

Open to the possibility beyond language learning 'Patchwork' and its influence

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Patchwork, Stories, Songs and Children's Games from Around the World was a rewarding outcome of collaboration between international students and an instructor in the Program in Educational Theatre at NYU. By sharing stories in their first language and then being supported in translating them into English, the students were empowered to share their cultural traditions and to communicate them in both their first language and English.

Patchwork was a performance of folklore from various traditions, told in their original language with English translation, celebrating our diversity while revealing our common bonds. The project demonstrated that all cultures use music and stories to soothe, entertain and teach their children. It also provided insight into the resilient spirit and innate creativity in children across cultures and through the generations.

The Patchwork team toured the NYC tri-state area performing and leading workshops from 2001-2003, eventually taking the show to Seoul, Korea. Clear benefits to language development emerged from our experience with Patchwork and successful workshops were held for Korean and American teachers/actors adapting the Patchwork model to encourage active engagement in English language learning.

Patchwork has especially impacted on one of the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teacher training courses in graduate school in Korea in 2008. Based on the core idea of Patchwork project, 'experiencing diverse language and culture within authentic context in a dramatic form,' the EFL teachers have created storytelling performances along with lesson plans that are applicable to their classrooms.

To convey the meaning of the story in a foreign language, the teachers worked on rewriting the original stories with repetitive phrases, created the before, during, and after the story activities, and added theatrical elements with music, movement, props, and puppetry. Throughout a semester, twelve stories with lesson plans were created; ready to be implemented in the actual EFL classrooms.

While stories are often taught in a foreign language classroom, this multi sensory approach of telling stories can widely open the door for experiencing language visually, aurally, physically, and emotionally. And when they are not losing their essential taste and enjoyment, and when not being exploited for the purpose of language learning, our unlimited, universal, and rich resources of stories can open to the possibility of sharing, creating, and communicating with each other beyond language learning.