

Socrates Programme – Comenius 2.1 project
**“Effective teaching and learning for
minority-language children in preschool”**

Compendium

of Learning Materials



Socrates

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CONTENTS

ACTIVITIES SUPPORTING LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT	5
What am I?	7
I am	7
Where do I live?	8
What does my face say?	9
Clothes have names, too.....	10
I'll be the mommy.....	11
A shopping we will go.....	12
Food colours.....	13
What's missing?	14
Backwards fun	14
Monkey in the middle.....	15
Weather moves	16
Move and groove	17
Make a shape	18
Tell me about your picture.....	19
Falling leaves tree match	20
Red light, green light.....	20
Teddy bear picnic	21
Mommy and daddy helpers	22
Wash day	23
Setting the table	24
Snack time.....	25
Group words.....	26
Dog show.....	27
You are jumping.....	28
Binoculars	28
The treasures of nature	28
Echo.....	29
What does not belong here?.....	29
A long sentence game.....	29
LITERACY ACTIVITIES	31
Read a picture together	33
Making books.....	37
Explaining words.....	37
How is it?	38
WORD PLAY, RHYMES AND ALLITERATION	39
Initiate word play	41
Rhyming games	41
Alliteration games.....	42
Picture cards for sound matching (rhyme and alliteration).....	42
Books and stories with rhyme and alliteration.....	43
Nursery rhymes.....	43
Add the correct picture.....	43
Those who sleep will not win	44
A ship has arrived	44
What did I see?.....	44
One syllable	44
Say where they were put	44
Guess the name.....	45
Recognizing a voice.....	45
How do they wake you up?.....	45
Poets	45

What toy do you have in your hands?	45
What does it do?	46
Riddle game	46
READING ALOUD AND STORYTELLING	47
Reading aloud	49
Storytelling	50
Spontaneous improvised use of language	51
MULTICULTURAL GAMES	53
Catching fishes in the dark	55
O. A.	55
My little bird	56
Hopscotch	56
Round hopscotch	58
The story of your name	59
The fox and the chickens	59
Hide and go seek	60
Space boys	60
Down	60
What's the time Mr. Wolf	61
Nose telephone	61
We are all unique	61
CONCEPT MAPPING AS A LEARNING STRATEGY	63
Advantages of concept mapping	65
The process of the creation of a concept map	66
The main forms of concept maps	69
LITERATURE	70
RESOURCES	70

Activities Supporting Language Development

What am I?

Hearing is a sense, but listening is a skill that can be practiced. Children get to practice their listening skills, especially auditory discrimination, while enjoying this activity.

Aids: Pictures of things that make a noise that a child can imitate, grouped by category.

Words you can use (sample activities): noise, sound, cow, horse, dog, cat, car, train, airplane, truck, boat, drum, bells, triangle, tambourine, etc.

Procedure:

1. Gather together pictures of any noisemaking items from one category, such as animals, transportation, or musical instruments. (Use pictures of things in more than one category after the children have done this activity a few times.)
2. Give each child in the group a picture, instructing her or him not to show it to anyone else.
3. Have the children take turns making the noise or sound of their pictured item while the others guess what they are.
4. Have the children verify guesses by showing their hidden pictures.

Questions to assess language development:

Expressive language

- Can children name (label) the item that is making the noise?

Receptive language

- Can children identify the noise they are hearing?

Resource: Rockwell, R., D. R. Hoge, and B. Searcy. 1999. "What Am I?" *Linking Language*. Beltsville, Md.: Grypton House: 90. *Used with permission.*

I am

This activity develops dramatic play skills, expressive language, sequencing skills, and memory skills—and the children have a good time too!

Aids: Props related to one of the sample activities listed below.

Words you can use: getting dressed, setting the table, getting ready for bed, eating supper/lunch, making a sandwich, colouring a picture, putting on your shoes, brushing your teeth, taking the dog for a walk, playing house, playing school, any pretend activity.

Procedure:

1. Pick out daily activities that are fun and familiar to the children. Simple routines from home and school are best.
2. Tell one child, "Show me how to..."

3. Have one child act out the activity first, saying the steps he is showing. For example, for making a sandwich: get the bread, get the butter, etc.

Activity variations:

1. Ask one child to describe what another child is doing as she does it.
2. Have one child tell another the steps he must do to pretend an activity. For example, for going to sleep: put your head down, close your eyes, etc.

Questions to assess language development

Expressive language

- Can children say what they are doing as they act out a daily activity?

Receptive language

- If one child is acting out while another child describes the activity, can the child who is acting out the activity understand what she needs to do?
- Can children describe the activity in a “correct” sequence?

Resource: Rockwell, R., D. R. Hoge, and B. Searcy. 1999. “I am.” What Am I? *Linking Language*. Beltsville, Md.: Gryphon House: 92. *Used with permission.*

Where do I live?

This activity encourages children to develop advanced categorizing skills. Each child acts out an animal, and then the group says where that animal lives.

Aids: List of animals and their natural habitats.

Words you can use: jungle, elephant, tiger, monkey, snake, home, dog, cat, goldfish, hamster, farm, cow, pig, chicken, forest, deer, birds, bear, wolf, fox, etc.

Procedure:

1. Sit in a circle.
2. Have each child take a turn acting out an animal. If necessary, suggest animals for the children to act out.
3. The group guesses the animal and determines one of the three places—jungle, farm, forest—that it can live.
4. Ask the children to sit together with the other jungle, farm, or forest animals.
5. Encourage the children to play together as animals from the various habitats.

Activity variations:

1. Change or extend the categories to be simpler or more complicated—zoo, rain forest—depending on the abilities and needs of the children.
2. Draw the various habitats—zoo, farm, jungle—and use the drawings to expand the concept of categories.

Questions to assess language development*Expressive language*

- Can the children name (label) a variety of animals?
- Can the children say where the various animals live?
- Can the children name animals by category?

Resource: Rockwell, R., D. R. Hoge, and B. Searcy. 1999. "Where do I live?" *Linking Language*. Beltsville, Md.: Grypton House: 88. *Used with permission.*

What does my face say?

Facial expression is one way to send a message to others. This activity lets children practice this "social use" of nonverbal language with a mirror. Reading the facial expression of others is as important as knowing what your face may be "saying".

Aids: Mirror, list of facial expressions.

Words you can use: happy, sad, brave, excited, mad, angry, scared, surprised, shy, face, mirror.

Procedure:

1. Ask the children to sit before a long mirror.
2. Encourage all the children to make a "happy" face. Each child looks at his own face and all the other children's versions of "happy" faces.
3. Ask them to make another kind of "happy" face. Again, each child looks at her face and all the other children's faces.
4. Encourage them to make various "readable" faces, such as scared, surprised, excited, or sad.

Activity variations:

1. Children can pair up and read each other's facial expressions.
2. Draw various "readable" faces, then try these faces.
3. Name an event or occasion, such as riding a roller coaster or attending a birthday party, and ask the children put on the "face" that goes with the event.
4. Make opposite faces such as happy/sad, excited/bored, and scared/brave.

Questions to assess language development

Expressive language

- Can children name (label) the various feelings that their face and others' faces are showing?

Receptive language

- Can children understand the meaning of the various "face" words, such as happy, sad, or angry?
- Can children match an expression word to the face they are seeing?

Resource: Rockwell, R., D. R. Hoge, and B. Searcy. 1999. "What does my face say?" *Linking Language*. Beltsville, Md.: Grypton House: 86. *Used with permission.*

Clothes have names, too

This activity helps children acquire the descriptive vocabulary of the clothing they wear daily as well as the dress-up clothing in the housekeeping area.

Aids: A few of the following props: socks, shoes, hat, pants, shirt, dress, coats, jacket, boots, sandals, pajamas, underpants, skirt, jeans, apron, bib, belt, tie, ribbon, etc.

Words you can use: socks, shoes, hat, pants, shirt, sneakers, dress, coat, jacket, boots, sandals, pajamas, underpants, skirt, jeans, bib, apron, belt, tie, ribbons.

Procedure:

1. Place an adequate supply of clothing items in the housekeeping area. Be sure items represent various roles that the children might play.
2. Collect a number of clothing items from the housekeeping centre. There should be at least one or two items of clothing for each child.
3. Place the collection in the centre of a circle formed by the children.
4. Each child picks a piece of clothing and names it. If a child does not know the name of the item, then the others can help.
5. If appropriate, ask the children how the clothing is used.

Activity variations:

1. Take a specific clothing item. Let the children name specific parts of the clothing such as a button, sleeve, zipper, or collar.
2. Share clothing items from various professions that might be represented in the dress-up or housekeeping area, such as a police officer, letter carrier, pilot, doctor, or nurse.

Questions to assess language development

Expressive language

- Can the children name (label) various pieces of clothing?

Receptive language

- Can the children identify clothing pieces by name by pointing to them?

Resources: Rockwell, R., D. R. Hoge, and B. Searcy. 1999. "Clothes have names too." *Linking Language*. Beltsville, Md.: Grypton House: 68. *Used with permission.*

I'll be the mommy

Children often explore family roles in their play. Family roles are some of the symbolic play milestones children reach. They love to enact familiar family routines, particularly those marking special events. As they pretend to be different family members, the children talk and act out various roles.

Aids: Provide a variety of props, including old clothing (male and female, adult and child) such as shoes, jackets, hats, ties, baby clothes, and telephone, chairs, empty food containers, dishes, pots, pans, dolls, beds, and toys.

Words you can use: mom, baby, dad, children, home, house, play, outside, breakfast, lunch, meals, dinner, bedtime, naptime, get dressed, shirts, shoes, sweater, hat, coat, gloves.

Procedure:

1. Designate an area of the room as the housekeeping centre.
2. Children will gravitate to and play in this centre with little direction. However, you might suggest a situation, such as preparing for the baby's first birthday party, getting ready to go to the child's care centre, going Grandma and Grandpa's home, and getting ready to take a trip in the car, bus, train, or plane.

Questions to assess language development

Expressive language

- Can the children use words appropriate to the roles they are creating?

Receptive language

- Do the children show an understanding of the different language and voices used to represent various family members?

Resources: Rockwell, R., D. R. Hoge, and B. Searcy. 1999. "I'll be the mommy." *Linking Language*. Beltsville, Md.: Grypton House: 66. *Used with permission.*

A shopping we will go

Children love to talk about food and pretend to do the jobs of the people in stores.

Aids: Aprons, plastic food models or food pictures, cash drawer, play cash register, play money, paper or plastic shopping bags.

