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Authors	Jaffke, Christoph
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Performance in the lower school

Speaking, singing, playing, dancing and acting in a foreign language

Christoph Jaffke

In Waldorf schools, two foreign languages are taught from the start of primary school age, the first three years only orally. Body movements as well as non-verbal means of communication like facial expressions, gesture and posture are essential elements of this holistic approach. Ample use of poetic language facilitates the children's access to the new language. Action rhymes, finger plays, counting-out rhymes, number rhymes, jump-rope/skipping rhymes, clapping games, classroom games, singing games, little/short rhymed dialogues, every-day conversations (e.g. about family, pets and the weather), daily activities and role-plays — all of these activities and more are part of the repertoire that forms the basis of this approach. While choral activity usually is the starting-point, individual speaking in dialogue, role-play and games is the goal. Fixed expressions ('chunks') serve as islands of security in the beginning phases of verbal interaction. In every lesson there is room for performing as well as for listening and watching.

1 Introduction

When the first Waldorf School opened in 1919, it was one of its revolutionary features that pupils were taught two foreign languages already from the first grade on. The founder of the school, Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), in his educational lecture courses, justified this by describing the positive effects that the early foreign language experience would have on the formation of the child's attitudes and personality (Jaffke, 2008). He also gave practical advice on how teachers could involve their pupils in a holistic way, activating them intellectually, emotionally, and physically in the various school subjects.

This article presents a number of methodical aspects, followed by examples of materials used in teaching English to children of grades 1 to 3 in Waldorf schools. Based on his professional experience, the author describes a variety of possible activities that may be of interest to parents and teachers as well as anyone interested in the Waldorf approach to this topic. The educational relevance of early foreign language teaching in Waldorf education has been described in some detail elsewhere and is not part of this contribution (see Jaffke & Maier, 1997; Jaffke, 2008, 2021; Stockmeyer, 2017).

When the young child acquires her mother tongue, imitation plays a vital role. In second language learning, at school age, conscious or 'reflected' imitation (Piaget, 1975) becomes important. It gets weaker as the children approach the developmental stage at 9/10 years of age. At the same time, the children's spontaneity, curiosity and their imitative faculties recede notably. Therefore, these faculties are made use of as long as they are available. During the first three years of school, foreign languages are only taught orally. Literacy is introduced in grade 4.

Many first graders have attended a Waldorf kindergarten before starting school and have taken part in different manual activities as well as in all kinds of little role-plays, some connected with celebrating seasonal festivals others with the rhythmical actions of craftsmen. The five and six-year-olds plan these games, invent their own rules and assign certain roles to each other such as captain, conductor, waiter or fireman (Stehlow, 2019). From here, moving to a song or verse in another language is not a very big step. Just as in the Waldorf Kindergarten, games and role-playing are natural components of the language lessons in the first three years of school.

In the course of their eight years with their class, class-teachers usually study and perform short plays in the mother tongue on a regular basis (Eller, 2007). In many schools there is a tradition of doing a full-length play in class 8, at the end of the class-teacher's term, and in class 12, at the end of the regular Waldorf school years. So it is fair to say that role-play and theatre, in general, have an important place in Waldorf education.

2 Speaking involves moving

In 1922, Steiner spoke of the *inner speech* that inevitably accompanies active listening: "Listening consists not only in listening, but in talking (...) inaudibly, in a very subtle way. We don't just hear what the other person says, we imitate it in our linguistic organs." (Steiner, 1976, p. 161, author trans.)

Research in the United States, as long ago as the 1970s, showed that speaking is accompanied not only by a wide range of macro-kinesic, visible movements and gestures, but also by a huge number of minute, micro-kinesic body movements that are not visible to the naked eye. They happen involuntarily and have been scientifically described as involving both speaker and listener (Jaffke, 2008). Peter Lutzker (2018) has described in detail the relevance of linguistic-kinesic research for foreign language learning and the role of sensory processes in language perception and language acquisition (see also Lutzker Part II in this issue).

