



**Multilingual Performance Project**



*Primary students shooting a in multilingual film in Birmingham*

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND CREATIVITY IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

In this pack you'll find suggestions and examples of ways to start using theatre and creative exercises to integrate MFL into primary school life – across the curriculum in your teaching and learning (pp. 5-8), in extra-curricular activities (pp. 9-10) and by introducing some drama exercises to your repertoire (pp. 2-4).

Over the course of the MPP (between January 2018 and June 2020) we've often met primary teachers who are keen for ideas on how to start integrating drama and creative activities into their language teaching.

Alongside some of these teachers we have developed the MPP's existing exercises and created new ideas for activities and games, which are presented in this pack.

We hope you find some of these introductory ideas useful!

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*Releasing the creative potential of modern languages  
Making linguistic diversity more visible, valued, and vibrant  
Inspiring learners. Empowering communities. Invigorating research*

The **Multilingual Performance Project** was an initiative of **Creative Multilingualism**, a four-year research programme (2016-2020) funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council in the context of its Open World Research Initiative. **Creative Multilingualism** investigated the interconnection between linguistic diversity and creativity, and rethinking the identity of Modern Languages. It aimed to strengthen the identity of the discipline, enhancing the visibility and status of languages in society, and giving a new impetus to language learning in schools.

To find out more, please visit: [www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk](http://www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk)

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## **1) DRAMA ACTIVITIES FOR INTRODUCING MFL TO PRIMARY STUDENTS**

### **Numbering + Sorting**

A quick and easy ice-breaker which can help with teaching and revising numbers and/or body vocabulary.

Children move around a room and the teacher says a number. The children then have to get into groups of that number as quickly as possible. If the whole group is not divisible by that number those left over are out and/or can become those in charge with the teacher to choose the next instruction.

The teacher can be creative with the instructions, it's endlessly adaptable depending on the level of learners and how much languages they've learned so far. Try:

- Asking for groups of X amount of people with X amount of arms in the air (if explained beforehand the actual instruction could be "3, 4 arms")
- Asking for groups of X amount of people with X amount of feet on the ground – groups here will have fun balancing on each other and negotiating.
- People wearing black shoes / people wearing grey shoes
- Birthdays from January to June / July to December
- Letters A-M / N-Z (first names beginning with, last names beginning with, etc...)
- Groups of the same shoe size

### **Emotion Café**

Create a simple café script with two (or more) participants in the target language. You can work with the whole class to ensure the script is understood. Invite performers up to a performance space (Early Years settings will have plenty of role play props you could use in class to make the scene more exciting!).

Have a box prepared with a selection of emotions in - these could be written in English, the target language or even emoji faces. The performers have to perform the scene having blindly chosen an emotion to inform their character, and the audience must guess what the emotion was.

You can vary this by getting performers to choose different emotions during the scene at certain points, by getting other students to choose emotions for them, or even (gently!) throwing the emotion as a paper aeroplane at the performers mid-scene!

## The Shopping List

The most basic version of this activity would be to use your food vocabulary to play the Shopping List memory game; the first person in the circle says “I went to the shop and bought an apple”, next person has to add on to the list, “I went to the shop and bought an apple and some bread” and so on around the class to see how much can be remembered, where possible using each letter of the alphabet for the objects.

You could adapt this further by making it into a family role play. Splitting the class into groups of three, one student becomes the parent who recites a shopping list to a their ‘child’, who has to go to the shop of the third student who is in role as the shopkeeper. The shopkeeper has to write each item down as an order. You could make it competitive in that each group must try to add more items on to the list, with younger learners you could make use of props or pictures, and more advanced learners could practice their conjunctions. Which group could come up with the most ridiculous shopping list? Which can remember the longest list? Allow them to use a dictionary to write a list containing the strangest things they can.

## What/Where/Who...

Get your class/group into a circle.

The first participant steps forward and performs a simple mime, for example, brushing their hair.

The next participant steps forward and asks **“What are you doing?”**.

Participant One replies with a new action to perform, e.g. “I’m looking for my phone!”

Participant One goes back into the circle, and Participant Two must begin acting out looking for their phone.

Participant Three asks “What are you doing?” and Participant Two gives yet another action, “I’m washing the car”, which Participant Three then begins to act out.