Words you can use: shop, grocery, money, taste, more, supermarket, like, dislike, store, shop assistant or clerk, vegetables, fruits, meat, milk, eggs, yogurt, napkins, toilet paper, shampoo, soap, paper, plastic, truck, customer, shopper, amounts of money.

Procedure:

1. Encourage the children to play the roles of the store owners, employees, and shoppers.
2. If necessary, facilitate their play by providing materials for the store or by acting as a shopper.
3. The children will shop, ask for certain foods, and go through the checkout counter. Let them select the roles that they will play and let the activity evolve as the children desire.
4. While shopping, the children will use descriptive language as they communicate what they want (both food and non-food items) and how much they need.
5. Play money and a cash register enrich this activity and add an additional stimulus for both receptive and expressive language.
6. If appropriate, add the roles of the farmer, delivery person, etc.

Questions to assess language development

Expressive language

- Can the children name (label) the foods/items in the market?
- Can the children model language used in the grocery store?

Receptive language

- Can the children identify foods/items by the label?

Resources: Rockwell, R., D. R. Hoge, and B. Searcy. 1999. "A shopping we will go." *Linking Language*. Beltsville, Md.: Grypton House: 62. *Used with permission.*

Food colours

Fruits and vegetables come in many colours. Develop children's awareness of colour and their observation skills by looking at pictures of fruits and vegetables or the actual fruits and vegetables that you bring into the classroom. Names (labels) for fruits and vegetables are the language focus here.

Aids: Newsprint, masking tape or easel, crayons, variety of foods, pictures of foods from magazines, or colour photographs of foods.

Words you can use: mark, draw, colour, like, dislike, taste, count, chart, names of colours, names of foods.

Procedure:

1. Make two colour charts on large pieces of newsprint. Each chart should be divided into eight columns. Each column is for recording one colour. Keep one column open for colours that do not match those presented.
2. Bring out one fruit or vegetable. After the item is identified, ask the children, "What colour is it?"
3. After the children respond, let them take turns taping the picture in a column, making a mark in a column, or drawing the item in the matching colour column with a crayon of the same colour.

Activity variations:

1. Count the colours in each column. Which one is used the most often? Which one is used the least often?
2. Graph the colour of the clothing the children are wearing to school on two separate days.
3. Graph the children's favourite colours.

Questions to assess language development

Expressive language

- Can the children name the various colours of the food?
- Can the children state an opinion about whether they like or dislike a certain food?

Receptive language

- Can the children sort foods by colour?

Resource: Rockwell, R., D. R. Hoge, and B. Searcy. 1999. "Food colors." *Linking Language*. Beltsville, Md.: Grypton House: 52. *Used with permission.*

What's missing?

This activity makes rote counting a fun activity as children try to determine how many items are missing from a group and then try to name the missing items.

Aids: Scarf, common objects such as crayon, cup, small ball, spoon, miniature animals, cars or dolls, marker, block, scissors, picture.

Words you can use: one through five, other numbers, crayon, cup, small ball, spoon, block, hats, dress-up clothes, miniature animals, car, doll, marker, scissors, puppet, book, tambourine, other common objects.

Procedure:

1. Gather a group of common objects that the children are familiar with.
2. Put a few of the items (with young children start with just three items) on a table and cover them with a scarf.
3. Remove the scarf and ask the children to count the items. After they count them again, cover the items and remove one or more.
4. Show the children the remaining items and ask them to count them. They should come up with a different number than the first time.
5. After counting the remaining items, prompt the children to name the missing item or items.
6. Continue to increase the number of objects (make sure the number is developmentally appropriate).

Questions to assess language development

Expressive language

- Can the children name the items that are missing from the original count?

Receptive language

- Can the children follow the direction to count?
- Do the children know an item is missing from the original count?

Resource: Rockwell, R., D. R. Hoge, and B. Searcy. 1999. "What's missing?" *Linking Language*. Beltsville, Md.: Grypton House: 208. *Used with permission.*

Backwards fun

This activity helps children to understand and use opposite words. If coordinated with music, the children can have a great time while practicing an important concept. When the activity is targeting a word during music, the children may listen exceptionally closely to be sure they catch the backward word.

Aids: Carpet squares, music book.

Words you can use: stand/sit, loud/soft, hot/cold, clean/dirty, happy/sad, fast/slow, open/ close, thick/thin, night/day, up/down, on/off, full/empty.

Procedure:

1. Come into an area for singing, perhaps the circle time area with the rugs.
2. Begin to use opposites right away, telling the children that you are going to need some help as you are feeling “backwards”. Have them sit down for music time, and then remain standing and say “everyone sitting, OK I’m sitting too”. The children should prompt you that you are still standing and let you know you are “backwards.” Act surprised and allow them to guide you to the “opposite” of what you are doing.
3. Begin the music period, choosing a song with lots of possibilities for opposites. “Head, shoulders, knees, toes” can be done in reverse order, “Old MacDonald’s” animals can be making the wrong sounds, etc. You can also tell the children know that you are going to sing “softly” and then burst into loud song.
4. The children should thoroughly enjoy themselves as they “catch” you being backwards.

Activity variations:

1. The children can choose a familiar song that they can lead with their peers, inserting “backwards” words as they sing.
2. You can make any period during the day “backwards” time, or have an entire “backwards” day.

Questions to assess language development

Expressive language

- Can the children say certain words and then act backwards?

Receptive language

- Are the children able to “catch” you doing the opposite of what you are saying?

Resource: Rockwell, R., D. R. Hoge, and B. Searcy. 1999. “Backwards fun.” *Linking Language*. Beltsville, Md.: Grypton House: 188. *Used with permission.*

Monkey in the middle

A circular version of “follow the leader” allows children to see and hear directions, as well as model the actions of a peer. Children are allowed to lead in a nondemanding way in this motor activity. Initiation is important as a conversational skill, and this nonverbal play activity sets up the context for the child to succeed.

Aids: Large space, motor movement ideas.

Words you can use: march, swing, bend, kneel, stomp, spin, jump, kick, dance, shake, wiggle, walk, jumping jack, run in place.

Procedure:

1. The children form a circle in a large area in the outdoor play area (or indoor gross motor area in inclement weather).
2. One child goes to the middle of the circle and becomes the “monkey in the middle”.
3. He names a gross motor action such as marching, swinging arms, touching nose, and models for the others in the circle. This is the “initiation” opportunity for each child.
4. The other children follow the action of the leader.
5. After one or two minutes, the “monkey” is changed until all children have had a turn to be a leader.

Activity variations:

1. Action combinations such as spinning in a circle or kneeling can be incorporated into the activity. The actions will still need to be named if possible.
2. Sequencing can also be incorporated if the child does one action first and another last.

Questions to assess language development*Expressive language*

- Can the children name the action they want the others in the group to copy?
- How eager are the children to take the initiator role? If some children are more reluctant, they may be able to go into the middle with a buddy.

Resource: Rockwell, R., D. R. Hoge, and B. Searcy. 1999. “Monkey in the middle.” *Linking Language*. Beltsville, Md.: Grypton House: 184. *Used with permission.*

Weather moves

This activity gives the children an opportunity to respond with descriptive words and movement to their feelings and images as they listen to seasonal music.

Aids: Seasonal CD music; for example, for winter—“Winter daydreams,” symphony No. 1 in G minor, op. 13 by Peter Tchaikovsky and Christmas music, etc.)

Words you can use: summer, fall, winter, spring; mood descriptors such as happy, sad; words associated with the various seasons such as windy, hot, warm, cold, cool, freezing, chilly, shiver, etc.

Procedure:

1. Play a tape, record, or CD.
2. Let the children move the way the music makes them feel.

3. Talk about their movements and the emotions that they feel as they hear spring, summer, fall, and winter music themes.
4. Invite them to describe what they see as they listen.

Activity variation:

Play short excerpts of various kinds of music and let the children respond verbally about what they feel and see as they listen.

Questions to assess language development

Expressive language

- Can the children say the descriptive words associated with the music?

Receptive language

- Can the children listen and attend to the various types of music being presented?

Resource: Rockwell, R., D. R. Hoge, and B. Searcy. 1999. "Weather moves." *Linking Language*. Beltsville, Md.: Grypton House: 182. *Used with permission.*

Move and groove

Preschoolers enjoy learning to sing songs with accompanying movements. Listening to, singing along, and responding to movement instructions from the teacher, another child, or from those given on the record, tape, or CD that is being played provide an excellent opportunity for listening language development and motor skill development.

Aids: Words and music to some simple action songs.

Words you can use: move, dance, listen, hear, lyrics to song.

Procedure:

1. Start with an easy singing and doing activity. The song should be one that has a number of small repetitive movements and words.
2. Play or sing the song for the children.
3. Play the song a second time and have the children try some of the movements with you. Encourage the children to make the movements any way that they wish (not just imitate you) and to join in the singing as they do the movements.

Activity variations:

1. Try a variety of songs.
2. Send words, music, and instructions home with the children so they can show and talk with their families about what they are learning.

Questions to assess language development

Expressive language

- Can the children sing and say the words to the chosen song as they “move and groove” to the music?

Receptive language

- Can the children attend and listen to the song that is chosen?

Resource: Rockwell, R., D. R. Hoge, and B. Searcy. 1999. “Move and groove.” *Linking Language*. Beltsville, Md.: Grypton House: 180. *Used with permission.*

Make a shape

The ability to match, sort, and identify shapes is a cognitive prerequisite for young children. Children will enjoy making shapes and talking about them.

Aids: Play dough or clay, shape cutters, rolling pins.

Words you can use: roll, press, dough, clay, square, star, circle, oval/egg, diamond, rectangle, triangle, shape, next, rolling pin, cutters.

Procedure:

1. Give a small group of children clay or dough and cutters in various shapes.
2. Have the children roll the dough, then cut out shapes using the cutters.
3. Encourage the children to name the shapes as they use the cutters to make them.
4. Talk about sorting the shapes into groups, such as by colour, clay vs. dough, etc.

Activity variation:

Develop patterns by sequencing shapes into rows.

Questions to assess language development

Expressive language

- Can the children name the basic shapes of circle, square, triangle, rectangle?
- Can the children say why they have put certain shapes into certain groups? For example: colour, all circles, all made of clay, etc?

Receptive language

- Can the children identify various shapes?
- Can the children sort according to some similarities within the shapes they have created?

Resource: Rockwell, R., D. R. Hoge, and B. Searcy. 1999. “Make a shape.” *Linking Language*. Beltsville, Md.: Grypton House: 130. *Used with permission.*

Tell me about your picture

Children enjoy showing others their drawings. This interchange provides an excellent opportunity for the use of descriptive language as the children talk about their creations. An adult who shows interest and is willing to listen is in for a treat.

