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Addressing home languages in early (foreign) language learning: empirical results and teaching perspectives

EAL conference: "Enhancing EAL support: opportunities and best practices"
University of Leeds
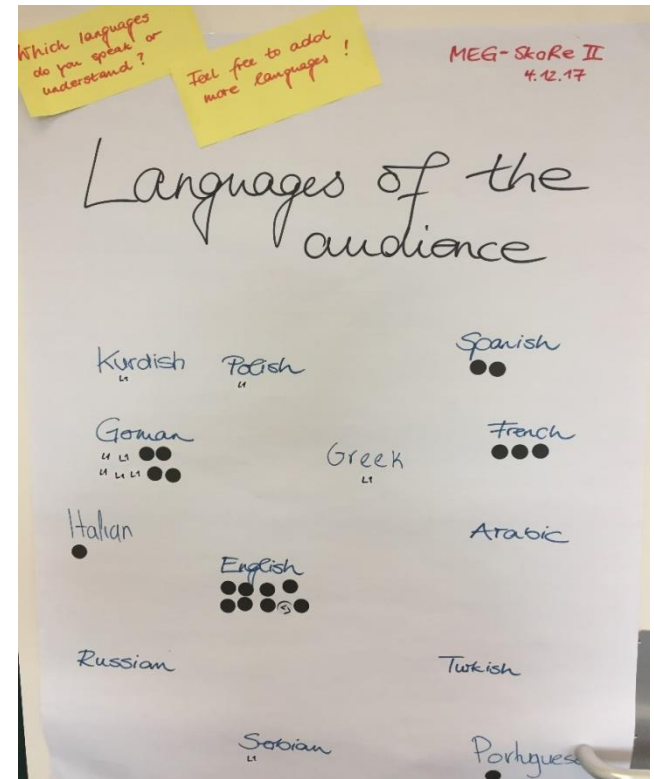
Jenny Jakisch, 6 July, 2019

My background

Language teacher (German and English, secondary level)

PhD project: data from teachers and learners (views on multilingualism and ELT)

MEG-SKoRe project: teaching English at primary level

Getting started

- How did you go about positioning yourself on the poster?

- How do you find out about the language situation of groups you are working with?

- Do you consider yourself multilingual?

- (Where) Have you come across multilingualism?

Outline

Introduction

– *How can we find out about the language situation of a group?*

Empirical results

– *What do we know about the role of home languages in foreign language learning?*

Teaching perspectives

– *How can home languages be integrated into the teaching of modern foreign languages?*

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Outline

Introduction

– *How can we find out about the language situation of a group?*

Empirical results

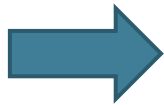– *What do we know about the role of home languages in foreign language learning?*
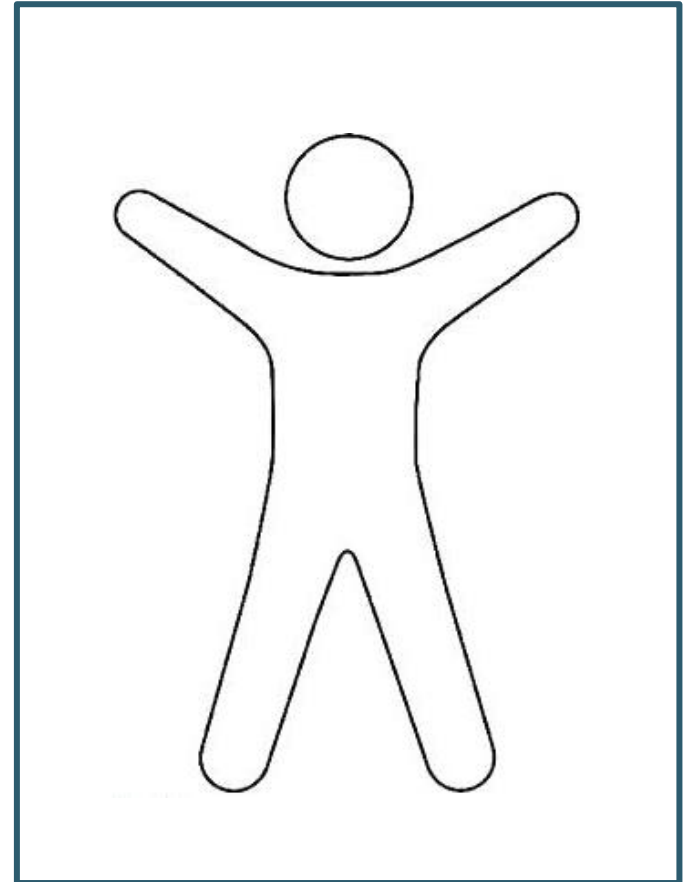
Teaching perspectives

