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Storytelling Clubs: A Multilingual, Multimodal Approach

Throughout the world, stories are a part of every culture. Stories pass down traditions and values. They entertain and educate, and they preserve languages. They serve as a natural site for linguistic innovation and creativity. Stories are a fertile source of content for teachers because they can be used to increase language proficiency across the four main language skills: students can listen to a story, read a folktale, become oral storytellers, or write their own stories. Stories are naturally evocative, bringing to mind vivid images and inspiring emotional reactions that keep students engaged (Romney and Mama 2018).

This article describes an approach to creating multilingual, multimodal stories that I developed for an after-school club at a rural Tanzanian secondary school. Club members told stories, wrote picture books, and created dramas, all based on the traditional stories their families had told them as children. They conducted these activities in two or three languages each, learning English while reinforcing their skills in their national and tribal languages. My hope is that teachers around the world will be able to use these same techniques to connect to their students' cultures and develop literacy skills, and that these activities will support their students' identities as multicompetent multilinguals.

The rich affective environment created though storytelling is reinforced when the stories are presented in a club format, outside of the pressures that many students feel in an academic language classroom. In a club setting, students feel more relaxed and willing to take risks because they know they will not be graded harshly if they make mistakes.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

In addition to the awareness of storytelling as a powerful tool for language learning, several central ideas informed the design of the storytelling club: multilingualism and plurilingualism, multimodality and multiliteracies, and audience and genre as academic literacy skills. In the following sections, I outline each idea, its benefits for language learning, and how it manifested in the club.

Multilingualism and Plurilingualism

Because we were in an after-school club setting, we were able to work multilingually, with the students using their skills in one language to support their learning of others. In keeping with the idea of plurilingualism, an approach to individuals' multilingualism

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that values the full linguistic repertoire of a multilingual speaker as an integrated whole (Piccardo 2013), we chose to work in multiple languages in our club, even when the students only had partial competence.

A plurilingual approach has several benefits. First, it reflects typical linguistic practices found in multilingual settings around the world, where speakers move fluidly between languages in order to communicate and where multiple languages coexist in the linguistic environment. Second, including students' mother tongues supports literacy development across all languages. When students are literate in their first language, those skills transfer not only to other languages, but to other academic domains as well, leading to increased academic achievement (Cummins 2000). In addition, it helps students develop a sense of pride in their identities and cultures, since they no longer have to develop different selves in different languages and can instead create a single identity as a multicompetent user of multiple languages (Cook 1999). This further supports their literacy skills because "literacy practices that are identity-affirming are likely to increase students' literacy engagement" (Cummins et al. 2015, 557). Finally, the inclusion of local languages alongside more-dominant ones sends a strong message that indigenous languages are worth maintaining or revitalizing, even as we learn English and continue to speak national languages.

Multimodality and Multiliteracies

In addition to presenting multiple languages side by side, the storytelling club incorporated various modes of communication—namely oral stories, written picture books, and dramatic stories. This juxtaposition of modalities—called multimodality—helps students develop a range of literacy skills across multiple media, often called multiliteracies (New London Group 1996). While traditionally language educators considered oral and written language as the two modes of communication, there are also five nonverbal modes that learners can be literate in: visual, audio, tactile, gestural, and spatial (Cope and Kalantzis 2009). Through the multimedia format of our club, learners developed skills across all seven modalities. The oral stories used oral language, audio, and gestures; the picture books brought in written text and visuals; and drama combined audio, tactile, and spatial communication with oral language.

Multimodality and multiliteracies are beneficial for language learners. When learners engage with language across a range of modalities, they are widening their understanding and incorporating what they already know through other means into their understanding of their new language. This multimodal teaching approach allows language learners to draw on a wide range of resources to support their learning (Early, Kendrick, and Potts 2015). Integrating plurilingualism and multimodality further increases the communicative options available to learners, resulting in dynamic and creative communication (Werner and Todeva 2022).

Audience and Genre

The multilingual, multimodal nature of our club opened up multiple avenues of communication, which meant that students had multiple options available to them to present the same stories. This creates possibilities for learners to choose the best method of communicating to a specific

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person in a given context, an experiential way to learn about audience and genre, important concepts in developing academic literacies (Johns 2008). In addition, the online component of sharing their stories allowed the students to envision a wider audience for their work outside their immediate community. This opportunity to share their ideas with a global audience is particularly rare for African students, who are not typically afforded the opportunity to publish their own content on the internet (Darvin and Norton 2015).