Aids: Paint and paintbrushes, crayons, or markers, paper.

Words you can use: tell, good, colours, about, like, big, share, more, little, paint, crayon, draw, endless descriptors depending on topic of drawing.

Procedure:

1. Give the children many opportunities throughout the day to draw, paint, or colour pictures of recent happenings in their lives, characters from a story they have heard, or anything else that interests them.
2. Ask the children to tell about their pictures in a small group setting or when alone with you.
3. Listen carefully as they use language to describe the picture and the story that it tells. Most children will do this willingly if they have an active listener. That is the critical component of this activity. If you ask, then actively listen with genuine interest.
4. Ask open-ended questions to encourage the child to elaborate.

Activity variation:

Using the same listening skills, allow the children numerous opportunities to describe what they have done, be it block building, a sand castle, a game they have played, or anything that they perceive as an accomplishment.

Questions to assess language development

Expressive language

- Are the children using age-appropriate vocabulary and specific words to describe their creations? Do they describe shape, size, colour, and other advanced concepts?
- Remember to pose open-ended questions for the children to answer. These should be questions that begin with one of two key words: how or why.
- Open-ended questions should encourage elaboration.
- Open-ended questions should not be answerable with yes or no.

Resource: Rockwell, R., D. R. Hoge, and B. Searcy. 1999. "Tell me about your picture." *Linking Language*. Beltsville, Md.: Grypton House: 120. *Used with permission.*

Falling leaves tree match

A leaf-collecting walk encourages descriptive language about the colour, shape, and size of leaves as well as the trees that they have fallen from.

Aids: Collecting bags, leaves from trees or from flowers, bushes, and other plants, crayons and paper for rubbings.

Words you can use: leaf, leaves, shape, tree, match, fall, fallen, big, little, small, tall, high, size, tiny, large, huge, texture, dry, brittle, soft, colour names.

Procedure:

1. Give each child a collecting bag.
2. Walk around the neighbourhood or a nearby park and collect a variety of leaves.
3. Examine the leaves. Try to locate the tree they have fallen from. Match the fallen leaves to those that are still on the trees.
4. Talk about and compare the size, colour, and texture of the leaves.
5. After returning to the room, use the leaves for leaf rubbings or leaf pattern paintings.

Activity variations:

Use a clear plastic shower curtain to make a leaf mural. Attach a variety of leaves to the curtain with masking tape. Turn the curtain over and use tempera paint to paint around the real leaf patterns.

Questions to assess language development

Expressive language

- Can the children use descriptive words to describe the leaves that they find?
- Can the children name the trees that the leaves have fallen from?

Receptive language

- Can the children identify trees and leaves as they are named?

Resource: Rockwell, R., D. R. Hoge, and B. Searcy. 1999. "Falling leaves tree match." *Linking Language*. Beltsville, Md.: Grypton House: 114. *Used with permission.*

Red light, green light

An old favourite, this game helps children learn auditory discrimination and colour association and practice following directions.

Aids: Visual cues, if needed.

Words you can use: red, green, yellow, stop, go, carefully, slowly, skip, hop, walk, run.

Procedure:

1. Talk about how traffic lights work and what the signals mean. Emphasize that the green light means “go” and red light means “stop”.
2. Have the children form a line, standing next to one another.
3. Stand in front of the line, facing the children.
4. Call out “green light,” and the children move toward you.
5. Call out “red light,” and the children stop.
6. Play continues, with children associating “go” with green light and “stop” with red light.
7. Let the children take turns calling out “green light” and “red light”.

Activity variations:

1. Use different movement patterns such as skipping or hopping for the next game.
2. Incorporate “yellow light” into the game, meaning “move slowly” or “move carefully”.
3. Use visual cues, such as a green, red, yellow paper circles.

Questions to assess language development*Receptive language*

- Do the children appear to be associating the colours with their meaning?
- Can the children follow the directions according to their colour association?

Resource: Rockwell, R., D. R. Hoge, and B. Searcy. 1999. “Red light, green light.” *Linking Language*. Beltsville, Md.: Grypton House: 114. *Used with permission.*

Teddy bear picnic

Role playing allows children to recreate activities from their lives. Developing expressive language and social language are the goals in this developmentally appropriate pretend game.

Aids: A few of the following props: plates, cups, spoons, water, teddy bear, picnic blanket, picnic basket, cakes (or snack).

Words you can use: picnic, spoons, plates, cups, teddy bear, picnic blanket, picnic basket, water, please, thank you, bugs, pour, likes, does not like, pass, play.

Procedure:

1. Send a note home a few days prior to the event, asking parents to send a teddy bear to school with the child on the chosen date.
2. On the day of the teddy bear picnic, the children bring their teddy bears to school. (Be sure to have a few extra bears in case a child forgets to bring one in.)

3. Ask the group what they need for a picnic, encouraging the children to name and gather picnic items.
4. Go outside with the teddy bears and the picnic items.
5. Hold a teddy bear picnic, modelling how to take turns and use good manners.
6. Name picnic foods and say whether teddy “likes” or “does not like” certain items.

Activity variations:

1. Extend the pretend picnic sequence in any manner the children prefer. Teddies can make friends with other teddies, can babysit for smaller teddies, etc.
2. The children can pretend to be teddy bears after the picnic meal and engage in outdoor play.
3. Take the picnic to a nearby park.

Questions to assess language development

Expressive language

- Are the children able to produce politeness markers, such as “please,” “thank you,” “please pass the... ”?

Receptive language

- Are the children able to pretend at the picnic sequence?

Resource: Rockwell, R., D. R. Hoge, and B. Searcy. 1999. “Teddy bear picnic.” *Linking Language*. Beltsville, Md.: Grypton House: 102. *Used with permission..*

Mommy and daddy helpers

Talking about the things that children can do to help their parents at home is an excellent way to teach them about the jobs that they can do at home and in school.

Aids: Just imaginations.

Words you can use: clean, wash, sweep, brush, pick up, help, cook, dress, job, toys, play, work, names of clothing items.

Procedure:

1. Ask the children to talk about the jobs they do at home to help their parents.
2. Ask them to pretend they are just waking up and getting out of bed. They need to get ready to go to preschool. Are there things they can do to help their parents? Perhaps the children will say things like brushing their teeth, getting dressed, helping with breakfast, putting on coats, boots, etc.

3. Ask them to pretend they are just getting home from preschool. What can they do to help their parents? The children may share ideas such as putting their coats away, picking up toys, and helping with meals.
4. Encourage them to pretend that it is a day when they stay at home. What can they do to help their parents? How can they help when they go to a friend's home?
5. Encourage the children to play being helpers in the dramatic play centre.

Activity variation:

Encourage the children to act all the ways they can be helpful at home and in school.

Questions to assess language development

Expressive language

- Can the children name (label) various tasks they see routinely performed at home?
- Can the children name (label) items associated with particular tasks/routines?

Receptive language

- Can the children replicate these tasks and routines with a sequence?
- Can the children identify items associated with particular tasks/routines?

Resource: Rockwell, R., D. R. Hoge, and B. Searcy. 1999. "Mommy and daddy helpers." *Linking Language*. Beltsville, Md.: Grypton House: 82. *Used with permission.*

Wash day

Children love to wash things and to sort clothing. This activity combines both a pretend laundry day and adds practice in sequencing skills.

Aids: Washtub, soap and water optional, washboard optional, clothesline, clothespins, clothing items for various people in a family.

Words you can use: wash, dry, pants, shirt, diapers, scrub, clothespin, socks, underwear, undershirts, gloves, hats, dresses, clothesline, washtub, washboard.

Procedure:

1. Put clothing items for a variety of family members in the dramatic play area.
2. Add a washtub for the children to "wash" the clothes. If possible, add soap and water and a washboard.
3. String a clothesline in an out-of-the-way section of the dramatic play area and encourage the children to hang their clothes to dry with clothespins, sorting them by family members. For example, hang all the baby clothes together, all the "brother" clothes together, and so on. Children can name (label) the items as they hang the clothes.
4. Encourage children to play this activity together so that they can practice taking turns and conversing.

Questions to assess language development

Expressive language

- Can the children name (label) what is needed for laundry day?
- Can the children verbalize a sequence for laundry day?

Receptive language

- Can the children group clothes by association (baby clothes, red clothes, all socks, etc.)?

Resource: Rockwell, R., D. R. Hoge, and B. Searcy. 1999. "Wash day." *Linking Language*. Beltsville, Md.: Grypton House: 42. *Used with permission.*

Setting the table

The opportunities for communication while preparing the table for snack time are abundant. Setting the table and learning the names of the utensils provide practice in both receptive and expressive language skills. Groups of children using social language while setting the table can increase expressive collaboration.

Aids: Actual snack food items, magazine pictures of foods, or coloured photos. Utensils. Placemats with outlines of utensil placement.

Words you can use: fingers, hands, knife, fork, spoon, plate, bowl, cup, glass, napkin, set, prepare, table, snack, food, placemat, names of snack food items.

Procedure:

1. Ask the children what they use to eat food at home. The responses will probably include the use of their fingers and hands as well as knives, forks, spoons, plates, bowls, cups, and glasses.
2. Tell the children that each day when they have snack time, someone will be chosen to set the table for the entire class. Depending on the snack that is served, one or more of the utensils they mentioned will be used.
3. Show the children some snack food items such as apples, grapes, celery, bread, crackers, milk, juice, or water. As you show each food item, ask the children to name the utensils they would use to eat the sample item. Although finger foods are a common snack, some utensils can be used to eat them or serve them.
4. If the snack requires utensils, the children can practice setting the table for this snack. Talk about each commonly used food utensil and how it helps us to eat our food.

Activity variations:

1. Ask the children about the snacks they eat at home, and when and how often they eat them.
2. This can be a useful way to talk about nutrition and healthy snacks.

Questions to assess language development

Expressive language

- Can the children name the utensils and items used in eating?
- Can the children name a variety of foods?

Receptive language

- Can the children identify the various utensils and items used in eating?

Resource: Rockwell, R., D. R. Hoge, and B. Searcy. 1999. "Setting the table." *Linking Language*. Beltsville, Md.: Grypton House: 42. *Used with permission.*

Snack time

Snack time is a time for teaching children about new foods, for engaging in conversation, and for learning simple etiquette while children serve themselves, eat, and clean up.

Aids: Snack foods, such as milk, juice, fruits, serving trays, paper cups, sponges or paper towels.

Words you can use: snack, food, please, time, clean, sponges, paper towels, wipe, wash, manners, spills, accident, talk, listen, quiet, noise, eat, pass.

