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Tanulmány / Study Article

Kamishibai as a Medium for Course Innovation and Real-World Outcomes

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Abstract:

This paper reports on the redesign of the *English Children's Literature* course for final-year students in the part-time English-language Kindergarten Educator BA programme at Apor Vilmos Catholic College. The course innovation combined a *Flipped Classroom* approach with a *University–Business Cooperation* (UBC) project, integrating theoretical knowledge, pedagogical skills, and professional practice within the constraints of limited face-to-face instruction. Central to the UBC component was the creation of a bilingual *kamishibai* tale, *The Little Red Hen*, accompanied by a teacher's resource, an *Activity Bank*, developed collaboratively by students and professional partners. Using a practical action research design, data were collected through interviews, questionnaires, course documentation, instructors' journals, partner communications, and students' reflections. Findings indicate that the Flipped Classroom facilitated autonomous learning while maximizing in-person sessions for collaborative application, and that participation in the UBC project enhanced students' creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and professional competence. Moreover, stakeholders' collaboration proved a significant driver of curricular innovation, producing an authentic teaching resource and expanding students' methodological repertoire in early English language development. The study demonstrates the potential of combining flipped learning with real-world projects to foster reflective, practice-oriented teacher education.

Keywords:

flipped classroom, kamishibai storytelling method, early second language development, University-Business Cooperation, action research

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Introduction

In part-time teacher education,[3] where face-to-face instruction constitutes only a third of total contact time, balancing practical training with theoretical instruction presents a substantial challenge. In redesigning the *English Children's Literature* course for final-year students in the part-time English-language Kindergarten Educator BA programme at Apor Vilmos Catholic College, we addressed this by incorporating a *Flipped Classroom* element and a *University-Business Cooperation* (UBC) project into the course, thereby integrating theory, pedagogy, and professional skills development within the constraints of limited in-person sessions.

In addition to addressing the inherent limitations of correspondence courses, there was also a professional rationale for undertaking this course renewal. We wanted to produce a bilingual *kamishibai* story based on a traditional English folk tale and specifically aimed at very young learners of English. The integration of kamishibai paper theatre has long been an established component of coursework at Apor Vilmos Catholic College. However, due to the lack of kamishibai stories based on traditional English folk tales specifically designed for very young learners of English, we undertook the creation of a bilingual kamishibai tale entitled *The Little Red Hen* which can be used as an effective teaching aid in the field of early English language development.

The authors of this paper, who also served as the course instructors, initiated a collaboration with two professional partners – Kriszta Kállai Nagy and the Csimota Publishing – both of whom have extensive experience in illustration and kamishibai tale publishing. Additionally, staff members of a partner institution, Angolpaláta Bilingual Montessori Kindergarten, were also involved in the final phase of the project to pilot the end-product, a teacher's resource material. This UBC project provided students with the opportunity to make a substantive professional contribution while fostering their creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication skills. Guided by the course instructors, students collaboratively developed an Activity Bank to accompany the kamishibai tale, designed to serve as a comprehensive pedagogical resource for educators in kindergarten and lower primary education. These outputs – the tale and the accompanying Activity Bank – represent specialised, purpose-built materials that contribute to the field of early English language development and exemplify the integration of creative production into initial teacher education. This study presents a practical action research that explores the processes and outcomes of this course innovation, implemented as a best practice in the renewal of initial teacher training.

[3] In Hungary, part-time teacher education means that all formal instructional activities are delivered on Saturdays, but despite the condensed weekly timetable it is expected to meet the same learning outcomes, credit requirements and quality assurance standards as its full-time, week-day based counterpart.

Early Foreign Language Pedagogy

Early second language pedagogy has long recognized the value of contextualized learning through narrative-based approaches, particularly for young learners. Stories provide a rich, meaningful framework for language input and cultural understanding (Ellis & Brewster, 2014) and serve as an effective vehicle for integrating vocabulary and grammar within a holistic language learning framework (Pinter, 2017). Herbert Puchta and Karen Elliott (2017) emphasize that the mode of storytelling is crucial for the success of story-based instruction, while Mary Mayesky (2023) highlights the benefits of listening to and telling stories for vocabulary acquisition, expressive language, narrative understanding and comprehension of story structure, sequencing, and cause-and-effect relationships.

Selecting stories for young learners requires consideration of linguistic complexity, cultural relevance, thematic appropriateness, and engagement potential, while also offering teacher trainees clear selection criteria (Bland, 2019). Ellis and Brewster (2014) systematically outline such criteria, highlighting the psycholinguistic, sociological, and intercultural value of stories for whole-child development. In line with these principles, *The Little Red Hen* tale was chosen for its cultural significance and pedagogical potential. As a familiar English folk tale, it fosters positive attitudes toward the target language and culture. Its age-appropriateness lies in anthropomorphic characters and a concise plot, while its formulaic language – characterized by repetition, cumulative sequences, and rhythmic dialogues (Ellis & Shintani, 2014; Lüthi, 1986; Zipes, 2006) – enhances motivation, comprehension, and memory. Furthermore, the tale enables cross-curricular integration through art, music, and drama, and its moral dimension supports emotional development and holistic learning.

