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# EDUGATE – Multilingual teaching in early childhood education and care

*Project number: 2016-1- IT02-KA201- 024294*

## O4 Didactic Material





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## **Introduction to Modules of Language Acquisition**

In the current document we present a series of didactic methodologies for children inspired by the scientific literature about monolingual and multilingual child language development and implemented by the ECEC teachers and educators that took part to the EDUGATE Project.

The activities were created to offer practical didactic methodologies for teachers and educators working in bilingual schools as well as in multilingual classrooms. Activities are designed to consolidate and enhance linguistic development in three areas: L1 (first language) enhancement; Foreign Language enhancement; Communication development.

The didactic methodologies were created by analyzing and adapting existing research data to enable children to attain proficiency in their first language and/or in a foreign language. Regarding multilingual children that use a language at home different from the language of school instruction, the aim of the current activities is to allow them to maintain and develop their multilingual skills, promoting both their L1 as well as the majority language spoken at school. First, some activities are meant to train their L1, whereas others aim at consolidating the language of instruction in order to allow children to better learn academic subjects, achieve their goals, and adequately use their linguistic competence to advance in further education. In order to prevent the exclusion of children speaking a minority language, current methodologies encourage to value other languages (also the less spoken ones) and convey that learning languages is fun and that knowing more languages has great value.

In the current project the ECEC teachers and educators had the chance to test all the didactic materials, adapting them to their needs. Therefore, for each methodology we present one or more examples of practical items that were adapted by the ECEC teachers and educators and tested in their classrooms. Additionally, it is important to recall that all the didactic methodologies we are proposing, might be further developed and modified by the teachers/educators according to their working context.

The document is organized as follows: we will first present the three main modules regarded as the general aims of the current didactic methodologies. We then report seven didactic materials that were inspired by the scientific literature and in particular in language acquisition research and in language-based pedagogy (e.g., translanguaging). For each didactic material we add one or more activities implemented by the ECEC teachers and educators in the local context. For each of them, we include the age group for which the activity is suitable for as well as the description of the procedure.

In general, the activities can be easily integrated into the educational daily routine of the kindergarten and classes in schools. Note furthermore that each methodology can be applied to one or more modules



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depending on the content/use each partner will attribute to it. That is, each teacher might consider modifying and adapting the methodology not only with respect to the language s/he is using, but also regarding the age, the type of class, the number of children s/he is working with.



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## 1.1 L1 Linguistic enhancement and screening activities

There are two basic language skills necessary to acquire an adequate verbal competence during the preschool years: oral comprehension and oral production. Basic language skills include also the ability to interact with peers and adults as a fundamental language skill that should be developed.

Additionally, during this period, it is also important an early identification of language problems in order to plan educational activities and clinical intervention in order to support those children who show a delay.

We will now discuss the linguistic areas important for the L1 enhancement.

### Phonology

In the early stages of language acquisition, the ability to (progressively) master a repertoire of the sounds of a specific language is one of the most important verbal skills in the child verbal development. For this reason, it is very important that the teacher consistently develops exercises to consolidate and reinforce the ability to discriminate between the sounds of a language as well as the ability to produce them.

### Vocabulary

Developing a rich and adequate vocabulary repertoire permit not only to develop more sophisticated ways of communication with peers and adults but will also allow the child to enhance comprehension. This is further important when the child learn to read, as he/she already possess a vocabulary of oral forms to which he/she can add the orthographic forms. Therefore, the vocabulary proposed by the teacher should be stimulating for students and related to their life. It is necessary to keep in mind a difference between:

**Active vocabulary** that is words regularly used by the speaker to communicate. Number of words in the active lexicon is always numerically lower than in the passive vocabulary, in the adult as well as in the child.

**Passive vocabulary that is** words not regularly used by the speaker to communicate, but whose meanings are known, since they have already been heard. Passive vocabulary is always numerically higher than active vocabulary, in the adult as well as in the child.

### Morphology and Grammar

The morphological and morphosyntactic aspects of the language are the basic skills to produce complex words and sentences. It is therefore necessary for the teacher to acquire a basic knowledge of the grammar of their language, in order to be able to foresee possible difficulties or advantages that students may encounter during their development. Therefore, training syntactic competences since a very early age is crucial in order to achieve an adequate communicative competence. In general the exercises about syntax appear to be more effective if preceded by the use of the structure (passive, relative clause) to be learned.



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In other words, reflection should come after such structures have already been internalized as communicative behavior.

**Pragmatic**

The pragmatic dimension (the socially competent use of language in the context) is essential in order to achieve an effective communication. It may sometimes even constitute a compensation of linguistic processing difficulties. Therefore it is important that teachers value the effective and appropriate use of language in order to communicate even when it contains some phonological/lexical/syntactic errors.

To sum up in the current module we aim to include didactic methodologies that will allow:

- To promote L1 linguistic development in terms of language sounds, vocabulary, grammar and social interaction;
- To assess L1 linguistic competence of children in order to identify a delay in reaching the typical milestones of language and communication development.

In order to achieve these aims we propose some playful activities to promote and evaluate basic linguistic abilities in L1 children, as well as in the L2 for immigrant children. Recall indeed that learning an L2 for an immigrant child, speaking a minority language, means learning the majority language spoken in the country where s/he is living and the language of instruction.

Such methodologies might help children to exercise their linguistic abilities before literacy skills are introduced, or, if the delay is consistent, to refer the child to the services caring for speech and language disorders. In addition, in a multilingual classrooms such activities might provide additional information about the linguistic competence of immigrant children in their L2.



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## 1.2 Foreign Language (FL) Learning

Foreign language learning refers to the learning of a language that is neither a minority or a majority language in the learning context (e.g., English learned in Italy). Learning another language since a very early age might have many beneficial effects on the child cognitive development. Knowing (or simply being exposed to another language) leads to greater sensitivity to languages and to a better metalinguistic awareness: several studies have shown that children learning another language beyond their L1 demonstrate a greater ability to understand language structure and its internal functioning. Additionally, they show a better competence in the manipulation of sounds and words in comparison with monolinguals.

According to the literature, FL learning is a multi-staged process (Cummins, 1989), and therefore it is important to observe at which stage a child is in his developmental process when proposing a specific didactic activity.

