editing but rather, used teacher editing so that I could provide more assistance during editing to them.

Students' final versions revealed that they used most of the advice given them in the feedback on their drafts and made corrections. Spelling and punctuation mistakes were much less frequent and organisation of the stories improved. Students were very thankful and proud, but most especially, they were surprised as to how much they produced and how well they produced it, and that boosted their confidence. In addition, a sample of students' writing task (see appendix 9.1.2) suggest that, students improved in their writing.

5.1.3   Comments from critical friend

My critical friend observed every lesson that I taught and gave me feedback, suggestions and criticism at the end of each lesson. I recorded her comments to use as data for the study. According to her, she liked how interested the students were in the activities to the extent that sometimes when the lesson was over they would ask that we finish what we were doing. She also pointed out that she was happy my method of teaching writing not only motivated and encouraged students to have fun and to learn at the same time, but that students were talking all the time and mostly in English.

She said, "Helga [not real name] was so happy after receiving her draft, she said you liked her story the most because you wrote under it, 'wow, interesting story I can't wait to read it'. But then I saw you wrote similar

encouraging feedback under each student's draft" This shows that she liked the way I encouraged the students with positive feedback.

She concluded that the best part of the writing exercise was that students were communicating their ideas all the time throughout the process. However, she also sometimes criticised my methods and class management style. For instance, when I told students a story and gave them clues to go on a quest to find elements of the story that I hid, she brought to my attention that the clues were a bit confusing. Based on her criticism, I had to stop the quest task and instead asked the class to re-tell the story in their own way and understanding, which was equally fun, until it was recess when I had some time to rewrite the clues in collaboration with her. She also helped me to be more vigilant to make sure students were not left idle.

5.1.4   Outcome of Survey of writing interest and awareness

After returning students' final version of their story, a survey of writing interest and awareness was distributed. They were required to check one box for each question (Questions number 1-7) and provide a written answer for questions 8-10. The chart below was derived from students' answers.

Table 5. Question number 8: Result from survey of writing interest and awareness

		A lot	Sometimes	A little	Not at all
1.	I like to write stories	5	20	6	8
2.	I am a good writer	10	22	5	2
3.	Writing stories is easy for me	6	7	19	6
4.	Writing to friends is fun	22	14	3	0
5.	Writing helps me in school	20	8	9	2
6.	I like to share my writing with others	0	10	7	22
7.	I write at home	1	22	22	4

Answers to question 8 in table 5 suggest that generally students have develop the liking for writing stories.

Tables 6 and 7 show the answers received fo8r questions 9 and 10.

Table 6. Question.9 How have you improved as a writer? What can you do well?

Students' answers	Number of students
Good imagination	4
Good spelling and description	5
Final product made better sense	13
I think my story is fun, they get better and better each time I write	1
I am now more creative in writing	1
More vocabulary, lively imagination	9
Can write more and be funny in my writing	1
Better vocabulary	3
I can use the computer to do the grammar for me	1

Table 7. Question.10 What else do you want to improve in your writing?

Students' answers	Number of students
Improve my handwriting	5
Imagine and write better	5
Better spelling	12
More vocabulary	12
How to be funny in my story	1
Be able to write longer stories	1
Listen more to BBC to improve my grammar	1
Sentencing	1

Answers to question 9, in Table 6, indicate that students perceive themselves as having improved in their writing and the responses to the last question in Table 7 reveals that students were motivated to improve.

5.2 Speaking

My goal of teaching speaking skills with storytelling was for students to communicate in English. In this section, I will discuss findings from speaking activities, from story preparation through rehearsal, and finally I will discuss the presentation of students' stories, which was the final assignment/project for the thesis.

5.2.1 Preparation, discussion and communication

A lot of healthy argument about story topics, which stories should group members accept, roles of members, and structure of the stories ensued during this stage. As I moved from group to group, I realised students used English language most of the time.

As required, each group member offered suggestions as to what theme and topic the group should consider, giving an explanation or an outline of the story. The class was noisy, but the outcome was that students were communicating their ideas and giving reasons why their topics should be accepted. As I listened to the groups, I noticed that the students used English most of the time during this stage. In some groups, students substituted Icelandic for English. Then they used Google Translate or a dictionary or asked their English teacher for the words in English. In fact, this seemed to help them to add to their vocabulary, for most of them wrote down the English words.