Procedure:

1. Have one or two children serve the snack food or put the snack on a serving plate and let all of the children pass the food to each other. It's a great time to observe the social rule "take some and leave some".
2. Model good manners, encouraging the children to say "thank you" as they receive their snack and "please" when requesting more food.
3. Ask the children about other times when they might use the words "please" and "thank you".
4. Discuss how we feel when others thank us for something we have done.
5. Talk about using the names of classmates to get their attention when they need to pass an item. This is a good way to practice asking for attention in an appropriate manner.
6. Have plenty of sponges and paper towels for cleaning up during or after snack.

Questions to assess language development

Expressive language

- Can the children produce politeness markers (please, thank you) as they engage in passing and receiving food?

Receptive language

- Do the children respond to their names as they are passed food items?
- Do the children respond to good manners as they engage in passing and receiving food?

Resource: Rockwell, R., D. R. Hoge, and B. Searcy. 1999. "Snack time." *Linking Language*. Beltsville, Md.: Grypton House: 40. *Used with permission.*

Group words

As part of this category and vocabulary building activity, children group animals and then label that group of animals. Some group names will be familiar to the children, while others may be very new.

Aids: Various animal pictures or small toy animals—fish, kittens, puppies, birds of many types, lions, wolves, horses. Printed word cards with each group name, if appropriate.

Words you can use: school, flock, pack, covey, litter, group, pride, picture, various animal names.

Procedure:

1. Put pictures of animals or small toy animals into the center of the circle.
2. Ask the children to cooperate in putting the groups of animals together—fish with fish, lions with lions.
3. Have the children provide or learn the group name for the various animal groups. For example, a school of fish, flock of birds, litter of puppies, etc. Depending on the age and abilities of the children, provide word cards to match each name for literacy development.

Activity variations:

1. Pick a group of animals and make that animal's sounds.
2. Learn the words for parents and offspring in each animal group.
3. Incorporate more difficult group words.

Questions to assess language development

Expressive language

- Can the children name the group independently?
- Can the children name the group with a prompt?

Receptive language

- Can the children sort the animals into groups?

Resource: Rockwell, R., D. R. Hoge, and B. Searcy. 1999. "Group words." *Linking Language*. Beltsville, Md.: Grypton House: 26. *Used with permission.*

Dog show

This activity allows children to use descriptive words in a fun experience using their very own stuffed animals from home.

Aids: A note sent home to the parents before the dog show date. Masking tape or another way to put the child's name on her stuffed dog. Blue ribbons (or paper), scissors and markers.

Words you can use: black, white, brown, yellow, red, small, tiny, large, big, huge, long, short, pointy, floppy, spotted, tricolour, curly, straight, tail, ear, nose, eyes, fuzzy, describe.

Procedure:

1. Send a note home announcing the dog show, asking parents to send a stuffed dog (or other stuffed animal) to school with their child on the designated date.
2. On the designated date, the children bring their stuffed dogs to circle time.
3. Ask each child to tell something specific that she can see about her dog such as colour, size, what kind of fur, what kind of ears, and what kind of tail.
4. After each child has had a turn, all participants get a blue ribbon with DOG SHOW and the year written on it. Everyone is a winner.

Activity variations:

1. Ask each child to tell the dog's name.
2. Ask each child to tell how she received her dog or where the dog came from.
3. Encourage the children to engage in pretend play with the dogs.
4. Categorize the dogs into groups with the children such as brown dogs, white dogs, big dogs, and small dogs.

Questions to assess language development

Expressive language

- Can the children say descriptive words that really reflect an aspect of their dog?
- Can the children say descriptive words in a variety of categories, such as colour, texture, size of tail or ears?

Resource: Rockwell, R., D. R. Hoge, and B. Searcy. 1999. "Dog show." *Linking Language*. Beltsville, Md.: Grypton House: 24. *Used with permission.*

You are jumping

With this very simple activity children practice using action verbs in gross motor activities.

Aids: Picture cards depicting action verbs.

Words you can use: smiling, laughing, jumping, crying, walking, running, skipping, eating, yelling, screaming, tasting, writing, reading, talking, colouring, coughing, climbing, calling, painting, waving, washing, brushing, pushing, pulling, chewing, drinking, dancing.

Procedure:

1. Make picture cards showing verbs that are fun for children to act out.
2. Each child takes a turn choosing a card from a pile and then acting out what the picture shows while the other children guess what the child is doing.
3. Encourage the children to use the full sentence, "You are... "

Questions to assess language development

Expressive language

- Can the children form the complete sentence "You are... " with and without a model from the teacher?

Resource: Rockwell, R., D. R. Hoge, and B. Searcy. 1999. "You are jumping." *Linking Language*. Beltsville, Md.: Grypton House: 14. *Used with permission.*

Binoculars

Objective: Improve the grammatical correctness of spoken language.

Aids: Toilet paper or kitchen tissue rolls.

Procedure:

1. Create "binoculars" from the rolls.
2. If a particular child shows interest in the binoculars show him how one is supposed to look through it and comment on what you see—"I can see a couple of chairs and Joseph reading a book".
3. Let the child look through the binoculars and let him describe what he can see.

Resources: *Activities of kindergarten teachers*, Malé Uherce, Slovakia. *Used with permission.*

The treasures of nature

Objective: To learn new words and use them actively.

Aids: Small buckets.

Procedure:

1. During an outdoor activity let children collect various items from nature.
2. Speak with them about what they found.
3. Sort the various things collected into groups, e.g., stones, leaves.
4. Talk to the children about the colours, shapes, texture, and size of the collected items.

Resources: *Activities of kindergarten teachers, Malé Uherce, Slovakia. Used with permission.*

Echo

Procedure: Have children sit on chairs in a circle and one by one say their own name and surname. Upon saying one name the rest of the children should, like an echo, repeat the name of the child. For example, one child says "Jane Brown" and the rest repeat, "Jane Brown".

Resources: *Activities of kindergarten teachers, Malé Uherce, Slovakia. Used with permission.*

What does not belong here?

Aids: Various items, e.g., toys, fruit, animals, transportation vehicles.

Procedure: Have children sit around a desk. The teacher places several items in the middle of the desk, e.g., an apple, a pear, a plum, a car, and grapes. The children name the items together and look at them together. The teacher then asks, "What does not belong in the group?" The children answer one by one. Then the teacher reveals the correct answer. Each child who answered correctly gets a point. Finally, as a group, they tell why the particular item does not belong.

Resources: *Activities of kindergarten teachers, Malé Uherce, Slovakia. Used with permission.*

A long sentence game

Aids: Various pictures.

Procedure: Have children sit around a desk that has various pictures on it. The teacher says a simple sentence, for example, "The doll is crying". The children should then add words to the sentence to make it longer. For example: "The small doll is crying; the small doll named Jane is crying; the small doll named Jane is crying in the stroller".

Resource: Wagnerová, E. 2000. Predškolská príprava rómskych detí, Príručka pre učiteľky materských škôl, Nadácia Škola dokorán. *Used with permission.*

Literacy Activities

These activities stimulate the development of children's expressive and receptive language.

The children have opportunities to use the words to name the persons, items, phenomena, and activities and also words to express their imaginations, ideas, and feelings.

Read a picture together

Aids: Pictures (numbers 1 and 2).

Procedure:

1. Show the children the first picture.
2. Begin by asking a child to describe what she sees.
3. After describing what's happening, ask the children to make up a story about what the family did before they arrived at the pond.
4. Ask the children what they think might happen during the picnic.
5. Ask the children, "What might the people do if it starts to rain hard? What about the animals? What would they do?"
6. Have the children colour the picture and add it to their collection.

Act out the picture

Procedure:

1. Using the picture as a starting point, help the children act out what's happening, and what they think might happen next. Ask the children which character they want to be. Remember, it could be that some of the children will want to be the parent or maybe one of the animals. That's just fine.
2. Tell them what character you (as a teacher) will play.
3. Begin by acting out what you see in the picture and then create a scene about what might come next.

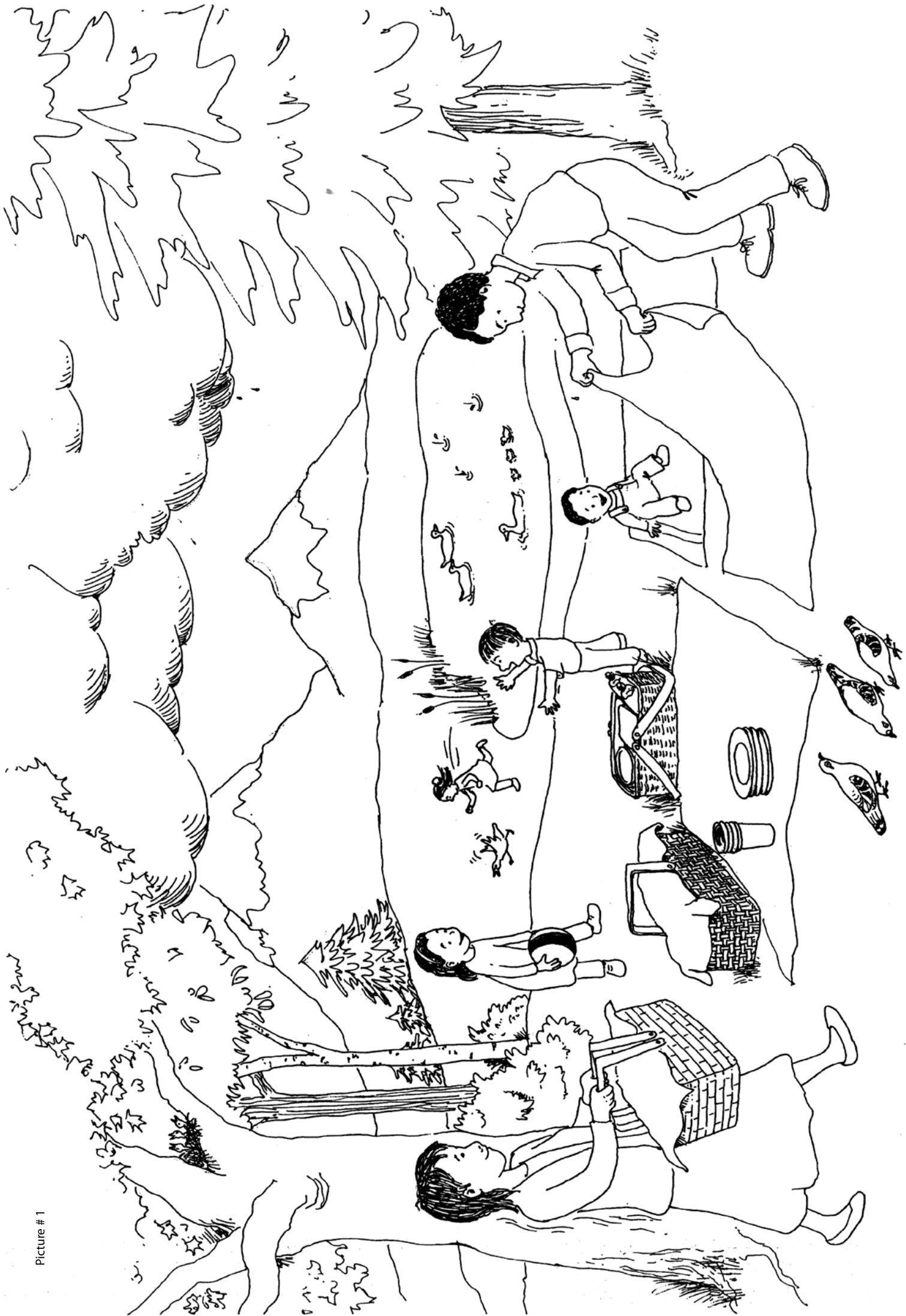
Talk about a picture

Procedure:

1. Show the children the second picture.
2. Ask them to describe the picture and talk about what's happening in the picture.
3. Then ask them to discuss the relative sizes of the objects in the picture. For example, you might ask:
 - Which cat is the longest?
 - Which kitten is the smallest?
 - Which ball of yarn do you think is the heaviest? Why do you think that?
 - Are there more cats or kittens?
 - How do you know?

