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"Show and tell": The significance of a children's genre in culture and education

Abstract

The study examines an American children's genre, Show and tell. In the first part it compares the discourse structure of Show and tell to that of the presentation, and shows that they are forms of public speaking, central to assertive American culture. On the other hand, the genres that Hungarian kindergartners and lower graders at school perform seem to indicate that Hungarian culture cultivates verbal art and problem solving instead of open ended tasks.

In the second part, American and Hungarian cultures are compared along four dimensions established by Hall (1976) and Hofstede (2011) to see if the genres studied support the description of national characteristics.

Finally, the possibility of introducing Show and tell and its descendants to early education in Hungary is explored, in order to produce more experienced and better public speakers. The conclusion is that the culture would not welcome these genres, which are therefore suggested to be utilized in extracurricular activities.

*You'd scarce expect one of my age
To speak in public on the stage;
And if I chance to fall below
Demosthenes or Cicero,
Don't view me with a critic's eye,
But pass my imperfections by.
Large streams from little fountains flow,
Tall oaks from little acorns grow.*

(David Everett)

1. Introduction

How old is a person mature enough for public speaking? In Hungary, where the author lives, about 18; in the USA, about 4 years old - at least inferred from the educational practices in the countries in question. Such a difference should not be accidental: this can be examined, correlated and perhaps explained by looking at the national cultures which surround public speaking, as well as analyzing the genres related to it.

The present writing will show that there is a special children's genre called "Show and tell", routinely used in US American (henceforth "American" for convenience) pre-schools (ages 4-5), kindergartens (ages 5-6) and lower grades at primary school, and that it is the predecessor of later versions of public speech (presentations, debates, reports etc.) in the USA. In addition to this, three more research questions will be asked:

1. Will Show and tell and its successors (the "genre set"), or the genres that are in its place in Hungarian culture, be able to show anything about the respective cultures? If yes, what?
2. Will this comparison confirm or refute any research findings about American and Hungarian national cultures?
3. In order to produce more experienced and better public speakers, is it 1) advisable and 2) possible to introduce Show and tell to Hungarian education?

The culture of the USA is commonly considered individualistic, and an individual can represent their interests by speaking up for themselves, that is, by being assertive. A closer look at culture, especially academic practices, can reveal if these or any other values are related to this genre or public speaking in general. In comparison, the genres in place of Show and tell may be telling of Hungarian early education and Hungarian culture as well.

In this paper, public speaking will be defined as a speech event which is "focused around an individual direct [speech](#) to a live [audience](#) in a structured, deliberate manner in order to inform, influence, or entertain them" (Wikipedia). Public speaking dates back to ancient Greece, whose democratic values are expressly cherished by so-called Greek societies in the USA. Public speaking is practiced chiefly in business, politics and academia.

2. Show and tell

While Show and tell is common knowledge in the USA, it is not known in Hungary: even professionals such as teachers of English and people having spent some time in the USA or the UK will probably be unaware of this young children's genre. Show and tell has not been studied at all from a linguistic or cultural perspective. There are several definitions stating that it is an activity in pre-schools during which a child brings in an object and talks about it (e.g. McGraw-Hill 2002). Wikipedia also states that it is known "(i)n the United Kingdom, North America, New Zealand and Australia". At the start of the present study (Fall of 2015), the author learned that in the UK it was not yet used a generation ago but has since spread there from elsewhere (presumably the USA).

Therefore, first I wanted to confirm if these (or more) countries were familiar with this genre. In addition, I wanted to know where Show and tell comes from, and assuming it is an enjoyable activity, I hoped to find out if people really liked it at the time they were young. Another assumption that I wanted to test was

whether Show and tell is related to public speaking and is an early genre to prepare children for it. Very importantly, I also had the impression that American college students were much more confident speakers; they appeared more motivated and active than their peers in Hungary (Szitó 2005). Therefore, I was curious if the people concerned recognized any impact of this early genre at public speaking.

3. Methods

The primary sources for the present writing are as follows. For lack of authentic description and / or scholarly articles, at first I had to rely on personal impressions, personal communication with teachers from USA, GB, Australia, and internet guides and videos for teachers and parents.

The following assumptions were set up:

1. Show and tell, an educational genre for young children, is an early start at public speaking. Therefore, a comparison of Show and tell and a later variety, the presentation will show similar structures to public speaking.
2. People will be aware of it being attached to public speaking.
3. All people shall view it positively.
4. People having Show and tell will be more comfortable at public speaking.

These hypotheses were tested by a brief online questionnaire (Appendix). At the time of writing up the research report (end of 2015), there were 37 respondents.