– *How can home languages be integrated into the teaching of modern foreign languages?*

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Making home languages visible

Creating language portraits
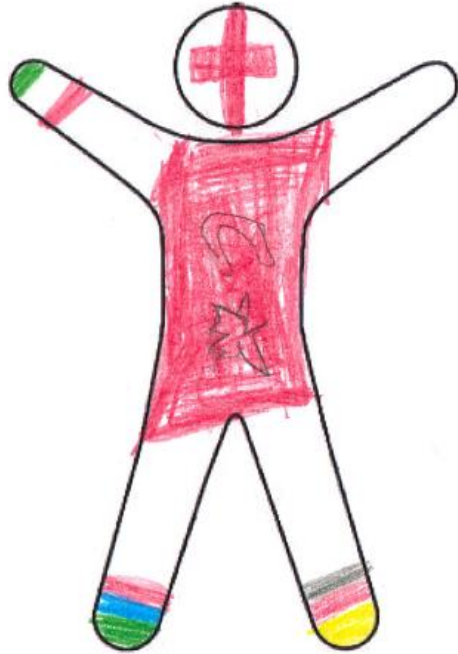(e.g. Krumm / Jenkins, 2001,
Krumm, 2003)

**Draw your languages into the
figure. Explain.**

Making home languages visible

Male deine Sprachen in die Figur. Erkläre.

Meine Elter kommen aus Sudan. Doort spricht man arabisch Ich lebe in Deutschland, Ich habe früher Schweizerdeutsch und Französich gelernt. Ich esse gerne Pizza und ich habe türkische Freunde und ich liebe Englisch

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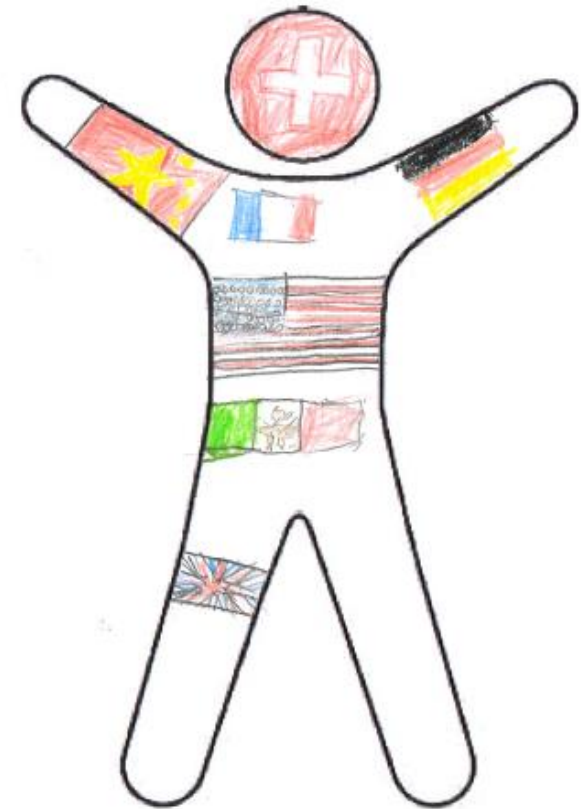
The German context

Multilingualism in Germany

- 1/3 of children have a migration background (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2016)

- most common heritage languages: Turkish, Polish, Russian and Arabic (Ekinci & Günesli, 2016)

- instruction in home languages is optional and depends on provision across states and availability in different regions

EFL Teaching in Germany

- English instruction usually starts in grade 3

- 2 x 45 min lessons per week in primary school (grade 1-4)

- two foreign languages mandatory for A-levels

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Home languages and multilingualism

Multilingual children:

- CEFR: being able to communicate in more than one foreign language (M+2; plurilingualism)

- in the context of our project:
  children who have aquired an additional language (L1) other than L2 (e.g. German) before learning a foreign language in an institutional context (L3) (i.e. English at primary school)

Multilingual advantages in foreign language learning?

