

# LANGUAGE RICH INTERACTIONS IN THE PRESCHOOL

A guide for preschool teachers



## INTRODUCTION

### PART 1: LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT IN A MULTILINGUAL CONTEXT

# Content

**INTRODUCTION**

- 1. Why this guide?
- 2. Who is this guide for?
- 3. How to use the guide?
- 4. What is the content of the guide?

**Part 1: Language development in a multilingual context**

Chapter 1: Wellbeing, involvement and language.....	01
1.1. High wellbeing and involvement for all children.....	01
1.2. Communication as a barrier to learning.....	03
1.3. Language-rich interactions in the preschool.....	06
Terminology.....	06
 Chapter 2: How does language develop?.....	 08
2.1. Language processing.....	08
2.2. The crucial years: from 0 to 5.....	09
2.3. What influences language development?.....	11
 Chapter 3: Key concepts about multi/bilingual language development.....	 13
3.1. Sequential and simultaneous bilingual language development.....	13
3.2. How does language develop in a bilingual child?.....	14
3.3. Characteristics of bilingual development.....	16
3.4. How does the home language help the new (school) language?.....	16
3.5. A balanced bilingual development.....	17



# INTRODUCTION

## 1. Why this guide?

Most 3 to 6-year-old children in Vietnam attend preschool. Preschool teachers and school leaders, want all children to develop to their full potential. When children reach a high level of wellbeing and a high level of involvement, we know that children will develop fully. However, many preschool children experience barriers to learning and participation in the classroom, including language barriers. Children can experience these barriers in the physical environment, materials, activities and (especially adult-child) interactions.

Because of the experienced barriers, children do not reach high levels of wellbeing or involvement. These barriers keep them from benefiting fully and developing to their full potential. Some groups of children, including children from ethnic minority groups, are especially at risk of not realizing their full holistic development potential. Being born in more remote and disadvantaged communities, these children more often grow up in poverty, speak a different language at home than the teacher's language in school and experience the differences between home and school culture as well as barriers.

Preschool teachers and their school leaders can play a pivotal role to address many of these barriers, including those experienced by ethnic minority children, and by doing so, increase their levels of involvement and wellbeing in their classrooms and school environments. By developing their competences to support and value ethnic diversity in the class, teachers can take significant steps forward in ensuring that all children are developing to their full potential. This is in line with the intentions of the new ECE curriculum which gives more space to teachers and schools to design and adapt the curriculum implementation and encourages teachers to increasingly use the local context in their classrooms.

This material helps teachers to better understand the language development and how they can create the best circumstances in the classroom to help children develop to their full potential, while valuing and using their language and cultural background. This material helps teachers to take the first steps.

The content was developed with and tested by teachers, school leaders, Bureaus and Departments of Education and Training (BOET and DOET) of Kon Tum, Quang Nam and Quang Ngai provinces as part of their collaboration with VVOB Education for Development in the programme '*Mitigating Preschool Children's Barriers to Learning in disadvantaged and ethnically diverse districts in Central Vietnam*' (2017-2021). VVOB's structural partners, Ms Veerle Boelen (CEF Pedagogical Counselling Services Belgium) and Ms Kirsten Schraeyen (Thomas More University College Belgium) and the Institute for Studies of Society, Economy and Environment (iSEE) have contributed to the Guide with valuable international knowledge, practice and inspiration.

## 2. Who is this guide for?

This material primarily targets **preschool teachers**. It deepens their understanding of language development of children in a multilingual context but also in a monolingual context. Based on this deeper understanding it provides concrete handles to create rich language environments and interactions in the classroom. By doing so it complements guidance by the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) and DOET, Strengthening Vietnamese for children from ethnic minorities in Vietnam (Decision no. 1008/QĐ-TTg 02 June 2016) as well as the intentions of the new ECE curriculum which encourages teachers to use the local context in the classroom.

This material is useful to all teachers, also teachers in monolingual classrooms. Quality interactions in the classroom enhance all children's development and is in line with Child-centred approaches and Learning through Play as described in Circular #17/2009/TT-BGDĐT MOET) and as amended in Circular 28/2016/TT-BGDĐT (MOET).

This should lead to the establishment of an age appropriate, playful language development practice -throughout the entire classroom environment, activities and interactions- that helps the children with different socio-economic and socio-cultural backgrounds to develop to their full potential.

The material can also be used by **school leaders and education officers** (BOET and DOET) to organise school-based or district/province based TPD.

### 3.How to use the guide?

This guide helps the user -both teachers, school leaders and officers- to develop different attitudes, knowledge and skills towards language, multilingualism and diversity.

While sharing basic **knowledge** on diversity and language development, the user is requested to reflect on own values and actions. As a next step, the material shares good **practices** and hints and tips, and thus guides the user to reflect on the current practices and formulate clear actions for improvement and application in classes and schools.

The guide can also be used for **school based Teacher Professional Development** and district or provincial TPD. The clearly listed "Tasks" and "Answers" provide facilitators (core trainers, school leaders, officers) with facilitation suggestions to allow active and collaborative participation and engagement with the content.

Part 4 specifically helps core trainers, school leaders, BOET and DOET officers to create an **enabling environment** and **support** teachers while they are changing their practices.

### 4.What is the content of the guide?

The guide starts with a general introduction.  
The guide is then divided in 3 parts.

Part 1 builds understanding about language development in a multilingual context

Chapter 1 helps teachers to understand language barriers experienced by children and their impact on the wellbeing and involvement of children. It introduces the reader to key terminology on the topic.

Chapter 2 deepens teacher's understanding on language development and what influences language development.

Chapter 3 focuses on multilingual language development and deals with some existing myths and misconceptions.

Part 2 helps to establish language rich environments and quality interactions.

Chapter 4 introduces teachers to framework of a language rich environment and gives concrete handles on how to apply and establish a safe environment, create meaningful interactions and provide language support through interactions.

Chapter 5 further enriches the framework by focusing on language rich interactions in the classroom. The teacher explores a variety of techniques (roles) teachers could apply while interacting with children in corner play, tries out asking varied questions leading to interaction and higher level thinking and uses picture books as a starting point for playful interaction and making meaning of the world.

Part 3 focuses on how teachers can value diversity in their classroom and how the potential of the local context and the rich diversity children bring to school can be used in playful, language rich interactions.

Chapter 6 gives teachers a better understanding of how the differences between home and school culture and context can be a barrier which impacts the wellbeing and involvement of children. It also helps teachers explore current beliefs on education and culture.

Chapter 7 helps teachers to use the local context and new perspectives on culture in the classroom. It takes the teacher through the whole process, from collecting various materials to developing playful, language rich activities.

Part 4 helps school leaders, core trainers) and district and provincial officers to support the learning of teachers and the implementation of changed practices in the classroom.

Chapter 8 focuses on creating an enabling environment, Chapter 9 on how to encourage collaborative learning and Chapter 10 on supporting and coaching teachers.




# **PART 1:**

## **LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT IN A MULTILINGUAL CONTEXT**



# Chapter 1: Wellbeing, involvement and language



**This chapter aims to:**

- Give you a better understanding of how language and communication barriers impact the wellbeing and involvement of children
- Let you experience a communication barrier yourself
- Start to explore ways of overcoming communication barriers
- Show you which role you can play in creating language rich environments and interactions
- Introduce you to key terminology on the topic.

## 1.1.High wellbeing and involvement for all children

When applying process -oriented child monitoring (POM) teachers observe the level of wellbeing and involvement of children, identify barriers to learning and participation. They then take action in order to mitigate the barriers by making changes in the learning environment, materials, activities and interactions. This ensures deep learning of all children.

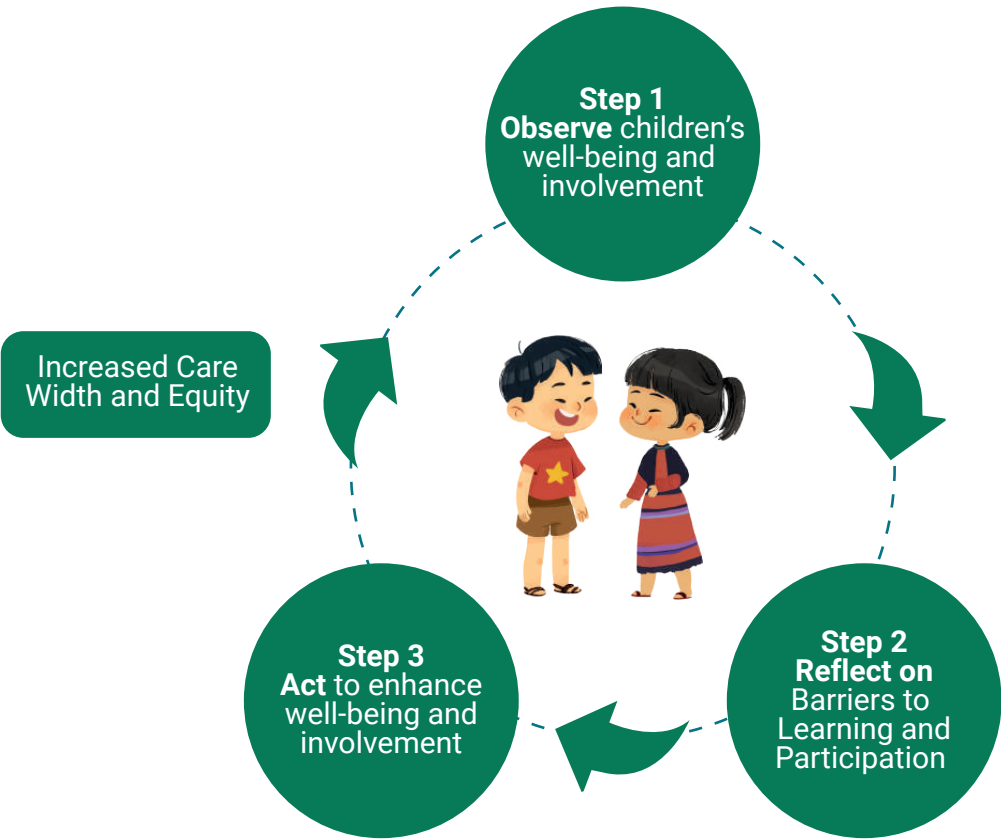


Figure 1 The process-oriented child monitoring approach supports the teacher to become a reflective teacher that continuously improves the quality of education and the care width for all children

If you want to understand more about the basics of POM, you can access the guide for teachers (VVOB. 2020. Ensuring children’s wellbeing and involvement in Vietnamese preschools: A practical guide for reflective teachers.)