This story project confirms the theories discussed in the theoretical framework. Interacting with fellow students in English made the class communicative as described by Richards (2006). When group members worked on different tasks to achieve one common goal, students were engaged in Task Based Learning as discussed by Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011) because each group had a range of tasks that had a clear outcome. In addition, students taking charge of their learning, by noticing which strategy would work best for their group and changing roles in the group, reflected the fact that responsibility had been shifted to them. This describes learning autonomy as Benson (2003), Aşık (2010) and Scharle & Szabó (2000) have identified the concept. Finally, assigning roles according to intelligences brought Gardner's (1991; 1993) theory of Multiple Intelligences, of which Project Based Learning is a natural partner, into play.

The self-assessment revealed that 31 students considered their participation in their group to be "A lot," and 7 "About the right amount." No one circled "Too little." Students mentioned pictures they drew, lyrics, poems and journal entries they wrote, and songs they sang. This suggested that students were actively participating in their groups and were paying attention to what their group members were suggesting.

5.2.2 Rehearsal

Even though it was new and therefore difficult for students to rehearse their stories in the beginning, just after a few minutes of rehearsal, they

took charge of the roles assigned to them in the group. They shared responsibilities by collaborating in their various groups to present stories, taking up roles like singing, acting, playing musical instrument etc., while others helped by holding placards and so forth, as suggested by Krechevsky and Seidel, (1998) who discuss students' employment of various intelligences in school activities.

Most of the students took pictures and videos with their digital mobile phones, to keep evidence of their progress. English was the language of discussion during the rehearsal stage. At this point, students were very particular as to the use of English to give good presentations.

5.2.3   Presentation

On the day of presentation, students arrived early in their nice clothes. My critical friend and I went early to set up the classrooms. Interestingly, students went to their groups and exchanged quick "last words" before the presentation. I combined the ninth and tenth grades class in order to make the occasion more eventful.

The following are titles of the seven stories students presented:

1. *The Quest.* A silly prince needs to go on a quest to rescue a beautiful princess from a spooky castle so that he can become king.
2. *The Scary Turtle*. An ugly turtle kidnaps students' friends and puts them in cages in the tallest tower in its castle.
3. *The Little Flower*. A little flower is dying due to lack of sunlight.
4. *The Dwarf Who Couldn't Cook.* A dwarf sets fire to his apartment due to his carelessness while cooking.
5. *The Bad Witch.* A witch kidnaps families,
6. *The Fisherman Who Was Looking for Love.* A fisherman finds a lover on the Internet but when he goes to meet her, she is a he!
7. *English Parts of Speech*. A retold story about princes who go on a quest, with the one finding all eight English parts of speech being made king.

Each student had a role to play in his/her group. As groups told stories, other group members sometimes interrupted with questions, which were answered. In all the stories, groups either had a person who sang or recited poems created by the groups. The applause and the shouting of names at the end of each story suggested that students enjoyed the stories.

Sometimes students lifted their friends up, patted them on the back, kissed them, and often said "frábært" (excellent).

The excited students took group pictures, after the presentations, my critical friend asked them whether they liked the stories that were told, and whether they would like to have another lesson like that. Students answered, "Yes!" and started enquiring when the next lesson on storytelling would start.

6 Discussion

As students presented their stories, they experienced the authentic use of English because they had to use the kind of language appropriate for their stories and audience to relate to the theme of their stories. For students to gauge and copy the kind of language that is needed for an assigned task, I concur with Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011) that students need to be introduced to the kind of language they will need for the task. Students clearly exhibited this guideline during their story presentation. In addition, as students learned to use English in an authentic manner, they did not necessarily associate learning English as only a school subject limited to the classroom, but rather saw learning English as an opportunity to learn to use the language outside of the classroom.

As demonstrated in the study, it is clear that group story writing fosters natural communication in the English language classroom by allowing students to experience and experiment with the authentic use of English language, a basic concept that Communicative Language Teaching emphasizes (Richards, 2006). At the methodological stages of the thesis, every step of the lesson, both writing and speaking, was based on discussion. With storytelling, students were surrounded by English language in the classroom and that made it easy to use the language.

