Cultural Introductions by Way of Storytelling

Unique cultures help to define who we are as individuals, shaping our perspectives as teachers, and in turn, how we share and explore ideas with students.

In this webinar, we will:

• examine how we can share our own unique stories with others using an engaging method which gives value to ourselves, while also celebrating the differences of everyone involved

• explore how to use our voice as a positive tool for constructive dialogue with others, and how a good storyteller not only shares, but listens, too
Matthew Jellick

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“Cultural Introductions by Way of Storytelling”
Matthew Jellick

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Why Do We Share?

Each of us, as teachers or students, has a distinct identity.

Our identity is what makes us, as individuals, special, and collectively, our classrooms unique spaces in which we teach and learn.

Today, we will share ideas about using “Cultural Ways of Storytelling” to celebrate our individuality as teachers as well as that of our students.
What is something that makes you...YOU?

Each of us has something special that we bring to our classrooms:
In the chat, share some things that make you unique:

• Where are you from?
• What is your favorite food?
• What type of music do you enjoy?

Example

Matthew: Los Angeles/tacos/hip hop
Students = Teachers

In our classrooms, student input is valued as much teacher input

We can view a class of 25 students as a group of 25 teachers, too

So, just as we bring unique qualities to the classroom, so too do our students

Let’s celebrate each one of these differences!
Why is each student important?

From an academic standpoint, students may have different strengths:
  • Speaking
  • Writing

From an individual standpoint, students also have different strengths:
  • Sports
  • Music
Student Sharing

What are some ways which you already use in class to encourage students to share information about themselves?
Suggestions

• Presentations
• Show-and-Tell
• Journals
Language Accuracy

In self-expression activities, how important is grammar and pronunciation in student output?

Share some ideas in the chat.
Interpersonal Communication

In today’s activity, we will focus more on interpersonal communication than language accuracy

Language-focused issues (grammar, pronunciation, intonation, etc.) are an excellent follow-up lesson for this activity
Empowerment

“The use of storytelling has the potential to facilitate understanding of communication concepts in applicable, everyday contexts....”

(Burke, 2000, p.3)
Storytelling

Today, we will explore storytelling options through an interactive activity that you can use in your classrooms.

The activity can be adapted for more- or less-advanced applications based on the levels/ages in your classes.
## Activity Context

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester/Course Timeframe</th>
<th>Near the beginning is best</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lesson Length</strong></td>
<td>10 minutes (icebreaker)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 hour (extended lesson)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Student Level</strong></td>
<td>All: beginning to advanced</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Materials</strong></td>
<td>Chalkboard (simple)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Handouts (extended)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher Preparation</strong></td>
<td>Prepare materials and examples</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Location, Food, and Music and as Culture

Reflection:

Why do geography, food, and music play an important role in who we are?

Share some ideas in the chat...
Getting Started

My hometown is __________.

My favorite food is __________.

I like to listen to __________.
Creating Your Own

What other topic categories can you ask your students to share their interests about?

Examples:
• Sports
• Movies

Write another example in the chat...
Implementing the Activity

Step 1: Teacher Example

Step 2: Student Example

Step 3: Student Sentences
Step 1: Teacher Example

1. Teachers write and share their example on the board, complete with the “blanks” filled in with the teacher’s responses.

Example:
In my hometown of Los Angeles, I like to eat tacos while listening to hip hop.
Step 2: Student Example

2. Students write the same sentence, substituting their own answers in the respective blanks.

Example:
In my hometown of __________, I like to eat __________ while listening to __________.
3. Students write their own sentences, creating three new blanks to fill in.

Examples:
My favorite athlete is __________, who plays my favorite sport of __________, which I enjoy watching with my best friend, __________.

My favorite actor/actress is __________, who is in my favorite film, __________, which I have watched __________ times.
Informal Observations

As students work on their sentences, the teacher should roam around the classroom, conducting informal observations, but not intruding on student creativity

(Achmad & Yusef, 2014)
Encourage Peer-to-Peer Sharing

After students have completed the example sentence from the board as well as one of their own sentences, have them share with a partner.

What are some benefits of sharing with a partner?