To complement the questionnaire (reflecting opinions), the assumption that Show and tell is related to public speaking and is an early genre to prepare children for it was also tested by a comparison of Show and tell to several other genres in public speaking. This was done by analyzing the discourse of the aforementioned genres.

Another assumption, that the genre in question is intimately related to values of American verbal culture, just like the genres employed by Hungarian early education, was done by employing critical discourse analysis (CDA). CDA is explained by Bhatia (2015:3) as "an analysis of contexts, over and above that of Genre" as "it involves looking at professional practice, in addition to professional discourse". Therefore, an analysis of contexts of culture and education will be attempted in order "to understand what makes these discursive actions possible and pragmatically successful" (loc. cit.).

4. Survey results

The survey results are not generalizable, due to the low number of respondents (37). However, they confirm or contradict some expectations specified above.

Nearly half of the respondents were American citizens spending their early childhood (3-7) there. Only two in 17 did not meet Show and tell in their early education. Both Canadians, the one Australian and one of the two people spending their early childhood in England had it. Not surprisingly, Hungarian and Japanese respondents did not meet Show and tell in their early childhood education.

Most of the American people liked it (13), but did not think it had a great impact on their lives (nearly half of them chose the middle of the 5-point Likert scale, worded "a moderate amount of impact"). Both Canadian respondents found Show and tell "extremely engaging" (matching 5 on a pre-worded Likert-scale). Those who liked it to any extent mention a variety of activities, the interesting objects that other children had to show, and the excitement of figuring out what to show to others. Respondents were free to comment at the end of the survey, and some Americans who thought Show and tell was useful mentioned how much they enjoyed it and that it prepared them for public speaking.

A Japanese respondent noted, "I wish I could have had Show and Tell session(s) during my childhood. This experience would have given me more confidence in talking in public". This comment precisely reflected my own assumption, but it did not seem to be confirmed: those who had Show and tell did not report more confidence when speaking in public than others who did not meet this genre in their early education. I was also surprised to find that two US respondents were not given the opportunity to "Show and tell".

Once again, these findings are opinions, and even as opinions, they require further investigation. Nevertheless, the data provide some basis to introduce the genre in question.

5. Genre analysis: Show and tell and its successors

According to Bhatia (2015:3), "(g)enre is viewed as an instance of language use in a conventionalised social setting requiring an appropriate response to a specific set of communicative goals of a disciplinary or social institution, and thus giving rise to stable structural forms by imposing constraints on the use of lexico-grammatical as well as discoursal resources". This definition describes the genre of Show and tell as a specific, complex and more or less stable linguistic and cultural artefact, called into existence by communicative goals in the education of young children in North American culture. Bhatia observes that "genres are primarily identified on the basis of text-external factors, such as rhetorical context, communicative purpose, rhetorical strategies, socio-cultural and other institutional constraints, etc." (loc. cit.) and Show and tell indeed receives its name from two of its defining strategies (or constraints): showing an object and telling something interesting about it.

Bhatia also suggests that "text-internal factors, such as lexico-grammatical resources, discourse organisation patterns, etc., often serve as insightful indicators" (loc. cit.). Therefore we shall have a closer look at its discourse structure. In this attempt, we shall use Dell Hymes' (1972) system, known as the ethnography of speaking. "Speaking" here is also an acronym, a "code word" "mnemonically" (Hymes 1972: 65) representing the key factors to be considered, such as Situation (S), Participants (P), Ends (E), Act

sequence (A), Key (K), Instrumentalities (I), Norms (N) and Genres (G) (also in Dornai 2015).

The discourse structure of Show and tell is summarized in Figure 1 below.

Discourse structure: Show & Tell	
Scene: educational Participants: one speaker + audience Key: relaxed, informal	Instrumentalities: an object (toy) Teacher (helping questions)
SPEAKER <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is any child from a familiar small group (up to 15) (aged 4-7) • Posture: stands or sits facing the audience • Act sequence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • speaks to peers non-stop (monologue) for a few minutes • End: may expect & answer questions from Audience 	AUDIENCE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is a small familiar group made up of peers aged 4-7 (and a teacher) • Posture: sits • Act sequence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listens • End: May ask questions

Figure 1.

The discourse structure of Show and tell

Figure 1 above illustrates that Show and tell is used in early education: pre-school (ages 4-5), kindergarten (ages 5-6) and lower grades in primary school (ages 6-7). In Show and tell, a single speaker aged 4-7 from a small familiar group of the same age informally and briefly addresses the rest of the group (the audience), while briefly talking about an object or toy presented. The parents may be involved in the preparation, and the actual performance takes place with some help from the teacher.

