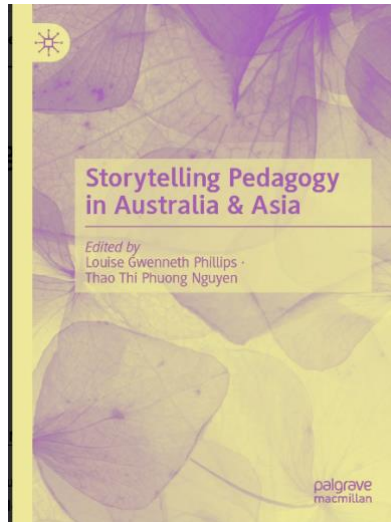


Storytelling opens doors

Storytelling invites us into the worlds of others. Storytelling teachers and authors from this newly released edited collection -



share how they teach through storytelling to support inclusivity.

Louise Phillips (Australian storytelling pedagogue and Chair of Initial Teacher Education, Southern Cross University): Stories are an inclusive mode of communication, they speak across generations, across cultures, and break down barriers. They invite us into the heart and soul of others. In my teaching through storytelling, I see great capacity in storytelling enabling the understanding of another's lived experiences. As it is through storytelling we imagine and feel another's feelings and build a greater understanding of the many ways of being human. For example, through listening, and being with Aboriginal Australians sharing the brutality of their Stolen Generation experiences we come to viscerally understand more about the physical, cultural, psychological and spiritual impacts of colonisation and racism in Australia.

I frame my practice of storytelling pedagogy with three motifs: story-tailoring, 'walking in the shoes of another' and freedom of expression (Phillips, 2012). I tailor stories to the audience

and the injustices they are troubling with. Each story is crafted and told to evoke a whole-body experience of walking in the shoes of those troubled; to viscerally feel their tragedy with empathy and relationality, as if they were in the story themselves. Both in and after the story, I welcome listeners to share their responses, to support processing of new understandings of diverse perspectives and realities. See Chapter Nine *Storytelling Pedagogy for Active Citizenship* for more ideas on how storytelling can cultivate inclusive thinking through coming to understand the lived realities of others.

Thao (Vietnamese storytelling pedagogue and English as Foreign Language academic living in Australia):

I teach English to young children who learn English as a foreign/additional language (EFL/EAL) and found storytelling as a way to support inclusivity in a language classroom. I believe storytelling is life itself where each child can see themselves, explore things and perceive relationships. Further than that, storytelling creates knowledge for children and with children and it embraces the relationality within a child and with others (Phillips & Nguyen, 2021). A primary classroom in Australia is typical of a diversity of cultures, languages and races. Therefore, inclusive education to cater for learning opportunities for all students including students of English as an additional or dialect language (EALD) is emphasised (ACARA, 2022). In this context, I advocate for storytelling as a humanist approach in teaching English to young learners who migrate to Australia and have to learn EAL in their early years of education in Australia. Biesta (2011) discusses a pedagogy of the educational use of philosophy for children in relation to humanist thinking “as a concern for the ways in which individuals-in-their-uniqueness might come into the world” (p. 317). In storytelling, children connect themselves with others through stories. They will share with each other about their worlds where there is puzzlement, imagination, enjoyment, and joy which may appear during story time. It is a combination of new learning and prior experience. Seeing children interacting

with each other and showing their affects in learning will help us communicate authentically with them and recognise how individual children respond to language learning. The inclusion of each child in the storytelling circle is a dynamic meaning-making interaction. I find children spontaneously tell stories to develop their literacy of sense making in a new language.

To make sure all children are included in my storytelling, I ask questions to invite children to role-play characters. By so doing, each child can be included in stories through responding to questions freely and showing their thoughts. They freely seek language for learning, initiate learning with peers, ask questions for curiosity, critique and contribute to co-storytelling in storytelling pedagogy. See Chapter Seven *Storytelling and Imagination* for more ideas on the inclusive practices of storytelling pedagogy for foreign language learning.

Karine (French storytelling pedagogue and language researcher and teacher living in Singapore):

What if all your students become kamishibai storytellers? Kamishibai, literally translates to “paper theatre” in Japanese, is a very versatile educational resource, as demonstrated by Ishiguro (2017). Kamishibai writing and performing in particular offer features supporting inclusive classrooms, where each voice can be expressed and evaluated in their unique way of expression, at their level. With the kamishibai, the visual and oral storytelling modes are combined in the use of a set of unbound illustrated sheets, the text of the story being printed at the back, the sheets sliding in and out of a wooden stage (butai), with some particular motions.

