



Context

Language competences are precious for the person's development since childhood. These permit to grow linguistic and imagination skills with positive consequences on growth and the quality of life experiences, but also on future narrative and literature related events and tasks, like both reading comprehension and production, event re-telling, personal narration, vocabulary and proper use, understanding and following/giving instructions, etc...

Storytelling is vital for self-development goals like identity maturation or role assumption, especially at young age. Practices like reading and storytelling promote a healthy growth should often be practiced and repeated as a reinforcement.



What is storytelling?

Storytelling is defined as the art sharing narrative and literature operas with young children or passionated listeners, using words and actions to reveal the elements and images of a story while encouraging the listener's imagination.

Stories, fables and tales can be exposed with different purposes, of entertainment or with educational reasons. The reader's interpretation of the story and the reading rythm are fundamental for narrative skills development that listeners will assimilate and through observational experience and repetition.



...but how does storytelling in Sign Language work?

Just like oral storytelling, narrative and literature can be translated in signs with the same objectives and characteristics as it has in oral language: new words, characters and rolemodels can be explored thanks to this mean of expression and also support the deaf listeners in acquiring oral/written language.



Storytelling in Sign Language needs to be performed by expert signers. A few interactive books with signing indications were produced in the latest years, but usually at local level, in national sign languages.

Fortunately the deaf community is very active on Youtube: many storytelling videos can be found online.



Adaptation

If a deaf signing student is in your class:

- arrange storytelling moments in agreement with a translator
- search for one story telling video with text and tell the story to all the children together, with the same timing as the signed video.

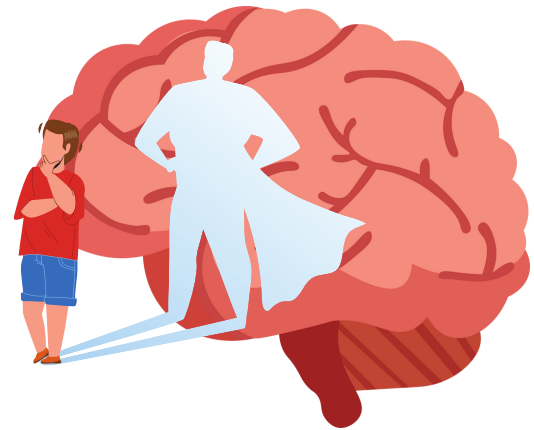
You can look for storytelling videos on the Youtube channels of Deaf associations, national Deaf agencies or dedicated blogs online.



Benefits on self-development

Developmental psychology suggests that reading and story-telling has positive effects on young kids in matter of cognitive development and key competences in general:

- linguistic competences
- vocabulary extension
- psychological/emotional lexicon
- reading skills
- comprehension of social roles
- identity construction



Research in this psychology field shows that the very same competences can be developed during the same developmental window through the use of both oral and manual language.

A small but signifying example of storytelling's potential:

Once upon a time, there was a young girl. She was 9 years old and her name was Wende. Wende was incredibly intelligent, yet she had a hard time learning things by heart. No matter how hard she tried, she just could not memorize the planets of the solar system. It just did not stick in her head.

One day her teacher told her a story about all the planets. A story about how the sun was lonely and Mercury was his first friend. How Mercury fell madly in love with Venus and how Planet Earth got jealous. After telling her the story, Wende was able to remember all of the planets in the right order. Why? Because of the magic of storytelling.

Wende could remember the story and with that, she could remember the planets.

-Yoast Blog



Resources

If you would like to deepen your knowledge in this topic we suggest you to search on any video sharing platform for the name of a famous story, fable or fairy tale in your language followed by the name of your national sign language (e.g. "Little Red Riding Hood" + ASL).