This guide can be found in the publication section in the VVOB Vietnam website at <https://vietnam.vvob.org/en/publications> or QR code access:



## ACTION POINTS

1

Rearrange the **classroom** in appealing corners or areas

2

Check corners to replace unattractive materials by **more appealing ones**

3

Introduce **new and unconventional materials and activities**

4

Discover **children’s interests** & find related activities

5

Support ongoing activities with **stimulating impulses** & enriching interventions

6

Widen possibilities for **free initiative** & Support them with **sound rules and agreements**

7

Explore & improve the **relation with each child and between children**

8

Introduce activities that help children to explore the world of **behaviour, feelings and values**

Figure 2 Action points to change the learning environment, materials, activities and interactions



1.2.Communication as a barrier to learning

Many preschool children experience barriers to learning and participation in the classroom. These barriers keep them from benefiting fully and developing to their full potential.



In a multilingual setting where children are having a different home language from the language of instruction in the school, communication is often perceived as a barrier.



Examples:

1. Vu arrives at school. He wants to tell the teacher what has happened last night. He doesn't speak Vietnamese yet and starts speaking in his home language. The teacher doesn't understand.
2. During circle time, teacher Thanh explains that they will play a game. He explains the rules of the game. Vu and his friend don't understand the language (Vietnamese) the teacher is using.

When a child does not understand teachers' language of instruction, the child will not feel confident or at ease. This will impact the child's wellbeing. When instructions are not clear, the child's involvement might be impacted.

Preschool teachers and their school leaders can play a pivotal role to address many of these barriers. They can take giant steps forward in ensuring that all children are developing to their full potential, including children from ethnic minorities.

**Task**

*Reflection questions:*

1. Have you ever experienced language as a barrier for yourself? Where you ever in a situation where you did not understand the speakers around you?
2. How did that feel?
3. How did you solve the problem?

**Task**

*Experience the language barrier, an exercise.*

1. Make a group of 3 people
2. Cut the cards below (set 1) without reading the cards. Put them upside down on the table.
3. Each person takes 1 card. The card will explain what you must do. Two people will have to do something, the third will observe.
4. 1 rule: do not speak Vietnamese. You are only allowed to speak a non-existing made up language
5. If you want to do it again, use set 2 and 3 (or if you are more than 1 group)

**Task**

*Reflecting on the exercise:*

1. Do A and B manage to understand each other?
2. How do they react when it is difficult?
3. How do they solve the communication problem due to the language barrier?



**Cards for the Task “Experience the language barrier, an exercise”**

<div>SET 1</div> <div><b>A. In the shop</b> (do not show this card to the others) <b>Buyer</b> You go to the sewing shop. You want to buy a bobbin sewing thread. You don't see the sewing thread on the shelf, so you ask the shop owner.</div>	<div>SET 1</div> <div><b>B. In the shop</b> <b>Seller</b> Someone comes to buy something in your sewing shop.</div>	<div>SET 1</div> <div><b>C. Observer</b> <b>Observe the following:</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Can A and B understand each other?</li><li>- How do they respond when things get tough?</li><li>- How do they solve the communication problem due to the language barrier?</li></ul></div>
<div>SET 2</div> <div><b>A. At the doctor's</b> (do not show this card to the others) <b>Patient</b> You have been bitten by a dog and you think it will need stitches. You are worried that you are not vaccinated against rabies.</div>	<div>SET 2</div> <div><b>B. At the doctor's</b> <b>Doctor</b> A patient comes in with an ugly wound. You ask about the circumstances of the accident. You treat the patient in a professional manner.</div>	<div>SET 2</div> <div><b>C. Observer</b> <b>Observe the following:</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Can A and B understand each other?</li><li>- How do they respond when things get tough?</li><li>- How do they solve the communication problem due to the language barrier?</li></ul></div>
<div>SET 3</div> <div><b>A. In the train station</b> (do not show this card to the others) <b>Traveller</b> You want to buy a train ticket to Hue. You are 75 years and you should get the cheaper tariff. However, you forgot your identity card. But you don't want to pay the full price.</div>	<div>SET 3</div> <div><b>B. In the train station</b> <b>Official</b> Someone comes to buy a ticket. But there are some challenges.</div>	<div>SET 3</div> <div><b>C. Observer</b> <b>Observe the following:</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Can A and B understand each other?</li><li>- How do they respond when things get tough?</li><li>- How do they solve the communication problem due to the language barrier?</li></ul></div>

### 1.3.Language-rich interactions in the preschool

How can teachers communicate and have rich and meaningful interactions with children? How can they give stimulating impulses to the child’s language development?

This guide gives background information on language development and provides some practical holds for schools to create language-rich environments where child-initiative is stimulated, and where there are ample opportunities to interact, express and reason. This will stimulate the holistic development of all children, whether they are mono- or multilingual.

#### Terminology

Terms	Explanation
Mono-lingual	The child develops 1 language (e.g. Vietnamese)
Bilingual	The child develops 2 languages (e.g. 1) Co Tu at home, Vietnamese at school; or 2) Co Tu at home (mother) and Vietnamese at home (father). (1) is called sequential bilingualism as the language are learned at different times, (2) is called simultaneous bilingualism, as the two languages are learned at the same time.
Multi-lingual	This is the same as bilingual, but more than 2 languages. The terms bilingual and monolingual are applied from the perspective of the child: what is the child’s situation. When looking at a class, it is important to look at what the language situation is: how many home languages?
Home language or mother tongue	This is the language the child uses at home to communicate with parents and community. Note the child can have two home languages. See example (2) above.
Language of instruction or language of teaching and learning	In Vietnam this language is mostly Vietnamese. For children who have another home language, the language in school is their second language.
Passive or receptive language	This is the ability to understand and comprehend language you hear or read. For example, a child’s ability to listen and follow directions (e.g. “Put on your coat”).
Active or expressive language	This is the ability to express yourself via speaking, signing, drawing or writing.
Verbal communication	This is using words to share information with other people. It can include both spoken and written communication
Non-verbal communication	This is the transmission of messages or signals through eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, posture, or the distance between two individuals.




### Task

1. Explain the terms in the table above in your own words.
2. What is the home language of the children in your class/district?  
Who is bilingual? Who is multilingual? Who is monolingual? (in your class, family, community)
3. Try to give a message to your colleague by using non-verbal communication.
4. Do you know words that are part of your passive language (you understand) but not part of your active language (you don't use)? Try to find some examples.



## Chapter 2: How does language develop?



**This chapter aims to:**

- Give you a better understanding of how language develops
- Show you the different development stages a child moves through from birth till the end of preschool
- Help you assess children’s language development stage
- Make you aware of what influences the language development and the role of the school and teacher.

### 2.1. Language processing

Language develops in interaction. A child listens to what is being said and tries to understand (Step 1, Figure 3). The child reacts based on what the child thought was said (Step 2). The environment reacts accordingly (Step 3). By the reaction of the environment, the child knows whether it was correct or wrong and it learns new things (Step 4).

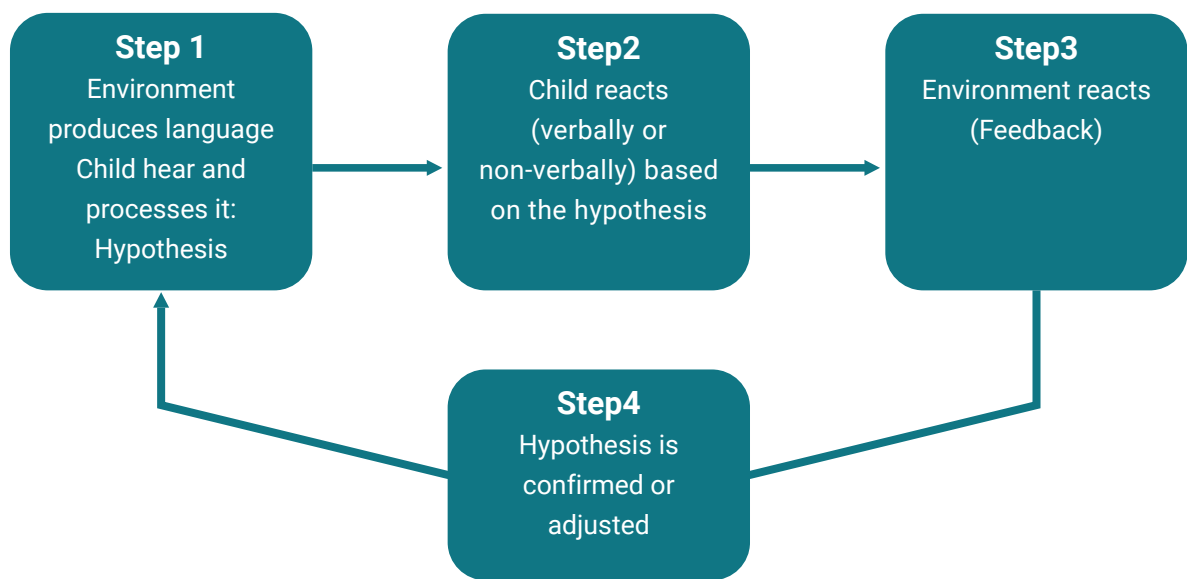


Figure 3 Language develops in interaction



Let’s look at 3 examples:

1. A father says to the toddler “put on your shoes, we are going out”. The child listens, and picks up the word “shoes”. The child thinks that father asks to bring his shoes. The child runs to the door, takes the shoes and brings them to father. Father says: “No, don’t bring them. Put on your own shoes. We will go away”. At the same time father puts on his own shoes and takes his helmet. The child learns that the first hypothesis was wrong. With the additional information (father is showing what to do), the child understands.



2. A father says to the toddler “put on your shoes, we are going out”. The child listens, and picks up the word “shoes”. The child thinks that they are going out. The child runs to the door, puts on his shoes and takes the motor bike helmet, ready to go. At the same time father puts on his own shoes and takes his helmet. The child learns that his hypothesis was correct.
3. In the last example, the teacher is learning: A child in your class says “hungry”, (not well pronounced) (step 1). You don’t understand. It is almost lunch time and the child is tapping its tummy while saying “hungry” again. You think that the child says that it is hungry. You say to the child: “Lan, are you hungry?” (step 2). The child smiles and says “yes” (step 3). You know now that your assumption was correct (step 4).

This process is the motor of the language development. For children to develop (a new) language, they need lots of interaction in a meaningful context, not language teaching.