Continue until everyone has had a turn. Play as much or as little of this game in the target language as suits your learners (substitute simple nouns or learn the phrase ‘What are you doing?’ and a short list of simple sentences describing present action).

You could adapt this to use phrases that you have learnt on a particular topic, for example, things you do on holiday: ‘I am getting on the plane’, ‘I am packing my suitcase’, ‘I am swimming in the sea’.

Further versions of this game could be **“Where are you going?”** – each mime consisting of the participants miming out the place they are going to and giving a new location to the next participant, i.e. reading books after being sent to the library, and saying “I am going to the swimming pool” to the next participant, who must mime swimming, etc.

You could also play **“Who are you?”**, replacing the actions with professions:

“I’m a doctor” – participant acts out taking someone’s temperature

“I’m a teacher” – participant acts out teaching a lesson

“I’m a footballer” – participant scores a goal



## **Pirates!**

This activity needs a little more space, like the school hall or playground. Mark out the area (such as a basketball court shape) or somehow set your boundaries. The teacher calls out the directions and the last person to complete the task is out. Here we've included German and Spanish translations, but of course you could write these directions in any target language, and start adding in directional vocabulary.

Instructions	German	Spanish	Actions
(Be) the captain	Der Kapitän	El capitán	Puff out chest, point, say 'Arrrgh!'
Scrub the deck	Das Deck schrubben	Tenéis que limpiar/Limpiad la cubierta	kneel down and clean
Port	der Hafen	Babor	Run to the left
Starboard	Steuerbord	Estribor	Run to the right
Stern	das Heck	La popa	Run to the back
Bow	der Bug [pron. "boog"!] ]	La proa	Run to the front
Climb the rope	Steig das Seil hoch	Tenéis que subir/Subid la cuerda	Pretend to climb a rope
Shipwreck!	Schiffbruch!	¡Naufrgaio!	Flail around hopelessly (and scream!)

## **Traffic Lights**

Another simple instruction game for very early learners could involve the teacher calling out:

Instructions	Spanish	Actions
Red	Rojo	Stop
Amber	Ámbar	Slow down / start to walk slowly
Green	Verde	Run / Walk Fast

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For more drama games and exercises that you could use with your students, check out our 'Get Involved' and 'Stay Involved' packs. They can be found at: [www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk/resources](http://www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk/resources)

## **2) CROSS-CURRICULAR INTEGRATION OF CREATIVITY WITH MFL**

Language teaching does not need to stay inside a set language lesson – it can be peppered throughout lessons to support a greater understanding of a topic and to keep practicing the vocabulary between sessions. Language specialists can support staff in preparing activities ready for topic work.

### **Rainforest**

Within this umbrella title, we can include Science, History, Geography, Spanish and, of course, reading, writing and SPAG by using drama activities to explore the Aztecs, the Conquistadors and the creatures of the rainforest.

#### **Rainforest 1: The Conquistadors' Camp**

Using simple costumes, and a re-arrangement of the classroom furniture, make a large space to be the camp of Hernán Cortés - the teacher could be in role as the translator, Geronimo de Aguilar. Get your “troops” to talk about the trip they have faced on board the ships from Cuba, and about the journey they face ahead going further into Mayan territory. Depending on the skill set of your students, they could be encouraged to speak phrases or key vocab in the target language by you as the translator, or this drama activity could be the basis of a writing exercise where they write home to their families about their voyage, using the target language.

#### **Rainforest 2: A Safari!**

The idea of this activity is to explore the creatures of the rainforest whilst also practicing adjectives of the target language. You could use a variety of printed images, wooden figures, even cuddly toys, and hide them behind a leafy shade. Doing your best David Attenborough impression, use your binoculars and the target language to describe an animal. You could make it a competition to see who can guess which animal you are describing first. Students could have a go – using the binoculars and other props to keep them engaged, and describe their animal to the class. This could lead onto a written description of the creatures and its habitat, or you could make your very own class wildlife documentary, complete with class-created sound effects (I’m sure someone would like to do a howler monkey impression!)

### **Shakespearean Love Letters**

If you choose to look at Shakespeare texts with Key Stage 2 learners, you can introduce MFL by looking at the languages the characters would have spoken. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Romeo and Juliet* are popular texts in primary, so you could look at the lovers writing letters to each other. Romeo and Juliet could write to each other in Italian (or just using some key words in Italian within a letter in English), and Lysander and Hermia could exchange letters in Greek. Choose key phrases or vocabulary depending the ability of your learners.