Kamishibai Paper Theatre in Education

Multimodal storytelling has increasingly gained attention in education, with kamishibai – a traditional Japanese method combining illustrated cards, oral narration, and theatrical performance – emerging as an effective tool to foster multimodal literacy. The format consists of a fold-out wooden frame (*butai*) that holds large picture cards with illustrations on the front and text on the back, each card representing a sequential part of the story. This design maximizes the audience's attention, as the large visuals ensure visibility for groups while simultaneously integrating text, images, and performance into a complex learning experience.

McGowan (2015) emphasizes the significance of spatial and kineikonic modes in kamishibai, highlighting its dynamic, performative potential rooted in its history as Japanese street performance from the 1930s. This was confirmed in practice when our students performing *The Little Red Hen* observed that images came alive only through engaging oral and gestural delivery. Through several rehearsals, they further enriched the performance with puppets and musical instruments, demonstrating the medium's creative po-

tential. The most effective insights, contributions of the students were later compiled into the Activity Bank.

Nozaka (2013) highlights kamishibai's communal character, which creates *kyokan*, a shared story-world experience between performer and audience. Unlike picture books, which are primarily suited to individual or small-group reading, kamishibai offers a theatre-like experience for groups, engaging learners through its distinctive format. In our project, students rehearsing *The Little Red Hen* observed that varying the speed of sliding the picture cards within the butai and modulating the rhythm of narration significantly enhanced the dramatic impact of the performance. Such performative techniques not only intensified the audience's (the other participating students) engagement but also fostered a sense of community.

As Ishiguro (2018) demonstrates, pedagogical kamishibai (*kyouiku*) capitalizes on arts-based and discovery learning while also fostering collaborative story-making. This theoretical framework is reflected in our training programme: Although in the *English Children's Literature* course our students worked with ready-made illustrations prepared by a professional illustrator prior to the project, the *Early English* module had provided opportunities for them to design their own kamishibai picture cards for preschool-related stories. This creative task not only fostered artistic expression but also enhanced collaboration and peer learning,

Bloom's Taxonomy

To instruct students in early language pedagogy through literature employing visual storytelling techniques – with particular emphasis on kamishibai – our course was designed utilizing several pedagogical approaches. When thinking about the renewal of methodology in higher education, it is essential to keep in mind the expected learning outcomes in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes (Kennedy, 2006), and the relevance of coursework for students' future careers (O'Neill & Short, 2023). Benjamin Bloom's taxonomy (1956) provided an excellent framework for guiding students from acquiring basic subject knowledge to applying it creatively. Bloom understood learning as a process in which thought processes are built hierarchically on top of each other, each level assuming knowledge of the previous level. His 6-level taxonomy was rethought by Lorin W. Anderson, David R. Krathwohl and their colleagues (2001), the application of which was instrumental when restructuring the syllabus from lower-order skills (Remember, Understand) to higher-order skills (Apply, Analyze, Evaluate, Create).

Flipped Classroom Approach

Due to the limited contact hours in our part-time *English Children's Literature* course, it is a recurring challenge how to effectively provide students with a solid foundation in theoretical and literary-historical knowledge while maintaining an emphasis on creative pedagogical methods. This was addressed

through the widely adopted Flipped Classroom methodology, whereby students engage independently with course materials outside of class, and then deepen their understanding during instructor-led in-person sessions. In accordance with the flipped classroom methodology, students in the *English Children's Literature* course first engaged with digital materials via Google Classroom, accessing literary texts, secondary readings, videos, and presentations on both prose and poetry. This pre-class engagement reflects Talbert's (2023) framework of flipped course design, which emphasizes shifting lower-order cognitive activities – such as information acquisition – to individual study, thereby freeing in-class time for deeper application and interaction. The prose block explored foundational works of British children's literature, folk and literary tales, and storytelling strategies for early English instruction, while the poetry module The poetry module provided a historical overview of the main authors of children's poetry, and addressed the methodology of teaching verse in preschool contexts, with a focus on nursery rhymes, finger plays, tongue twisters, jazz chants, and rhyme-based games.

Building on Şahin and Fell Kurban's (2016) findings on optimizing face-to-face learning for Generation Z learners, in-class sessions prioritized collaboration and creativity through an escape-room activity, rhyme-writing tasks, and student-led workshops. These sessions promoted critical and reflective thinking consistent with Olivier's (2019) *Thinking Tools Programme*, which highlights cognitive engagement over content transmission. Similarly, the *British Prose Literature Timeline* board game and students' performances of tales using visual storytelling aids translated theoretical knowledge into experiential learning. The final *Little Red Hen* kamishibai project integrated literary theory, visual storytelling, and preschool pedagogy, demonstrating how flipped instruction fosters autonomy, creativity, and professional competence. This holistic design builds on the pedagogical principles outlined by Torres Zúñiga's *Flipping the Pages of Children's Literature* (2024), confirming that pre-class preparation and active classroom engagement jointly enhance future pre-primary English teachers' critical understanding and pedagogical innovation.

What is important to emphasize regarding the flipped classroom method is that, while it has been extensively examined across various educational contexts, our review of the relevant literature revealed that research specifically addressing its implementation in English children's literature courses remains notably limited, indicating a significant gap in the current academic discourse. This lack of child-literature–specific research highlights a clear gap in the literature, and positions the present practical action research study as a contribution to this underexplored area.

