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Kamishibai: A format for telling children's stories

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Abstract:

In the field of art education, it is imperative to use new and innovative methods to study visual culture, and to adopt multicultural and intercultural approaches to interpret art in different cultures. It is interesting to study the way in which the intertextual method (the interrelationship between texts, whether written, oral, past or present; the implicit or explicit connection between a set of texts forms a context which conditions the understanding and development of the discourse) can be employed to interpret art from a western or eastern perspective.

The *kamishibai* art form should be integrated into pre-school and elementary school curricula to promote reading. This proposal goes beyond simply understanding a text with images. The focus is on how a text can be performed theatrically and involve the participation and interaction of children as protagonists in the process.

We start by introducing the concept of *kamishibai*, including its origins and different stages of evolution throughout history until the present day. Then, we discuss the potential new roles that contemporary *kamishibai* could assume in the educational context.

Finally, we present an educational proposal to promote the use of *kamishibai* with young children. Here, we consider the development of artistic interpretation, the potential value of a text when performed theatrically, and the importance of introducing children to new concepts such as multiculturalism in the American society.

Keywords: Kamishibai, Gaito Kamishibaiya, Kamishibai Traditional Storyteller, performance theatrical practices, kindergarten, primary.

1. Introduction

Kamishibai is a type of theatrical performance that offers an alternative way to tell stories to children. Moreover, it is of interest to introduce aspects, such as studying multicultural literature, into the school curriculum, particularly in the USA.

As stated in chapter 2 of *Integrating Multicultural Literature into the Curriculum* (Atkinson, Oswald & Jenkins, 2011:17):

Multicultural literature has been described by experts on literature as both a window and a mirror (Gates & Mark, 2006). It is a window on the world, opening up views for readers to learn about the world, its geography, history and cultures. It is a mirror reflecting the traditions, values, and beliefs of diverse readers. When readers read about characters that look like them and reflect their way of life, their self-identity is affirmed, and they get the message that their way of life is valued (Norton, 2009).

In the increasingly diverse U.S. society, multicultural literature should be an essential part of the fabric of the learning environment. (Banks, 2004).

Some experts (Atkinson & Oswald, 2011:17) have proposed integrating multicultural literature into the curriculum as a way to develop both written and visual literacy.

Norton (1990) has suggested that teachers use a five-phase model for studying multicultural literature by exploring the following genres in each phase:

- Phase one: traditional literature.
- Phase two: traditional tales from one area.
- Phase three: autobiographies, biographies and historical nonfiction.
- Phase four: historical fiction.
- Phase five: contemporary fiction, biography and poetry.

Furthermore, several academic studies have been conducted into the applied intertextual method, for instance, the recent study about *kamishibai* published in the International Journal of Art & Design: *The Intertextual Method for Art Education Applied in Japanese Paper Theatre – a Study on Discovering Intercultural Differences*.

My hypothesis was that it is possible to find local and global differences that arise from selected texts and study them interculturally. As postmodernism calls attention to marginal areas, I applied my method to a form of visual culture that is not well known in the European art education context, the Japanese *kamishibai* which can be translated as Japanese paper theatre. (Paatela, 2008:1)

Martina Paatela-Nieminen's research focuses on the Alice in Wonderland paper theaters from the International Institute for Children's Literature (IICLO), including a version from 1937 written and edited by Hiroshige Hamada and illustrated by Makoto Hyuga, and a later version from 1977 written by Umihiko Ito and illustrated by Miki Ito. In addition, she found two further Alice in Wonderland paper theaters in the Doshinsha Publishing company in Tokyo. The most recent version was written in 1965 by Masaharu and Kawasaki, with illustrations by Seiichi Yuno, while the earlier work was written by Gozan Takahashi and illustrated by Seiichi Yuno in 1952

Paatela-Nieminen applies the intertextual method to Japanese paper theater with a focus on different versions of Alice in Wonderland. The study has three main parts. In the first part, she applies Gérard Genette's concept of the paratext which offers a subjective starting point to study the paper theater as a visual and verbal text. The context of the paratext offers a broad and open view; a means to connect the history of the paper theater with the texts. The second method adopts Genette's concepts of hypertextuality, studying the Alice in Wonderland paper theaters palimpsestically, which implies passing from the most recent to the oldest information. Hypertextuality is a transformation category that enables one to locate and study the differences and diverse styles found in texts. The third part addresses the most prominent contrasts between the different paper theatre versions, not just in terms of the story or format, but by providing a broader observation of the art form within Japanese culture. In this part of her research, she applies Julia Kristeva's concepts of phenotext and genotext. The term phenotext refers to language that serves to communicate, while the genotext can be considered as the underlying foundation of a language.

