

## Immersion in Language

In his book<sup>1</sup> Brian Cambourne suggests essential conditions of learning. The first of these is 'immersion'. What do we understand by that in the context of reading in the foreign language?

- In our classrooms we can provide a language-rich environment that connects with the real-life experiences, needs and purposes of young people. We can surround them with print in the form of:
  - posters
  - the days of the week and the months of the year
  - a weather chart
  - a scribbling board for messages from the teacher and pupils
  - labels, tickets, signs, e.g. *il est interdit de manger en classe*.
- When we present new language, we can show the written form at the same time, pointing out common pronunciation features, for example:
  - *il pleut/quelle heure est-il?*
  - *es schneit/wie heißt du?*
- We can provide language and memory support all around the classroom, for example a large sentence maker (Breakthrough to Literacy). As new language is taught/encountered a corresponding card is made of the language and displayed on the sentence maker. In this way pupils are reminded about known words because they are on display and they can use the word bank to help in their reading, writing, listening and speaking.
- We can provide a reading corner where pupils can select reading materials from a wide range of genres that connect with their interests, for example well-known stories, rhymes, poems, magazines, commercially produced readers and non-fiction text downloaded from the internet. Audio recordings can accompany these where possible.

Brian Cambourne also speaks about 'demonstrations' given freely and without limit by those around the child. How does that translate into teaching strategies in the classroom?

- We can show our own enthusiasm for reading and demonstrate that we consider reading an important and valued part of foreign language learning by reading our own books with the pupils as they select something to read in the reading corner.
- We can model our own strategies as we read, for example 'Now where did I see the word "*fromage*" before? Oh yes, it's on the poster about French cheeses.' or 'What about this word that ends in "*-ment* ..."? That's probably an adverb because many adverbs do end in "*-ment*", for example "*finaleme<sup>nt</sup>, heureuseme<sup>nt</sup>, lenteme<sup>nt</sup>*".' or 'I think this text is going to be

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<sup>1</sup> Cambourne, B., *The Whole Story: Natural Learning and the Acquisition of Literacy in the Classroom*, New Zealand: Ashton Scholastic, 1988

about special occasions in Germany because I see the words “*Weihnacht*” and “*Oster*” and I know they mean “Christmas” and “Easter”.’ or ‘What a long word! But if I break it down into smaller parts, I’ll maybe be able to work out what it means, for example ...’.

- We can encourage the pupils to follow text with their fingers as we are reading it, helping them to make the word–sound connection.
- We can have fun with letters, phonics and words.

## Letters, phonics and word activities

*Phonological awareness is best developed through traditional activities such as nursery rhymes and word games.*

McMillan, G. and Leslie, M., *The Early Intervention Handbook: Intervention in Literacy*, The City of Edinburgh Council, 1998

The emphasis in the following activities is on having fun with letters, phonics and words. In the process the pupils will be fine-tuning their phonological awareness. While this is a purely oral skill, it is also an important predictor of how well children will learn to read and spell.

Over a period of time the following activities can be introduced. We:

1. start with letter recognition
2. move on to recognition of phonic groupings
3. play a game of ‘I-Spy’
4. learn some rhymes and poems
5. introduce a story linked to (a) a curricular theme being studied in class or (b) a particular linguistic area
6. work on non-fiction text.

### 1. Letter recognition

- The [‘letter-snake’](#) should be photocopied on to card, each line cut out and sellotaped together to form a ‘snake’, like this.

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a | b | c | d | é | f | g | h | i | j | l | m | n | o | p | r | s | t | v | z |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

- Each group of two or three pupils is given a ‘snake’ and a clothes peg.
- The activity should be presented in the form of a game or competition. The first person to recognise the onset letter of the word and pin their clothes peg on the correct letter wins a point for their team.
- As you can see, the words chosen come from a wide range of language contexts. If you prefer, you can limit the words to those that the children have already encountered or are about to encounter.

The foreign language required by the teacher is provided in French and German with some suggestions for the words that might be used.

