



USING FOLKLORE IN EARLY LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS

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Using Folklore in Early Language Classrooms

Children are sitting in a circle. The topic of discussion is games. Each child has drawn their idea of games. One comes forward to speak about the games he plays.

“Teacher, we play different games. We play, *lagori*, cricket, *dasti aata*.”

I ask the child what *dasti aata* means. Two children get up to demonstrate. They stand next to each other and one holds her hand out; the other is supposed to hit it and move to the other side of the room; and so the games goes on.

Do you see teachers and children engaging in such interactions in the classrooms around you?

This interaction took place when Sameeksha, the first author of the piece, conducted a session on folk games with first- to third-graders during her teacher-research on the possibilities of using folklore in early language learning.

Before we proceed further, let’s establish a common understanding of what we mean by “folklore”. The traditional beliefs, customs and stories of a community typically passed through generations through oral traditions and cultural practices is commonly referred to as folklore. Folktales (or folk stories) are only one kind of folklore. Folklore includes folk art, craft, music, dance, food, occupational and technical skills, architecture, verbal arts like storytelling (Bucuvalas, 1988).

Sameeksha was interested in exploring whether folklore could be used in early language and literacy classrooms. The games that children engaged in outside of the school was one category of folklore that she explored with the students in her classroom.

Why bring Folklore into the Classroom?

Sylvia Ashton-Warner (1963) proposed that young children learn best when they engage with content that has a strong emotional connect for them. But many children experience a disconnect when they first enter school. While all young learners may face this disconnect to some extent, the gap between home and school is especially large for children whose home cultures and languages are very different from the culture and language of the classroom. This disconnect can be so large for first-generation school goers, that they disengage (partially or entirely) with the learning process. Folklore provides an opportunity

for creating spaces in school that are meaningful and connected to the child's home environment.

All communities have “funds of knowledge” (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005) – about food, medicine, architecture, arts and crafts, mythology, and so on. Folklore is knowledge that has been preserved, modified and handed down through generations. But in traditional curriculum planning, there is an implicit assumption that folklore is for uneducated people. It is sometimes avoided in schools because it is believed to be linked to false beliefs and superstitions, making it difficult to include it in school-based curricula.

While some aspects of folk knowledge may indeed be problematic for inclusion in school curricula (e.g., superstitions and questionable social practices), other aspects may be less controversial (e.g., knowledge of local plants and animals), and could help to make children, especially those from marginalised communities, feel more emotionally connected with and knowledgeable about what is being discussed in the classroom (Dundes, 1969). Bringing in knowledge and information from the family and community into the classroom could help to bridge some gaps between the school and community for the child.

Of course, school-based knowledge will always have some disconnects from community-based knowledge. But building on what is known could help the child learn what is new. Vygotsky (1981) referred to this process in his discussion of concept formation. To develop more abstract ways of thinking, a child's everyday experience needs to be engaged with, which can then be transformed through school-based instruction into more abstract mental functions. Thus, including and building upon the children's daily experiences is good for building strong conceptual foundations.

A third reason for including folklore is that it provides rich avenues for the simultaneous development of listening, speaking, reading and writing (LSRW) in the early language classroom (see Butoliya & Menon, 2017, for a rationale for simultaneously developing LSRW). When the topics are those of interest to the child, and those that she is an “expert” on, she is more likely to be an engaged and active participant in the learning process.

In early language classrooms, this promotes more active listening and speaking, and also greater willingness to take risks with reading and writing. While folklore exists largely in oral forms, it opens up possibilities for exploring connections between oral and written forms in the classroom. For example, if children bring in oral stories from their communities, it not only permits them to develop the oral skills of narration, but also provides ways for exploring

how to represent those oral narratives in the written forms. Likewise, a community survey conducted by children can be written down and recorded for discussion in the classroom.

A final reason we offer is that traditional school curricula have always favoured developing the child's cognition (or mind), without providing sufficient spaces for them to enter as "whole" people – with thoughts, feelings, identities, interests, and so on. Folklore permits the child's self, emotions, ideas and identities to be fully present in the classroom, reducing the likelihood of disengagement from the educational process.

Thus, there are multiple reasons for bringing in folklore into formal curricular spaces, especially into the reaching and learning of early language and literacy.