University-Business Cooperation (UBC)

UBC has been a strategic priority for the European Commission's Directorate General for Education and Culture for over a decade. It fosters collaboration be-

tween academia and businesses to bridge theory and practice for mutual benefit. A 2016 study assessing UBC in European higher education institutions (HEIs) introduced the *UBC Ecosystem Framework*, identifying four key areas: UBC *processes*, *influencing factors* (barriers and drivers), HEI *support mechanisms*, and the *contextual impacts* of the UBC activity on the individuals, the organizations, and their environment (Balzhan et al., 2017). The UBC process includes three stages: 1. *Inputs* – Resources are needed to enable cooperation. 2. *UBC Activities* – Fourteen UBC activities are recognised, arranged into the categories of *education*, *research*, *valorisation* and *management*. For our study, the educational aspect is the most important, containing the following five activities: *curriculum co-design*, *curriculum co-delivery* (e.g. guest lectures), *mobility of students* (i.e. student internships/placements), *dual education programmes* (i.e. part theory, part practical), and *lifelong learning for people from business* (e.g. executive education, industry training and professional courses). 3. *UBC Results* – They can be common outputs, outcomes, and impacts. Although a UBC can enhance teaching and research for academics, and drive innovation and competitiveness for businesses (Davey et al., 2018), it benefits students the most who gain real-world experience while developing essential skills for their future careers.

Despite its obvious potential for both higher education and business, research shows that UBC remains underrepresented in European HEIs, with Hungary lagging behind, one of the reasons reportedly being inadequate financial and organizational support from academic management (Balzhan et al., 2017). Our project, as an initial UBC effort, has successfully addressed these challenges and received strong institutional support in funding, personnel, and facilities.

Collaborative Learning

Enhancing students' collaboration skills was central to the course redesign, as these are crucial for their future professional roles. Collaborative learning, grounded in Vygotsky's social constructivist theory, emphasizes co-construction of knowledge through shared inquiry, dialogue, and engagement (Benke, 2020). Research shows that such environments improve critical thinking (Gokhale, 1995), motivation (La Rocca et al., 2014), and active participation through peer interaction, negotiation, discussion, and reflection (Chang-Tik et al., 2022). Additionally, collaborative learning fosters 21st-century competencies by developing knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values through teamwork (OECD, 2018).

Reflective Practice

Collaboration inherently entails the skill of reflection, as partners must exchange and critically evaluate their ideas to reach consensus. Reflective practice in professional development has been valued since the early 20th century, notably by John Dewey, who distinguished between general thinking and reflective thinking aimed at justifying one's ideas (Candy, 2020). Over the subsequent decades, vari-

ous models have elaborated on reflective practice as summarized by A. Pendrey (2022): J. Luft and H. Ingham's Johari Window (1955) explored self-awareness through four facets: open area, blind spot, hidden area, and unknown area. D. A. Schön (1983) distinguished between two modes of reflection: reflection-in-action, which occurs during professional experiences, and reflection-on-action, which takes place afterward. D. Kolb's reflective cycle (1984) outlined four stages: learning from the concrete experience, reflecting on it, conceptualizing the observations, and experimenting with the newly conceived method. S. Brookfield (1994) emphasized viewing situations from multiple perspectives through four 'lenses': Self Lens, Child's Lens, Colleague's Lens, and Literature Lens. Finally, G. Gibbs' six-stage model (1998) advocated starting reflection by evaluating emotions connected to an experience.

Reflection supports pre-service teachers' self-development – including awareness of values, learning styles, and growth areas – and professional skills such as problem-solving, experimentation, and collaboration (Thompson, 2022). For educators, reflection is equally important: reflection-in-action enables real-time adjustments to teaching, while reflection-on-action provides insights to refine methodology (Schön as cited in Candy, 2020).

In action research, the dynamic exchange of explicit and tacit knowledge between students and instructors necessitates reflection. Thus, reflective practice was integral to our research, mainly following Schön's approach while incorporating elements from other models. As shown later, this process involved analysing successes and challenges to refine teaching methods.

Methods

Research Hypotheses

This action research, conducted within the framework of course innovation, sought to examine the following hypotheses:

a. The Flipped Classroom approach can effectively complement and support knowledge acquisition and application within a part-time training programme characterised by limited face-to-face instructional time.
b. Implementing storytelling knowledge in real-world projects provides students with greater educational benefits than relying solely on classroom-based contexts.
c. Collaboration with stakeholders in kamishibai publishing fosters innovative approaches in children's literature courses, enhancing pedagogical practices and curricular development.

Setting and Participants

The study was conducted in the *English Children's Literature* course, a compulsory component of the part-time English-language Kindergarten Educa-

tor BA programme. The course consists of 20 contact hours, organized into four cooperative teaching blocks and co-taught by the two authors. It combines literary-historical foundations with practice-oriented methodology for teaching English as a foreign language to preschool-aged learners. In the 2024–25 academic year, the syllabus was revised to follow a flipped learning model, with students engaging in digital preparatory tasks via Google Classroom prior to interactive, application-focused sessions.

