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Involving parents in plurilingual and intercultural education

Description card of « The Travelling Mascot »

CONTEXT

Country : France

Town : Toulon

Environment (rural, urban, city-centre, suburbs) : urban environment

- other characteristics of the environment : multilingual town, welcoming many people « coming from elsewhere» (Toulon is a military harbor)

Age of the involved pupils : 3 until 6 years

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involved **Team** : 4 school teachers (Nursery School), 1 educational coordinator, 1 researcher-teacher, plurilingual parents.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION :

Main ideas of the project: The class Mascot (often a teddy representing an animal) leaves for a journey and sends the class some postcards from foreign countries or from other regions than that where the class is. On the map there are some words (« good morning », « see you soon », « bye », etc.) in another language than the school language.

Learning goals :

- Acquiring the language: phonetic discrimination, manipulation of phonemes and syllables, detecting identical sounds in words, intercomprehension between related or not related languages, comparing words in different languages, discovering sound similarities between words belonging to different languages
- Discovering the written language and familiarizing the pupils with a written paper from everyday life (the postcard), recognizing alphabet letters, discovering words in other languages (learning to say « good morning », « bye » and «thank you» in other languages ; learning nouns of animals and their « calls » in other languages)
- Becoming pupil : taking his/her place in the exchanges, listening to the mates
- Living together : some principles of hospitality
- Discovering the world : countries, languages, building landmarks in the geographic space



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Pupils are led to the discovery of countries, of nouns of animals and of courtesy words in different languages. They memorize some kinds of « good morning », « bye », « thank you », learn some short counting rhymes in these languages and discover not familiar cultural elements.

Role(s) played by the parents in this action : first the parents send some postcards or let them sent by members of the family, by friends. Secondly (description card « Invited people from elsewhere »), the parents come to the class in order to play the role of translator of the « person » (generally a teddy) by the class Mascot.

Action organisation:

SESSION 1

Role-playing

- ask the pupils what fetish animal they would like for the class (the mascot)
- ask them why (expression of the taste, feelings of fear, of affection...)
- ask them to repeat the first or the last syllable of the nouns of the proposed animals (game about the sounds and the syllables).
- decide the mascot - animal of the class (exchanges, argumentation, decision)
- giving him/her a loving nickname by repeating the first or the last syllable or his/her common noun (examples : « Gigi » for giraffe, « Lala » for 'lapin', « Rara » for 'rana', etc.).

Research situation 1

- ask the pupils which countries they know, which languages they have already heard, which word they know in other languages (this allows the first approach to the sociolinguistic landscape of the class and of the environment, what will steer the choice of the languages to discover)
 - a) prepare **the bunch of languages of the class** : two kinds of placement are suggested for this bunch in progress that allows to show the languages met by the pupils in the family, with friends, in the district they live in, in the town and thanks to the mascot's travels: a great board on which the flowers prepared by the children will be pasted. Every flower will represent a language that has been discovered through the activities or that a child will have spoken about because it is a language of his/her repertoire or environment. The languages that are spoken and/or understood by the teacher will also appear.
 - b) a bouquet of paper flowers planted in a pot containing some sand.

Whatever the chosen method will be, « the bunch of languages of the class » will be exhibited in the hall or in a corridor of the school in order to offer these languages to everyone's curiosity about this topic, to allow the pupils of the other classes to ask about it; it is also for the parents, so that they can follow the development of the activity and can involved in the project.

Research situation 2

- explain to the pupils that the mascot is leaving for a journey with a rucksack containing objects, books, records he/she will offer to the people she meets abroad.



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- decide together with the pupils about the content of the rucksack (vocabulary, description, argumentation).

SESSION 2

Description of the session

The class mascot left for a journey. He/she sent the class a postcard. For this session 2 – introduction of the postcard – first of all the postcard is explored. It will be read during session 3. During the following sessions, when new postcards will be brought, session 2 and 3 of this module will be gathered together.

Role-playing 1

- observe the postcard from a foreign country **or from another region** (the teachers and the parents are invited to activate their networks of acquaintances abroad to receive some « authentic » postcards !). See the example below
- observe the postcard (photocopy the card in A4 or A3 size to make the finding activities easier) and ask the pupil to identify this medium (letter? postcard? advertising?)
- observe the shaping of the text : place, date, signature
- describe the photo/image/picture on the postcard (this can represent a landscape, one/some animal/s, one/some music instrument/s, a party scene, a cooking recipe, a monument...). Ask the children about what they see, they recognize, they feel;

The postcard is written according to the following structure:

Perugia, February 24th 2011

Buongiorno children,

Today I'm in Italy. I'm learning new words!

I'm coming soon and see you together with my friend Rara the frog, but she doesn't speak English.

Arrivederci

Gigi

(the nickname of the mascot)



Research situation 2

- try to find on the planisphere the country of origin of the stamp
- try to find the flag of the country or of the region, comment on the shape and the colors of the flag.



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Synthesis and consolidation

- preparing a board on which the postcard and the flag of the country will be pasted. This board in progress will be completed when the animal met by the mascot will come and visit the class (collage of photos, wraps...)