Bilingual Societies (Canada, Spain, Switzerland)

- multilingual learners have advantages learning a foreign language
  (e.g. Swain et al., 1990; Langabaster, 2000; Sanz, 2005; for an overview see: Cenoz, 2013)

Migration Contexts

- no difference between mono- and multilingual students
  (Sanders & Meijers, 1995; Schoonen et al., 2002; Groot-Wilken, Engel & Thürmann, 2007; Wilden & Porsch, 2013; May, 2006; Thomas, 1988)

- multilingual students have a **disadvantage** in foreign language learning
  (Elsner, 2007; van Gelderen et al., 2003)

- multilingual students have an **advantage** in foreign language learning
  (DESI: Hesse, Hartig, & Göbel, 2008; ELEMENT: Maluch et al., 2015)

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The MEG-SKoRe project

"Linguistic and cognitive resources of multilingualism in the acquisition of English in primary school"

1st phase: Finding the factors

How does multilingualism influence English language acquisition in primary school?

(2014-2017, Grant No. 01JM1401)

2nd phase: Using the factors

How can multilingual students' individual resources be promoted in the early English classroom?

(2017-2020, Grant No. 01JM1702A/B)

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What do we know about the role of home languages in foreign language learning?

MEG-SKoRe I: Results

- multilingual group performs less well than group of monolingual students

- **multilingualism** has as a **positive influence** on English grammar and lexicon if structural, institutional and cognitive variables are controlled for

- home languages can become relevant as an **individual resource** for the acquisition of vocabulary and grammar

- factors that contribute to foreign language achievement for both **minority and majority-language** students:

  - proficiency in the home language

  - phonological awareness ($\rightarrow$ metalinguistic skills)

  - (attitude towards multilingualism)

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> **How can multilingual students' individual resources be promoted in the early English classroom?**

Intervention study (6 months):

Participants

4 schools in the area of Braunschweig, Germany: 4th grade, 128 students

Experimental group: implementation of multilingual teaching approach with focus on students' multilingual background and metalinguistic (phonological) awareness in EFL

Control group: target language only (i.e. English)

Pre-/Post-test design

Your turn!

1) Which word is the German word? Circle.

1. (Fußball)   fotboll

2. cheval   Pferd

3. Saxofon   ساكسفون

4. cykel   Fahrrad

5. kochen   cocinero

6. Ente   ördek

7. danse   tanzen

8. skaten   skate

2) Which languages are the other words from?

Solutions

1. Fußball	fotboll
	Swedish
2. cheval	Pferd
French	
3. Saxofon	ساكسفون
	Arabic
4. cykel	Fahrrad
Swedish	

Solutions

5. kochen	cocinero *Spanish*
6. Ente	ördek *Turkish*
3. danse *French*	tanzen
4. skaten	skate *English*