1. **Comprehension period.** The learner has a (reduced) receptive vocabulary, s/he is not able to produce any spoken language, except for some short repetition of what s/he has just heard. Comprehension is based on contextual activities. This period can last several months or even years depending on the quality and quantity of exposure of the child to the FL. Most of the didactic activities that we will propose/implement in the current module might allow the learner to overcome this period and start communicating in the new language.
2. **First spontaneous (oral) production.** The learner has a little receptive and expressive vocabulary and can produce sentences of at least two words. Children might be able to produce short sentences, but not always in the proper way. Didactic materials to be used in such a case should promote oral vocabulary and grammar consolidation both in comprehension and in production.
3. **Speech emergence.** Children can produce short sentences and are able to understand simple instructions or short stories, answer very simple questions, repeat and/or complete sentences. At this stage an interesting didactic activity might involve active retelling of stories using another point of view.
4. **FL fluency:** The learner can use and fully master complex sentences both in oral production and comprehension. It is possible that children show the ability to transfer the strategies learned in their L1 to the new language. In such a case it is possible to propose tasks that involve the use of narratives.

To sum up, according to the above-mentioned process, receptive skills are always developed before production in the learning process of a new language. For this reason the teacher should avoid to demand an excessive effort in oral production as it can be frustrating for the learner. Furthermore, in the early phases of learning, it is necessary to make FL learning as similar as possible to the acquisition of L1.



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In general this perspective points to the key role of linguistic education at school to learn a foreign language. It is important to note that in a structured learning situation such as a classroom, there is only a limited amount of time dedicated to the foreign language. Another problem might be that the quality of the input is reduced. That is, in contrast to the naturalistic L2 acquisition context, in the FL context the only language model is represented by the teacher. Therefore the child is exposed to a limited input.

Additionally, one should also consider that the teacher might be a non-native speaker of the foreign language. However, it must be emphasized that communication in the FL with other learners, producing imperfections in pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary cannot reduce the language competence of a child: language is not learned through imitation only. Thus, learners are not likely to 'imitate' each other's errors, since they are engaged in their own acquisition process.

Therefore the aims of the current module are:

- To understand child language development in terms of their receptive and productive skills in a FL;
- To promote the receptive skills in a FL based on sounds, words and sentences of the FL;
- To consolidate productive skills in a FL.



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## **1.3 Communication, cultural and identity development**

The third module is concerned with didactic methodologies aiming at facilitating communication among children, beyond their ethnic/cultural/linguistic origins. Note indeed that communication skills might help in constructing a child's social identity in the community.

The presence of more than one language in a child implies the coexistence of more cultures. As a consequence, the multilingual child will develop a more complex identity. In addition, the presence of a multilingual child in the classroom might have an impact for the whole class: realizing that the same object might be named in a different way by his/her classmate might help children to develop a greater linguistic and meta-linguistic awareness. Ideally, it will further help children to develop the ability to see things from a different perspective and to understand different points of view.

Therefore, promoting the L1 of immigrant children may be not only beneficial to the development of their L2, but will help every child in the classroom to improve their meta-linguistic skills (for instance, learning that words are labels and vary across languages), and to learn a positive attitude toward any language spoken in the group.

Therefore, maintenance of the minority language (or native language) spoken by a child in the classroom is important for several reasons. On the one hand, it is fundamental for the multilingual child's identity in order to maintain relations with his/her country of origin; on the other, it is also important for monolingual classmates to be able to see things from a different perspective, developing tolerance towards different views, ideas and traditions.

Aims of the current module:

- To value the cultural aspects of linguistic diversity, highlighting the contribution of every single student (and his/her culture) in the classroom;
- To promote the different communication styles that may belong to the various languages/cultures represented in the classroom in order to avoid communication problems;
- To increase sensitivity about different languages among students.



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## Phonemic awareness

### 2.1 Presentation

Phonemic repertoires of different languages can be diverse, in terms of number and types of phonemes. For instance, English has 10 vowels and 21-24 consonants (numbers may vary in the different varieties of English). Italian has 7 vowels and 23 consonants.

Despite these cross-linguistic differences in the sounds repertoires, in all the languages since the very the first months of life, the child naturally and without effort acquires the native language, building up a phonetic repertoire, that is based on the mother tongue (assuming that the child is exposed only to one language). This means that, when we learn our native language, we unconsciously categorize the variety of perceived sounds into a series of categories that are specific for a certain language.

During the preschool years, the sensitivity that children start to demonstrate for the sound structure of language is called Phonological awareness. Such ability involves the competence to detect and manipulate sounds in spoken language while separating them from meaning (i.e., if a child is aware of the fact that the word *caterpillar* is longer than the word *train*, one might be confident that s/he is able to distinguish a word from its meaning). Therefore, children who can detect and manipulate sounds in speech are phonologically competent.

Phonological awareness appears to be particularly crucial with respect to reading and writing acquisition. Indeed, children who are unaware that speech is made up of small sounds, have difficulties in learning to read. The ability of a child to reflect on language itself, specifically the sounds of language, supports the child's learning of the written code.

For this reason training phonemic awareness during the preschool years plays a key role in education, as such ability is related to later success in reading and writing.

### 2.2 Description of the activities

#### *Sounds detection*

Use a computer to play some of the sounds such as: Telephone, applause, cat. Make or play these sounds and let the children listen. Then teach the child to raise his hands when they hear only a specific sound (for instance alarm).

Play the relevant sound; children should raise their hands. Now introduce another sound (for instance telephone ringing). When children hear that sound, children should put their hands down.

Child raises his/her hand while a specific sound is played, while s/he puts his/her hands down if another sound is played. This introduces him/her to the practice of noticing a particular sound and discriminate it from another similar sound.



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Use a couple of clear sounds (or more, depending on the age of the children) until the child has mastered the activity. Instead of hands raising, children might be involved in different movements such as touching their nose, shaking their foot, etc. (it should be a playful activity). Importantly, recall that the aim is that children should be able to discriminate between two (or more) similar sounds, as denoted by their behavioral response.

#### *Phoneme detection*

A similar activity that might be more linguistically-tricky consists in playing other types of sounds, namely linguistic sounds, that differ with respect to a specific phonetic difference (for example, place of articulation or voicing). To do so, it is important to find in each language a set of “minimal pairs words”. What is a minimal pair? In phonology, minimal pairs are pairs of words that differ in only one phonological element, a phoneme, and have distinct meanings. For example, in English there are minimal pairs of words based on the alternation p-b:

pig big

path bath

pug bug

Now, you can apply the sound detection game to this new set of stimuli (for instance: “Raise your hands when you hear a word starting with *p*”).

Note: you can expand such task in many other ways. For instance, you can ask children to reproduce/imitate the word before they raise (or not) their hands. Or you can teach children to provide a different behavioral response (clapping their hands or stand up) with respect to different sounds. Recall the aim must be that children elaborate linguistic sounds in a competent way and demonstrate to the teacher they are able to discriminate them. To find the relevant phonemes of a given language you can consult books for teaching the given language (for example, French phonemes).

