

1 Sorting and sequencing

Aim To sort and sequence parts of a narrative into a logical sequence

Language focus

- Sequencing the elements of a story
- Past tense forms
- Accuracy: pronunciation, textual connections, vocabulary
- Fluency: reading, speaking

Level Elementary–advanced

Time 1 hour +

Preparation

- 1 Prepare a short story suited to the level and interests of the class (see Resources 1, 2 and 3 for examples). Cut the story into strips, allowing one strip per student in each group: so, for example, if you divide the class into groups of five, the story should be divided into five strips. See also Variations below.
 - 2 If the text is written/chosen for particular target sounds, introduce these sounds in isolation to the students in advance of the lesson and provide practice time.
-

Procedure

In the classroom

- 1 Seat students in groups. Each group collectively has the whole story, but each student within the group has only one sentence.
- 2 The students must practise reading and saying their sentences until they can say them clearly and confidently, paying particular attention to the target sounds. Each student only sees their own sentence written down.
- 3 Students then order their story by listening to each other say their sentence and deciding on the logical sequence. Textual markers indicating sequence of events may help here. If possible, students could move their seats so that they are seated in the order which they decide is the story's sequence.

Sorting and sequencing

- 4 If each group has worked on a different story (see Variations below), end the lesson by having each group tell their story in the right order to the rest of the class.

If you have a language laboratory

- 1 Prepare the language lab with a blank tape for each student. Place one of the sentence strips for each student at the console.
- 2 Explain the task: each student has a sentence from a story. Students must read their sentence and practise it, concentrating particularly on producing the target sounds correctly.
- 3 Monitor and assist students with their pronunciation. When they are confident that they can produce the sentence clearly, they tape themselves reading the sentence.
- 4 Next, the students move from console to console, listening to each sentence and writing it down as a dictation.
- 5 When the students have written down all the sentences, they work together as a group and check the accuracy of each sentence.
- 6 They then try to order the sentences so that the story makes sense.

Teacher's notes

- 1 The texts in Resources have been written with a particular pronunciation focus in mind. They could also be constructed to have a vocabulary focus or a grammatical/structural focus.
- 2 You may want to give students a model to work from. In the classroom you can go from student to student providing a model for their sentence. In the lab, you can pre-record each student's sentence onto their tape.

Variations

- 1 Mixed-level classes could divide into higher and lower groups, perhaps using the same story idea but at two different levels (see Resources 1a and 1b). Alternatively, you could use different stories with different groups.
- 2 If you have a small class, you may cut the story up into the number of strips that equates with the number of students in the class, instead of dividing into smaller groups.
- 3 Possible extensions:
 - Organise a role-play: choose students to play the key characters and have the rest of the class interview them (see Resources 3 for examples).

Stories

- If the lesson has been used primarily as a means of focusing on the pronunciation of specific sounds, students could be asked to draw up lists of words containing the target sounds. This could be a consolidation task for homework.

Resources**1a Apple Pies (intermediate)**

TARGET SOUNDS: /p/ AND /b/

Benny was a cab driver who liked eating pies.

One day, he drove to Penny's pie shop, to order his favourite pie – apple.

When he went into the shop, he took off his cap and put it on the counter.

Benny bought the apple pie and said 'Bye' to Penny.

As he got back in his cab, he put the pie on the seat.

Then he realised he'd left his cap in Penny's shop, so he went back and got his cap.

He got back into the cab and sat on his apple pie.

1b Apple Pies (pre-intermediate)

This text below is a reduced version of 1a above.

Benny was a cab driver and he liked pies for lunch.

One day he went to the pie shop and bought an apple pie.

He got back in his cab, put the pie on the seat and then he remembered his cap.

Sorting and sequencing

He went back to the shop and got his cap.

He came back to the cab, opened the door and sat on his pie.

2 Bad Habits (intermediate)

TARGET SOUNDS: /s/, /θ/ AND /ð/

Sue was a thin woman of thirty who still sucked her thumb.

Her mother thought it was a filthy habit and told her to take her thumb out of her mouth.