The students also presented their stories locally, through oral storytelling, physical copies of their picture books, and dramatic performances. Drawing on local traditions and source materials to create their texts, the students created a bridge between their oral culture's traditional literacy practices and their school-based language skills (Anokye 1994). Keeping both the global and local communities in mind helped students understand how to make strategic choices about what information is necessary for a specific audience.

In addition, we can think of storytelling as a genre, with different cultures having different idealized forms. In many English-speaking cultures, the expectation is that a story will narrate the beginning, middle, and end of a single event. However, for those with different cultural backgrounds, the form of a typical story might be quite different. For example, Japanese American children were found to narrate several similar experiences succinctly in the same story, with character growth occurring over the course of multiple events, while African American children told much longer stories, which connected related events that occurred to different people and at different times around a common theme, and Latino children were more likely to tell stories in the present tense (McCabe 1997). By comparing typical English stories, which often move from a "once upon a time" through to a "happily ever after," with stories from different cultures that follow different structures, club members can expand their cross-cultural awareness and learn to appreciate stories from different cultures.

THE STORYTELLING CLUB

In this section, I outline the steps we took to start the club and describe six modules, focused on listening, telling, writing, publishing, dramatizing, and sharing stories. I also provide background information on the Tanzanian educational and linguistic context of our club. The goal is to describe one model of how a multilingual, multimodal storytelling club can work, with instructions to help you conduct a similar club in your own context.

The Tanzanian Storytelling Club

Our club met once a week after school at a secondary school in rural Tanzania. In Tanzania, the medium of instruction switches from Swahili, Tanzania's national language, to English when students enter secondary school. The 20 students who chose to participate in the club used Swahili to communicate in their homes and community, but switched to English for their classes. In addition to the two languages used in the education system, Tanzania is home to approximately 120 indigenous languages, many of which are classified as endangered (Eberhard, Simons, and Fennig 2019). The majority of the students in the club identified as Chagga, a tribe native to the area near Mount Kilimanjaro, where the school was located.

By working on the same story in multiple languages, the students were able to draw parallels between the languages and approach language learning in an additive way, increasing their linguistic repertoires rather than replacing one language with another.

However, none were fluent Chagga speakers, having heard the language predominately from their grandparents rather than their parents. In addition, two students were learning Hacha, a language from the northwest part of Tanzania, near Lake Victoria, where one side of their family had originated.

In the club, the students were given a choice of languages. All students told their stories in both English and Swahili. Some chose to learn the stories in their family's tribal language as well. The day-to-day activities of the club were conducted in English, a decision that was negotiated between the English teacher responsible for leading the club and the students themselves. At the beginning, the club members approached stories together, discussing and analyzing the structure of stories from their own and other cultures. As they became more familiar with the elements of storytelling, they brought in their own stories. The students mastered the traditional Tanzanian folktales they had chosen and learned to tell them in two or three languages each. Many of the students had originally heard these stories from their grandparents, told in their tribal languages, and were relearning the language alongside the story. By working on the same story in multiple languages, the students were able to draw parallels between the languages and approach language learning in an additive way, increasing their linguistic repertoires rather than replacing one language with another.

In addition to telling stories in multiple languages, the club members used different media to share the same story, increasing the range of communicative methods they had at their disposal. Drawing on the African tradition of oral storytelling by elders, the club began with oral folktales told by master storytellers from their community. The students listened to and discussed these tales with ease, since the format was familiar to them because of their childhood experiences. After they had developed a shared understanding of the elements of an effective story, the students started telling oral stories themselves.

Next, they wrote down their stories, translated them into additional languages, and drew illustrations to create mini–picture books. They worked with their teacher to type the text and scan the images, as they created both physical books and digital stories to be shared online.

The final mode of communicating the club's stories was drama. Given the communal nature of theatre, time constraints meant that the students chose only some of the stories to dramatize. They worked in groups to create scripts and rehearse the scenes, many of which featured animals as the main characters, in keeping with local traditions. They creatively repurposed common objects to make props and costumes, fastening leaves to their heads to create lion manes and using bundles of discarded plastic bags to represent animals of prey. They took pride in performing their plays for their fellow students, especially when they had the opportunity to share the plays with the entire school during morning assemblies.

