

THE ART OF STORYTELLING AND ENDANGERED LANGUAGES

Why use storytelling in the classroom?

- Stories teach history, lessons, values, and culture.
- Stories are engaging and fun. They build students' imaginations, as well as sequencing, organization, and critical thinking skills.
- Books have been found to have a larger variety of language when compared to child-directed conversation. Because stories are not limited to the present situation, they can use more complicated grammar (past tense, future tense, etc.), as well as diverse vocabulary about a large range of topics. This increased language input builds students' language skills (Montag et al. 2015).

Why include multiple languages in the classroom?

- "Learning in the mother tongue is vital, especially in primary school, to avoid knowledge gaps and increase the speed of learning and comprehension." -UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report (2020). See also UNESCO, 2008.
- Using a child's mother tongue or home language in the classroom builds a connection between home and school.
- When students' language knowledge is highlighted as a positive feature (by knowing multiple languages that are being shared), they feel more comfortable in school - their "linguistic and cultural capital [become] social capital within the classroom" (Naqvi, 2013, p. 523).

Why include endangered languages in the classroom?

- There are more than 7,000 languages spoken on earth today, but about half of them are in danger of falling silent. In India, there are [at least 200](#) endangered languages - maybe more. Visit endangeredlanguages.com to learn more.
- Languages carry the unique knowledge, culture, history, and wisdom of a community.
- When a community revitalizes their endangered language (keeps it strong, ensures that it is still spoken), it has [profound positive effects](#) for health, well-being, and educational outcomes.
- Using endangered languages in the classroom shows that these languages are not just from the past, but are actively spoken today. It helps students from these communities feel valued and respected.
- Using endangered languages in the classroom creates opportunities for speakers to use them in schools and other educational settings. Increasing the areas of life where languages are used is one step in language revitalization (Rogers and Campbell, 2016).

← **More resources:** <https://bit.ly/story-resources>



FEBRUARY 13, 2023
11:00 am IST



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Reflection questions:

- What was your favourite story growing up? Why did you like it? What lessons did you learn from it? Where was this story from? How did you hear it, read it, learn it?
- What languages do you speak? Are any of them endangered?
- Which of your languages were spoken at school when you were a student? How did it feel when your languages were (or weren't) included?
- For teachers: How many languages do your students speak? Do any of them speak endangered languages? (You can find out by searching on endangeredlanguages.com)
- Do your students speak their mother tongue languages at school? How are these languages represented in the school? In your classroom? In your lessons?

Ways to include storytelling and endangered languages in your classroom:

- Invite storytellers into your classroom - host a storytelling event like the one we had today.
- Invite parents and family members to visit the class and share stories in their mother tongue (either orally or read from books).
- Ask your students what languages they speak. Take note of these languages and make space for them at school
 - Ask students to teach you basic statements in the language (hello, goodbye, please, thank you, etc). Use the words that you've learned.
 - Seek out books and songs in these languages and find ways to include these in the classroom.
 - Ask your school librarian to include these books in the school library.
 - Put the books in your classroom library so students can enjoy them.
 - Read the books to the students.
 - Play music quietly while students work or eat.
 - Learn a song together.
- If you can't find books in specific languages, have students create them!
 - Students can retell a popular story in their own language.
 - Students can create bilingual books that tell the story in two languages.
 - Students can tell a story in their language and create a book from it
- Include signs with students' languages in the classroom, hallways, or outside in play areas.
- Start a storytelling or language club at lunch or after school
 - Listen to storytellers, and have students learn stories to tell themselves.
 - Have students write their own original stories or translate popular stories into their mother tongue. Have students make a copy for the school - catalog it and include it in the school library.
 - Have students record songs and/or stories in their mother tongue

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