Our program typically runs with a small number of 5–10 students. The 2023 course consisted of 8 students. In the planning phase, non-random convenience sampling was applied to interview four students from the 2023 course, which helped identify potential challenges with earlier methodology, including 2-2 students with and without previous work experience. In the implementation phase, non-random purposive sampling was used to involve all the three students (out of six) of the redesigned 2024 course who agreed to participate in the research. In addition, five external partners participated in the study: two representatives of Csimota Publishing, one illustrator, and two kindergarten teachers from Angolpalánta Kindergarten.

Design

A practical action research approach (Mills & Gay, 2019) was employed to evaluate the redesigned *English Children's Literature* course. This methodology was selected as it enables the systematic study of teaching practice while simultaneously improving instructional design. The research design involved planning, implementation, reflection, and refinement.

At the start of the course, students were informed of the research aims and procedures. Verbal consent to participate was obtained, with the option to withdraw at any time without disadvantage.

Data Collection

The research utilized six instruments: (1) structured interviews with students, (2) a group questionnaire, (3) course documentation, (4) instructors' journals, (5) verbal and written communication with partners, and (6) students' oral reflections. These instruments were selected to obtain comprehensive data from all participant groups, thereby enabling the identification of potential areas for future course improvement.

Interviews

Seven student interviews were conducted in two phases: four pre-course interviews with students from the 2023 *English Children's Literature* course and three post-course interviews with students from the revised 2024 course. The pre-course interviews, guided by a 15-item questionnaire, evaluated the original course content and delivery. The post-course interviews, held online with

five questions, explored student perspectives on the Flipped Classroom, collaboration with external partners, editorial work, professional development, and the final product. Interviews were documented through audio-recorded transcriptions or detailed real-time notes taken by the instructor-researchers.

Group Questionnaire

In addition to individual interviews, students took part in an anonymous mid-course group reflection on the Flipped Classroom component via a six-item questionnaire in a shared Google Document. Using colour-coded entries, they could view and respond to each other's feedback anonymously. This format elicited both positive experiences – such as achievement, creativity, and enjoyment of online tasks – and concerns, including time constraints, study overload, and unclear instructions, offering valuable guidance for future course improvement.

Course Documents

Data were also gathered from students' assignments submitted via Google Classroom, the college's official platform. While the 2023 documents were used to redesign the course, the 2024 documents were coded and analyzed in line with the research questions.

Instructors' Journals

The instructor-researchers' reflective journals of their coursework were also used for data collection. These reflections were prepared individually by the two instructors, based on their lesson plans, within a short time after each session. Drawing on the reflective practice advocated by D. Schön, these documents captured how the instructors flexibly reassessed the classroom realities and made adjustments accordingly (reflection-in-action) as well as how they could evaluate their decisions with hindsight (reflection-on-action).

Verbal and Written Communication with Partners

The preparation and implementation of the UBC component required intensive communication with external partners. An initial in-person meeting six months before the course clarified collaborative objectives, followed by several video conferences, email exchanges and in-person meetings during and after the course. Communication was primarily managed by the instructors, though students were also invited to contribute ideas for the forthcoming kamishibai tale in a joint session with the instructors and a publishing house representative.

Students' Oral Reflections

Finally, insights into students' experiences with the UBC project – an integral element of the course – were also gathered from two students' contribu-

tions to the roundtable discussion at the annual *Early Childhood Education Conference* in Vác, held in collaboration with our external partners.

For a thorough evaluation, data were analysed through iterative coding rounds. Initial coding, based on the 2023 course documentation, identified key themes that shaped the pre-course interview questions. As interviews and subsequent data collection progressed, additional themes emerged and were incorporated to remain responsive to student perspectives. These pre-course codes guided the course redesign, which was later tested and evaluated using data from the implementation phase. Ultimately, five codes were established that comprehensively capture the key themes of the course innovation, aligned with initial expectations:

1. Managing constraints imposed by the part-time course format, introducing the Flipped Classroom method
2. Collaboration with peers, instructors and stakeholders
3. Using story-telling techniques, such as verbal performance and visual aids
4. Assessment of students' knowledge
5. Professional development regarding subject knowledge and competencies

Results

Managing Constraints Imposed by the Part-Time Course Format, Introducing the Flipped Classroom Method

The first code examined students' perceptions of the part-time course format and the Flipped Classroom component. Most planning-phase students did not view limited contact hours as a disadvantage, relying on their prior bilingual or international early childhood experience and earlier Early English modules as preparation. However, students found the content dense, often revisiting online materials primarily to complete assignments. As one student reflected, "If we had received the secondary literature in advance, we could have prepared better both linguistically and in terms of content. We would have been more familiar with the material, retained it more effectively, and recognised connections more easily" (S1).

To address this, a Flipped Classroom element was added. Feedback was mixed: independent study was sometimes challenging, and not all students attended the optional online orientation. Some suggested clearer guidance on prioritizing resources (S7). Despite these challenges, students found the tasks engaging, appreciating in-person sessions for consolidating pre-class learning: "The class provided an opportunity to apply and further deepen the theoretical knowledge acquired in advance through practical activities" (S7). Although the instructors' journals also mentioned that disparities were observed in the students' levels of independent learning, altogether they found student preparation sufficient for the purposes of the rest of the course. n

relation to a card game activity, one of the instructors reflected: "All students were able to speak meaningfully about the works and authors featured on their cards. An added value that emerged spontaneously during the activity was that students shared their personal connections and emotional attachments to certain works or their film adaptations, which proved to be inspiring for their peers as well" (I1). The other instructor emphasized the importance of creative work: "They wrote their own poems, which turned out to be surprisingly creative. Moreover, they became so encouraged by the process that they even contributed several rhymes to the supplementary materials prepared for the kamishibai story" (I2).