During the last few decades, numerous experts in foreign language pedagogy have pointed out the relevance of body movements, of facial expression, gesture and posture in supporting

the learning process. According to Appel, "language is (…) not only a mental phenomenon, but also a physical one (…). A second physical basis of language is movement. Language - from trying out a new sound with the mouth parts to gestures - is formed through movement and accompanied by movement. (Appel, 2000, pp. 29-30, author trans.)

Two of the more recent experts, Sambanis and Walter (2019), write: "A close connection of gestures, facial expressions etc., i.e., forms of physical expression, is particularly important in the context of language learning and language promotion, because language and body are closely related." (p. 8, author trans.)

It is quite surprising that von Raffler-Engel (1980) had already pointed out some time ago that non-verbal aspects ought to be included in foreign language didactics, yet the significance of this has apparently had little impact on mainstream language teaching.

3 All the world's a stage (including the classroom and the auditorium)

There is a certain similarity between students at school presenting foreign language activities to an audience (classmates, parents, the whole school) and rehearsing a play for a professional theatre performance. According to director Peter Brook, staging and performing happen in three phases: An actor first studies and memorizes the text, then prepares for the presentation of the play on stage, and thirdly there is the audience that support the actor's effort by listening and interacting (Brook, 1968). Brook uses the French terms répétition, présentation and assistance (see Appel, 2000, p. 29).

A similar process takes place in the foreign-language classroom when studying and memorizing poetry, which usually starts with recitation in chorus in the Waldorf FL classroom. Reciting together is an important step as it allows *all* the children to participate, thus strengthening the social coherence within the class. Children who are inhibited or afraid to expose themselves by speaking alone can develop their self-confidence when embedded in the choral speaking. According to Leisinger, "it is well known that the achievements of those with stronger memories and the immanent mutual help also carry the weaker ones through" (1949, p. 86). Speaking and acting in groups, practising and repeating, mark the next phase towards individual activity in which courageous students offer to present what they have learned to the rest of the class or group. This can be considered as the first attempts at 'presentation'. The pupils who are watching also 'assist' in the sense that Brook (1968) refers to, in that they support those that are performing. The final stage, of course, is the actual presentation or performance to other classes, the school community or parents.

4 Poetry and prose

A great deal of the language that is offered during the first three years of school comes in the form of poetry, that is, language containing rhythm and rhyme, in which the meaning becomes accessible only gradually, mainly when the teacher manages to involve the children emotionally through offering vivid verbal clues and gestures. The understanding of the children depends largely on the mood that is created, supported by the gestures that accompany the spoken words. The process of understanding a poem can sometimes take weeks or months, but, at this stage of the children's development, a word-by-word understanding is not envisaged.

According to Pelz "there is a layer of language grasping that goes beyond the logical-conscious, that has something to do with language magic that clearly borders on the mythical of children's reality" (1992, p. 85, author trans.). Egan (1988) points to the close relationship between feeling and memory: "The human memory is an ever-active, emotionally charged (…) faculty. (…) Our concern with emotion and the active 'poetic' memory is more appropriate than a concern with lodging discrete information and skills for later recall" (p. 125). Billows, a pioneer of cooperative language learning, agreed with Dylan Thomas that "poetry lives in a different dimension from prose" (Billows, 1973, p. 28). Billows also reminds us that the formal order of rhythm and rhyme make it easier to memorize verses than a prose text. We recall W. H. Auden's definition; "Poetry is memorable speech". It was self-evident that the inclusion of rhyme and rhythm as learning aids could save time and effort (Billows, 1973)

Along with singing, poetic language introduces the children to the flow of the new language and also familiarizes them with its prosodic/non-verbal elements, such as emphasis, intonation, pitch, etc. or, more generally speaking, with that part of human speech which is not expressed by the contents of the words.