Speaking was not limited only to telling stories, but included singing, reciting of poems and picture readings, all of which required oral communication but to various degrees relied on linguistic, musical and spatial intelligences that Gardner (1991; 1993) stresses in the theory of Multiple Intelligences.

Writing can be a daunting and problematic task for a novice. Even mature writers sometimes face problems. A mature writer might find ways to work through difficult points in writing, but younger students, like participants in this study, may give up and stop writing when they cannot think of anything to write. Using story prompts and outlines prior to writing gives students the opportunity to develop language about their stories and get feedback from their peers, preventing students from being put off writing, and as indicated by Moore (2001), this boost students' confidence and motivation to write.

An example of storytelling boosting a student's interest and motivation is demonstrated in the study when two dyslectic students each produced eight-page stories. The spelling inabilities did not stop them from writing, and because their confidence was boosted, they were able to write and in so doing, helped the teacher to identify their weaknesses and assist them.

Using storytelling prior to writing also helped students to organize their stories. I helped students to create story outlines with the use of prompts, jotting down what they wanted to include in their stories. This activity helped those students who were not used to telling stories to make decisions about what type of stories to write and through oral discussion with peers, gave them ideas about how their stories could be structured before they started writing.

Moreover, because students started the writing process by telling a partner their story outline, it introduced them to the concept of *audience*. These students' audience had usually been their teacher, who read their work to award a grade. In situations like this, the only motivation for students is to write what the teacher might like. Nevertheless, when students are given the opportunity to tell their stories orally and share their written stories, they develop a deeper understanding of audience, which in this case was the class. For example, they decide on the appropriate register to appeal to the audience, or as Richards (2006) has written in a discussion of CLT, it is necessary to identify the appropriate use of the language in accordance to the context and situation in which it is used.

It is clear that the goals of the National Curriculum (2007) are achieved through the use of storytelling to teach English writing and speaking. Students were able to write stories in fairly seamless prose, and to apply basic grammar in speech and writing. Students wrote continuous text in appropriate language on topics that were familiar to them by following the main traditions regarding structure of writing: introduction, body and conclusion.

As for the speaking skills required by the National Curriculum (2007), this study achieved those goals by eliciting students to communicate and participate effectively in discussions about their stories and expressing themselves appropriately according to their situation. Students were able to present their stories as prepared speech on topics familiar to them. They were able to, in general, understand each other through interaction.

7 Conclusion

Before discussing the conclusions, I would like to mention my observation of English fluency of the students in this study, and some difficulties I encountered during the study.

Generally, I noticed most of the students could already speak English in short sentences. I later found out that this was because some of them were born, had lived or had often gone on vacation in English speaking countries like the UK, the USA, Canada, or had English speaking Internet friends. Some of the students attributed their English fluency to the media, which confirms Arnbjörnsdottir (2007) argument about Icelandic students being exposed to a great deal to English through the media.

Furthermore, the workload was very heavy. Reading through and giving feedback to thirty-eight students on a continuous basis was very demanding. The size of the classes (25 and 14 students) sometimes made it difficult for all students to have the opportunity to add an ending or middle to stories that were told during the study. Based on this, not all students may have had the opportunity to tell as many stories as they would have wanted, and not all may have received detailed feedback to help them in writing their final version of their stories. This may have led to not giving equal opportunity for all learners to explore the method.

The purpose of this study was to discover how storytelling could be adapted in the English language class in lower secondary school in Iceland to enhance communicative language teaching of writing and speaking. It has been demonstrated in this thesis that storytelling as a teaching strategy in the language class enhances communicative teaching. In improving writing skills, not only does storytelling make the writing process motivational, educative, challenging and creative but it also helps students to identify their strengths and weaknesses, which in turn helps the teacher to give appropriate assistance for students to achieve their potential as learners of English language. Storytelling also promoted learning taking place in a more natural, meaningful and interactive context, motivating students to connect with their learning and creating the opportunity for them to use English in the classroom to express themselves appropriately, according to the situation. Above all, storytelling boosted students'

confidence to face challenges and bring their inner imaginative and creativity to the forefront.

