

Plurilingual competence and oral skills in the 1st key stage



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INTRODUCTION

This action plan has been developed and elaborated in order to help English teachers introduce the plurilingual competence in their Didactic Unit (DU) planning. Opinions from 14 1st key stage English teachers regarding the plurilingual competence were gathered. Some of them expressed the need to be more prepared and to receive resources to start implementing it.

The finality of this action plan is not to offer a DU to 1st key stage English teachers but to offer them different teaching guidelines to boost the development of their students' plurilingual competence. Having in mind that this might be the first contact that 1st key stage students have with English, especially 1st grade students, the emphasis of the action plan is to enhance the transfer of oral skills between the students' L1 and English.

1. OBJECTIVES

- To promote the development of the plurilingual competence by motivating the students to use the TL language as a tool of communication.
- To guarantee an optimal use and acceptance of the students' L1 in English class.
- To make students aware of their linguistic and cultural background and encourage them to bring it into play when learning English.
- To work on the oral communicative skills.
- To allow students to compare their L1 and the TL (English) in order to look for similarities and differences.
- To help students realise that they are living in a globalised world.
- To educate the students to respect and show interests towards other languages and cultures in the class.

2. METHODOLOGY

The action plan is based on an Integrated Plurilingual Approach (IPA). The following teaching methodologies are proposed:

1. Use of students' L1 throughout translanguaging techniques

- **Translation:** It can be used to enhance the learning of students with low English level (González Davies, 2017).
 - o Recasting (L1 – AL) - T: “La tieta”, the aunt....
 - o Sandwiching (AL – L1 – AL) - T: We are going to make a big circle, “un cercle”, a *big circle*...

- Students as a translator for other students (usually fast learners can be given this role to motivate them or give them higher level tasks). - T: During Easter, in England, they go Egg hunting. Marc what is Easter? // M: “La Pasqua”.

- **Code-switching:** When using code-switching, students are aware of the similarities and differences between two or more languages. Good opportunities to use CS are checking understanding and comprehension and as well asking for discipline.

T: Okay! In this activity we need to circle only the images of the classroom objects that we hear in the song. “D’acord?” If you have understood, thumbs up.

T: *[Explains activity but some students look kind of lost]*. Okay! “Qui no ha entès l’activitat?” Laura can you explain the activity? Okay, now listen carefully to Laura, “pareu atenció”.

Especially with young learners is necessary to stress the meaning of the message with non-verbal communication to favour the students’ comprehension.

2. Task based activities

According to the new plurilingual document from the Catalan Government is important to learn a language through meaningful tasks. When planning the sessions, different challenges or tasks should be introduced for the students in order to engage them with the activities. As well, to let them see that what they are doing is important, what they are learning is necessary to solve a problem or help someone. Students need to be aware that learning a language helps you interact with the society.

3. Group work / cooperative activities

It is important to involve students in activities which they can practice the structures and key concepts of the Unit. The best way to do so is by doing group activities where students can use the vocabulary and expressions with their classmates. It is important to offer the students the chance to learn from one another and create learning together. There are multiple ways to make groups: by students’ interests, by learning levels, etc. When planning an activity, is important to think which is the best way to group students:

- Sometimes, during punctual activities or games, we can allow students to make their own groups. This way, we are letting them know that we trust in them.
- While it is true that there are students who work better together and some that can’t stand each other, it is beneficial for the students to not work always with the same classmates, as they need to learn how to work with everyone in the class.

3. TIMING

In order to achieve the different objectives of the action plan, it is really important to start implementing it since the beginning and throughout of the scholar year. The different methodologies and teaching techniques need to be applied during all the English sessions with the 1st key stage students. There should be a constant continuity for the plurilingual competence to be developed, which is why it needs to be worked all along the 1st key stage (1st and 2nd grade).

4. ACTIVITIES

As the main objective of this action plan is to favour the development of the plurilingual competence, mainly oral activities and games have to be planned. It is important to take into account:

- The **students' linguistic background** is "crucial because the knowledge of a language helps to add other languages and is the starting point for the development of the competence" (expert's quote).
- The **level of English** that 6-7 year old students have.

