

# Indigenous Storytelling Practices and Communicative Competence of Urban Learners from Philippine Ethnolinguistic Groups

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## Abstract

This study explores the relationship between indigenous storytelling practices and the communicative competence of urban learners from Philippine ethnolinguistic groups (ELGs). Employing an explanatory sequential mixed methods design, the research investigated this phenomenon in two phases. The quantitative phase surveyed 192 public secondary school students residing in Davao City, belonging to five specific ELGs: Maranao, Tausug, Mandaya, Badjao, and Mansaka. The survey identified five common indigenous storytelling practices, with oral storytelling by elders being the most prevalent. Notably, over 80% of participants reported high engagement with storytelling. Additionally, self-reported levels of communicative competence were strong, particularly in grammar, written discourse, sociolinguistic, and strategic aspects. A statistically significant positive association emerged between engagement in storytelling and self-reported communicative competence. The qualitative phase involved in-depth interviews with five participants – one representative from each ELG. Thematic analysis revealed two key themes impacting communicative competence: mastery of language and expression, and the development of interpersonal and social skills. These findings suggest potential mechanisms by which indigenous storytelling fosters effective communication among urban ELG learners. This research contributes to the understanding of how traditional practices can support the development of communication skills in diverse educational settings.

**Keywords:** indigenous storytelling; communicative competence; urban learners; Philippine ethnolinguistic groups

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## 1. Introduction

The Philippines is a Southeast Asian archipelago nation renowned for its rich cultural tapestry. This diversity is evident in the presence of over 170 distinct ethnolinguistic groups (ELGs), each with its own unique language, traditions, and belief systems [1]. Storytelling serves as a cornerstone of cultural transmission within these communities, passed down through generations for millennia. Indigenous narratives encompass a vast array of genres, including myths, legends, epics, folktales, and songs. These stories not only entertain but also impart valuable knowledge about history, social norms, environmental stewardship, and spiritual values [2].

In recent years, there has been a significant migration of families from indigenous communities towards urban areas in search of better educational and economic opportunities for their children. This influx has led to a growing number of learners from ELGs

attending schools designed primarily for Filipino speakers [3]. While these schools strive to provide a quality education, the curriculum and communication methods often differ significantly from the storytelling practices traditionally employed within indigenous communities [4].

Communicative competence is a multi-faceted concept encompassing fluency, grammatical accuracy, vocabulary range, and the ability to adapt communication styles to different contexts [5]. Storytelling plays a crucial role in developing these skills within indigenous communities [6]. Traditional narratives often employ rich figurative language, repetitive structures, and rhythmic patterns that enhance fluency and vocabulary acquisition in young learners [7]. Storytelling sessions frequently involve audience participation which encourages children to engage with and refine grammatical structures through active listening and repetition [8]. Indigenous stories are deeply embedded within the cultural context of the

community that can provide learners with implicit lessons about appropriate communication styles for different situations and audiences [9].

Despite the valuable contributions of indigenous storytelling practices to communicative competence, the shift to formal education in urban settings can create a potential disconnect for learners from ELGs [10]. The emphasis on standardized testing and classroom-based instruction may not adequately capture the strengths fostered through traditional storytelling [11]. Additionally, the use of Filipino, while a national language, might not fully resonate with learners accustomed to their native tongue's richness and expressiveness [12].

The current research on communicative competence in the Philippines has primarily focused on Filipino-speaking students or the challenges faced by second-language learners. Limited research exists on how the specific storytelling practices of indigenous communities contribute to the development of communicative competence in their children. Understanding this gap is crucial for educators to effectively support learners from ELGs as they transition to urban schools and explore the complexities of a new linguistic environment.