While initially we had planned on having the students tell different stories in each medium, the teacher who led the club suggested that the students would benefit

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more from repeating their oral stories when it came time to write the picture books and create the dramas. The iteration of the same stories in different forms deepened students' understanding of the texts and helped them internalize the impact that different media can have on the same message. As Cope and Kalantzis write, "The movie can never be the same as the novel. The image can never do the same thing as the description of a scene in language. The parallelism allows the same thing to be depicted in different modes, but the meaning is never quite the same" (2009, 180). The multimodal nature of the storytelling club reinforced this fundamental principle of multiliteracies.

HOW TO START A STORYTELLING CLUB

Through our experience, we have gained insights on how to start a successful storytelling club. These clubs can be school-based, like ours, or they can involve the wider community, and the format can be adapted for children, teenagers, or adults. The following section describes factors to consider when starting a club and provides an outline of the six modules, with advice for teachers and club leaders. While we chose to use all six modules in the order presented below, the modular format is flexible, so you should feel free to adapt or reorder the modules to best fit the needs of your context. In addition, the modules can be used once for an after-school project, or the cycle can be repeated, using different stories for an ongoing club.

Before the First Meeting

Starting your own storytelling club right away can be tempting, but there are a few preliminary steps you should consider to ensure that your club runs smoothly from the start.

- **What leadership model will you use?** Clubs are more flexible than traditional language classes and do not need to be as teacher-focused (Malu and Smedley 2016). Are you open to a more egalitarian leadership model, or will your club members expect there to be a single leader? We found in our club that while the teacher initially guided the meetings, over time student leaders took on more of the responsibility and were eventually able to manage the club independently. While older participants can gradually take on leadership responsibilities themselves, with younger students the club might need to be more teacher-directed.

- **When and where will you meet?** Think about how to make attending the club easy for the members. Make sure to choose a time that doesn't conflict with their other responsibilities and a location that is easy to get to. Our club met once a week for one hour after school in the library, so students could come directly to the club meeting before going home for the day. If you are organizing a community-based club, hold a preliminary meeting to gather information about potential club members' preferred times and possible locations.

- **What stories are part of the local culture?** Do you want to use familiar stories or those that are new to the students? The stories you use at the start will likely be seen as models to be emulated and can therefore influence members' choices throughout the duration of the club. In our case, we chose traditional African folktales, featuring animal protagonists learning moral lessons.

The first module focuses on listening to oral stories, mirroring the way we typically first encounter stories as children.

As a result, our students told their own stories using this same format, which is common in Tanzania. If you would like your club to focus on different types of stories—such as folktales, personal stories from the members' own lives, or imaginary adventures—it is a good idea to include examples of those types early on.

- **What languages will you use?** In our English as a foreign language (EFL) context, the students had two shared languages to choose from, Swahili and English. At the first meeting, the club members discussed the benefits of running the club in each language; they chose to carry out club business in English so they could practice and improve their English fluency. In addition, they were sensitive to the fact that not all members of the club were interested in learning tribal languages, so they decided that telling the stories in a third language would be optional. If your club members are interested in learning a heritage or indigenous language, think about who in the community could serve as a resource person for that language. In an English as a second language (ESL) context, it is possible that English will be the only language that is shared by all club members, while in EFL contexts, you are more likely to have multiple options. In either circumstance, remember to include all club members in this discussion and emphasize that students' home or heritage languages do not need to be shared by everyone in order to be used in the club. Students should feel free to tell stories in all of their languages and take pride in their plurilingualism.

Module 1: Listening to Stories

The first module focuses on listening to oral stories, mirroring the way we typically first encounter stories as children. It can be fruitful to start with traditional stories since "folktales play the same role in oral cultures as textbooks play in literate cultures" (Romney and Mama 2018, 6). These tales, with their rich imagery, familiar structure, and embedded messages, naturally lend themselves to the type of discussion and analysis necessary to establishing a shared understanding of the elements of effective storytelling.

We chose to start with live storytelling, although audio or video recordings can also be used. Podcasts, such as StoryCorps (www.storycorps.org) or The Moth (www.themoth.org), are a good source of stories focused on people's actual experiences. If you are working in a place with a strong written tradition, you can also consider reading picture books out loud. If teachers or club leaders are comfortable, they can tell the first stories themselves, or they can invite a storyteller from the community to visit the club. If the storyteller is multilingual, they can even tell the story in multiple languages! In our club, we combined approaches. First, the teacher told a traditional story from her childhood, and then the club listened to an audio recording of *How Chameleon Became a Teacher*, a folktale from Benin (Mama and Romney 2001).