Most of the teachers who were asked recommended planning between 3 and 5 activities per session; nevertheless, the complexity of the activities has to be taken into account when scheduling. Avoid being too ambitious when planning and establish routines and habits to practice throughout the year. In terms of classroom arrangement, each activity will require a different class organisation. With 1st key stage students it is better sitting in groups for cooperative activities and sitting on the floor (circle or theatre position) as students feel comfortable, listen better to one another and don't get distracted.

Numerous are the activities and resources that can be put into practice, here is a list of the ones that most of the questioned English teachers use:

- Storytelling
- Game corner (card games, memory, domino, crafted board games, etc.)
- Songs and chants
- Routines and habits (weather, calendar, hello and goodbye song, etc.)
- Theatre and role-playing using structures from the Unit
- Flashcards
- Arts and crafts

Description of activities

The following topics are proposed to work with the students although some of the activities that accompany them can be done in any Unit.

TOPIC 1: Around the world

Activity: Where are you from?

Before starting the project it will be really useful to know the linguistic backgrounds from each student and have its country and L1 present while doing the activity.

Firstly the students will gather and make a circle. The teacher will show them different flags from around the world and ask them if anyone recognises them, this would be a good moment to show the flag from a student whose parents are from another country and get him/her to explain some curiosities about it. Once the students are familiar with the flags and have related them with a country, the teacher will introduce a typical greeting from each of the countries. For example:

- Catalan: Bon dia!
- Spanish: Bueno días!
- English: Good morning!
- French: Bonjour!
- Italian: Buongiorno!
- Finnish: Hyvä päivä!

But, it will be the students who will have to decide which expression corresponds to each country. Once it is clear, the following song can be played, better twice to stress the key structure “**Where are you from?**” to introduce the next game.

Song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I6A2EFkjXq4>

After the song, each student will be given one small flag of a country (from the previous ones). The objective of the game is that they can find the other student or students that come from the same country. To do so the following dialogue can be used:

S1: *[Greeting in the country language]*. Where are you from?

S2: *[Greeting in the country language]*. I am from *[country]*. Where are you from?

S1: I am from *[country]*.

When they find someone that comes from the same country, they can hold hands and go look for the other members. To help students remember the different structures they can be either posted around the class with flashcards or they can be written down in the blackboard.

Once the Unit has been presented, a world map can be hung in the classroom. The teacher can explain the students that from now on, when they travel to a country or they meet someone from another country, they can bring to the class a new word. Then, the new word can be translated into as many languages present in the class as possible. See annex 1 for an example.

TOPIC 2: Introducing me

Activity: Get to know me

This is a good topic to start 1st grade. Although students may know themselves from early-childhood, there are some schools that mix up students once they start primary or they might be new students coming in. The aim of this activity is to allow students to get to know their classmates, and, additionally, the teacher can benefit from this activity as s/he also gets to know in depth his/her students.

This activity can be done with two sets of materials.

- Multiple plastic bottles with a question mark at the bottom (one per group) and several jars with wooden sticks with personal questions written on them. See *annex 5 for an example*.
- Different dices with personal questions on each of the six faces. See *annex 7 for an example*.

Possible questions could be:

(Depending on the previous Units, more technical questions can be added)

- What's your name?
- How old are you?
- Where are you from?
- Where do you live?
- Which language do you speak?

The first thing to do with the students is to introduce the key structures that give answer to the questions they will be asking. According to the former questions, the structures could be:

- My name is ...
- I am ...
- I am from ...
- I live in ...
- I speak ...

Firstly, to put into practice the questions and the key expressions, the activity could be done in a big circle with all the students and the teacher to control and check that students use properly the structures. The teacher spins the bottle/rolls the dice and to whomever it is pointing to will be the one to answer the question. Another student will have to take out one stick and ask the question to the student. Probably students will have difficulties reading so, to make it easier some drawings can accompany the questions to help students understand what it says and, moreover, the teacher can help them. Afterwards, when every student understands the activity and the structures, they can divide into smaller groups so everyone has the chance to answer a question. The role of the teacher is to wander around the class and supervise that all groups are playing the activity properly and, as well, support them in case there are any doubts.

To conclude the activity, which could be done another day but changing the students' groups, we can ask the students to sit again in a circle. Then, again, some questions are taken out of the pot but this time, it has to be someone from the student's group that answers it. For example:

T: Where is Maria from?

S1: [*She is*] from Sweden.

T: Where does Pablo live?

S2: [*He lives*] in Barcelona.

