

Bags to tell

1. Objectives

- Build understanding of a story with all pupils and especially allophones
- Constitute a repertoire of simple tales common to the class
- Work on memorising words and sentences through repeated nursery rhymes included in hiking stories
- Work on the narrative construction (and thus, thereby, on the construction of reasoning and thought)
- Improve pupils' ability to listen and concentrate, as well as cooperation and respect skills
- Improve the understanding and production of oral French (a type of oral ritualised, termed "scriptural" in official documents, and which includes conventions: conjugation tenses used, formulas such as "once upon a time")
- Learn to engage in a long and structured speaking session in front of a group
- Learn to build mental images of the elements of the tale and a representation of the narrative framework (we are in the oral, but we already prevent the difficulties of comprehension in general, and therefore also those of writing)

Longer-term objectives:

- Allow the transfer of narrative skills in the pupils' first languages; I tell in French, but I would like stories to be told in the pupils' languages as well.

I try to get the parents to come for these storytelling moments, with 2 objectives:

- bring in new and family stories, and/or
- migrate these practices into families with the idea that, in some time, the bags to tell can be loaned to families

While waiting to be able to go so far, the recording of the tales makes it possible to allow to promote the link school/family thanks to their presence on the school blog.

2. Emergence of practice and theoretical support

In order to favor entry into the language of schooling through a playful and motivating practice, I propose this ritual activity to my pupils, resulting from the confluence of two practices. I was inspired both by a protocol proposed by Suzy Platiel and, at the same time, by practices for allophones such as the Dulala story box..

2.1. "Storytelling, a tool for education and humanity" (Suzy Platiel)

I had the chance to participate in a training day with the ethnolinguist Suzy Platiel, organised by CLIVE in 2014, at the initiative of Nathalie Thibur. Suzy Platiel developed her theory from a work conducted in the years 1965/1970 which aimed at developing a writing system for the language of a people with a completely oral tradition (the Sanans in Burkina Faso). She spent much time observing their daily lives, recording a corpus of about 300 stories and observing how the language and codes of Sanan society were transmitted to children through an important storytelling activity.

Suzy Platiel then hypothesised that transposing this model into our schools could make it possible to work on mastering speech and structuring thought. It was about telling to make people tell. She has trained teachers, including Nicole Launey and Jean-Christophe Gary. The established protocol scrupulously follows the principles observed among the Sanan. Stories are introduced respecting a progression that allows the

progressive acquisition of the capacity to tell:

- We begin by naming things while showing them.

- Then, the children learn nursery rhymes, which are repetitive models (which allow the development of memorisation and the construction of complete sentences).

The child can start telling stories only if he has heard some. First he must often listen to stories and to plenty of them...

- Then, he is told hiking tales, type of tales with repetitive and/or cumulative structure, then tales with repetition of the same motif, then tales with a succession of varied circumstances, which makes it possible to him to acquire the logic of succession in the story.

- The extensions, for adults, are proverbs and fables, which contain a moral.

Experiments have been conducted, in different school contexts, with pupils of different ages (mainly middle school and elementary school), all based on the same principle: regularly telling a fairly large number of stories, repeating them, in ritualised moments, and apart from any work on the understanding of story and any pedagogical exploitation. At first, only the teacher tales, then, little by little, the pupils get into it. These moments are based on free participation: each pupil has the right to tell or not, and always a story of his choice. The benefits are never evaluated, nothing is written.

These experiences gave rise to the same observations:

- Pupils learn to listen and develop their memory skills (appropriation and not by heart).

- The class group is built around this listening and class atmosphere calms down and becomes much more respectful and supportive.

- Many pupils develop their language skills. Non-French speakers progress in French, this was observed for example in French Guiana (Launey & Platiel, 2010).