After listening to each story, club members should recap and discuss it. Encourage them to reflect not just on their reactions to the content of the story, but on its form and themes as well. Questions to ask include the following:

- What were the major events of the story?
- Did the story follow a beginning–middle–end structure?

Encourage club members to be flexible with their word choices and to think of storytelling as a dynamic process, rather than as a recitation.

- What did the characters represent?
- What lessons does the story teach us?

These initial performances are also used to demonstrate the nonverbal elements of storytelling. Consider how the storytellers used prosody—the music-like features of spoken language, such as intonation, volume, rhythm, and pitch. When did they change their vocal inflections? What was the effect on the listeners? How did they use pauses? Examine the storytellers' physical presence as well. Did they use gestures or facial expressions? How close were they to the audience? Did they sit or stand still, or did they move around the space? These are all important aspects of storytelling. Ask club members to make a list of stylistic choices that influence how the audience engages with the storyteller. To get firsthand experience of the difference these choices can make, ask members to practice telling a small section of the story, using their vocal and physical choices to evoke different effects.

Module 2: Telling Stories

In the second phase of our club, participants began to tell their own stories. This was appropriate in our context, given the strong oral tradition in Tanzanian culture. In places where the written tradition is dominant, you might consider switching the order of modules so that students can begin with the modality that is most comfortable for them.

Regardless of which modality you start with, each club member should have the opportunity to bring in a story to focus on, from their own culture or from another source. These stories will serve as the foundation for the rest of the modules, so make sure that members are comfortable with their choices. Most of the students in our club chose short stories they had been told when they were children, usually between two and three minutes long. The majority were traditional animal folktales, like *Why Goat Has a Short Tail* (see Table 1), in keeping with the examples the members listened to in the first module. In our experience, club members felt most comfortable sticking closely to familiar story types, so if you want members to choose from a range of story types, make sure you provide a wide array of models.

It works well for club members to work in pairs the first time they tell their stories. By focusing on communicating to just one person, they are less likely to be overly nervous than if they were to tell their story to a large group. Encourage them to tell the story in the language that they are most comfortable with first. This might mean that club members tell each other stories in languages their partners do not understand. In this case, the storytellers can provide a synopsis in English or another shared language, and their partner can pay closer attention to the impact of the extralinguistic choices, such as the sound of the storyteller's voice or the gestures they make. Have the pairs practice telling their stories and giving each other advice on how to improve until they feel ready to share with a larger group. While we found it useful to review guidelines for giving constructive feedback, everyone in the group is both a storyteller and an audience member, and as a result they are likely to be supportive of their peers.

After the club members feel confident telling the story in their dominant language, they can perform it for the whole group. Then they begin the process again in their next language. In our club, students started with Swahili,

While oral storytelling is universal, written stories are not.

then moved to English. Those who chose to use their tribal languages worked with those languages last. This order reflects the students' degree of comfort with each language, starting with the language they felt most proficient in. We encouraged our storytellers to memorize the structure of their story instead of writing a script to repeat verbatim. Storytelling is a flexible oral medium, and it is common for great storytellers to tell a story in a slightly different way each time. Encourage club members to be flexible with their word choices and to think of storytelling as a dynamic process, rather than as a recitation. By the end, they should be able to tell the stories fluidly from memory in each of their languages.

Module 3: Writing Stories

In the third module, the focus switches from oral to written stories. Since picture books are often designed to be read aloud, they serve as a natural bridge between spoken and written texts. By capturing the nuances of their spoken tales in print, club members develop an increased sensitivity to the connections between oral and written language. In our club, we chose to use picture books as the format for the written stories because the images incorporated another communicative modality, although you might consider whether another medium (such as short stories, cartoons, or comic books) is more appropriate in your context.

While oral storytelling is universal, written stories are not. Therefore, it is best to give club members a range of examples to serve as models of the possibilities of the form. Since we did not have access to many printed storybooks, we used online sources. Global Storybooks (https://globalstorybooks.net) is one example of a website with free online picture books available in a range of languages. If you are repeating the club modules in an ongoing cycle, you can also use stories produced in earlier iterations of the club as examples.

Choose a story to read aloud in the club, discussing the differences between the book and the oral stories you examined in the first module. What role do the pictures play? Is the language used differently when it is in print? How many words are on each page? You might provide books for club members to read on their own or in smaller groups as well.