Collaboration with Peers, Instructors and Stakeholders

In post-course interviews, students highlighted the instructors' coordinating role, professional experience, and feedback – including advice on what might or might not work – as particularly valuable, placing high importance on instructor-led, in-person instruction.

Their main achievement was effective collaboration in the editorial workshop. Presentations of individual mind maps with envisioned uses were highly appreciated (S7), feeding into a joint project plan from which the best activities were integrated into the Activity Bank. Students reported that brainstorming clarified concepts, inspired new perspectives, developed their critical thinking skills. The instructors' journals highlighted students' professional attitude in the editorial process: "It was rewarding to observe how students were able to draw on and integrate the knowledge they had gained over the course of their studies" (I1). "Students worked independently at home on the parts of the project, each bringing their own ideas and perspectives. During the last session, the collaborative brainstorming, creativity, and teamwork proved highly engaging and motivating for the entire group" (I2).

Evaluations of work with external partners were mixed. Students valued the ideas, guidance, and practical insights into kamishibai offered by the Csimota representative (S5), but some felt their input had little impact on finalizing the tale. One student expressed disappointment that suggestions – including those on visual presentation – were not incorporated, as the representative arrived with pre-prepared images (S2). Suggestions for improvement included involving students in story selection to enhance ownership and adding a teacher feedback platform on the publisher's website (S5).

Stakeholder communication was handled by the two instructors. In the planning phase, email exchanges with the publisher and illustrator focused on adapting wording and illustrations for young learners. In the post-course phase, the teacher-researchers contacted Angolpalánta Kindergarten to pilot the resource material and worked with the publisher to finalize the Activity Bank, which was later uploaded to the publisher's website.

Using Story-Telling Techniques

In the research phase, students built on prior knowledge of storytelling methods – acquired in the Early English module and through Flipped Classroom study – by performing pre-selected folk and literary tales in pairs, tailored to the developmental and linguistic needs of specific preschool age groups. These activities incorporated visual aids such as story cards, story maps, and story mountains. Although pairs and techniques had been assigned, post-course interviews indicated that students found the process highly creative, stimulating their imagination and expanding their methodological repertoire. Several participants expressed a preference for more autonomy in selecting techniques, which they believed would have further enhanced engagement (S6).

A particularly valued element was the workshop with the Csimota Publishing representative, who performed a kamishibai story and demonstrated how to use story cards effectively to create dramatic impact and capture children's attention (S7). Students emphasized the importance of active participation, appreciating the opportunity to rehearse and present a story themselves, which allowed them to assess the feasibility of their ideas and explore how kamishibai could be applied in early childhood contexts (S7).

Pre-course interviews had indicated that students considered greater emphasis on verbal performance techniques important when presenting children's literature texts (S3). However, in the research phase it was again not possible to devote as much time to this aspect as planned.

Assessment of Students' Knowledge

Pre-course interviews indicated that students valued assessment as a motivator for engaging with online self-study materials. One student noted, "Targeted learning, such as preparing for a test, motivates people to learn" (S1), while another reported accessing supplementary materials primarily when completing assignments (S3). In response, a formative online Redmenta practice test was implemented at the end of the self-study period, requiring 100% completion within 24 hours, with unlimited attempts allowed; some students, however, perceived it as summative.

To evaluate students' initial knowledge within the Flipped Classroom framework, diagnostic assessment was conducted in the first face-to-face session using gamified activities – an escape room for children's poetry and a card game for children's prose. Formative assessment continued through written assignments and presentations, supported by a point-based system (Prievara, 2015) that allowed task choice and personalized learning paths. Although a maximum of 130 points was available, grading was scaled to 100 points (≥90 = highest grade), and all but one student exceeded 100 points.

Post-course interviews revealed that students were more motivated by the creativity and relevance of activities than by point values. However, the instructors' journals pointed out that it was useful to give nuanced reflection: "the

point-based grading system proved useful in a few cases – such as the short presentations – where it allowed us to reflect, in numerical terms, when a task was not completed perfectly" (I2). One student reflected in the anonymous group reflection that the Redmenta test "alleviated the stress factor, thus making study easier," highlighting the first face-to-face revision session as particularly valuable. Although students were not fully aware of this, the instructors regarded the test more as part of the learning process than as a formal assessment.

Professional Development Regarding Subject Knowledge and Competencies

Pre-course interviews indicated that students viewed the *English Children's Literature* course as effective preparation for using stories and rhymes in future teaching. One participant described the knowledge gained as "surface-level" (S2) but valued practical assignments, such as mind maps and activity plans, over engagement with older literary texts. Students also reported improvements in problem-solving and critical thinking through discussions and peer exchange.