2. Theoretical framework

In order to obtain a more precise understanding of *kamishibai*, we will refer to a description presented in the book, *Kamishibai Story Theater: The Art of Picture Telling*:

"In the Japanese language, *Kamishibai* (kah-MEE-she-bye) means "*paper drama*." *Kamishibai* was a popular form of street storytelling from the late 1920s until the early 1950s. The *Kamishibai* man was an itinerant storyteller who traveled from village to village or neighborhood to neighborhood by bicycle. His main occupation was selling candy. To entice children to buy candy, he entertained them with stories." (De la Casas, 2006: 1).

3. History of kamishibai

Kamishibai in pre-depression Japan:

The origins of *kamishibai* go back to the 12th century when it was used in temples by Buddhist monks. It is believed that the practice originated in China and later spread to Japan. The monks used this narrative form to teach their followers about the history of the temples and gods in Japanese society.

The *emaki* (picture scroll) was used during the Heian period in Japan in the 11th and 12th centuries. It is thought to be the predecessor of the *kamishibai* and comprised a horizontal paper scroll that was rolled over a viewing screen (*Hirofumi*). This narrative form was most prominently used to depict the 11th century novel, *Genji Monogatari* (*Motoyama*). However, this art form gradually became neglected over the years, and was almost completely lost, until its reappearance in the early 20th century.



Fig. 1. *Street Corner Kamishibai performance, 1928.* Photograph by Kageyama Kōyō. From the book: *Propaganda Performed: Kamishibai in Japan's Fifteen-Year War.* P. 39.

Fig. 2. *A drum on the back of this bicycle produced some of the sound effects for the picture-card show.* From the Walter A. Pennino Postwar Japan Photo Collection, courtesy of the Center for Japanese Studies, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. Available from: http://www.hawaii.edu/cjs/?page_id=256 [Accessed: 02/10/16]

Kamishibai in post-depression Japan

The dramatic rise in the use of *kamishibai* coincided with the Great Economic Depression of 1929, which originated in the United States, but then went on to affect many countries, in particular, Japan. It is estimated that, during the years of the Great Depression, some 3,000 *kamishibai* storytellers (*Gaito Kamishibaiya*) were operating in the city of Tokyo. In Japan as a whole, the number of *gaito kamishibaiya*, who travelled by bicycle between performances, reached almost 30,000.

During the Second World War, a wide range of educational genres were created for the *kamishibai* format, and stories were published to teach history, biology, ethics, and other subjects.

However, with the introduction and spread of television in the 1950s and 1960s, children gradually stopped going to see *kamishibai* performances. Despite the performers' efforts to attract the public by means of adding amplifiers, lights and special effects, the art form would eventually disappear.

As the *kamishibai* storytellers disappeared from the streets, they turned to a more lucrative type of art, producing animations and manga cartoons. Nevertheless, the use of *kamishibai* in classrooms did continue throughout Japan.



Fig. 3. *Children crowding together to view the performance.* Photograph by Domon Ken. From the book: *Propaganda Performed: Kamishibai in Japan's Fifteen-Year War.* P. 41.

Fig. 4. *Selling candy before a street corner performance, 1953.* From the book: *Propaganda Performed: Kamishibai in Japan's Fifteen-Year War.* P. 39.

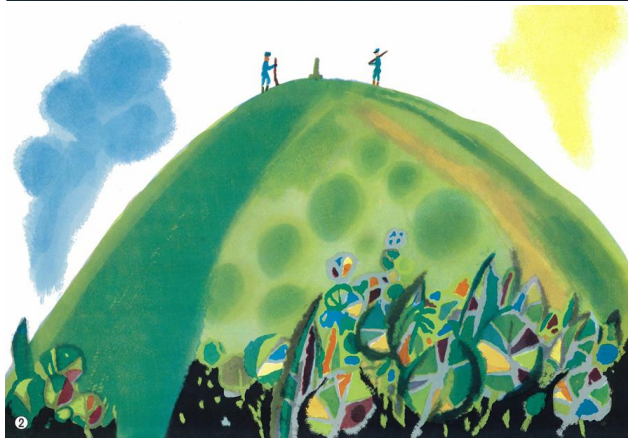
Resurgence of kamishibai in Japan and the United States