After the club members have gotten a sense of the conventions of picture books, it is time for them to create their own. There are two basic approaches:

- **The text-first approach.** Since the club members have already learned their stories orally, they can simply write down the text that they use when they narrate the story. This can serve as a foundation for their books. After they have written a draft, they can break the text into page-sized chunks and brainstorm pictures to accompany each section of text. This process often involves some trial and error, and club members might need to rewrite portions of their story in order to achieve a relatively consistent length per page.

- **The storyboarding approach.** Alternately, club members can start with the major events in their stories and create a storyboard, which is a grid that shows quick sketches of the scenes in the order they will appear in the book. Storyboarding can help ensure that the structure of the story is well represented and that the pictures are a core part of the storytelling. After drafting the images, club members write the text, which may or may not mirror the way they tell the story orally.

Whether club members start with the text or with the images, it is essential that they

The final module focuses on sharing club members' stories with others in the community. Stories are meant to be shared, so this step is critical.

refine their work before it is finalized. Writers should be encouraged to share their work with their peers, who can give feedback on both the words and the images. Only after they have gone through several rounds of edits should the members create final versions of their text and illustrations. They can decide whether they would like to create a multilingual book, with the text in multiple languages in a single volume, or if they would prefer to keep the translations separate and create multiple books telling the same story, each in a different language. If they choose to present multiple languages in the same book, it can be helpful to use a different font or text color for each language.

Module 4: Publishing Stories

Next, club members can turn their completed stories into books to share with others, in their own community and beyond. In our club, students created digital storybooks that could be easily shared beyond their immediate community, but you could also create physical books for your club members with a printer or by hand. Seeing their art and writing laid out in a real book or posted online can be a great source of pride for students. These books also create a permanent record of the club members' languages and cultures. This section outlines two approaches to publishing your club's books:

- **Digital storybooks.** If you have access to technology, digital publishing is a good way to share your club's picture books. To create a digital storybook, club members will first need to digitize the artwork, using a scanner or a digital camera, and type the text. Next, they will combine the words and images into a book layout. They can use word-processing software to lay out the text and images themselves, or they can use websites that provide templates and assist with the assembly of their digital storybooks. If your club chooses to use a website, there are a number of free options. However, it is important to review the content guidelines and technical specifications for the website you plan to use before your students create their stories, so that they can upload their work easily and not have it removed from the site later. Sites such as the African Storybook (https://africanstorybook.org), StoryWeaver (https://storyweaver.org.in), and My Storybook (https://mystorybook.com) serve as digital repositories for multilingual stories. You could also use a blogging platform such as WordPress (https://wordpress.com) and Blogger (https://www.blogger.com) to create a website where you can share your club's stories.

- **Physical storybooks.** Club members can create copies of their books, even without access to technology. If your club chooses to digitize their stories, they can print the stories and bind the pages, but if not, members can use their original images and carefully handwritten text to create their books. There are many techniques for making handmade books, but hand-sewing is one simple method. You will need the pages of the book, a needle, and sturdy thread to bind the pages together, and a heavier material, such as manila or card stock, to serve as the cover. First, stack the pages in the correct order. Put an extra sheet before the first page and after the last page to serve as the endpapers. Next, bind them together using thread. It is easiest to poke holes through the sheets first, using a pin or thumbtack; then, sew the pages through the prepunched holes using a needle and heavyweight thread such as embroidery thread or dental floss.

After you have secured the pages, use glue to attach the cover to the blank first and last pages. Make sure to write the title and author's name on a title page inside the book as well as on the cover.

Module 5: Dramatizing Stories

In this module, our club collaboratively created short plays based on some of the stories. Given the communal nature of drama, you will probably need to select just a few of the stories to dramatize. Club members will work together in groups, each with the same number of people as there are characters in the story, so that each person has a role to play. In their groups, the members discuss the major events of the story and outline the number of scenes they will need to tell it. Instead of starting with a written script, we found that it worked best for students to improvise each scene several times. They gave one another feedback after each attempt, before settling on the most effective combination of lines and actions to convey the plot points. Then, they wrote down a rough outline of their script so that they could remember the sequence they had created together.

After developing a script, the club members are ready to rehearse the plays. Since they might not be familiar with theatrical conventions, it is important to discuss things like *blocking* (the movements and positions of each actor on stage) and *projection* (speaking loudly and clearly so that the whole audience can hear). They can also watch other groups rehearse and give helpful comments to improve the performances.