Teacher Research in Yadgir, Karnataka

Sameeksha was interested in examining the potential of using folklore in the classroom with elementary grade children. Working under the guidance of the second author (Shailaja), she planned and implemented a six-week curriculum for 15 first- to third-graders in a Nali Kali (Multi-Grade Multi-Level) classroom at a government school in Alipur *Thanda*¹, Yadgir, Karnataka. A non-governmental organisation, Kalike, which has been working with school education in that region over the past decade, served as the host organisation.

The official medium of instruction in government schools in the region is Kannada, although most children are from the Lambani community. Lambanis are a semi-nomadic tribe who have now settled in various parts of the country, including in villages around in North Karnataka. The Lambani language belongs to the Indo-Aryan family (unlike Kannada, which is a Dravidian language) and does not have a native script. Through long settlement in *thandas* around northern Karnataka, the adults have acquired knowledge of spoken Kannada, while the young children are still only partially orally proficient in it.

Pedagogical Principles

While designing the sessions, a few core pedagogical principles were kept in mind.

Principle 1. Children should be permitted to bring their ideas into the classroom.

The very idea of conducting a folklore project is to empower children, to help them bring in

¹ A "*thanda*" is a settlement, usually of tribal or nomadic groups.

their knowledge, and to feel connected with, and engaged with the learning process. Therefore, the sessions were designed with this principle in mind.

Principle 2. Children should be permitted to bring their languages into the classroom. Children should not be forced to speak only in the school language, but should feel comfortable speaking and expressing themselves in their home language, or mixing the home and school languages freely. This fluid mixing of languages in speech and writing is termed “translanguaging” and is an aspect of how most multilingual speakers use the languages at their disposal (Garcia & Wei, 2014).

Principle 3. The curriculum should make space for a two-way engagement with the community. Traditional curriculum and pedagogy result in one-way communications between school and home, where what is learned at school is carried back home. This was consciously reworked in this project, such that children were invited to engage with and bring in knowledge from the community into the school; and back, creating pathways for a two-way engagement. Sameeksha helped with this process (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Sameeksha (towards the back) with the classroom teacher (front) and children from the community. **Image Courtesy:** Sameeksha M.

Principle 4. Children’s emergent attempts at reading and writing should be supported². It is well known that children don’t become conventional readers and writers all at once. They go through many emergent attempts at learning to read and write, which would include enacting, speaking out what they are trying to write, drawing, and using “invented” spellings. Likewise, when they begin to read, they may look only at the pictures, guess at, or narrate a story from oral memory, and the like. Supporting children in these emergent attempts at reading and writing will help them become better readers and writers (see Figure 2).



Figure 2. Children discussing their drawings. **Image Courtesy:** Sameeksha M.

Principle 5. Children should have sufficient opportunities to *simultaneously* engage with LSRW. Folklore projects are interdisciplinary in nature, but the key objective of this project was to use folklore to enhance early language learning. Therefore, children’s explorations were used to create spaces in the classroom to engage with both the oral (listening and speaking) and the written (reading and writing) aspects of language

² For more on emergent literacy, refer to this ELI brief: Sinha, S., Pydah, A., & Menon, S. (2019). *Emergent literacy*. Hyderabad: Early Literacy Initiative, Tata Institute of Social Sciences. Retrieved from: http://eli.tiss.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/ELI_Practitioner-Brief-16_Emergent-Literacy.pdf

simultaneously. We drew upon principles of emergent literacy and organic reading (Ashton-Warner, 1963) to help young learners to engage simultaneously with LSRW.

Principle 6. The teacher's role is that of skilled facilitator. Folklore gives primary importance to information and knowledge that children bring from their communities. Yet, good child-centred pedagogy requires us to pay equal attention to the role of the teacher, if high quality learning is to result. Topics would have to be selected, directions for conducting the work given, spaces created for sharing and peer-work (see Figure 3), and appropriate support and feedback would have to be given to each child at different points of the teaching-learning process.



Figure 3. A collaborative space for discussing and writing stories. **Image Courtesy:** Sameeksha M.

A Brief Description of the Flow of the Sessions

Over a period of six-week, a variety of topics were worked upon, including the children's daily routines, songs, dances, festivals, family lore, mapping the locality, clothing and jewellery, food, games, medicines and stories (see Figure 4: folkdance). We could have selected fewer topics and gone deeper with them in the limited time available – perhaps this

would have led to richer insights about the nature of student learning. In effect, these six-weeks served as a pilot study for exploring the range of possibilities.