Moreover, poetic language offers a constant challenge to the pupils in that it makes them want to find out the meaning of new words. As Stern & Stern (1965) already showed in their ground-breaking research on their own children's first language acquisition, children need a *superabundance* of language if they are to make progress in their language development.

At the same time, children that have got used to the fact that it is impossible to understand everything in the foreign language straight away, have developed one of the criteria of a 'good language learner', that is, tolerance of ambiguity (Kiersch, Dahl, & Lutzker, 2016, p. 106).

According to Steiner, "poetry is decidedly preferable to prose in the first three years" (1975a, p. 162, author trans.) My classroom observations of several decades have shown that this advice of Steiner's has often been taken too narrowly and this meant that pupils were taught

poem after poem missing out on age-appropriate conversation, although this was something that Steiner had also quite clearly called for (Steiner, 1977).

5 Direct method and 'chunks'

Steiner's most important suggestion to the language teachers probably was that the children should encounter the new language in a direct way, i.e. not through translation. The children should be given the possibility of "really living into the foreign language, that is, that in learning the foreign language the mediation by the mother tongue is avoided (...). We do not link each language to words of another language, but to the immediate objects (...)" (Steiner, 1963, p. 105, author trans.). One should avoid "looking to the (...) German translation of the word (...) for any word or phrase that the child has to acquire (...)" (Steiner, 1975a, p. 161, author trans.). At the time, this was quite a revolutionary approach, though in the course of the 20th century, it has gained almost universal acceptance for the teaching of foreign languages to children of this age.

Steiner also advised that the children should be trained in the ability to have little conversations about everyday life in the foreign language ["sachliches Konversieren"] (Steiner, 1977). This includes topics like classroom objects, family, pets, the weather, food, etc. and this coincides, for instance, with Krashen's research on natural second language acquisition. One of the main axioms of his work is this, "Language is best taught when it is being used to transmit messages, not when it is explicitly taught for conscious learning" (Krashen & Terrell, 1999, p. 55).

Research in foreign language teaching (e.g., Aguado, 2002; Jaffke 2008, pp. 116-121; Saberi 2008; Ying Zhao, 2009) has shown that it can be a great help for learners at the beginning if they are given certain formulaic expressions or *chunks* that are not analysed cognitively, but whose meaning as a whole can be clearly recognized through their context – and through the body language of the teacher. They represent *islands of security* or *secure havens* from the first lesson onward and enable the children to interact with one another in the foreign language from the very beginning. It is the author's impression after sitting in on a considerable number of lessons in the lower school in many countries, that this is not always practiced in Waldorf FL classrooms.

6 Gesture and movement

Just as children while learning their mother tongue proceed from pointing and moving to actually saying things, so purposeful movement also plays an important part in learning a second language in the lower school. It was mentioned above how closely and intimately speech and body movements are interrelated on a micro-level.

Owing to the work of great pioneers of foreign language didactics like Gouin (1880), gesture and movement are now considered to be indispensable components of teaching language to children. Today there is general agreement that children should experience a new language with as many senses as possible and not just through their sense of hearing. In the 1970s, Asher, an American psychologist, even developed a whole system of holistic language learning based on body movements: *Total Physical Response – TPR* (Asher, 1977).

A few decades after Asher first published his approach, several authors took it up and enlarged on the concept. Scott and Ytreberg (1993) may serve as one example: "Don't rely on the spoken word only. Most activities for the younger learners should include movement and involve the senses (...). Appealing to the senses will always help the pupils to learn (…). The younger your pupils, the more physical activities they need." (Scott & Ytreberg, 1993, pp. 22-23)

With regard to foreign language teaching at the Waldorf school, Steiner said that success is "the greater the more the children can be brought into activity" (Steiner, 1975, p. 113, author trans.).