Think of a sound that is particularly difficult in a language (for instance, that is acquired late along the course of development). Think about how your students could discriminate a sound from other potentially similar sounds in a language.

Note that the same activity can be applied to FL classes too. For instance, here it is a comprehensive lists of minimal pairs sounds that can be used to organize FL classes in English:

[https://www.speech-language-therapy.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=134:mp2&catid=9:resources&Itemid=108](https://www.speech-language-therapy.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=134:mp2&catid=9:resources&Itemid=108)



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## ***A. Phonological Awareness in L1 (proposed by ECEC teachers and educators of Slovenia)***

### **Age and group:**

4-6 years old (4 up to 8 children)

### **Description:**

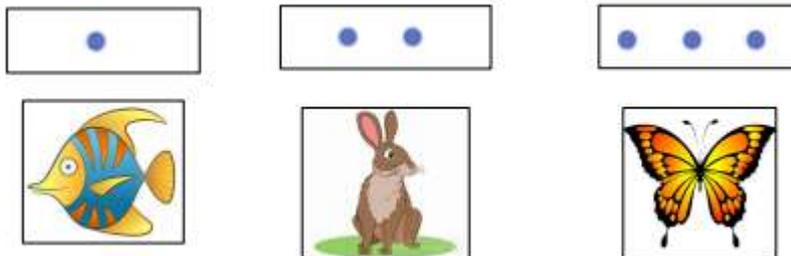
*Words length:* Teacher uses a set of different pictures depicting a series of words of different length and says each word aloud. Children show in behavioral ways (jumping; clapping hands) if the word is long or short. Examples: children show the length of a word with their hands; children show the length of a word by jumping (they jump as far as they think the word is long);

Children show the length of a word by choosing different objects; they have a long and a short object in front of them e.g. ribbons, toy snakes, strings, toy trains etc. and they choose the appropriate one.

4 – 6 years old might be further asked to show the length of their names with string and ribbons.

*Recognizing rhyming words in a FL (English):* Teacher uses a set of pictures that children have learnt before, for example words for colours. Children sit in a circle and teacher puts the pictures in the middle of the circle. Teacher gives one or two examples for rhyming words (e.g. HEAD – RED, HELLO – YELLOW). Then teacher says a word and asks children to find a rhyming colour (QUEEN – GREEN, JACK – BLACK, NIGHT – WHITE, TRUE – BLUE).

*Detecting the number of syllables in L1 and in a FL (English):* Teacher uses a set of different pictures and pronounces each word aloud. When teacher says each word s/he also shows a number of syllables by clapping hands (we can also stomp the feet, click fingers, jump etc.). Then teacher uses 3 pictures with one, two or three dots and puts them on the floor. Children say the words, show the number of syllables and put the pictures next to the right number of dots.





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***B: Playing with animal sounds to increase linguistic awareness (proposed by teachers/educators during the LTTA meeting in Piacenza).***

**Age and group:**

4-6 years old (4 up to 8 children)

**Description:** Instead of playing words, or other linguistic strings, show to children a video reproducing different languages versions of animal sounds. Children hear different language versions of animal sounds. Children will be made aware of the different ways that languages use to represent animal sounds (for example, the dog's sound in Italian is BAU BAU, in Finnish HAU HAU, in English WOOF and WANG in Chinese).

Furthermore, children might be able to provide a behavioral response (clapping hands or jumping) when similar language sounds are played (e.g., the dog's sound in Finnish and Italian are similar but not in English or Chinese).

Immigrant children might be asked to tell the sounds animals make in their own languages, and ask their classmates to repeat them. This activity might become an opportunity for the teacher/educator to talk about the different ways languages use to express the same content, and therefore to widen linguistic awareness in children.



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## 3. Narratives

### 3.1 Introduction

Narratives are common across different contexts, cultures, and times. Narratives can be seen as a mean to convey culturally significant information since the very first years of life. According to the literature, children have some notion of what a story is by the age of 3. Given their frequency, narratives provide an excellent way to promote children's spontaneous language, and reflect distinctive structural and linguistic changes through cultures. Thus, narratives provide an advantageous way for promoting, evaluating multiple aspects of linguistic development in monolingual children not only in their L1, but also in a FL or in their L2.

Linguistically, producing a story involves lexically encoding information about the events, their temporal relations, about the characters, their goals, their mental states. Additionally, children must make inferences to link events, to link characters. Finally, telling a story is a social activity, that places the narrator (an adult or a child) in relation to its audience (children or other peers). Beyond the macro-structures aspects of which we have just talked, narrating a story involves micro-structures aspects that have to do with the specific linguistic structures used (simple sentences, subordinating clauses, sentences with pronouns).

Numerous researchers have exploited the methodology of narratives elicitation/production to evaluate or promote child language. In this didactic methodology we present a well known task that has been used in the literature to produce a narrative elicited by a story made up of a series of pictures: the Frog Story (Mayer, 1969).

### 3.2 Description of the activities

The picture book "the Frog Story" contains no words and provides a rich context for language production. In addition to the series of events, this task requires children to make inferences about characters' relationships, thoughts, feelings, and motivations throughout the story.

Educator: "Here is a story about a boy, a frog and a dog. I want you to first look through the pictures, and then I want you tell me the story as you look through them again."

First, choose a story and create a series of pictures for each character, event, etc. in it (you can also ask children to help you to do that). Ask children to go through the pictures and then to tell the story to their classmates in their L1, L2 or even in FL (depending on how well children appear to master the language). There are two ways to proceed for the child to tell the story. While she is narrating she has each picture in front of her and pictures are changes as the story continues. Alternatively, when the child is telling the story she does not see the pictures any longer. In the first case, the child may tend to describe each pictures as a single event, and not as part of the story. In the second case, the child might repeat the gist of the story but not remember everything. This second procedure can be enhanced by selecting short stories.



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Select carefully the story. In cooperation with multilingual children (and parents), the teacher might also use stories of their country of origin and propose them to the whole classroom. Again, create pictures based on the main events and characters of the story and ask children to produce a coherent narrative.

**A) Narratives in a FL: the Gingerbread Man (proposed by ECEC teachers and educators of Czech Republic)**

**Age and group:**

4-6 years old (up to 12 children)

**Description:** The activity takes place in English. Teacher introduces a story by showing the pictures reported on the book. A drawing of the main characters is then presented to the children. Children are asked to draw again characters of the story. Then the teacher reads the story. Children show the pictures of the characters they made when they are mentioned in the story. Then children have to re-tell the story.