Figure 4. Children engaging in a folk dance. **Image Courtesy:** Sameeksha M.

The sessions were conducted for an hour every day, for four or five days a week, over six weeks. Although we give you a brief flow of the sessions here, in reality, except for the *Energiser* activity which remained a constant, all the other aspects moved around based on the need of the day, children’s interests, and so on. So the outline presented is not a series of steps, but ideas that can be adapted and used flexibly.

Energiser. Each session would start with an energiser activity, like an action song, movement-related activities or games. This helped young and twitchy learners settle down and get ready for learning!

Introduction. When Sameeksha introduced a kind of folklore (for example, games, or folk art), she would discuss it, and share her experiences with it growing up in Mangalore (a coastal district of Karnataka). Then, she would ask children about their experiences with it in their communities (geographically and culturally quite distinct from Sameeksha’s). For

example, she might talk about the games she played as a child, before asking the children about their experiences with games in their own community.

Connection to own experiences. During this phase, the children would try and think of their experiences with the topic presented. In the case of games, the children would discuss the kinds of games they played. Often, these happened as whole-group discussions.

Documentation. During this part of the process, each child would present their ideas on paper through illustrations, or through emergent writing.

Discussion. Each child would present her ideas and discuss them with the entire class. The example at the beginning of the paper is from this part of the process.

Throughout the sessions, Sameeksha supported the children with thinking, discussing and written representations.

Learnings and Recommendations

Here we summarise key insights that emerged from Sameeksha's work.

Folklore as a bridge between home and school. One of the main insights from the internship was that folklore acts as a valuable bridge between home and school, especially during the early years of schooling. There are two aspects to this relationship that we will comment on.

Folklore as a bridge between mother tongue and school language. The children were comfortable with conversing in their mother tongue, Lambani, but found it difficult to speak in Kannada. Ideally, according to all national policies and even the National Curriculum Framework (NCERT, 2005), young children should be permitted to learn in their mother tongue. However, in practice, a large percentage of children in India learn in a language other than their mother tongue. Under such circumstances, helping them transition to the school language is the only available option. Unfortunately, when children are forced to speak only in the school language, they face serious educational problems. Jhingran (2009) has estimated that one in four children in Indian classrooms faces a serious learning disadvantage due to the language barrier.

Using folklore in the classroom is not a substitute for using the children's mother tongue. However, it did help ease the language barrier a little. Since folklore involved talking about themselves, children were interested and invested in attending to the school language, and in attempting to communicate in it. Here is an example that highlights this point.

Discussion Topic: What do you do when you wake up in the morning?

Child 1 (C1) (speaking in Lambani): *Das gasucho, angoli karucho, khana khalu cho ni shale avu cho.*

(I brush my teeth, take a shower, eat my food, come to school)

Other children (whispering, urging C1 to use the school language): *Kannada kannada, munjane.*

C1 (speaking in Kannada): *Munjane yeddivri, brush madtivri.* (I wake up in the morning, brush my teeth.)

(Translanguaging between Lambani and Kannada)

C1 (speaking in Kannada): *Jhalaka madhuri, shaleg bartivri* (I take a shower and come to school.)

C2 (speaking in Lambani): *Daat gasucho, kapda, angoli karuco, shali avucho.* (I brush my teeth, wear clothes, take a shower, come to school.)

Other children (urging C2 to speak in the school language): *Kannada, Kannada.*

C2 (attempting to speak in Kannada): *Munjanevri, munjane ri yeddelthivri, brush madtivri, na nahativri, tele bachidvi, batte hakiri, shaleg barthivri.* (In the morning, in the morning, I wake up, brush my teeth, take a shower, wear clothes, come to school).

If you read the last line again, you see an interesting attempt by the child to incorporate the Lambani word for bathing (*nahana*) into the Kannada grammatical structure (*nahativri*). This transcript shows that children felt a pressure and need to communicate in Kannada at school, but also that it didn't come instinctively to them. While the position of the authors of this piece is that children should be allowed to communicate freely in their home languages, this is not the standard protocol in government schools, where they are urged to speak in the school language. Permitting children to express themselves in a language of comfort to them, allowed children to first gather their thoughts in their home language and then, with the support of their peers, to attempt to share it in the school language.