Sue's mother thought that the idea would sink into her daughter's head if she told her to stop often enough.

However, Sue felt sick every time her mother said something about her thumb-sucking and it only got worse.

Sue's mother finally saw that it wasn't worth saying anything about it.

In the end, Sue stopped sucking her thumb and started smoking instead.

3 The Storm (advanced)

TARGET SOUNDS: /ɜ:/ AND /ɔ:/

The journey by ship from Greece to Turkey was rough and a fierce storm had blown up only four hours from shore.

The rain poured down and the wind roared, tossing the ship mercilessly.

Walking across the deck, Fleur fought to stay upright, as the wind caught her skirt and blew it against her legs.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-00160-1 - Stories: Narrative Activities for the Language Classroom

Ruth Wajnryb

Excerpt

[More information](#)

Stories

She saw a short dark man walking towards the edge of the boat.

She thought he might work on the ship, although he wasn't wearing a uniform.

Suddenly, the man quickened his steps and hurled himself against the railings.

Fleur thought, 'He's going to throw himself overboard!' and just in time she caught his shirt and pulled him back.

The man sprawled face-up on the dirty floor.

Fleur couldn't believe what she saw – it was her ex-husband, Bert.

Character extensions/interviews: Fleur could explain what she was doing out on deck in a storm, or Bert could tell the class why he wanted to jump over the edge of the deck.

Acknowledgement This lesson was inspired by an idea in Celce-Murcia, Brinton and Goodwin (1996).

Story bank See 30, 31, 32.

2 Musical orientation

Aim To create an orientation for a narrative from a musical inspiration

Language focus

- The orientation as a stage in the narrative template
- Components of an orientation
- Paragraph writing

Level All levels

Time 1 hour +

Preparation

Choose and prepare the music. Select music that you think will inspire your class to imagine the orientation for a narrative. Some suggestions for music are made in Resources. (The examples given are classical and operatic. However, you should choose pieces that you think will appeal to your students.) There's no reason to select either all classical or all rock. A combination might be more stimulating. The number of musical pieces you choose will depend on the level of the class. With a low level, use only one. At a high level, use as many as four.

Procedure

- 1 As a preliminary activity, ask the class what types of music they enjoy and whether they associate certain kinds of music with particular emotions or settings. Suggest to students the notion that music is a language of its own and a very effective conveyer of emotion. To set the mood, perhaps play a few examples of different compositions and after each, discuss the mood(s) or emotion(s) evoked in the students. Tell them that today's lesson will use music to inspire the orientation for a narrative.
- 2 Introduce students to (or review) the basic stages of a narrative: beginning with an orientation → moving to a complication → ending in a resolution.
- 3 Introduce the core elements of an orientation: where? when? who? One way into settling on these major elements is to 'free associate'.

Stories

Ask students:

- What colour do you see in the music?
- What emotion do you feel?
- What action do you imagine is going on?

Then go on to more specific elements:

- a place or setting (what country? what place?)
- a time (what century? what season? what time of the day?)
- a sense of the participants (who?)

Draw these elements as a table on the board to enable you to elicit students' comments later in the lesson (see sample tables A and B in Resources).

- 4 Now you are ready for the first listening. Play the piece of music and allow time for the students to jot down notes. Then play it again – students add to their notes.

With a higher-level class, where you will use more than one piece of music, follow the same procedure with each piece of music.

- 5 In pairs, students now compare and discuss their reactions. Finish off this stage of the lesson by one more playing of the music.
- 6 Using the table constructed on the board in step 3, elicit student responses so that these will be displayed for everyone to see. Allow the report-back to be as full as student interest warrants.
- 7 Working alone or in pairs, students choose an orientation from the table on the board and write it out as a paragraph, as if it were the orientation for a narrative.

Teacher's notes

- 1 You will need to find out about your students' musical tastes prior to the lesson. This could be done informally. If there is a Music teacher in your school, s/he may be able to help.
- 2 Be willing to play the music as many times as students feel they want to hear it. If they know their listening will not be restricted, they will hear better.
- 3 Low-level students may need some guidance to enable them to leap from the listening to the writing without too much difficulty.