#### Task

1. *Was there a time that you were not understanding a child? Where you had to check your own hypothesis? Find your own example where you were going through this process (as in example 3).*

## 2.2.The crucial years: from 0 to 5

Language develops in the early years of childhood. Basic language skills are acquired around the age of 5. Between 5-12 years of age, language is further fine-tuned. In the table below you can see the steps in the language development of a child growing up with one language.



Mono-lingual language development timeline	
Receptive language Hearing and understanding	Productive language Talking, signing
1.Prelingual stage (0 – 12 months)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recognises voices</li> <li>- Stops crying when hearing a voice</li> <li>- Moves eyes into the direction of sounds</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Makes pleasure sounds</li> <li>- Cries differently for different needs</li> <li>- Smiles when seeing you</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recognises words for common things like “milk” “cup” “rice”</li> <li>- Listens attentively</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Babbling includes many sounds such as p, b, m.</li> <li>- Babbling starts sounding like language (same intonations)</li> <li>- Imitates different sounds</li> </ul>

2. Early lingual stage (12 months – 30 months)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Responds to request such as: “give to me”, “come here”</li> <li>- Understands a lot of words (e.g. “no”, “slippers”, “bowl”, ..)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- One word utterances (a sentence that consists of one word but means more), e.g. “mama” (meaning “pick me up, mama”, “water” (meaning: please give me water), “xe”(meaning: let’s go on the motorbike).</li> <li>- Uses at least 10 words</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Understands simple instructions such as “get your blanket”, “bring it to your aunt”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Two word utterances (a sentence that consists of two words), e.g. “daddy come” or “more rice”, “water drink”</li> <li>- Uses at least 150 words</li> <li>- Asks simple questions, (“what’s this?”)</li> </ul>
3. Differentiation stage (30 months – 60 months)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Listens to conversation</li> <li>- Understands prepositions such as in, under, behind</li> <li>- Understands more complicated instructions, e.g. “take your helmet, your shoes and rain jacket”.</li> <li>- Understands what, where, who questions</li> <li>- Understands stories</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Uses at least 300 words and this grows every day</li> <li>- Uses more complicated sentences: “I go to school”, “Tomorrow, we will go to the park”, “I want to drink water”.</li> <li>- Uses plurals (cat/cats), pronouns (me, him, he, her, she) and prepositions (on, in, under, between..)</li> <li>- Holds a conversation</li> <li>- Can express emotions</li> </ul>
4. Completion stage (> 60 months)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- understands why questions</li> <li>- understands most of what is said at school and at home</li> <li>- understands school instructions such as “Draw a circle around each item that you can eat.”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- sentences grow and get more complicated. “Mom, I am thirsty, can I get some water?”</li> <li>- makes connections and relations</li> <li>- can tell stories</li> </ul>







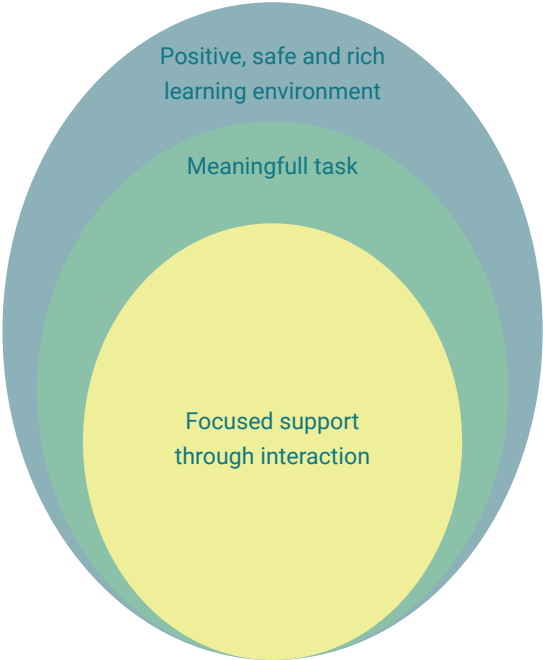


#### Task

1. Can you identify in which language development stage the children in your community are?
2. Make a copy of the table above. Cut the two columns. Keep Receptive and Productive language separate. Cut all rows and shuffle the cards. Ask your colleagues to arrange them in chronological order. Answer: see table above.

2.3.What influences language development?

Language development is influenced by many factors. Below we will discuss the most important ones. As a school we can have an impact on many factors, but there is only one factor that we have fully control over, a factor that we hold in our hands. That is the quantity and quality of the language offered at school.

	<p><b>The quantity and quality of language offerings at home and in free time.</b></p> <p>Think of the Socio-Economic Status (SES) features. Growing up in a family with a low SES is more likely to lead to slower language development, due to e.g. less language of instruction in conversations, fewer books in the house, fewer board games, fewer excursions, less interactions, ...</p>
	<p><b>Contextual factors</b></p> <p>A child will learn more language at home, if there is “peace” and safety in the family. Think for example of the relational situation, violence, financial stress, But also in the classroom, at school, ... a high level of wellbeing is important for language acquisition. A motivated child with a high level of wellbeing will acquire more language.</p>
	<p><b>Knowledge of the home language</b></p> <p>The better a child develops its home language, the easier it learns a new language!</p>
	<p><b>The personality of the child</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Age: preschool age is an ideal time to learn a new language; as from the age of young adults, it is much harder to learn a new language.</li><li>- Character: a more extravert child which is not afraid to make mistakes will have more chances to practice and absorb language than a shy /introvert child.</li></ul>


	<p><b>The quantity and quality of the language offered at school</b></p> <p>Children learn language via language rich interactions. Teachers need to offer a language-rich environment, a setting in which the child is surrounded by talk and has plenty of opportunities to communicate with others. So, it is rich in language and provides many rich language interactions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- A large and understandable range of languages, in a natural way</li><li>- Use child initiative and motivation as starting point</li><li>- Meaningful actions</li><li>- With a lot of interaction and feedback</li><li>- With many natural listening and speaking opportunities</li><li>- In small groups</li></ul>
	<p><b>Knowledge of the world</b></p> <p>The more a child knows about its environment and the world, the easier it can pick up language, and the more it will use it.</p>
	<p><b>The cognitive and language capacities of the child</b></p> <p>One child learns language quicker than another, but all can grow.</p> <p>Children need 'practice time': they need to get the opportunity to speak, to have a conversation, to interact, to express themselves.</p>



**Task**

1. Which of the factors above can we directly influence? Which factors are in our control?
2. Explain

## Chapter 3: Key concepts about multi/bilingual language development



**This chapter aims to:**

- Expose you to key concepts and terms regarding to multilingual language development
- Give you a better understanding of how multilingual language develops in children
- Help you assess in which language development stage for the new language the children are
- Make you aware of existing myths and misunderstandings regarding multilingual language development
- Explain how home language and additional language are related and how they support each other
- Introduce you to the role you can play to enhance the language development of both home language and language of instruction.

### 3.1.Sequential and simultaneous bilingual language development

Children who are exposed to more than one language before the school starts, are called **simultaneous** bilinguals. They learn the two languages at the same time. (E.g. Father speaks Co Tu, mother Vietnamese). Children who are exposed to one language before the school starts and learn a second language when they start at school, are called **sequential** bilinguals. They first learn one language and later another language. (E.g. Cham at home and Vietnamese at school). A combination of both types is also possible. (E.g. Child learns Cham (mother) and Vietnamese (father) at home and learns English at school).

Table 1 Types of bilingual language development

Simultaneous	Sequential	Combined simultaneous and sequential
The child learns both language at the same time, and before it starts going to school.	The child learns one language before it starts school and the second language at school.	The child learns two languages at the same time before going to school. Then, when it starts preschool, it learns an additional language.
<i>Example:</i> Father speaks Co Tu, mother Vietnamese.	<i>Example:</i> Cham at home and Vietnamese at school	<i>Example:</i> Child learns Cham (mother) and Vietnamese (father) at home and learns English at school).

The ideal language-learning window is during the first few years of life—the most rapid period of brain development, but older children can still become fluent in a second language. Although some bilingual kids will initially be behind the level of their peers when they start school, they catch up quite quickly and, in most cases, **outperform** their peers. Bilingual children tend to do better on tasks that require attention control, problem solving and fast changing of tasks. So, being bilingual strengthens cognitive development. It also delays cognitive decline.



### Task

#### Examples:

1. Mai is born in Vietnam. She is 1,5 years old. Her mother speaks fluently Khmer and Vietnamese (work related). With Mai she only speaks Khmer. Mai's father was born and raised in Vietnam and he only speaks Vietnamese. He uses Vietnamese with Mai. The language of instruction is Vietnamese.
2. Teo is 8 years old and lives in Vietnam. Teo's parents speak Cham with each other and with Teo. Teo goes to a school where the language of instruction is Vietnamese.

#### Questions:

1. Is Mai acquiring her second language simultaneous or sequential? Why?
2. Is Teo acquiring his second language simultaneous or sequential? Why?



- Answer:**
1. Mai is a bilingual child who learns both languages at the same time
  2. This is called a simultaneous bilingual child
  3. Teo is a bilingual child who learns one language at the time
  4. This is called a sequential bilingual child

### 3.2.How does language develop in a bilingual child?

The milestones of the early language development are the same in all languages (first words by year 1; by year 2 use sentences of two words). Bilingual children go through the same process as children only learning 1 language. There are some individual differences. Some will be quicker; some will take more time.

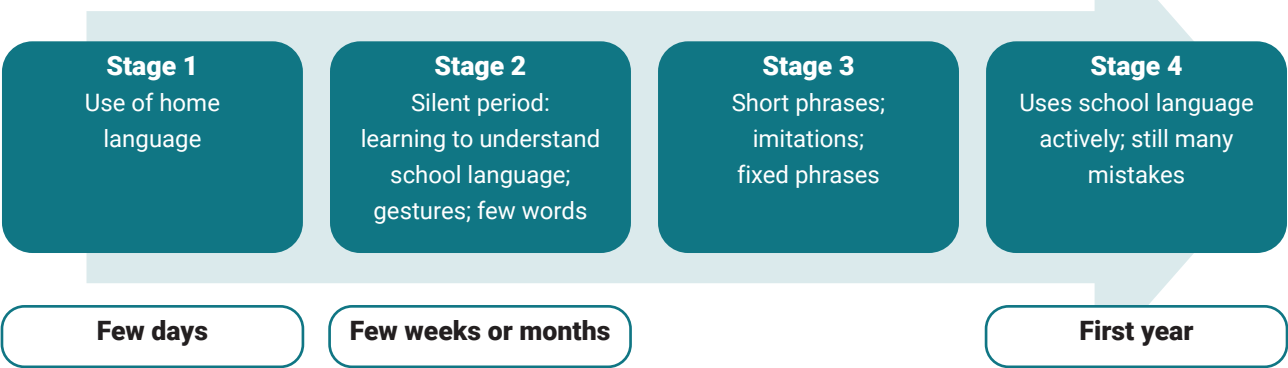
A child who is only exposed to the language of instruction at the school start, has some catching up to do. This can be compared to the language development of a child learning one language (from birth to 2 years: more silent period). This silent period may occur a few weeks until a few months.

