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BAGS TO TALK

1. Objectives
- Understand and use everyday vocabulary
- Master a specific lexical field
- Produce in interaction a specific oral to act on others
- Respect the rules of a multi-player game and the turns to speak
- Establish a link with the first languages (translation) through the digital multilingual picture book
- Memorise words and syntactic schemas
- Develop self-help and tutoring skills to reinvest lexicon in context

2. Emergence of practice and theoretical support

An imagier (picture book) is a collection of images (drawings or photos) presenting objects, animals, isolated characters as well as the word that characterises them. It is generally intended for children because it allows them to become aware of the world around them.

At school, picture books are an important tool for lexicon learning by the little ones; they are also commonly used in language learning by allophones. (see picture books in different languages on the CASNAV Strasbourg website).

I use them regularly for the acquisition of vocabulary related to the topics studied. To ensure that these acquisitions can be maintained and reinforced, the picture books are made available to children and stored in cloth bags whose appearance makes it possible to immediately identify the theme of the images they contain.

The child learns to speak in interaction with the adult, in multiple daily interactions for years. One of the difficulties of language learning in the context of a class is that one adult, the teacher, two at best with the ATSEM, must interact effectively with 25 children. So how to overcome this lack of dual relationships? Even favouring certain pupils with greater language needs, it may not be enough. I then tried to imagine activities that are done first with the adult, but that can very quickly be done alone or with the others, at times that will allow to reinvest, to repeat, to train language skills. The bag in autonomous use is supposed to multiply the opportunities of listening and production, promoting peer support and self-learning.

Vocabulary acquisition
Under what conditions is it done? A word is not acquired "isolated": it is memorised in contexts (speeches and situations that have meaning for the child), in syntactic turns, through multiple occurrences, in categorisation exercises, and within a lexical field.

Some excerpts from a document on vocabulary teaching:

"Multiple directions: a unique encounter with the word or a mere evocation are not enough to integrate a new word. It is therefore necessary to approach the vocabulary by crossing several types of learning situations "(p.4)

"Learning words is not just learning isolated words, it is to bring them into collections and categories linked together in a complex network of meanings. Learning a new word implies reorganising the preceding knowledge; it also means understanding that the word can belong to different conceptual categories and designate different realities or have different representations." (p. 4)

source: on the website Eduscol, in a document on vocabulary in nursery school:
https://cache.media.eduscol.education.fr/file/vocabulaire_maternelle/04/6/Ecole_Ressources_VocabEcoleMaternelle_TravaillerVocabulaire_153046.pdf (consulted on 15/01/2018)

Games with rules

A program companion document entitled "Games with rules" is largely devoted to "Games to Talk" (starting on page 13):

"Language is, at many times, present in the game activity: either to recall what has been done, or to consider together what we will do, how, why, with whom. Thus, any gambling situation can be an opportunity to mobilise language in its various dimensions, to allow different uses other than that of ordinary conversation, uses that refer to narrative, explanatory or even argumentative discourse. The school regularly asks pupils to talk about what is not immediately perceptible in the immediate situation and to express themselves more and more explicitly, and thus, to mobilise the language alone to make themselves understood." (p. 13)

source : on the website Eduscol, in a document on the games with rules in nursery school:
https://cache.media.eduscol.education.fr/file/Apprendre/14/6/Ress_c1_jouer_regles_459146.pdf (consulted on15/01/2018)

Peer to peer shoring and deferred and mediatised shoring

The nursery school program has an introductory section entitled: "A school where children will learn together and live together." We can read on page 4:

"The child finds his place in the group, is recognised as a person in his own right and experiences the role of others in the construction of learning.