By the 1980s, electronic devices had made their way into many Japanese households providing children with new forms of entertainment. This led children to gradually lose interest in reading; a phenomenon that occurred in many parts of the world. Parents became concerned with this drop in reading and the influence that it may have on their children's education and literacy. In Japan, it was feared that their cultural identity was being lost due to the influence of westernization and economic growth. Therefore, it is precisely for this reason that the texts and illustrations that make up most *kamishibai* stories and Japanese children's books focus on the traditions of different regions in Japan. The purpose is to teach the Japanese youth about the significance of national festivals, rituals and symbolism through the folklore and stories that have been preserved and passed down through oral transmission.

Later, Japan experienced a resurgence of interest in national art, traditions and *kamishibai* storytelling. Teachers and cultural centers started to raise awareness among the public, and libraries compiled material about this Japanese art form. These actions eventually led to the spread of *kamishibai* to the United States in the 1990s. The company Accursed Toys created a digital adaptation of the *kamishibai* model for Microsoft, which enabled users not only to view the images and stories, but also to add music and sounds effects at the same time.

Many people who promote the diffusion of *kamishibai* have also actively participated in movements in Japan to encourage local populations to create their own hand-made *kamishibai*, or *tezukuri kamishibai*. In addition, competitions have been formed in several cities to evaluate the quality of the stories and performances. These actions have helped to promote *kamishibai*, and it is once again today a fully-fledged form of storytelling.

Nowadays, *kamishibai* is often used in American classrooms with young children, particularly as an activity of cultural exchange activity, as it is a good vehicle for communication.



Écrit par Mimei Ogawa
Adapté par Seishi Horio
Illustré par Makoto Sakurai

LES ROSES SAUVAGES

(1)

D'un bon côté, apaisé
Il y avait autrefois une montagne. De blancs nuages
flottaient, des oiseaux volaient paisiblement.
Tout semblait serein et calme dans ce paysage.
Cependant aucun homme n'y passait jamais.
Au sommet de cette montagne une stèle se dressait
et marquait la frontière entre deux pays.
-En tirant l'image-
D'un côté de la stèle,
un vieux soldat montait la garde du grand pays...

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堀尾 誠史
小川 未明

(2)

et de l'autre côté, le petit pays était protégé
par un jeune soldat.
Les deux hommes qui étaient tous les deux
de braves guerriers, avaient pour consigne :
« Ne pas parler pour ne rien dire ».
Et même en se faisant face,
ils ne se parlaient pas.
Afin de protéger la frontière, il fallait, chaque jour,
redoubler de vigilance, tâche très ennuyeuse
-En tirant l'image-
D'une voix jeune et enjouée
Le jeune soldat : « Ah ! Les rosiers sauvages ont fleuri »

Fig. 5, 6, 7 & 8. *Les roses sauvages*, 2009. Original work by Mimei Ogawa / Text by Seishi Horio / Illustrations by Makoto Sakurai. Available from: <http://www.doshinsha.co.jp/kamishibai/translations/form.php> [Accessed: 05/10/16]

3.1. Concept of modern kamishibai

It is interesting to discuss the ways in which the *kamishibai* format has changed over time. According to the authors of *Folktales from the Japanese Countryside*:

Storytelling is still alive in Japan. Kamishibai and picture books of traditional stories are popular in schools and libraries. Storytellers and story readers are everywhere in Japan. There was even a popular television program that showed animated versions of the ancient stories. Many young people today learned the old stories from that series. Many tellers and researchers are turning to the old tales recorded in ancient books; others are listening to the stories of older generations. Libraries and cultural centers are collecting stories of the elders. But there is still the interplay of the oral tradition and the written text that has played such an important part in Japanese folktale history. Now video cameras, tape recorders, and CD players are important tools in the collecting of stories. Novelists, film directors, and animation artists such as Academy Award winner Hayao Miyazaki are returning to Japanese myth, legend, and folk themes for their contemporary work. Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples now sell comic book versions of their sacred stories. Tales over a thousand years old are still told today, and those stories continue to evolve and live on. (Fujita, Stallings, Wright & Sakurai: 2008: 19)



Fig. 9. *Kamishibai in Asakusa by Tokyobling*. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License. Available from: <https://tokyobling.wordpress.com/2014/08/15/kamishibai-and-the-first-superhero-street-storytelling/>
 Fig. 10. *A contemporary version of a street corner performer's bicycle*. From the book: *Propaganda Performed: Kamishibai in Japan's Fifteen-Year War*. P. 42.