Although there are differences between children, normally all children learning a second language will complete 4 stages:

1. Stage 1: They still use a lot of their home language in school (e.g. Use of Bahnar in Vietnamese context). This takes a few days.
2. Stage 2: Silent period. They are quiet but are picking up the language of the school. They understand more and more. They use only a few words and a lot of gestures to express themselves. This can take a few weeks to months.
3. Stage 3: They start using short sentences. These are often fixed phrases which they hear a lot in class. They imitate what others say. What they say in the language of instruction is not yet very original/creative.
4. Stage 4: By the end of the first year, most children can use the language well. They still make mistakes, but they can express themselves.



Figure 4 Stages in bilingual language development



**Task**

*An example:*

Principal: Do you like school?

Child: yes

Principal: What's your teacher's name?

Child: Hanh.

Principal: What do you like to do at school?

Child: Painting.

Principal: That's nice. Did you already paint a rainbow?

Child: Euh, no

Principal: In Vietnam, it often rains, do you agree?

Child: I like that, the rain.

*Question:*

1. In which phase is this child?
2. Why?



**Answer:**

This child is in Stage 3. It uses one word sentences (yes, Hanh, Painting, no) and fixed sentences (I like the rain).

The language development depends on the **language exposure**. Language exposure refers to the contact that the child has with the language that the child is trying to learn. Children learn language via interactions, not by repeating words. What kind of language exposure does the child get at school? If the school/teacher doesn't offer a language rich environment, the child will not acquire the new language very well.

**What does this mean for you as a teacher and school?** Teachers need to offer a language-rich environment, a setting in which the child is surrounded by talk and has plenty of opportunities to communicate with others. So, it is rich in language and provides many rich language interactions. Part 2 will guide you on how to do this.

### 3.3.Characteristics of bilingual development

Bilingual children may mix up grammar rules and words from different languages, but this does not mean they are confused. This is simply a normal part of bilingual language development.

Mixing up grammatical rules (e.g. word order from home language is used when saying something in the language of instruction) is called a **transfer**.

Using words from multiple languages in the same sentence is called **code-mixing**.

**What does this mean for you as a teacher?** The teacher should not discourage from or punish children for code-mixing. Code-mixing is perfectly normal stage in bilingual language development. A teacher should always use gestures and facial expressions. This will benefit all children, not only bilingual children. The teacher should speak in a slow pace and use short sentences. The sentences must be correct. E.g. Put the cup in the kitchen, Not: Cup kitchen. The teacher can emphasise the important words. E.g. Put the **cup** in the **kitchen**.

It takes time (dependent on when both languages have been introduced to the child), but eventually, they will learn to separate the two languages correctly.



**Task**

Which of the items below are a typical characteristic of a normal bilingual development?

Explain.

- ☐ Code-mixing
- ☐ Language loss
- ☐ Anxiety
- ☐ Transfer errors



**Answer:**

Code-mixing and transfer errors.

### 3.4.How does the home language help the new (school) language?

When children learn a language, they do not only learn the names or the words (labels), but they also learn the concept. E.g. a glass is something that can break, that you can use to put something inside, you use it to drink, how it feels, ....

These concepts are all gathered in the central knowledge system. Whatever children learn, ends up in this system.

The child learns the concept of a glass in home language (at home), When the child learns a new language, it will learn a new word (or label) for glass, but the conceptual understanding remains the same. It may happen that the child later learns new concepts first in the second language, then only in the home language.

So, the one language builds on the other and vice versa. This can be represented by two icebergs. The two icebergs represent the two languages children grow up with.

Not all tops are as high. Later in life adults might not use the one language as much as the other.

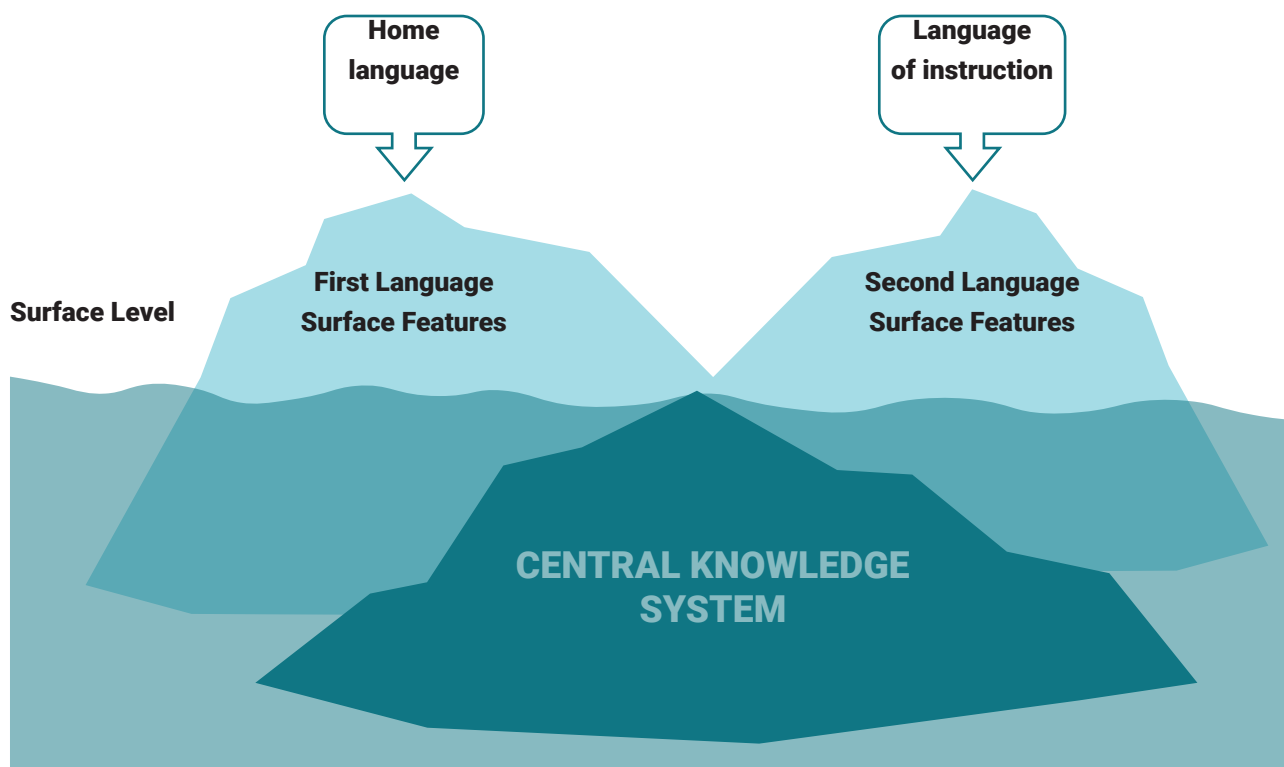


Figure 5 Two languages, each contributing to the central knowledge system

### 3.5.A balanced bilingual development

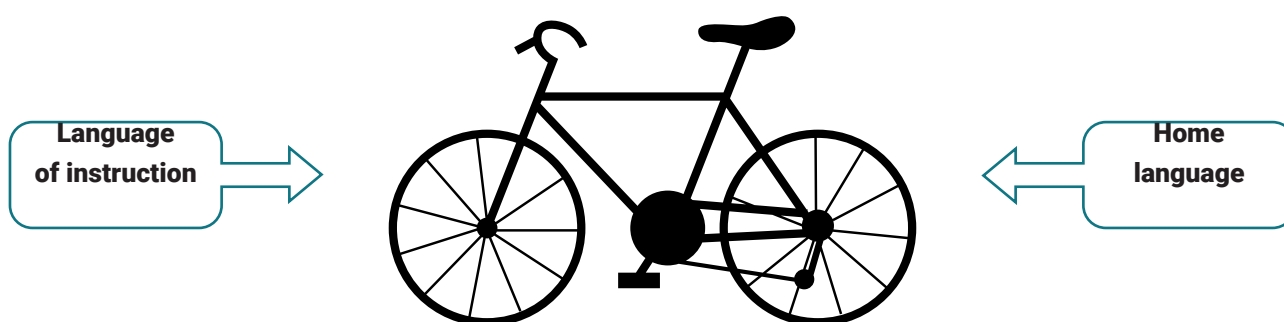


Figure 6 Home language and language of instruction: they need each other

Think of a bicycle. The back wheel is the home language. It is the steering power of the bicycle. Children start developing many concepts in their home language: their knowledge of the world, their understanding about things, relations, animals, ... E.g. when children come to school, they know what a cup is (something to drink from). They will not know the word in Vietnamese, but they know the word in their own language. At school they will learn the new word. This word builds on the concept they learned in their home language. That is why the home language is powering the bike: they learn the new language (Vietnamese) from the basics of what they know in their own home language.)

The front wheel is the language of instruction, in Vietnam that is Vietnamese. It is also very important. A person's ability in Vietnamese is very visible in society, in school, in the workplace. It is the first thing that children and adults are assessed on. That why it is the first wheel. Successful learning outcomes in primary and secondary will depend on the front wheel.

The chain, the pedals and the gears create the link between the two wheels. Good coordination is essential. Then the bicycle will move smoothly (the child develops).