The presentation is a genre that replaces Show and tell in later schooling, and its discourse structure will appear highly similar to Show and tell, as Figure 2 shows below.

Discourse structure: Presentation	
Scene: educational Participants: one speaker + audience Key: informal to formal	Instrumentalities: -visuals: pictures, slides, videos -notes for speaker
SPEAKER <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is any student from a small familiar group • Posture: stands or sits facing the audience • Act sequence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • speaks to peers non-stop (monologue) for a few minutes • End: may expect & answer questions from Audience 	AUDIENCE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is a small familiar group made up of peers (and a teacher) • Posture: sits • Act sequence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listens • End: May ask questions

Figure 2

The discourse structure of the presentation

Figure 2 above shows nearly the same structure as in Show and tell, with very minor changes. In the presentation, a single student from a familiar group, usually about the same age, briefly addresses the rest of the group, the audience, while talking about something, possibly using visual aids such as pictures or slides. This takes place during class time. The differences are that students are older, the group may be larger, the object is replaced by visual aids, and the subject as well as the language will become more complex, approaching a more formal style.

Figure 3 below illustrates that a nearly identical general structure underlies public speaking. In this speech event (a higher-level stage than genre), a single individual addresses an audience. There are no specifications of settings and the relations between the speaker and the audience, but the structure is by and large the same: the speaker speaks and the audience listens, which may or may not be followed by a question-answer session.

Discourse structure: Public speaking	
Scene: any Participants: one speaker + audience Key: informal to formal	Instrumentalities: often none, perhaps notes
SPEAKER	AUDIENCE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is any person from a small familiar group • Posture: stands or sits facing the audience • Act sequence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • speaks to peers non-stop (monologue) for a few minutes • End: may expect & answer questions from Audience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is a small familiar group made up of peers (and a teacher) • Posture: variable • Act sequence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listens • End: May ask questions

Figure 3

The discourse structure of public speaking

6. Comparison of public speaking in early schooling: USA vs. Hungary

In an influential article, Miller (1994) points out that "genres serve ... as an index to cultural patterns" (Miller 1994: 39). Thus public speaking genres in early schooling in the USA and in Hungary may be considered as indices to American and Hungarian cultural patterns.

In the USA, during Show and tell an individual child talks to the rest of the class, aided by some objects previously chosen and brought in. The teacher usually specifies in advance what kind of object should be chosen, for example a favorite toy, something you can make yourself, something the size of an apple, or a real and an unreal object (e.g. toy car vs dragon). The frequency and setup may vary as teachers like: they may have Show and tell on a regular basis (e.g. every week) or use it when suitable (e.g. when there is a new student, or at higher grades when a project is finished and reported).

In comparison, when Hungarian preschoolers and kindergartners do public performances, they usually recite poems and chant traditional (folk) rhymes or sing traditional (folk) songs most often accompanied by games. In the distant past, before kindergarten was introduced countrywide, the same rhymes were chanted and the same games were played and sung by children.

It appears from this comparison that the nature of public speaking is different in the two cultures. In fact, the idea of public speaking does not surface during Hungarian compulsory schooling, let alone in these early years. During group sessions together with their teacher, kindergartners (ages 3-6) in Hungary recite poetry or play folk games. Children are occasionally required to perform for an audience of parents, and they rehearse for these occasions. Games are always large group performances. It is reciting poetry that could potentially be done alone; however, exposing a single child to a large audience of parents would be too stressful for the child, and therefore they are put in small groups.

American Show and tell has in the past twenty years spread to Great Britain and is also used in Canada, Australia and New Zealand. It is little known elsewhere in Europe or the rest of the world, including Hungary. In later schooling in the USA, Show and tell transforms into other, structurally similar genres, such as project report and presentation (or essay in the written register), which are all based on open ended tasks where information must be manipulated according to the author's goals.

In a real life example, American second graders were asked to prepare an imaginary figure and send it to another country for an adventure. A girl we shall call Beth made a paper Funny Fred figure and asked her mother to send it to a friend in another country. Funny Fred 'looked around' the country, 'recorded' in a letter what he experienced, and returned to Beth via mail. Children then talked about their figure's experience in class (i.e. gave a presentation) and consequently worked to prepare an exhibition for the school.

Such a project is unlikely to be assigned in any lower-graders in Hungary. As soon as they learn to read, write and count (1st grade, ages 6-7), Hungarian children are normally given problems to be solved (e.g. in Math) and are expected to learn and perform poetry and songs (for Reading, Writing and Singing). Students are traditionally *not* expected to speak freely on a chosen topic during the regular 45-minute class time, and are rarely assigned open ended tasks such as the one described above, even for homework. Instead, they may regularly be graded on the basis of their performance of a brief public oral exam on the material assigned to be learned. This genre is called "felelés" (lit. 'answering', since they need to answer questions from the teacher), introduced around the 2nd grade at primary school. For example, third graders may be asked to tell

the definition of the noun, or describe what the common alder looks like.