4. Ask them about the numbers of things in the picture:
 - How many cats? How many kittens?
 - How many living things are in the room?
 - How many nonliving things are in the room?

Resource: Rockwell, R., D. R. Hoge, and B. Searcy. 1999. "Read a picture together". *Linking Language*. Beltsville, Md.: Grypton House: 47. *Used with permission.*



Picture # 1



Making books

Make and take activity

This activity can be done by parents in the home. Parents can make books at home and bring them to primary schools. Parents can foster their child's interest in books by helping her or him to make her or his own.

A book about me

Include drawings or photographs of family, friends, pets, toys, bedroom, favourite things, holidays, birthdays, favourite foods.

Favourite topics

Collect pictures from old magazines or newspapers about favourite topics such as cars, animals, food.

Shapes and colours

Collect pictures of different shaped objects and have a page for each shape. Do the same for colours.

Stories

If the child shows an interest in writing, help him to make up a story and write down what he dictates. He can illustrate his own story.

Resource: Rockwell, R., D. R. Hoge, and B. Searcy. 1999. "Making own books". *Linking Language*. Beltsville, Md.: Grypton House: 47. *Used with permission.*

Explaining words

Objective: To learn new words and use them actively.

Material: A ball.

Procedure:

1. Show the ball to the child and let her look at it and touch it.
2. Ask her "What are you doing with the ball?" If the child does not answer, show her how to throw the ball or kick it. Play with the child and at the same time describe what you are doing. Then ask again, "What are you doing with the ball?"
3. Show the child other items and ask her how they are used.

How is it?

Aids: Various pictures.

Procedure: Children sit in a circle on the floor. One child distributes one picture to each pupil. Children should look over their picture and then the teacher says, "Please describe your picture." For example, if the picture shows the Sun, the child should answer in a complete sentence: "The sun is warm, yellow, and big."

Resource: Wagnerová, E. 2000. Predškolská príprava rómskych detí. Príručka pre učiteľky materských škôl, Nadácia škola dokorán: 51.

Activities of kindergarten teachers, Malé Uherce, Slovakia. Used with permission.

Word Play, Rhymes, and Alliteration

Just as children enjoy playing with the tangible objects in their world—play dough, Daddy’s shoes, puddles of water—so, too, they enjoy playing with the sounds and words of our language. And just as exploring and experimenting with objects enhance children’s cognitive development, so do language play and exploration contribute to children’s language development and, more specifically, to their developing literacy. Children’s own word play includes making various sounds, playing with real words, making up nonsense words, telling jokes, riddles, and stories, creating strings of rhyming words, and singing simple songs.

Initiate word play

We can support and extend child-initiated word play in the moment, and children can follow up as well by planning brief and playful experiences with words.

Rhyming games

The following playful activities focus on rhyming.

Procedure:

1. Substitute a word at the end of a line in a familiar song or chant and see what word children choose to rhyme with it.
2. Play “let’s think of words that rhyme”. Let’s think of words that rhyme with sat. (Any rhyming word or nonsense word will do: hat, bat, that, cat, mat, etc.)

Let children to be the leaders. When children are familiar with this game, try making up rhyming phrases with them:

“I saw a goat sailing in a... ” (Any rhyme will do: boat, coat, moat, etc.)

3. Play rhyming “I spy” (or “I see”): After children get the idea of rhyming words in the above activity (where there are multiple right answers), introduce this game (where there is usually only one right answer).
 - “I spy (or I see) something that rhymes with... ” What do you think it is?
 - Start with the most concrete form of this game—children do not have to search for the objects, because you have them right in front of you and the children.
 - “I spy something I am holding that rhymes with call.”
 - “I spy something next to me that rhymes with fox.”
 - “I spy something we are sitting on that rhymes with bug.”

When children can play that form of the game easily, expand the area where the objects can be found:

“I spy something in the book area that rhymes with willow.”

“ I spy something in the room that rhymes with label.”

Resource: Ranweiler, L. W. 2004. “Rhyming games—Nursery rhymes.” *Preschool Readers and Writers—Early Literacy Strategies for Teachers*. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press: 45–53. *Used with permission.*

Alliteration games

Here are some helpful ways to help children notice the sounds at the beginnings of words:

1. To familiarize children with the initial sounds in their names, play "I know someone," using the names of the children in your group.

"I know someone, right here in this room, whose name starts like this: (shhhhhhhh). Who do you think it is?"

"There are two children in our room whose names begin with this sound: (t,t,t). Who are they?"

"I know three children whose names starts with (j) sound."

"I am thinking of a person whose name starts with the same sound as monkey."

2. As the children become more familiar with the initial sounds in one another's names, play active group games. Stress the matching initial sound in each action word as the children call out the names that begin with that sound.
 - "If you see someone whose name begins with a (b) sound, **b**ounce on your **b**ottom... Yes, we're **b**ouncing with **B**rianna."
 - "If you see someone whose name begins with a (j) sound, **j**ump up and down. Now we're **j**umping with **J**ean and **J**ane."
 - When children are familiar with the sounds their own names begin with, make up alliterative phrases together, using their names: **B**en **b**ouncing **b**all, **A**nn **a**pple **a**nts, **T**ibor **t**en **t**oes, **K**ara **c**andy **c**up, etc.

3. Play "Let's think of words that start like this".

Introduce a word or a sound, then let children come up with other words that begin with the same sound. Once the children catch on, they can take turns leading this game:

"Let's think of words that start like big, baby, bottle... "

"Let's think of words that start with (m), like mummy... !"

"Let's think of words that begin with a (d) sound."

Repeat children's responses.

Resources: Handzelová, J. 2002. Nadácia Škola dokorán, Slovakia. *Used with permission.*

Picture cards for sound matching (rhyme and alliteration)

- Pictures of words that have the same initial sound. Examples:

carrot, cow, cup, crayon

dog, dress, doll,

table, TV, two, tail

- Pictures of words that rhyme. Examples:

fox/box

king/ring

mouse/house

bed/bread

Before adding these cards to your room, introduce them to the children, perhaps at greeting time. Here is a playful way to show how the rhyming words can be matched. "I am a big brown bear, and I want to sit in my chair. Can you help find it?"

Resources: Handzelová, J. 2002. Nadácia Škola dokorán, Slovakia. Used with permission

Books and stories with rhyme and alliteration

Here are some ways to use many wonderful preschool-level books and stories that are filled with rhyme and alliteration.

- When reading or telling stories with rhyming phrases, occasionally ask the children to identify the rhyming words they hear. Or pause at the end of a line so children can fill in the rhyming word.
- When reading familiar stories and rhymes that include alliterative phrases, pause so children can say them with you or fill them in.

Resources: Handzelová, J. 2002. Nadácia Škola dokorán, Slovakia. *Used with permission.*

Nursery rhymes

Nursery rhymes may be used in both traditional and nontraditional ways:

- Read and recite nursery rhymes daily.
- Stock the room with nursery rhyme books, audiotapes, puppets, and pictures.
- Make a nursery rhyme "big book".
- Send home copies of the children's favourite nursery rhymes, stapled into a book format. Children could decorate their books before taking them home.
- Recite appropriate nursery rhymes with cooking activities or snacks.
- Make up nursery rhyme riddles.
- Record the children's nursery rhyme riddles on chart paper.
- Encourage children to act out nursery rhymes (or to recite them while other children act them out).
- Make a set of sequence cards for favourite nursery rhymes, and store them in the book area.

Resources: Handzelová, J. 2002. Nadácia Škola dokorán, Slovakia. *Used with permission.*

Add the correct picture

Goal: Develop phonetic hearing.

Procedure: The teacher puts a picture in the middle of a ring. He names it. The teacher and children then specify the sound the name of the depicted thing, living creature, etc. starts with. Children search from their allocated pictures for those that start with the same sound as the model picture and they add them to the center.

Resource: Trochtová, I. 2002. "Add the correct picture." Rozvojový jazykový program pre rómske deti. Prešov: Rokus: 26. *Used with permission.*

Those who sleep will not win

Objective: Analyze the sound at the beginning of a word.

Procedure: Pupils "sleep" (have heads down on the desk). The teacher says words and children "wake up" (raise their heads) when a word is said that starts with a previously agreed sound.

Resource: Trochtová, I. 2002. Those who sleep will not win. Rozvojový jazykový program pre rómske deti. Prešov : Rokus: 26. *Used with permission.*

A ship has arrived

Objective: Develop vocabulary.

Procedure: The teacher holds a small ball in his or her hand, saying, "A ship has arrived and it has brought the sound m." She or he then throws the ball to a pupil who has to say a word that starts with that sound. Then the pupil tosses the ball back to the teacher.

Resource: Trochtová, I. 2002. "A ship has arrived." Rozvojový jazykový program pre rómske deti. Prešov : Rokus: 26. *Used with permission.*

What did I see?

Objective: Develop the capability to express oneself readily and to form sentences.

Procedure: The teacher begins: "I was in front of school and I saw some trees." The teacher then calls on a child to repeat the sentence and add a word to it.

Resource: Trochtová, I. 2002. "What did I see?" Rozvojový jazykový program pre rómske deti. Prešov : Rokus: 26. *Used with permission.*

One syllable

Objective: Practice the capability to form words.