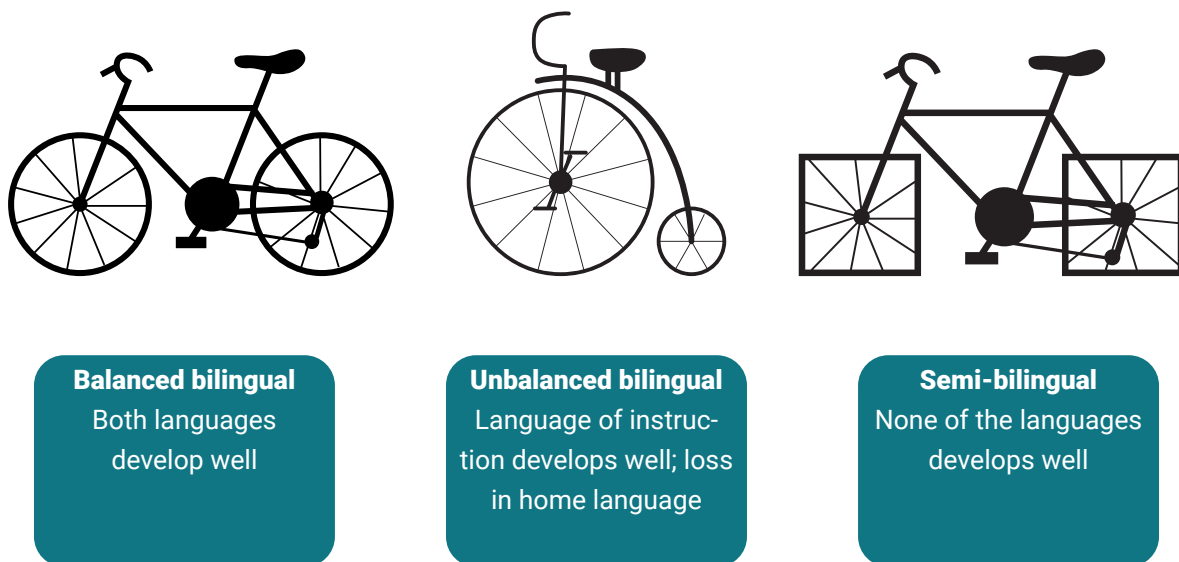


Figure 7 Balanced, unbalanced and semi-bilingual

Acknowledging and further developing home language is essential for successful learning, and language acquisition. This leads to a **balanced** bilingual development. Parents and the school both play a crucial role in stimulating the language process of the child. It is a shared responsibility.

**What does this mean for you as a teacher?** We should **avoid loss of home language** as the home language is the basis of any other language learned. It is crucial that the home language will be maintained! Otherwise the child will experience emotional problems and less accurate language of instruction development.



#### Task

Test yourself. Are the statements true or false? Why?

Statement	True	False
1. A child should learn a language before the age of 3. Any language learned after that will not be fluent.		
2. If you expose a child (before school age) to more than one language, the language development will be delayed.		
3. When a child is only exposed to the second language at the start of going to school, the child will experience a silent period (= a period where the child does not say anything in class)		
4. A child that learns more than one language in a bilingual context, will sometimes sound strange for an outsider. Its language will have certain characteristics. This is normal and part of bilingual development.		

5. When a (bilingual) child does not understand everything in class, it is good that the teacher uses short sentences and a lot of gestures to explain herself.		
6. A child that starts learning Vietnamese when it goes to school, should be able to speak Vietnamese fluently within 1 year.		
7. Han speaks Co Tu at home with her parents. She struggles with Vietnamese in school. You know that the parents can speak Vietnamese rather well. You should advise them to speak Vietnamese at home instead of Co Tu.		
8. The school is responsible for the language of instruction while the parents are responsible for the home language. Therefore, school teachers do not need to know which language the child speaks at home.		
9. It is better to force children to speak Vietnamese at all times when on the school premises.		
10. In a bilingual context it is important to focus most on language, not so much on cultural aspects.		
11. The maintenance of the child's home language is crucial to learn the language of instruction.		
12. Once the bilingual child has learned to speak in Vietnamese at school, the child does not need the home language anymore.		
13. Bilingual children will have learning problems.		
14. Even if a child is not equally fluent in both languages, the child is a truly bilingual.		
15. Children have to be smart to be bilingual.		



### Answer

#	True	False	Reason
1		✗	Although the ideal language-learning window is during the first few years of life—the most rapid period of brain development—older children can still become fluent in a second language.
2		✗	The developmental milestones for children who learn more than one language are the same as for children learning one language. There are of course individual differences.
3	✗		Indeed, the child has some catching up to do. This silent period may take a few weeks until a few months. See Figure 4.

4	×		Bilingual children may mix up grammar rules and use words from the different languages in the same sentence, but this does not mean they are confused. This is a normal part of bilingual language development. Eventually, they will learn to separate the two languages.
5	×		Children that learn a second language at the school start need 2-3 year to catch up with monolingual peers. There are individual differences.
6		×	Indeed, gestures are always helpful, also for monolingual children. Use short but correct sentences.
7		×	Parents should always be advised to speak their mother tongue or the language they speak best (= their emotional language). Keep in mind: input =output so if a parent gives a wrong model (wrong sentences in Vietnamese etc.), the child will copy these errors. It is also important that parents keep using the home language to avoid language loss of this home language.
8		×	Parents and the school both play a crucial role in stimulating the language process of the child.
9		×	It is important for the wellbeing of the child that the home language may be spoken at school. When the wellbeing is higher, the child will be open to learning.
10		×	Language is an important aspect of culture. Bilingual children do not only learn a new language but also a new culture. Children may not share the same assumptions, customary beliefs about many things as the teacher. The teacher needs to understand the culture of the child. This includes habits, dress codes, gestures, food, festivals, rituals, ...
11	×		Loss of home language should be avoided as the home language is the basis of any other language learned.
12		×	It is crucial that the home language will be maintained! Otherwise the child will experience emotional problems and a less accurate development of the language of instruction.
13		×	Although some bilingual kids will initially be behind the level of their peers when they start school, we know they catch up quite quickly and in most cases outperform their peers. Bilingual children tend to do better on tasks that require attention control, problem solving and fast changing of tasks. Bilingualism strengthens cognitive development.
14	×		Bilingual children almost always have a dominant language, which can change over time, depending on how often the language is used
15		×	Any child has the possibility to be bilingual, no matter their level of intelligence. If there is the need for each language (language has to be functional), and adequate exposure a child will learn to speak both.





### Task

*Test yourself.*

1. Which statement is correct? Why?
  - a, It is good if the teacher knows which language(s) the child speaks at home, however, not necessary
  - b, It is crucial that the teacher knows which language(s) the child speaks at home in order to understand its development in Vietnamese
  - c, It is necessary that the teacher speaks the home languages of the child in order to understand everything the child says.
2. Which statement is correct? If a being child does not understand the assignment in class, the teacher....
  - a, Should repeat the same sentence over and over again in Vietnamese until the child understands it
  - b, Should rephrase the sentence using a short sentence with only relevant words e.g. "you painting" while using gestures
  - c, Should rephrase the sentence using a short but grammatically correct sentence while using gestures



**Answer:**  
1. b, 2. c.

**Published on February 2021, by:**

© 2021 VVOB – education for development  
Julien Dillensplein 1 bus 2A, 1060 Brussels, Belgium  
Telephone: +32 2 209 07 99; Website: [www.vvob.org](http://www.vvob.org)



### **Some rights reserved**

This work is a product of the staff of VVOB, based on the collaboration, findings and experiences of VVOB and its partners in the 'Mitigating Preschool Children's Barriers to Learning in disadvantaged and ethnically diverse districts in Central Vietnam' (BaMi) programme and complemented by relevant literature. The findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed in this work do not necessarily reflect the views of VVOB, its Board of Directors, or the funding donors. VVOB does not guarantee the accuracy of the data included in this work. The boundaries, colors, denominations, and other information shown on any map in this work do not imply any judgment on the part of VVOB concerning the legal status of any territory or the endorsement or acceptance of such boundaries.

### **Rights and Permissions**

Responsible Editor:

Sven Rooms

© 2021 VVOB - education for development



This work is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial Share-alike 4.0 International license (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0). Under the Creative Commons Attribution license, you are free to copy, distribute, transmit, and adapt this work, only for noncommercial purposes, under the following conditions:

Please cite the work as follows: *VVOB – education for development. 2021. "Language Rich Interactions In The Preschool – A Guide For Preschool Teachers"*

All queries on rights and licenses should be addressed to VVOB, Julien Dillensplein 1 bus 2A, 1060 Brussels, Belgium - Telephone: +32 2 209 07 99; E-mail: [info@vvob.org](mailto:info@vvob.org); Website: [www.vvob.org](http://www.vvob.org)

### **Disclaimer**

This publication contains references to other publications and websites. VVOB cannot be held responsible for current or future content of these publications and websites, nor for the content of external publications and websites that refer to this publication of VVOB.

This publication was produced with the financial support of the Governments of Belgium and Flanders. Its contents are the sole responsibility of VVOB and do not necessarily reflect the views of these actors. The Governments of Belgium and Flanders cannot be held responsible for the content of this publication.

### **(Co-)funded by:**



**Belgium**  
partner in development



**Flanders**  
State of the Art



3-5 Nguyen Binh, Hai Chau District, Da Nang, Viet Nam  
+84 (0) 236 3923332  
<https://vietnam.vvob.org>  
<http://fb.com/vvobvietnam>

# LANGUAGE RICH INTERACTIONS IN THE PRESCHOOL

A guide for preschool teachers



## PART 2: ESTABLISHING LANGUAGE RICH ENVIRONMENTS AND INTERACTIONS

# Content

**Part 2: Establishing language rich environments and interactions**

Chapter 4: Creating a language rich learning environment.....	01
4.1. Positive, safe and rich learning environment.....	02
4.2. Meaningful, real life tasks.....	04
4.3. Focused language support through interaction.....	06
4.4. Applying a language rich environment.....	10
 Chapter 5: Advancing our skills to create language rich interactions.....	14
5.1. Introduction: the role of the teacher.....	14
5.2. Nine techniques for enriching corner play.....	16
5.3. Asking questions.....	20
5.4. Using books and stories in a multi-lingual context.....	25
 Annexure 1: Where the wild things are, an example of how to work with picture books.....	33
1. Book details.....	33
2. Introduction: monsters.....	35
3. Core: telling and retelling.....	35
4. Expanding activities.....	36
 Annexure 2: The matching game: nine techniques for enriching corner play.....	41
Nine techniques.....	41
Nine examples.....	42