## **Famous People from History**

Like the fictional characters above, look at famous historical figures and the languages they would have spoken:

- the Stuart kings would have spoken French, so Charles II could write from his exile in France, pleading to be back on his throne.
- Christopher Columbus would have spoken Italian, Portuguese and Spanish, and could make a list of things needed on his next expedition.
- Anne of Cleves could write in German about her terror at the thought of becoming Henry VIII's next bride!
- Put your students in role as spies who must decipher (with a bilingual dictionary in-hand) an intercepted note: like a Spanish letter that, once translated, will show that King Phillip II is sending the Armada to overthrow Elizabeth I!

So, when researching famous people, think about their culture and language. Perhaps students could learn how to greet the person in their subject's native language, or how they might describe themselves and their occupation. You could also look at key vocabulary concerning the person's particular interests, for example if studying Monet you could include painting terminology and colours in French.

## **World War I**

To further expand upon the idea of cross curricular integration, here is a list of activities that join together ideas from the study of History and French, as well as PSHE, Science and Design. Though obviously not an exhaustive list, it gives a flavour of the way languages can be used to enrich the understanding of a topic and make cross-curricular connections.

**A French Breakfast** – students enter the classroom to see French menus with breakfast items ready to be ordered (obviously food allergies being catered for appropriately or even using toy food). Whilst sitting and sharing food, begin a discussion of how French villagers would eat and compare that to how soldiers in the trenches would have eaten.

**Map of France** – Trace an outline of map of France and draw on key cultural points, cultural figures and areas of interest. You might add on the Louvre, Dijon, the Eiffel Tower, the Bordeaux region, Nice etc.

Play classic French music in the background and work collaboratively.

This large map will then be referred to when looking at the locations of key WWI incidents. Students can layer on the Western Front, Flanders Field, or show the regions that would have been travelled through. This could lead on to creative tasks imagining what the soldiers might have seen on their journeys? What would have been destroyed by the passing tanks and battles?



**Letters** - Get your students to write letters to read out to the class – depending on the skill level of your group, this could be letters from French villagers to their relatives, describing what has happened in their village, or British soldiers writing home including French phrases they have learnt whilst overseas.

**Food and gardening** - WWI included rationing, and though ‘Dig for Victory’ was a WWII campaign, people were still very reliant on growing their own produce when possible. Why not create a green area for your class – pots on the playground, dedicated raised beds or even plant pots on the windowsill. Grow your own vegetables and learn the French terms for them. If you haven’t got the resources for that, try making and translating lists of rationing items or a shopping list for an avid gardener. Pairs could act out scenes in the shop or market.

**Fashion show!** – Look at the history of fashion in Paris, the look at key vocab of clothes and colour. Then its time to raid the lost property box and school costume cupboard and get your students to make their own fashion show!

**Women in the War** – After discussing the situation at home, the depleted workforce and the new roles women would play in society, learn the basic conversation phrases of greeting in French. Use these to role play women meeting at the factory gates and going into work.

**Cooking** – Cooking in the classroom can of course contribute to learning French vocabulary and talking about French food culture – you could make ratatouille, make your own baguettes or tuna niçoise in class. You could also make ANZAC biscuits. Learn the French vocabulary for the ingredients, and whilst making these easy to mix biscuits (bonus – the bicarb reaction could spark a micro science lesson as you see the bubbles of CO<sub>2</sub> rise!) you can talk about the Gallipoli Campaign and multitude of diverse, Commonwealth soldiers who fought in the war on behalf of the British.

To read up on how this scheme was developed in a home-school setting, please visit: [www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk/blog/exploring-multilingualism/introducing-mfl-across-primary-curriculum-home-schooling-mum](http://www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk/blog/exploring-multilingualism/introducing-mfl-across-primary-curriculum-home-schooling-mum)

## **Science/Biology**

Learn the body parts in a different language and then students can make posters that feature pictures of a body and the new vocabulary, or they could draw around each other as they lie on large pieces of paper and then label the parts.

Translate and sing ‘Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes’ in the target language.

If you’re feeling adventurous you could even create an MFL version of ‘Dem Bones’.