## French

- Alors les enfants, mettez-vous dans des groupes de trois.
- Chaque groupe a une épingle et un serpent à lettres.
- Ecoutez bien les mots que je dis, et épinglez la première lettre du mot.
- Par exemple: si je dis le mot '*lion*', vous épinglez la lettre '*l*'
- Tout le monde a compris?
- Alors, je commence!

## L'abécédaire pour l'activité

- a: ananas, abricot, américain, alphabet, actif, agréable, amande, avocat  
 b: bébé, balançoire, baleine, belle, blanc, bleu, beau, bulle  
 c: calendrier, couleur, corps, cri, colère, cardigan, cravate, crayon  
 d: dessiner, directrice, dent, danser, date, difficile, direct, doucement  
 e: éléphant, école, éducation, église, élastique, élève, escargot, escalier  
 f: ferme, femme, fenêtre, froid, famille, fête, feu, feuille, frite  
 g: grand, gros, gris, gant, garage, gage, galoper, garçon, gauche  
 h: homme, hôpital, hôtel, hibou, hérisson, hibou, habiter, hippopotame  
 i: il, idée, idéal, imaginer, imiter, immeuble, innocent, italien, ivre  
 j: jeune, jaune, je, jazz, jardin, jambe, japonais, joli, jeu, jouet  
 l: long, lentement, lancer, lit, lampe, langue, lapin, lait, livre  
 m: méchant, mignon, marron, malade, mur, maintenant, maman, manger  
 n: noir, nounours, nuit, nager, nièce, Noël, nord, neuf, novembre  
 o: orange, olive, occupé, opération, opinion, orchestre, oreille  
 p: petit, pomme, poire, prune, page, papier, pingouin, parents  
 r: rouge, raisin, rang, rapide, rose, rectangle, règle, répéter, rideau  
 s: souris, sac, sable, salade, sale, serpent, singe, semaine, sel  
 t: tortue, tarte, table, tennis, tu, trois, trente, tabouret, téléphone  
 v: vert, violet, vache, vase, vélo, vendredi, vin, vent, village  
 z: zèbre, zoo, zéro, zut, zodiaque

## German

- Also Kinder, macht bitte Gruppen! Drei in jeder Gruppe!
- Jede Gruppe hat eine Stecknadel und eine Buchstabenschlange.
- Hört gut an, welches Wort ich sage, und stecht den ersten Buchstaben dieses Wortes!
- Zum Beispiel: Wenn ich das Wort „Löwe“ sage, stecht ihr den Buchstaben „L“.
- Habt ihr alle verstanden?
- Also, ich fange an!

## Das A-B-C für die Aufgabe

A/a: Apfel, Angst, aber, Abend, Abzug, acht, Adventskalender, Afrika,  
 B/b: Bäcker, Badezimmer, Bahnhof, Bank, beide, Bein, Birne, blau  
 D/d: drei, da, dein, danke, Dame, dänisch, das, Datum, Deutsch  
 E/e: echt, Ecke, elastisch, Elefant, elf, Eltern, Ende, Entschuldigung  
 F/f: Fahrkarte, frei, falsch, Familie, Farbe, fast, faul, Februar  
 G/g: ganz, Garten, Geld, Geburtstag, geben, gelb, Giraffe, Gruppe  
 H/h: halb, Haar, Hand, Hamburger, Harmonika, Heftklammer, heiße  
 I/i: ich, ideal, Igel, immer, Irland, ist, Italien  
 J/j: ja, Jacke, Jahr, jetzt, Jugendherberge, Juli, Junge, jede  
 K/k: Kaffee, Kairo, kaputt, Karte, Kinder, Kirche, klein, Knie, krank  
 L/l: Laden, Lama, Land, lang, langsam, langweilig, Lehrer, leider  
 M/m: mit, mein, manchmal, Marmelade, mehr, Messer, minus  
 N/n: Nachmittag, Nacht, nein, Name, Nashorn, nebelig, normalerweise  
 O/o: Ober, offen, ohne, Ohr, Oktober, Oma, Oster, oval  
 P/p: Papagei, Parfüm, Pause, Papier, Pfeffer, Pfennig, Pinsel, plötzlich  
 Q/q: Quadrat, Qualität, Quark, Quiz  
 R/r: Rad, Radiergummi, Radio, Rathaus, Raupe, rechts, Regel, Ruhe  
 S/s: Sahne, Salat, Salz, See, Seife, Sekunde, Sonne, super  
 T/t: Tag, Tanz, Taxi, Telefon, Temperatur, Tiger, Tomate, tot  
 U/u: und, um, Umlaut, unbequem, Uhr, Urlaub, USA  
 V/v: Vater, verboten, Vergißmeinnicht, Verkehr, voll, Volksschule  
 W/w: wie, Wasser, Wagen, warm, wann, Wand, wo, Wochenende  
 Z/z: zahlen, Zahn, zwei, zehn, Zeitung, Zimmer, Zitrone, Zug