In the pedagogical course held in 1919 before the opening of the first Waldorf school in Stuttgart, he advised to "cultivate the element of reflex action in connection with foreign language lessons. Give the children (...) simple tasks: Do this, do that – and make sure they carry them out" (Steiner, 1966, p. 145, author trans). This exercise means that occasionally - as a special exercise - what the language teacher says should not be followed by reflection on what the teacher has said or by a slowly spoken answer, but by action. "In this way, the will realm, the element of movement, is cultivated in language lessons (…). Our task will always be to unite the realm of the will with the intellect in the right way" (Steiner, 1966, p. 145, author trans).

The intimate connection between language and movement is one of the essentials of early foreign language methodology at Waldorf schools. It is not only the sound of a language, but also the specific movements that distinguish it from others. According to Lauten, "the habitus of a person who speaks the foreign language, the place where he tends to stand when he uses certain idioms, the gestures with which he accompanies one or the other expression over and over again, they are much more easily remembered for the understanding of the essence of the foreign language than we usually realize." (1984, p. 66, author trans.)

7 Examples from the Classroom[1]

The following section offers a selection of teaching materials from the standard collection that is being used by Waldorf teachers worldwide, wherever English is taught as a second language (Jaffke, 2016). In the present context, it is only possible to present a few examples from the various groups of teaching material that form the repertoire of the lower school. All of these examples serve to demonstrate the close connection between speaking and moving and their suitability for performing in the foreign language in classroom setting:

Action Rhymes - Time and Seasons - Weather, The Elements - Animals - Plants - Finger Plays - Counting-Out Rhymes - Number Rhymes - Jump- Rope/Skipping Rhymes - Fun in Sound and Rhythms/Tongue Twisters - Little Rhymed Dialogues - People and Occupations - Daily Activities - Classroom Games - Clapping Games - Songs and Rounds - Singing Games.

7.1 Action Rhymes

Action rhymes are among the first things the children will learn in Grade 1. They are ideal in that they are self-explanatory, i.e. the accompanying actions do not require a lot of explaining:

These are my eyes
And these are my toes.
These are my fingers
And this is my nose.
These are my knees
And this is my head,
And when I sleep
I am in bed.
My arms and legs I use to play,
A happy child the whole long day.
Clap rhythm of last two lines with forefingers

The following is an action sequence, again in rhythm and rhyme, which lends itself to various possibilities for 'little meaningful conversations' and guessing games:

I'm standing, I'm sitting,
I'm writing, I'm knitting.
I'm reading, I'm counting,
I'm swimming, I'm shouting.
I'm eating, I'm drinking,
I'm talking, I'm thinking.

[1] The following examples are taken from Jaffke (2016; 2021).

I'm giving, I'm taking,
I'm sweeping, I'm baking
I'm laughing, I'm looking,
I'm washing, I'm cooking
I'm smiling, I'm weeping,
I'm yawning, I'm sleeping.
I'm driving, I'm rowing,
I'm kneeling, I'm growing.
I show my right hand,
I show my left hand,
I show both my hands,
And now I will stand/sit still.

Through the fixed expressions, this sequence of actions offers a whole series of possibilities to give children the appropriate expressive tools for guessing games. To begin with, the children work their way into the context of the chain of actions through speaking them in chorus, accompanied by the appropriate gestures. Then this context is broken up and leads over into various question and answer games:

1. The teacher asks: *"Am I sitting?"* The children answer, initially in chorus: *"No, you're not, you are standing."* As soon as the children have understood what it is all about, individual children can make up three questions, encouraged by the teacher: *"Who would like to do three things/ask three questions?"* – 'Obvious' questions are very popular, like: *"Am I driving?" "No, you're not, you are sleeping."*
2. One child leaves the classroom and does something in the corridor. Another child stands at the door and observes. Initially, the children limit themselves to actions they know from the above verse. By and by, new ones are added. The children in the classroom now ask the 'reporter' in turn: "*Is she (he) looking?" "No, she isn't/is not."* – *"Is she counting?" "No, she isn't."* etc. – Finally, perhaps, *"Is she jumping?" "Yes, she is."*
3. One pupil goes out and comes back a short time later. Now he or she is asked: "Were you looking?" "No, I was not/wasn't." – "Were you laughing?" "No, I wasn't." - "Were you running?" "No, I wasn't." etc. Finally, perhaps, "Were you lying down on the floor?" "Yes, I was."
4. The fourth variation is more appropriate for Class 2 or 3 when the pupils have acquired a basic vocabulary about clothing. One child stands with arms outstretched in front of the class and slowly turns so that all the children can clearly see the details of his clothing. Then the child goes out and changes three things (e.g. opens a shirt button, changes her/his hair or rolls up one trouser leg a little). When he comes back, the