The final teaching material demonstrated professional-level expertise, including an introduction in Hungarian and English to early foreign language pedagogy; an *Activities while reading* section with three to four tasks per kamishibai card (Figure 1); and additional ideas in the *Further project activities* section were linked to six core content areas in early childhood education: story and rhyme, mathematical concepts, knowledge of the outside world, movement, arts and crafts, and music. As can be seen in Figure 2, the activities included here promote the holistic development of children.

Figure 1

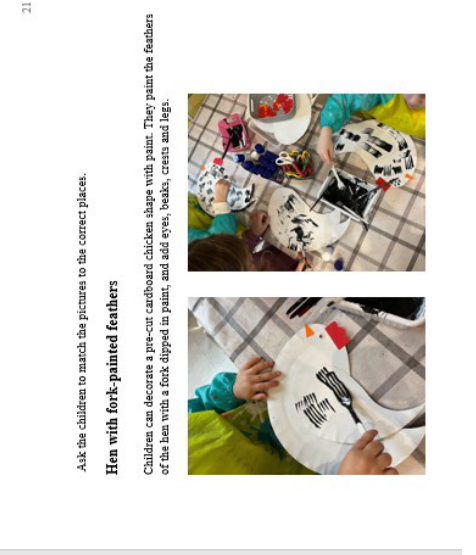
Excerpt from 'Activities While Reading'
(Source: Streitmann & Tabi, 2025, p. 8)

Slide 1	
• identifying the Little Red Hen's home • recognising animals and their habitats • counting animals • talking about the foods of the Little Red Hen 	**Identifying the Little Red Hen's home:** Point to the farm: *This is the Little Red Hen's home.* Further ideas: **Recognising animals and their habitats:** During the second or third reading, point to the animals: *What animal is this?* [eliciting the names of the animals in the picture] *Where do they live?* [eliciting the habitats of the animals] **Counting animals:** Point to the animals and get the children to count them. **Talking about the foods of the Little Red Hen:** There are different bugs and worms in the picture. Point to them, rubbing your belly and saying: *Yummy! Look here are the bugs and worms, chickens love to eat them. These are the favourite foods of the Little Red Hen.*

As can be seen, the list of activities and an index image are featured in the first column for orientation, while the second column presents detailed descriptions of the activities, including verbatim teacher instructions, which can be particularly beneficial for novice early years EFL teachers.

Figure 2

Excerpt from 'Further project activities'
(Source: Streitmann & Tabi, 2025, p. 21)



20

Cross lateral movements

At this age cross lateral movements (e.g. touching the right hand to the left knee) are fundamental for early childhood development. They play a crucial role in developing the brain and body coordination.

- *Pretending to plant seeds*
  Squat and touch the ground with the opposite hand (right hand to left side, left hand to right side).
- *Pretending to be the Little Red Hen*
  Flap one arm like a wing while tapping the opposite knee with the other hand. Switch sides with each step or hop.
- *Gathering the wheat*
  Reach diagonally across the body to "pick" the wheat from one side and bring it down to an imaginary basket on the opposite side. Alternate hands and sides.
- *Pretend to turn a big millstone*
  Extend arms forward and make large circular motions horizontally as if your arms were two big millstones, crossing arms over each other with each turn.
- *Carrying the bread*
  While holding a loaf of bread in the one hand, march in a circle touching the opposite knee with the other hand at every second step.

21

Ask the children to match the pictures to the correct places.

Hen with fork-painted feathers

Children can decorate a pre-cut cardboard chicken shape with paint. They paint the feathers of the hen with a fork dipped in paint, and add eyes, beaks, crests and legs.

After having piloted the material, the staff of Angolpalánta Kindergarten described it as rich and workable, noting that the tale offers substantial educational potential, sufficient to support three to four weeks of meaningful and imaginative activities.

Post-course interviews indicated that the collaborative editorial process – primarily completed as homework and in an instructor-facilitated workshop – was highly motivating and professionally valuable. One participant described the workshop as "an occasion where they could finally participate competently; it was a real professional challenge" (S5). Students valued contributing to a project with tangible outcomes, reporting gains in creativity, methodological competence, and planning skills.

Discussion

A central aspect of innovating the *English Children's Literature* course was the adoption of the Flipped Classroom model, which proved our first hypothesis that this approach has the potential to enhance and facilitate both knowledge acquisition and its application in a part-time training context with restricted face-to-face contact hours. In line with Talbert's (2023) instructional guide, the course was redesigned to shift the initial acquisition of knowledge into self-directed, pre-class learning and to devote in-person sessions to the collaborative consolidation and practical application of content.

Student feedback gathered during the research phase, however, revealed the challenges of adapting to this model. Independent study was not uniformly perceived as effective, as several students struggled with time management and prioritisation of materials. This indicates that while flipped learning fosters autonomy, it requires strong scaffolding, especially for students less experienced in self-directed study. A clear roadmap outlining which resources to prioritise and how to approach them would have eased the transition. The optional online orientation session proved insufficient, since non-attending students missed essential guidance. Fortunately, students who were absent from the discussion received support from their peers, who shared the necessary information, enabling them to complete the tasks as well. This demonstrates the crucial role of student collaboration, particularly in part-time programmes that employ the flipped classroom approach. Nevertheless, we are planning to introduce a compulsory two-lesson orientation, accompanied by more explicit instructions to ensure all students begin the course with adequate preparation.