As we look for ways to bring communicative teaching onto our English language classrooms, we must remember the goals of the National Curriculum (2007). True education is not simply learning specific knowledge, but rather occurs when children's learning ability is developed. This study suggest that when children develop the competency to think clearly and creatively, they are able to plan and apply their plans and express their understanding in diverse ways.

Students should be provided with set of tools for thinking and creating. So, as English teachers in Iceland, we should take advantage of Iceland's storytelling history (Ross, 2000), and use storytelling to develop our students' competence to think clearly and creatively and express their understanding in diverse ways.

With the result demonstrated by this study, I hope that English language teachers in Iceland will employ this powerful teaching tool that acknowledges the requirements set by the National curriculum (2007) in planning their lessons. By so doing they will be embracing the methods of Task Based Learning, Project Based Learning, Communicative Language Teaching, Learner Autonomy and process writing, all under one umbrella—Storytelling—to create a conducive learning environment for their students.

In the long term, I hope administrators and curriculum developers restructuring the National Curriculum will consider the step-by-step guide in this study to help bolster communicative teaching and authentic use of English language in the classroom.

The outcomes of the study support the assertions of Haven (2000) that storytelling motivates students to be active learners, since students took active part in telling and writing stories. However, the study does not claim that storytelling and story writing is the only teaching strategy that encourages CLT, nor does it claim to have found the single solution to changing the current dearth of CLT in English classroom in Icelandic schools.

8 References

Aşık, A. (2010). Misconceptions on Learner Autonomy: a Methodological and Conceptual Renewal. *Ekev Academic Review*. Ekev Akademi Dergisi, Cumhuriyet Caddesi Ozel Idare Sitesi. Kat: 2 No: 29. Erzurum:Turkey

Altrichter, H., Posch, P. & Somekh, B. (1993). Teachers investigate their work: an introduction to the methods of action research. New York, NY: Routledge.

Atkinson, R. (2005). Storytelling with folktales. Carlton, Vic.: Curriculum Corporation

Arbjörnsdóttir, B. (2007). English in Iceland: Second Language, Foreign Language or Neither? In a Arnbjörnsdóttir, B. & Ingvarsdóttir, H (Eds.) *Teaching and Learning English in Iceland (p.51- 75).* Reykjavík: University of Iceland.

Benson, P. (2003). Learner autonomu in the classroom. In Nunan, D. (Ed.), *Practical English Language Teaching (p.290-308).* New York.:NY: McGraw-Hill.

Benson, P. (2001). *Teaching and researching autonomy in language learning*. Englang : Person.

Blaz, D. (1999). *Foreign language teacher's guide to active learning*. Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education, Inc.

Bloch, J. (2010). Digital storytelling: The second language writing classroom. *In Office of the chief information officer (paragraph 10)*. Retrieved 23- 03-2011 from: http://digitalunion.osu.edu/2010/08/19/digital-storytelling-the- second-language-writing-classroom/

Champion, T. B., Katz, L., Muldrow, R., & Dail, R. (1999). Storytelling and story making in an urban preschool classroom: Building bridges from home to school culture. *Topics in Language Disorders*, 19(3), 52-67.

Creswell, J. W. (2008). Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research (3rd ed.) Upper Saddle River, NJ:Pearson/Merrill Prentice Hall

Cummins, D. &Davidson, C. (2007). *International handbook of English language teaching (part 1).* NY, New York: Springer.

Davies, A. (2007). *Storytelling in the classroom: enhancing traditional oral skills for teachers and pupils*. London: Paul Chapman.

Dunlop, E. (1997). *How do I get these kids to listen?: Practical ways to Gain and Hold Attention in the classroom*. USA: Sword of the Lord publishers.

Fox, C. (1993). At the very edge of the forest: The influence of literature on storytelling by children. London: Casell

Hannon, L. & Clift, J. (2010). *General Hospital Care for People with Learning Disabilities*. Retrieved from *http://books.google.com/books?id=C2Tt PSRO kk C&pg =PT121&dq=makaton* &hl=fi&ei=DKXlTLehHcaZhQeZsoHMDA &sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCMQ6AEwAA#v=on epage&q=makaton&f=false

Gardner, H. (1983). *Frames of mind: the theory of multiple intelligences*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Gardner, H. (1993). *Multiple intelligences: theory in practice*. NY, New York: Basic Books.