MEG-SKoRe II: Aims

Integrating home languages without compromising English language skills

Developing multilingual language (learning) awareness
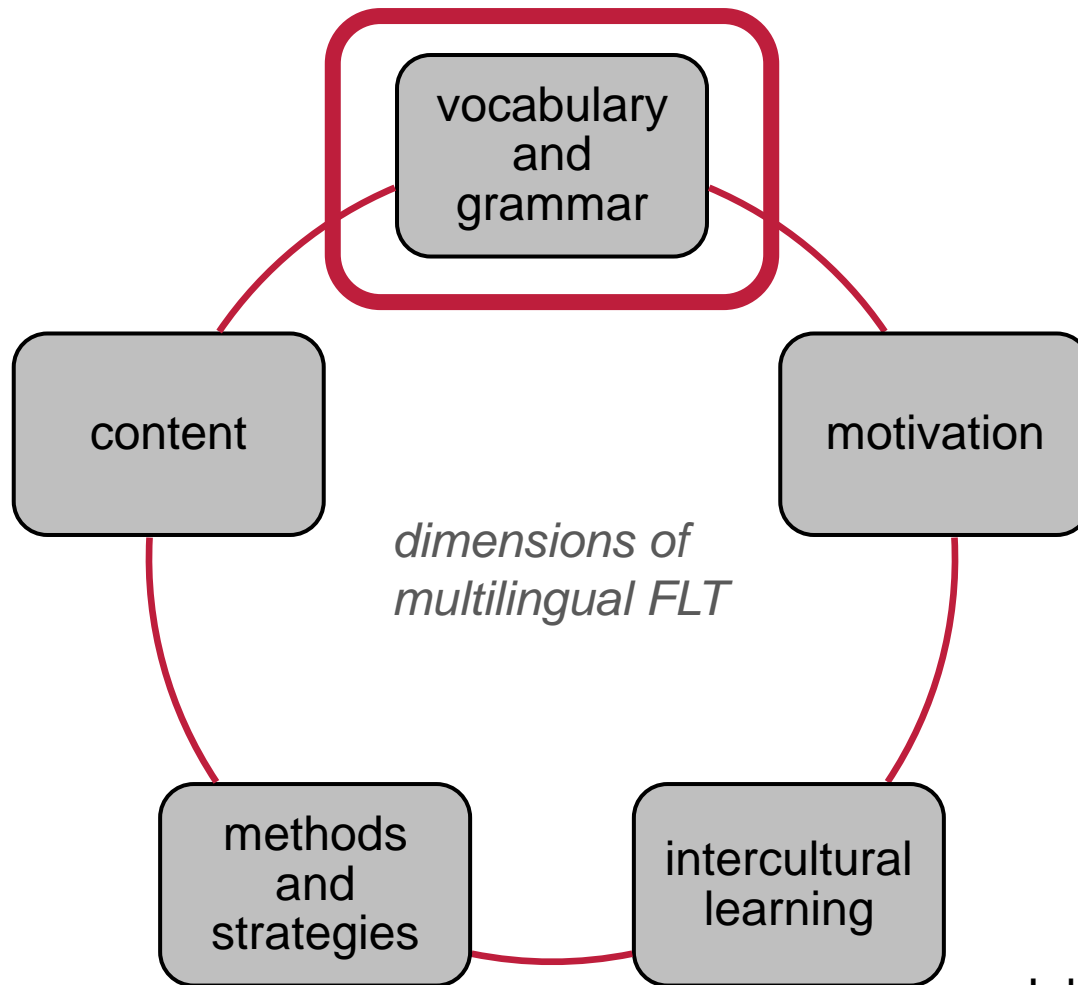
Appreciating language diversity

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Integrating home languages

What to keep in mind:

- development of school- and group-specific multilingual concepts

- integration of familiar task types and utilization of existing materials & expertise (course book, familiar rituals/games)

- optionality: do not exploit home language speakers as "experts" (often they are not!)

- addressing all learners: offer moderate learning scenarios for all students (mono- and multilingual) e.g. by using a mediating language (in our case: Swedish)
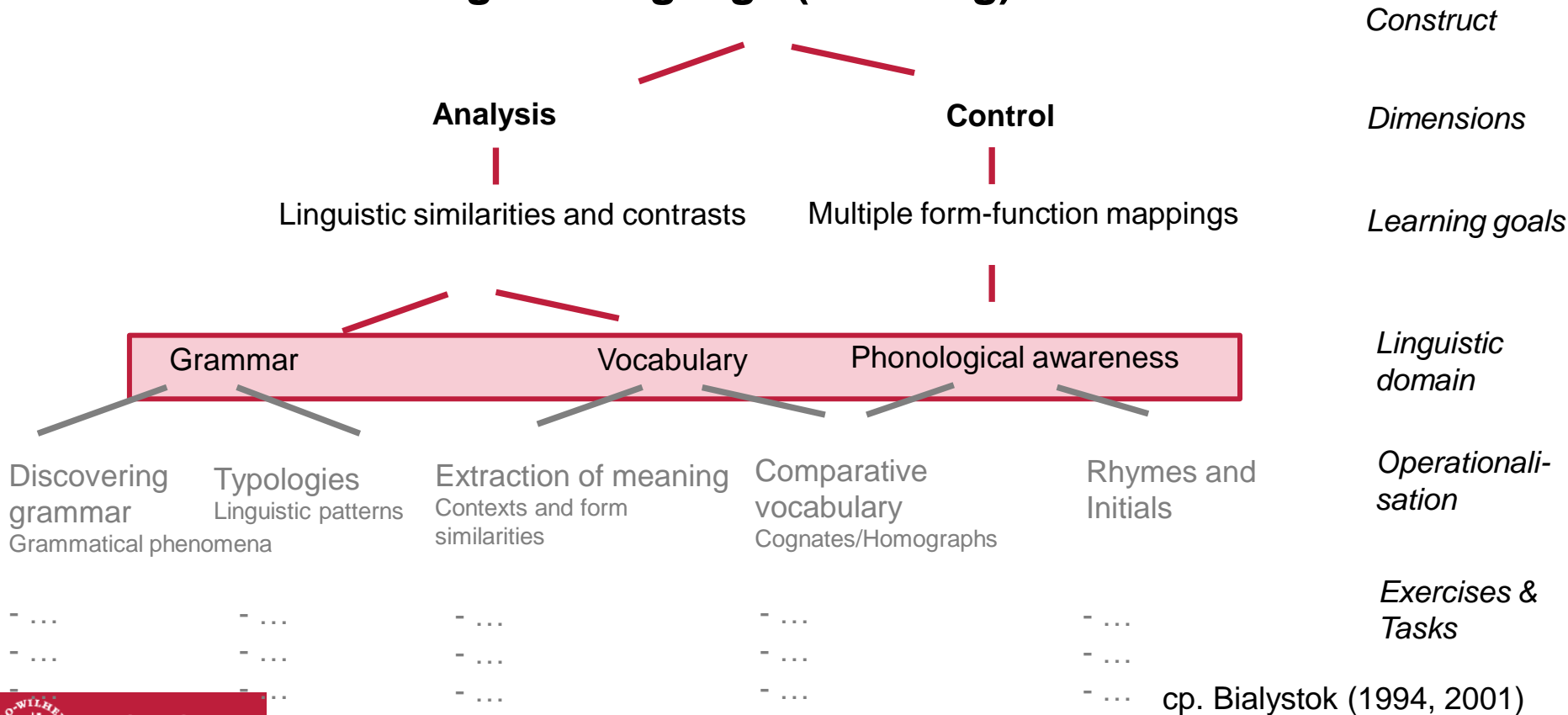
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Addressing home languages

