Towards inspiring language learning in the early years

ECML National Support Event, Helsinki
September 22
Inspiring language learning and teaching in the early years
ECML PROJECT 2016-2019

Welcome

Setting the frame
The context

- faster language learning
- improved mother tongue skills
- better performances in other areas
- attitudes towards language learning

What is it about?
Bringing very young children into contact with foreign languages may result in faster language learning, improved mother tongue skills and better performance in other areas. That is why EU education ministers support the teaching of at least two foreign languages from a very early age.

Why is it needed?
As well as laying the foundations for later learning, early language learning can influence attitudes towards other languages and cultures, and this is the primary motivation behind the various European Commission initiatives to promote early language learning and support further research in this area.
Barcelona European Council (2002)

Call for action “to improve the mastery of basic skills, in particular by teaching at least two foreign languages from a very early age (...).”
Inspiring language learning in the early years

ECML PROJECT 2016-2019

Website of the ECML

Early language learning

There is a growing trend across Europe to begin language learning in early primary or even in kindergarten. Teaching languages to young children requires combining the general skills needed for this age group and specific language teaching approaches. The language aspects must be associated with children's cognitive and emotional development as well as their early experiences of learning together in social groups.
The beginnings of the project...

- Think tank on Early Language Learning in Graz, December 2016
  - Importance of attitudes and values towards language learning and plurilingualism: Recognizing and valuing the learners and teacher’s/educator’s languages (→ teacher training);
  - Importance of continuity and progression within primary education and transition phases (→ whole school community);
  - Building on existing tools from Member States and ECML (→ methodologies and practical tools).
... the project

Inspiring language learning in the early years

Why it matters and what it looks like for children age 3 to 12
Inspiring language learning in the early years

ECML PROJECT 2016-2019

The team

Déirdre Kirwan
Ireland

Flore Schank
Luxembourg

Jakob Patekar
Croatia

Dana Musilová
Czech Republic

Ingeborg Birnie
United Kingdom
Inspiring language learning in the early years

ECML PROJECT 2016-2019

Children are at the heart of the project – as well as their teachers and educators!
Inspiring language learning in the early years

Inspire – by giving children many opportunities to discover and learn language(s)

www.ecml.at
Inspiring language learning in the early years

ECML PROJECT 2016-2019

Be inspired – by looking at how children discover and learn language(s)

Joleen

Simon
Inspiring language learning in the early years

ECML PROJECT 2016-2019

Children age 3 to 12 – pre-primary and primary education, focus on continuity and coherence

Languages at the heart of learning
Les langues au cœur des apprentissages
Sprachen als Herzstück des Lernens

www.ecml.at
Inspiring language learning in the early years
ECML PROJECT 2016-2019

The website – comprehensible, easily accessible, user-friendly

Languages at the heart of learning
Les langues au cœur des apprentissages
Sprachen als Herzstück des Lernens

www.ecml.at
Inspiring language learning in the early years

ECML PROJECT 2016-2019

WORK in PROGRESS

Your feedback and your expertise are mostly wanted!

www.ecml.at
Getting into the mood:

Exploring linguistic repertoires
Reading in different languages ...

- Please read the following short texts and messages;
- Write down the main message (using key words) or words you know.
Discussion:

• What strategies did you use to work out the texts?
  – Did you understand the languages that are used?
  – If not: How did you construct meaning? By relying on your mother tongue(s)? By relying on other known languages? By drawing comparisons between languages? By looking at the pictures?

• Was there anything that surprised you?
Listening to different languages instead of reading the text...

... is much more difficult (because you have less time); it is a stream of sound and “noises”; sometimes it is difficult to identify the beginning and ending of phrases ...
Dimensions of young children’s language learning
Inspiring language learning in the early years

Why it matters and what it looks like for children age 3 to 12
Approaching the notion of plurilingualism

Approaching the notion of plurilingualism

“Mysterious things have been happening all over town”

Il se passe des choses mystérieuses.

Approaching the notion of plurilingualism

“I may look like a hardened criminal but I am innocent.”

Malgré les apparences, je suis innocent.

The plurilingual brain

What do we mean by “plurilingual”?

