

## 4.3 Bilingual Story Bags

Bilingual parents should be involved in their child's learning at home and in schools or other educational establishments. They can introduce and reinforce concepts in the home language that can be consolidated in English at school. A strong basis in the home language is a key factor in enhancing bilingual learners' achievement and self esteem. Bilingual parents are often the only people available who are able to provide this kind of support.

This module aims at raising awareness of bilingualism and its value and showing how parents and schools can work together to support the early education of bilingual children.

### Target group

The project is aimed at student teachers and teachers of nursery pupils and of pupils in the first year of primary school.

### Aims

- To raise the awareness of student teachers and teachers of the concerns of bilingual parents when their children attend school.
- To give student teachers and teachers of pupils in nursery and primary schools activities and ideas they could use with bilingual parents to show the parents how they can support their child's learning before the child starts school and in the first years at school.
- To show teachers how to involve parents in their child's education and give parents the confidence to enjoy books and reading with their child in their home language. Not every parent finds it easy to read stories, but with the supporting materials that the story bag offers, all parents can successfully share books with their child at a variety of levels.



## Sessions in practice

### Session 1: Awareness raising

Concerns parents have when their children go to school in a country where the parents do not speak the language.

**Participants:** Up to a maximum of 30 participants

#### Step 1:

Give out a sheet entitled Language Profile. Ask the participants to fill in the sheet quickly.

Language Profile	Handout 1
1. What language(s) do you regard as 'your own' language, the one you would want to pass on to your children?	
2. What language(s) do you read, write and speak fluently, think in?	
3. What language(s) can you function in at a minimal level... get by in both in spoken and written mode?	
4. What language(s) can you read and understand but cannot function in otherwise ... or perhaps in limited phrases, or with the help of a phrase book?	
5. If your language competences do not fit in to any of the above then please describe them.	

Talk about what the participants have written down. Which languages are they more comfortable using? How do they use it?

Then split the group into 4 or 6 small groups. Give half the groups Case Study 1 and half Case Study 2.

**Case Study 1****Handout 2a**

Your partner's occupation is about to be relocated in Karachi. This is likely to be on a permanent basis and therefore requires relocation of the whole family i.e. yourself, your spouse, your baby, your seven-year-old and your thirteen-year-old.

Taking account of your own language proficiency, discuss the following:

What language will you all speak at home, particularly to the baby?

Will you need to improve your Urdu? ... learn it even?

How will you do this? ... How confident are you about this?

What school will your children go to?

How will you prepare them for this?

Would your answer to any of these questions have been different if the relocation had been to a rural area of France?

If so, why?

Adapted from: Living Languages, Strathclyde Regional Council

**Case Study 2****Handout 2b**

Your partner's occupation is about to be relocated in a rural area of France. This is likely to be on a permanent basis and therefore requires relocation of the whole family i.e. yourself, your spouse, your baby, your seven-year-old and your thirteen-year-old.

Taking account of your own language proficiency, discuss the following:

What language will you all speak at home, particularly to the baby?

Will you need to improve your French? ... learn it even?

How will you do this?... How confident are you about this?

What school will your children go to?

How will you prepare them for this?

Would your answer to any of these questions have been different if the relocation had been to Karachi?

If so, why?

Adapted from: Living Languages, Strathclyde Regional Council

Leave them to discuss the questions on the sheet.

Bring the groups together and through discussion bring out the key points about confidence and self esteem of ethnic minority families:

- Everyone has a strong desire to maintain their first language within the family.
- Language is more than a way of communicating; it is part of an inherent culture we want to pass on to our families and is related to social and emotional aspects.
- Most people want to acquire the language of the country they are living in but lack of confidence, lack of facilities; cultural factors etc. can present barriers to learning it.
- Some languages are given more status than others and that can affect people's self esteem and confidence.

## Step 2: Why is being bilingual good?

How can we reassure parents about the use of their home language?

### Points of discussion

- What do you imagine might be the experiences of bilingual children in our schools?
- Research tells us that being bilingual has many advantages for children. Can you think what these might be?

### Activity

Imagine you are talking to the parents of a bilingual child in your school. They are worried that they should be speaking English with them at home and also that their English is not of a very high standard. They clearly lack confidence in how they can support their child. Watch the film and identify points which would help you reassure them.

#### Activity Sheet

#### Handout 3

#### Points to help you reassure parents

Participants watch a film clip then fill in the Activity sheet.