**PART 2:**  
**ESTABLISHING LANGUAGE RICH**  
**ENVIRONMENTS AND INTERACTIONS**



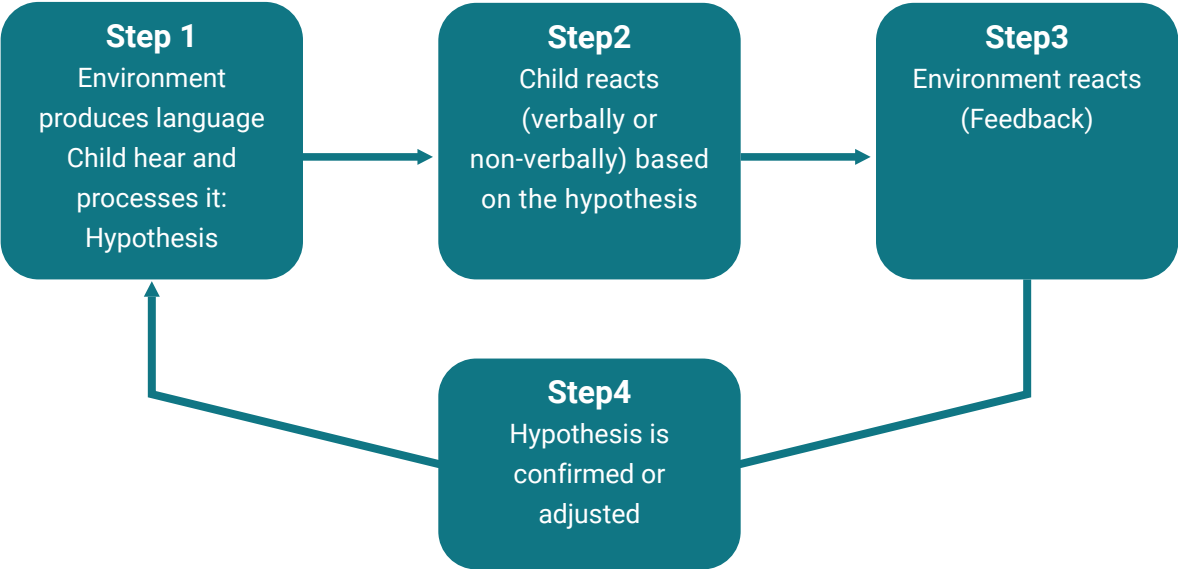
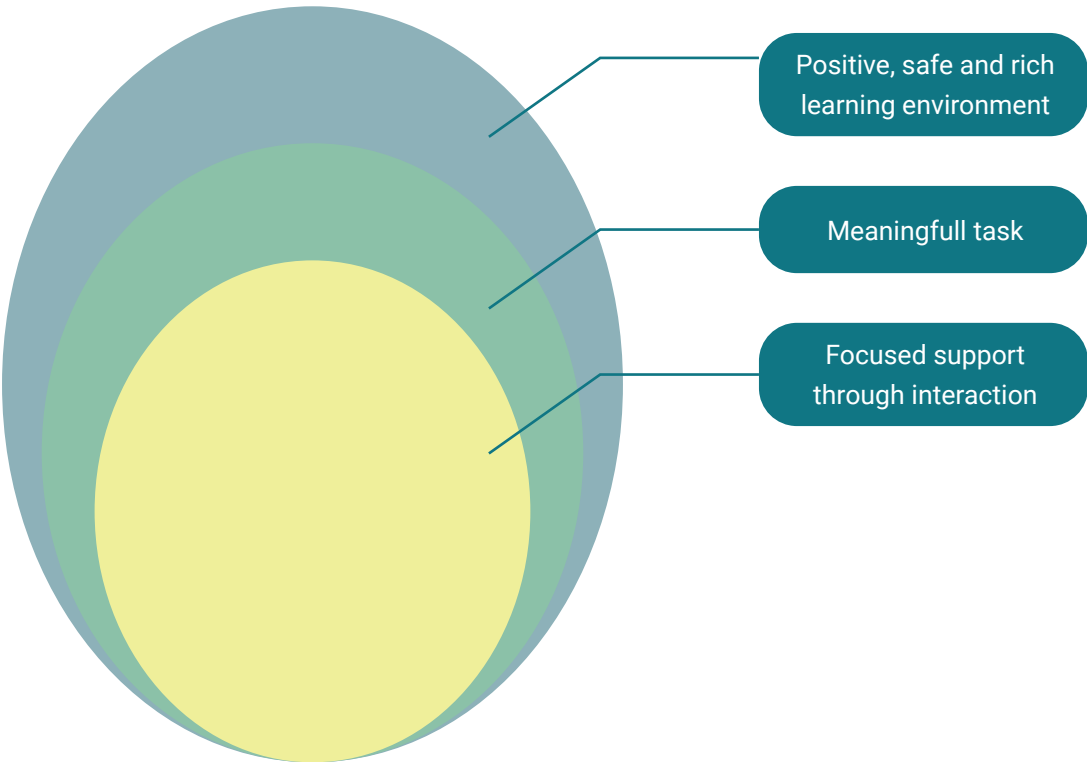


# Chapter 4: Creating a language rich learning environment



**This chapter aims to:**

- Introduce you to the framework of a language rich environment
- Give concrete handles on how to apply and establish a safe environment, create meaningful interactions and provide language support through interactions
- Help you to try out and reflect in your classroom
- Provide concrete situations in which you can apply the language rich environment



Language is learned best in a natural context. This applies to all children, also children who speak another language. Preschool children are still in the middle of their language development. **Also, their home language development is still in process!** The best a teacher can do is provide the same context for language learning as parents provide for their children. A language rich environment looks very much like **the natural context in which children pick up language at home**. Think of how you interacted with your children age 0 to 5.

A teacher needs to explicitly create a language-rich learning environment. It does not come by itself.

A language-rich environment is pretty much what the name suggests: a setting in which the child is surrounded by talk and has plenty of opportunities to communicate with others. So, it is rich in language and provides many rich language interactions.

Building a language rich environment is

- About using every opportunity to use language, to interact, to share a focus, to talk, to take turns.
- About building a nurturing environment, giving the child love and affection and building their self-confidence.
- About building a learning environment, creating a place where love, language and learning can all take place together.

Note:

- It is **not about a lot in terms of asking a lot of questions**. On the contrary: asking too many questions can create pressure on the child. But it is about describing what a child is doing, offering **language in a natural and meaningful context**.
- **Children do not only learn from adults but also from other children**. Creating opportunities for children to interact and speak, therefore is beneficial for the language development of children. Children even pick up language by overhearing others speak and interact.

#### 4.1. Positive, safe and rich learning environment

##### 1. Description

In a positive, safe and rich learning environment the child will be supported to reach a high level of wellbeing. The child will be open to what is happening in its surrounding and it will start exploring and learning. When children explore, interactions between children are triggered. Through the interactions the exploration will be enriched. Then, the child will be receptive to language.



*An example:*

Today is Hanh's first day at school. Hanh speaks Bahnar at home. The teacher speaks Vietnamese. The teacher welcomes Hanh, Hanh replies in Bahnar. The teacher holds her hand when they start circle time. When it is corner play time, Hanh may choose where she wants to play. She chooses the construction corner. Hanh is quiet and sits at the side. The teacher joins the corner, she engages Hanh in the play. Together with Hanh and another boy they build a bridge. They use cars to drive over the bridge. Hanh relaxes and smiles.

## 2. How to create a positive, safe and rich learning environment?

In the table below you will find some points for attention and tips and tricks. You can also use this table as a check list.

As a teacher...	I do this		
	always	sometimes	never
a. I create a safe and friendly learning environment where children are at ease and have a high level of wellbeing.			
b. I start from what the child can do and knows.			
c. I accommodate the needs of <b>all</b> the children.			
d. I aim for high involvement of <b>all</b> the children.			
e. I aim for high wellbeing of <b>all</b> the children.			
f. I appreciate and stimulate the use of children's home language.			
g. I react on any communication attempt of children. The children may express themselves in any way (E.g. <i>gestures, drawing, pointing, home language, facial expression, ...</i> ) if they are not yet confident in Vietnamese.			
h. I give children enough space and time to speak:			
- After I have asked a (preferably 'open') question, I give the child enough time to understand, think and answer or contribute.			
- After the child has said something, I remain silent a bit longer so the child can continue if it would want to.			
- I reduce my instruction and teaching time and interact more with children.			
- I show the child via my facial expression, via keeping eye contact (interaction at the same eye-level) and gestures that I are interested in what the child contributes, says and does, even when it is difficult for me to understand the child's utterances.			
- I try to understand what the child is trying to say and I express this in correct language.			
i. I welcome the input of the children, also if it is non-verbal (E.g. <i>The child points at the ball. I say: "Do you want to play with the ball?"</i> )			
j. I do not "punish" children for language mistakes. I repeat what the child says in correct language. I model. (E.g. <i>Child: "dog eating." I say: "indeed, the dog eats."</i> )			
k. I give positive feedback and compliments to children. (E.g. <i>"Well done. You made a nice tower with the boxes"</i> )			
l. I have a positive attitude towards the home language and the identity of the children.			

As a teacher...	I do this		
	always	sometimes	never
m. I explore diversity in my class. I get to know differences in language, culture, food, music, ... and use them as a resource (activities and materials) in my classroom.			
n. The children may take initiative: they can initiate activities or suggest materials or topics. They can make choices. I welcome their ideas and suggestions.			
o. I allow children to try out things for themselves. I only support children when they are stuck in their learning.			
p. I look for topics and themes that interest children (child-centred approach) and link to the existing knowledge of the child (context, world, words, concepts).			
q. I work with children in small groups (e.g. <a href="#">storytelling</a> , <a href="#">reading a book</a> , <a href="#">play along with the children in a corner</a> , ...) or even interact individually with children. They will feel safer.			

## 4.2.Meaningful, real life tasks

### 1. Description

To support children’s involvement, activities and materials need to be linked to the interests, daily routines and living environment of the children. Children learn language by experiencing. Language is a means to reach a motivating, functional and relevant purpose or goal. Make sure children have such purpose or goal



*An example:*  
Hanh speaks Bahnar at home. She learns Vietnamese in school. She can already say a few words in Vietnamese. Today Hanh is playing in the market corner. The teacher goes to the stall and asks: “Good day, Ms Hanh, what are you selling today?” Hanh answers: “mangoes”. The teacher says: “How much for one kilogram of mangoes?”



## 2. How to create meaningful, real life tasks?

In the table below you will find some points for attention and tips and tricks. You can also use this table as a check list.

As a teacher...	I do this		
	always	sometimes	never
a. I often chose activities based on the interests of the children, even if this is not my first choice.			
b. I link to the child's context and world (starting from concrete to abstract)			
c. I offer activities which increase the involvement of all children. The children are actively engaged and enthusiast.			
d. My activities trigger children to take the lead, to experiment and to explore			
e. I am teaching less and facilitating more. I stimulate the learning process by playing along, sit at their table, ...			
f. I offer new language and words which is naturally linked to the activity. I do not focus too much on offering new vocabulary by naming many objects. (E.g. The child is playing in the shop corner. I do not name all items in the shop, but ask "What are you selling, Ms. Ha?" "Can I buy rice? Are the mangoes ripe?" or even more open "What should I cook with the rice tonight?")			
g. My activities are functional, challenging, motivating and interactive.			
h. I identify relevant and exciting learning goals.			
i. I challenge children so they must bridge a gap between what they can already do and what I trigger them to do (zone of proximal development).			
j. I challenge children in a differentiated way. I take differences among children into account by creating different pathways and different support.			
k. I design open tasks. This means that there are many answers or products possible. (E.g. drawing a flower, not all flowers should look the same. Maybe a child decides to cut a flower from a magazine and colour it.)			
l. I stimulate learning by enriching the activity. (E.g. Two children are playing with blocks in the construction corner. I ask "Who can make the highest tower with these five blocks?" When one child has made the highest tower, I ask a follow-up open question: "Why is your tower higher than this one?" "How many blocks do you need to make your tower as high as the highest tower?")			