“(…) the plurilingual approach emphasises the fact that as an individual person’s experience of language in its cultural contexts expands, from the language of the home to that of society at large and then to the languages of other peoples (whether learnt at school or college, or by direct experience), he or she does not keep these languages and cultures in strictly separated mental compartments, but rather builds up a communicative competence to which all knowledge and experience of language contributes and in which languages interrelate and interact.” (CE 2001)
Consequences for language learning

“From this perspective, the aim of language education is profoundly modified. It is no longer seen as simply to achieve ‘mastery’ of one or two, or even three languages, each taken in isolation, with the ‘ideal native speaker’ as the ultimate model. Instead, the aim is to develop a linguistic repertory, in which all linguistic abilities have a place.” (CE 2001)
Linguistic repertories of young children ...
Inspiring language learning in the early years
ECML PROJECT 2016-2019

“Children are not future people because they are people already.”
Janusz Korczak
Inspiring language learning in the early years

ECML PROJECT 2016-2019

ANA
L1 = language of schooling

BRYAN
L1 ≠ language of schooling

MARKUS
Dialect ≠ language of schooling

PETAR
One of the two languages = language of schooling

HILLEVI
One of the three languages = language of schooling

INEZ
One of two languages = foreign language
Inspiring language learning in the early years

ECML PROJECT 2016-2019

ANA
L1 = language of schooling

BRYAN
L1 ≠ language of schooling

PETAR
One of the two languages = language of schooling

MARKUS
Dialect ≠ language of schooling

HILLEVI
One of the three languages = language of schooling

NEK
One of two languages = foreign language

TOMIK
None of the two languages = language of schooling

www.ecml.at
Inspiring language learning in the early years

ECML PROJECT 2016-2019

**BRYAN**
L1 ≠ language of schooling

**ANA**
L1 = language of schooling

**PETAR**
one of the two languages = language of schooling

**MARKUS**
Dialect ≠ language of schooling

**HILLEVI**
One of the three languages = language of schooling

**INEZ**
One of two languages = foreign language

**TOMIK**
None of the two languages = language of schooling
Can I put them in?

No, wait! It isn’t boiling yet.

Want more?

No!

You want something else?

This one!

BICS: “Basic interpersonal communicative skills”

(Cummins 1979, 1984, 2000)

... the spoken language of every day communication
Il l’a eu?
Et alors? Ça lui a plu?
Sais pas. Ouais. Il a ri.

Hi! Wot RU doing 2nite?
Sitting on the sofa. LOL!
LOL! Have fun. CU 2mrw.


... the written language of every day communication
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Some characteristics of everyday language</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Highly contextualized - Common subject of conversation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Few details and explanations</td>
<td>“Can I put them in?” → What? Where?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple and short sentences</td>
<td>“Want more?”; “No!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of abbreviations</td>
<td>“LOL!”; “CU 2mrw”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common and general wording</td>
<td>Use of pronouns, simple verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incomplete formulations</td>
<td>“Want more?” → “Do you want more?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of grammatical correctness</td>
<td>“Sais pas?” → “Je ne sais pas.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active verbs</td>
<td>“Sitting on the sofa.”; “Il l’a eu.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of non-verbal clues to support meaning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When language becomes a ‘cognitive tool’ *

Feilke, 2012
The ancient Chinese believed that their country was at the center of the civilized world, surrounded by barbarian people. So they named it the “Middle Kingdom”. The oldest civilization of mankind grew up in the Yellow River region almost five thousand years ago. Long before the Europeans, they were great precursors. They are at the origin of paper, invented porcelain, developed gunpowder, developed navigation instruments, made steel, and became interested in astronomy.

The ancient Chinese believed that their country was at the center of the civilized world, surrounded by barbarian people. So they named it the “Middle Kingdom”. The oldest civilization of mankind grew up in the Yellow River region almost five thousand years ago. Long before the Europeans, they were great precursors. They are at the origin of paper, invented porcelain, developed gunpowder, developed navigation instruments, made steel, and became interested in astronomy.

The ancient Chinese believed that their country was at the center of the civilized world, surrounded by barbarian people. So they named it the “Middle Kingdom”. The oldest civilization of mankind grew up in the Yellow River region almost five thousand years ago. Long before the Europeans, they were great precursors. They are at the origin of paper, invented porcelain, developed gunpowder, developed navigation instruments, made steel, and became interested in astronomy.

The ancient Chinese believed that their country was at the center of the civilized world, surrounded by barbarian people. So they named it the “Middle Kingdom”. The oldest civilization of mankind grew up in the Yellow River region almost five thousand years ago. Long before the Europeans, they were great precursors. They are at the origin of paper, invented porcelain, developed gunpowder, developed navigation instruments, made steel, and became interested in astronomy.
The ancient Chinese believed that their country was at the center of the civilized world, surrounded by barbarian people. So they named it the “Middle Kingdom”. The oldest civilization of mankind grew up in the Yellow River region almost five thousand years ago. Long before the Europeans, they were great precursors. They are at the origin of paper, invented porcelain, developed gunpowder, developed navigation instruments, made steel, and became interested in astronomy.

The ancient Chinese believed that their country was at the center of the civilized world, surrounded by barbarian people. So they named it the “Middle Kingdom”. The oldest civilization of mankind grew up in the Yellow River region almost five thousand years ago. Long before the Europeans, they were great precursors. They are at the origin of paper, invented porcelain, developed gunpowder, developed navigation instruments, made steel, and became interested in astronomy.