This study aims to bridge this knowledge gap by exploring the relationship between indigenous storytelling practices and the communicative competence of learners from ELGs currently enrolled in urban schools. Specifically, it aims to (1) explore the different indigenous storytelling practices and engagement of the learners with these practices, (2) assess the current level of communicative competence of learners, (3) determine whether participants' engagement with storytelling practices are associated with communicative competence, and (4) describe the learners' experiences on the impact of indigenous storytelling practices on the development of their communicative competence. This research seeks to inform pedagogical approaches that can leverage the strengths of both traditional storytelling and formal education to optimize the learning outcomes of this diverse student population.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Research Design

This research utilized an explanatory sequential mixed methods design. The study was conducted in two consecutive phases. The first phase employed quantitative methods. Learner engagement with various indigenous storytelling practices was measured through surveys. Additionally, the quantitative phase assessed their engagement with these practices, as well as their current level of communicative competence. The potential association between indigenous storytelling practices and communicative competence was also explored quantitatively. The qualitative phase aimed to elucidate how participants perceived indigenous storytelling practices impacting the development of their communicative competence, based on their lived experiences. This in-depth exploration aimed to provide a richer understanding of the mechanisms behind any potential associations identified in the quantitative phase.

The justification for this design lies in the need to first establish the existence and strength of a relationship between storytelling practices and communicative competence. The quantitative phase provided a foundational understanding of these practices and their

potential impact. The subsequent qualitative phase then explored the "why" behind these findings, offering deeper insights into the participants' experiences and perceptions. This sequential approach allowed the research to build a more comprehensive picture of the relationship between indigenous storytelling and the communicative competence of ELG learners in urban schools.

### 2.2 Locale and Participants

Davao City, a metropolitan area situated in the southern Philippines, is characterized by a significant migrant population. This diversity fosters a multicultural environment where various ethnicities coexist peacefully. The city is home to over 20 ELGs, the primary unit of cultural identification in the Philippines [13].

The quantitative phase of the present study focused on 192 public secondary school students residing in Davao City. Participants belonged to five specific ELGs: Maranao, Tausug, Mandaya, Badjao, and Mansaka. Student identification was based on self-reported data collected during the 2023 enrolment process. The public school system in the Philippines enrolls the majority of high school students. The sample comprised students from Grades 7-12, with an equal distribution of 32 students per grade level. The ethnic composition of the sample revealed a majority of Maranao participants (29.69%), followed by Tausug (26.56%), Mandaya (20.31%), Badjao (14.58%), and Mansaka (8.85%). The qualitative phase involved the purposive recruitment of one representative from each identified ELG, resulting in a total of five participants.

### 2.3 Research Instrument

A two-phase approach was used to gather data from participants. The first phase employed a quantitative survey. A self-made questionnaire with open-ended questions explored storytelling practices within participants' communities. Participants described these practices and indicated their level of engagement using a four-point Likert scale (1 = Very Low, 4 = Very High). This pilot-tested questionnaire demonstrated excellent internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.90. The second part of the survey adapted Juhász's [14] instrument for assessing communicative competence in Hungarian EFL classrooms. This adaptation, modified to suit learners from Philippine ethnolinguistic groups (ELGs), also achieved a high Cronbach's alpha of 0.92. To assess communicative competence, participants self-reported their abilities on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (very low) to 5 (very high).

The second phase utilized qualitative interviews. Here, learners discussed the impact of indigenous storytelling practices on their communication skills. Interview questions explored how storytelling influenced their ability to express themselves clearly, listen actively, and adapt communication styles in various contexts.

To ensure the relevance and effectiveness of the instruments, all questions underwent validation by experts in cultural studies and educational research. This process aimed to capture the nuances of both indigenous storytelling practices and communicative competence among learners from Philippine ELGs.

### 2.4 Data Collection

Potential participants were identified through commissioned enumerators working in schools pre-selected by the researchers. After obtaining permission from school heads, assent forms were collected from the learners. All procedures adhered to the ethical guidelines established in the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its

subsequent amendments or equivalent ethical standards. Interviews were conducted in the participants' preferred language, facilitated by a qualified translator to guarantee clear comprehension of the questions.

2.5 Data Analysis

The study employed a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to analyze the relationship between indigenous storytelling practices and communicative competence. Descriptive statistics, including frequency (F), percentage (%), and mean, were used to quantify the prevalence of these practices, the extent to which learners engaged in them, and their overall communicative competence. To further explore the potential association between these factors, linear regression analysis was conducted. SPSS Version 23 was used to quantitatively analyze the data. A p-value less than 0.05 was considered significant. Finally, participants' experiences regarding the impact of indigenous storytelling practices on their communication skills were analyzed using Clarke and Braun's [15] six-step thematic analysis. This approach allowed for a deeper understanding of how participants perceive the influence of these practices.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Quantitative Phase

Five common indigenous storytelling practices were identified by urban learners from different Philippine ethnolinguistic groups (Table 1). Oral storytelling by elders is the most common form of indigenous storytelling, with 145 participants (75.52%) highlighting its importance. Oral storytelling by elders serves as a cornerstone for passing down cultural knowledge, values, and traditions [16]. Elders are revered as the custodians of wisdom, and their storytelling sessions are often intimate and communal, fostering a deep connection between generations [17].