As a teacher...	I do this		
	always	sometimes	never
m. I use daily routine moments to offer language. (E.g. toilet visit: “Let’s wash our hands. Why do we need to wash our hands after a toilet visit?” E.g. Lunch: “What is your favourite food?” “What did you eat this morning/last night?” “Yen, what did you bring for lunch today?”)			
n. I use active and activating activities, working with rhymes, music and movement, to enrich language.			

### 4.3.Focused language support through interaction

#### 1. Description

The language support and scaffolding needs to be specific and focused. The support happens via interaction. Interaction with the teacher (and other children) helps the child to learn language and to overcome the language challenges. Good interactions have an immediate positive effect on children’s involvement levels.



An example:

Hanh speaks Bahnar at home. She learns Vietnamese in school. She can already say a few words in Vietnamese. Today Hanh is playing in the market corner. The teacher goes to the stall and asks: “Good day, Ms Hanh, what are you selling today?” Hanh answers: “**Mangoes**” (not well pronounced). The teacher says: “Aha, you are selling mangoes. My children would like some **mangoes**. How much for one kilogram of mangoes?” (The teacher makes sure she pronounces mangoes clearly). “What else should I buy for dinner?”.



2. How to provide focused language support through interaction?

In the table below you will find some points for attention and tips and tricks. You can also use this table as a check list

As a teacher...	I do this		
	always	sometimes	never
a. I pay attention to what children do, say or try to say. I react on this with my language input. (E.g. I join the children in their play, start by copying what they're doing, let them lead the activity. I describe what they are doing in language. I start a conversation.)			
b. I adjust my own language:			
- I offer clear language, but no baby language (E.g. use the word car, not brrr).			
- I speak at a normal but not too quick pace.			
- I use short, grammatically correct sentences, but no telegram style! (E.g. I say "I don't like sugar", I don't say "don't like".)			
- I stress important words in my message (content words) (e.g. "Do you want milk or water?").			
- I use visual support (gestures, pictures, objects, facial expression..)			
- I describe in language what children are doing. (E.g. "Phuc is really making a high tower. He is wondering, will he add another block? Oh, Phuc, be careful. No shaking.")			
- I describe in language what I am doing. (E.g. "I am taking the scissors. Here are the scissors. I cut the apple from this paper.")			
- I give one instruction at the time, not a series of instructions. When children have a better language understanding, I can give more complicated instructions.			
- I try to reformulate what I say, using synonyms. I repeat a lot as this helps to move new words from the short-term memory to the long-term memory.			
- I can use words from the child's home language. Ask help from parents. If I speak the language, I repeat in the home language.			
- I deliberately bring in new words, including more abstract words.			
c. I show children via my facial expression, keeping eye contact and gestures that I am interested in what they contribute, say and do, even when it is difficult for me to understand the child's utterances. The child will feel more motivated to communicate and try again.			



As a teacher...	I do this		
	always	sometimes	never
d. My feedback focuses mostly on the content of what children say, not on how they say it (mistakes).			
f. I pay attention to any reactions of the child.			
g. I assess whether I have understood children's utterances correctly.			
h. I link the "new language" to previous experiences of the children or already known language. I try to activate these experiences and language verbally or visually.			
i. I ask open ended questions and questions that stimulate thinking. Sometimes, I answer questions by asking new questions.			
j. I help children to express themselves, their thoughts and what they are doing in words.			
k. I stimulate interaction between children, non-verbally. I organise groupwork to enhance meaningful interaction. (E.g. 4 children build a house together. The house must have a door and 2 windows.)			
l. I interact with children individually or in small groups where possible.			
m. I pay attention to interactions between children, stimulate and react on it. (E.g. I see two children in the shop corner. One child (Phuc) takes some tomatoes from the box and shows them to the child (Yen) who is the shop owner. I say: "Phuc wants to buy tomatoes. How much must he pay, Ms Yen?")			
n. I challenge children to react by making mistakes, (e.g. I take a basket for the shopping. I put it on my head and say: "What a nice hat! I like this hat. Do I look pretty with this hat?") or by using opposites (E.g. We are discussing the weather. It is a very hot day. I take my winter coat and say: "Oh, it is so cold today. I am so cold. Let me put my jacket on. And my scarf. And my hat.")			
o. I play and work with the children. I participate in their activities and use this as an opportunity to offer relevant language at the right moment.			
p. I correct the language output of the children indirectly via my reactions on what they say.			
q. I express what the child does not say. (E.g. I see Phuc selecting tomatoes in the shop corner. I say: "Phuc, do you want to buy tomatoes?" or "Phuc, how many tomatoes do you want to buy?")			
r. I repeat what the child says in correct language. I model. (E.g. Child: "dog eating." I say: "indeed, the dog eats.")			

As a teacher...	I do this		
	always	sometimes	never
s. I repeat what the child says and expand. This means I widen the sentence and make it more complex. (E.g. Child: "dog eating." I say: "Indeed, the dog eats bones" (widen) or "The dog eats because it is hungry." (more complex).)			
t. I observe children and interact with them to get a better idea of their language progress (continuous informal assessment).			
u. I make language materials, such as books and posters, choice boards, calendars,... available in my class.			
v. I stimulate analysing and reasoning (comparing, predicting, problem solving, reflecting) (E.g. "I wonder which tower is the highest. How will we know?" or "What do you think is going to happen if we add that big block on top of the tower?" or "Why was that such a difficult exercise?")			



**Task**

A language rich environment in my classroom

- 1. Use section 4.1-4.3 as a checklist
- 2. Which items are you already doing?
- 3. Which are you not yet doing/applying?
- 4. Which one will you try to apply during the following week?

#### 4.4. Applying a language rich environment

In this part we will work with some concrete situations and activities to apply our knowledge and understanding on language development and how we can create language rich environments.



##### Task

Language skills of children

The children say:

Ly: Teacher, scissors?

Duy: Teacher, want cut paper. I...? (Duy makes a gesture for cutting with his hands)

Questions:

1. Which child is furthest in its language development? Duy or Ly?
2. Why?
3. How can you react as a teacher?



##### Task

Language support to children (circle 3)

##### Case 1:

*Chau: "I drawing car"*

*Teacher: "Wow, you drew such a beautiful car"*

##### Case 2:

*Chau: "I drawing car"*

*Teacher: "No, you drew a car."*

##### Case 3:

*Chau: "I drawing car"*

*Teacher: "Wow, you drew such a beautiful car."*

*Whose car is this?"*

##### Case 4:

*Chau: "I drawing car"*

*Teacher: "Yes, you drew a car."*

Questions:

1. Which language support in interaction do you like most?
2. Why?





### Task

A meaningful opportunity for language acquisition

#### Situation 1:

*The teacher brings a box full of tools to the class to use in her music lesson. She takes a tool from the box, says how it is called, and shows the children how they can make music with this tool. Then all children play each tool to make music.*

#### Situation 2:

*During breakfast, snack or lunch time, children are allowed to talk. They can discuss any topic. The teacher also eats her lunch with the children and joins them at the table.*

#### Situation 3:

*The children are drawing. The teacher asks them what they are drawing. She offers to write "the story" on the drawing.*



Questions:

1. Which situation creates best opportunities for language acquisition?
2. Why?
3. How could you enrich or change the situations to turn them into great opportunities?



### Task

Words for language acquisition

Child – go – bag – shoes – cut – name –  
such as – sit – play dough – table –  
biggest – coke – eat.

Questions:

1. Which of the words in the list above will a child who speaks another language at home learn first at school?
2. Why?





## Answer:

1. Language skills children: Duy has the best language skills. He understands what scissors are. He does not know the label/word. But he can describe the meaning (cut, gesture, paper). Ly possibly has the concept, but we do not know for sure.
2. Language support to children: the best support is in case 3, then case 1, then case 4. In case 2 the teacher corrects the child and creates an environment that is **not safe**.
- Case 3: implicit correcting; expanding by adding the word "beautiful", there is an open question; triggering reaction from the child and offering more language interaction opportunities. (Implicit correcting means that the teacher gives a good model of the correct phrase as part of a normal reaction in the conversation. The teacher doesn't say "this is wrong, that is correct".)
- Case 1: The implicit correction and expanding
- Case 4: Implicit correction
- Case 2: Correction only > not safe
- (This example is worked out in more detail below.)
3. A meaningful learning opportunity: situation 2
- Situation 2: the topic is free and open; follow interests and initiative children; natural meaningful environment. Joining them in eating creates connection and a safe feeling. Teacher can trigger language or expand language started by children and give impulses. Children are learning without knowing it.
- Situation 3: children are triggered by the teacher's question to talk. This helps the teacher to understand the drawing (not always easy). Children speak from their experience. They express themselves without the feeling that this is a language lesson. When the teacher writes what they said (in correct language) they feel appreciated and valued. It makes them feel important.
- Situation 1: the teacher directs everything; children cannot experiment. Suggested change: let children take items out of the box, ask questions, teacher can then offer correct words.
4. Words for language acquisition: first words: child, shoes, cut, play dough, eat. Why? The children hear these words most: "take off our shoes", "all children can go and eat", "we play with play dough", "scissors", ... (note: answer can be adjusted based on the situation at the school. Children learn those words quickest that are used most often.

When applying language rich environments it is important to keep in mind:

- 1. Language is more than knowing words. It is about being able to explain and describe, to express oneself. Teachers need to focus on the content of the message children try to share, not on the way how they say so.
- 2. Children learn language best in interaction and in meaningful situations. The more natural the situation (e.g. eating time) the more language the child will learn. Children will pick up words and concepts quicker when they are more often repeated (e.g. words around daily class routines).
- 3. Every phrase, answer or communication attempt of a child creates a new opportunity for the teacher to support the language development.