To know more:

On the website « Apprendre à éduquer » : <http://apprendreaeduquer.fr/conte-outil-deducation-suzy-platiel/>

A film : <http://videothèque.cnrs.fr/doc=4095> (consulted on 25/01/18)

Un article : Launey N. & Platiel S. (2010). *Vitalité du conte : à l'école du conte oral, en Guyane Ou comment s'appuyer sur la tradition orale pour développer la sociabilité et les structures mentales des enfants*. Synergies France n° 7 – 2010. pp. 137-144. <https://gerflint.fr/Base/France7/nicole.pdf> (consulted on 25/01/18)

A bibliography: [http://www.euroconte.org/fr-fr/groupe detravail/bibliographiegroupew/bibliographiesuzyplatiel.aspx](http://www.euroconte.org/fr/fr/groupe detravail/bibliographiegroupew/bibliographiesuzyplatiel.aspx) (consulted on 25/01/18)

I have added to this protocol what I call " bags to tell". We had to find a way so that all pupils, including the youngest (3 years) and those who did not yet understand French sufficiently, could understand the story. The bag to tell makes it possible to adapt the activity to the age of the pupils and to the multilingual context. The bags are inspired by practices used with allophones, in particular:

2.2. The story box (Dulala)

This is a practice that allows stories to be told in different languages.

"Created by an Italian artist, Fiorenza Mariotti, and developed by DULALA from the perspective of language development and languages awareness, this large, very neat box contains symbolic objects that constitute the steps and the key characters of a story. The children listen to the storyteller's voice, who, while telling the story, draws from the box the objects, one after the other, to place them on a small stage. At certain times, the narration can be interrupted, in order to propose to the children to interact with the objects (to touch

them, to smell, to taste...)." .

Source: https://www.dulala.fr/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/forumlecture_boiteahistoire_dulala.pdf
(consulted on 25/01/18)

To know more:

Dulala (from one language to another) : <https://www.dulala.fr/boite-a-histoires-dulala/> (consulted on 25/01/18)

This type of practice around stories is encouraged by the National Education: see the official website Eduscol the accompanying document to the 2015 programs:

https://cache.media.eduscol.education.fr/file/Langage/42/5/Ress_c1_langage_oral_activite-ritualisees_456425.pdf (consulted on 25/01/18)

3. Implementation

Ritual

2 times 20 minutes at ½ hour per week, always the same days, at the same times, on the benches arranged in square in the corner grouping,

The first time I tell a story, in silence, I take the bag and ostensibly take out the material and place it in the order of the story, and then I tell.

I always start and end a story with "cric crac".

A large box contains the bags to tell; each tale in the class repertoire is materialised by a bag containing accessories that will serve...

-for allophones, as support in the understanding of the story;

-for all, as support in the structuring of the narrative.

Choice of tales

-Tales of hiking not too long, with animals most often, and always with repeated motifs of the nursery rhyme type ("Quickly, quickly, in the muffle, he camouflages and wraps himself up") allowing a memorisation;

- tales traditionally used in nursery school (the little gingerbread man, Boucle d'Or and the 3 bears, Roule galette,);

-albums for children with repetitive structure whose story I tell but without ever using the album.

4. Impact

These 2 times 20 minutes are the times of the week when the pupils' attention is the best and when we get the best quality of silence. The pupils await this moment with delight. The quality of silence is different from that observed when reading albums. The connivance developed with the audience is much superior: the storyteller captures by the glance, by the gestures, by his whole being, he is no longer only intermediary between a text and an audience, but he reinterprets the story. It is oral, the text can fluctuate, and let new discoveries spring forth.

For the teacher, this is a completely different commitment than reading, we have all observed that it is quite possible to read aloud mechanically without even really understanding what we are reading, but it is impossible to tell mechanically. The storyteller is necessarily intensely present and captures the attention of his audience by the glance, the facial expressions...

The pupils' motivation is very strong, the first interest of this approach is there: the tales are extremely appreciated by the children and they want to tell in their turn. They are therefore ready to practice tirelessly for weeks to achieve this.

The challenges

The challenge is significant in a class where many children are identified each year by the PMI (mother and child care centre) as having a language delay, according to normative assessments and that do not take into account the context multilingual. The mid-section class corresponds to an age (4 years) when the child opens up, where his curiosity for the outside and the others awakens and where he begins to express something other than his primary needs.