A significant portion of participants (110, or 57.29%) identified storytelling through songs and chants as the second most common practice. These forms of storytelling are not just entertaining but are also imbued with cultural significance and often serve as a means to preserve language, teach historical narratives, and convey moral lessons. Songs and chants can be performed in various social and ceremonial contexts, reinforcing their role in cultural transmission [18].

Storytelling through dance and performance is recognized by 97 participants (50.52%). This practice integrates movement and

expression to bring stories to life, often in a highly engaging and communal setting. Dances and performances are frequently used to depict historical events, mythological tales, and social values, providing a vivid and immersive storytelling experience [19].

Visual arts, cited by 68 participants (35.42%), play a significant role in indigenous storytelling. This includes traditional art forms like painting, weaving, and carving that convey stories and cultural symbolism. These visual narratives are essential for preserving and communicating cultural heritage, especially in communities where oral transmission is complemented by artistic expression [20].

Modern adaptations of storytelling through written and digital media were noted by 59 participants (30.73%). This practice includes the recording of stories in books, videos, and digital platforms, allowing for broader dissemination and preservation of cultural narratives in contemporary formats. This form is particularly important for reaching younger generations and urban audiences who may be more engaged with digital media [21].

A small percentage of participants (2, or 1.04%) mentioned other forms of storytelling practices. These include unique or less common methods not captured by the broader categories listed above. This indicates the diversity and adaptability of indigenous storytelling practices to various contexts and needs [22].

Indigenous storytelling remains a significant and vibrant practice among the majority of participants, with over 80% showing very high engagement as shown in Figure 1. This highlights the enduring importance of these cultural traditions in fostering community bonds, cultural identity, and personal development among urban learners from ELGs. The role of indigenous storytelling in cultural preservation and community building has been supported by several studies. For instance, Zwack et al. [23] emphasized that storytelling serves as a crucial mechanism for transmitting cultural values and traditions, ensuring their survival across generations. Similarly, Liebenberg et al. [24] found that engaging in storytelling practices significantly enhances the cultural identity and self-esteem of indigenous youth, fostering a sense of belonging and community cohesion among participants.

The participants' self-reported levels of communicative competence indicate a strong overall proficiency, particularly in the aspects of grammar, written discourse, sociolinguistic, and strategic competencies, which are rated very high (Table 2). This suggests that participants perceive themselves as highly competent communicators, capable of using language effectively and appropriately in a wide range of contexts and for various purposes.

Table 1: Common indigenous storytelling practices identified by the participants.

Indigenous storytelling practices	F	%
Oral storytelling by elders	145	75.52
Storytelling through songs and chants	110	57.29
Storytelling through dance and performance	97	50.52
Storytelling through visual arts	68	35.42
Storytelling through written and digital media	59	30.73
Others	2	1.04

Table 2: Self-reported level of communicative competence of the participants.

Indicators	Mean	Descriptive Level
Linguistic competence/vocabulary	4.13	High
Linguistic competence/grammar	4.20	Very High
Spoken discourse competence	4.18	High
Written discourse competence	4.28	Very High
Actional competence	4.29	High
Sociolinguistic competence	4.20	Very High
Strategic competence	4.26	Very High
Overall	4.22	Very High

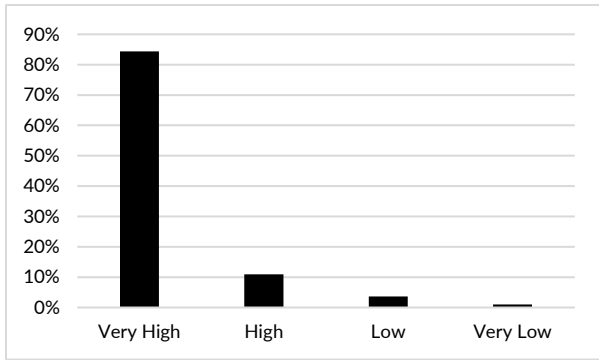


Figure 1: Level of engagement of the participants in indigenous storytelling practices.