> others ask questions like: *"Have you rolled up your trousers?" "Have you changed your hair?"- "Have you changed your shoes?" "Have you opened your shirt?"*

This part may seem too difficult because the children perhaps do not have the necessary vocabulary at their disposal yet. Experience has shown that the following approach can easily overcome this problem: Children point and the teacher formulates the question for the child, e.g. *"Have you unbuttoned your shirt?"* If the child in question is too shy to repeat the question on her own, the teacher will say, *"Let's all ask her/him together …".*

There are various activities that start with a rhyme and then move over into conversations in prose - an ideal combination, using an English penny as a prop:

> The penny is hidden,
> Where can it be –
> In my right hand, in my left hand?
> Please tell me.

The teacher shows the children the coin and then hides it behind her back. Now one of the children is given the coin, puts both hands behind his or her back and then brings each closed hand to the front in rhythm with the lines 'right hand, left hand' with the coin in one of them. Then individual children will ask: "Is it in your [right/left] hand?"

7.2 Little Rhymed Dialogues and Role-Plays

In the following section, four rhymed dialogues each of which which can be used for different kinds of role-plays, are introduced.

7.2.1 Please, Mrs Crocodile …

One child is standing before the class facing the blackboard. On the opposite side, four or five children stand next to each other and ask, one after the other:

> **Please, Mrs [Mr] Crocodile,**
> May I cross the water
> To visit your fair daughter?"
> "Yes, you may,
> If you're wearing something … *(blue, green, red, etc.).*"

The colours will have been practised before this game is played. If the child asking the question can show to the class the colour in question in her/his clothing, she/he may take one step forward, e.g. "*There is some blue in my jumper*." The first to reach Mrs/Mr Crocodile will change places with her/him.

7.2.2 Six little mice sat down to spin

For the next verse, six children volunteer to be the mice kneeling in a circle. The rest of the class speak the first two lines. The cat walks round and then stops to address (flatter) the mice. At the end, the mice put their arms on their neighbours' shoulders in order to 'shut the door' and keep the cat locked out.

Six little mice sat down to spin.
Pussy passed by and she peeped in:
"What are you doing, my little men?"
"Weaving coats for gentlemen."
"You look so wondrous wise,
I like your whiskers and bright black eyes.
Your house is the nicest house I see,
I think there is room for you and me.
So may I come in and cut off your threads?"
"Oh no, Mrs. Pussy, you would bite off our heads."
"Oh no, I'll not; I'll help you to spin."
"That may be so, but you can't come in!"