Such a comparison of the above mentioned verbal educational practices and genres reveals that learning the rich traditional verbal folklore is emphasized in Hungarian kindergarten education. This feature survives in the genre of "felelés" in primary school, which is giving an account of the material assigned, be it poetry, rules or facts. That is, when a single child is in the position of being able to speak in public, it is the memorization and recall of factual knowledge that is required in "felelés". In the regular school system, Hungarian students are not accustomed to having their own ideas presented in public, unlike their North American peers in Show and tell and its successors.

Not surprisingly, on the occasions when students or teachers from these two countries participate in an exchange program, both tend to feel that Hungarians know a lot more facts than Americans but many are too nervous to speak in public and, on the whole, are unable to use their knowledge to represent their own ideas in public. In other words, Americans may wonder: if Hungarians are so bright, why are they so shy? At the same time, Americans are more confident, outspoken and convincing speakers than Hungarians, yet there may be gaps in their factual knowledge when compared to Hungarians'. As a Hungarian once put it, Americans "say their nothing so convincingly".

Show and tell as a genre suggests that it is important for individuals to be heard in public, and that it is equally important for audiences to be receptive to individuals' ideas. This is clearly connected to individualism, and also assertiveness - a word and concept that I first met in the USA - , as well as the centrality of public speaking in American culture.

In the next section, we shall examine some existing comparisons of Hungarian and American culture, in order to see if the above description of genres of early schooling support any claims about them.

7. Comparison of Hungarian and American cultures

Since the importance of a certain genre is based on a culture's value system, we require a value-based definition of culture, such as Hofstede's (1980-81). Hofstede defines culture as "a collective programming of the human mind that distinguishes the members of one human group from those of another. Culture, in this sense, is a system of collectively held values" (Hofstede 1980-81: 24.).

Cultures can be described and compared along several concepts, whose number and labels vary from study to study. In the present paper they are called dimensions after Hofstede (e.g. 2011). It should be noted, however, that ^[1] Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2010) may use the word "dimension" differently from the sense the word is used in this paper. Their dimensions are statistically validated constructs, based on the mean values and factor analysis of a very large number of answers in questionnaire surveys of about 100 countries. In their definition "(a) dimension groups together a number of phenomena in a society that were empirically found to occur in combination, regardless of whether there seems to be a logical necessity for their going together" (Hofstede et al. 2010: 31).

Two of Hofstede's six dimensions are used in Singhal and Nagao (1993) in the comparison of American and Japanese communication styles. The authors choose four dimensions to capture the differences: individualistic vs collectivistic culture, masculine vs feminine culture, high vs low context culture, and Confucian vs Christian culture. The first two are based on Hofstede (e.g. 1980-1981), and the third is on Hall (1976). Their results show that the difference along these dimensions significantly influences the speakers' attitude toward assertive behavior and their perception of assertiveness.

Similarly to Singhal and Nagao (1993), this paper will make use of Hall's high vs low context dimension. It will also utilize three out of Hofstede's six dimensions: individualism vs collectivism, power distance and uncertainty avoidance. These dimensions were selected according to their perceived relevance to the genre of Show and tell and its successors, as well as their power to grasp the differences in culture and education.

7.1. Hall's high vs low context

Edward T. Hall (1976) discovered that cultures treat the context of speaking differently with regard to how much information context will implicitly carry. This enabled him to arrange cultures on the scale of their tendency of using high-context to low-context communication. He defines them as follows:

A high-context (HC) communication or message is one in which more of the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit part of the message. A low-context (LC) communication is just the opposite; i.e., the mass of information is vested in the explicit code. (Hall 1976: 91)

Hall also notes that "American culture ... is toward the lower end of the scale" (Hall 1976: 91). In low-context cultures, verbal skills are "more necessary and highly prized" (Singhal and Nagao 1993: 4); in high-context cultures "nonverbal aspects of communication" (loc.cit) are valued. *Assertiveness* is a central characteristic of effective communication in the low-context culture of the USA, but less so in high-context cultures such as Japan (Singhal and Nagao 1993).