### Film Transcript

#### It's your language! – Keep it! Develop it! Share it!

If you speak a language other than English at home, your child has a special advantage in their learning and it is very important for many reasons that you keep developing your child's home language as much as you can.

A long time ago people thought that speaking two languages would confuse children and even make them less intelligent. But now we understand that this is not true. Research shows that being bilingual helps children develop educationally, emotionally, socially and culturally, but it is very important that they continue to develop both languages.

Also, it may seem strange, but it is true that if children have a strong home language, this will help them to learn English.

Here is one parent talking about his own reasons for maintaining the home language.

**Parent 1** It's good for the kids' self-esteem because when I was at school I felt very isolated. I felt there wasn't much education on other cultures and other religions, so I felt that the only way for me to be accepted was to almost disregard my own culture and background and become as Scottish as I possibly could. And it would be nice for my kids not to have to do that.

I feel it's important because there are elders within our community, who hold a wealth of knowledge about India, about social events, cultures, religion, and I feel it would be good to tap into that.

So, developing home language is good because:

- It allows children to keep in touch with their family and culture
- This can help to make them comfortable about who they are
- It can make them happy and confident
- This can directly help their education
- We know that, with a strong home language, children can learn English more easily

**Parent 2** Well, we do our best to speak Panjabi at home with the kids, and just recently Panjabi classes have started up in my daughter's school so she's been going to those as well.

**Parent 3** Sometimes when we have the time, we'll try and discuss the schoolwork that my daughter brings home in Panjabi as well. When you're talking about their schoolwork, you're teaching them Panjabi at an educational level, whereas when you're playing games with them they're learning Panjabi at a social level. So they're learning two different levels of Panjabi.

The schoolwork that she gets is structured, and if you've already got something there that's structured for you, you might as well jump on the bandwagon and use it.

To develop home language parents can:

- Speak their language as much as possible
- Find classes in their language
- Discuss school work in their home language

(Adapted from: It's Your Help That Counts Supporting Young Bilingual Children and Their Families The City of Edinburgh Council Education Department 10 Waterloo Place, Edinburgh, EH1 3EG)

When they have filled in the activity sheet, make a list of the points the group have written down.

The main points should be:

- Bilingualism is beneficial for many reasons, but both languages need to be maintained and developed for the full advantages to be reaped.
- If we don't support their bilingualism we risk disadvantaging the child
- Problems arise when families are encouraged to switch to speaking English, particularly if they are not strong in English themselves.
- If children are confident and developing well in their home language
- i.e. not just keeping it up at a social level, but developing it at an educational level too ), it should not be a problem for them to learn English as well, assuming that the English in the classroom is easily accessible for them.
- The families need to discuss school work and educational topics with their children, and this discussion can happen in their home language.

All these points need to be explained to the parents, only then can they take part fully in their child's education.

## Session 2: Working with families

How school staff can encourage bilingual families to support their children’s early literacy using their home language.

**Participants:** up to 30

### Step 1: What can schools do to help families of bilingual children support their literacy?

The participants are reminded of the need for bilingual pupils to use their home language to develop language and concepts, especially in the early years.

### Points for discussion

- What are your own experiences of trying to read/write in another language? If it was difficult, why was this the case?
- What would make it easier?
- How does this relate to the experiences of young bilingual children in our schools?
- What could make it easier for them?

### Activity 1

List the literacy activities children in your school do at school. Then watch the film and consider what advice you could give to a bilingual family on how to support these activities and literacy development in general. Don’t forget to consider the benefit of using the home language to develop literacy.

Activity Sheet		Handout 4
School-based activity	Advice to parents for supporting this at home	

The participants are given a worksheet and asked to watch a short film then fill in the worksheet. This can be done in small groups.

### Film Transcript

If you involve your child when you read or write they easily learn about literacy. Have a think about all the times you read or wrote something in the last week. Talk to your child and try to involve them in some of these.

#### Talking and Listening

Children learn a lot from talking and listening to adults and each other. This talk can be about their day at school and their homework, but it is also

important to talk about other things which interest them or teach them about their world. There are lots of free places you can take your child to engage their interest and get them thinking.

Don’t forget nursery rhymes (in any language) are a good way to develop children’s listening and speaking. This, in turn, helps them with reading and writing.

**Parent 1** Sometimes bedtime stories get translated into Panjabi as well. We've got Panjabi poetry upstairs as well. We try to encourage the kids to speak to their relatives down the phone as often as possible as well because that helps. When there are TV programmes we try to sit down as a family and watch them. And we listen to Indian film and classical music as well.