Most pupils take a long time to start: for at least two or three months, the teacher is the only one to tell. Curiously, it is not necessarily the pupils usually endowed with the greatest assurance who are the first to launch themselves. Some of them participate only there and very well. They get embold by telling and then start to participate in other circumstances. The ultimate objective (for older children) would be a storyteller's monologue; at this age, it is rather a construction of the story in a group, because we are allowed to help the storyteller, and it is also a time of building the group communication skills (listening to others, respecting speaking turns,...)

It is a complex and difficult exercise involving many skills, one of which is particularly difficult to acquire: the production of long statements (research on language activities in nursery school shows that they are often not very present). But the pupils like these stories so much that their motivation is very strong. When I tell, they start saying the small formulas with me. To facilitate the storytelling in front of the large group and to allow it for everyone, I have elaborated a progression with steps and related activities so that the children learn little by little to construct the stories.

The activity takes several forms to allow the progressive appropriation by the pupils:

- Storytelling with the bag to tell bag (pictures of characters, objects or sets necessary for understanding), only for the small group of pupils who do not yet understand French, so that they can then grasp the frame of the collective sessions
- Telling without accessories for all, ritually and repeatedly, quite a few times
- Possibly link with digital multilingual picture book for keyword translation
- Autonomous listening of recordings of stories on class computers (with headphones) or on internet at home (which allows self-learning or delayed shoring)
- Free and autonomous use of the bag to tell by pupils
- Group work on the chronology of the story (with bag to tell)
- Telling in interaction with an adult or in the reassuring situation of a small group
- Telling for and with the help of the large group

Remarks

- In the case of these young and language-learning children, we are talking here about "language socialisation" as well as the development of language skills..
- The use of picture books will not necessarily prevent the creation of mental images by children, perhaps they need real supports to elaborate them (everything depends on the type of images: scenes or only elements (characters, accessories)).
- When children tell stories, some passages can be memorised by heart (the small formulas), they serve then as reassuring support to the storytelling (at the beginning some children only say that when they speak, but it allows them to "keep face "and gain confidence in their ability to speak in front of the group). But, for all that, it can not be "reciting" a tale by heart, there is truly appropriation of the story. Telling is impossible without a real understanding of the story, and everyone adds a personal touch.

An example: *Le petit bonhomme des bois (The little man of the woods)*

To work on the tale, I write a frame from the text of the album. This frame allows me to fix the stages of the narration and serves as a guide for the memorisation of the tale. In each frame, I use a small formula (or several) if there are any, (or I invent it) to rhythm the story and help its appropriation.

At the same time, I record the story on the digital tablet. The story is also freely available on the class computer and on the school's blog:

<http://mat-cologne-besancon.ac-besancon.fr/2017/01/02/contes-sacs-a-raconter/>

An example of a frame for the oralisation:

The little man of the woods inspired by the album of the same name by Pierre Delye and Martine Bourre at Didier Jeunesse.

Le p'tit bonhomme des bois



Characters
(in order of
appearance)

LITTLE MAN OF
THE WOODS

BADGER

FOX
WOLF
BEAR

Once upon a time there was a little man of the woods.

That day, the little man of the woods was walking in the forest, he was following the path of the woods.

But, hidden behind a tree, a badger was looking at him. He said to himself:
"Oh, a little man of the woods,
It must be good a little man of the woods,
I would enjoy eating a little man of the woods."

Then the badger began to follow the little man of the woods. And the little man of the woods? He was following the path of the woods.

But, hidden behind (...) I would enjoy eating a little man of the woods
And then also a badger! »

Then the fox began to follow the badger who was following the little man of the woods.

Meanwhile, the little man kept walking. But he felt that something was

wrong. He stopped himself.
He looked in the air, NOTHING;
he looked down, NOTHING;
he looked to the right, NOTHING;
he looked to the left, NOTHING;
he turned around and he found himself face to face with the badger.

Zou he plunged between the paws of the badger
and he found himself face to face with the ...

Zou ... he plunged between the paws of the bear and he escaped deep in
the woods and he ran a long time, a long time ...

It is even said that he is still running

BADGER
FOX
WOLF
BEAR