7.2.3 Pussy-Cat, where have you been?

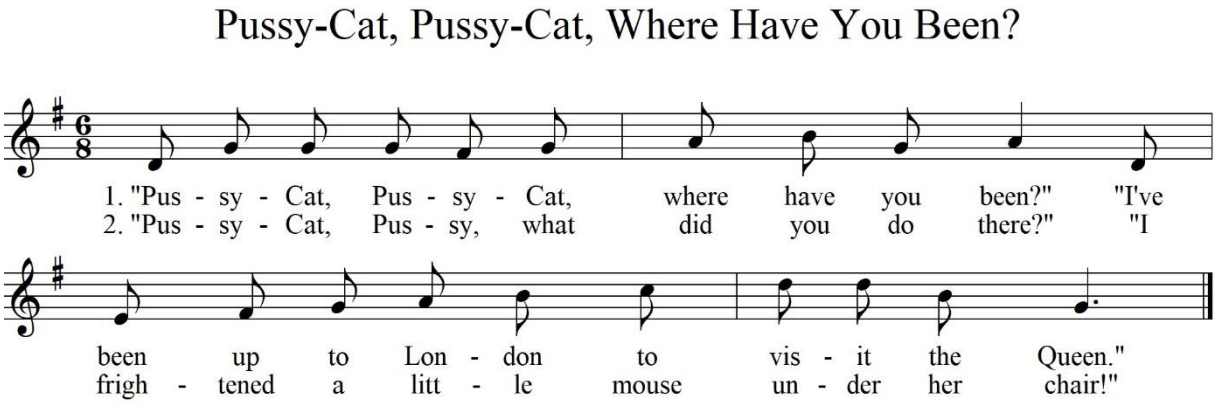


Figure 1: Screenshot from the song (Jaffke, 2021, p. 73)

This song lends itself to a role-play by three children: The Queen, adorned with a 'crown', perhaps just consisting of a golden ribbon, ring or wreath – is seated on her 'throne'. The Little Mouse is positioned on her knees behind the throne, ready to run away as soon as the Pussy-Cat, standing at a distance, starts chasing her. She is only allowed to go down on her knees to try and catch the mouse after she has finished singing "… under her chair." – The questions to the Pussy-Cat are sung by the chorus. The play ends when the cat has touched the mouse or when the mouse is back in her usual place in the classroom – whichever happens first.

If we want to give more children a part to play we can have them ask the 'magic question' ("May I be…?") and have a servant kneeling next to the Queen to serve her a cup of tea on an - imaginary – silver tray. On the Queen's other side, a 'guard' could be posted to protect her.

7.2.4 The snowman

Role-play: The following verse is spoken by the class chorus (or a smaller group of speakers). One child is the snowman, squatting on the ground, three others give him – in order of the poem – his hat, stick and pipe.

Come in the garden
And play in the snow,
A snowman we'll make,
See how quickly he'll grow! *(grows tall)*
Give him hat, stick, and pipe,
And make him look gay.
Such a fine game
For a cold winter day!

7.3 Finger plays

Finger plays are actions or movements combined with singing or spoken words. They help children develop an ear for sounds and fine motor coordination.

7.3.1 Here is a house with a pointed door

Here is a house with a pointed door, Hands and lower arms forming the roof.
Windows tall, and a fine flat floor. Hands, parallel, move down from high up – the windows – then moving horizontally – the floor.
Three good people live in the house, Three middle fingers of left hand.
One fat cat, and one thin mouse. Point at left-hand thumb and little finger.
Out of his hole the little mouse peeps, Little finger peeps through the right-hand fist.
Out of her corner the pussy cat leaps. Left hand jumps on right-hand fist.
Three good people say, "Oh! Oh! Oh!" Grave/alarming looks; warning index finger.
Little mouse says, "No! No! No!" Little finger of left hand pulls out of right-hand fist.

To make sure the children calm down after this 'drama', it makes sense to go back to the first two lines of the story with the appropriate gestures.

7.3.2 Finger plays – role plays

One more Finger Play may serve as an example for those that can be developed into little role-plays.First this is a finger play, but it also lends itself to an enjoyable little role-play. Children will ask, "*May I be a tall policeman*?" "*Yes, you may*." "*May I be the other policeman*?" When all ten roles have been distributed, the 'players' form two lines facing each other – not too close (!). The children of the class chorus tell the story, the individual characters act and speak their – short – parts. The last line is again spoken by the chorus.

Two fat[2] gentlemen met in a lane *(thumbs)*
Bowed most politely, bowed once again:
How do you do, how do you do, how do you do again.