The high self-reported levels of communicative competence among participants are supported by several studies. Notably, Ahmed [25] argued that communicative competence encompasses grammar, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competencies, all of which are essential for effective communication. Their research indicated that proficiency in these areas is critical for using language accurately and appropriately across different contexts. In addition, Light and McNaughton [26] highlighted that individuals with high communicative competence are better equipped to navigate diverse linguistic and social scenarios, enhancing their ability to convey and interpret meaning effectively.

Regression analysis shows a significant positive association between the participants' engagement in indigenous storytelling practices and their self-reported level of communicative competence (Table 3). A higher level of engagement in these storytelling practices is associated with a higher level of communicative competence. This suggests that storytelling is an effective method for developing communication skills among learners. Supporting this, Lucarevschi [27] found that indigenous storytelling enhances linguistic skills and cultural understanding, contributing to overall communicative competence. Moreover, Yang et al. [28] demonstrated that storytelling fosters critical thinking and language development, providing learners with the tools to communicate effectively in various contexts.

3.2 Qualitative Phase

The analysis of participant experiences revealed two key themes impacting communicative competence: mastery of language and expression, and the development of interpersonal and social skills. Themes and sub-themes generated are given in Table 4.

Theme 1: Mastery of Language and Expression

Sub-Theme 1: Enhanced Vocabulary

Engaging with indigenous storytelling significantly enriched participants' vocabulary. Many noted that traditional stories introduced them to culturally specific words and expressions. For instance, a Maranao participant shared how folktales about Lake Lanao's mythological origins expanded their vocabulary with terms specific to the region's ecology and mythology. This exposure to culturally rich and often rare vocabulary broadened their language skills beyond everyday urban vernacular.

Indigenous stories were also laden with idioms and metaphors, intrinsic to the cultural heritage. A Tausug learner, for example, spoke of how proverbs embedded in their tales conveyed wisdom and values, enriching their understanding and use of figurative language. These idiomatic expressions provided deeper insights into the cultural psyche, enhancing both linguistic and cultural literacy.

The participants further emphasized the nuances in dialect and speech patterns used in storytelling. A Badjao learner described how listening to elders narrate stories in different dialects of their language helped them appreciate the subtleties of pronunciation and word usage. This exposure to linguistic variations sharpened their overall language comprehension and adaptability, making them more proficient in navigating diverse linguistic landscapes.

Hettiarachchi et al. [29] support this finding, demonstrating that storytelling in indigenous languages enhances vocabulary and linguistic skills by exposing learners to diverse lexical items and speech patterns. Additionally, Lubis and Bahri [30] highlighted how the use of traditional stories in language education preserves and enriches vocabulary, promoting a deeper understanding of cultural and linguistic heritage.

Sub-Theme 2: Improved Storytelling and Narrative Skills

Participants observed that indigenous storytelling significantly honed their narrative and storytelling abilities. Many learners mentioned how traditional stories, with their clear structures, taught them to effectively organize and present their own stories. A Mandaya participant remarked on the typical structure of their folk tales, with detailed setups and climactic resolutions, providing a blueprint for crafting narratives. This understanding of story mechanics proved transferable to various forms of communication, including writing and public speaking.

Participants frequently cited the use of vivid and expressive language in indigenous stories as a major influence on their narrative skills. A Mansaka learner shared how the rich, descriptive passages about the landscape and characters in their stories inspired them to be more detailed and imaginative in their storytelling. This enhancement in expressive capabilities not only improved their narrative skills but also deepened their engagement

Table 3: Association between level of engagement of the participants in indigenous storytelling practices and their self-reported level of communicative competence.

Variables (Constant)	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	T	p
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Engagement in indigenous storytelling practices	0.43	0.03	0.61	14.24	.000

Note: R<sup>2</sup> = .367; F-value=202.841; p=.000

Table 4: Themes and sub-themes regarding learners' experiences on the impact of indigenous storytelling practices on the development of their communicative competence.