vocabulary and grammar

content

motivation

dimensions of multilingual FLT

methods and strategies

intercultural learning

Jakisch (2015: 91)

Framework of multilingual language (learning) awareness

Multilingual Language (Learning) Awareness

Construct

Analysis **Control**

Dimensions

Linguistic similarities and contrasts   Multiple form-function mappings

Learning goals

| Grammar | Vocabulary | Phonological awareness |

Linguistic domain

Discovering grammar
Grammatical phenomena

Typologies
Linguistic patterns

Extraction of meaning
Contexts and form similarities

Comparative vocabulary
Cognates/Homographs

Rhymes and Initials

Operationali-sation

- …
- …
- …

- …
- …
- …

- …
- …
- …

- …
- …
- …

- …
- …
- …

Exercises & Tasks

cp. Bialystok (1994, 2001)

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Types of activities and their number

Vocabulary	
– Comparative/multilingual oral vocabulary expansion	6
– Comparative/multilingual written vocabulary expansion using posters	5
– Comparative/multilingual vocabulary activities	3
– Extraction of meaning in stories	1
Phonological awareness	
– Substitution of initial sounds	4
– Segmentation of syllables	2
– Identification of initial sounds	4
– Identification of rhymes	5
– Production of rhymes	1
Language Comparisons / Grammar	
– Forms of address	1
– Capitalisation in orthography	1
– Wh-questions	1
– Adverb placement	1
– Two-digit numbers (order of tens and units)	1