TOPIC 3: Food

Activity: Elaborating menu

In this Unit we can work food vocabulary and some expressions such as:

- I like ... / I don't like ...
- My favourite food is ...

The following songs can be used to introduce the topic to the students:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=frN3nvhlHUK>

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ddDN30evKPc>

Before doing the activity the vocabulary words of food have to be practiced with the students. The menu activity has two different proposals:

1. Trilingual menu

The trilingual menu activity consists in dividing the students in small groups of 3-4 students and giving each group a different menu. Each menu has 3 different dishes (starter, main course and dessert) but each of them is written in a different language (*if there are other L1 in the classroom, a menu can be elaborated using that language and giving it to the correspondent student*). An example could be:

Starter: Sopa de galets.

Main course: Pollo con verduras

Dessert: Chocolate cake with strawberries and cream.

Once each group has the menu, they will have to rewrite it in English, the teacher can help them by offering cards or a template with the correct words, and elaborate the menu card. Then, the students will have to create each of the dishes with different craft materials to make it seem real. Afterwards, when each of the groups has its menu card and the dishes ready they will have to present it to the rest of the students in English. *See annex 4 for an example.*

2. Traditional menu

Connecting the activity with TOPIC 1: Around the world, students can be asked to prepare a traditional menu from one of the countries that they had worked. The teacher will offer them a menu with 3 different dishes (starter, main course and dessert). The dishes will be written in the official language of that country. This would be a good moment to elaborate a menu using the students' L1 (Spanish, Catalan or any other language). An example could be:

Starter: Salade avec des carottes, tomates, olives et oignon.

Main course: Poisson avec des légumes.

Dessert: Glacé au chocolat et vanille.

The functioning can be the same as the other proposal, *1. Trilingual menu*, students have to rewrite the menu in English in a cardboard as if it was the menu card. And then elaborate the 3 dishes using craft material. Once everything is set, each group has to present in front of the class their menu and get the classmates to find out from which country is it. To do so, when presenting the menu, students can say some of the words in the L1 of the country they are representing.

In order to do this activity, a lot of previous work has to be done. Specially, stressing on food vocabulary words and also introducing the vocabulary words in different L1. A good way could be with flashcards, guessing games, card games...

TOPIC 4: My body

Activity: Game session

The body unit is a perfect excuse for the students to learn vocabulary by doing and experimenting. In this unit, instead of introducing the key words with flashcards a good resource is to trace the silhouette of one of the students on a piece of wall paper and write the name of the different body parts. Students can be the ones who trace the words and decorate the body that later can be hung in the class. During the session, any time a student doesn't recall the name of a body part or s/he is not sure of how to spell, s/he can have a look at the mural.

To help students internalise the body parts different songs can be played, the following are an example:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1cqLp1RqHI8>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QkHQ0CYwjal>
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gS_Mz3ekkck

The aim of this session is to offer a variety of games with which students can practice the key words and structures of this unit: parts of the body, body aches... To do so, a variation of the following games can be fun for the students:

Memory – Two sets of cards can be elaborated:

- **Game 1:** The aim is to find two cards that depict the same body part (head – head, nose – nose). The student who finds that pair, can only take it if s/he is able to say right the name of the body part that the cards shows.
- **Game 2:** This game is for students who are more skilful in reading. There are two types of cards: those that show an image of a body part and the ones that have the name of the body parts. The aim is to match properly each body part with its name. As well, the student can only keep the card if s/he says and reads properly the name.

Bingo – The bingo activity is also known for the students. From the entire group there should be one volunteer who calls out the cards. The cards that the “caller” has can depict two different things:

- **Option 1:** If students are good readers, a whole sentence can be written down with the correct image to help students understand what it says. For example:
 - I have got a tummy ache.
 - I have got a sore throat.
 - I have got a runny nose.
- **Option 2:** If students still have difficulties with English reading, an image of a body part or a body ache can be put in the card and the “caller” will have to call out only the correct name or body ache. For example:

- Nose	- Leg
- Sore throat	- Earache

The other students will have each of them a template with different body parts and body aches in it and. So, while listening to the “caller”, they will have to place a “counter” (*fitxa del Parxís*) on the correct word. The first student to have the template completed, s/he will call “bingo” and s/he will get to be the “caller”.

