

Interactive Art Research Project, Based on International Dialogue between Japanese and Hungarian Teacher Trainers, Applying the Tools of Visual Language and Contemporary Plastic Arts The 3612 Bamboo Tandem and Lessons in Hungary

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Abstract

Seizing on the possibility provided by InSEA in Korea in August 2017, two world counsellors started an interactive arts research project, based on international dialogue between Japanese and Hungarian early childhood teacher training students, applying the tools of visual language and contemporary plastic arts. In addition to expressive creation, the emphasis is on visual communication and the mobilization of critical thinking. The enterprise focuses on the built environment education and on the development of children's spatial capabilities (through composition in 3D and the fostering of spatial skills, plastic skills, construction skills, design/traditional handcraft and the planning/preparation of objects with support of possibilities given selected contemporary artworks from artists in Japan and Hungary). The study targets the transitional years from kindergarten into elementary school, in a view of

a new Competency based curriculum (published in 2017 in Japan, in preparation in Hungary) for Kindergarten. In the presentation, beyond outlining the theoretical framework, we introduce the newest research relating to the central elements and the research plan developed in consequence.

Keywords

InSEA World Council, early childhood, kindergarten teacher training, Japan, Hungary, communication, visual education competencies, built environment education, spatial creation, contemporary art, design thinking, multiculturalism, interculturalism, visual culture and dialog.

Pataky Gabriella

The **3612 Bamboo Tandem** is a longitudinal action-based research project between two very different teacher training programs, located really far from each other in distance and in cultural heritage as well. Two InSEA world councilors are leading this artistic adventure (the authors). We teach visual art education in the full spectrum of teacher training, however in this case the focus is on the education of future kindergarten teachers.

From the name of our proposition, **3612** stands for kindergarten and primary school ages (3-6 age of Kindergarten/Preschool and 6-12 years for the primary/elementary education).

The **bamboo** is an important plant in both countries, even if it is quite different already upon looking at it: Strand by strand it is small and fragile in Hungary, but in bunches it is perfect building material. Even its collection is extraordinary: during the cold winters it is cut off of the surface of frozen lakes. Whereas in Japan, it is strong and has huge amount load bearing qualities as well as being a nutritious, delicious snack.

Tandem is the metaphor of collaboration and for exploring new paths and routes. A bicycle made of bamboo is rare, showing the experimentation in our less travelled field where we both will use our strong designer behavior and problem-solving skills. (We, Maho and Gabriella, both made our doctoral research about construction and design skills related to early years.)

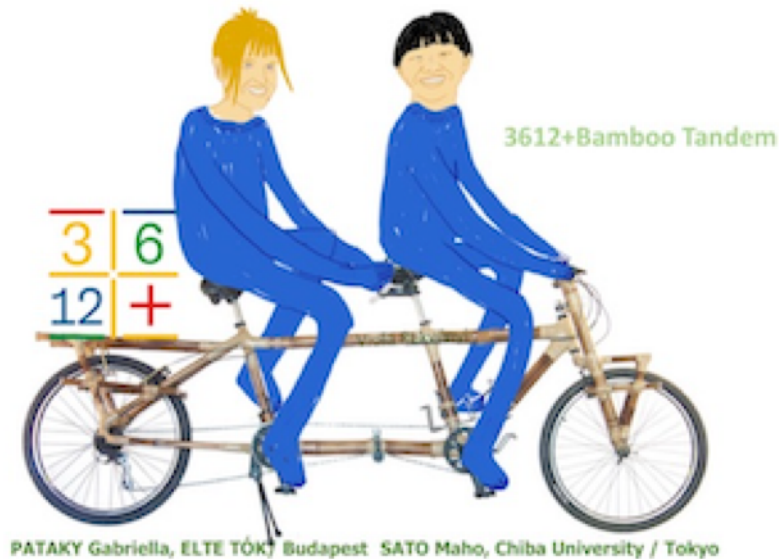


Figure 1: The Metaphor for the project

The project moved and developed continuously our student's **visual competencies** primarily, but it is also about **collaboration, learning** from each other, intercultural and **multicultural** education, while we would like to give a note to the importance of **transdisciplinary art** education and help raise the prestige of **Early Childhood Education**.

I began with the first preparations in Budapest, where I tried to show a good example by experimenting with more contemporary teaching roles, which are maybe more rarely used, alongside classical methods as a facilitator, as a coach or even as a hard-working mother, as Maho and I both are.

Part I

Problem-solving with Design Thinking

During the first weeks, we learned **traditional hand-crafting** techniques by planning and making design objects. We researched traditional Japanese methods that are similar to Hungarian folk art. This is how we found, along origami, kirigami and tshibori, which are well known in Hungary, a number of specialties, like kumihimo. Even though we didn't have traditional tools, but we made useable, simple objects in order to be able to try out the techniques and experiment as to what is the best way to give this gained knowledge over to kids. We documented our work with life images and shared the photos with our Japanese partners. On a winter's day, as a reply – much to our surprise and happiness – we received a package with real Japanese tools, which was a gesture we required. We're working on a short guide film to the Hungarian tool of Körmöcske.