4. Applied educational proposal

The educational proposal was conducted with students of the Infant Education Degree program in the Department of Education at the University of Cadiz, Spain, during the 2010-2011 academic year.

The students were initially presented with the task of creating their own *kamishibai*. The elements of importance in this project included promoting reading, connecting with theater performances, and understanding different art forms.

The students created their own individual *kamishibai* and accompanying story, and were also responsible for the physical design of the paper theater.

Crucially, before creating the paper theaters, the students should be familiar with the different types of *kamishibai*. These genres include street performance (*gaitō kamishibai*), religious *kamishibai*, educational and published *kamishibai*, military propaganda *kamishibai*, hand-made (*tezukuri kamishibai*) and electric *kamishibai*. The different types of *kamishibai* can be appreciated in Figure 12.

For the design of the *kamishibai*, students may find it useful to refer to the online publication: *The world through Picture Books: Librarians' favourite books from their country*. This document can serve as a guide and inspiration to create the picture boards that will be placed in the miniature stage box to form the *kamishibai*. This publication by the IFLA, International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, is a great resource which provides examples of traditional illustrated children's stories from all over the world. Students can select any book that draws their interest and use it to create their *kamishibai*. For instance, if they select a title from Cameroon or the Philippines, they can first study the customs and lifestyles of these countries, and then integrate these intercultural elements in the classroom. This second online edition is an invaluable resource that presents a list of 500 books in 37 languages compiled by librarians for children.



Fig. 11. Kamishibai. Infant Education Degree. 2010 -2011 academic year. Repeto Menéndez, Nerea. UCA. University of Cadiz.
 Fig. 12. Kamishibai. Infant Education Degree. 2010 -2011 academic year. Belizón López, Yolanda. UCA. University of Cadiz.



4.1.
 This lesson plan is

Fig. 13. Kamishibai. Infant Education Degree. 2010 -2011 academic year. Gómez García, Claudia & Lafuente Galán, María José. UCA. University of Cadiz.

Lesson plan design
 aimed at students of

infant and primary education degrees to be conducted with preschoolers in the United States.

The lesson plan is divided into three key parts: the first part addresses the figure of the storyteller around the world with a special focus on Japan, India and Morocco; the second part focuses on creating a story; and the third part examines a number of devices available to tell stories to children.

The figure of the storyteller varies depending on geographical location.

In Japan, stories were transmitted through *kamishibai* by artists who created illustrated stories. The drawings were based on their inspirations, imagination, and other visual techniques taken from popular foreign cinema. The artists were also influenced by a wide range of other sources, including local Japanese theater styles and folklore. In each performance, the storyteller performed scenes from at least three different genres in order to cover the broad range of tastes of the audience. These commonly included love stories for girls, action adventures for boys, and manga (Japanese comics) for older children of both sexes.

In *Media toshite no kamishibi* (Kamishibai as a Medium), Suzuki Tsunekatsu compiles a list of the major attractions of the *gaito kamishibai* performances for children:

- (1) the intrinsic interest of the stories, (2) the entertaining storytelling style, (3) the human qualities of the kamishibai man, (4) the sense of solidarity that comes from realizing that everyone around you is of the same economic background, (5) the collective space and experience shared with one's close friends and neighbors. (Tsunekatsu, 2005: 10)

In India, *Kaavadiyas* (narrators) and their *jajmans* (hereditary patrons) consider the *Kaavad* as a sacred shrine that requires certain rituals to be performed, including listening to ancestry and genealogy, epic stories, and making offerings. The *Kaavad* was originally both a storybook and a shrine which was carried by the storytellers from one rural area to another. The front of the box can be opened up completely by unfolding the panels one after another. Each hinged panel features illustrations depicting local deities, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, and pilgrimages.



Fig. 14. *Kaavad*. A portable shrine.

Available from: <http://www.dsourc.in/resource/kaavad/kaavad-object> [Accessed: 02/10/16]

The *Kaavad* is a form of storytelling that goes back hundreds of years. The panels were purposefully crafted and illustrated to form a device that, just like the *kamishibai*, was used to tell stories. In addition to being a traditional form of oral storytelling, a donation could be left in a draw positioned in the base of the *Kaavad*.