Themes	Sub-Themes
Linguistic proficiency and expression	Enhanced vocabulary Improved storytelling and narrative skills Development of multi-lingual capabilities
Interpersonal and social skills	Active listening and engagement Empathy and understanding different perspectives Strengthened communication in group settings Conflict resolution and diplomacy

with the audience. The interactive nature of storytelling emerged as another invaluable aspect for participants. A Badjao learner described how storytelling sessions often involved communal engagement, such as singing and role-playing. These experiences helped them understand the importance of audience interaction and taught them how to capture and maintain an audience's attention, a skill crucial for effective communication in various settings, from academic presentations to social interactions.

This finding supports the studies of Lucarevski [27] and Spencer and Petersen [31] which found that storytelling practices enhance children's narrative skills by providing them with story structure and language use models. Their study illustrates that exposure to storytelling helps learners understand narrative components and improve their ability to organize and express their own stories. Moreover, Cunsolo Willox et al. [32] demonstrated that storytelling traditions in diverse cultures contribute to the development of sophisticated linguistic and narrative abilities. Additionally, Juraid and Ibrahim [33] highlighted that engaging with storytelling improves expressive language skills and fosters an understanding of audience dynamics and interactive communication, essential for effective storytelling and broader communicative competence.

#### *Sub-Theme 3: Development of Multi-Lingual Capabilities*

Indigenous storytelling practices were also seen by participants as significantly contributing to their development as multilingual individuals. Many learners reflected on how storytelling reinforced their proficiency in their native languages, which they might otherwise rarely use in urban settings. A Maranao participant highlighted that retelling folktales in their native tongue allowed them to practice and maintain fluency, preserving their linguistic heritage despite the dominance of Filipino and English in daily life.

Participants frequently discussed how storytelling facilitated their ability to switch between languages. A Tausug learner shared how they often retold traditional stories in both their native language and Filipino, honing their ability to seamlessly transition between different linguistic codes. This practice of code-switching proved particularly useful in navigating the multilingual urban environment.

Storytelling also bridged the gap between cultural and linguistic identities for participants. A Mandaya learner described how sharing a story in their native tongue and then translating it to Filipino or English allowed them to connect their cultural heritage with their urban identity. This dual-language storytelling not only improved their multilingual capabilities but also fostered a sense of pride and confidence in their cultural background.

This finding is in consonance with the study of He et al. [34], which found that storytelling in multiple languages promotes

cognitive and linguistic development by encouraging learners to think and express themselves in different linguistic frameworks. Their study highlighted that engaging in bilingual storytelling enhances language proficiency and cognitive flexibility, facilitating easier language transitions. Similarly, Anderson et al. [35] demonstrated that multilingual storytelling practices help maintain and develop language skills in minority languages while simultaneously strengthening the learners' proficiency in the dominant language.

## **Theme 2: Development of Interpersonal and Social Skills**

### *Sub-Theme 1: Active Listening and Engagement*

Indigenous storytelling practices significantly enhanced participants' active listening and engagement skills. Many participants emphasized the demand for attentiveness in traditional storytelling sessions. A Maranao learner described how listening to elders recount elaborate tales required sustained focus to follow intricate plots and characters. This practice fostered more engaged listening, a skill useful in academic settings and everyday interactions.

The interactive nature of storytelling sessions further encouraged participation and engagement. A Tausug participant recounted being asked to join chants or respond to questions, making the experience more dynamic and engaging. This interactive listening fostered a deeper connection to the stories and improved their ability to actively participate in conversations.

The oral nature of indigenous storytelling also cultivated an appreciation for listening as a critical aspect of communication. A Mandaya learner mentioned valuing the art of listening as much as speaking. This shift in perspective enhanced their overall communication skills, making them more patient and thoughtful listeners in various contexts.

This finding affirms the view of Maine and Shields [36] that storytelling practices enhance listening skills by requiring learners to process and engage with the narrative actively. Their study indicated that the need to follow complex storylines and anticipate plot developments improves attentiveness and comprehension. Additionally, Shelton et al. [37] demonstrated that interactive storytelling fosters social engagement and participation. The results showed that the communal aspects of storytelling, such as responding to prompts and participating in chants, build stronger listening and interactive skills, promoting more effective communication in diverse settings.