## 2. Phonic recognition

- The [‘phonic-snake’](#) should be photocopied on to card, each line cut out and sellotaped together to form a ‘snake’, like this.

|     |     |            |            |     |     |       |     |             |                |
|-----|-----|------------|------------|-----|-----|-------|-----|-------------|----------------|
| -oi | -eu | -an/<br>en | in/<br>ain | -ou | -qu | -tion | -ai | -au/<br>eau | -eil/<br>eille |
|-----|-----|------------|------------|-----|-----|-------|-----|-------------|----------------|

- Each group of two or three pupils is given a ‘snake’ and a clothes peg.
- The activity should be presented in the form of a game or competition. The first person to recognise the phonic grouping in the word and pin their clothes peg on the correct phonic grouping, wins a point for their team.
- As you can see, the words chosen come from a wide range of language contexts. If you prefer, you can limit the words to those that the children have already encountered or are about to encounter.

The foreign language required by the teacher is provided in French and German with some suggestions for the words that might be used.

## French

- Alors les enfants, maintenant prenez le serpent à groupements phoniques.
- Ecoutez bien les mots que je dis, et épinglez le groupement phonique que vous entendez.
- Par exemple: si je dis le mot, 'moi', vous épinglez le groupement -OI.
- Tout le monde a compris?
- Alors, je commence!

### Des suggestions pour les différents groupements phonique

- oi: moi, toi, au revoir, poire, foire, fois, voilà, trois, poisson, doigt, froid
- eu: deux, bleu, feu, jeu, peu, heure, fleur, jeune, déjeuner
- an/en: enfant, grand, éléphant, charmant, vlan, vent, dentiste, enlever, France
- in/ain: vin, lapin, pain, grain, nain, pingouin, singe, vilain, main
- ou: sous, nounours, pouce, douce, ours, joue, cou, coude
- qu: qui, que, disque, queue, quatorze, quatre, quel, quiche
- tion: nationalité, équitation, observation, natation, formation, opération
- ai: mais, lait, j'ai, frais, craie, crayon, maison
- au/eau: bateau, chapeau, chameau, eau, crapaud, auberge, gâteau

## German

- Also Kinder, nehmt jetzt die Schlange mit den phonetischen Gruppierungen!
- Hört gut an, welches Wort ich sage und stecht die phonetische Gruppierung an, die ihr hört!
- Zum Beispiel: Wenn ich das Wort, „blau“ sage, stecht ihr die Gruppierung, „au“.
- Habt ihr alle verstanden?
- Also, ich fange an!

### Phonetischen Gruppierungen

- ei: zwei, Arbeit, Preis, Ei, eins, einmal, Seite, schreiben, heiß, reich, Reihe, Reim, Seife, Schweiz, Speisekarte
- ie: vier, Fliege, Knie, schwierig, wiedersehen, wieviel, siebzehn, Spiegel, Tiergarten, Viertel, vierzig, ziemlich
- au: Haus, Baum, Daumen, genau, Hauptbahnhof, kaufen, laut, Maus, Mauer, Pause, Raum, Raupe
- ö: öffentlich, öffnen, Olivenöl, persönlich, nördlich, nötig, Körper, plötzlich, möchte, Röcke
- ü: über, südlich, rührig, Rüssel, Frühstück, Füller, natürlich, fünfzen, Nüsse, pünktlich,
- ä: Plätze, Aktivität, erzählen, Mädchen, selbstverständlich, Länder, Späße, spät

### 3. Phonic clouds<sup>2</sup>

There are many combinations of letters that form particular sounds. The sounds are frequently different from those in English and can cause some concern to children. For example: *-oi*, *-en/an* *-eu*, *-in/ain* in French; *-ej*, *-ie*, *-au* in German.