### Reading and Writing

Encourage your child to look for writing all around you and talk to him or her about it.

Try to make time to share reading with your child. Take time to look at the title and the pictures. If you don't feel confident reading English, look at the pictures and discuss them with your child in your home language.

You might also involve your child in reading and writing letters to family and friends. Children love to write the language of their family. Try to involve your child when you are writing in your own language. The little girl and her parents are writing a letter together to granny in India.

(Adapted from: It's Your Help That Counts Supporting Young Bilingual Children and Their Families The City of Edinburgh Council Education Department 10 Waterloo Place, Edinburgh, EH1 3EG)

Points to be discussed after the activity:

- Bilingual families need to be reassured that discussing books written in the home language from an early age is valid support for learning literacy in English, and, that when they do start reading and writing in English, it is extremely useful to discuss what they are doing in the home language.
- Some families may come from educational contexts where games and other 'fun activities' are seen as less educational than doing exercises. The benefits of games etc. may have to be explained.
- Activities such as photo books and games can all be done in the home language. The words in the games for homework will be in English, but all discussion can be done in the home language.
- Writing activities such as photo books and writing to family can be very helpful (writing in any language).

In order to explain how the bilingual parents can support their children it is suggested that schools should organise a meeting with the bilingual parents.

### Activity 2

The participants are then split into small groups and asked to:

- plan how they would set up a meeting
- who would be invited
- who would talk to the parents
- what would be discussed at the meeting
- any follow up to the meeting

Bring the groups together and through discussion note main points:

- Choose a suitable venue that most parents have access to.
- Choose a time that is suitable to most parents
- Have people to interpret for parents who do not speak English.
- Send letters in their home language or make phone calls to inform them about the meeting.
- Have a teacher who has worked with young children talk to the parents
- Make the meeting informal, if possible
- Take bilingual resources to show them

### Content of the meeting

Show the film clip to parents and discuss it.

After watching this, try to make the following points to parents:

#### Books and Reading

Young children are quick to learn rhymes. They enjoy saying rhymes, so have fun with them. Say them in your own language. Make mistakes and they will correct you. Leave out words and they will supply the missing words.

Children see print everywhere. Use this. Read books to them from an early age – cloth books/bath books. Read the books in your own language. While you are reading, let them turn the pages. Later, let them tell you the story.

As well as reading stories tell stories, using your own language.

When your child goes to school, continue talking about books in your own language, even if the books are written in English.

### Activity 3

Show the participants copies of Parent Support Leaflets (in different languages) which explain how parents can help their children. These can be given out at the end of the parents' meeting.

➔ <http://www.involve-migrants-improve-school.eu/>

Give the participants games to play that they could demonstrate to the parents:

- Snap
- Pairs games
- Sound games
- Sequencing cards
- Jigsaws

## Session 3: Story Bags

How to involve parents in the use of dual language story bags with young bilingual children

### Participants

Up to 30 participants

### Step 1: Material for a Story Bag

Show the participants a completed dual language Story Bag containing:

- A dual language fiction picture book
- An audio-tape of the story ( in the home language if possible)
- A toy or game relating to the story
- A related puzzle / jigsaw
- A parent prompt with suggested ideas for parent / child interactive reading

### Explain the following to the participants:

Story Bags are special because they are made by parents for parents and their children.

### Explain the aim of a dual language Story Bag:

A dual language Story Bag is to give a parent the confidence to enjoy books and reading with their child in their own language, thus becoming a combined learning experience.

Not every parent finds it easy to read stories, but with the supporting materials that the story bag offers, all parents can successfully share books with their child at a variety of levels.

How does this benefit the child?

- By valuing the child's home language
- By developing reading for meaning
- By bringing stories to life
- By extending vocabulary

- By developing an understanding of character, plot and setting
- By attracting interest and raising motivation
- By reinforcing key words and phrases
- By developing reading strategies and skills
- By extending play and creative skills
- By extending interaction with parents, book and story.

### Step 2: Making the dual language Story Bags

Split the participants into groups of 4-5

Have a selection of dual language books, toys, games, jigsaws, bags, fabric, felt, letters and sewing materials.

Task: Each group has to make a story bag containing a dual language book, a toy and a game or a jigsaw. The bag must have the name of the book and a picture on the front of it. They must also prepare a parent prompt sheet for the story.

