1. Look at the drawings and videos for Pupil 1 and Pupil 2. What differences do you notice?

Pupil 1’s worksheet allowed 6 drawings. He produced more speech, including three-word strings with adjectives placed before the noun (one blue monster) and subject-verb constructions (blue monster’s angry, mountain crack). He focused on the more violent aspects of the story: the monsters being angry, throwing stones, the mountain cracking.

Pupil 2’s worksheet allowed only 3 drawings. She produced less speech, with shorter constructions and adjectives placed after the noun, as in French. She focused on the reconciliation at the end of the story, where the monsters were happy.

2. How does this task allow for learner choice and autonomy? What support do the learners have to complete the task?

The learners can choose which aspects of the story to include in their drawings. The act of drawing allows time to rehearse the story and increases the chances of success in oral retelling. The drawings then help the learners remember the sequence of events to be recounted; the teacher scaffolds by ratifying completed utterances and prompting when required.

3. Look at the five different drawings. How can we account for the differences with Bartlett’s notion of schemata?

Some learners fit the original story into a conflict schema, where the characters fight and destroy their surroundings. Others used a reconciliation schema in which the characters discover common ground. These different perceptions influenced the events the learners selected and the conclusion of their stories.
4. What learning opportunities are provided by this task, and in what sense can it be considered a constructivist classroom activity?

The learners have the opportunity to produce a long stretch of connected speech independently, as opposed to short contributions in interaction, for example. Retelling the story is therefore a chance for sustained output and thus develop fluency in speaking.

The task is an authentic, communicative task in the sense that the language used has not been memorised as a complete text, as might be the case in the audiolingual method, nor is translation from the L1 involved, as in the grammar-translation method. The learners are retelling a story which the whole class already knows, but the task leaves each learner the possibility of selecting events to shape the story in their own way and thus take ownership of the narration.

The opportunity to present their work in front of the group was motivating for these learners; other pupils preferred to write words on their drawings. In both cases, the drawings gave the teacher some insight into what the learners had understood and could produce without the stress of a standard pencil-and-paper test.