Numerous researches in language science, sociology, and sciences of education, as well as a 2011 IGEN report, concur to highlight the richness of young children's interactions with each other in informal moments: in free activities in the classroom or in the playground, for example. Research also shows that tutoring between pupils can have very beneficial effects on learning. The bags to talk capitalise on the language learning potential of relationships between children. The bag to talk induces a reinvestment with peers of what one has begun to learn with the teacher. Between them and by playing a game they have chosen, children reiterate a familiar activity, which allows them to appropriate lexicon and syntactic structures through interactions between peers.

3. Implementation

These are collections of images found on the internet or in educational books, sometimes photos, which are laminated and then stored in cloth bags whose appearance allows to deduce what they contain: a man for body parts and clothes, a tree to hold pictures of trees in different seasons, a house to contain pictures of houses around the world, ...

Each bag is used as a game: memory, lotto, guessing game, categorisation game, ... And these games should not constitute a simple reminder of words but they require a syntax setting, or even a discussion (for example about the choice of a category).

The bags are evolving: new images complete them as the year goes by, and the games evolve and become more complex.

They are related to the activities of the class and are a way to remember them. Their usefulness is explained by adults who play with them as frequently as possible to show their interest. They are put in self-service only after being used in small groups many times with the teacher and when she is sure that the children know how to use them.

The bags to talk are often linked to digital books - album-echo, plurilingual picture book or a digital book in which the characteristics of certain objects are compared - posted on the school's blog (see below the example on the bag to talk about animals).

4. Impact

Bags to talk are used a lot by pupils, very rarely alone, mostly in small groups of affinities, and always with the language objectives for which they were created. Moreover, the rules are most often respected, and in all cases, the game turns. Pupils really play together without conflict. In addition, they show creativity, for example by imagining a particular way of storing cards or inventing new rules.

We also see the development of self-help attitudes: some children become aware that they are able to help some of their classmates and then place themselves in a tutoring position. Within the framework of a master's research, I filmed many sequences of activities chosen independently, and we often observe scenes of mutual aid.

Exemples de sacs à parler (see photograph below, bags1, 2, 3 and 4)

1. The bag to talk about animals: this one contains images of animals. It is enriched throughout the year with the animals encountered in readings and activities. We are here at the end of the school year, so it contains a lot of animals. The task has changed, it was to name the images, it became a sorting activity: pupils must distinguish between mammals, birds, insects, fish and others, with the help of sorting sheets (for example the "mammals" sheet shows the following characteristics, with drawings: animals with hair, 4 legs and giving milk to their young).

2. The bag to talk about Claude Ponti's stories: the cloth bag is a book with pages and contains images taken from Adèle's album (Gallimard, 1986), images representing unusual scenes, for example chicks carrying several giant glasses, or riding a giraffe. The images are all placed on the table face up and each child must, in turn, describe an image so that others can guess which one it is; whoever finds it and takes it first wins.

3. The bag to talk about the body and clothes: it features a man and contains two types of pictures: images of body parts and images of clothing. The first ones are stored in the man's head, the last ones in his belly.

4. The bag to talk about colours: this bag contains pictures of different colors. It evolved during the school year: at the beginning it had a limited number of common and easily recognisable objects, even emblematic of a colour, such as the sky and the sea for blue or the sun for yellow, and the task consisted of naming the object and its colour then sorting the images by colour. The quantity of images has considerably increased as new vocabulary was introduced and as topics were covered (vegetables, animals,...). And, at the end of the year, the categorisation requested changed in nature: it is now a question of classifying the images into 4 categories: plants, animals, objects, "neither ... nor", a fourth group which gathers the images which represent something which is neither a plant, nor an animal, nor an object. The interest of the game is that there is not necessarily an exact answer and that it forces pupils to question themselves and justify their choices, skills that they have to build and that are part of the language objectives set by the programs.

4 bags to talk

1	2
3	4

Example of a bag to talk in connection with digital picture books

The bag to talk about animals comes with a digital multilingual picture book with translations of 8 animal names and a digital book that compares animals that look alike. http://mat-cologne-besancon.ac-besancon.fr/category/annee-2016-2017/les-lasses/classe-2/