**B) Narratives in a bilingual context (proposed by ECEC teachers and educators of Sweden)**

**Age and group:**

2 to 6 years old (up to 6 children; depending on the complexity of the story)

**Description:** The teacher shows the pictures of a story and describes them using the majority language (language of instruction; i.e., Swedish). The story is told following the sequence of the pictures. Then the teacher asks the (bi-, multi-lingual) children to tell the same story in another language (i.e., Finnish) based on each single picture. Namely, each event needs to be translated in the other language sequence by sequence. Child will contribute with the vocabulary they know. The teacher can support them connecting the words they know in the L2 (Finnish).

Advise: The exercise doesn't have to happen straight away: children can start by looking at one picture and describing it first in the majority language then in an L2, and then gradually conclude the storytelling.

**Reference:**

Mayer, M. (1969). Frog, where are you?. New York: Dial Press.



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## 4. Coloring Task

### 4.1 Introduction

According to the most recent literature on child comprehension the Coloring Book method (Zuckerman et al., 2016), or shortly the Coloring Task, appears to be the most sensitive way and the more appropriate tool for the investigation of language comprehension in preschool children. In this task children are asked to color an element in the picture. However, in contrast to the most traditional coloring task, in this methodology, children are forced to make a linguistic decision to color only a specific element in the picture, according to their understanding of a given sentence. The Coloring Task method is based on a simple idea: children will show their ability to understand a specific sentence/word/ etc. by coloring specific items on a picture.

### 4.2 Description of the activities

The task consists of listening to a sentence containing for instance a specific verbal expression, or a complex syntactic structure. Then the teachers provides additional instructions about how to color the picture. Each picture is devised in such a way that it contains several uncolored characters. Looking which character the child colors (and whether with the correct or wrong color) will offer an idea about his/her understanding of the verbal input as close as possible a communicative situation in real life.

Example:

“Please color the drawing in such a way that the red ballerina is lifting the green ballerina up” or “Please color the drawing in such a way that the red ballerina is being lifted”.

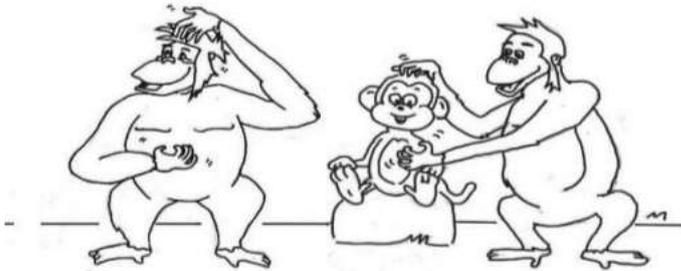


“Please color the drawing in such a way that a green monkey is sitting on a stone, and a blue monkey is scratching himself”.

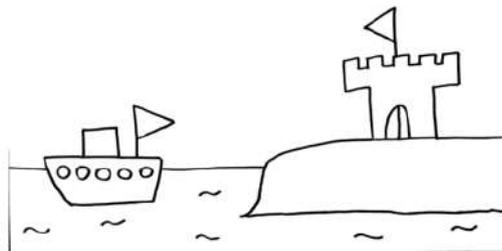


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“Please color the drawing in such a way that there is a boat passing by. Its flag is red.”



**A) Using coloring task to enhance vocabulary in L1 (proposed by ECEC teachers and educators of Piacenza, Italy)**

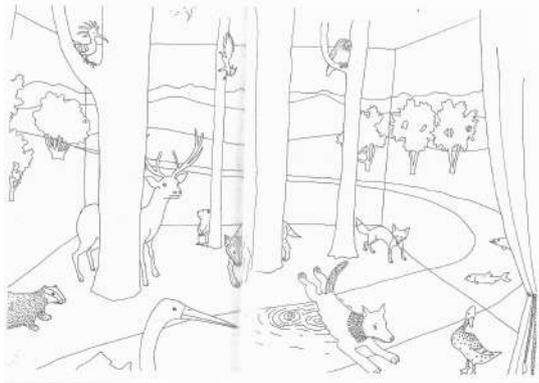
**Age and group:**

4 to 5 years old (up to 7 children)



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(credits Alessandra Repetti)

**Description:** The teacher shows the image reproduced above. Then the teacher asks to color the dog brown, fox red, fishes green and water blue. Children were already aware of the words (colors and names) used.

**B) Using coloring task to enhance comprehension in a FL (proposed by ECEC teachers and educators of Piacenza, Italy)**

**Age and group:**

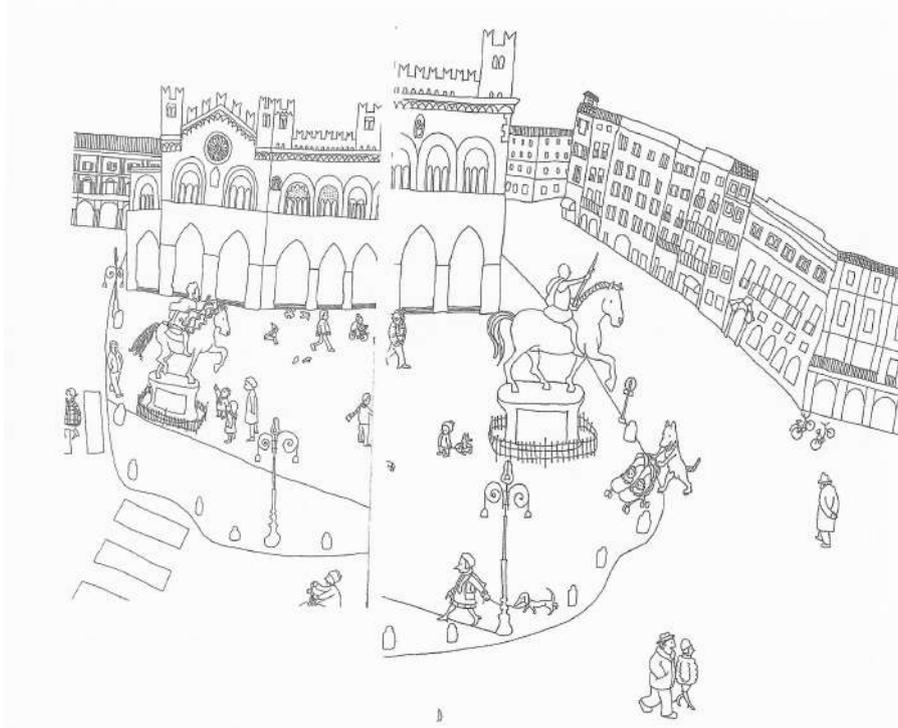
4 to 5 years old (up to 7 children)

**Description:** The teacher shows the image reproduced below. Then the teacher asks to color the bigger statue red and the smaller one green. In general all activities are based on the use of comparatives (bigger/smaller, etc.) that have been previously introduced to children.