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Addressing home languages

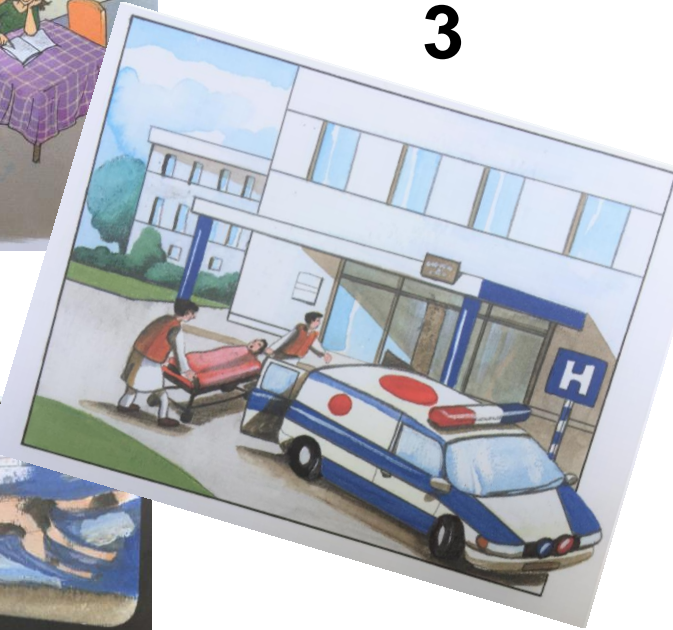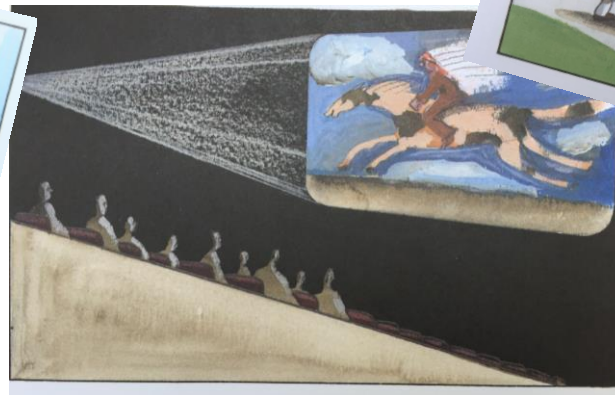| Vocabulary |
|---|
| Comparative/multilingual oral vocabulary expansion |
| Comparative/multilingual written vocabulary expansion using posters |
| Comparative/multilingual vocabulary activities |
| Extraction of meaning in stories |

Your turn!

1

2

3

4

5

Comparative/multilingual oral vocabulary expansion

Lesson 1: Comparative/multilingual oral vocabulary expansion

- *What is it in other languages?*

Lesson 2: Comparative/multilingual written vocabulary expansion using posters

- *What can you see?*

- *Which words belong together?*

    (→ mapping wordcards from different languages to English words)

Follow-up lessons: Comparative/multilingual vocabulary activities

- *Circle the English words.*

- *Match.*

- *…*

Comparative/multilingual written vocabulary expansion

Gerngross / Puchta / Becker 2013

Comparative/multilingual vocabulary activities

MATCH THE WORDS.

Dezember	September
settembre	March
aǧustos	April
mars	December
maj	August
avrêl	May
يناير (janajir)	January

Circle the English words.

nerveux
kızgın
sad angry
fatigué
feliz smutny bored
nervosamente
traurig
müde tired
nervös happy
sinirli scared

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Addressing home languages

Phonological awareness
Substitution of initial sounds
Segmentation of syllables
Identification of initial sounds
Identification of rhymes
Production of rhymes

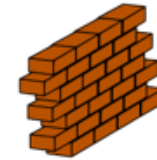# Substitution of initial sounds

with presentation of flash card:

"Is it the (e.g. **l**upermarket)?"

"No, it's the (**s**upermarket)!"

flashcard taken from *Playway 4*
(Gerngross / Puchta / Becker 2013)

Identification of rhymes

Match the rhymes.