The next step is to find props and costumes. These do not need to be elaborate, but even simple costumes help actors feel "in character," and basic props help differentiate the dramatization from the initial storytelling by situating the characters in the physical world of the play. You might also want to create a set or backdrop for the performance, although in our club we did not. Instead, students brought in items and articles of clothing from their homes and created stand-in props from everyday objects found around the school; we felt that these evoked the imaginative world of the drama well enough. After the groups have rehearsed their plays and collected the props and costumes they will need, it is time for a dress rehearsal, a practice run delivered for the other members of the club to troubleshoot issues in advance of a public performance.

Module 6: Sharing Stories

The final module focuses on sharing club members' stories with others in the community. Stories are meant to be shared, so this step is critical. Sharing their stories publicly allows students a chance to reflect on their progress, take pride in their work, and contribute to their communities. As a club, discuss who they want to share their stories with and brainstorm a list of possible audiences. Reflect on which format(s) and language(s) would be best suited for each audience, then make a plan to put your club's stories into the world! There are four basic strategies for sharing your club's work:

- **Story time.** One of the most natural ways to share stories is by hosting or participating in a community storytelling event. Venues such as elementary schools, day-care centers, community centers, and retirement homes might be interested in having your club come spend an afternoon telling stories. You could even start a regular story time at your school or one nearby, with a different student sharing their story each week.

- **Performances.** Performing for an audience is the final stage in creating a drama. If you have a theater in your community, you could see if you are able to book it for a night of performances, but if not, don't worry. Almost anywhere can serve as a stage. Classrooms, libraries, and even fields can all work. Make sure students have enough room to perform their plays, then set up a separate space for the audience. You can advertise the plays and recruit an audience specifically for your performance, or you can perform as part of an event that already has a crowd.

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For example, our club performed for the whole school at an assembly and for parents at graduation.

- **Book distribution.** If your club members have created books, either digitally or in physical form, you will want to make them available for people to read. You can create a collection for a local library or donate the books to a classroom. If you have access to copying facilities, you can create multiple copies to distribute or include the entire club's stories in one collected volume, allowing each student to keep their original book. You could also create a club website in order to share the digitized versions, or upload them to a story-sharing platform, allowing people from outside your immediate community to have access to your club's stories.

- **Videos.** Another way to create a lasting record of your club's work is to create videos of their dramatic performances or oral storytelling. These can be shared locally on flash drives or uploaded to social media sites, such as Facebook and YouTube. If the videos are short, they can even be sent via text message or WhatsApp. This gives club members the opportunity to share their work with friends and family members who might not be able to attend performances or storytelling events in person. Videotaped stories can also serve as the starting point for the next iteration of the club, with members watching and

Why Goat Has a Short Tail **by Joshua Minja**

Once upon the time there were two friends. One was sheep and the other was a goat. They were visiting each other.

One day the goat went to the sheep at her house, to find the sheep cooking rice without vegetables.

The goat asked, "My friend, where are the vegetables?"

Then sheep replied, "Don't worry, wait a little bit."

Then sheep put the clay pot into the fire and with her tail started to produce oil. The sheep served the rice with vegetables and started to eat it. It was so delicious.

The next day the sheep went to the goat's house. The goat made stiff porridge (*ugali*) without vegetables. This time it was the sheep who asked, "My friend, where were the vegetables?"

"Don't worry, wait a little bit," replied the goat.

The goat lit the fire and placed the clay pot on it. Then she put her tail in it, to stir it.

She started to cry with the great pain "Meeeeeee … meeeeeee!!!"

That is why until today goats have a short tail.

Table 1. Traditional animal folktale

analyzing stories from previous years before creating their own.

CONCLUSION

Learning multiple languages side by side through storytelling provided a strong source of motivation for our club members, who felt the experience improved not only their English, but their other languages as well. They learned new ways of thinking and engaging creatively in order to communicate their ideas. Each week, their skills developed across multiple languages and modalities as they created a supportive community, refined their stories, and became confident, multilingual public speakers. The inclusion of their tribal languages connected them to their heritage, and they expressed pride in seeing their languages represented on the internet.

As Friday (2014) says, "Stories are innately part of human experience, in any language." The multilingual, multimodal storytelling club format represents one way of connecting students to that shared humanity, as they reach across linguistic boundaries to share stories rooted in their cultures.

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