Research situation 3

- reading the postcard and understanding the text with words in a foreign language.
- the teacher reads the postcard (role-playing preliminary to attentive and active listening)
- invite the pupils to identify the foreign words and to guess their meaning. Examples of questions to steer the children in their discovery of the « close language» (developing intercomprehension skills) :
 - « What does the first word mean? I don't understand » (awareness-raising of the notion of word).
 - « What word does it look like? »
 - « Have you already heard this word at home or travelling? »
 - « And the last word of the postcard, what do you think it means? »
 - « Do you know other words to say « good morning », « bye bye » ? » (example : ciao/ au revoir /kenavo). Introduce the variation « hallo » and its usage.
- Ask the students to comment on these foreign words at the sensory level (pleasure or feeling of being a stranger?)

Research situation 4

- explain that to welcome well the new friend of the mascot it is necessary to teach him/her to say « good morning », « thank you » et «bye bye» in his/her language (awareness of welcoming behaviors)
- promote the activities about the pronunciation of these new words (audio 1, 2,3)
- try to find on the planisphere the country/the countries where the discovered language is spoken (this allows to become aware that a language can be spoken in several countries and that a country can « speak» several languages !)
- pay attention to the topic of « immigration languages » : « travelling languages » or « languages without frontiers»
- prepare a board in progress « The round dance of the good mornings» on which they are going to write “good morning” in the different languages met in the course of the mascot's peregrinations
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Research situation 5

- let the children hear the name of the animal met by the mascot (in the example given here: « rana », hence « Rara ») and the corresponding onomatopoeia (audio 5)
- prepare a board in progress « The Mascot's Ark» on which images or pictures, drawings of the animals met in the course of the activity will be pasted and in the phylactery there will be the « call » of each animal in different languages.

Synthesis and consolidation



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- let the children pronounce « good morning », « bye bye » and « thank you » in the language of the day.
- let the children pronounce the name of the animal met by the Mascot

Prolongation

- ask the children to bring to school postcards, stamps, photos or objects coming from foreign countries, from another region or from the region they live in if you are working on the regional language-culture
- describe and explain these objects in the class
- organize a corner to exhibit these objects in the class

SÉSSION 3 and following

Description of the session

The class receive a new postcard, from a country where the Mascot discovered a new language and met a new friend.

Proceeding

Research situation 1

- circulate the authentic postcard and distribute its reproductions to each subgroup (of 4 pupils) let the groups explore this document
- ask the children to describe what they see, what they recognize

Research situation 2

- pool the observations
- read the postcard (pay close attention to the fact that the pupils have to be brought to a preliminary situation of attentive and active listening)
- invite the children to identify the foreign words and let them guess their meaning, ask the pupils to comment on these foreign words at a sensory level (pleasure or feeling of being a stranger?)
- practice the pronunciation of « good morning » and of the « bye bye » of the postcard
- teach how to say « thank you » in this new language
- try to find on the planisphere the country (the countries) where the discovered language is spoken
- complete the board « The round dance of the good mornings »

Research situation 3

- let the children listen to the name of the animal met by the mascot and to the onomatopoeia corresponding to him/her
- ask the pupils what is the corresponding « noise » in the school language
- complete the board « The Mascot's Ark »

Synthesis and consolidation after the work done when the 3 postcards arrived

«Who's speaking ? » -Game :

- distribute some postcards with the photos of the foreign animals to the pupils



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- let the children listen to the CD plurilingual versions of « good morning», «thank you» and « bye bye» (audio 1)
- explain to the children that they have to raise the card of the animal that is speaking the language they are hearing
 - specify that the photo of the mascot can be put up every time because he/she knows the languages of his/her friends a little bit and he/she is getting plurilingual...

Prolongations

- integrate to the class rituals, when the children come and go, the plurilingual « good morning» and « bye bye » (in the morning involve parents in this ritual: they are going to say “good morning” in a language they will choose).
- in consolidation workshops: in the class or in another room, while the maternal assistant (ATSEM) take the responsibility for the other children in autonomy :
 - 1) workshop 1: vary the intonation of the salutations according to particular intents (joy/ anger ; whispered/ cried/ sung...).
 - 2) workshop 2 : in pairs greet each other in another language than the school language

Utilized media : *Les langues du Monde au quotidien, cycle 1*, with an audio CD: éd. CRDP Rennes (France).

Observed effects :

- enhancement of family languages
- interest of the children for languages and for the world
- decrease of the feeling of « being a stranger » felt by some plurilingual children
- greater interest of the child towards the family language and towards the other languages of his/her environment
- better parents / teachers relationships (building up a united educating community)

Difficulties noticed :

- shyness of some parents that do not feel at ease both with the school situation (being in the class in front of a group of pupils) and because they do not feel at ease enough with the language of education.

Remediation to these difficulties :

- reassure the parents about their language skills and about the development of the session (prepare it possibly together with them and provide them, if this is necessary, with a framework)
- ask the parents who feel at ease when they act in the class to reassure the other parents and to persuade them to participate to the action.