100+ Fun Ideas

Practising Modern Foreign Languages in the Primary Classroom

Activities for developing Oracy and Literacy skills

Sue Cave

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Preface

This resource book is a compilation of tried and tested ideas for practising a foreign language in the primary classroom. The ideas for the activities are ones which I have devised, collected or adapted during the last ten years as a peripatetic language specialist in primary schools. I recommend them due to the response I have received from young learners and the positive impact the activities have had on their learning of another language. It is hoped that by collating these activities under one cover, they will be easily accessible for the busy teacher.

The inherent rationale behind each activity is that it is interactive, communicative, memorable and enjoyable. The most popular activities in this book invariably include at least one ‘key ingredient’, namely:

✦ manipulation
✦ a shared secret
✦ competition
✦ surprise
✦ physical movement

These ingredients make up a recipe for success!

Very few resources are needed other than the teacher, the children, paper, card and items often found in a primary school classroom. The ideas could be used as stand-alone activities throughout the school week as reinforcement of language previously encountered or as an integral part of a longer language teaching session. They are suitable for a wide variety of topics and for most modern foreign languages. Repetition and practice are essential in language learning; the variety of activities suggested in this book should provide plenty of opportunity for this.
For each resource, I have suggested ideas to develop both oracy and literacy skills. At the start of each section you will find codes relating to the oracy and literacy objectives in the ‘Key Stage 2 Framework for Languages’. There are activities related to many of these objectives across the four years in Key Stage 2. For a complete list of how the activities relate to the objectives, refer to the table in the introduction.

I hope that you have fun using and perhaps adapting these ideas in the teaching of a foreign language to your young learners. I certainly have done and continue to do so.

Sue Cave
April 2006
Introduction

Team games and competition

Many of the ideas and activities in this book suggest how a competitive element can be included. I have found that competition encourages children to participate more readily and with even greater enthusiasm than they might do otherwise. Children who seem to be reticent or appear to lack confidence in using a foreign language in the classroom, often join in with a game with relish. This seems to be true for many boys, in particular. Team games take away the emphasis from the individual. They allow children to learn, perform and develop skills in the ‘safe’ environment of a group of peers.

I avoid single sex teams but try to orchestrate mixed ability teams. These teams are normally organized on a teaching session basis and new ones formed in the next lesson. However, you could keep the same teams and develop a ‘league’ to which points are added after each game.

As in any competition, rules are essential to ensure the smooth running and fairness of the game. I tell the children that the teacher is the referee and the ‘ref’s’ decision is final! I allow the winning team to perform a victory salute and announce that they are the ‘Champions!’ in the target language. This is a privilege given only to the winners which is much respected and esteemed by all.

Team games are always popular. The children become so engrossed that they are oblivious to the amount of repetition taking place. You might guess from all this, that I like team games and find them an effective strategy in language learning. However, if you feel that it would be more appropriate for your class to learn in a less competitive atmosphere, the majority of the activities can be played just as well without explicit competition.
Key Stage 2 Framework for Languages Objectives

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Flashcards

Flashcards are an excellent way of bypassing the mother tongue and encouraging the use of the target language. They are very versatile and can be used in many activities.

Flashcards can easily be made from images, either hand-drawn, collected from magazines, or using ‘clipart’ obtained either online or from commercially produced software. Home-produced images need to be strengthened with card and laminating will increase their durability. The flashcards can be colour coded as a prompt for remembering the gender of nouns. Alternatively, coloured stickers could be used.

A5 size is normally big enough for all to see in a classroom. Smaller cards are better for group work.

Year 3 children playing ‘Match the word to the image’
Practising MFL in the Primary Classroom

**Oracy**  
O3.1, O3.3, O3.4, O4.4

In the following activities, flashcards provide cues for oral repetition, simple communicative tasks and demonstrating recognition.

**Responding to rhymes, stories and songs**

1. **Listen and show**
   - Create images on cards which relate to key words and sounds in rhymes, stories and songs.
   - Distribute the cards amongst the children and then ask them to raise the cards showing the corresponding image as the words are recited in the story, song or rhyme.

2. **Card sequencing**
   - Put the children in groups.
   - Give the children small versions of the cards from activity 1, relating to key words and sounds in rhymes, stories and songs.
   - Ask them to sequence the cards as they hear them.
Listening, recognizing and responding to sounds and words

3. **Point to a card**
   ✦ Position the cards around the room.
   ✦ Say a word and then ask the children to point to the correct image.
   ✦ The children love it when you speed up this activity and keep repeating the same word or sound in succession.

4. **Clap if true**
   ✦ Show a card and say a word.
   ✦ If the word matches the card, the children either clap, say ‘true’, stand up or nod, etc.
   ✦ This is a good game to play competitively, with the children versus the teacher, awarding a point to the teacher if the children clap at the wrong time. This encourages intense listening, as the children always want to beat the teacher!
5. **Splat!**

- Stick the flashcards for a given topic on the board.

- Divide the class into two teams and ask a representative from each team to come to the board.

- Say a word or sound, and the first person to ‘splat’ the corresponding card, wins a point.

- This is always a popular game which never has a lack of willing volunteers.

- Hint: A useful rule here is ‘the first touch is the only touch.’