Bring the participants together so that they can explain how they made their finished bag and how they chose the games or jigsaws to go into the bag.

Split the participants into their groups again and ask them to write down how they would go about making story bags with bilingual parents.

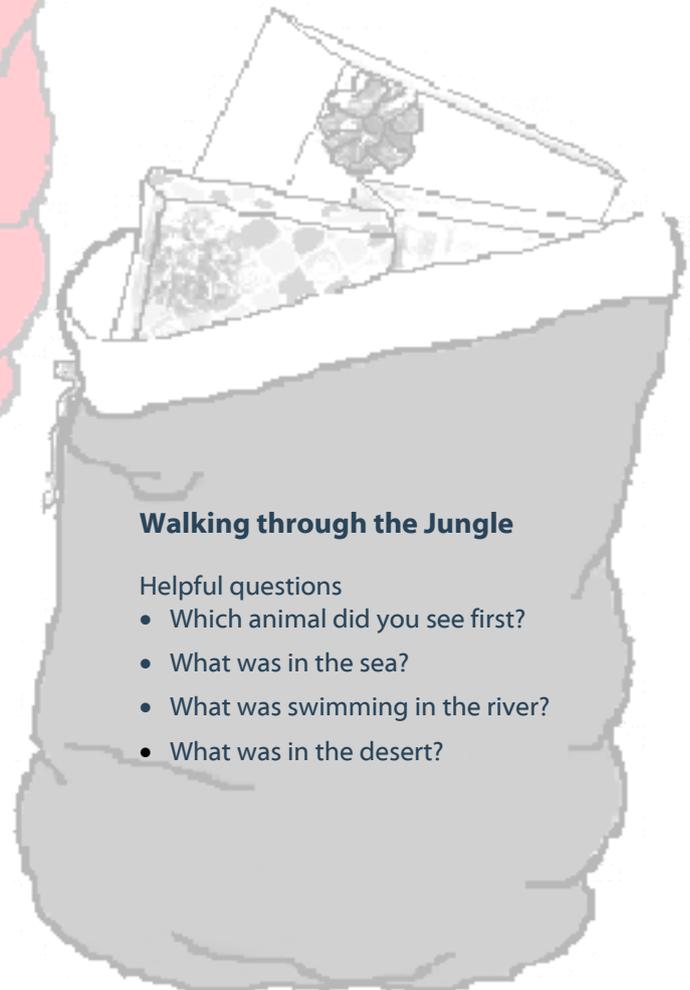
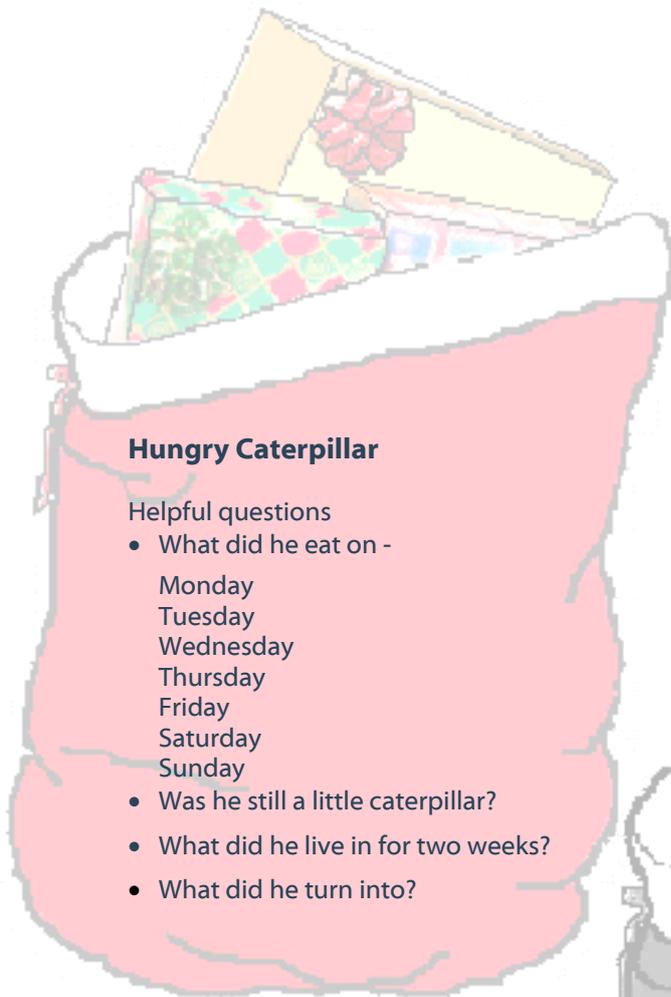
Bring the participants back and discuss the best way to organise parent helpers.