Share some ideas in the chat...
Video

In the short 30-second video, look for two things:

1. What is the role of the teacher?
2. What is the role of the students?
Student Sharing: Cooperative Learning
Sharing the Activity

Step 1: Students write on board

Step 2: Students share their own story

Step 3: Students share their partner’s story
Step 1: Completing the board example

1. Teacher invites a student to come to the front of the class and write fill in the blanks from the original example.

Example:

In my hometown of __________, I like to eat __________ while listening to __________.
Step 2: Reading their own example

2. Teacher invites a (different) student to come to the front of the class and read the original sentence frame that they created.

Example:

My favorite athlete is __________, who plays my favorite sport of __________, which I enjoy watching with my best friend __________.
Step 3: Reading their partner’s example

3. Teacher invites another student to come to the front of the class and read the example which their partner created.

Example:
My favorite actor/actress is __________, who is in my favorite film, __________, which I have watched __________ times.
Follow-Up Questions for Students

To promote continued dialogue, teachers can ask the students follow-up questions about the stories they read aloud.
Follow-Up Question Examples

**Hometown:** You said you’re from Addis Ababa, how is the weather there?

**Food:** What are some ingredients in your favorite stew?

**Music:** You mentioned jazz, who is your favorite jazz musician?
Follow-Up Questions

What do you think is a good follow-up question to ask students about sports?

Share in the chat...
Letting Students Ask Questions

After the teacher has asked students questions, it is important to transfer responsibility and have students ask each other questions.
Letting Students Ask Questions

Since they have already discussed with their partners, have other pairs ask questions of the students who are verbally sharing in front of the class.

For time, limit this to one or two questions from different students.
Large Classes

In the chat box, share how student-student questions could be handled in a large class (50 or more students).
Modeling a longer story

Once students have grasped the activity concept, the teacher can provide a longer story template:

My pet _____ and I walked though the city of _____. We became tired. “I need something to drink” I thought. I saw a market that sold my favorite drink, delicious, cold _____. Inside the store, we heard music from _____ playing from the speakers. We found our drink and a delicious snack of _____. After paying, we left.
Process Activity (5 Steps)

1. Teachers write the model story on the board (not filling in the blanks)

2. Provide students with a template so they can fill in the blanks with their own answers

3. Pair students so that they can share their completed stories with each other

4. Write the same story (with blanks) on the board

5. Have one student fill in their respective blanks on the board to share with the class
Process Activity (Alternative)

1. Teachers write the model story on the board (not filling in the blanks)

2. Provide students with a template so they can fill in the blanks with their own answers

3. Pair students so that they can share their completed stories with each other

4. Write the same story (with blanks) on the board

5. Instead of having one student fill in all the blanks, call on five different students to each fill in only one blank
My pet dog and I walked through the city of Seoul. We became tired. "I need something to drink" I thought. I saw a market that sold my favorite drink, delicious, cold milk. Inside the store, we heard music from K’naan playing from the speakers. We found our drink and a delicious snack of peanuts. After paying, we left.
Transferring Ownership to Students

Teachers
Develop Stories

Students
Develop Stories
Students Develop Stories (5 Steps)

**Step 1:** Have students create their own stories, leaving blanks for others to fill in.

**Step 2:** Have them exchange their “unanswered” stories with their partner.

**Step 3:** Have students fill in the blanks of their partner’s story.

**Step 4:** Have them share, orally, with each other.

**Step 5:** Rotate partners.
Teacher Role

In the chat, describe how the role of the teacher changes as this activity develops...
Academic and Social Benefits

In addition to creating a platform for constructive verbal communication with peer feedback, this activity does something perhaps more important:

It builds peer-to-peer relationships among everyone in the classroom, and gives insight into who they are as people, not just students.
Take-Aways

• This activity aims to give value to student voices through storytelling

• The teacher can model, but as the lesson develops, the students gain responsibility and ownership

• Extended information can be found in the Teaching Techniques section of English Teaching Forum 53 (3)
References


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Thank you!
Reflection Questions

1. How might you/how do you design learning activities that encourage students to creatively express their interests and opinions? Why might these types of activities encourage student engagement?

2. When focused on “getting to know each other” or idea-focused activities, how and when—if at all—should you address language accuracy issues in student production?

3. When monitoring student pair or group work during informal assessment, what types of information might you want to collect? How might you capture and use that data?