Procedure: The teacher says a syllable and pupils form words containing that syllable.

Resource: Trochtová, I. 2002. "One syllable." Rozvojový jazykový program pre rómske deti. Prešov: Rokus: 26. *Used with permission.*

Say where they were put

Objective: Practice the use of prepositions.

Procedure: One child goes out of the room. The other children hide a previously agreed-upon object. At a signal, the child returns into the room and looks for the object. When she finds it, she uses a full sentence to say where it was hidden (for example, the ball was under the desk, the car was on the cabinet, etc.).

Resource: Trochtová, I. 2002. "Say where they were put." Rozvojový jazykový program pre rómske deti. Prešov : Rokus.: 27. *Used with permission.*

Guess the name

Objective: Practice the knowledge of fairy tales.

Procedure: The teacher places pictures from a well-known fairy tale on a magnetic board and the children have to guess the fairy tale.

Modification: One of the pictures does not belong to the group and children have to tell which one it is.

Resources: Trochtová, I. 2002. Rozvojový jazykový program pre rómske deti. Prešov: Rokus: 26. *Used with permission*

Recognizing a voice

Aids: Textile playhouse.

Procedure: Have children sit in a circle and in the middle of it create a textile house. Use a word game to choose a child to go outside the classroom. Choose a different child to hide in the playhouse. The first child then enters the room and asks, "Who lives in this house?" The child in the playhouse should answer: "It's me, Winnie the Pooh!" The first child should now guess the name of the one hidden in the playhouse. If the answer is correct, the rest of the children should applaud and the two children should sit back in the circle. Repeat the game with two other children.

Resources: *Activities of kindergarten teachers, Malé Uherce, Slovakia. Used with permission.*

How do they wake you up?

Procedure: The teacher mentions various animals, for instance, cow, dog, rooster, and the children should answer together with the sound that the animal names makes, e.g., "moo".

Resources: *Activities of kindergarten teachers, Malé Uherce, Slovakia. Used with permission.*

Poets

Aids: Pictures or toys.

Procedure: Have children sit around a desk. The teacher says a word and the children should look for a word (among the pictures or toys) that rhymes with the first word. For instance, the teacher says “fog” and the children can spot the picture of a dog or a toy dog.

Resources: *Activities of kindergarten teachers, Malé Uherce, Slovakia. Used with permission.*

What toy do you have in your hands?

Aids: Classroom toys.

Procedure: Children sit in a circle on the floor. The teacher distributes one toy to each child. She then asks one child after the other, “What toy do you have in your hands?” The child will answer, for example “a car”. For a change in this activity, distribute pictures of toys, items of daily use, means of transportation, etc.

Resources: *Activities of kindergarten teachers, Malé Uherce, Slovakia. Used with permission.*

What does it do?

Aids: Various pictures of animals, e.g., a frog, fish, butterfly, rabbit, etc.

Procedure: The teacher shows pictures of animals to children who are seated about the room. The teacher asks while showing a picture of, for example, a rabbit—“What does this animal do?” The children answer: “A rabbit hops.” They can also imitate a rabbit hopping.

Resources: *Activities of kindergarten teachers, Malé Uherce, Slovakia. Used with permission.*

Riddle game

Aids: Various environments of a kindergarten, e.g., classroom, locker room, bedroom, bathroom.

Procedure: Use a kindergarten rhyme to ask children:

Into our classroom there flew a bee,
When it sat down what did it see?

Children sit in a circle on the floor. One by one they answer what they see in the room. When a child answers, the rest of the children respond whether it is true or not. If there is no such item in the room, the child should stand up.

Resources: *Activities of kindergarten teachers, Malé Uherce, Slovakia. Used with permission.*

Reading Aloud and Storytelling

Reading aloud

Reading aloud has been found to be one of the most important ways adults can foster children's emerging literacy. More specifically, reading to children supports all eight dimensions of literacy learning:

- When we read with enjoyment to children, we demonstrate the power and pleasure of literacy.
- Books that children listen to (as well as look at) are a prominent part of the literate environment.
- Reading aloud enhances children's language development through the introduction of new words, concepts, and language structures.
- Reading aloud builds children's knowledge and comprehension of the world.
- When children are read to regularly, their knowledge of print grows.
- When we read a variety of books, not just storybooks, children learn about the many different types of text.
- Children's phonological awareness increases when we read aloud to them and talk about the sounds in the words.
- Reading aloud supports children's developing interest in and knowledge of letters and words.

In preschool classrooms we read a story mainly for enjoyment, reading straight through but accepting children's questions and comments throughout. At other times we may stop the reading to point out various features of the book, the print, or individual words, we may ask questions or make comments about the story, we may pause at appropriate places for the children to chime in or complete a rhyme.

Reading aloud to children stimulates their imagination, as evidenced when their dramatic play includes elements from various stories they have become familiar with. Being read to also stretches their attention span, improves their listening comprehension, nurtures their emotional development, and can build a sense of community in the classroom.

Children love to hear their favourite stories again and again, sometimes to adults' dismay. However re-reading has many benefits for children's learning. Repetition:

- Immerses the child in the language of the story, making it easier to learn.
- Helps build children's confidence (they know what's going to happen next).
- Strengthens and reinforces the neural connections in children's brains.
- Improves children's vocabulary, sequencing, and memory skills.
- Increases the possibility that children will be able to read the book on their own afterwards.
- Encourages children to re-enact their favourite stories.

Read a variety of books

- **Books that contain rhyme and alliteration.** These books allow you to draw children's attention to the various sounds of the words, helping them develop phonemic awareness. Books with rhyme and alliteration can be stories, poems, songs, or nursery rhymes.
- Predictable books. These books, which help children think of themselves as readers, use a variety of literary devices to make them predictable—repetition, rhyme, refrain, cumulative text, sequential patterns, interlocking patterns, text closely matching the illustrations, or one idea or thought per page.
- Books with easily remembered phrases or lines for children to chant.
- Books that invite physical as well as verbal participation.
- Books that reflect the identities, home languages, family structures, and cultures of the children in your class.
- Wordless books. Demonstrate to children how they can make up the story as they “read” the pictures.
- Big books of familiar stories and poems. Point to the words as you read them, children will often chime in and read along with you.
- Alphabet books. These books invite the response or involvement of the child in the read-aloud experience, and they also provide teachers with a rich source of ideas for extended activities in the early childhood setting.

Resource: Ranweiler, L. W. 2004. “Reading aloud.” *Preschool Readers and Writers—Early Literacy Strategies for Teachers*. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press: 60–61. *Used with permission.*

Storytelling

Storytelling benefits children in the following ways:

- Helps children learn to listen and concentrate and increases their attention span.
- Exposes children to new words and language patterns.
- Helps children develop a sense of story, acquaints them with the elements of character, setting, dialogue, and plot.
- Helps children develop an appreciation for literature.
- Encourages children to tell stories themselves, especially familiar stories have been told again and again.
- Stimulates the imagination of the listeners as they bring words to life in their minds.
- Encourages listener participation, children make predictions, contribute ideas, and add sounds and motions to the story.
- Encourages children's thinking and comprehension.

- Can nurture a sense of humour in children.
- Helps children develop social abilities, such as listening to others, understanding the feelings of others, and contributing to a group effort.
- Enhances children's understanding of community and self.
- Helps children appreciate their own cultural heritage.
- Increases children's knowledge of and understanding of other places, cultures, and beliefs.

Storytelling is a flexible activity. It can be planned in advance or spontaneous, initiated by the adult or done at the children's request. You can tell stories to children at the same time of day that you would be likely to read to them: as they arrive for the day, at greeting time, work time, small-group time, before or after lunch, before or after naptime. You can also tell stories to children at times when there are no books available, for example, on the playground or while waiting during a field trip.

Resource: Ranweiler, L. W. 2004. "Storytelling. Rhyming games—Nursery rhymes." *Preschool Readers and Writers—Early Literacy Strategies for Teachers*. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press: 70. *Used with permission.*

Spontaneous improvised use of language

Objective: To tell of one's adventures and experience.

Procedure:

1. Ask the child about things that he is interested in, for instance: "What do you like doing while visiting your grandmother?" "What program did you like watching on TV?"
2. If the child does not readily offer answers, try to ask about different topics until you engage her interest.
3. For a child who does not like communicating with an adult, use a doll or a stuffed toy.

Resource: *Activities of kindergarten teachers*, Malé Uherce, Slovakia. *Used with permission.*

Multicultural Games

Catching fishes in the dark

Number of participants: 8 to 20

Equipment: Blindfold.

Procedure: Blindfold the child who is playing the fisherman. The rest of the group are fish. The fish run by the fisherman and try to tag him without his tagging them. If the fisherman tags a fish, he tries to guess who it is. If he guesses correctly, then he changes places with the fish. If he guesses incorrectly, the fish goes free. Clearly define the area in which the fish may run.

Adaptation

The fish remain stationary and make sounds. The fisherman locates the fish by homing in on the sounds.

Resource: Barbarash, L. 1997. "Catching fishes in the dark." *Multicultural games*. Brooklyn, N.Y.: Wingate High School: 100. *Used with permission.*

O. A.

Number of participants: 5

Area: smooth area with a wall.

Equipment: five tennis balls or small playground balls.

Procedure: The five players line up facing a wall that is about six feet away. All five players chant the following together in rhythm, repeating each line three times before reciting the next line. As each player says her line, she will bounce the ball against the wall and catch it, following the special instructions when given. When a player misses, she is eliminated until only one player remains.

We bounce our ball...

Against the wall...

Without moving...

Without laughing...

Without talking...

On one foot...

With one hand... (throw and catch with the same hand)

In front... (throw, clap, catch)

Behind... (throw, clap behind back, catch)

Whirlwind... (throw, windmill arms, catch)

Little horse... (throw, raise leg, clap under it, catch)

Right now... (throw, arms stay extended, catch)

Half-turn... (throw, full spin, catch).

This finishes the first round. If more than one player finishes successfully, repeat, chanting each line only twice. If after this more than one player remains, repeat the chant, each line once. In the event more than one player still remains, go back to chanting each line three times (then two, then one) and continue until only one player remains. The remaining player is the winner.

Adaptation

When a player misses, she begins with the next line, but earns a point for the miss. The player with the fewest points wins if no one successfully completes the round or at the end of a preset number of rounds.

Resource: Barbarash, L. 1997. "O. A." *Multicultural games*. Brooklyn, N.Y.: Wingate High School: 64. *Used with permission.*

My little bird

Number of participants: 20 or more

Area : Any.