According to Falk Bánó (2014), Hungary is also a high context culture, where much of the information and the rules are understood and therefore need not be verbalized. In a high context culture, the purpose of communication is primarily to form relationships, not to give information. In order to understand high context messages, contextual information is required. For instance, instructions about how to find a certain location in a Hungarian city often contain the element where a *landmark building used to be*. In the sense Hall employs the term, the whereabouts of landmarks, and worse even, the *past* whereabouts of landmarks, count as non-explicit, contextual information, thus useless for the outsider.

American culture is low context, where rules are not understood readily and therefore must be spelled out. Low context messages provide information mainly. As opposed to the irrelevance of Hungarian instructions

specified above, Americans behave effectively in a similar situation. For instance, a party invitation may routinely be accompanied by detailed instructions on how to find the host's house.

In a low-context culture assertiveness is also highly rated. The presence of Show and tell and its successors in American education suggest that information about something interesting can and should be passed by an individual to an audience, even at a very young age. When an individual faces an audience and is supposed to talk to it, this individual must be confident enough to believe that their views are worthy of attention. Also, when an idea is questioned or disputed, the speaker must be able to defend it or else acknowledge shortcomings. Assertiveness appears to be related to the centrality of public speaking in American culture. In Hungary, learning traditional songs and games, and reciting poetry suggest that appreciation of verbal art, traditional or not, can and should be taught from a very young age. Playing group games and pair-choosing games also strengthen bonds among children. None of these activities are aimed at informing or asserting. It must, however, be noticed that verbal skills are not de-emphasized in order to allow context to carry the information. Verbal skills are actually highly valued. When someone faces an audience and decides to entertain it by reciting verbal art, they must be able to perform it properly. Yet this is not about assertiveness. In fact, the word "assertiveness" is only known in professional circles such as psychology or business training in Hungary.

7.2. Hofstede's dimensions

Geert Hofstede's intercultural research compares about 100 national cultures along six dimensions. Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2010: 31) define dimension as "an aspect of a culture that can be measured relative to other cultures". The following three dimensions have been chosen for our purposes:

1. *Power Distance*, related to the different solutions to the basic problem of human inequality;
2. *Uncertainty Avoidance*, related to the level of stress in a society in the face of an unknown future;
3. *Individualism* versus *Collectivism*, related to the integration of individuals into primary groups...

(Hofstede 2011: 8, emphasis in original)

The USA and Hungary are theoretically comparable along these dimensions. In the 3rd edition of the Hofstede study (Hofstede et al. 2010), Hungary appears in the database. However, the samples in the Central European region, including Hungary, consist of young university students, and therefore the data "are not directly comparable to" the IBM survey (Kolman, Noorderhaven, Hofstede and Dienes 2003: 6). In spite of this, comparisons have been made with statistically manipulated data, like in Figure 4 below.

