



Your Storytelling Voice Workshop & Open Mic Practicum

Programme Review

Introduction

Our voice plays a vital role in our everyday life. However, not many of us take the time to nurture a good voice for effective communication. To enhance the verbal competence of Story Ambassadors, the Hong Kong Public Libraries organised the Story Ambassador Refresher Training Programme in 2025. The programme comprised two parts: the **Your Storytelling Voice Workshop** followed by the **Open Mic Practicum**. The former was intended to strengthen the vocal capabilities of participants, sharpen their delivery skills and enhance their confidence, while the latter provided an opportunity for participants to apply their newly acquired skills in real-life settings and receive constructive feedback from both the audience and the facilitator.

Training Highlights

Your Storytelling Voice Workshop

The workshop covered four main training areas:

1. Enhancing Voice Quality

1.1 Physical Factors

When talking, we rely not just on properly controlling our breath but also on the effective functioning of our vocal cords and resonance chambers such as the mouth, nose, throat and chest. Regular relaxation and breathing exercises are therefore key to nurturing and preserving a good voice for higher competence in public speaking and storytelling. Some useful tips shared by the facilitator in the workshop include:

- **Yawning and humming** – Relax the vocal cords and enhance natural resonance
- **Jaw relaxation exercises** – Release tension and improve vocal clarity
- **Diaphragmatic breathing** – Develop vocal strength and endurance

1.2 Psychological Factors

To establish a strong vocal presence, we should nurture a growth mindset and continuously enhance our speaking skills. The facilitator of the workshop introduced participants to the **A.A.A. Framework**, which suggests three essential qualities of an effective speech:

- **Audibility** – Ensure clarity of the voice
- **Attractiveness** – Use a suitable tone to stimulate interest among the audience
- **Authority** – Display confidence and credibility

Participants were also encouraged to identify their strengths and development needs and set specific goals for self-improvement using the **3D approach**. The three Ds refer to:

- **Desire** – Develop a clear sense of purpose and motivation
- **Decision** – Make a firm commitment to personal improvement
- **Declaration** – Articulate goals publicly and hold oneself accountable

2. Strengthening Vocal Skills through Everyday Practice

Participants of the workshop were encouraged to strengthen their vocal skills through everyday practice. They were introduced to the **M.A.P. framework**, which suggests three essential elements of effective vocal delivery:

- **Modulation** – Suitable control of the pace, pitch and volume
- **Articulation** – Precision and clarity in pronunciation
- **Projection** – Effective transmission of the voice across different spaces

Participants were also introduced to the **P.E.T. model**, which suggests three strategies for impactful vocal delivery:

- **Pause** – Controlled silence for emphasis
- **Emphasis** – Highlight of key words or ideas
- **Tone** – Adjustment of emotion based on the context

The facilitator used the following story to illustrate the effective use of vocal skills in storytelling:

The Dark House

In a dark, dark wood, there is a dark, dark house,	(use a low volume and slow pace)
And in that dark, dark house, there is a dark, dark room.	(pause at commas)
And in that dark, dark room, there is a dark, dark cupboard,	(put emphasis on the words "room" and "cupboard")
And in that dark, dark cupboard, there is a dark, dark shelf,	
And in that dark, dark shelf, there is a dark, dark box,	(create a sense of fear)
And in that dark, dark box, there is a GHOST!!!	(pause at commas; use the highest possible volume to emphasise the appearance of a ghost)

3. Understanding the Structure of a Story and the Importance of the "Story Arc"

Story Ambassadors should have a clear understanding of stories in order to give a smooth and engaging narrative. The facilitator of the workshop suggested that special attention be paid to the following:

- **Characters**
- **Storyline**
- **Conflict and Resolution**
- **Viewpoints and perspectives**
- **Narration and Dialogue**

Participants were also introduced to the concept of the "**story arc**". The story arc reflects the overall structure of a story and typically includes the following elements:

- **Opening** – Introduction of the characters and setting
- **Build-Up/Rising Action** – Development of the plot and gradual increase of tension
- **Conflict/Turning Point** – Emergence of challenges or dilemmas
- **Climax** – The moment of greatest intensity
- **Resolution/Falling Action** – Problem-solving and conclusion of the story

4. Integrating Vocal Skills with Dramatic Reading and Interpretive Telling

Storytelling generally takes two forms: **dramatic reading**, in which reference is made to a written text; and **interpretive telling**, which does not involve making reference to written materials. For both forms of storytelling, it is vital for storytellers to use their vocal skills effectively.

To illustrate storytelling by **dramatic reading**, the facilitator of the workshop used the story "Should I Share My Ice Cream?" by Mo Willems as an example. In the story, Gerald the elephant grapples with the conflict of whether to share his favourite ice cream with his friend, Piggie. Some useful skills for presenting the story include:

- Variation of the tone and volume – To create an air of tension
- Changes in pace (including pausing where appropriate) – To convey hesitation
- Shifts in resonance and articulation – To highlight contrasting thoughts and feelings

On the other hand, **interpretive telling** can be used for sharing personal experiences (such as the most memorable vacation). Narrators can enhance their delivery by adopting the following skills:

- **Suitable use of body language** – To capture and sustain audience attention
- **Modulation and projection** – To convey the build-up of tension and highlight moments of conflict
- **Variation of the tone and rhythm** – To convey changes in thoughts and feelings

Open Mic Practicum

The practicum enabled participants to practise storytelling by giving short speeches, narratives and poetry recitations. The major activities include:

- **Stage performance** – Provided an opportunity for participants to showcase their strengths (Each performance lasted for one to three minutes. Participants were given time for individual preparation and two rounds of rehearsal before **Show Time**.)
- **Constructive risk-taking** – Enabled participants to identify areas for improvement
- **Feedback session** – Provided participants with structured feedback to support the continuous enhancement of vocal skills

Conclusion

The 2025 Story Ambassador Refresher Training Programme has equipped participants with a range of storytelling skills. Apart from consolidating what they have learnt through regular practice, participants should also engage in collaborative learning with mentors and peers, and embrace the golden rule "**keep practising and seek stage time**" to enhance their storytelling skills continuously.