### Points to note:

- Identify a convenient time for most parents
- Have an initial meeting with parents to divide out the various jobs
  - o Cutting out felt letters
  - o Hand sewing the letters and pictures
  - o Making parents prompt cards
  - o Shopping for games / jigsaws
- Have regular meetings to encourage the parents to continue the task
- Some parents will not be able to be involved so it is important to keep them informed of the progress. This can be done by sending home short notes.
- Have a day in school when the parents can come in to help their child to choose the first story bag

### The parents can be told:

- Story Bags:
  - o The book is the most important thing in the bag.
  - o It may have a fiction or a non-fiction book in it.
  - o As well as the book there will be a game or a jigsaw.
- Before reading the book, look at the front cover:
- What do you think the story will be about?
- Try to predict what will happen in the story.
- Look at the pictures – tell the story in your own language without reading the text if you want to.
- Use different voices for the characters.
- While you are reading let the children turn the pages.
- Let them tell you what the story is about when you have read it several times.
- Play the game or make the jigsaw. Talk about the pictures or objects in your own language while you are doing this.



## Session 4: Evaluation

### Questionnaire

1. List three things you have learned.

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2. Give an example of one idea you feel you could put into practice.

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3. Do you feel you would benefit from further training on any part of this course?

Yes  No

If yes, what further training would be helpful?

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4. How would you rate?

- The content of the course

Excellent  Very good  Good  Fair  Poor

- The pace of the course

Excellent  Very good  Good  Fair  Poor

Comment:

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## 4.3.1 Evaluation: Story Bags

### The equipment story bags and methods of implementation

#### 1. What conditions apply?

Decisions made at the Conference of the Ministers of Education – educational standards of the subject German for primary schools (form 4). At their conference on 23./24. 05. 2002 the Ministers of Education agreed to develop educational standards for certain interfaces of general schools – e.g. primary schools (form 4). In addition to this agreement, the Ministers of Education decided the following for primary schools (form 4):

1. At the beginning of the school year 2005/2006 the Federal States took over the educational standards for primary schools (form 4) in the subjects German and mathematics as a basis for the subject-specific requirements in primary school-teaching.
2. The Federal States committed themselves to implement and apply these standards. This particularly applies to curriculum work, school

development and teacher education and training. The Federal States agreed to develop further trial tasks and to run pilot studies and comparative studies within their own and neighbouring Federal States. Subsequently, they can then determine to what extent the standards are met. This can take place either at the end of form 4 or earlier in order to allow interventions.

3. Taking into account the development in specialist subjects, in methodology and in school practice, the standards and their compliance will be revised by an academic institution jointly authorised by the Federal States and developed further based on validated tests.

Contact: Secretariat of the Standing Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Federal States of Germany  
Department IV A, P. O. box 22 40, 53012 Bonn



## The contribution of the subject German to education

The function of primary schools is to develop basic education, which is the basis for further learning and for acquiring to independently adapt to a culture. Developing linguistic skills is a crucial part of this educational commitment.

Language implies meaning and tradition and is the key to understanding the world and oneself, as well as a medium for interpersonal communication. It has great importance for a child's cognitive, emotional and social development. The function of the subject German in elementary schools is a thorough grounding in the German language for each child and it should lead to autonomous learning. For these reasons, German learning and teaching in elementary schools supports each child's linguistic skills as extensively as possible and should lead to autonomous learning.

Children have very different experiences and preconditions towards learning. Elementary schools and German learning and teaching in particular face the challenge to harmonise with the development of the individual child. At the same time late developers and children with specific talents also need special support.

For many children the German language is not their mother tongue and not the language spoken in their family. They have gone through other language experiences and acquired other competences in their mother tongue. It would be very favourable if the teaching of German could use their life experience in intercultural education. In the case of children with another language of origin the basics for learning at school in the German language must first be guaranteed by appropriate support measures. The teaching of German develops speaking and listening, reading and writing and gives the children first insights into the cultural and intercultural importance of language. The interest of the children in reading and writing and the acquisition of basic reading and writing abilities are continually supported by individual and differentiated group teaching approaches. The pupils develop the ability to use written and spoken language according to

situations, following the correct procedures, partner relevant and with a clear view to their objectives in real life and child-oriented situations and in meaningful contexts. They experience the aesthetic dimension of language by working creatively. The development of their pragmatic language competence also comprises reflecting on language. The teaching of German gives the children an opportunity to gain first insights into the structures of language and acquaints them with elementary specialist terms.