The ancient Chinese believed that their country was at the center of the civilized world, surrounded by barbarian people. So they named it the “Middle Kingdom”. The oldest civilization of mankind grew up in the Yellow River region almost five thousand years ago. Long before the Europeans, they were great precursors. They are at the origin of paper, invented porcelain, developed gunpowder, developed navigation instruments, made steel, and became interested in astronomy.

### Some characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics of written language use are also to be found in oral language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decontextualized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher frequency of longer complex sentences; impersonal statements and passive voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic/figurative meaning (often abstract terms)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building coherence by the use of verbal means (articles, pronouns, conjunctions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarity of expression and low redundancy, condensed text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of correctedness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Which buttons can be put in the same box? Why? Could you please try how many different ways there are to sort out the buttons?

Après le petit déjeuner, nous allons travailler en ateliers. Cet après-midi, je vais vous raconter l’histoire du petit ours brun.

Schlagt bitte euer Buch auf Seite 3 auf!

Oral instructions

• Complex and precise
• Correct and complete
• Structured/chronological/close to written language ("schriftförmig")
• “Metaphorical”, initiating cognitive processes
When language becomes a cognitive tool ...

“For many students the language of their day to day (...) is markedly different from that of school and of subject learning. Many students also lack consciousness and explicitness in cognitive operations. **There is a tension between spontaneous (everyday, colloquial) speech versus the expected, conceptually 'written' forms of school discourse** which are expected to unfold by themselves, but do not in many cases.” (CE 2016)
Access to academic language is an issue for all learners.
Double challenge for children with different L1: learn a new language AND a new type of language.
Academic language - challenges

“This is an issue for all learners, but particularly for those from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, or whose home language is different to the main language of schooling. Recognition of the importance of academic language is not elitist but, on the contrary, is rather an essential aspect of working towards equity in educational outcomes.” (CE 2016)
Inspiring language learning and teaching in the early years
ECML PROJECT 2016-2019

To sum up ...
Dimensions of language learning

- The learner and the languages present in school
  - Regional, minority and migration languages
  - Language(s) of schooling
  - Foreign languages – modern and classical
  - Language as subject
  - Language(s) in other subjects

Curricula and Evaluation

Council of Europe
Moving from theory to practice:

Discovering the website
Inspiring language learning and teaching in the early years
Why it matters and what it looks like for children age 3-12

This project aims to help teachers and other educators prepare young children to successfully face the challenges of a culturally and linguistically diverse world. It will provide them with learning and teaching resources and strategies which take existing linguistic repertoires into account in order to (further) develop the linguistic and intercultural competences of both learners and educators. Read more

Working languages of the project: English, French
Project term: April 2017 - April 2019
Shortcut: www.ecml.at/inspiringearlylearning

Events
Towards guiding principles

Guiding principles ...

• ... are overall/general guidelines that do not apply to one specific area or context;
• ... are a frame, which helps to “locate” language learning with young children;
• ... put the child in the centre;
• ... help to create a common understanding about Language Learning with young children;
• ... are evolutive.
Guiding principles of early language learning

Two levels of information

www.ecml.at/inspiringearlylearning
Inspiring language learning and teaching in the early years
ECML PROJECT 2016-2019

Relying on existing linguistic repertoires
Language exploration – discovering languages

“By not creating a context for bilingual language exploration in our classroom, we miss out on one of the most powerful tools that children have to develop their literacy and awareness of language. In French – English and Spanish – English programmes, the cognate connections between the languages provide enormous possibilities for linguistic enrichment, but not if the programme is set to ensure that the two languages never meet.” (Cummins, 2000)
Language awareness – awakening to languages

• Raise implicit knowledge and understanding of language to an explicit level
• Analysis
• Reflection
• Curiosity
• Exploration of language
Cultivating a plurilingual approach

• Valuing what the child brings to the learning process
• An approach, a way of thinking – not a programme
• Becoming a learning community
• Involving parents
• Including non-formal and informal learning
Importance of coherence and continuity
Integrating the language dimension in all subjects ...
Inspiring language learning in the early years

ECML PROJECT 2016-2019

*Durchgängige sprachliche Bildung* (= continuous inclusive language education) (Germany)

3 dimensions:

- **Educational biographies**: gradual build-up of academic literacy skills across educational stages from the elementary to the post-secondary (vocational) level on the basis of individual needs and strengths

- **Content**: co-ordinated, systemic and reflected exposure to academic language skills and knowledge across content areas and subjects

- **Plurilingualism**: taking into account and using students’ plurilingual skills and competences for the acquisition of the academic register (“Bildungssprache”) and for the extension and consolidation of language learning skills. (cf. CE 2016)
Inspiring language learning and teaching in the early years

ECML PROJECT 2016-2019

Moving from theory to practice:

A “toolbox” for teachers and educators
Inspiring language learning in the early years
ECML PROJECT 2016-2019

2 types of practical tools:
inspiring practices AND learning and teaching resources

www.ecml.at/inspiringearlylearning
Inspiring practices ...