Gardner, H. (1991). *The unschooled mind: how children think and how schools should teach*. NY, New York: Basic Books.

Gardner, H. (2006).*Multiple intelligences: New horizons*. New York, NY: Basic books

Gregoire, J. & Jungers, C., F. (2007). *The counselor's companion: what ever beginning counselor needs to know*.Mahwah, New Jersy: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc, Publishers.*y*

Hatcher, D. & Goddard, L. (2005). *Tools for everyday writers:The Writing Process: a step-by-step approach for everyday writers*. Virginia: LandaBooks

Haven, K. F. (2000). *Super simple storytelling: a can-do guide for every classroom, every day*. Englewood, Colo.: Teacher Ideas Press.

Henniger, H. (2005). *Didactic Functions of Storytelling in the Primary Schoo Classroom*. Norderstedt, Germany: GRIN Verlag.

Howatt, A., P., R. (1984). *A history of English language teaching*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Isbell, R., Sobol, J., Lindauer, L., & Lowrance, A. (2004). The Effects of Storytelling and Story Reading on the Oral Language Complexity and Story Comprehension of Young Children. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 32 (3), p. 157-163.

Jóhannsdóttir, Þ. J. (2010). *Teacher education and school-based distancelearning: Individual and systemic development in schools and a teacher education programme*. Retrieved from Skemma.

Johnson, K. & Johnson, H. (Eds.). (1999). *Encyclopedic dictionary of applied linguistics: a handbook for language teaching*. Oxford:Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Krechevsky, M., & Seidel, S. (1998). Minds at work: Applying Multiple Intelligence in the classroom. In Sternberg, R.J., & Williams, W.M. (Eds.), *Intelligence, Instruction, and Assessment: Theory into practice* (17-42). Mahwah; NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum associates.

Larsen-Freeman, D. (2000)(2nd Ed.). *Techniques and principles in language teaching*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Larsen-Freeman, D., & Anderson, M. (2011). *Tecniques &Pinciples in Language Teaching(3rd ed.)*. New Yok, NY: Oxford University Press.

Lefever, S. (2009). Are National Curriculum objectives for teaching English being met in Icelandic compulsory schools? *Tímarit um mennt-arannsóknir*, 6. , 106-107. Retrieved from http://fum.is/TUM-6.%20 árgangur/7_samuel.pdf

Leithwood, K.,A., &Hallinger, P., (Eds). (2002). *Second international handbook of educational Leadership and Administration (Part two)*. Dordrecht,Netherlands:Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Littlewood, W. (1981). *Communicative Language Teaching*. N.Y, New York: Cambrigde University press. Cambridge Language Teaching Library

McMallan, J. H. (2008). *Educational Research: Fundametals for consumer5th*(Ed). Boston: Pearson.

McNiff, J. (2010). *Action research for professional development: Concise advice for new action researchers*. September Books: Dorset

McNiff, J. & Whitehead, J. (2002). *Action Research: Principles and Practice* (2nd Ed.). New York, N.Y: Routledge Falmer.

Menntamálaráðuneytið. (2007). *Aðalnámskrá grunnskóla – erlend tungumál*. Reykjavík: Menntamálaráðuneytið.

Mergendoller, J., R., Markham,T., Ravitz, J., & Larmer, J. (2006). Persavive Management of Project Based Learning: Teachers as guides and facilitators. In Evertson,C.M., & Weinst,C.,M. (Eds.). *Handbook of classroom management: research, practice, and contemporary issues*.(P.583- 588).Bern.:Switzaland:Peter Lang AG

Mertler, C., A. (2006). *Action Research: Teachers as Researchers in the Classroom*. California, IL: Sage Publications.

Mooney, W., & Holt, D. (1996). *The storyteller's guide: storytellers share advice for the classroom, boardroom, showroom, podium, pulpit and center stage*. Little Rock, Ark.: August House.

Moore, J., E. (2001). *How to write a story*. CA, Carlifonia: EVAN-MOOR CORP.