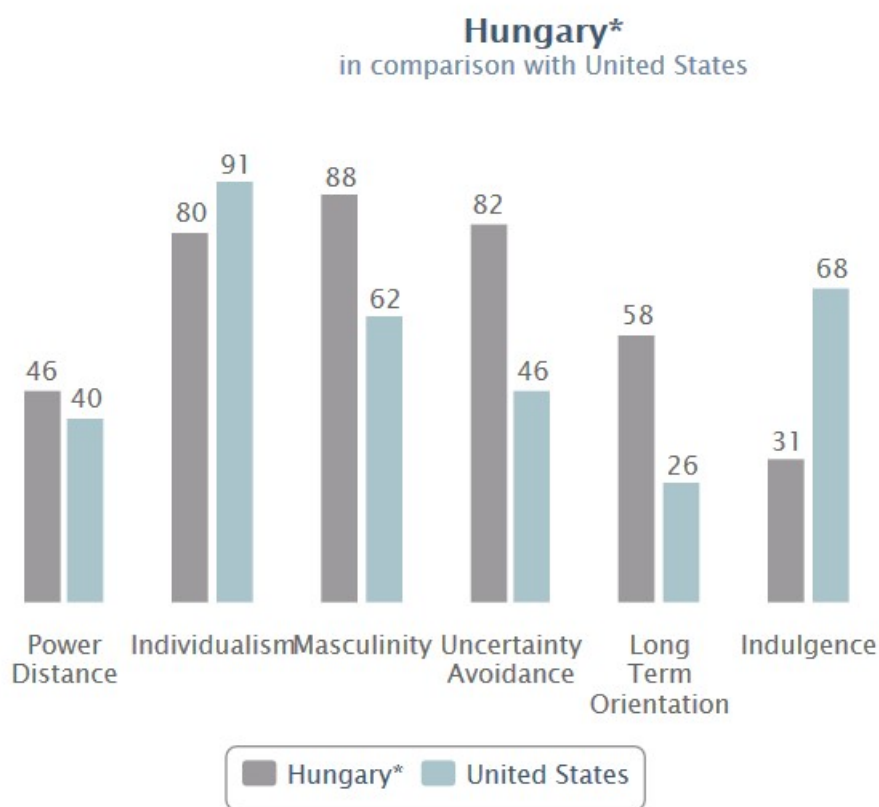


Figure 4

Hungary in comparison with the USA according to the Hofstede Institute

Figure 4 shows that the USA scores very high on individualism, relatively low on power distance as well as uncertainty avoidance. Based on this figure, Hungarian culture would be slightly higher in power distance (46, +6%), relatively less individualistic (80, -9), and very strongly uncertainty avoiding (82, +36). However, as mentioned before, Hungarian data are skewed and are not in the original study. The values on the first two dimensions contradict common sense. Falk Bánó (2014: 19) claims that in fact, "compared to British and American cultures especially, Hungarian culture tends to be considerably higher power distance, more collectivist, ... high-context, ... and can be characterized by a higher uncertainty avoidance level".

7.2.1. Power distance

According to Wursten and Jacobs (2013),

Power distance is the extent to which less powerful members of a society accept that power is distributed unequally. In high power-distance cultures everybody has his/her rightful place in society. Old age is respected, and status is important. In low power-distance cultures people try to look younger and powerful people try to look less powerful. (Wursten and Jacobs (2013: 7)

Power distance appears in education primarily as teachers' and students' relative status to one another. The main characteristics are summarized in Table 1.

In American relatively low power distance education, students and teachers are near equals. Therefore, students are expected to take initiatives and be active in the learning process. Show and tell perfectly matches this scene: students are involved while the teacher is only helping. Throughout their education, American students are much more active and communicative than Hungarian students. In Hungarian higher power distance education, typically teachers take initiatives; also the quality of learning depends on teacher excellence, thus good teachers are popular among parents and students. The genre "felelet" (mini-exam) suits this framework.

Low power distance education	High power distance education
Students treat teachers as equals.	Students give teachers respect, even outside class.
<i>Teachers expect initiatives from students in class.</i>	Teachers should take all initiatives in class.
<i>Students speak up, ask questions, may criticize teacher.</i>	Teachers are never criticized.
Teachers are experts who transfer impersonal truths.	Teachers are gurus who transfer personal wisdom.
When child misbehaves, parents often side up with child.	When a child misbehaves, the teacher expects parents to set them right.
Quality of learning depends <i>on two-way communication</i> and student excellence.	Quality of learning depends on teacher excellence.
Educational policy focuses on secondary schools.	Educational policy focuses on universities.

Table 1: Education in low power distance and high power distance cultures, based on Hofstede et al. 2010: 69-71.

7.2.2. Individualism vs collectivism

Societies "in which the interest of the group prevails over the interest of the individual" (Hofstede et al. 2010: 90) are called collectivist; and "societies in which the interests of the individual prevail over the interests of the group" (Hofstede et al. 2010: 91) are considered individualist.

The USA is the most individualist society on the Hofstede scale (91), and this is intuitively true. Hungary, however, is more collectivist than shown in Figure 4, according to Falk Bánó (2013).

The basic tenets of education in individualist vs collectivist cultures are summarized in Table 2. The most characteristic feature is described succinctly in Hofstede et al. (2010) as follows:

A typical complaint from such teachers [who move from an individualist culture to a more collectivist culture to teach, SzJ] is that students do not speak up, not even when the teacher puts a question to the class. For the student who conceives of him- or herself as part of a group, it is illogical to speak up without being sanctioned by the group to do so. If the teacher wants students to speak up, the teacher should address a particular student personally. (Hofstede et al. 2010: 117)

Individualist education	Collectivist education
<i>Students will speak to teacher in class.</i>	<i>Students are quiet when addressed by teacher.</i>
Student discussion without teacher in larger groups.	<i>Students talk only to small in-group peers when without teacher.</i>
Teacher is expected to treat students individually and equally, independently of their background; anything else immoral.	Teacher is expected to treat students as part of a group; in-group members (i.e. students from the same ethnic or family background) should be treated better than others.
Group formation is based on friendships as well as skills and task.	Group formation is within in-group.
Confrontations and open discussion of conflicts are often considered salutary.	Harmony and maintaining face reign supreme; confrontations and conflicts should be avoided; offenders are "shamed".
The purpose of learning is to know how to learn.	The purpose of learning is to learn how to do things.
Diploma provides a sense of achievement and improves economic worth.	Diploma provides social acceptance and higher status.

Table 2: Education in individualist and collective cultures, based on Hofstede et al. 2010: 117-119.