## **Geography**

When looking at a country or region, use the native language to think about what the citizens of that country call themselves and how they refer to their own country. Ask students to investigate how would you give or ask for directions in that country, or think about what you could ask to go and see – for example, which way to the mountains? – and then act out short sketches of a tourist asking a local for directions.

## **Extreme Weather**

Find articles and online news reports in different languages:

- firstly analyze gesture, tone and graphic design
- then try to pick out words similar to English
- then use dictionaries to look up key words

Make your own foreign-language warning poster or even better film your own foreign language weather or news report.

## **Music**

Ask your student-investigators to look at various examples of sheet music that have common Italian directions on them, e.g.:

Adagio  
Andante  
Crescendo  
Decrescendo  
Dolce  
Forte  
Largo  
Pianissimo

Ask what they think they might mean.

Get them to translate them using dictionaries or the internet.

Check the answers all together.

If you have a song that the whole class knows (even if it's in English), have a few sing-throughs whilst you call out or point to the different directions.

Then get dramatic – your students can explore these directions in terms of movement around the classroom and in how a character might talk. Let them direct each other in pairs by calling out the instructions.



### **3) MFL IN EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES**

#### **School plays**

Whether you're working from an existing script or devising your own school play, think about whether or not different groups of characters could speak different language, e.g. all the fairies speak German, the clan of witches speak French, the Wolves speak Spanish etc.

As long as a narrator is there to describe the action, elements of text can be in other languages quite easily and adds interest and excitement to the voices on stage. You could also think about using subtitles, either projected onto the stage or carried on cards by the characters. You could even have an interpreter character in the show who must relay the conversations between characters.

Specific characters may have a pre-determined language that you could include – historical figures in your play could speak in the appropriate language to introduce themselves.

#### **Nativities/Christmas plays**

Look at the different ways that people around the world celebrate Christmas, and incorporate moments of their celebrations into your play.

Spanish families walking the streets with guitars and tambourines, singing after midnight mass, or French families wishing each other "Joyeux Noel".

You could also look at the languages of the lands your Nativity characters come from, and have characters speaking Greek, Arabic or Hebrew.

#### **Assembly Ideas**

Inspired by the three main MFL in British schools, these are three important dates in France, Germany and Spain that fall within school term-time (although now and then on a weekend!):

**14<sup>th</sup> July – 'Fête Nationale' / Bastille Day** (celebrating the taking of the Bastille in Paris during the revolution in 1789)

**3<sup>rd</sup> October – 'Tag der deutschen Einheit' / German Unity Day** (commemorating the reunification of Germany)

**12<sup>th</sup> October – 'Día de la Hispanidad' / Hispanic Day or 'Fiesta Nacional de España' / National Day** (commemorating Christopher Columbus setting foot in the Americas in 1492)



These historic events could be used as stimulus for an assembly prepared by students and staff which covers the historic facts, famous people involved, music from the country, a few words in the target language and much more. There's a huge scope for creative and engaging promotion of other countries, cultures and languages here.

### **World Book Day**

On this very exciting day in the school calendar, think about encouraging a focus on foreign authors – even if we read them in translation –

What's the original title?

What are the characters' original names?

What key words can we learn from the original language?

Maybe make a poster to advertise the book using adjectives from the native language

### **Registration / End of day**

Even registration can provide opportunities to include MFL:

Students can reply to the register in the target language

Students and staff can greet one another in the target language

Students could also learn the numbers 1-30 and respond to their position in the register when hearing the MFL version of their number.

You could ask people to get in line for assembly by calling out the numbers to lie up in the target language.

You could also discuss the days of the week and months of the year, each day having the date written up on the board in the target language. Start exploring the past, present and future tenses – What was the day/date yesterday? What is the day/date today? What will be the day/date tomorrow?

Teacher:	Hola clase.
Students:	Hola profesor.
Teacher:	¿Qué tal?
Students:	Bien gracias.
Teacher:	Muy bien. ¿Qué día es hoy?
Students:	Hoy es martes.
Teacher:	Perfecto. Y ¿qué día fue ayer?
Students:	Ayer fue lunes.
Teacher:	Muy bien. Ahora, ¿qué día será mañana?
Students:	Mañana será miércoles.
Teacher:	Muy bien, chicos!