Nejmann, D. L. (2006). *A history of Icelandic literature*. Lincoln&London:University of Nebraska retrieved from http://www.scribd .com/doc/ 54465129/ A-History-of-Icelandic-Literature-Daisy- Neijmann

O'Malley,J.M., & Pierce, L., V. (1996*). Authentic assessment for English language learners; Practical approaches for teachers*. U.S.A: Longman

Palfreyman, D., & Smith, R., C. (Eds.). (2003). *Learner autonomy across cultures: language education perspectives*. New York.: NY: Palgrave Macmillan Ltd.

Pálsson, G., (1992). *From sagas to Society: Comparative Approach to Early Iceland*. Middlesex: Hisarlik Press.

Richards, J. C. (2006). *Communicative language teaching today*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ross, C., M. (Ed.). (2000). *Old Icelandic literature and society*. Cambridge,CB:Cambridge University Press.

Scala, C., M, & Schroder, C., V. (1997) From Storytelling to Getting On-Line: Language and Literacy Opportunities in the Elementary School. In J. Flood, B., S. Heath & D, Lapp (Eds.) *Handbook of Research on Teaching Literacy through the Communicative and Visual Arts*. New York, NY: A project of the international reading association.

Schnank, R., C. (1998). *Inside Multi-Media Cased Based Instruction*,(Ed.). NJ, Mahwah:Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Scharle, Á. & Szabó, A. (2000). *Learner autonomy : a guide to developing learner responsibility*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press

Siew, Y. L. & Chwen, J. C. (2010). Designing a virtual reality (VR) storytelling system for educational proposes. In Iskander, M., Kapila, V. & Karim, M. E. (ed.) *Technological development in education and automation* (p. 119-122). Retrieved from http://books.google.com/books?id= mEpTCmy UHIIC&printsec=frontcover&dq=technological+develop ment+in+ education&hl=is&ei=Eor2TJaMNIiWOr22gcMI&sa=X&oi=book _result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCMQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=tech nological%20development%20in%20education&f=false

Smidt, S. (2009). Introducing Vygotsky: *a guide for practitioners and students in early years education*. New York: NY: Routledge.

Tsou, W., Wang, W., & Tzeng. (2004). *Applying a multimedia storytelling website in foreign language learning. Computer & Education*.Vol.47.p.17-28. doi:10.1016/j.comped. Retrieved 18th March, 2011 from: Science Direct database. (0360-1315/$) University of Helsinki. (2004*). Center for activity theory and developmental work research*. Retrieved from http://www.edu.helsinki.fi/activity/

Woolfolk, A., Hughes, M. & Walkup, V. (2008). *Psychology in Education*. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.

9   Appendix

9.1.1   Setting Improvement Goals

Name: Grade: Date
Look at your writing sample.
What does this sample show that you can do?
Write about what you did well.
Think about realistic goals.
Write one thing you need to do better. Be specific.

Adapted from: O'Malley and Pierce (1996)

9.1.2   A sample of student's written task

From a ninth grader

Story outline

Fyrir söguna- Enska Pat

Name of city: Sun City, go there by bus, plane, mótorhjól,

Character; Brad and Sussane

Sussanne= Nurse, Female, tall and beautiful

Brad = Businessman, muscular, tall and handsome

Buger joints-smell like piza

Creature-giant pillow, allien, big gun? Hahaha

Creature eat all people, Sussane too

Bad creature

Brad go to office and gun creature down

Draft

  The Story of Brad and the Pillow

Brad is a businessman in Sun city. A beautiful city defined by big glass buildings, a park, fining places and most of all, sunny weather. The City has a modern style and everything is clean and nice. Brad is going to a meeting with the chairman of a big company from Iceland. The noises of cars, people and music in a comfortable chaos gives him a headache. He walks on the street next to a burger joint but it smells like pizza.

"That's weird." He thinks and walks down to the down town square.

He can see the big football stadium in quite a distance. When he's about to reach his workplace, witch is a penthouse office at the biggest skyscraper in the whole City. But suddenly, he sees a big shadow fall on the building. He turns around and sees a huge something?!

"What is this?" He thinks.

"Oh my god" – someone screams.

"It's a giant evil pillow!"

The pillow immediately started to destroy small buildings and houses. Brad panicked and ran inside the nearest building. Inside there were people crying. Thinking about they're loved ones.