Nina Sabnani is a professor at the Industrial Design Centre in the Indian Institute of Technology in Bombay. Her research interests include visual communication, visual culture, folklore and storytelling. Her project *Telling it together* seeks to bring together craftspeople and designers.

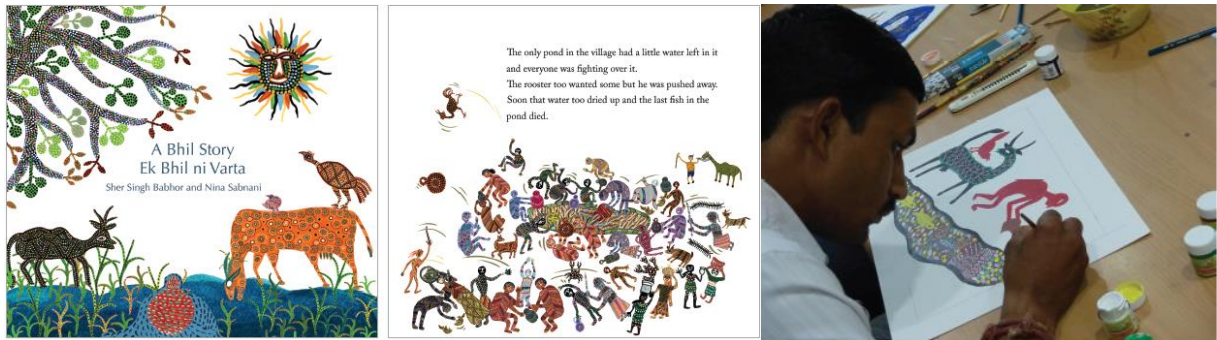


Fig. 15. *Telling it Together: Collaboration between designers and craft communities*, 2015. Project by Nina Sabnani. Abhikalpana Design Show 2015. 2nd to 4th January 2015. Available from: http://www.idc.iitb.ac.in/nina/Telling_Together.html [Accessed: 02/10/16]

Storytelling is a type of intangible cultural heritage that has been maintained and preserved in multiple forms. On the one hand, cinema and animation offer new forms of storytelling which have largely replaced traditional oral types. However, they also help to prevent the disappearance of traditional stories, thereby protecting and conserving cultural heritage. An example of this process can be observed in the Bhil tribe, whose orally recounted stories are unknown to most audiences. Sabnani's collaborative project with this tribe has led to the creation of resources that help to conserve this intangible heritage, as well as generating new audiences and economic possibilities for one of the oldest and largest tribal communities in India.

This project addresses the areas of local crafts, technology and education in connection with development. The principal aim is to promote and participate in specific artistic and narrative forms that are key to the conservation of the Bhil community of Madhya Pradesh. The project intends to prevent the Bhil culture from being lost forever by transforming the tribe's particular style of painting and storytelling into illustrations to be used in books, movies and cartoons.

Sabnani's project seeks to bring together traditional craft communities and designers to create media artefacts that prevent the extinction of an oral tradition. Moreover, the creation of digital media, including a website, illustrated books and movies provide new opportunities for the development of craftwork. Both printed and electronic media are used to advertise and promote the arts and crafts produced by the Bhil tribe. This helps to generate an income which, in turn, facilitates the conservation and evolution of different art forms. The idea is to prevent the extinction of an art form which would otherwise disappear.

In the case of Morocco, it is the Jemaa el Fna square, situated close to the Koutoubia Mosque, which is most closely associated with the activity of storytelling. This square is brimming with human life and activity, including storytellers, teachers, food and sweet sellers, snake charmers, acrobats, dancers, water sellers, etc. A vast number of people go about their activities every day in the square, which is illuminated later at night by the various colored lights of the stalls. Due to being the cultural center of the city, UNESCO proclaimed the Jemaa el Fna square a site of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2008.

Although the Jemaa el Fna square is not associated with one particular art form, such as the *kamishibai*, often the stories are accompanied by drawings and relate to the magical, healing or aphrodisiac properties of the products on sale at the market.

In order to create the applied stories, we refer to Gianni Rodari's book, *Gramática de la Fantasía* (The Grammar of Fantasy). This publication proposes numerous methods for creating stories. In chapter 17, entitled Little Red Riding Hood in a Helicopter (*Caperucita Roja en helicóptero*), the author describes a

storytelling method in which children are given a list of five words that evoke this famous fairy tale: “Grandmother”, “Woods”, “Wolf”, “Girl” and “Flowers”. However, then a sixth word, “Helicopter”, is added, which breaks with this series of words.