However, we don't believe that permitting them to speak in their home language alone would have served much purpose if the content had also not been interesting for them. The children were keen to talk about themselves, they were familiar with the concepts being discussed, and could relate to them. It had also been established that they were welcome to talk in any mixture of the languages they knew without fear of being scolded or punished. Relying on their home language in the classroom was not only not taboo, it was actually

encouraged. So the children felt freer to speak first in their mother tongue, and then to slowly translate it into Kannada with peer support.

We draw these conclusions from multiple similar instances observed in Sameeksha's classroom, as well as from observations made of the same children in the other classrooms as well. The children were a lot more hesitant to speak up in other classes, and one conversation Sameeksha had with the teacher showed that the teacher found it difficult to get children to do anything because of the language barrier. She was of the view that the "they don't know anything" and "nothing can be done" because they did not understand her language and she could not understand theirs. Permitting children to translanguague and to talk about meaningful content becomes important especially amongst first-generation school-goers as children find it hard to transition to school learning through unfamiliar language and content.

Folklore as a bridge between cultural worlds of home and school. In addition to bridging home and school languages, we found that folklore also helped bridge the larger cultural worlds of home and school. Parents in the community rarely engage in school activities. Thus, for a child, there is a disconnect between the home and school environments, while, for the parents, school is an unknown entity. First generation learners may find themselves "on the margins of two cultures" and have to often manage the tension between the two (Ghosh, 2014).

One activity Sameeksha conducted involved having children collect stories from their families. They not only listened to these stories orally, but also engaged in collaborative writing with more literate members of the family and community, since the young students were not yet able to write them down on their own. Then, they brought these stories into class. Here is an English translation of one such story.

Hide-and-Seek in the Forest

That was the day of the crowning of the new king. All the animals in the forest gathered to play hide-and-seeek.

Grandpa Fox asked the animals, "Who will seek the ones who are hiding?"

At that moment, the snobby cat smiled and said, "Oh! When I can find anyone in the night, finding them in the morning is easy. I will find everyone before they can even blink."

The animals all stood in a line and Grandpa Fox dictated the rules. Then began the game.

Grandpa Fox closed the cat's eyes, and as soon as his eyes were closed, all the animals

went into hiding. The tortoise went to a rock and sat next to it, disguising himself as a rock under his shell. The yellow frog sat near a flower and the owl sat on another tree. All the animals were cleverly disguised, and the snobby cat went on looking for them. Refusing to give up, he looked and looked, and yet was not able to find them. Tired of looking everywhere, he went and sat on the tortoise disguised as a rock. Even then, the tortoise did not move an inch. Suddenly Grandpa Fox announced that the cat's time was up. The snobby cat got up and stood next to Grandpa Fox, bowing his head. Suddenly to the cat's shock, the tortoise who had disguised himself as a rock got up and all the animals gathered around, unable to control their laughter.

Figure 5 shows the Kannada version of the story, written with the help of a literate family member.

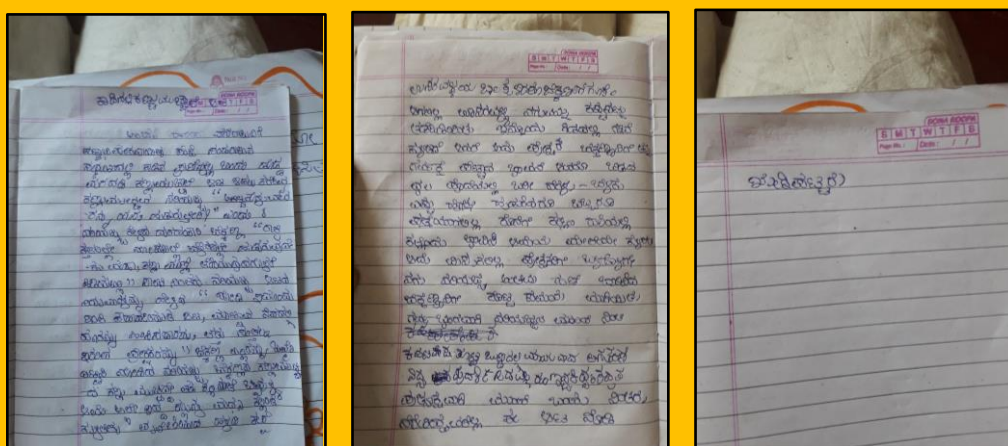


Figure 5. Example of a written story collected by the child. **Image Courtesy:** Sameeksha M.