Procedure: The leader stands before the group and says, "My little bird is lively, lively." She then quickly calls out the name of anything she wishes. For example, she might say, "Goats fly." If the thing named can fly, the children flap their arms like they're flying. If the thing can't fly and a player flaps her arms in error, the player is eliminated. The last remaining child wins the game.

Adaptations

Use walking objects or rolling objects. If walking things are used, the children could drop to all fours if the thing walks. If rolling things are used, the children could drop to the floor and roll over if the thing rolls.

Award a player who commits an error a point. The person with the fewest points at the end of the game wins.

Resource: Barbarash, L. 1997. "My little bird." *Multicultural games*. Brooklyn, N.Y.: Wingate High School: 16. *Used with permission.*

Hopscotch

Number of participants: 2 to 6

Area: any hardtop surface.

Equipment: chalk or floor tape, flat stone or other marker.

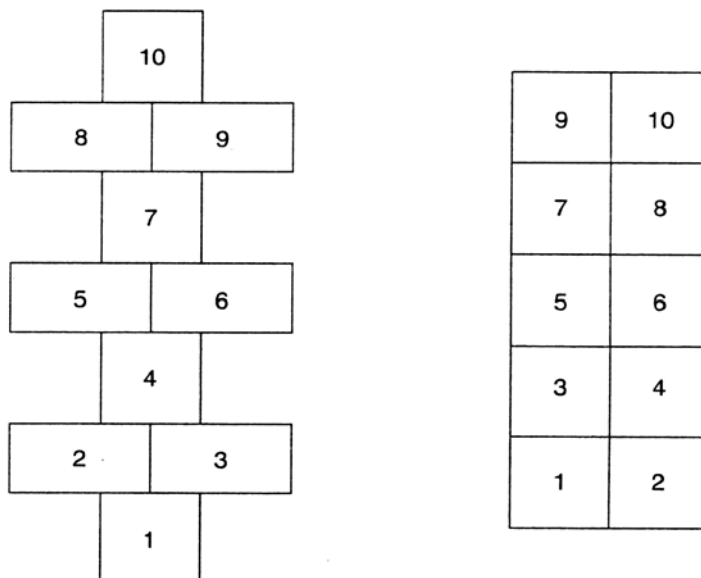
Procedure: Many variations of the game exist, but the rules are basically the same for all. In this version, each player has a small flat stone to use as a marker. The object of the game is to toss the marker onto the number 1 square, hop on one foot onto the square, kick the marker back over the

baseline (using free foot), and hop back out. If the player accomplishes this, he performs the same sequence with the number 2 square, first hopping onto the number 1 square before hopping on the same foot to the number 2 square. The sequence continues through number 10.

A player's turn is over if:

- the other foot touches down when hopping or standing still,
- he hops on a line,
- the stone toss does not land in the correct number square, or
- the kicked stone fails to go over the baseline.

When one player misses, the next player begins from the point the miss happened. The winner is the first player to complete the tossing and kicking sequence from 1 to 10.



Adaptations

To make the game longer or more difficult, the player who first completes the tossing and kicking sequence back down from 10 to 1 is the winner.

Another popular way to play is to hop on one foot in the single squares and straddle the double squares, placing one foot in each square. The foot in the box kicks the marker.

Resource: Barbarash, L. 1997. "Hopscotch." *Multicultural games*. Brooklyn, N.Y.: Wingate High School: 28. *Used with permission.*

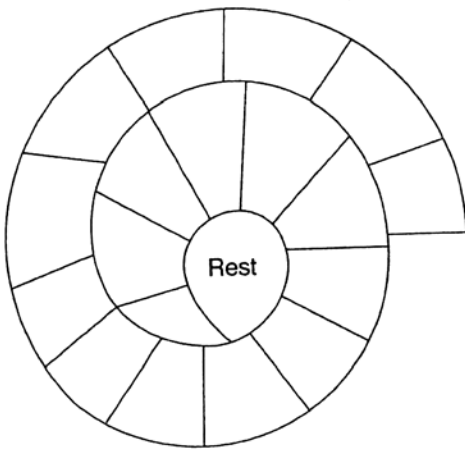
Round hopscotch

Number of participants: 2 to 6

Area: Any hardtop area.

Equipment: chalk or floor tape, small, smooth stone or other marker.

Procedure: Draw a spiral, marking off boxes. Player number one hops on one foot, not touching any lines, through the spiral to the rest box. Allow the player to stand on both feet when in the rest box. After a short rest, the player turns and hops around the spiral back to the starting line. If she completes the spiral, in and out, she puts her initials in any box, except the rest box. If playing inside, use cardboard name markers to claim boxes. Player number two begins the same pattern, but can't jump in the initialled box. Only the player whose initials are in a box may hop in it. Play continues until it is impossible to reach the rest square without missing or hopping in someone else's box. If a player steps in a claimed box or on a line, his turn is over and he is eliminated. The last person remaining is the winner.



Adaptations

When a player steps in a claimed box or on a line, his turn is over and he does not claim a box that round. This prevents players from being eliminated. The player with the most initialled squares is the winner.

Resource: Barbarash, L. 1997. "Round hopscotch." *Multicultural games*. Brooklyn, N.Y.: Wingate High School: 32. *Used with permission.*

The story of your name

Number of participants: 10 and more

Area: Any.

Procedure: Ensure that an appropriate group atmosphere is established in which students have already done some initial warm-up activities and name games. Ask students to turn to a partner and explain what your name means (if anything) and where it comes from. Most people reveal a surprising amount of interesting information about where their name comes from and what it means. The greater the ethnic and cultural diversity in the group, the better this exercise tends to work. Can be specifically used to help build intercultural respect and understanding or to more generally help develop self-identity and open respect and sharing. Optional: Ask each student to introduce his or her partner to the larger group and to explain what his or her name means and where it comes from. Optional: The activity can be extended into revealing the background behind other names, e.g.:

- Nicknames
- Pets
- Fantasy name
- Names of children—or what would you name your children if you have them?

Brief description:

Where does your name come from? Share the story of where your name comes from and what your name means. Everyone's name has a surprisingly interesting origin. Helps to build intercultural respect and understanding.

Resource: *Activities of kindergarten teachers, Malé Uherce, Slovakia. Used with permission.*

The fox and the chickens

Number of participants: 2 to 6

Area: Any.

Procedure: Someone gets to be the Fox; all others are Chickens. The Chickens have a barn. The Fox can't get in the barn, so the Chickens are safe there. The Chickens ask the Fox what time it is. The Fox says a number. Then the Chickens come out of the barn as many steps as the number the Fox says. When the Fox says "midnight," the Chickens run back to the barn, because that is when the Fox can catch them. When the Fox catches a Chicken, the Chicken changes to a Fox and helps the Fox catch more Chickens. The game ends when all the Chickens are turned into Foxes.

Resource: *Activities of kindergarten teachers, Malé Uherce, Slovakia. Used with permission.*

Hide and go seek

Number of participants: Any number

Area: Any area.

Procedure: One child hides her eyes and counts to 10; all other children hide. Having counted to 10, the child says: "Ready or not, here I come." The person who counted tries to find the others. If one of the hiding children makes it back to home base—where the first child counted—without getting caught, that child is "home free". The last one found is "It" and must count for the next game.

Resource: *Activities of kindergarten teachers, Malé Uherce, Slovakia. Used with permission.*

Space boys

Number of participants: 15 to 20

Area: Any.

Equipment: masks, clothes.

Procedure: The children playing this game all have powers that can help them glide, turn into birds or into different colours, fly over a volcano, fly in space, etc. They're also monsters and they can turn others into dogs or other animals. There is a castle and the kids have to get there. In the castle are a mother and a father who have mind control and have a rocket ship in space. The monsters have a spaceship too. With the help of their mother and father, the kids have to fight the monsters. They have to reach a button in the monsters' spaceship to turn the others into humans again.

Resource: *Activities of kindergarten teachers, Malé Uherce, Slovakia. Used with permission.*

Down

Number of participants: 2 to 6

Area: Outdoors.

Equipment: balls.

Procedure: The group starts off with a tennis ball, throwing the ball continuously between them until somebody drops the ball. At that point, whoever has dropped the ball hears "Down on one knee" from the others in the group. If the same person drops the ball a second time, it's "Down on two knees"; if the same person drops the ball again, "Down on one elbow"; drop it again, "Down on two elbows". More misses by the same child result in "Down on the chin"—next miss and that child is "out". While playing the game, each child must throw and catch the ball from whatever posture he or she is in.

Resource: *Activities of kindergarten teachers, Malé Uherce, Slovakia. Used with permission.*

What's the time Mr. Wolf?

Number of participants: 10 to 15

Area: Any area.

Procedure: One player is the wolf and stands about 5 meters from the others with her back turned. The rest call out, "What's the time Mr. Wolf?" and the wolf turns to face the others and shouts out a time, e.g., 10 o'clock. The others then take 10 steps toward the wolf. The group will take the same number of steps toward the wolf as the number of hours in the wolf's time: 2 o'clock = 2 steps, 6 o'clock = 6 steps, etc. The wolf again faces away from the the group, which again yells "What's the time..." When the group gets close to the wolf, the next time the group yells its question, the wolf says "DINNER TIME" and runs after the group who are running back to the start line. If the wolf catches a player, that player is the next wolf. Sounds complicated, but is fun and not hard to play.

Resource: *Activities of kindergarten teachers, Malé Uherce, Slovakia. Used with permission.*

Nose telephone

Number of participants: 6 to 12

Area: Any area.

Equipment: matchbox.

Procedure: Players form two equal teams and line up with each team facing the other. The game begins as the first player on each team places an empty matchbox (from wooden matches) cover on his nose. He then tries to transfer the matchbox to his neighbour's nose without using his hands.

If the matchbox cover falls, players must pick it up only with their noses. The team that which finishes passing first is the winner.

Resource: *Activities of kindergarten teachers, Malé Uherce, Slovakia. Used with permission.*

We are all unique

Objective: To realize that people are different and to be able to describe the differences and commonalities between them.

Aids: Books and magazines, scissors, glue, paper.

Procedure: Have various books and magazines available. The teacher and pupils look over the pictures of various people and describe in what respects they look similar and in what respects they differ.

Cut out pictures of different types of people from the printed materials and glue sets of two pictures of different people onto a piece of paper; e.g., man and a woman, a young person and an older person, a short and a tall person, a Caucasian and a black person.

Resource: Wagnerová, E. 2000. Predškolská príprava rómskych detí. Príručka pre učiteľky materských škôl, Nadácia škola dokorán: 26.