At the earliest stage, we cut out a cloud shape with the phonic grouping written on both sides and suspend it from the ceiling of the classroom (hence the name phonic cloud). On each occasion that a word containing the particular phonic grouping is encountered, a child writes out the word on another cloud shape cut-out, highlights the phonic grouping as it appears in the word, and hangs it from the stem cloud. So for example, with the phonic groupings *-eu* and *-ie* we could have the following clouds.



These phonic clouds are then a permanent aide-mémoire for the children to which they can refer in their reading. When we feel confident that the children have mastered that particular phonic grouping, a poster can be devised for a more permanent classroom display. There is no suggestion that we need systematically present all possible phonic groupings at the one time, but we can nonetheless make quite explicit the difficulties that the children will encounter and provide them with a strategy for overcoming these difficulties.

<sup>2</sup> Text adapted from pp. 80–81 of Frost and Driscoll, *Teaching Modern Languages in the Primary School*, Routledge, March 1999, ISBN 0 415 18383 9, price £16.99. This publication may be purchased through Taylor and Francis, [www.tandf.co.uk/www.eBookstore.tandf.co.uk](http://www.tandf.co.uk/www.eBookstore.tandf.co.uk)

## Other Activities

### 1. I-Spy

In this activity the emphasis is still on fun and stress-free learning. Classroom objects are the focus of this activity.

Word cards should be prepared in advance to correspond to the objects being guessed, for example:

Buch

Radiergummi

crayon

rétroprojecteur

When the pupils guess the word, the card is shown and again, and opportunities are created to focus on spelling, phonics, intonation, etc.

#### French

Je vois du coin de l'oeil quelque chose qui commence par la lettre ...

#### German

Ich sehe etwas, was mit ... beginnt

### 2. Rhymes and poems

There is a wealth of rhymes and poems that are tried and tested over the years. A large selection of these can be found on the following website: [www.momes.net](http://www.momes.net)

Here are two comptines. The first one is particularly useful for rhyming pronunciation. The second one is a nonsense rhyme that children have enjoyed illustrating and reading aloud.

#### (i) Un éléphant blanc

Un éléphant blanc  
marche devant  
un éléphant vert  
marche derrière  
trois éléphants bleus  
marchent au milieu  
enfants d'éléphants  
marchez bien en rang  
ran plan plan

#### (ii) Une fourmi de dix-huit mètres

Une fourmi de dix-huit mètres  
avec un chapeau sur la tête  
ça n'existe pas, ça n'existe pas.  
Une fourmi traînant un char  
plein de pingouins et de canards  
ça n'existe pas, ça n'existe pas.  
Une fourmi parlant français  
parlant latin et javanais  
ça n'existe pas, ça n'existe pas.  
eh! et pourquoi pas?

Robert Desnos (éditions Gründ)

### 3. Short story: Le Gros Gourmand

The following short story has been used successfully with classes ranging from P5 to S2. It can be used to complement work in 'Health' (Healthy Living) or as a free-standing unit linked to 'The House'. The language areas and skills covered are:

- items of furniture
- affective language
- likes and dislikes
- positional language
- extended speaking.

The following diagram shows how the story of Le Gros Gourmand can help to develop knowledge, understanding and skills across a range of strands with the four attainment outcomes.