Two thin ladies met in a lane, *(index fingers)*
Curtsied most politely, curtsied once again:
How do you do, how do you do, how do you do again.

Two tall policemen met in a lane.
Saluted most politely, saluted once again:
How do you do, how do you do, how do you do again.

Two little school girls (boys) met in a lane,
Cuffed one another, cuffed once again:
How do you do, how do you do, how do you do again.

Two little babies met in a lane.
Jiggled and joggled, and jiggled again:
How do you do, how do you do, how do you do again.

7.4 Trades

In Class 3, the Waldorf curriculum provides for two main lesson blocks of several weeks, in which the children study a new topic with their class-teacher: crafts, most prominent among them, farming and house-building. According to the author's experience, the foreign language teachers usually take up current main lesson topics and integrate them into their repertoire. Here is a popular verse about some basic crafts, offering many opportunities for accompanying descriptive movements:

The Choice of Trades
When we're grown up, to women and men,
We'll be carpenters, if we can.
We'll plane like this, and we'll hammer so!
And this is the way our saws shall go.
We'll make pretty houses, and boxes and boats
And a ship that shall race every vessel that floats
When we are women and men.

When we're grown up, to women and men,
We'll be blacksmiths, if we can.
Clink, clink, clink, shall our anvils ring,
And this is the way our hammers shall swing.
We'll shoe your horse, Sir, neat and tight
And trot down the lane to see if it's right
When we are women and men.

When we're grown up, to women and men,
We'll be masons, if we can.

[2] This is the original wording, but one could also replace "fat" with "portly" or "stout" or "large" or some other term of one's own choosing.

We'll lay the bricks this way, and lay one that,
Then take our trowels to smooth them flat.
Great chimneys we'll make – we think we'll be able
To build one as high as the Tower of Babel
When we are women and men.

When we're grown up, to women and men,
We'll be farmers, if we can.
We'll plough the ground, and seed we'll sow,
We'll reap the grain, and the grass we'll mow,
We'll bind the sheaves, we'll rake the hay,
And throw it up on the stack this way
When we are women and men.

7.5 Storytelling

"In the Waldorf schools (…) stories have always been a central part of the teaching,", as Kubanek-German (1992, p. 16, author trans.) rightly remarks. In the lower school, storytelling is an integral part of foreign language lessons. According to C. Lindenberg "it would (…) be a mistake to assume that the pupils behave passively when listening. It is an effort of its own to transform a narrative heard and presented in words into images through imagination" (1991, p. 583). By listening attentively, the children learn to entrust themselves to the flow of the new language. Through this inner activity, they develop the ability to understand the gist of a story, something that plays an important part in language learning all the way through school. It also promotes tolerance of ambiguity.

When we prepare for storytelling, we have a heightened awareness of our role as performers and how we apply the non-verbal elements:

- What facial expressions are at our disposal: relaxed, happy, surprised, sad, angry…?
- How do we use our arms and legs in gestures?
- What postures do we apply? (How does a bear look and move differently from a fox, a cat or an old woman?)
- How can we adapt our voice according to the situation?
- How does our intonation (the 'melody' of our speaking) change?
- How do we use the 'stage' on which we are presenting our story? Do we remember where we 'placed' our imagined characters/people/animals/objects?
- Can we manage to keep eye-contact with our audience?

It can often be noticed that children join the retelling of the known parts thus preparing for the story to be turned into a role-play. The topic has been dealt with in detail in a recent publication by Hidalgo (2020).