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(Credits Alessandra Repetti; Bonomini, A. 2014)

**C) Using coloring task to enhance vocabulary growth in a FL English (proposed by ECEC teachers and educators of Latvia)**

**Age and group:**

4 to 6 years old (up to 10 children)

**Description:** The teacher dictates the series of sentences reproduced below. Then the child has to draw and then color the elements proposed by the teacher in the proper way. For 6-year-olds the teacher proposed not only the oral version of the instructions, but exposed children to the written version of the sentences (i.e., children saw the word TREE; GREEN; SUN; YELLOW; CAT; etc.). The same words were also pronounced out loud by the teacher.

- Draw a tall tree.
- Colour it green.
- It is a sunny day. Draw the sun. Colour it yellow.



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- Draw a cat under the tree. The cat is brown. The cat has got green eyes.

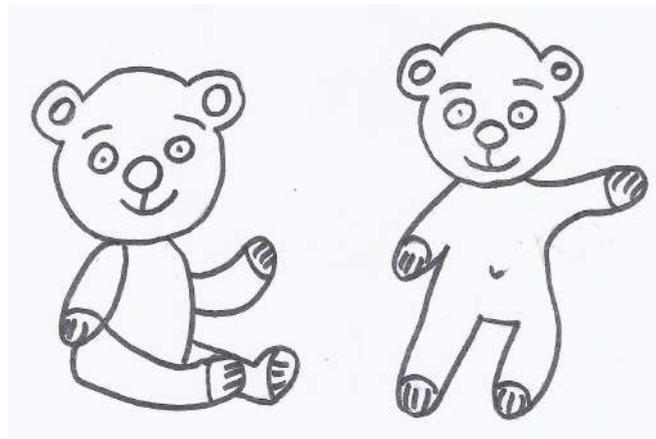
### **D) Using coloring task to enhance vocabulary and spatial relation comprehension in a FL English (proposed by ECEC teachers and educators of Poland)**

**Age and group:** 2 to 6 years old (up to 10 children; depending on the complexity of the task)

**Description:** The teacher pronounces a series of sentences reproduced below and then provide the child with the pictures displayed below. The child has to draw and then color the elements in the proper way.

Listen and color:

- a brown teddy bear is sitting
- a red teddy bear is dancing
- the teddy bear on your left has yellow eyes



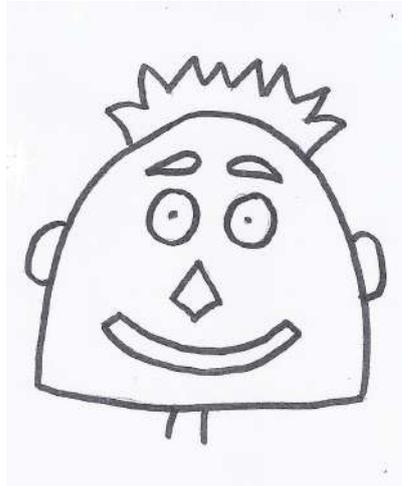
Listen and color the face:

- ears are green
- eyes are blue
- nose is orange
- mouth is pink
- hair is red



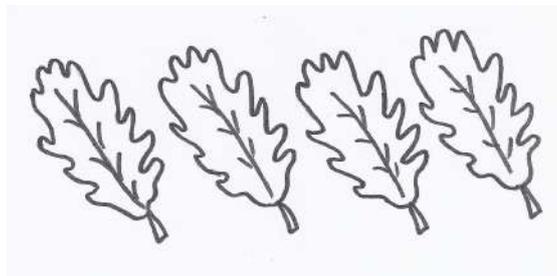
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Listen and Color:

- the second leaf counting from the left side
- the third leaf from the right side



Reference:

Zuckerman, S., Pinto, M., Koutamanis, E., van Spijk, Y. (2016). A New Method for Testing Language Comprehension Reveals Better Performance on Passive and Principle B Constructions. BUCLD 40: Proceedings of the 40th annual Boston University Conference on Language Development.

Bonomini, A. (2014). Piacenza a naso in su e qualche volta in giù. Guida illustrata per bambini e non solo. Piacenza: Officine Gutenberg.



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## 5. Sentence repetition

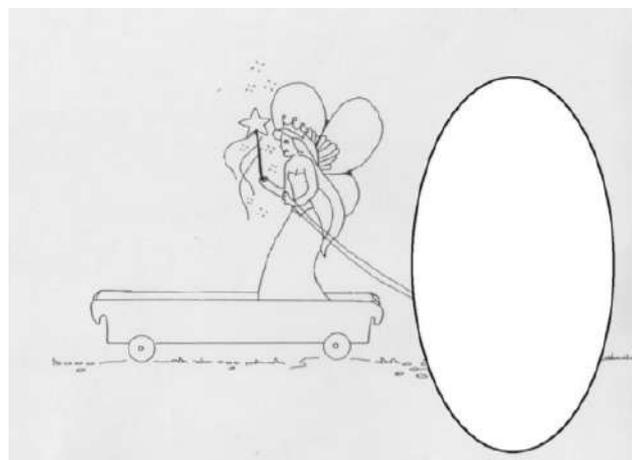
### 5.1 Introduction

#### *Sentence repetition*

According to the literature, elicited sentence repetition is the most reliable psycholinguistic marker for detecting language impairment (Conti-Ramsden et al. 2001). In addition, it is a very easy task because it simply requires to create a set of short sentences (“the cat is eating”) associated if possible with related pictures. In the short sentences, it is important to use words that may gradually become more complex, that is, it is important to provide children with an adequate, but not too complex, input. It is important to keep under control the length of sentences in terms of syllables; for example, one may start with sentences with 10 syllables and then increase lengths and complexity of sentences. There are sentences repetition task available from funded European project such as Cost Action (Gavarrò, 2017). The task of the child is to listen to the sentence and to repeat it.

#### *Sentence structure elicitation*

As for sentence structure, one can transfer methods used for research to educational practices. An elicited production method consists in asking children to produce specific kind of sentences once this type of structure has been just introduced to the child. Again, one needs to create a series of drawings that make the use of a given type of sentence appropriate in the context. For example, if we want a child to produce a question, we need to show her/him a picture, with two characters, one of which is hidden as in Guasti, Branchini and Arosio’s Task (2012).