Clear and explicit teacher instructions prior to the in-class sessions are crucial to prevent task misinterpretation. Although the course syllabus – uploaded to the Classroom in advance – explicitly specified that students should adapt and perform a tale according to their selected preschool age group and language level, the task description in the "Assignments" section

placed greater emphasis on the preparation and submission of the visual storytelling aids. As a result, the student presentations demonstrated a high degree of creativity and quality in terms of visual design, but the adaptation of the tale's text to the chosen age group and language proficiency level, as well as the oral delivery of the story, proved less successful. Future guidelines given in the Classroom should emphasize these aspects more explicitly.

The volume of uploaded materials presented another difficulty. Students initially found the quantity overwhelming, highlighting the importance of carefully balancing breadth and depth of preparatory resources. In response, we are planning to reduce the number of items while retaining pedagogical variety. Importantly, despite these challenges, students consistently described the tasks as interesting and the assessments as non-threatening, underscoring that once engaged, they appreciated the design of the flipped learning environment. Several reflections emphasised that the first in-person session was crucial, as it enabled the consolidation of knowledge gained independently and provided opportunities for active, collaborative application.

In retrospect, we acknowledged that the course design may have been overly ambitious, particularly regarding the allocation of prose literature materials. To address this, the subsequent year group received the prose content earlier – at the conclusion of the *Early English* module – allowing students to prepare gradually for the third-year *English Children's Literature* course. This adjustment aims at aligning student workload with the expectations of a flipped learning model.

Ultimately, our findings resonate with Olivier's observation (2019) that the core challenge of the Flipped Classroom lies in shifting students from passive reception of content to active engagement through problem-solving, critical thinking, and creative application. In a part-time training context, this transformation is demanding, requiring sustained effort from both instructors and students. Yet, the benefits are substantial: limited contact hours can be used more productively for interactive learning, while preparatory work builds the foundation for autonomy and professional competence. For these reasons, we see the Flipped Classroom approach not as a one-time innovation but as a methodology to be embedded sustainably across teacher education programmes.

Our second hypothesis that implementing storytelling knowledge in real-world projects provides students with greater educational benefits than relying solely on classroom-based contexts has been supported by both student reflections and the quality of the final output, the Activity Bank. The integration of coursework with practical outcomes aligns with findings in recent research, which suggests that project-based tasks connected to authentic contexts strengthen motivation and contribute to professional growth (Balzhan & Carolin, 2022). In our case, the development of the Activity Bank, a 22-page teaching resource for early foreign language education, illustrates

how previous knowledge and experience can be effectively mobilised and expanded when students are engaged in purposeful and collaborative work.

The project highlighted the advantages of drawing on students' accumulated competences in early childhood pedagogy, early English language development, and storytelling techniques. Notably, many of the students were already practicing kindergarten teachers, which enabled them to contribute concrete classroom experiences. Their familiarity with children's needs, interests, and behaviours enriched the design process and helped situate the activities within realistic pedagogical scenarios. This dual identity as students and professionals fostered deeper involvement, since they could see immediate relevance and possible classroom application. The significance of this approach lies in the way professional expertise and academic knowledge were mutually reinforcing, leading to higher levels of confidence and ownership in the learning process.

Motivation was a recurrent theme during the project. Students reported a sense of responsibility and genuine enthusiasm, noting that the stakes felt higher than in traditional coursework. The anticipation of publishing the kamishibai story with an accompanying methodological guide, and of having practicing teachers test the material in a partner kindergarten, created a form of professional accountability. This echoes earlier observations that authentic assessment and the promise of real-life impact can transform learning into a professional rehearsal, where students perceive themselves not merely as learners but as contributors to the field.

Formative assessment in the form of a point system also contributed to students' professional growth. Although all students scored above 100 points – seemingly rendering the system unnecessary – the large number of assignments created variety in the points achieved. This, in turn, provided meaningful feedback and gave students more freedom to follow their own learning paths, thereby reinforcing their sense of responsibility for professional development.

The collaborative process also developed skills beyond the subject domain. Students practiced critical thinking by evaluating activity ideas, communication skills by negotiating with peers, and systemic thinking by connecting individual contributions into a coherent whole. Such skills are closely tied to entrepreneurial competences (Lubinszki, 2022), which are increasingly valued in teacher education as they promote adaptability, initiative, and a readiness for societal engagement. The project thus functioned as a bridge between academic training and broader professional roles, positioning students as reflective practitioners.

Equally important was the role of the instructor as facilitator. Rather than directing the work, instructors provided guidance, feedback, and reassurance, while leaving space for student initiative. This dynamic created a constructive atmosphere of trust, where experimentation and dialogue were encouraged. The relational dimension of the project – instructors and students

working together as partners – proved particularly valuable. It not only enhanced the quality of the final product but also modelled a collaborative professional culture that students can later replicate in their own institutions.

Finally, the structure of the renewed course, with its Flipped Classroom element followed by in-depth collaborative sessions, proved effective for integrating subject knowledge and higher-order application. Students moved from individual preparation to group creation as suggested in Bloom's revised taxonomy of learning objectives (Anderson et al., 2001). The resulting Activity Bank, complete with bilingual methodological guidance, reflected professional-level competence and underscored the validity of our initial hypothesis: that real-world projects anchored in existing methodological knowledge can significantly enhance both the learning process and its outcomes.