Concept Mapping as a Learning Strategy

In the past, a general name for the group of various approaches to the structuring of learning material has been sought. At present, the concepts of cognitive maps, semantic maps, knowledge maps, cobweb, network graphic interpretation, clustering, mind maps, idea links, etc., appear to have been subsumed under the term “concept maps”.

A concept map is a graphic representation of the pupil’s knowledge structure of the respective learning material, where nodes (points) represent concepts, and links (lines – curved or straight) represent relations between concepts. It is a method of learning, testing, and finding knowledge with the goal of understanding mutual relations between concepts. In the compilation of the concept map, a schema (diagram) is created. Individual concepts are arranged in a way to make the relations between them apparent to the reader. The character of the relation between concepts is expressed by a brief description above the link. The emphasis is on the correct hierarchical arrangement of concepts in which specific concepts are placed under more general ones (Urbanoá, Prokša 2001).

Advantages of concept mapping

A. For pupils

Briefly, concept mapping facilitates:

- understanding new material;
- recoding it into a form that is easier to remember;
- remembering new material;
- recollecting new material; and
- reconstructing the material when new knowledge is acquired.

Concept mapping offers pupils certain tools (special learning strategies) for dealing with situations in which they come across a new and complex topic they are supposed to learn (Čáp, Mareš 2001).

To get a more complete idea, we offer views of other specialists who specify and widen the advantages of the application of concept maps:

- Concept mapping also allows the expression of the superiority and inferiority of individual terms, i.e., it allows us to determine their hierarchical order. In addition, concept mapping can express the sequence of events and processes—what comes before and what comes after (Gavora 1999, 57).
- For learning new content with concentrated concepts (new subject matter), concept mapping is a relatively simple means for capturing the structure of learning by a pupil and the organizational element of the learning process. In the creation of a concept map, pupils visualize their understanding of certain conceptual units—structural elements of the learning material. They learn how to find mutual links and relations. When students meet new elements, they fold them into the captured material and into their own cognitive schemes (Pupala, Osuská 1998).
- Concept maps allow pupils to realize that learning is not an individual process but a social process where everything a pupil learns is part of the “common cultural and historical structure of knowledge” (Roth, www.concepts.com).

- Helping children to create a pictorial concept map, which are later completed with written words, contributes to the development of initial literacy (Pupala, Osuská 1998).
- Using concept maps helps children discern the structure of language. Through the maps, children may be able to perceive the differentiation of proper nouns and also the differentiation of words for marking concepts from connecting words (ibid.).
- Concept mapping provides a complete frame for mastering language skill areas—speaking, listening, reading, and writing (Fisher 1995).
- Concept maps allow children to register the category of the most general and abstract terms (ibid.).
- In a bilingual environment (particularly in the education of Roma children and children of immigrants), concept maps help children understand the relation between the word and the marked phenomena (ibid.).
- Creation of concept maps helps children to develop the capability to orient themselves in a fluently spoken (later written) text. Concept maps aid children to reproduce ideas, stories, and text repeatedly identically (ibid.). They allow children to understand the structure of each text.
- Concept maps assist in the planning of activities or a project in a way that facilitates the arrangement and grouping of ideas and reveals relations between them (Fisher 1995).
- Concept maps provide graphic means for communication (ibid.).
- Concept maps assist pupils to arrange their ideas before writing.

B. For teachers

Advantages of concept mapping for teachers:

- useful in the planning of curricula, explaining more complicated parts of learning material, and summarizing the learning material;
- a suitable tool for diagnosing the previous knowledge of the pupil, his or her naive theories and misconceptions, planning the course of learning, summarizing (Čáp, Mareš 2001; Gavora 1999; www.concept-maps.com).

The process of the creation of a concept map

Below we have tried to lay out basic activities and methodological steps in the gradual introduction of concept mapping.

A. Preparatory phase

Before the creation of a concept map by pupils, suitable methodological strategies must be employed to involve the children with concept maps and with working with concept maps. When preparing your class for the use of concept mapping, remember to give enough attention to

the conceptualization of the category of concept. How to introduce children to the language of concepts? Fisher (1995) reports that one way is to specify the concept as any word that means something; for example, the name of a person, place, thing, event, or idea.

What is often useful is to tell children that a concept is a word that they can visualize or imagine in their minds. Give examples of a number of unfamiliar words so that the children in your class can begin to understand what is meant by visualizing in their minds.

Tell your class that they should take notice of connecting words (e.g., that, is, are, when, that, then, etc.). This will help the children to recognize that these words are not concepts but words that give sentences a specific meaning. At the conclusion of the preparatory phase, read a few sentences from a book aloud and distinguish together between words expressing concepts and connecting words.

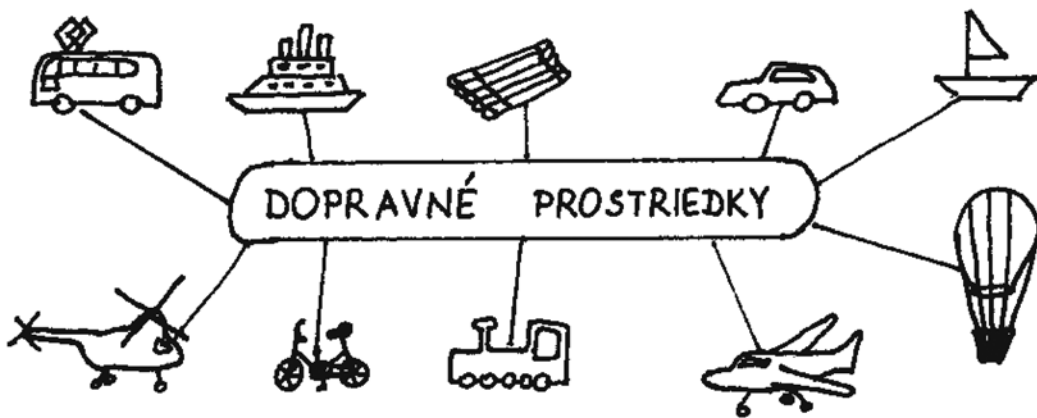
B. Implementation phase

The process of the implementation phase is as follows:

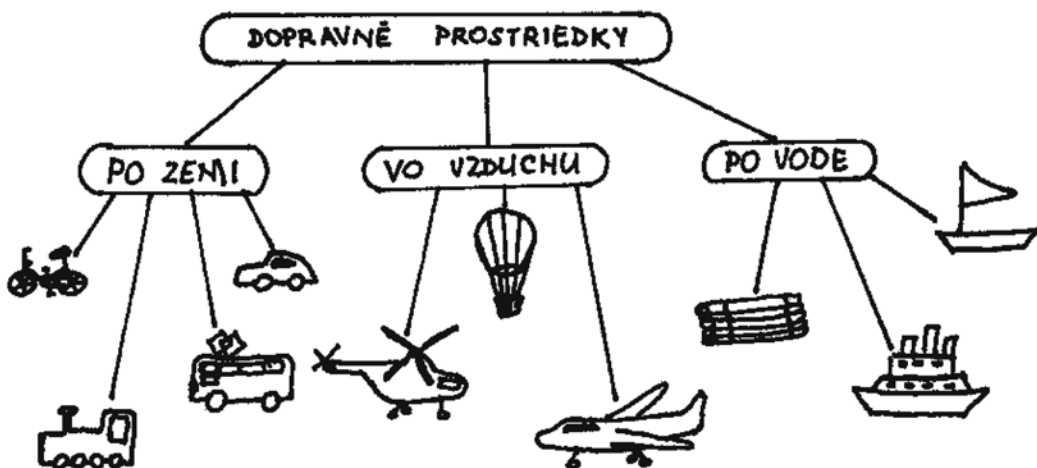
1. Choose a topic that the children are familiar with, inviting each child to draw (write) one picture (word) that comes to mind. Then put together and display all pictures (words) in one place. A common set is created as the starting point for further steps in concept mapping.



2. In the center of the set, put the word marking of the general concept (name of the topic). Mark and highlight the relations of individual pictures (with words) to the central (more general) terms.



3. Regroup the picture (words) into individual—agreed on with children—subcategories. In the newly created concept map, mark links—lines expressing relations in the hierarchy of the recorded categories.



4. Let your pupils read the concept map, this will lead to the map getting expressed verbally in a way meaningful for your students. The map can be completed later with new elements and relations.

Gradually move toward activities in which children create their own concept maps from the provided set of pictures (words). Let the children tell the story hidden in the map after its creation. Later move on to the creation of a map from a read text that children express graphically. Help them to make concept maps that contain substantial information, pictures and words that will represent a list of key information. From them children will independently create their own maps, which will allow them to “read” and reproduce the text.

What is important is that the concept maps created by children should stay in the class in a visible place. Your class can go back to them repeatedly, add to them, and look for other relations, even between two different maps (Pupala, Osuská 1998).

Forms of concept maps

A concept map consists of arranged pictures, such as frames, triangles, ovals, etc., that are connected with lines or arrows. They derive their meanings from verbal information that is placed in the middle of these pictures and among them to form a system of relations between concepts. Simple concept maps form a semantic network on the basis of a simple idea or concept. A more complex strategy is to depict concepts hierarchically.

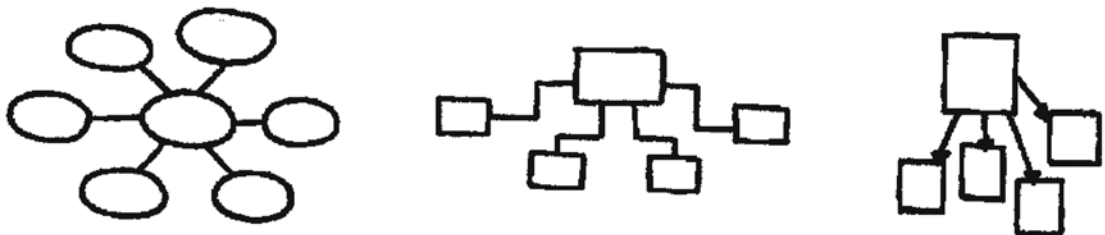
Children should learn about different ways of depicting information in a graphic form. If they get experience with different ways of mapping information, they will also get both the means for a better way of creating information for better understanding and the possibility of determining a better way to create an individual concept map (Fisher 1995).

Below, some forms of concept maps (Leys 1999, In: Petrasová 2003)

The main forms of concept maps

1. A concept map—“A spider”

The “spider” concept map is organized by placing the central theme or unifying factor in the center of the map. Outwardly radiating sub-themes surround the center of the map.



2. A concept map—hierarchy

The hierarchy concept map presents information in a descending order of importance. The most important information is placed at the top. Distinguishing factors determine the placement of the information.



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