Mimics – This type of activity is known for the students and they enjoy doing little theatres. To play this game a set of cards is needed. Again, the cards can show either a body ache or the word + the image of the body ache, depending on the group of students.

The game can be played in teams or as a whole group. If it is played in groups, a volunteer of each team has to represent the body ache and the members of his/her team have to guess it. If the team doesn't know, the other group has a chance to guess it. If it is played with the whole group, a volunteer comes to represent the action and the other students have to guess it. The student who gets it right can have a turn.

To practice, an example of structures that the students can say could be:

[S1 represent the card]

S2: Have you got a tummy ache?

S1: No, I haven't.

S3: Have you got a headache?

S1: Yes, I have.

To give each student an opportunity to participate, it would be better if the games were played in small groups.

TOPIC 5: Classroom objects

Activity: Creating a Poster

To introduce and present the name of the classroom objects to the students a story can be explained. An example would be **Jamie's Magic School Bag**. While the different classroom objects appear in the story different flashcards (picture + name of the object) can be shown. Later, the flashcards can be posted around the class. The best place would be where the classroom object usually is. Those students whose L1 is different can be asked to bring to the class the name of the most important objects (those that students use the most) in their language.

To consolidate their learning with the classroom objects, cooperatively students can elaborate a poster. The teacher will give each group a cardboard and images of the classroom objects. Students are the ones in charge of the poster organisation.

Depending on the students writing skills one of these two options can be selected:

OPTION A. The teacher offers the students a template with the name of the classroom objects in Catalan/Spanish and English to write them down in their poster, although they can also have a look from the flashcards around the class. As well they can add the name of the classroom objects in any of the other students' L1.

OPTION B. The teacher offers the students small cards with the name of the classroom objects in English and Catalan/Spanish so students can cut them and stick them in their poster. Students are free to write down the name of the classroom objects in any of the other students' L1.

With the whole group, they can decide which is the poster that they want to hang in the class and the others can be hung in the hallway or in another primary classroom. See annex 3 for an example of a poster.

5. MATERIAL AND PERSONAL RESOURCES

TOPIC 1: Around the world

- Big Flags cards and small Flags cards
- Flashcards with greetings in different languages
- Song: *"Where are you from?"* – *Maple Leaf Learning*

TOPIC 2: Introducing me

- Plastic bottles with "?"
- Jars with wooden sticks with questions on them.
- Paper dices with personal questions.

TOPIC 3: Food

- Songs: *"Do you like Broccoli Ice-cream?"* / *"Do you like spaghetti yogurt?"* – *Super Simple Songs*
- Menus (1 / group)
- Craft materials
- Cardboards (1 / group)

TOPIC 4: My body

- Wallpaper
- Bingo materials.
- Memory cards.
- Mimic cards.

TOPIC 5: Classroom objects

- Jamie's magic school bag
- Pictures of the classroom objects
- Template with the name of the objects
- Cardboards (1 / group)

6. ASSESSMENT

To check if the objectives have been achieved two different proposals of assessment have been selected. The first one is an overall assessment of the action plan that needs to be done at the end of the 1st key stage. Nevertheless, in order to improve the effectiveness of the action plan two assessment periods have to be determined. The first assessment should be conducted at the end of 1st grade and the second one, at the end of 2nd grade. The following assessment grid has been elaborated to ease its evaluation:

Assessment grid

The student ...	Good	Average	Poor
Adapts his/her linguistic repertoire according to the situation.			
Is aware of some similarities and differences between his/her mother tongue and English.			
Interacts in class using English as much as possible.			
Feels comfortable and relaxed during English class knowing that s/he can use his/her L1.			
Relates what s/he knows in his/her L1 with what s/he is learning in English.			
Puts into practice his/her linguistic background when learning English.			
Shows respects and interest towards other cultures and languages.			
<i>Observations:</i>			

To guarantee that this action plan tries to benefit all students, the two grid assessments will have to be conducted to each student individually. This way a better insight on its strengths and weakness can be extracted. The results from both assessments will be slightly different as the 2nd time the assessment is conducted students should have more *good* items as their plurilingual competence had been boosted for two consecutive years.