### *Sub-Theme 2: Empathy and Understanding Different Perspectives*

The participants noted that indigenous storytelling significantly contributed to their development of empathy and understanding of

different perspectives. Through stories, learners were exposed to a wide range of experiences and viewpoints. A Badjao participant shared how hearing tales from other ethnolinguistic groups helped them understand and appreciate the diversity within their community. This exposure to different cultural narratives broadened their perspective and fostered a greater sense of empathy towards others' experiences and traditions.

Participants often found themselves resonating with the stories' characters and situations. A Mansaka learner reflected on how stories about overcoming challenges or moral dilemmas mirrored their own experiences. This identification deepened their emotional understanding and empathy for the characters, translating into greater empathy in real-life interactions.

The stories also served as windows into the historical and social contexts of their communities. A Tausug learner highlighted how folktales about their ancestors' struggles and triumphs provided a deeper understanding of their cultural history. This historical perspective enhanced their empathy towards the challenges faced by previous generations and their impact on present-day community dynamics.

The finding is similar to the study of Dias [38] who conducted research demonstrating that storytelling promotes empathy by encouraging listeners to identify with diverse characters and situations. His study showed that narratives provide a safe space for emotional engagement and perspective-taking, fostering empathy and understanding of different viewpoints. Additionally, Hibbin [39] explored how narratives, including indigenous stories, contribute to narrative empathy—a process where listeners emotionally engage with stories and develop empathy for the characters' experiences. The result illustrated that storytelling enhances interpersonal understanding and empathy by inviting listeners to reflect on shared human experiences across cultural and historical contexts.

#### *Sub-Theme 3: Strengthened Communication in Group Settings*

The participants observed that storytelling practices enhanced their communication skills, particularly in group settings. Many participants recounted how storytelling was often a collaborative effort, with multiple voices contributing to the narrative. A Mandaya learner shared how family members or community elders would take turns narrating parts of a story, which required clear and coordinated communication. This collaborative approach to storytelling improved their ability to communicate effectively in group activities and projects.

Storytelling sessions frequently incorporated role-playing and performance, boosting participants' confidence in expressing themselves. A Badjao learner described how acting out characters in a story helped them become more articulate and expressive in group discussions. This practice of role-playing enhanced both their verbal and non-verbal communication skills, making them more effective communicators in social and academic settings.

Storytelling traditions emphasized the importance of respectful dialogue and turn-taking. A Maranao participant mentioned learning to wait their turn and listen attentively during storytelling sessions. This fostered a sense of respect for others' contributions and improved their ability to engage in respectful and constructive group communication.

The finding supports the study of Killmer et al. [40] who explored the dynamics of group communication, highlighting the role of turn-

taking and collaborative storytelling in enhancing social interaction. It suggested that structured communication practices, such as those in storytelling traditions, facilitate effective group communication by promoting clear expression and attentive listening among participants. Additionally, O'Byrne [41] discussed the concept of collaborative learning and its impact on communication skills. Their result illustrated how collaborative storytelling activities, where learners work together to construct narratives, promote cognitive and social development by fostering shared understanding and effective communication strategies.

#### *Sub-Theme 4: Conflict Resolution and Diplomacy*

The participants highlighted how indigenous storytelling practices provided valuable lessons in conflict resolution and diplomacy. Many indigenous stories contain moral lessons about resolving conflicts and fostering harmony. A Tausug learner reflected on how stories about resolving disputes through dialogue and understanding influenced their approach to conflict resolution. These narratives offered practical examples of diplomatic behavior and problem-solving strategies that they could apply in real-life situations.

Participants noted that stories often presented conflicts from multiple perspectives, which helped them understand and consider different viewpoints. A Mansaka learner shared how a story about two feuding families illustrated the importance of empathy and understanding each side's perspective. This understanding of multiple viewpoints enhanced their ability to approach conflicts with a more balanced and empathetic mindset.

The emphasis on peaceful and constructive solutions in storytelling resonated with many learners. A Badjao participant recounted a tale that highlighted the value of compromise and mutual respect in resolving disputes. These stories reinforced the importance of seeking amicable and fair solutions in conflicts, fostering a diplomatic approach in their interactions with others.

This finding supports the idea of Garagozov and Gadirova [42], who explored the role of storytelling in conflict resolution and emphasized how narratives promote empathy and understanding among conflicting parties. Their research suggested that storytelling encourages individuals to explore different perspectives and negotiate peaceful resolutions to conflicts. Additionally, Kilgore et al. [43] discussed the use of narrative-based approaches in teaching diplomacy and conflict resolution skills. The study revealed how storytelling fosters critical thinking and empathy, enabling learners to develop effective strategies for resolving disputes and promoting mutual understanding.