Collecting these folktales acted as an important means for the children and family members to engage with each other around school tasks. On the one hand this activity helped get the family more involved in the school work of the children; and on the other, it also helped link the two in the imagination of the child as the two environments did not seem as disconnected as they usually do.

Further, as pointed out by Alan Dundes (1969), using such activities also helped emphasise the importance of oral tradition and collect folk stories passed down for generations in the community. Finally, it helped generated rich texts that could be shared and discussed in the early language classroom – texts that came not from some distant curriculum developer, but from the children's family and community knowledge!

Children as active participants in the classroom. Using folklore in the classroom shifts the focus from the teacher to the child. The child becomes the centre of the learning process as folklore involves enabling children to explore and discuss topics that they have familiarity with, or interest in. As described earlier, we explored aspects of the folk lives of children, such as games, songs, and dance, where they had to describe practices from their lives. This helped the children let go of their fear of taking risks, and participate more actively and with ownership in the classroom.

The stories that were brought to the classroom would usually be read out, or narrated orally by the children to their peers (see Figure 6), and then there would be a whole-class discussion around it. One child had brought in a story that was incomplete. This was the story of “The boy who cried wolf”. Since Sameeksha knew the story, she narrated it to the children. As the class discussed the story, they realised that they could do more with it. They collectively decided to turn it into a play.



Figure 6. Examples of children sharing their stories. **Image Courtesy:** Sameeksha M.

Sameeksha helped the children write the dialogues and story line. All other aspects, such as choosing the characters, deciding the lighting, and stage effects, were done by the children, with support from Sameeksha as needed. Sameeksha noticed that the children were thoroughly engaged with the process, and had complete ownership of this activity. They even practised after class, without anyone asking them to.

The play was staged with great enthusiasm (see Figure 7). Children who had until then not spoken much in class were eager participants. Children hesitant with speaking in Kannada now spoke their lines with confidence.



Figure 7. A scene from the play performed by children. **Image Courtesy:** Sameeksha M.

Some children decided to attempt writing the stories they had brought from home on their own, since they felt they knew and understood them well. Of course, they were encouraged to use invented spellings, drawings and translanguaging in their writing, so the products were not always conventionally-written pieces. But the engagement that the children had in the process gave valuable openings which could be built upon to pave the way towards more conventional ways of reading and writing.

An activity like this—derived from the stories brought by the children and performed by them—also shifted the dynamics in the class. The teacher became the facilitator and provided space for the children to explore and work on their own. Thus, as a pedagogic process, folklore not only shifts the power dynamics in the class, but also provides opportunities to for reluctant and less-engaged students to actively participate. Formats like drama help open up this space in the early language classroom. However, we believe that the children’s ownership of the content also contributed to its success.

Simultaneously supporting LSRW. In most classrooms in India, LSRW is often taught in a disconnected manner. The problem with this is that when the child is taught language this way, the symbols become arbitrary and meaningless to her. Children, who are natural meaning makers, are unable to understand the symbols taught at school, and lose interest in literacy and schooling. Moreover, literacy is acquired more easily when these four aspects are interwoven. Thus, it becomes important to look at methods that address the LSRW skills simultaneously and in an integrated fashion. We found that using folklore in the classroom does this effectively.

Let's revisit the vignette at the beginning of the piece. This is how that activity played out in the classroom³.

(Children are all sitting in a circle. The topic of discussion is games. Each child has drawn their idea of games. One comes forward to talk about the games he plays.)

C1: Teacher, we play different games. We play *lagori*, *cricket*, *dasti aata*.

T: What does *dasti aata* mean?

(Two children get up to demonstrate. They stand next to each other. One holds her hand out, and the other is supposed to hit it and move to the other side of the room and so on, the game goes on.)

T: What other games do you play?

Children: Teacher *ri*, we play *kho kho*, cricket.

C2: *Lagori ri*, *football ri*, *cycle ri*. We put the stones one on top of the other, we take a ball and we hit the stones.

C3: We play *hagga aata*.