In the theme of **built environment education**, we got to know the innovative educational spaces of early childhood on the basis of Japanese examples. We explored the ideal spaces for development in visual education, as well as its object and environment culture. We made mock-ups, montages, blueprints and building games.

Part II

Transdisciplinary approach based on the knowledge of storytelling and theory of fairy tales

Meanwhile, out of the elements used in the whole spectrum of the training, I picked out **fairy tales** as a base for our transdisciplinary escorting program. I read the Hungarian translation of a Japanese story to the half of my students. We marked every part of it that differed from Hungarian folk tales. My students then altered the story by these differences with the actions and turns normally a Hungarian folk tale would take in either situation. I asked them to present

these with pictures and make a storyboard of the Japanese story with the Hungarian influences. By sending to Japan these, I hoped the students at Chiba University could guess the original story. We hoped to receive the answer visually, a colourful storyboard, painted or drawn by hand, of the original tale. The Hungarian drawings translated into Japanese drawings.

The Japanese students did the same with the original of the Japanese tale. Just an example from the differences: the golden egg is hatched by a turtle in Japan, by a chicken in Hungary. Those Hungarian students, that didn't know the tale but received an illustrated yet unreadable, the text being uninterpretable, message by the Japanese students, either wrote a new tale based on communicational signs, or turned it into a comic. I expect the real fun when we translate and send these to Japan.

We also created subjective maps, where we tried to visualize the differences between Hungarian and Japanese folk tales with roads, turns and intersections.

Part III

Planning Visual Art Activities and Lessons

The structure of the second semester was defined by a collection of Japanese artworks. After careful consideration, I picked out 25 works, which standalone and grouped following different aspects would help developing the visual competences of our teacher training students, as well as being examples to follow for children. After our collective work, everybody chose one, the inspiration of which lead to the assembling of individual Hungarian and an international collection for everyone. Based on these collections, the students pitched exercise ideas, and detailed one of these to use in their teaching practice.

The first two semesters ended with formative assessment based on the ENViL CEFR_VL Rubrik, as well as reflections, but the project is continuing in September.

My experience is that no matter the many dedicated and excited student, original idea, in-



Figure 2: Japanese Artwork Collection for Hungarian lesson plans

novation, arriving to kindergartens, most of them quickly assimilate to kindergarten visual education which is based on ordinary schemes. I hope that immersing in another culture will also help learn how to look at our own with fresh eyes. Our tandem is already in the making! You can follow our project on Instagram with these hashtags:

#3612plus

#3612BambooTandem

Lesson ideas from Japan to Hungary: Learning through everyday life objects

Sato Maho

In this part of the paper, a traditional Japanese craft project that I conducted in a teacher training course in Japan is introduced as a lesson idea for a teacher training course in Hungary. According to Katter (1995), crafts can be a vehicle for expression as well as the transmission of a group or national identity. Craft education plays an important role in cultural learning, defined as understanding cultural diversity and the construction of identity. However, my previous research

on teaching crafts with schoolteachers emphasised the development of skills and techniques. One reason is that craft education has traditionally relied on the transfer of skilled knowledge from specialists to learners, also known as apprenticeship. This model of learning encourages skills-centred teaching in schools. In the craft project, I emphasised teaching design thinking rather than focussing on the end products.

The craft object I chose for the lesson was *tenugui*, which is a plain cloth. In Japanese, *te* means hand, and *nugui* means wipe. *Tenugui* is sometimes used as a rag and towel for drying one's hands or cleaning. Traditionally, screen print/stencil dyeing techniques have been used to print patterns for *tenugui*, which is made of cotton. Cotton became popular in the 17th century because people could easily obtain it.

I had two opportunities to conduct the *tenugui* lesson (workshop) at a university in Japan; one was with in-service primary school classroom teachers and another with international students from Taiwan. The former made me think about possibilities for teaching ways of developing ideas (the design thinking process) from an interdisciplinary point of view. The latter made me reflect on this lesson in terms of international perspectives and cultural understanding.

The main learning objective for students is to develop the ability to reflect on their own beliefs and value systems through the making and designing of Japanese traditional crafts.