Outside, the horrible monster pillow was eating everybody. In the building Brad was hiding, there was a woman called Susanne. She was helping the people relax. Brad was going to talk to her but all of a sudden, the doors crack up open and the giant pillow furiously comes in and eats a mouthful of people before anybody can do anything. Susanne is one of them. Brad felt horrible. He managed to get out of there and into his workplace.

He had a bazooka in his office just for showing off. Now it will come in handy. He grabbed the rocket launcher and went out to his svalir. He is aiming at the pillow from the top of his building, bending of the handrail when suddenly, he accidently slips over the rail and starts falling down. As he was about to fall down to the ground he managed to aim at the pillow and fired. The gun's backfire was so heavy that Brad got shot up right before he fell down. He has a pretty smooth landing base on that he falls down 200 meters. The pillow (along with everyone inside it) exploded. This day people are really sad but Brad is a hero.

The End

My feedback
Good beginning; now put your computer language into English
to help correct the tenses.

Final version

The Story of Brad and the Pillow

Brad is a businessman in Sun City. Sun City is a beautiful city defined by big glass buildings, a park, fining places and most of all, sunny weather. The City has a modern style and everything is clean and nice. Brad is going to a meeting with the chairman of a big company from Iceland. The noises from cars, people and music in a comfortable chaos gives him a headache. He walks on the street next to a fast food restaurant that sells burggers but the buggers smell like pizza.

"That's weird." He thinks and walks down to the downtown square.

He can see the big football stadium in quite a distance. When he's about to reach his workplace, which is a penthouse office at the biggest skyscraper in the whole City, suddenly, he sees a big shadow fall on the building. He turns around and sees a huge something!

"What is this?" He thinks.

"Oh my god" – someone screams.

"It's a giant evil pillow!"

The pillow hits the floor right in front of Brad and immediately starts to destroy small buildings and houses. Brad panics, crawls under a big table that happens to be standing in front of the restaurant, he squeezes his muscular body in between the doors and manages to get inside the restaurant. Inside the restaurant, there are people running screaming, running, crying and causing a lot of commotion, thinking about their loved ones.

Outside, the horrible monster pillow is eating everybody. Inside the restaurant that Brad was hiding, there was a woman called Susanne. Susanne is wearing a nurse uniform she is tall and beautiful. She is helping the people relax by talking to them and gathering them at one corner of the restaurant. Brad tiptoes towards her, intending to go over and talk to her, but all of a sudden, the doors crack open and the giant pillow furiously comes in and eats a mouthful of people before anybody can do anything. Susanne is one of them. Brad feels horrible. He manages to get out of there and into his workplace.

He has a bazooka in his office just for showing off. Now it will come in handy. He opens a small window at the back of the restaurant, gets out, run to his office and gets the gun; he runs to the top of his office building, he can see the monster pillow is still eating people up, he grabs the rocket launcher and goes out to his office balcony. He is aiming at the pillow from the top of his building, bending of the handrail when suddenly; he accidentally slips over the rail and starts falling down. As he is about to fall down to the ground he manages to aim at the pillow and fires. The gun's backfire was so heavy that Brad got shot up right before he falls down. He has a pretty smooth landing base on that he falls down 200 meters. The pillow (along with everyone inside it explodes. The people including Susanne, come out of the pillow unhurt, all the people applauses for Brad heroic deeds that has safe them today. Brad becomes the hero of Sun City. He will definitely find his name in the history book of Sun City for his heroic deeds.

The End

My feedback
I can see you know much about guns-lol. This is a fine story, well grounded in your imagination. Good character description. Good use of capital letters to start new sentences, speech marks and full stops.
Excellent effort.
Grade: 10/10