T: How do you play *hagga aata*?

(The child pretends to skip.)

C3: *Naavu haggadata*, *chip aata adtivri* (We play skipping and chip game.)

(The child then demonstrates) All of us stand in a group. Then we keep one chip in one corner and then we run.

C4: Teacher *ri naavu hagga aata*, *cricket*, *patang* (We play skipping, cricket and kite flying.)

C5: *Naavu lagori*, *jhaad aatanu adtivri* (We play *lagori* and *jhaad ban*).

³ This transcript has been translated into English.

(The child explains that *jhaad ban* is a game where they sit on the tree and look down for a particular person, then hide from that person.)

C6: Teacher *ri*, we play box-box *aata*, then we play *lagori aata*. We play *jhaad ban*, *dasti aata*.

After elaborating on, even enacting the games they played, children were asked to draw them (see Figure 8).

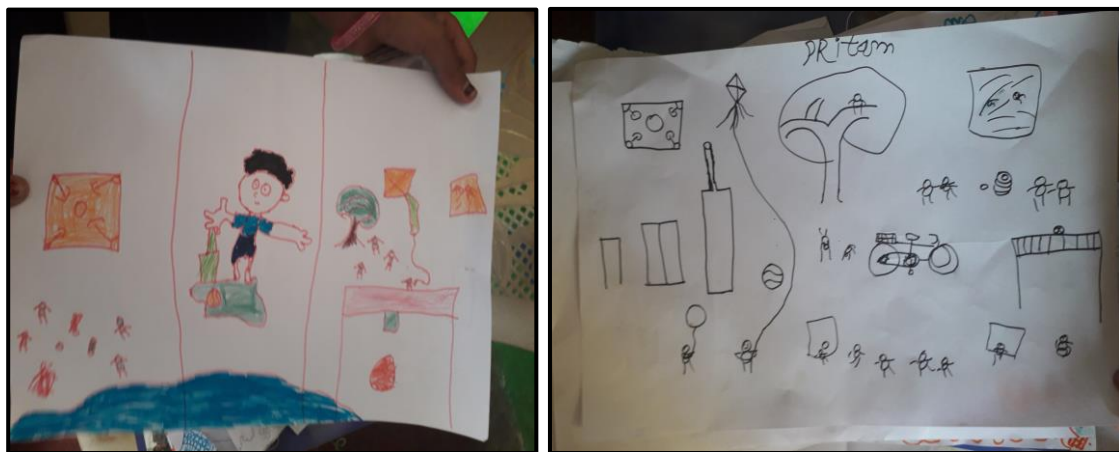


Figure 8. Examples of drawings made by children on the games they play.

Image Courtesy: Sameeksha M.

In Figure 8, we see children learning to represent through symbols the thoughts they shared during the discussion earlier. “What is central in learning to speak, to draw, to read and to write, is that they all involve learning symbols. As a child learns language, she learns that symbols can be used to convey meaning.” (Butoliya & Menon, 2017, p. 7)

Moving from picture drawing or scribbling to conventional writing is a process of learning to symbolise, one well supported in this classroom.

As described earlier, children also engaged with the writing process in other ways during this project: by helping to write down the stories their families or communities shared, and also by attempting to rewrite these in the classroom. Children read out (with support) the stories they had gathered; they also attempted to read out each other’s stories. Thus, discussing (speaking and listening), drawing, writing, reading were seamlessly interwoven in the classroom (see Figure 9). Moreover, the process appeared to be meaningful and often emerged from children’s responses or responsiveness to the activities introduced.



Figure 9. Children sharing the stories they had gathered with each other, orally and in writing.
Image Courtesy: Sameeksha M.

Conclusion

In many Indian classrooms, children in Grades 1 to 3 spend much of their time learning the script. The assumption is that children cannot engage in more meaningful pieces of reading or writing until they master the script. Yet, in this practitioner brief we have tried to demonstrate that even young children can engage meaningfully in higher-order LSRW activities by invoking two principles: (1) the content should be rich, meaningful and relevant to the child; (2) the child's emergent attempts at speaking, reading and writing should be encouraged and accepted. If we keep these two ideas in mind, it is indeed possible to engage children in rich reading and writing activities *while they are simultaneously taught to master the script.*⁴