The mastery of the German language forms the basis for success at school for all children, because language is the medium of learning in all subjects. The basis for learning at school is created through the development of pragmatic language competence. Children learn to understand subject matter mediated through language and reproduce such subject matter themselves through language in an appropriate way. They experience joy at their own text production and understand the importance of the written language for themselves and other people as a means of communication, information and expression. With the acquisition of the written language in the teaching and learning of German the pre-conditions are created for children to use the media in a sensible way. They develop an interest in acquiring knowledge of the world from texts through their own efforts. At the level of subject matter and methods competence the accepted standards determine what can be expected of a child at the end of the fourth year in the central areas of the subject German. The standards must offer a clear perspective on the aims to be reached. Any individual support can then concentrate on these aims.

The standards themselves concentrate on the central aims of German teaching and learning. There is no explicit mention here of the more detailed aspects of support in the areas of personal and social competence, but they are nevertheless an indispensable component of basic education in primary school.

## Language support in Lower Saxony

Language support in Lower Saxony at the moment is being developed in several educational political important areas:

### 1. Pre-school language support measures in Lower Saxony

Language support measures before starting school are written into the School Law and have been available for periods of up to a year since 1.8.2006. All children coming of school age are tested on their language prowess in German in the May of the previous year. Then, in the following year, courses are offered for all those children whose knowledge of German is in all probability not sufficient to participate appropriately in the lessons for the 1st class. There is a regional in-service further education programme for the schools and teachers to prepare for this. (See ↪ <http://nibis.ni.schule.de>)

Which children should not take part in preschool language support?

The language support measures in elementary schools one year before school enrolment are not designed for those who

- go to a logopaedic kindergarten;
- go to an integrated institution due to their need for specific special needs support;

and who have an age-appropriate passive and active vocabulary and whose spoken language shows alterations merely in grammar and pronunciation.

## Fit in German – Testing the knowledge of language

### Objective target of the system

The language support measures aim at children who only have insufficient or knowledge of German or lack the knowledge at all. Above all, these are children whose first language/mother tongue is not German.

In order to be able to take actively part in teaching and learning in form 1, children have to

- dispose of a passive and active vocabulary (their passive vocabulary is usually more substantial than the active one);
- understand structured expressions suitable for children (declarations, questions and requests, grammatically not overcomplicated);
- act and react age-adequately within communication with other people.

Children should be able to speak clearly enough so that other children can understand them.

The present process of measuring language competence serves to test the German language knowledge of the children and thus to justify the decision whether the child will be obliged to take part in a special language support measure.

Therefore the children's active and passive vocabulary, their understanding of language and their active language structuring are tested. Their present linguistic development is determined. The process can be described as a screening process. This screening process helps to determine if the child needs support with their linguistic communication in school relevant areas. The results of this process however do not give any answers to questions such as what these areas that need support are in particular, how well developed those children's first language is. In order to answer these questions we will need a more extensive and differentiated study of language development that will only be possible at the beginning of the funding options.

## Elements of the process

### Collateral observations

During the process or subsequently directly following parts A and B, observations concerning the communication situation with the child are to be entered into the sheet. On the one hand, this keeps a record of the child's entire communication behaviour. These results can prove useful in case the single tasks show unclear results.

On the other hand, this helps to monitor the child's pronunciation. If in the process of measuring language competence there are significant indicators pointing to serious peculiarities in the child's pronunciation, the parents should consider consulting an expert. For a bilingual child it is not unusual to show slight alterations in pronunciation.

### A. Language biography

The process of measuring language competence begins with a discussion with the parents, within which information on the child's present development and his/her language competence as well as on his/her multilingualism, as the case may be, must be given. If the child goes to a child care unit, the nursery personnel should be interviewed as well. In order to be allowed to do so, the child's parents need to write a letter of agreement. In case of bi- or multilingual parents it is highly recommendable – if organisationally possible – to include native speakers into the discussion.

#### Stop criterion 1:

If already in the course of the discussion, the child apparently does not or hardly speaks German, it is obliged to take part in the language support measures. In this case the process of measuring language competence does not have to be carried out.