As Rodari explains, the purpose of this exercise is to create stories:

Through this game-exercise, the teachers or authors of this experiment measure the children’s ability to react to a new and unexpected element in a certain series of events; their ability to absorb the given word in a familiar story; and their ability to make the familiar words react in a new context (Rodari, 2008: 56)

Another storytelling method is the fantastic binomial, in which words are not ascribed their normal meaning. Instead, they are free from the verbal chains that would ordinarily hold them together. Interestingly, strange word selections usually lend themselves better to creating a story, such as “Dog” and “Closet”.

The author suggests the following technique (Rodari, 2008):

The simplest way to establish a relationship between the two words is to use a preposition to connect them. This creates different images:

The dog with the closet

The closet of the dog

The dog on the closet

The dog in the closet

Etc.

Each of these images gives us the blueprint from a fantastic situation.

A dog walks along the street with a closet on his back. It is his bed, there’s nothing we can do ... He takes it wherever he goes, just like a snail carries around its shell (...). (Rodari, 2008: 20)

Later, Rodari refers to the Gioco-Vita Theater Group as believers in objects. In one of the group’s suggested games, children are shown three different objects, such as a slipper, an empty bottle and a coffee pot, which they must use to invent a story. The objects provide a prop that is more creative and solid than words, since the children can touch, handle, observe and extract endless fantastic meanings. The story is created collectively and relates to the three objects provided; it may initiate from a noise or a simple gesture.

Another method is to explore words. The first step is to take a word such as “*Piedra*” (‘stone’ in English), and then this word is disassociated from its real meaning and sound; it is then broken down into its separate letters.

After putting the letters in a column beneath each other, Rodari describes the following technique:

Now, next to each letter, I can write the first word that I think of, obtaining a new list of words (for example, “*pirámide – inca – émbolo – dado – risa – aro*” (‘pyramid – Inca – piston – die – laughter – hoop’ [English translation])). Alternatively, and perhaps even more fun, I could write six words next to the letters that make up a sentence with some sort of meaning:

P – *Pianos*

I – *Incompletos*

E – *Encadenados*

D – *Doscientos*

R – *Rotos*

A – *Arrinconados*

(...)

(‘P – Pianos, I – Incomplete, E – chained, D – two-hundred, R – broken, A – put away’ [English translation])

I have personally invented many stories based on a word chosen at random. Once, for example, using the word “*cuchara*” (‘spoon’ in English), I obtained the following chain: “*Cuchara – cucharada – cuchara – clara – clara de huevo – oval – órbita – huevo en órbita*” (‘Spoon – spoonful – spoon – clear – egg white – oval – orbit – egg in orbit’ [English translation]). Here, I will stop and write a story called: *The world in an egg*. (Rodari, 2008: 12-13)

Another common way of inventing stories is to ask students to respond individually on pieces of paper to the following five questions: Who? How? When? Where? and Why? Then, the pieces of paper are shared with the group and the answers form the bases to invent absurd stories which can acquire certain different elements, such as science fiction.

5. Objective

The Japanese *kamishibai* paper theater originated as a street activity and flourished as a form of storytelling in the 1920s.

The *kamishibai* featured large image boards, measuring 382 x 270 mm, which enabled an entire group to watch at the same time. Stories of diverse themes were performed, such as intrigue and drama. Working with this art form can help students to develop their abilities of improvisation, gesticulation and intonation, since it combines visual, oral, body-language and written elements. In addition, each of these components can be used to introduce children to simple stories through tales, poems or children’s fiction.

Japanese musical instruments commonly accompany the narrative. The *hyoshigi*, a percussion instrument made of two sticks of hard wood or bamboo joined by a piece of string, is used to indicate that a story is starting by marking a slow beat that gradually accelerates. It is played by striking the two sticks together or against the floor. The use of the *hyoshigi* helps children to develop a sense of music, and other instruments with different sounds are often added to create a feeling of intrigue, mystery or surprise.

Similarly, the *kamishibai* usually features repetitive patterns which enable the audience to actively participate in the story.

Although very young children may sometimes not understand the text, they can associate the text with the visual through the images that they see. This makes the stories easier to remember and more meaningful for the children.

Developing written and oral expression is the first step in promoting reading and writing, and, in fact, children acquire pre-reading and pre-writing abilities successively, even if they do not see text.