Folklore is one useful way in which LSRW can be taught simultaneously, even as we introduce content that is relevant, meaningful and interesting to young learners. Table 1

⁴ Sameeksha did not focus on teaching phonics. However, teaching children to decode the script systematically is an important aspect of a comprehensive literacy curriculum. For more on these topics, readers can refer to these ELI briefs:

- a. Menon, S., & Das, H. V. (2019). *Comprehensive literacy instruction model in Indian classrooms*. Hyderabad: Early Literacy Initiative, Tata Institute of Social Sciences. Retrieved from: http://eli.tiss.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Comprehensive_Literacy_Practitioner_Brief_12_PDF.pdf
- b. Pydah, A. (2019). *Learning the script*. Hyderabad: Early Literacy Initiative, Tata Institute of Social Sciences. Retrieved from: http://eli.tiss.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/ELI_Handout_6_Learning-the-Script.pdf

provides a quick overview of the ways in which folklore can be incorporated in the classroom.

Table 1

Ideas for Using Folklore in the Classroom

1. Collect information about different aspects of the students' cultures
 - Collaboratively develop questionnaires on different aspects of students' cultures: mythology, food, games, songs, art, history, geography, and so on.
 - Children can interview and record responses of family or community members and bring them into class. Older children can write on their own, while younger children can have others help them.
 - Share and discuss in class.
2. Use information collected from the community to build on your early-language curriculum
 - Through creating "class books⁵" that compile contributions of different children.
 - Through creating live performances that draw upon and extend children's language skills⁶.
 - Through using visual aids—such as maps, drawings, and so on—which can aid in the transition from the oral to the written.
3. Use festivals and holidays in the community to conduct *research*, live observations and recordings of what happens, and why. These descriptions are likely to be vivid and recent in children's experiences, and so will be more detailed than retellings from past experiences.
4. Invite members of the community into your classroom to demonstrate or share a song, a recipe, a craft, a story, and so on. You can later help the children write up

⁵ For more on this, refer to this ELI brief:

Pydah, A. (2019). *Children's writing: Creating books in the classroom*. Hyderabad: Early Literacy Initiative, Tata Institute of Social Sciences. Retrieved from: http://eli.tiss.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Creating_Books_in_the_Classroom_ELI_Handout_7.pdf

⁶ Refer to this ELI brief:

Pydah, A. (2019). *Readers' theatre in the classroom*. Hyderabad: Early Literacy Initiative, Tata Institute of Social Sciences. Retrieved from: http://eli.tiss.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/ELI-Practitioners-Brief-13_Readers-Theatre-in-Classroom.pdf

the description of what happened during the visit, and invite them to explore that topic in their communities.

5. Permit children to use their languages of comfort to conduct these activities. Children can bring in stories, and oral or written recordings of various kinds in their home languages. If these are different from school language, translanguaging can help bridge the gap. Permit children to write using vocabulary from home languages.
6. Provide opportunities to reflect on similarities and differences amongst the cultures in your classroom, or between the home and school cultures.
7. Provide appropriate support
 - in setting the context for the activities that follow by sharing your experiences, reading aloud books from different cultures and communities, and so on.
 - by asking questions that permit rich discussion and reflection.
 - in helping students write their thoughts down (for younger children, especially).
 - by creating a non-threatening space for sharing and collaborating.
 - by providing appropriate support for extending students' vocabulary, writing and responding skills.
8. Conduct school or community *melas* where learnings from your class are shared with others beyond your classroom.

We should add an interesting insight here. When Sameeksha first went into the Lambani community, she had perhaps sub-consciously expected to find “pure” forms of Lambani culture available as resources for the classroom. To her surprise, she found children merrily reproducing Bollywood and Kollywood songs and dances in response to her request for folklore. As teachers, we must be sensitive to the idea that cultures don’t exist in isolation of each other: they overlap, merge, converge, diverge, and evolve. It goes without saying that there are no “pure” cultures out there. For the purposes of the early language classroom, the culture of the folk (as it exists, not as it is imagined) is folk culture, and their lore is folklore. All forms—pure or hybrid—serve our purpose just as well.

Given the short duration of the internship, Sameeksha could only explore a few forms,

and that too relatively superficially. We share her experiences in the hope that you will try your own activities around folklore in the early language and literacy classroom. We urge you to develop methods to make the process more meaningful for your students.

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