Addressing home languages

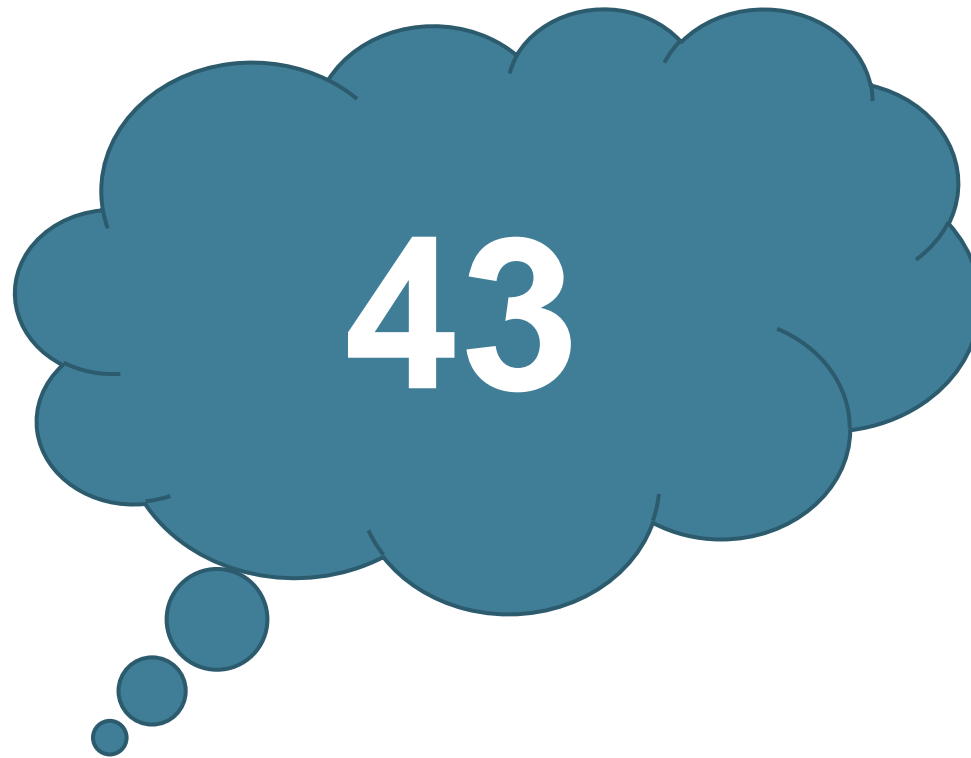| Language Comparisons / Grammar |
| --- |
| Forms of address |
| Capitalisation in orthography |
| Wh-questions |
| Adverb placement |
| Two-digit numbers (order of tens and units) |

Adverb placement (verb raising)

Adverb placement (verb raising)

How do you say „43" in the languages you know?

Language comparisons: two-digit numbers
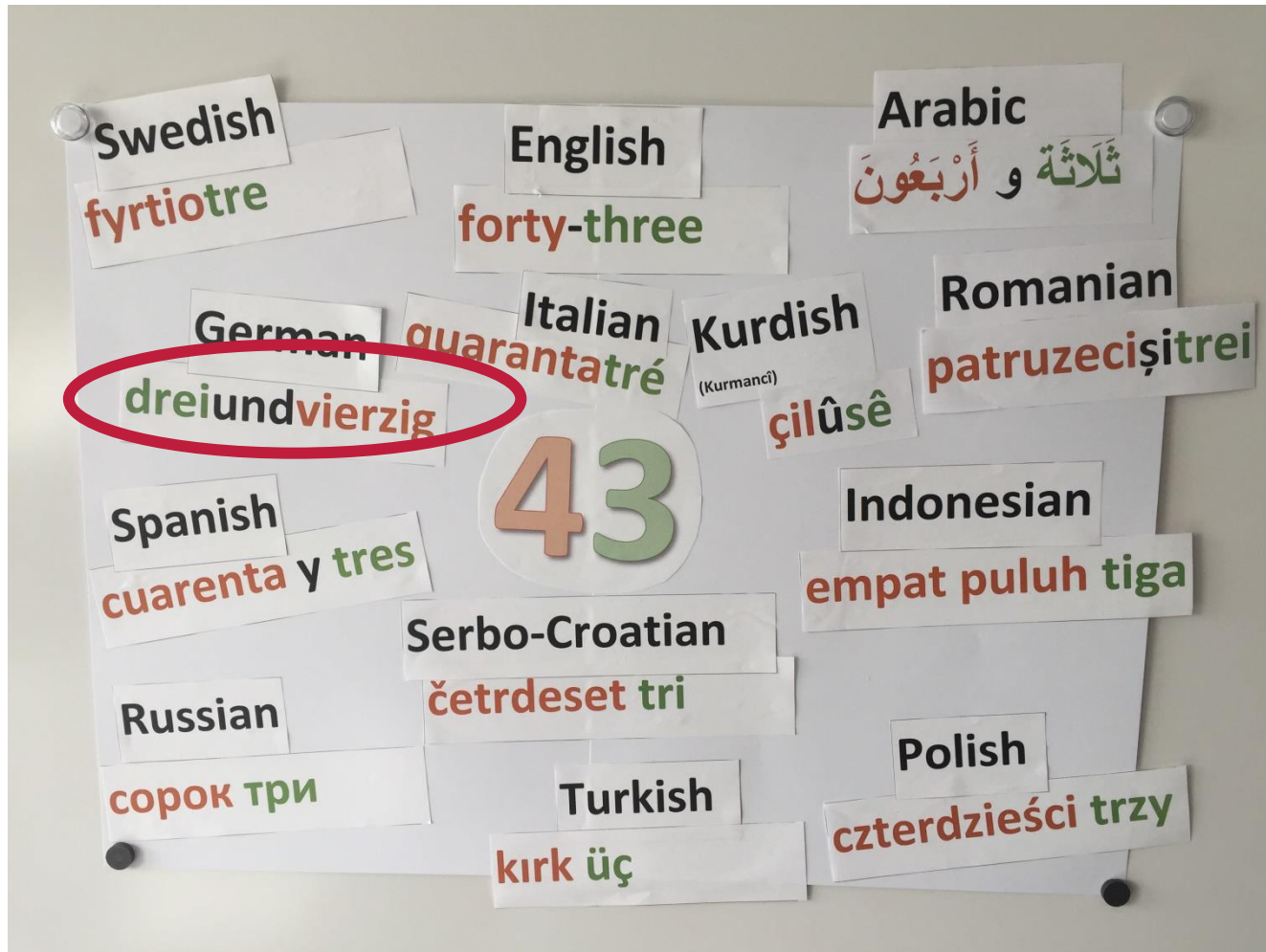
MEG-SKoRe II: Preliminary results