7.2.3. Uncertainty avoidance

Uncertainty avoidance is "the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations" (Hofstede 2005: 167). The index (UAI) is low for the USA (46) and high for Hungary

(82). This is accepted by Falk Bánó (2014) as well. Weak uncertainty avoidance Americans tend to find difference and the unexpected curious, they are more relaxed and tolerant, express less emotion and aggression, whereas strong uncertainty avoidance Hungarians tend to find the unexpected and the different threatening, they are more stressed and intolerant, express more of their emotions and are more neurotic.

Relevant to education, the primary difference is that weak uncertainty avoidance American students are used to open-ended tasks and are ready to participate in discussions, whereas strong uncertainty avoidance Hungarian students tend to feel uncomfortable when they are asked to discuss something; they also prefer to find the right answer to problems. These and other details are summarized in Table 3.

Weak uncertainty avoidance society and education	Strong uncertainty avoidance society and education
Intellectual disagreement does not separate friends.	Intellectual disagreement separates friends (students and professors).
<i>Students are comfortable with open-ended learning situations and concerned with good discussions.</i>	<i>Students are comfortable in structured learning situations and concerned with the right answers.</i>
<i>Teachers may say, "I don't know."</i>	<i>Teachers are supposed to have all the answers.</i>
Use of plain language to explain difficult issues is respected.	Use of cryptic academic language is respected.
Results are attributed to a person's own ability.	Results are attributed to circumstances or luck.
<i>Teachers involve parents in learning.</i>	<i>Teachers inform parents about learning.</i>
Inductive learning; practical issues	Deductive learning; grand theories
There is fast acceptance of new features such as mobile phones, e-mail, and the Internet.	There is a hesitancy toward new products and technologies.

Table 3: Education in weak vs strong uncertainty avoidance cultures, based on Hofstede et al. 2010: 205-209.

Relative to Show and tell and its successors, they usually constitute open-ended tasks or are related to such tasks. The end part also invites the audience for participation.

The comparison of American Show and tell and Hungarian poetry recitals also illuminate that in the first, parents are involved in the task, while in the other, parents are informed about what the children have

learned. Hofstede et.al. (2010) write about this phenomenon as follows:

In cultures with strong uncertainty avoidance, parents are sometimes brought in by teachers as an audience, but they are rarely consulted. Parents are lay persons, and teachers are experts who know. In countries with weak uncertainty avoidance, teachers often try to get parents involved in their children's learning process: they actively seek parents' ideas. (Hofstede et al. 2010: 206)

To summarize this section, the genres in American and Hungarian early education support the selected cultural dimensions set up by Hall (1976) and Hofstede (2011).

8. Introducing a new discourse genre?

In his influential writing, Swales (1997) cautions against the power of English against other languages. He describes it as a *Tyrannosaurus rex*, "a powerful carnivore gobbling up the other denizens of the academic linguistic grazing grounds" (Swales 1997: 374). It is clearly far more challenging to function in English in EAP, as the writer of the present study, a nonnative English speaker-writer, can attest to it. At the same time, "it is unhelpful to regard EAP teachers as the unwitting agents of colonialist reconstruction" (Hyland 2006: 29).

If a genre has been organically formed in one culture and proves to be a successful predecessor of academic prose (either oral, such as the talk, presentation or the written genres), it should be considered a discourse genre, which is learned through training. Then one may ask if this genre may be considered a "good practice" in education (cf. Wursten and Jacobs 2013) which can be borrowed and introduced elsewhere.

Since Show and tell is used in early education, it can be considered a discourse genre. According to Swales (1990), a discourse genre "comprises a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes" (Swales (1990: 58). As users learn how to utilize a discourse genre, they become members of a discourse community maintaining the genre. Members of such [discourse] communities typically join by training (Swales 1990) (as opposed to speech communities, whose members join by birth).

Importing Show and tell and its successors would serve the goal of building the communicative competence specific to academic genres. Although the involvement of the concept of genre in competence theory has not yet been solved (Sztó 2006), it obviously forms a part. In practice, the genres related to academic prose become increasingly important towards the end of compulsory education, and are substantial at the college level everywhere in the world, including Hungary; therefore, their acquisition should be ensured. In practice this would mean the introduction of the "genre set" at a sufficiently early time, e.g. Show and tell in the lower grades at primary school, in order to provide an appropriate amount of practice for the genre set to be integrated into communicative competence.

