



Theme 2

Feedback from the kindergarten experience: 3–5-year-olds

This document reports the reflections of teachers who have taken part in the first edition of the 2018-2019 ("From my window to the world", quote by Fernando Pessoa) and 2019-2020 ("I remember" quote by G. Perec) contests. The testimonies of several teachers and educators working with 3 to 5 years-old children are extracted from the logbook they kept during their participation (kept anonymous).

"Kindergarten is a place for language. Anything the children do is valuable when it comes to speaking, explaining or narrating. Thus, during the back-to-school meeting, I asked the parents to pass around a sheet of paper with a childhood memory introduced by "I remember..." written on it. The project was thus launched. The "I remember" form allowed for easy discussion about the passing of time ("when I was little...", "this morning...", "when I was in first year...", etc.), which is a topic included in the children's learning - only this time, in a very fun way!"

(Testimony of a teacher who participated in the 5th edition of the Plurilingual Kamishibai Contest in France).



Pedagogical Stakes	<p>In kindergarten¹, taking part in the contest is a way of favoring oral expression, of working on narrative patterns - especially the ones in fairytales -, as well as on the exploration of words... and worlds!</p> <p>“Our curriculum imposes that we work on research units. One of them is entitled “How we express ourselves” and consists of working on the structure of stories. In this way, children are able to understand and imagine coherent stories while respecting the narrative scheme. Thus, the Dulala project, as it includes writing a story in the form of kamishibai, fits perfectly in the spirit of our program.”</p> <p>“Discovery of oral and written language through the creation of a narrative story. Knowledge about the world through the integration of a workshop on geography and culture within the project. Openness to the world and others by gaining interest in other pupils’ countries, cultures, languages and customs.”</p> <p>“Weaving interdisciplinary links with the various domains explored in kindergarten: Mobilizing language in all its dimensions, using oral language for the creation of the story and writing with adult dictation²: cursive writing, directed drawing....</p> <p>The mobilization of parents may also be considered. One teacher thus testifies in their logbook after participating in the contest:</p> <p>“Parents came to class to present their language and a typical celebration of their homeland. We prepared some questions before the parents arrived. After each intervention, a few pupils summarized what they had memorized and the teacher took a dictation for one of the Kamishibai’s pages. (...) We sometimes also used illustrations that were brought in by parents, coloring pictures or photos of our work (origami rats and gnomes). The children also wrote down the words visible on the illustrations.”</p> <p>* *[Referring, of course, to the Kamilala project run in France by the Dulala association, which designed the competition, hence the confusion between the two.]</p>
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¹ In France, kindergarten (“*maternelle*”) is for children aged 3 to 5 years old on average.

² In kindergarten, “adult dictation” is a common pedagogical practice (children orally come up with sentences that are gradually transcribed by the adult, so that it ends up as a complete text often posted or written in large format on the board). This method enables children to realize the stability of the written form (words don’t change when you re-read them), to understand its meaning and eventually to make some visual spotting and experiment the various uses of written production (mail, stories, etc.).

<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Strong Points</p>	<p>According to a teacher who presented a plurilingual kamishibai created with a class of 3 to 5 years-old children, the project has been useful</p> <p>“For the students to discover and share the languages/cultures of their classmates, for plurilingual children to be proud of their origins and be able to build their cultural identity in peace, and especially for the welcoming of two allophone students, including one who had arrived from abroad just before the start of the school year.”</p> <p>Other strong points from participating in the contest: spelling reproduction and working on writing (cursive writing and drawing) matched with working on oral expression and the relationship between group and individual (express ideas and give them shape within a collective).</p>
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Consequences</p>	<p>Collective work has an impact on the group:</p> <p>“The project was brought up after we worked on a story book, which allowed us to lay the foundations of the narrative scheme. The first ideas were summed up on a large poster. The students negotiated what should be kept or removed. The story varied many times, the outcome wasn’t easy to find but we finally came to it naturally.”</p> <p>The Expected consequences are also multiple: development of the children’s agility and dexterity, strengthening of the group-class’s cohesion and cooperation. Consequences in the field of children’s socialization might also be considered (awakening to linguistic and cultural plurality within the scope of a plan including the families).</p> <p>“It’s always enriching for adults to exchange and discover new cultures. As a teacher, it allowed me to open the classroom to parents who wished to enter and to exchange statuses (as parents became, during the time of their intervention, those who held the knowledge that had to be applied and I became the learner by trying to repeat certain words).”</p>

Among the difficulties encountered by those who had taken part in the project the previous years, the **difficulty of setting up participatory approaches within a constrained framework** recurs:

“At first, I wanted them to produce a story based on the Chinese pupil’s little movie, but that was too complicated for kindergarten pupils. So, I proposed working on remembering polite and/or magic words. They told me in French the words they were thinking of, then those they remembered hearing from parents who had come to class. Children asked their parents about the words they didn’t remember or never heard before. They then chose the heroes and the plot of the story as well as the title (each time, there were a lot of suggestions so they voted to reach an agreement). The illustrations were only made by children from upper years [children 4 to 5 years old in average] - because we lacked time, I couldn’t include the youngest ones in the illustration process. For the visual part, they drew on the basis of animal pictures or photographs in order to learn how to draw. The design of the trees’ outlines was based on a book we have in class that they really enjoy. The adult was the one defining the methods.”



Speaking of which, it is important to underscore the importance of feeling free, in the course of the project, to reconsider your own goals or representations of the finished project, in order to leave more space for the children and their families.

Testimonies	<p>One teacher reflects on their experience of creating a plurilingual kamishibai with a class of children, evoking</p> <p>“a very creative and thorough project [able to] fit into my school and my class project on “architecture around the world”, and encompassing a huge part of the learning introduced in the “middle section” of kindergarten [children about 4 years old]. What reassured me in taking part in this project was above all the enthusiasm of the pupils and their parents.”</p> <p>“In order to value the children’s mother tongues, we also set up a school project - the Language Fest, for which parents are invited on a Saturday to come to school and to perform songs in their native language.”</p> <p>“In relation to our educational program, this project has been undertaken by the whole school. We aim at enlightening the families’ native languages by establishing many initiatives- Language Feast, Tree of Hellos in the classrooms, the Plurilingual Kamishibai project.”</p> <p>“We worked on various children's books to discover a couple countries around the world. We also attended a performance about round-the-world trips and climate change. The pupils then created and illustrated their own story. All of this allowed me to work on several language skills.”</p> <p>Some teachers also detailed the activities that were set up in the course of preparing for the contest:</p> <p>“Before we got into the creation of the story and the crafting of the kamishibai, several aspects of the project were introduced: the collaboration with a fifth-grade class also part of the school - during at least a couple of months, two fifth grade pupils came in weekly to read a kamishibai to our class; a dozen parents came to class to read, sing and tell stories in their mother tongues. We are also going to go back to certain songs and learn them; the artist Yuiko Tsuno came to narrate kamishibai stories for us (bilingual French/Japanese intervention) and led a workshop during which each child created their own kamishibai (drawings and adult dictation to write the story); and the public library lent us a butai and kamishibais throughout the year so we can keep discovering more. The pupil who arrived from China had been recorded by his parents as he was talking about the memories he had of his homeland and also of France. He’d finished by saying that he wished his new French friends would learn a few words in Chinese... so we also discussed/worked around this little sequence.”</p>
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