

Multilingual Storytelling Project

**John Sykes
foundation**

Charlotte Dormer

Background

Young children were deprived of opportunities to experience talk-rich environments by the pandemic. Our Multilingual Storytelling Project used Library resources, student volunteers and expert knowledge to give young children opportunities that they would otherwise have missed out on.



Figure 1. A student participating in the project as a reader

Project Activities



Expand and use the Dual Language Book collection as well as materials such as puppets to cover a wider range of languages.



Liaise between schools and volunteers, providing a point of contact for questions about the program.



Create opportunities for multilingual students to volunteer where their contribution would have a significant impact.



Collaborate across multiple University departments taking advantage of existing skills and contacts.



Provide both monolingual and multilingual children with an opportunity to experience unfamiliar talk-rich environments: a recognised need (Suggate et al, 2021).



Share leaflets based on research by CeLM with parents and teachers on the benefits of multilingualism.



Develop a sustainable model for similar future events, which foster a sense of community and understanding across multiple barriers (both linguistic and cultural).



Donation of dual-language story books in community languages to participating settings which enables them to continue practising multilingual storytelling (funded by the John Sykes foundation).



Figure 2. Sample books and leaflet from the project

References

- Suggate, S. P., Lenhart, J., Vaahtoranta, E., & Lenhard, W. (2021). Interactive elaborative storytelling fosters vocabulary in pre-schoolers compared to repeated-reading and phonemic awareness interventions. *Cognitive Development*, 57, Article 100996. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cogdev.2020.100996>

Collaborators

- Professor Naomi Flynn (Centre for Literacy and Multilingualism)
- Professor Holly Joseph (Centre for Literacy and Multilingualism)
- Judy Macdevitt (Students in Schools Co-ordinator)

Contact information

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Project Aims

Celebrate, promote and advocate for the use of home language(s) in educational settings and at home.

Demonstrate the value of using home languages for storytelling for language and social development of all children.

Translate UoR research on the benefits of multilingualism into the public domain.

Share best practice with parents and teachers on how to support children to maintain both first and acquired languages.

Impact

4

pre-school settings

12

student volunteers

7

Languages read

100 +

children reached

24 books in 17
languages
donated to settings

250 information
leaflets shared with
parents

“It has inspired us to have other people reading stories in different languages ... one of whom did so today”

— Nursery Manager