The present educational practice in Hungary is that academic prose is introduced at the college level, which seems to be rather late. At this stage only students with suitable personality traits (for instance extroversion), excellent language skills, and also with devotion to the subject studied - a rare match - will be able to acquire good academic presentation skills. Even fewer will be able to write a good academic essay. Learning a new genre set more or less means adding new dimensions to language competence, especially on the sociolinguistic and discourse levels (Sztó 2006: 360). Moreover, for students majoring English or other languages, this is made far more complex by an entirely new foreign language register to be mastered, in addition to culturally different structures and conventions (c.f. Kaplan 1966, Connor 2013).

It appears from the above that Show and tell as a discourse genre and its successors would be useful to be introduced earlier in Hungarian schools if we were to solve the problem of poor performance in college-level academic prose related genres, such as presentation, research proposal, essay and thesis. Presentations and essays would also enhance the learning process at high school, inasmuch as it requires utilizing information to one's own purposes.

There would be subtler yet more profound gains from introducing Show and tell to schoolers at a young age, and these are probably far more important than performance at school or college. To use Miller's illuminating wording, "(w)hat we learn when we learn a genre is not just a pattern of forms or even a method of achieving our own ends. We learn, more importantly, what ends we may have" (Miller 1994: 38). In Show and tell, children learn that they are able to talk about something alone; their individual ideas are worth spreading to their peers (and gradually, to a larger audience); and this boost self-confidence. The genre also develops descriptive language. Besides, children are forced to think about the specific ways to make their talk appealing to the audience, so they will have to learn to see the world from a different point of view than their own. Changing perspectives offers them invaluable opportunity for psychological development. Finally, they will learn the basics of specific techniques to maintain contact with groups of people formally (e.g. posture, eye contact, looking for feedback), which can become a routine before the content turns too difficult.

The final question is whether it would be possible to introduce a new set of genres in Hungarian education. Wursten and Jacobs (2013: 15) warn that countries will not introduce "new ideas if these ideas are not likely to fit in the context of their values".

The analysis above has shown that Hungarian and American educational cultures are different in at least four dimensions, and that Show and tell and its successors are suited to the American, but not the Hungarian, values and norms along those dimensions.

Considering the characteristics of instruction at Hungarian public (i.e. non-private and non-foundational) schools as well, changes are unlikely to be welcome. Restricted class time and space, a central curriculum to be followed calls for traditional frontal teaching (e.g. Dornai 2005), and this is against flexibility, teacher or student initiatives, and restricts opportunity for peer communication (Dornai 2005). Also, Hungary is a high power distance culture, and changes in its education usually come "from the top". Yet such reforms initiated "from the top" have never affected the basic "Prussian" characteristics of instruction, despite a large amount

of criticism from all participants in education. Judging from these characteristics, Show and tell and its descendants are unlikely to be introduced to Hungarian public education, although they may be utilized in extracurricular activities popular in schools.

9. Summary and conclusion

The present writing demonstrated that the genres of Show and tell and the presentation are forms of public speaking, central to assertive American culture. Also, the genres that young children perform were claimed to indicate that Hungarian culture cultivates verbal art and problem solving instead of open ended tasks.

The comparison of these educational genres and their successors was followed by a comparison of American and Hungarian cultures along four dimensions. The cultures differed along these dimensions, and the genres matched the description of the respective cultures as well as their educational characteristics. This supported Hall's high vs low context dimension, and three of Hofstede's dimensions.

Finally, the differences between the two cultures and educational practices were found to be working against the introduction of Show and tell and the presentation as discourse genres at an earlier stage of schooling than at present. In order to produce more experienced and better public speakers, these genres are suggested to be utilized in extracurricular activities.

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Appendix

The online questionnaire

Questions 5 and 10 are open ended, the rest are forced-choice questions.

Q4, Q7, Q8 and Q9 employ pre-worded five-point Likert scales.

<input type="checkbox"/> PAGE 1: Your Show and Tell Experience 
<input type="checkbox"/> Q1: In what country do you currently reside?
<input type="checkbox"/> Q2: In what country did you have most of your early education (3-7 years)?
<input type="checkbox"/> Q3: Did you have a Show and Tell session in your early childhood education?
<input type="checkbox"/> Q4: IF YES: Did you find Show and Tell engaging?
<input type="checkbox"/> Q5: IF YES: What did you like most about Show and Tell?
<input type="checkbox"/> Q6: IF YES: What did you dislike most about Show and Tell?
<input type="checkbox"/> Q7: IF YES: How much of an impact do you feel Show and Tell sessions had in your childhood education?
<input type="checkbox"/> Q8: How often do you talk in public or to groups?
<input type="checkbox"/> Q9: Generally speaking, are you comfortable speaking in public / to groups of people?
<input type="checkbox"/> Q10: Do you have any other comments, questions, or concerns?