Variations

- 1 As an alternative to the free association at the start of the activity, you could choose music from a film that the students have probably seen. Especially with adolescent learners, it may be more motivating to try to guess the real associations – place, time, characters and action – for which a piece of music was originally composed.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-00160-1 - Stories: Narrative Activities for the Language Classroom

Ruth Wajnryb

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Musical orientation*

- 2 As a follow-up to step 6 or step 7, another activity is for students to discuss where they think the orientation might go in the subsequent stages of the narrative. The whole class may choose one orientation and then work in small groups to consider its development, finally coming back as a whole group to share their work. The whole-class stage may be either 'talking about' the narrative or actually telling it.
- 3 An alternative is to have students plan out the narrative, including all three stages of orientation, complication and resolution.
- 4 Another follow-up could be to provide a story (see suggestions in the Story bank below) and ask the students, in groups perhaps, to put together a cassette or CD of accompanying music.

Resources**Table A Using one piece of music**

Elements of the orientation	Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4
Colour				
Emotion				
Action				
When?				
Where?				
Who?				

Table B Using four pieces of music

Elements of the orientation	Music piece 1	Music piece 2	Music piece 3	Music piece 4
Colour				
Emotion				
Action				
When?				
Where?				
Who?				

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-00160-1 - Stories: Narrative Activities for the Language Classroom

Ruth Wajnryb

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Stories***What music to choose?**

Some suggestions for the main activity:

- Mozart, *Così fan tutte*, 'Soave sia al vento', Act 1
- Carl Orff, *Carmina Burana*, 'O Fortuna' – the opening and the finale; or 'In taverna', the men's drinking song
- Handel, *Julius Caesar*, 'Ritorni omni nel nostro core'
- Offenbach, *The Tales of Hoffman*, 'Belle nuit, O nuit d'amour' (called the *Barcarolle*)
- Puccini, *La Bohème*, 'O suave fanciulla'
- Rossini, *Semiramide*, 'Giorno d'orrore'

These works or comparable ones are readily available and therefore quite easy to prepare for. On the other hand, to gain greater breadth and stimulation, try to involve more variety in the extracts you choose, varying along the following parameters:

- orchestral / chamber / single instrument
- choral / vocal
- modern / romantic / baroque / classical / folk / jazz / pop
- Indian / Japanese / Cajun / Afro-American / Caribbean / 'world' music
- slow / fast
- loud / soft
- harmonic / discordant
- calm / dramatic
- lively / reflective

Acknowledgement I learned about this lesson from Ben Taaffe who teaches literature and language to girls aged 13–18 at Ascham School in Sydney, Australia.

Story bank See 2, 38, 40.

3 Complications and resolutions

Aim To raise awareness of elements of the schematic structure of a narrative

Language focus

- Writing a narrative in a schematic way, with specific attention to the complication and resolution stages
- Fluency: discussion

Level Intermediate–advanced

Time 1.5 hours

Preparation

- 1 Prepare one copy of the schematic structure for each pair of students, cut into six strips (see Resources 1).
 - 2 Prepare a copy of the text for each student (see Resources 2 for a selection of texts at different levels).
-

Procedure

- 1 Introduce the idea of a ‘controversial’ issue. Give some examples and/or elicit others from the students.
- 2 Tell the students that in writing about an event (i.e. a recount), the text follows certain conventional stages. Explain each of these (see Teacher’s notes below). Put the students in pairs and give out the schematic structure, cut into six strips.
- 3 Give the students a cut-up copy of the text (see Resources). Ask them to read the text and then, in pairs, to match the text sections with the names of the stages.
- 4 Correct students’ work, using the opportunity for further discussion, so that the class fully understands the six stages of a recount.
- 5 Now focus attention on the resolution stage of the story. Group two pairs together to make groups of four. The task is to generate a different resolution. The groups feed back orally about their ideas for the resolution.
- 6 Keep the students in groups of four. The task now is to create a