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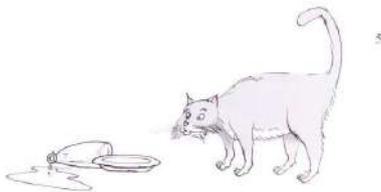
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Educator: The fairy is pulling someone pointing to the ellipsis. Ask the puppet who (is getting pulled vs. the fairy is pulling)?”. Then the child has to produce a question addressed to the puppet to find out which element is getting pulled or is the fairy pulling.

An additional way to train speakers to use specific structures that we want them to use/learn (actives/passives; dative structures; full nouns/pronouns; etc.) has been proposed by Messenger, Branigan and McLean (2011).

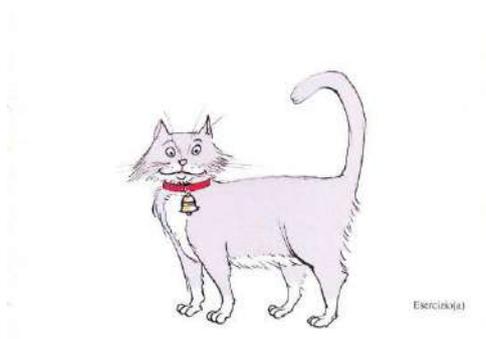
### 5.2 Description of the activities

We provide a number of examples about sentence repetition drawn from Gardner et al. (2007). The authors created 16 sentences. These assessed tense marking (past, future) as in “The cat wanted some



milk”

phrasal embedding: ‘the cat **with the bell** is happy’



dative construction ‘The dog **gives the cat** the milk’



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Example of how to introduce the task by using a puppet:

Educator: This is Bik. He only understands when children speak to him, and he would like to hear the story too. So, when I say something, you say it to Bik. Listen really carefully and make sure you say everything to Bik just the same as I say to you. Okay? Let's Practice.

Then the child has to repeat the sentence.

Note that the choice of the sentences must be based on the specific language of each partner. Additionally careful control vocabulary items that must be employed: all words must have an early age of acquisition (for instance cat, dog, milk) and be familiar to children regardless of their socioeconomic or cultural status.

Regarding the implementation of the *sentence structure elicitation task*, teachers might propose it as a classroom activity not only with monolingual children (to promote the acquisition of complex structures of their L1), but also with multilingual children to improve their syntactic competence on specific syntactic structures in the majority language.

The child will be prompted to produce short sentences in their L1 after hearing a description involving a specific syntactic structure produced by the teacher. To do so, children need to comprehend what the teacher is saying and continuously interact with him/her, by providing another description of another picture.

The teacher/experimenter has a sets of picture/cards involving hand-drawings illustrating events (for example, mother washing boy, bear chasing a mouse, cow kicking cat). The teacher shows to the children the first card describing it with a certain structure (for example, a short passive) and asks a child to describe out loud the second card.

Examples from Messenger et al., 2011:

Educator: The sheep is shocking the girl (active sentence)



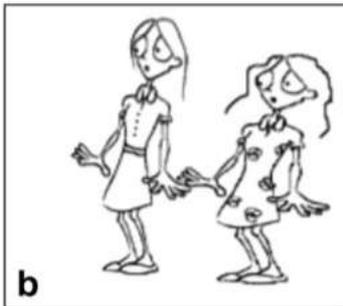
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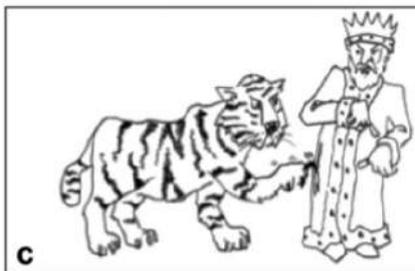


**OR**

Educator: The girls are being shocked (short passive)



The child has to describe the following picture (the tiger is scratching the king or the king is being scratched).



The choice of a specific syntactic structure may depend on the goals of the teaching activities, as well as on the specific language used.

This didactic material will allow children to acquire a better knowledge of the different syntactic structures of a language. Children might eventually become more aware about a structure, which is more complex



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and less used. Additionally, the current activity will improve child's syntactic competence by allowing him/her to use some structures that are rare and difficult.

**A) Sentence repetition to enhance vocabulary in a FL (proposed by ECEC teachers and educators of Piacenza, Italy)**

**Age and group:**

2 to 5 years old (up to 9 children)

**Description:** At the beginning of each lesson the English teacher proposes the 'hello song'. Children repeat 'Hello hello, what's your name?' and they answer by singing 'My name's ....' and everyone screams his/her name. All the children participate and recognize this song during the initial greeting.

Alternatively, the teacher shows the shape of an empty face. Children have to paste on the face the various elements (eyes, nose, mouth, etc.); whenever a child is asked to choose what to paste, the teacher pronounces the sentence 'Bob has ...' and asks the child to repeat it by adding that element to the face.

**B) Language abilities screening in L1 (proposed by ECEC teachers and educators of University of Milano-Bicocca, Italy)**

**Age and group:**

2 to 5 years old (possibly 1-2 children or very small groups)

**Description:** The teacher reads the following sentences and for each of them shows a picture. Children have to repeat exactly the same words the teacher has pronounced. The didactic material were prepared in Italian and taps into a series of key elements for the morpho-syntactic development, namely (clitic) pronouns, passives and subject relative clauses. All these elements, and in particular the production and repetition of clitic pronouns, are regarded in the psycholinguistic literature as clinical markers of a critical language delay (Bortolini et al., 2006).

Sentences to be pronounced out loud by the teacher:

1) "Il bambino **la** tocca" (Literal translation: The child (IT) touches), while showing the following pictures.



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2) “Il cane è **lavato** dal bambino” (Literal translation: The dog is being washed by the boy).



3) “Il bambino **che beve il latte** è piccolo” (Literal translation: The child that is drinking milk is little).



Reference:

Bortolini, U., Arfé, B., Caselli, C., Degasperi, L., Deevy, P. and Leonard, L. B.(2006). Clinical marker for specific language impairment in Italian: The contribution of clitics and non-word repetition. *International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders*, 41, 695–712.



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Gardner, H., Froud, K., McClelland, A., van der Lely, H.K. (2006). Development of the Grammar and Phonology Screening (GAPS) test to assess key markers of specific language and literacy difficulties in young children. *International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders*, 41, 513-540.

Gavarró, A. (2017). A Sentence Repetition Task for Catalan-speaking typically-developing children and children with Specific Language Impairment. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8:1865.