#### *3.3 Implications*

This study offers a wealth of insights for educators. They can create a culturally relevant and engaging learning environment that fosters strong communicative competence in their students by integrating these traditional storytelling practices into the curriculum.

The quantitative data revealed a positive association between engagement with indigenous storytelling and self-reported communicative competence. This suggests that storytelling practices play a crucial role in developing various language skills. Educators can leverage this knowledge by incorporating storytelling elements into lessons. For example, traditional narratives can be used as prompts for creative writing exercises, encouraging

students to explore vocabulary, narrative structure, and effective expression. Additionally, storytelling activities can be designed to encourage active listening and participation, mirroring the collaborative nature of indigenous storytelling. Educators can build confidence in oral communication and public speaking by creating a safe space for students to share their own stories or interpretations of traditional narratives.

The qualitative findings explore deeper, revealing how storytelling fosters mastery of language and expression and the development of interpersonal and social skills. Exposure to rich vocabulary, diverse storytelling structures, and nuanced expressions found in indigenous narratives can broaden students' linguistic repertoire and understanding of effective communication. Furthermore, the practice of actively listening to elders and participating in narratives hones comprehension skills and the ability to follow narratives. Storytelling also provides a platform for developing crucial interpersonal and social skills. Collaborative storytelling activities, respecting elders' voices, and effectively conveying ideas within the narrative all contribute to fostering empathy, active listening, and the ability to connect with others – essential tools for navigating social interactions and academic discourse.

Educators can create a more inclusive learning environment that values students' cultural background and heritage by integrating storytelling into the classroom. This approach can address the potential disconnect that urban learners might experience from their cultural roots. Moreover, storytelling can serve as a bridge between generations, allowing students to connect with the wisdom and experiences of their elders. This connection can foster a sense of belonging and cultural pride, motivating students to engage more actively in their learning journey.

The current research on indigenous storytelling practices provides a valuable roadmap for educators seeking to cultivate strong communication skills and cultural awareness in their students. Educators can create a dynamic learning environment that fosters a deep appreciation for language, effective communication, and cultural heritage by incorporating these traditions into the curriculum.

The current research offers valuable insights, but it is important to acknowledge its limitations. Firstly, the sample size and composition might not fully represent the diverse range of Philippine ELGs. This limits the generalizability of the findings to the entire ELG population in urban settings. Secondly, both engagement with storytelling practices and communicative competence relied on self-reported data. While valuable, self-reported measures can be susceptible to social desirability bias, where participants might report behaviors that they believe are more socially acceptable. Finally, the presence of teachers as facilitators during interviews could have introduced potential bias. Students might feel pressured to answer in a way that aligns with their teachers' expectations.

Despite these limitations, the study holds significance as a pioneering effort. It is the first to explore the connection between indigenous storytelling practices and the communicative competence of urban ELG learners using a combined quantitative and qualitative approach. This mixed-methods design offers a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon compared to relying solely on one methodology. Future research can address the

limitations identified here by employing larger and more geographically diverse samples. Additionally, incorporating objective measures of communicative competence alongside self-reported data could strengthen the findings. Finally, conducting interviews with students in neutral settings outside the school environment might minimize potential bias from teacher presence. When these limitations are addressed, future research can build upon this foundation and provide even more robust evidence for the positive impact of indigenous storytelling practices on the communicative competence of ELG learners.

#### 4. Conclusions

This research highlights the enduring significance of indigenous storytelling practices among urban learners from Philippine ELGs. The high engagement with storytelling, particularly oral traditions by elders, suggests a vibrant cultural connection despite the urban setting. Furthermore, the positive association between storytelling and self-reported communicative competence indicates a potential link between these traditions and the development of strong language skills, expressive ability, and interpersonal/social skills – all crucial elements for effective communication. These findings offer valuable insights for educators and policymakers seeking to cultivate well-rounded communicators while fostering cultural appreciation and identity among urban learners from diverse ethnolinguistic backgrounds.

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#### Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

#### Author Contributions

All authors have contributed equally. They have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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