### B. Talk with the child

In a first talk the child is introduced into the measuring process. They are asked to talk about themselves and their experiences. The ability to do so is indispensable in order to cope with everyday situations. Above all, this talk serves to test the child's active vocabulary. To avoid that the child is shy towards the unknown situation and teachers, materials that help animate the child (e.g. hand puppet, storybook) are used. Especially for younger children it is recommended to invite a carer from the child's kindergarten to take part in the talk as well.

#### Stop criterion 2:

If already during the talk it becomes evident that the child is able to speak German appropriately for its age, which includes appropriate vocabulary and language structures, and if the child is able to express itself fluently, the further process does not have to take place.

### C. Passive vocabulary

A basic rule of language development is that no element can be used actively that has not been mastered passively. Therefore testing the passive vocabulary is of great importance, especially with shy children.

The vocabulary chosen for the present process mostly comes from the children's everyday experience. The nouns under observation are partially simple and partially complex. Common verbs are under observation as well. The knowledge of adjectives is not required at this point in time.

**D. Understanding tasks**

Not only is understanding single words important to take part in teaching and learning later, but also understanding instructions in sentences. Besides the child must at least have the passive means to orientate themselves in the classroom. Understanding information with prepositions in particular is important because prepositions partly determine the formal appearance of expressions and besides their actual three dimension meaning, they also have more abstract meanings (e.g. temporal).

The abilities to understand this information can be observed with the help of a special task in which the child's actions show whether he/she has understood the request.

**E. Active demonstration**

In order to detect the child's ability to actively structure a language, the child should actively use his/her own words. To animate the children to talk, they are shown pictures. In the selection process it is important whether the child shows that he/she is able to form structural expressions. Therefore it is only important for this process if the child's expressions have a certain length, i.e. if he/she uses more than single words.

Especially for bilingual children it is not (yet) important that they follow the rules of German grammar. Hence the grammatical correctness is not a criterion to determine if the child takes part in the language support process. The only important thing is in how far he/she combines different parts of speech (mainly nouns, pronouns, verbs) to form expressions.

**Stop criterion 3:**

If the child has not succeeded in handling two of the three tasks C, D and E, the process can be stopped.

## 2. Family literacy with story bags and “Sprachbox”

“The first couple of years in a child’s life form the basis for their talking and writing competence as well as for their attitude towards openness for learning and for their later academic and educational success”. During this time parents play a decisive part in their child’s development. Some experts basically question child educational and language support programs without parents’ involvement. Conversely, children can also influence their parents’ educational standard. We know from adult education that many adults only start alphabetisation courses when their children start school. Their wish to be able to support their child in school tasks motivates those parents to improve their own educational standards.”

(Maren Elfert, Gabriele Rabkin in Migration und schulischer Wandel, Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften 2009, ed.: Sara Fürstenau, Mechtild Gomolla)

Family literacy programs focus on parents as the means to improve the reading and writing skills of all family members. Family literacy is a powerful way to support parents by showing them how they can help their children become confident and effective communicators. Promoting learning activities at home ensures that children acquire the reading comprehension, writing and math skills that prepare them for productive, fulfilling lives. Family literacy not only teaches children about the importance of reading and writing, it also helps parents improve their literacy skills. Learning is a lifelong endeavour that doesn’t stop after school. By reading to children and engaging in fun literacy activities, parents are actively keeping their own skills sharp while at the same time strengthening the relationships in the family which, in turn, encourages lifelong learning.

➔ [http://www.abc-canada.org/en/family\\_literacy](http://www.abc-canada.org/en/family_literacy)

Based on the project “story bags” in Scotland we are developing “Sprachbox” in Germany within the evaluation. Like “story bags”, “Sprachbox” was used in collaboration with parents and children and will be further developed as a family literacy method together with the school library in Hanover Roderbruch.

The time period for the evaluation lay within the first three weeks of the new school year 2009/2010. “Sprachbox” was used within a Welcome Week at the beginning of a pre-school language support course in the Primary Department of the comprehensive school IGS

Roderbruch, Hannover. But unlike the country project UK, these boxes weren’t designed and packed by the parents but prepared by three teachers. Instead it was particularly important to know the pupils’ mother tongues. The storybooks suitable for Sprachbox were chosen using the following criteria:

- the books contain the respective native language of a family, as well as the German text,
- the story should be age-appropriate,
- there are more pictures than text,
- the pictures are of good quality and animate the children to go on reading,
- the storybook has got the appropriate length of one lesson (45 min).