Guasti, M.T., Branchini, C., & Arosio, F. (2012). Interference in the production of Italian subject and object wh-questions. *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 33, 185-223.

Messenger, K., Branigan, H.P., McLean, J.F. (2011). Evidence for (shared) abstract structure underlying children's short and full passives. *Cognition*, 121, 268-74.



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## 6. Perspective Shift

### 6.1 Introduction

When children listen to a narrative, they adopt the perspective of the principal protagonist and continue to adhere to this specific point of view to retell the story (Rall & Harris, 2000). This is a common aspect that demonstrates child's capacity to adopt the perspective of the main character within a story. In contrast, being able to mentally shift to the perspective to another imagined character in the story is a highly evolved capacity that might develop during the preschool years, but that could be partially missing at this stage of development.

It is thought that children are more likely to shift their perspective and recall the story from the point of view of the character that seems good, or "closer" to the child, because the "good" character is more likely to be the main protagonist.

Therefore, promoting the exercise to retell the story from the perspective of another character (maybe the most different even from a cultural point of view) might offer the child the chance to undertake an imaginative shift in the mental construction of the story.

### 6.2 Description of the activities

We provide below an example based on a series of popular English stories for preschoolers.

In the current methodology we propose to start from a narrative in your L1 or L2, or in a FL.

See for example: Where are you blue Kangaroo?

( <https://www.worldbookday.com/videos/where-are-you-blue-kangeroo/>)

Tell the story to the child (where are you blue Kangaroo?). Then ask the child to retell the story from the point of view of another character of the story (e.g., the blue Kangaroo).

This methodology might be applied in the multilingual classroom too. Indeed, by choosing an appropriate story, we might ask children to retell it by adopting the point of view of the character that is most different from the social and cultural perspective of the child.

### **A) Perspective shift in a FL: Kitten and Puppy made a cake (proposed by ECEC teachers and educators of Czech Republic)**

**Age and group:**

4 to 5 years old (up to 8-9 children)



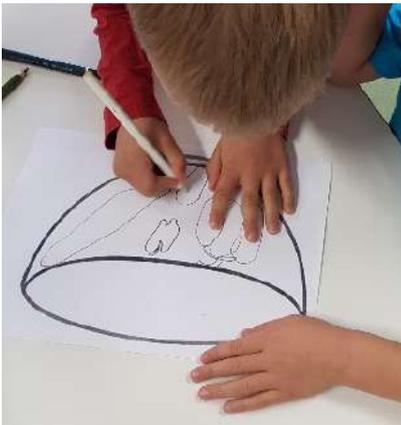
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**Description:** As the activity was presented in a FL (English), there was a pre-listening phase where children were exposed to the relevant vocabulary for the story in order to help them understand the new words. Pre-listening phase: given the fact that the story was about food, the teacher used a “magic” box with all the food that was presented to children. Children could smell, touch and hear what kind of sound the food made inside the box when the teacher was shaking it and they had to guess what was inside.

Listening phase: the teacher told the story and showed up the main characters (Kitten, Puppy, Bear) and related vocabulary.

Post-listening phase: at the end of the story children were divided into groups of three (each of them playing the role of Kitten, Puppy, Bear respectively) and were given a piece of paper with a template of a bowl (see picture below). They had to draw 4 pieces of food that each character put in the cake according to the story. That is, they were asked to recall the food that was put in the cake according to the story from the point of view of a specific character. Then they had to draw it (see picture below).



Then, all together children shared the pictures and told others what food they drew in their bowls.

Reference

Rall, J., & Harris, P. L. (2000). In Cinderella’s slippers? Story comprehension from the protagonist’s point of view. *Developmental Psychology*, 36,202–208.



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## 7. Enhancing vocabulary skills

### 7.1 Introduction

#### *Naming production task*

Naming can be referred to as the ability to apply a label to the elements in the world. Children might have many labels to name things around them, but in some cases their ability to recall and produce these label might be incorrect.

Sometimes naming might be inaccurate because the phonological information that children have stored about words is underspecified (incomplete and/or indistinct) making name production difficult even when the name is known, that is it is recognizable. For this reason naming production is a critical skill to be trained during the preschool years.

Children who have a reduced vocabulary in a language or poor verbal skills might have fewer words represented in their mental lexicon. For instance, they might be less able to produce the name of a pictured stimulus, or even to recognize and repeat a word they have just heard.

Additionally, recall that long words, with respect to short ones, require more phonological features to be stored and thus their representations would be more likely to be incomplete, fuzzy or inaccurate than those for shorter words. Similarly, less frequent words have been heard less often, so if children require more experience to establish solid phonological representations, these lexical entries would be more likely to be poorly specified and difficult to produce.

### 7.2 Description of the activities

In the current didactic methodology we propose to create a stimulus set of words including:

- short and long words in your language (what does it mean to be a short and long words? Look at number of syllables and number of phonemes);
- high and low-frequency words in your language (what does it mean to be high and low-frequency words? Usually high-frequency words are very common and familiar words, that are generally found in child-directed speech; low-frequency words are less used words that do not belong to the everyday life of the child);

You need to use a puppet (and a set of pictures representing objects or animals, if you think it is necessary).

Children are told that the puppet has learned a bunch of new words, but has learned them from someone who said them in an incorrect way. Children are asked to teach the puppet to pronounce the word in the right way.



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For each word, after the puppet has produced the stimulus incorrectly twice, the child:

- 1) imitates the puppet exactly the way it said it;
- 2) says the word the right way.

The teacher will take into account whether the child correctly imitates the string of sounds produced by the puppet; identifies the right word to be pronounced; corrects it.

Here it is an example of the materials developed by Fowler and Swainson (2004). Parrot rendition refers to the incorrect pronunciation of the puppet (parrot in their study).

**ITEMS USED IN THE PARROT  
IMITATION/CORRECTION TASK**

<b>High Frequency, Short (8)</b>	<b>Parrot Rendition</b>
guitar	kitar
pumpkin	punkin
feather	fezzer
sandwich	samwich
breakfast	beffus
pencil	prenzal
dentist	denniss
chimney	chimbly
<b>High Frequency, Long (8)</b>	<b>Parrot Rendition</b>
mosquitoes	mistee-os
arithmetic	ritmetic
electricity	lectrizity
vegetables	vegepuls
computer	percuter
spaghetti	pisgetti
secretary	seckatary
instruments	instaments
microscope	micascope



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<b>Low Frequency, Short (8)</b>	<b>Parrot Rendition</b>
backpack	packpack
thermos	fermus
stapler	stampler
chipmunk	chickmunk
ostrich	orstrich
penguin	penwin
sandals	spandals
stroller	scroller

**A) Enhancing vocabulary in L1, in a FL or in the majority language for multilingual children (proposed by ECEC teachers and educators of Piacenza, Italy)**

**Age and group:**

2 to 5 years old, depending on the complexity of the verbal material (up to 7 children)

**Description:**

*Psychological vocabulary (emotions):* The teacher proposes a series of flashcards related to emotions. The teacher shows the flashcards and repeats three times the word corresponding to the emotion shown. Then she tells each child an emotion and asks him/her to touch the corresponding flashcard.