7.6 Singing games

Based on his experience as a primary school English teacher and mentor on three Continents for almost four decades, the author can confidently say that singing games are among the favourite activities of many classes. With their fixed patterns they offer the children in the lower school yet another way of connecting language and movements. According to the author's experience, they have proved their worth throughout the first four grades. A selection from a recent workshop in Bangkok can be viewed here: https://christophjaffke.net/in-service-training

7.7 Classroom games and parents

About a hundred years ago, long before the experts of foreign language didactics discovered the relevance of playing games, the founder of the Waldorf school said that only he who "understands the seriousness of play" could understand it correctly (Steiner 1979, p. 25). According to Fröhlich-Ward (1990, p. 68), "The activity of play captivates the children, gives them joy and makes them unaware that they are learning the foreign language." The focus is on the respective play activity, not on language learning (*incidental* or *informal learning).* This aspect is emphasized by Halliwell (1992, p. 6) when she writes: "Games are a very effective opportunity for indirect learning (…) They *are* real work. They are a central part of the process of getting hold of the language."

Experienced teachers, - after the first few weeks of English in the first grade – invite the parents to the classroom for an 'open lesson'. It is a convincing experience for the parents to see how their child 'plays' and performs in the new language, in poetry and prose, with a great deal of movement - and enjoyment.

8 Conclusion

Foreign language teaching has been one of the characteristic features of Waldorf education for more than 100 years. In what is considered the first 'Curriculum' of the Waldorf School the following was written about foreign languages in the lower school a few years after it was founded:

> Already in this lowest class we start with two foreign languages. The still very strong imitative instinct and the plasticity of the children's speech organs, which serve the children in learning the mother tongue, should not remain unused for the learning of foreign languages. In the first three years of school the children learn to speak by speaking. They learn songs, games, singing games, and poems that first teach the rhythm, melody and sound of

> the foreign language. They are encouraged to engage in small conversations. Grammar is not practised." (Heydebrand 1925, p. 8, author trans.).

What was once a pioneering feature of a new school form has in the meantime spread to over 1800 Waldorf schools in 67 countries worldwide. In addition to the original two foreign languages, English and French, quite a variety of languages is being taught, among them Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Korean and Japanese (see Rawson in this issue).

Existing curricula (e.g., Avison, Rawson & Richter, 2014) offer no prescribed linguistic progression, nor generally binding content, but rather offers examples for orientation. The principle of a spiral or concentric curriculum means that one frequently returns to the basics of all the essential areas, always broadening and deepening them. It is up to the teacher to decide when to conclude the study of a subject area, when to start a new one, or when to take up a previously treated one again. The respective class situation plays an important role here.

Taking into account that the knowledge and abilities of the students in a class vary according to their individual talents and eagerness to learn, it is nevertheless possible to describe in general terms the goals that are achieved in the course of the first three years of instruction by children of average ability:

> They have mastered the most important sounds of the other language and have not only formed a secure feeling for the different sentence melodies, but can also switch from the intonation of one language to that of the other.
>
> They understand age-appropriate narrated stories and can assume a role in performing a play.
>
> They can participate in simple conversations about the weather, family, and school.
>
> They have actively experienced a broad repertoire of nursery rhymes, poems, songs, and games of the target language.
>
> They have an elementary active vocabulary that usually includes the following areas: Body parts, classroom objects, spatial orientation, prepositions, colours, numbers, time, plants and animals, weather, days of the week, months, seasons, celebrations, crafts, and occupations.
>
> Children are still barely aware of the existence of grammar. An astonishing number of grammatical structures are naturally trained as a form of expression in the first three years of foreign language teaching and are also unconsciously used correctly. (Jaffke & Maier 1997, pp. 84-85, author trans.)

According to the author's worldwide observations, the greatest challenge in Waldorf FL teaching is the transition from choral activity to individual students speaking alone. Steiner had strongly recommended speaking in chorus, "for language is a social element" (Stockmeyer 2017: p. 96, author trans.), but later criticised its excessive use as one of the "dark sides of the Waldorf School" (Steiner 1989, p.149, author trans.). During his decades of teaching English to children of primary-school age, the author has found two approaches particularly helpful:

• Introducing the children from the very beginning to the use of fixed expressions (chunks), especially in simple conversations and games.

• Consciously using the language of performance, which makes it easier for the children to adopt - and identify with - a text.

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