For 9 days, teachers collaborated with parents and children working on story boxes. These boxes were filled with various contents and used creatively, depending on the target group.

As well as “story bags”, “Sprachbox” served as a low-threshold access to reading to oneself and to others.

### 3. Aims, contents and materials

#### Story bags

##### Target group

The project is aimed at student teachers and teachers of nursery pupils and of pupils in the first year of primary school.

##### Aims

- To raise the awareness of student teachers and teachers towards the concerns of bilingual parents when their children attend school.
- To give student teachers and teachers of pupils in nursery and primary schools activities and ideas they could use with bilingual parents to show the parents how they can support their child's learning before the child starts school and in the first years at school.
- To show teachers how to involve parents in their child's education and give parents the confidence to enjoy books and reading with their child in their home language. Not every parent finds it easy to read stories, but with the supporting materials that the story bag offers, all parents can successfully share books with their child at a variety of levels.

##### Participants

Up to a maximum of 30 participants

Classes and children of pre-school age in the project pre-school + school (30 participants)

#### Sprachbox

##### Target group

Language support teachers, L2 German teachers, teacher education and training students, family education

##### Aims

- "Sprachbox", as a versatile applicable method both in teaching and learning as well as in pre-school language support, project teaching and in the parents' café, help the children to develop the joy of reading and familiarity with books.
- "Sprachbox" are used to systematically apply bilingual media from the school library and make them visible for parents. The families' native language is considered and appreciated as a special skill.
- "Sprachbox" can support speaking the language by being equipped with a variety of topics. "Story boxes" are filled with important information for the start of school (brochures etc.) and for possibilities of support (activities in their area), which especially applies to parents.
- "Sprachbox" is aimed at maintaining an early and intensive support of language and writing within familiar surroundings and systematically involve the parents.

##### Participants

Pre-school language support lessons (10 participants)

Parents' Café (20 participants)

(See literacy method "Sprachbox" used in the framework of pre-school language support at the IGS Roderbruch in Hannover from 11<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> August 2009, Module 4.4 Sprachbox)

#### 4. Extent of the contents

##### Level of difficulty of the contents:

“Story bags” have got a low-threshold and simple structure. This method is activity-based and respects the native language of the family/the child.

##### Can this material only be used as a package or are there single modules?

The basic idea of “story bags” is transferable and can be successfully applied to other given circumstances. Thus the method “story bags” makes use of the animation to choose various language supporting materials matching the storybook focused on.

In contrast to the “story bags”, the “Sprachbox” had already been prepared by the teachers and wasn’t put together by the parents.

##### What basic skills do you need to be able to work with the material?

The low-threshold access allows for an instant cooperation – also for analphabetic parents.

##### Didactic quality of the material (relation to experience, activating methods, self-reflection ...):

The complementary material to the storybooks gets the children talking and creates the interaction between parents and children, forming an emotional bond in the triangle parents – child – book. For those parents who can’t read, it is important to know that for their child it is equally important to talk about the pictures in the books.

##### Is there any complementary didactic material for the carrying out of the activities?

The “Sprachbox” for the Science experiments especially contains supportive and informatory complementary material.



### **Practicability within teacher education and training?**

The material is practice-oriented and the points of use in schools are manifold. Accordingly, for teacher education and training different capabilities can be developed and these can be particularly used for:

- interdisciplinary aspects (arts/plus different subject)
- or L2 German teaching and learning
- the material is also appropriate for the cooperation with parents in different academic and extracurricular contexts:
  - o This activating method is appropriate for any work on a topic, especially considering language education (see also “Sprachbox” with scientific experiments, author Hermann Krekeler; <http://www.hkrekeler.de/>) and offers a low-threshold approach.
  - o “Sprachbox” is also suitable for creating the initial phase of teaching and learning in the mornings together with the parents when the children choose a “story box” filled with storybooks, games for language support etc. (first step).
- “Sprachbox” can be applied with success in the bridging year within the framework of a pre-school project for the cooperation of child day-care centres and schools.

### **What conditions must be given to make the concept successful?**

There has to be the possibility to borrow bilingual storybooks from the library. A “Sprachbox” can be made from shoe boxes (they must match the size of the respective storybook!).

### **Impulses and motivations for a further involvement in the topic. What different models, modifications are the most likely to be used?**

Further development: at this point, we would like to introduce Hermann Krekeler’s “Sprachbox with science” and the idea that “Sprachbox” will be lendable from libraries in the future. This is how “Sprachbox” can reach the families.