Alternatively, the teacher shows a puppet and represents through the puppet the various emotions, saying “Sometimes the puppet is happy”, “Sometimes the puppet is sad”, etc. Then she asks each child to attribute an emotion to the puppet. “The puppet is...”, the child chooses and tells the emotion, the teacher shows, through the puppet, that emotion.

*Colors:* The teacher shows some colored balls and tells the children what color they are. Then she takes a ball and shows it to each child asking, in English, “What color is this?”. When the child says the correct color receives the ball and then the child returns it again to the teacher.

Alternatively, the teacher shows a canvas bag full of colored balls; in turn she asks each child to draw one without looking and, when they extract it, she says the name of the color. When the ball extracted is red, the teacher shouts “BOOM”, while for all the others she repeats the name of the color and caresses the ball.



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Another proposal: the teacher spills a large bag of balls in the classroom, she asks the children to look for and find the balls of a certain color and to put only those in the bag, one at time. The first time the color is chosen by the teacher, then children are expected to choose a color.

*Vocabulary about fruits and vegetables:* The teacher shows some flashcards depicting fruits and vegetables. She places them upside down on the table/carpet, then she asks each child to turn a flashcard and say what he/she found. Once all the flashcards are discovered, the teacher takes a bag containing fruits and vegetables. Then she asks each child to draw an object from the bag, say what he/she has found and place it on the corresponding flashcard.

Alternatively, the teacher shows the children a puppet and tells them that he is hungry. Then s/he shows a series of plastic fruit and names them one by one repeating the word three times. Then she asks each child what fruit they want to make the puppet to eat and invite them to use the question “Do you like ...?”. The puppet replies “I like ..., thank you”.

The teacher shows the puppet the flashcards or objects related to the words already known by the children (emotions, colors, fruits, face parts) and then she asks the puppet to pronounce the word . The puppet pronounces the word incorrectly, so it is possible to check if the child (even a multilingual child whose L1 is not the majority languages) is able to recognize the error and correct it.

Reference:

Fowler, A.E., Swainson, B. (2004). Relationships of naming skills to reading, memory, and receptive vocabulary: evidence for imprecise phonological representations of words by poor readers. *Annals of Dyslexia*, 54, 247-80.



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## 8. Translanguaging

### 8.1 Introduction

According to Kultti and colleagues (Kultti & Pramling, 2016, 2017) that have developed the notion of “translanguaging” in the educational practice, this concept refers to the use of the two languages (for instance, the majority language and English) in communication and meta-communication during a translation activity within early childhood education.

In their studies, children first listen to a song, then, supported by the teacher they are challenged to collaboratively translate the lyrics in another language. Once children have listened to the entire song, the teachers and children start talking about how to translate the lyrics, one phrase at a time. By doing so, children are forced to reflect about important aspects related to the internal structure of the language such as the arbitrary use of words in a lyrics, the difference between literal and figurative language across languages.

Alternatively, instead of translating the song, teachers could simply let children listen to the same (popular) song in their L1 (for example Swedish) and then in another language (for instance English or Finnish). In such a case, by noticing the similarities and differences between different-language versions of popular songs, children will become aware of the fact that the same song might be verbally different across languages.

### 8.2 Description of the activities

Such methodology offers many possible implementations.

First, if one uses it as a translation task (one sentence at time) it might enhance children’s competence not only in their L1 (depending on the verbal content of the song the teacher will choose), but crucially in a FL or in their L2 too.

Second, it might be applied to the multilingual classroom context too. Indeed one might ask a multilingual pupil (and their parents) to present a (popular) song in their mother tongue, and then translate it in the majority language. Children will become aware of existing languages, and again, can have another glance of the fact that the same song might convey a different meaning depending on the words have been used cross-linguistically.

Example:

“Frere Jacques” song in all the world’s languages:

<http://demonstrations.free.fr/frere.jacques/>



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## **A) Improving translinguaging abilities in the multilingual classroom (proposed by ECEC teachers and educators of Sweden)**

### **Age and group:**

1 to 5 years old. Initially start with a small group (2-3 children). A small group of children will make it possible to include and engage all later. As for child's age include children who use verbal language (later on the activity can be done in a group with children learning to speak).

### **Description:**

Initially use two languages (add one more later on, if the activity worked well). It is important to find a child's song that has two versions. Teachers with a small group of children first listen to a song in two languages. When listening and singing the song, watch a music video with illustrations of the song (YouTube). These illustrations will help the children to participate in the activity. These can also be used to discuss possible differences about words used in the song and the images used in the clip. Watch and listen to the song in both languages. Collaboratively translate parts of the lyrics that are critical in learning a new language (for example, a FL language). The child must be an active participant, scaffolded by the teacher. It is important to ask questions to children, whereas the teacher might try to avoid the monologue.

The teacher has to attend to similarities and differences between different-language versions of the song/illustrations in terms of meta-communication (talking about languages). It is further important to scaffold children in order to be aware of the fact that the same song is different in different languages. Additionally, with older children, it is important to help them to realize the transformative nature of translation (change in meaning when something is translated from one language to another). Pay attention to the way children explain a word/concept or propose a word sounding similar, when encountering a new word/concept.

Alternatively, children listen to a song in the majority language. After that, the song has to be translated by the teacher to English. The teacher introduces and engages the children in practices such as: repeating verses in English and in the majority language; reformulating/ rephrasing in more common terms ("So:"). The teacher also challenges the children by asking different kinds of questions, such as: "What does that mean?", "how can you say that in English?", "What could it mean?", "Are there any other words that you can use to say that ...", "How would you describe ... in English?", and "How would you describe if you are not allowed to say the word ...". The teacher also provides children with contrasting words/expressions. The children are asked to translate in two ways when confronted with unusual or invented words/names.



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Kultti, A. & Pramling, N. (2017). Translation activities in bilingual early childhood education: Children's perspectives and teachers' scaffolding. *Multilingua: Journal of Cross-Cultural and Interlanguage Communication*, 36, 703-725.