Empowering Tanzanian Students Through
Multilingual Storytelling, Drama and Digital Publishing

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Multilingual, Multimodal Storytelling Club at a Tanzanian Secondary School
• Students told stories, wrote storybooks to be published online and created dramas
• The club used four language: English, Swahili, Chagga and Hacha
• Riah developed the curriculum, Catherine implemented the project

Multicompetence: Creating a space for students to use their full linguistic repertoires lets students see themselves as multicompetent and improves language skills across all languages (Cook, 2010)
Preservation of Endangered Languages: Tribal languages in Tanzania are increasingly threatened and few written resources exist to preserve them. Chagga and Hacha are 6a (vigorous) the 1-10 Ethnologue scale, but locally it's closer to 6b (threatened.
Multimodality: There are multiple modes of communication (written, oral, visual, audio, gestural, spatial and tactile) and students can be multiliterate by understanding and being able to use the conventions of each mode (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009)
Digital Production: African students typically lack role models and resources to see themselves as digital producers, able to contribute to the body of knowledge on the internet (Darvin & Norton, 2015)

African Storybook Project: africanstorybook.org
Free to use website that publishes open source storybooks in African languages

Student Response
• Students felt storytelling club improved their skills in all three languages, especially vocabulary, and developed their creativity, self confidence and public speaking skills
• Narration was their favorite activity
• They were proud to share their languages on the internet
• Parents and grandparents served as resources for Chagga and Hacha vocabulary

"I'm a Chagga, but I don't know Chagga, but through [Storytelling Club] I found a lot of vocabulary in Chagga and I started to improve my Chagga. Also my English, I improved it."

"Storytelling gives me confidence to stand in front of students and speak."

"[Narrating stories] makes me be creative. If you can narrate a story, then when you are in the exam it will not be difficult for you to answer questions because your brain, it thinks more and more. So if a person can narrate a story, that is good."

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Club Outline

Introduction

1. Find students
2. Discuss aims of the club
3. Establish rules
4. Examine example stories (both oral and written)
5. Discuss the context of the stories

Story Writing

1. Brainstorm
2. Describe in writing
3. Write the stories
4. Draw pictures
5. Publish the stories

Storytelling

1. Practice telling stories
2. Learn the story in the other languages
3. Share them with other students in the club
4. Present to the rest of the school

Dramatization

1. Create scripts based on the stories
2. Rehearse and block the movements
3. Find props and costumes
4. Perform for other club members

Challenges: Internet connectivity and computer access, photographing the illustrations, unfamiliarity, time for the club and to perform the dramas

Recommendations for Creating a Storytelling Club

Create the club's language policy and rules collaboratively
Be willing to change the plan as you go
Think about the cultural context and share a variety of example stories (traditional, original fiction and personal)
Test your technology and have a publishing backup plan
Plan for illustrations that will photograph well