We have used kamishibai storytelling in early childhood and primary settings in the context of international schools to support literacy or language acquisition. It allowed students to explore the notions of authorship and self-expression (author/illustrator) based on rich body-play modalities (performer), as well as to develop listening skills (spectator) and critical skills (self-reflection or peer-reflection over video recording of the story). In the specific context of

language acquisition, students are encouraged to incorporate their native tongue. They also choose to write as much or as little text and indications at the back of the sheets. And present kamishibai storytelling to their preferred audience: small group vs a larger audience, the whole class or to a lesser-known audience, such as another class. One Grade 2 class were also immensely proud to present to their parents during a three-way conference. See Chapter Five *The Pedagogical Uses of Kamishibai, the Paper Theatre, in Asia* for a range of ideas and illustrative examples of kamishibai storytelling, with specific attention to kyokan, that is, to feel one with.

Prasong Sahong (Thai storytelling pedagogue and academic at Faculty of Education, Mahasarakham University, Mahasarakham, Thailand):

I have used storytelling in inclusive education for many years. I do this through tandem telling, story-theatre, picture book reading, drawing and telling stories, finger play storytelling, storytelling with objects, and role-play. The children play roles in the stories, express their feelings of love and care for people in their lives, and learn simple rules such as turn-taking, following traffic signs, and self-cleaning.

For children with cognitive disabilities, we tell stories that are accompanied by the same story as a picture book. This way they can see the pictures with animated voices of the student-storytellers to support their understanding.

For children with autistic spectrum disorders, I have seen that storytelling improves their language skills along with improving positive behaviours. The children's oral language develops to speaking in full sentences or three-word phrases, responding to questions and expressing emotional responses to the stories. See Chapter Three *The Pedagogical Uses of Storytelling in Thailand* for more ideas on storytelling in inclusive education.

Anamika Bhati (Indian storytelling pedagogue based in Singapore)

In early education storytelling can be used to reach out and teach children about diversity, acceptance and inclusivity (Coigley, 2021). It is well understood that there is diversity across the ways children learn and the learning challenges they face. In order to help children understand and connect to a story it is very important for the narrator/teacher to keep in mind which form of storytelling is best to adopt (Park, 2017). This is best illustrated with an example in the following story.

A story I adapted from Pachatantra about four friends in the jungle, a crow, a mouse, tortoise and a deer that I often use in class. *The four friends are best of friends. One day a hunter came into the forest and all except the tortoise ran away to safety. The three friends came up with a plan to save their friend. Up ahead on the hunter's path the deer pretended to be dead. "Oh what luck today I get to take home a tortoise and a deer," saying that he quickly dropped the net with the tortoise. The mouse who was hiding in the bushes ran and chewed the net open. Then the crow cried out to the deer, who quickly stood up and ran away just in time before the hunter could tie him up. The hunter went back to carry his first prey but was disappointed to find he was gone too. As for the four they cheered and hugged each other.*

In this story you can see there are four best friends with different abilities still able to accept each other. Also, how they used it to their advantage in a difficult situation (Coffield, et al, 2004).

To help internalize the story a set of activities could be crafted keeping the children's ability in mind. Like, making props, mini role plays, creating a song with movements, making clay models or simply use items from the class to represent characters, settings and tools in the story and have children walk through them.

References

- Australian Curriculum. (2022). *Student diversity*. Retrieved from [Student diversity | The Australian Curriculum \(Version 8.4\)](#)
- Coigley, L. (2021). Lis'n Tell: live inclusive storytelling: Therapeutic education motivating children and adults to listen and tell. In *Storytelling, Special Needs and Disabilities* (pp. 45-52). Routledge.
- Biesta, G. (2011). Philosophy, exposure, and children: How to resist the instrumentalisation of philosophy in education. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 45(2), 305-319. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9752.2011.00792.x

- Ishiguro (2017). Revisiting Japanese multimodal drama performance as child-centred performance ethnography: Picture-mediated reflection on ‘Kamishibai’. In *Arts-based methods in education around the world* (pp. 90–105). River Publishers.
- Park, K. (2017). *Interactive storytelling: Developing Inclusive stories for children and adults*. Routledge.
- Phillips, L. (2012). Emergent motifs of social justice storytelling as pedagogy. *Storytelling, Self, Society*, 8, 108–125.