The *kamishibai* format can be implemented to teach and develop writing skills, since drawing and narration form part of the pre-writing process. Recounting a story orally helps the child to internalize the process of constructing a story in a logical way with a beginning, climax and end.

By means of this sequencing of events, ideas and other elements are transmitted in a logical order. This can be of use to children as they try to establish a logical organization of everyday actions and events.

There are indeed many storytelling artefacts and devices offering numerous possibilities and alternatives for telling stories to children. Some prominent examples are the following:

--- Story cubes: A cube with a different image on each side. Stories can be initiated by throwing the cubes at random. This technique of generating characters to include in a story also works with other geometric

shapes, such as the dodecahedron. It is advisable to also depict landscapes and other possible settings for the story on the sides of the geometric shape, instead of just characters.

--- Split books: Books featuring split pages which enable the user to create characters and a story either with drawings or just text.

--- Storytelling aprons: Aprons depicting characters which are removed or added according to the series of events and scenes in the story.

--- Spinning discs: A device which can be used to answer the following questions: Who? To generate the characters; How? To generate the story; When? For actions in time; Where? To show the place where the story occurs; Why? To give meaning to the story.

--- Paper dolls: Children make a support base out of cardboard for the paper dolls, which leads to the creation of their own real stories.

--- Story stones: The tops of the stones depict characters, scenes and objects. The stones are placed face down and chosen at random in order to generate a story.

--- Digital stories: Stories can also be generated digitally with the online application *Storybird*. The software works by dragging and dropping objects such as images, text and buttons that direct the user to the next chapter. *Make It* is another easy-to-use and intuitive tool available for the iPad that can be used to create activities, games and stories.

6. Results

Our experience with the educational proposals and activities has highlighted the suitability of *kamishibai* as a vehicle to learn about other cultures from a multicultural perspective. In addition, it can be beneficial for learning a foreign language since the texts can be written in a child's second language. Further still, this Japanese art form can aid the development of acting and performance skills, as well as other creative abilities in the design and construction of the story boards.

Our research has also examined the work of some female authors regarding the *kamishibai* format. For instance, the intertextual method employed by Martina Paatela Nieminen analyzes Japanese paper theater through different versions of Alice in Wonderland. In addition, Nina Sabnani's innovative project on the Kavaad combines the creativity of artisan communities and designers.

Finally, we have aimed to provide an educational approach to our study by presenting a number of projects produced by future pre-school teachers from the Department of Education at the University of Cadiz. In addition, we have presented a complete lesson plan to be applied in the classroom.

7. Discussion and conclusions

Due to the fact that the *kamishibai* is not a lucrative art form like, for example, the illustration of children's books, many Japanese artists work with both media simultaneously. The illustrators who work within these genres tend to state that the creation process is different for each medium. Nevertheless, the lines between the *kamishibai* and illustrated children's books remain somewhat blurred.

For librarians, experienced in conserving and promoting books, the *kamishibai* is sometimes seen as an inferior medium due to its lower narrative content and visual composition, which some believe to be less refined than other books. However, it is important to consider that the *kamishibai* is designed to be eye-catching and to be viewed from a certain distance. Furthermore, in general, written texts are commonly given preference over theater performances. Therefore, with the purpose of promoting the creative development of the *kamishibai* at a high artistic level, in 1967, the Kamishibai Association in Japan created the Takahashi Gozán prize to acknowledge quality in this oral storytelling art form.

The reverse sides of the picture boards often feature some text that provides instructions about how quickly to move the picture boards, or the appropriate tone of voice for each character. These rules enable teachers, librarians, parents or theater performers to use *kamishibai* with very little preparation.

This study has discussed the teaching possibilities offered by *kamishibai*. On the one hand, it is a powerful tool to capture children's attention and emotions. However, despite its tried and tested design, it can also be stimulating and fun to create one's own *kamishibai*.

In terms of intercultural relations, Aldama, a teacher, explains how the use of *kamishibai* was introduced into her school due to the twinning of Pamplona with the city of Yamaguchi some twenty-five years ago. This twinning process, together with the collaboration of one parent, led to the creation of a library with several examples of Japanese culture.

In my case, at the University of Cadiz, it was a foreign student who initially proposed the idea of encouraging students and parents to transmit their culture through *kamishibai*. This proposal provided sufficient reason to explore the use of *kamishibai* as a resource of integration to facilitate active communication, at a time when our schools are boasting increasingly rich cultural diversities.

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