It has been proven that the application of action research design is useful in initial teacher education because it democratizes research by ensuring the inclusion of academics, students and external stakeholders. Thus, the innovation process can yield more relevant solutions to real-world problems through supportive tools and active engagement while also fulfilling the principle of equity (Zank, 2020).

Our hypothesis that collaboration with stakeholders in kamishibai publishing fosters innovative approaches in children's literature courses, enhancing pedagogical practices and curricular development has been substantiated by the outputs, outcomes, and impacts of this project, in alignment with the objectives of UBC (Davey, 2018). Entering into a structured partnership with external stakeholders not only provided our students with authentic learning opportunities but also created tangible outcomes that enriched the course content. The bilingual kamishibai tale, the accompanying Activity Bank, and the related teaching materials stand as evidence of how cooperation with external experts can result in innovative resources, while also enhancing students' professional preparedness.

By engaging Csimota Publishing and illustrator Kriszta Kállai Nagy in the co-design and co-delivery of the curriculum, we aligned our course with three recognized UBC activity areas: *shared resources in management*, *curriculum co-design*, and *curriculum co-delivery* (Balzhan et al., 2017). This triangulation between university, publishing industry, and creative arts introduced students to professional practices rarely accessible in traditional teacher training contexts.

The innovation potential of such collaboration became visible through multiple channels. First, the presence of external experts in class created authentic professional encounters. The publisher's representative, for example, not only presented the company's approach to kamishibai but also contextualized it within the broader process of visual storytelling, thereby bridging theoretical knowledge and industry practice. Secondly, the round table at the Early Childhood Education Conference in Vác provided a platform for shared reflection where students, educators, and professional partners

publicly discussed the joint project. This non-formal setting broadened the scope of curriculum co-delivery and reinforced students' sense of professional agency.

Most significantly, collaboration enabled both staff and students to acquire new knowledge and competencies that directly contributed to course innovation. Working with the kamishibai format in a focused way allowed us to experiment with multimodal storytelling in early English language development and to discover new ways of fostering vocabulary growth, narrative comprehension, and sequencing skills. Through this collaboration, we explored how to adapt traditional formula tales to exploit repetitive structures as a pedagogical tool (Pintér, 2017). Furthermore, engagement with the kineikonic mode (McGowan, 2015) deepened our understanding of multimodal meaning-making in teaching contexts. Building on these insights and experiences, we may pursue new directions for applying kamishibai in collaborative story-making and discovery-based learning, which enhances the methodological repertoire of the course and exemplifies the innovative possibilities of the pedagogic kamishibai emphasized by Ishiguro (2018). These advancements clearly illustrate how stakeholder collaboration can become a driver of curricular renewal.

Nevertheless, the process was not without limitations. Students did not participate in the pre-course development of the kamishibai tale, as this phase overlapped with summer and was largely restricted to professional-level editorial and artistic work. More importantly, external partners were reluctant to allow student involvement in the creative processes underlying illustration and publishing. While understandable from a professional standpoint, this constraint limited students' exposure to the full range of design activities and represents an area for improvement in future collaborations.

From the stakeholders' perspective, the project was also fruitful, possessing innovation value. Although for Csimota Publishing, the collaboration did not constitute a radical innovation – as they had previously developed materials with external partners – yet, this was their first venture into producing a teaching aid for early foreign language development, thereby opening new market opportunities. For the illustrator, the project represented a unique professional challenge – linking kamishibai illustration with early language acquisition – which contributed to her artistic growth. Thus, while the degree of novelty varied, all parties gained valuable insights, confirming the mutual benefits of such partnerships.

In sum, the project demonstrates that stakeholder collaboration serves as a fertile ground for course innovation. It generates authentic products, exposes students to professional expertise, and expands the pedagogical repertoire of educators. At the same time, it highlights the need to negotiate carefully the boundaries of collaboration, particularly regarding student involvement in professional creative processes. Taken together, these findings strongly support our hypothesis: stakeholder engagement is a catalyst for course renewal and can significantly enrich teacher education.

Conclusion

Although not all of our ideas and plans were realized during the action research, or not in the way initially envisioned, we consider it worthwhile to retain both the content-related and methodological innovations within the syllabus of the *English Children's Literature* course in the future. We also intend to continue our collaboration with professional partners in the coming academic years. While a new kamishibai tale will not be prepared with Csimota Publishing in the next academic year, further discussions with the publisher are already underway. Finally, the dissemination of the UBC project's final product also remains central: Csimota Publishing has already started distributing the tale, and sales figures will provide an engaging indicator of its wider impact.

Committed to the renewal of initial teacher education, we plan to transfer the accumulated knowledge and the tested methodological innovations from this project into other courses. For example, during our Erasmus semester in the previous academic year, *The Little Red Hen* was integrated into the *Storytelling and Drama* course with international students. Their positive reception underscored the relevance and adaptability of this approach in intercultural educational contexts. In addition, we have begun disseminating our professional experiences at national and international conferences, and we intend to share these practices with other institutions across both public and higher education.

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