The other proposal is taken from Gail Prasad's doctoral dissertation¹ on children's plurilingualism in English and French schools. She developed a dynamic that consisted in asking some primary students to draw their face and as well to represent their linguistic background in their brain to see how languages interact among them and how and where are they located in the brain (in the same compartment, separately, connected, etc.). To conduct the assessment, at the beginning of 1st grade, students can be asked to represent their languages according to Prasad's instructions. First it would be a good idea to ask them how many languages do they know. Once students have done their designs, the teacher collects them all. By the end of 2nd grade, once the action plan's period is finished, the teacher asks the students to represent again their linguistic repertoire in a new design. With both representations, the teacher can observe how students once understood and understand how languages work and how are they organised in their brain. *See annex 6 for an example of children's representations.*

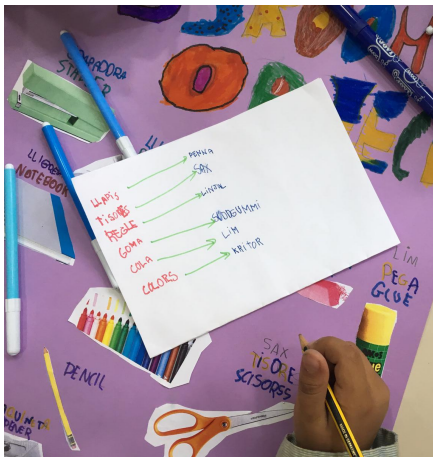
¹ Link to Gail Prasad's website - <https://www.iemplurilingual.com/>

7. ANNEX

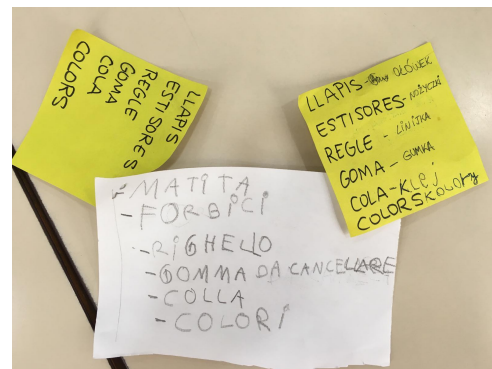
Annex 1: Word map



Annex 2: Classroom objects names in different languages



English - Swedish



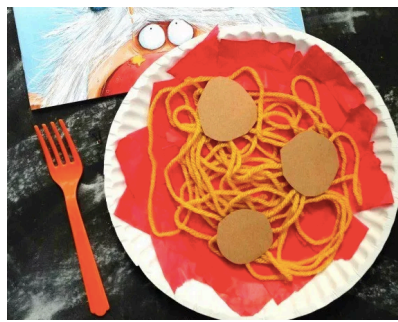
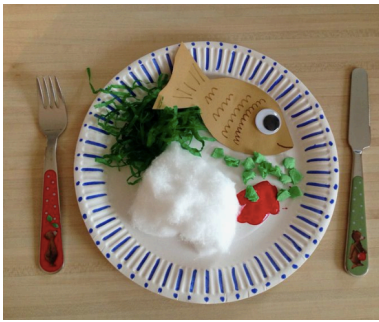
English - Italian

English - Polish

Annex 3: Classroom object Poster written in English and Polish

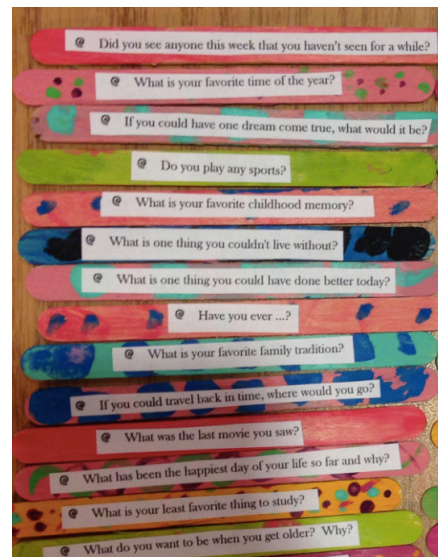


Annex 4: Crafted menus



Extracted from Pinterest.

Annex 5: Jar of questions



Extracted from Pinterest.

The questions should be adapted to the students' level.

Annex 6: Gail Prasad's study on children plurilingualism



Extracted from Prasad's website.

Annex 7: Dice of questions

Which
LANGUAGES
do you
speak?

What's
your
NAME?

How **OLD**
are you?

Where
are you
FROM?

Where do
you
LIVE?

What's
your
favourite
colour?