Lesson contents:

1. Exploring and understanding the historical background of *tenugui*
2. Exploring ways of using *tenugui*
3. Looking at the design of *tenugui* (possible questions: which kinds of patterns are printed? What do they mean?)
4. Designing and creating one's own *tenugui*

5. EReflecting on and evaluating one's work

At the beginning of the lesson, I show examples and talk about how *tenugui* have been used from the past to the present. There are many ways to use *tenugui*; here are some traditional methods:

- Headband in a festival (*hachimaki*) (Figure 3)
- Apron
- Covering [wrapping] up one's head and cheeks
- Sandal strap
- Nappy
- A rag for cleaning
- Traditional Japanese comedians use *tenugui* as a tool. . . they have used it as a book, letter, wallet, money, notebook, cigarette case, and so on



Figure 3: *Hachimaki*

There are more contemporary and creative ways of using *tenugui*. For instance, when you go on a date, it could be used as a picnic sheet and an umbrella, or a handkerchief (if you are watching a sad film).

After I discuss how to use *tenugui* with students, we look at some traditional *tenugui* patterns, such as *mameshibori* (meaning ‘descendants’ prosperity’), which is the most popular pattern. Another example is *seigaiha*, which shows a wave, and refers to a continuing peaceful future. Other examples are *asanoha* (in English, “hemp leaves”), which signifies the wishes for children’s healthy growth, and *hanakikko*, which has the geometric pattern of a regular hexagon and is regarded as a turtle shell and signifies longevity.

In this project, I collaborated with a local textile artist, Naoko Natsume, who works on a wide range of textiles. It was a good opportunity for students to become familiar with a local artist’s work and see how she designs and creates her works.

In order to generate and develop design ideas, I gave students simple design instructions:

- ① Your pattern should be repetitive
- ② You are allowed to use two or three colours
- ③ Consider how you are going to use it

When I teach traditional crafts, there is one question I always ask myself: ‘Should the materials and tools be authentic?’ Many Japanese secondary school art teachers have told me that authentic craft materials are too expensive for schools. Some Japanese schools that I visited used commercial kits for traditional craft projects, and a survey found that the majority of teachers use them frequently. I understand that the use of authentic resources is considered crucial in the apprenticeship model of learning, which is the best way of learning about crafts (Sennett, 2008). However, this project focussed on developing students’ design thinking skills, so I prepared inkpads for fabric and recycled materials and industrial product parts as stamps to make patterns. In this project, students were encouraged to experiment with materials.

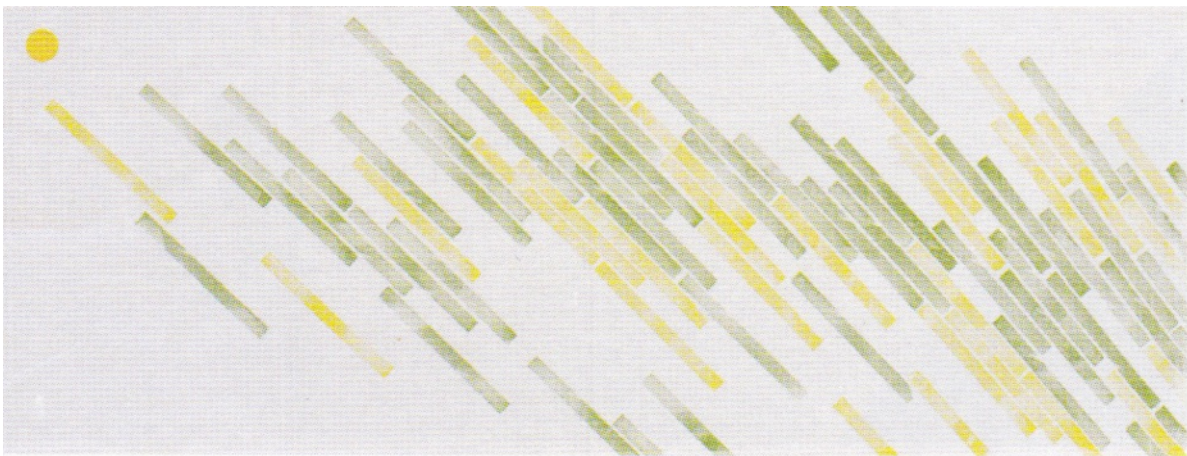


Figure 4: This is a student craft. The title is ‘tennis’. She told me she wanted to use this when she plays tennis.

Overall, participants enjoyed this craft project. Participants’ comments:

'I will try to pay attention to my artistic sensitivity in my daily life.'

'I was inspired by others' ideas and interested in different ideas than mine.'

'I am going to cherish the way I feel.'

Conclusion

It is important for teachers to understand creative thinking as a process and an ongoing aspect of children's development. In addition, children's creative thinking tends to be developed along with their changing social and cultural contexts. We (teachers) need to be open minded about the different ways students express their creativity. In this project, we developed and conducted art lessons by exchanging and responding to each other's lessons, such as in a conversation. This method motivated our students as well as us (teacher trainers) by stimulating our curiosity and creative thinking. I hope this collaborative research project contributes to children's and student teachers' understanding of creative thinking, which is one of key competencies in the 21st century.

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