- All learners (experimental and control groups) improve their English language skills.

- This shows that the integration of multilingual elements (which accounted for approximately 20% of the lesson time in the experimental groups) does not come at the expense of skills in the target language, i.e. English.

- Referring to other languages when teaching specific grammatical phenomena (adverb placement, Wh-questions) had a positive effect (higher scores for the control group).
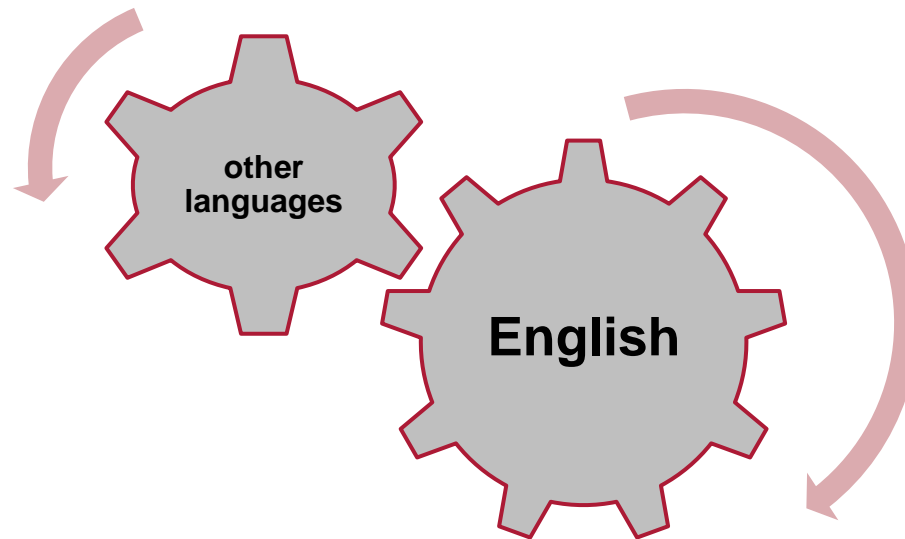
MEG-SKoRe II: Learners' opinions

"I really liked it [the integration of other languages] because I could see how a word is said in other languages. And in sentences I could see how different the sentences are, how many words are in a sentence and I really liked it."

(multilingual child, translated by JJ)

MEG-SKoRe II: Learners' opinions

"I didn't really like it, because it's English language teaching, and we'd better learn English there."

"Did the multilingual teaching approach help you to learn the English words?"

"Hmmm. Sometimes, but not always, because sometimes they are almost identical and sometimes not similar."

(monolingual child with L1 German, translated by JJ)

Conclusion and outlook

- The **systematic integration of home languages** into regular EFL teaching is possible (even with low-key activities). However, the materials and methods have to be adapted to the individual groups and learners.

- Creating a **multilingual learning atmosphere** takes time; being allowed to use their home languages in class is a completely new experience for many learners.

- Teachers have to be willing to suspend the exclusive use of the target language and to rethink their **role as experts** for a certain language.

- The **teacher's mind-set** and willingness to see home languages as an integral part of her teaching are key to making multilingual concepts work!

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Thank you for your attention!

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MEG KoRe

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