

Chapter 47

Proverbial Storytelling and Lifelong Learning in the Home–School Dialogue

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ABSTRACT

Storytelling and proverb sharing teaches children daily living skills, common sense, and moral values and introduces intergeneration and multicultural lifelong learning at an early age in the home-school dialogue. This chapter introduces the Idiolect Definition (ID) approach to home-school dialogue. By using this tool for text analysis, both parents and children could help the child create a reflective home-school/portfolio regarding text analysis. The school grade this is used in is early years/primary school education onwards. The topic is home –school dialogue based education and lifelong learning. The age range of the students is nursery/elementary school pupils. The people in charge include parents, guardians, family members, and school teachers.

INTRODUCTION

Since ancient times, sharing stories and unified metaphors has created commonality in our seemingly separate yet interpenetrating realities. It is the choice of shared language that contributes to shared meaning (Forest, 2006).

The process of dialogue brings people and ideas together to coordinate legitimate social action and generate new approaches to old issues. This chapter analyses the educational value of proverbial storytelling as a platform for home-school dialogue from a lifelong learning perspective and introduces the concepts of Cultural Catalysts and Idiolect Definition (ID) to facilitate this dialogue.

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Specifically, from a lifelong learning point of view in the fast paced media and technology environment of our times, the home-school dialogue brings together and integrates:

- The formal learning curriculum of the school with the informal learning curriculum that runs in parallel within the family and social context at large;
- The learning and life experience of different age and socio-cultural groups (inter-generational lifelong learning, multicultural lifelong learning) within the school community and the wider local and regional community at large.

Storytelling is a ‘form of disseminating meaning across the lifespan’ (McGee, 2008:1). It offers a bridge to the past and can link modern societies with the past and with culture (UNESCO, 2009; Agelidou, 2010). It provokes an inner dialogue leading to reflection, as well as to informal learning and Baldwin and Dudding (2007) provide a reference of classroom activities using storytelling which promote

- Wisdom by referring to principles and values that stand the test of time;
- Development of daily life skills that promote emotional well being;
- Imagination and inventiveness in problem solving situations;
- Verbal skills;
- Transfer of knowledge and skills to various aspects of life, such as workplace;
- Discovery of uniqueness.

From a dialectic point of view this chapter introduces two concepts – cultural catalysts and idiolect definition (ID) (Theodosopoulou & Papalois, 2011). Cultural catalysts are wisdom and common sense related didactic folk products such as fairy tales, proverbs and old sayings, riddles, songs, etc. The classic didactic value of cultural

catalysts usually relates to reading, writing and learning of a foreign language and is based on three characteristics:

- Brevity, by the use of short sentences and narratives that are kept to the minimum;
- Wit, by using quick retorts and liveliness of spirit to produce unexpected response to trivial questions and issues;
- Rhetoric and visualization. The use of metaphors, similes, personification (e.g. the use animal characters with human like qualities in Aesop’s fables remind people the consequences of their right or wrong choices in life), rhetorical questions, dialogue etc.

Finally, the concept of ID recognizes that words can be analysed at two levels. The first is a shared meaning based on dictionary definition and connotation (emotional appeal). The second is a personal meaning based on an individual’s unique experience and particular philosophy about life. There are two indicators to easily recognize an Idiolect definition (from the Greek words *idios*+*logos*, individual language) and separate it from the rest of a speaker’s or writer’s stream of language: repetition of keywords and ‘quotability’. In other words, by repeatedly emphasizing and elaborating certain elements about an issue the speaker draws the listener’s attention on his personal experience (in the sense of *have you noticed...that X is not X but Y?*) in the form of a working hypothesis that needs to be tested and thus communicated; on the other hand, the ID definition guides the listener to characteristically quote a speaker by picking up characteristic summary statements that contain the particular code of repetitive keywords specially used by the speaker to discuss an issue.

The ID definition as a natural process of verbal communication is closely linked with the phenomena of conversation, social dialogue and proverb production. Interest and curiosity of

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