#### Story: Le Gros Gourmand

##### **Listening for information and instructions**

- presentation strategies for new language (v. list)
- classroom organisation
- jeu de devinettes
- listen and draw

##### **Listening for enjoyment**

- story of Le Gros Gourmand
- matching text to visual

##### **Speaking to convey information**

- question and answer session around the visuals

##### **Speaking about experiences, feelings and opinions**

- discussion of likes and dislikes of food
- discussion of healthy/unhealthy foods

##### **Reading for enjoyment**

- reading of Le Gros Gourmand + audio cassette

##### **Reading for information**

- reading of recipe
- non-fiction text on healthy living

##### **Writing imaginatively/to entertain**

- adapt story/change the end of the story
- write speech bubbles
- poster to advocate healthy eating

## Resources

- Visuals for the story
- Flashcards for items of furniture
- Flashcards for food
- Mini-visuals for listening and drawing activity
- Word bank for story

## Visuals

1. Voici Clément. Regardez! Il est gourmand.
2. Il adore les gâteaux ... les gâteaux au chocolat, les gâteaux à la crème.
3. Aujourd'hui il y a un grand gâteau au chocolat dans la grande armoire de maman. Mais Clément est trop petit.
4. D'abord il essaie de monter sur l'armoire mais ça ne marche pas! Clément est trop petit.
  - Ah zut! dit Clément.
5. Ensuite il prend une table. Il monte sur la table mais ça ne marche toujours. Clément est toujours trop petit.
  - Ah zut! dit Clément.
6. Puis, il prend une chaise. Il monte sur la chaise qui est sur la table mais ça ne marche toujours pas. Clément est toujours trop petit.
  - Ah zut! dit Clément.
7. Maintenant Clément prend un tabouret. Il monte sur le tabouret qui est sur la chaise qui est sur la table mais ça ne marche toujours pas. Clément est toujours trop petit.
  - Ah zut! dit Clément.
8. Enfin Clément prend une boîte. Il monte sur la boîte qui est sur le tabouret qui est sur la chaise qui est sur la table et ... ça marche!
  - Youpi! crie Clément.
9. Mais tout d'un coup tout cela change. La boîte, le tabouret, la chaise ... et Clément tombent ....
10. ... vlan ... avec le gâteau!
11. Et Clément tombe dans le gâteau!
12. Aïe, aïe, aïe! Que va dire maman?

## Sentence Maker and Word bank

Words/phrases should be photo-enlarged and cut out on card. They should be set out in the following categories. Working in pairs/groups, the children select cards from the categories and make up sentences on the large sentence maker – rather like a holder for tiles in the game of Scrabble! This may involve them in deciding on the correct adjective, for example, or the correct part of the verb. Once a sentence has been made, the children read the sentence aloud and may opt to record themselves saying the sentence or write it into a jotter.

## Nouns

|                         |             |                        |          |           |
|-------------------------|-------------|------------------------|----------|-----------|
| Clément                 | Clémentine  | maman                  | Il       | Elle      |
| les gâteaux au chocolat |             | les gâteaux à la crème |          |           |
| l'armoire de maman      |             | un gâteau au chocolat  |          |           |
| une chaise              | la chaise   | une table              | la table | une boîte |
| la boîte                | un tabouret | le tabouret            |          |           |

**Note:** you can make similar word cards for clothes worn by Clément/Clémentine and for physical descriptions.

## Verbs/verbal phrases

|       |         |     |       |            |                   |       |       |
|-------|---------|-----|-------|------------|-------------------|-------|-------|
| Voici | Il y a  | est | monte | Ça marche! | Ça ne marche pas! |       |       |
| tombe | tombent | dit | aime  | adore      | il y a            | prend | C'est |

## Prepositions

|     |      |           |
|-----|------|-----------|
| sur | dans | par terre |
|-----|------|-----------|

## Connectors

|    |      |     |
|----|------|-----|
| et | mais | qui |
|----|------|-----|

## Affective expressions

|         |           |                |
|---------|-----------|----------------|
| Ah zut! | Oh mince! | Aïe, aïe, aïe! |
|---------|-----------|----------------|

## Adverbs

|         |         |            |      |            |       |
|---------|---------|------------|------|------------|-------|
| D'abord | Ensuite | Maintenant | Puis | Après cela | Enfin |
|         |         | trop       | très | assez      |       |

## Adjectives

|           |           |       |        |       |        |
|-----------|-----------|-------|--------|-------|--------|
| gourmand  | gourmande | petit | petite | grand | grande |
| délicieux |           |       |        |       |        |