• ... relate, as their name suggests, to **existing practices** in different contexts (projects, actions, initiatives, activities in classrooms etc.);

• ... have the potential to **inspire teachers and educators** and encourage them to transfer them to their contexts – partly or as a whole.
Learning and teaching resources (LTR)

They englobe **activities, tasks, language learning and teaching methods and strategies** as well as **didactic material** (games, books, websites, ITC etc. including ECML resources) that support teachers and educators in

- creating a learning environment which fosters language learning;
- designing and setting up activities and learning scenarios which – in return – could turn out to become inspiring practices.

LTR are likely to become **success stories** about language learning.
Different levels

- **Level 1**: different age groups (3 to 6 years; 7 to 12 years).

- **Level 2**:
  - living together, speaking, listening, reading, writing and singing;
  - maths, science and the arts;
  - playing and being physically active.
Inspiring language learning in the early years
ECML PROJECT 2016-2019

Activity

Description:
• Short description of the activity

The template

Age

If needed: “Push in” to highlight an important aspect

- Active language learning
- Holistic language learning
- Meaningful language learning
- Focus on language learning as a process
- Relying on linguistic repertoires

Languages at the heart of learning
Les langues au cœur des apprentissages
Sprachen als Herzstück des Lernens

www.ecml.at
Inspiring language learning in the early years

ECML PROJECT 2016-2019

Activity

Didactic comment:
- The didactic comment may include:
  - Outcome(s)/purpose(s) of the activity
  - Reasons for choosing this activity (e.g. innovative character of the activity)
  - Sources (literature, website links, etc.)

Variation(s):
- Variations may include:
  - Variations concerning the activity in itself
  - Measures of differentiation respecting the interest, talents and needs of the children
  - Duration:
    - Some activities do not need an indication (e.g. story boxes: they are adapted to the age and the receptivity of the children (15’ for 3 olds are mean something completely different than 15’ for 6 year old) – maybe these activities could contain a clock indicating “variable”
    - Replace the actual time indication by the time needed for your activity.
The following story has been created by Marie, Théo, Joana, Jérémy, Vic.
The birthday present (1)

Once upon a time, there was a devil who put a present on his tractor and drove to his colleague, the ladybird. The gift was a star to be put on the Christmas tree. It was a very special star, because it had a lot of signs on it. And the star had a magic button and if you push on the button, an angel appears, an angel who can fly. When the devil arrives at the ladybird’s, he is surprised because the ladybird is not alone at home; there is a visitor. The visitor was an angel. It has been the first time that the devil sees an angel. He enters and asks the ladybug: “Who is this?” The ladybug says: “An angel.”
The birthday present (2)

“But this is not my friend, because **angels** are my favourite food.” “Why do you want to eat my friend?” “Because he is not my friend.” “And if you eat him, than I won’t be your friend anymore.” And then, the **devil** says: “Ok, I don’t eat him, but I still have a gift for you.” And the **ladybug** opens the gift and there is the **star** in it. And they push the magic button and an **angel** comes out. Now they’re playing together. And if the **devil** won’t have eaten the **angel**, he will still be flying around.
Inspiring language learning in the early years
ECML PROJECT 2016-2019

Story boxes … a thousand stories to be told
Monolingual stories

« Neigh! Neigh! » said the horse. « Want to go for a ride? »

The spider didn’t answer. She was very busy spinning her web.

« Moo! Moo! said the cow. « Want to eat some grass? »

The spider didn’t answer. She was very busy spinning her web.

« Baa! Baa! » bleated the sheep. « Want to run in the meadow? »

The spider didn’t answer. She was very busy spinning her web.

(...)

E. Carle: The very busy spider. Puffin.
Monolingual stories

(...)« Tu viens te promener avec moi? » lui demande le cheval.
   Mais l’araignée n’a pas le temps.
« Tu veux manger un peu d’herbe? » lui demande la vache.
   Mais l’araignée n’a pas le temps.
« Si tu venais courir dans la prairie? » propose le mouton.
   Mais l’araignée n’a pas le temps.
(...)

E. Carle: L’araignée qui ne perd pas son temps. Myjade Éditions.
Bilingual stories

« Tu viens te promener avec moi? » said the horse.
The spider didn’t answer. She was very busy spinning her web.

« Tu veux manger un peu d’herbe? » said the cow.
The spider didn’t answer. She was very busy spinning her web.

« Si tu venais courir dans la prairie? » bleated the sheep.
The spider didn’t answer. She was very busy spinning her web.

(...)

www.ecml.at
Monolingual and plurilingual moments ...
Litterature

Litterature


Litterature

Kiitos! Merci! Thank you! Danke!