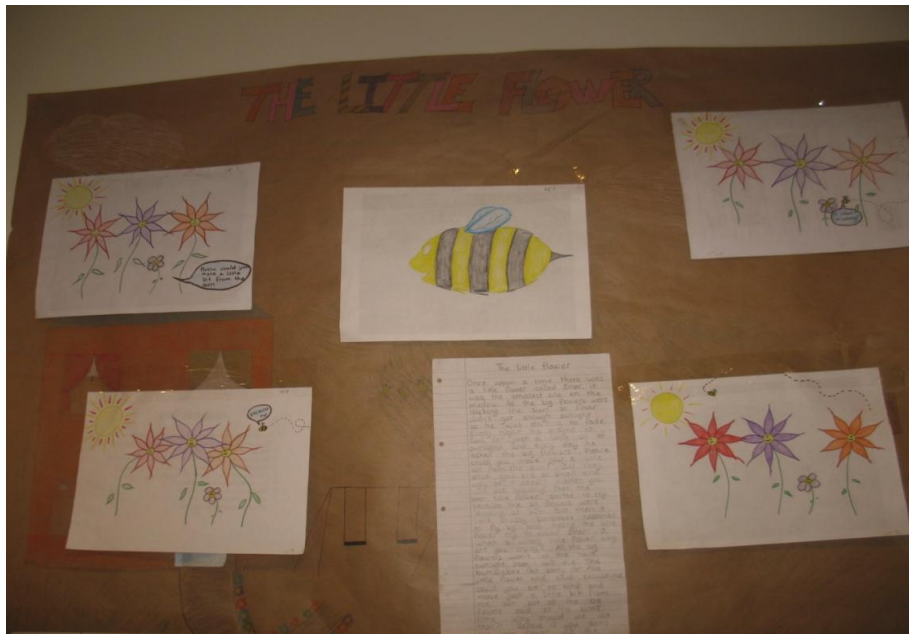### 9.1.3   Sample of group stories

The quest (pictures with script)

The scary Turtle

The little flower

9.1.4 Permission letter   07-02-2011

Helgi Halldórsson (Head of School)

> Hörðurvallaskóli
> Baugakór 38
> 203 Kopavogur
> RE: Permission to Conduct Research Study in your Institution

Dear Helgi,

I am writing to ask for permission to conduct a research study at your School; Hörðurvallaskóli. I am currently enrolled in the program 'Teaching and learning of foreign languages' at the University of Iceland; School of Education and I am in the process of writing my M.ed thesis. The study is entitled 'Storytelling as a teaching strategy in the English language classroom 'in which I am looking at how storytelling can be used to enhance communicative teaching and also to improve on writing and speaking of English language in conformation to the requirement set by the National curriculum in regards to English language teaching at compulsory school level.

I hope that the school administration will allow me to recruit a class of 9th and 10th grades students (females and males) from the school to part-take in study which will use storytelling to as the teaching strategy to teach speaking and writing, after. Since the students requested for in this study are less than 18 years old, a consent form in consultation with you (to ascertain which will be best) will be issued to be signed(or agreed) by parents or guardians, and returned (answer given) to me, the primary researcher at the beginning of the research process.

If approval is granted, student participants will complete the study in their normal English language classroom. The survey process should take no longer than six weeks. The study results will be pooled for the thesis project and the results of this study will remain absolutely confidential and anonymous. Should this study be published, only pooled results will be documented. No costs will be incurred by either your school or the individual participants.

Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated. I will follow up with a telephone call during the week and would be happy to answer any questions or concerns that you may have at that time. You may contact me at my email address: pak3@hi.is

Kindly submit a signed letter of permission on your institution's letterhead acknowledging your consent and permission for me to conduct this study at your institution.

Sincerely,

Patience Adjahoe Karlsson

University of Iceland

School of Education

Department of Teaching and learning of foreign languages

Enclosures

cc: Róbert Berman; Advisor/Supervisor (University of Iceland; School of Education)

Approved by:

_____   _____   _____

Print your name and title here   Signature   Date

Table 8. Self-assessment form- Creating of group story ideas

Name: Date
Story title:
Group Members:
How much did you participate in your group discussion? (circle one)
A lot   about the right amount   too little
What did you do well in your group discussion and creating of the   story?(Check what is true for you.)
I suggested ideas for the story and how to develop it
I suggested the lyrics that relate to the story (write first 5 words of the lyrics)
I drew pictures for the story (show it to your teacher.)
I wrote in my journal (Show it to your teacher.)
I listened to others (What did others say?)
I responded to others (what did you say?)
What was an important idea expressed by someone in your group?
(Name the person and describe what he or she said- you can write at the back of this sheet.)