An example:  
The child says: “I drawing car.”  
The teacher can:

Response	What does the teacher do?	Why is it useful?
“You drew a car”	<b>repeat</b> or <b>rephrase</b> what the child tried to say	By doing this the teacher gives a correct model (this is what we call “implicit correcting”) and checks whether she understood the child correctly.
“You drew a beautiful car”	Same as above And <b>expand</b> what the child said	By doing this the teacher exposes the child to new words or phrases.
“You drew a beautiful car. Whose car is this?”	Same as above and add a <b>question</b>	By doing this the teacher triggers a reaction from the child and creates a new opportunity for interaction.

## Chapter 5: Advancing our skills to create language rich interactions



### This chapter aims to:

- Introduce you to advanced skills to create language rich interactions
- Give concrete handles on how to create playful and language rich interactions by introducing you:
  - + To techniques that can be applied in corner play
  - + To different ways of asking questions and
  - + To a method of using story books
- Help you to try out and reflect in your classroom
- Provide concrete situations in which you can apply the language rich environment

In this section we will look at concrete ways of creating a language rich environment in our classroom.

### 5.1.Introduction: the role of the teacher

In a quality learning environment, the teacher has four key roles to play: the teacher as planner, as observer, as facilitator and as documenter of children's learning. In each roles there are opportunities for supporting language learning.

The teacher plays different roles in the classroom:

1. The teacher as planner:

The teacher **plans** and **prepares** lessons. In doing so, the teacher combines multiple goals and applies action points. *The teacher actively looks for language learning opportunities and prepares key words, phrases and questions that are relevant and meaningful.*

2. The teacher as observer.

The teacher **observes** the children's wellbeing and involvement. The teacher identifies the child's interests and needs and responds to the child's learning with meaningful impulses. *The child will learn more language in those areas that are triggering its interest, that are more relevant and meaningful.*

3. The teacher as facilitator.

The teacher **facilitates** learning. She creates a safe environment, supports child initiative, and creates speaking and interaction opportunities. Via interaction, children learn language. *The teacher responds to what the child says and does and, via interaction gives language support and stimulates further interaction.*

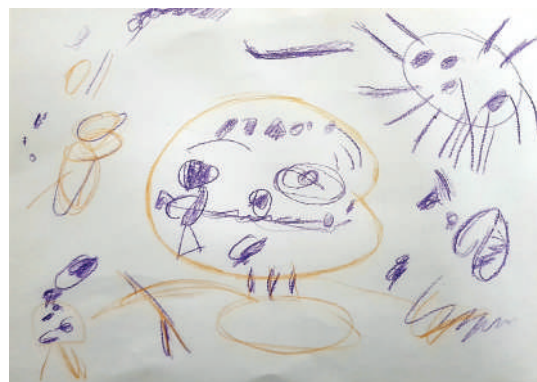
4. The teacher as documenter

The teacher **documents** the learning of the child. *Not only as a way of child assessment, but also to discuss and evaluate learning with the children after or even during an activity.* These records of learning activities can be shared and discussed with teachers for reflective learning.








An example:  
 Minh says: "Go market. Hot."  
 Teacher writes: "We went to the market today. It was so hot."





















An example:  
 How did the task go? Every child assesses how their work went that day.

	I did my best work! i did not need any help.
	I need some help today
	I needed a lot of help but i will try again!



An example:  
 After doing an experiment on floating/-sinking objects, teachers and children work together to reflect on the results of the experiment.

Sink or Float		
Name of object	Float	sink
coin 		
Pencil 		
beach ball 		
wooden stick 		
crayon 		
rubber band 		



*An example:*

After a trip to a farm, teacher and children retell the day and the teacher uses cell phone pictures or makes drawings of each step: walking to the farm, seeing the animals, feeding the pigs, cutting the grass, ...

## 5.2.Nine techniques for enriching corner play

When children are playing in the corners, many teachers prioritize their time to classroom management, by making sure that children find their ways to the corners and understand the instructions. While this is part of a teacher's role, such focus does not add a lot of playful learning opportunities. When teachers spend **more time** in one corner, they can interact more with the children and add more learning stimuli.

There are several hands-on facilitation techniques that can be applied by the teacher. Each of these techniques offer different opportunities to stimulate language and interaction. Some are more teacher-guided and others more child-led. Sometimes teachers combine different techniques at the same time, but it is worth trying to focus on one technique at the time. Important is to take time and spend enough time in the corner.

### Observe and help build the play

Via a little conversation with the children at the start, you help divide the roles in the play and what the role entails, what materials are needed and what could happen.

You then take a step away from the play and observe. You do not engage in play, but you are observing what is happening. You can describe in language what you see happening. Through observation, you can collect information to use later (e.g. interests of the children, preferred materials, level and content of the play, ...)



*An example:*

You ask in the market corner: "Who will be the seller of fruits? Who will sell fish?" or "Who will come and buy at the market?" or "What will you do? What do you need? What could happen?" Then you let children play and observe how they engage, you describe what you see "Aha, mommy is buying tomatoes and beans in the market".

### Give input via a book that was read

Create a corner where children can play out elements of the story of book that was read before. They can play this in the construction corner, the home corner, ...depending on the content of the story. You can choose to use elements of the book in different corners. Provide the key materials or let children collect and make the key materials for the story.



*An example:*

You provide the children with the book of The duck of Jules, with some small ducks, with a T-shirt with a duck painted on the back.

### Give input via playing a role

You take up a role and play the role, using supporting materials. By doing so you can show the children how this works in real life.

Example...



*An example:*

You act as a customer to the market: "I am daddy. Today I want to cook the favourite dish of my two children." Ask the children what their favourite food is. Come to a decision to what you will cook. Go with the children to the market corner and play the role of the customer. "Good day, madam. Today I want to cook this dish for my children. What do I need? What are the ingredients? How much will that cost?" (these are a few of possible questions you can discuss with the children (both those taking the role of your children and those being the sellers at the market.)

Example...



*An example:*

You act as the mother of a teddy bear that got hurt. "Doctor, can you help me? My little daughter is feeling sick. She is coughing and I think she has a fever."

### Give input by posing a problem

You take up a role in the play and bring up a problem. This enriches the play with an additional idea and opportunities for children to talk.

Example...



*An example:*

In the market corner. You go to the seller who sells shoes. "I would like to buy these shoes for my son, but what must I do if they do not fit?"

Example...



*An example:*

In the market corner. You go to the seller who sells shoes. "Oh dear, this pair only has two right shoes/ I cannot buy that. What should we do?"

### Play along with the children

You play along with the children. They are in the lead. They decide what they do. You just support and help them to interact, with you and with each other.

Example...



*An example:*

You join the building activity in the construction corner. You say: "Look what Ly is doing. That looks like a good idea to make a bigger tower, what do you think?"

### Whispering some *ideas* for action

You play along with the children. They are in the lead. They decide what they do. You whisper sometimes in the ear of one of the children what they could do or say.



*An example:*

You play along in the market corner. You whisper in the ear of the seller of fruit: "You can now say: 'Good day madam, how can I help you?'"



*An example:*

You play in the doctor's corner. You whisper in the ear of the doctor: "You could ask: 'where does it hurt? Are you nauseous?'"

### Director

You do not play along but you follow what is happening in the corner. You give advice, suggestions or directions.



*An example:*

"The blocks for building the tower are in that box".

### Evaluating and reflecting together

You discuss with some children or the whole class how the play went. You trigger them to describe what they did, you add to their phrases. This will inspire other children for the next time.



*An example:*

"Do you remember what the seller of shoes said when you asked what to do when the shoes were not the right size?"

### Jointly documenting

After playing you sit with some children to "record" some of their experiences, discoveries, conclusions, or agreements.



*An example:*

"You were checking which things can float and which things sink. Let's make a drawing of all things that float on this sheet and of things that sink on that sheet."



An example:

"What objects have we not yet checked? Let's write down what we would like to check next time".

(Source: Based on: 'De Activiteit', Landelijk centrum voor ontwikkelingsgericht onderwijs, Nederland)



**Task**

Can you find more examples for each technique? Describe the situation and explain why this is an example of the selected technique.



**Task**

Make a copy of the 9 techniques in Annexure 2. Cut each technique (keeping the title or name of the technique and the description together) and all examples into separate cards. Ask a colleague to match the techniques with the right example(s).



**Task**

Time to practice.

In the coming week, try to apply a different technique every time it is corner play time. Remember to first be the Director: make sure all children are clear and engaged. Then select one corner and spend time there applying a specific technique.

1. Which technique did you select? Why?
2. Which corner did you select? Why?
3. What did you observe (in terms of wellbeing and involvement)?
4. What did you learn?
5. What will you do differently next time?

### 5.3. Asking questions



#### Task

Make a list of 5 questions you have asked the children in your class today or the past days.

#### 1. Introduction

There are many different ways of asking questions.

**Questions** can be divided in:

1. Closed-ended questions are those questions which can be answered by a simple "yes" or "no," or with a simple one-word answer.  
E.g. Are you hungry? What colour is this?

Closed ended questions don't trigger thinking and interaction. The thinking, communication and language stops after the answer is given.

But closed ended questions can be very useful to check what a child is trying to say, e.g. Lan says "hungry" (not well pronounced). You don't understand. It is almost lunch time and the child is tapping its tummy while saying "hungry" again. You think that the child says that it is hungry. You say to the child: "Lan, are you hungry?". By using this yes/no question, you are checking whether you have understood the child correctly and you are giving a correct model of the correct pronunciation.

Closed ended questions can be a good entry point to generate a more open interaction or discussion. Some children will say yes and others no, and you can build up from there.

2. Open-ended questions are those which require more thought and more than a simple one-word answer.  
E.g. What do you think about the new playground? Why are you so sad?

Open ended questions trigger thinking, communication and interaction. It creates an opportunity for language development and quality interactions.

When we **analyse** the questions asked in our classes, too often we see that:

- We ask many closed ended questions (e.g. Are you tired?) and only few open questions.
- We focus on factual information or knowledge (e.g. what is this? What colour is this?) rather than children's ideas, opinions and reasoning.
- We provide too little time after asking the question. The children don't get a lot of time to think and formulate an answer.

Some questions trigger more interaction than other questions. But all questions have their purpose and advantages in a certain circumstances. A teacher needs to know **why** certain questions are selected. It is good to use a wide **variety** of questions.

For language development, it is important that:

- We ask a wide variety of questions, including open ended questions.
- We ask questions that stimulate thinking, reasoning and problem solving.
- We ask questions that trigger interaction.
- We provide enough answering time
- We trigger situations where children can ask questions and have time to respond to each other.

Since asking the best questions is not easy, it is important to **prepare** questions in advance and then add emerging questions based on the context.

Below we list 5 different types of questions. They are organized according to their interaction potential: the first types can lead to more language interaction than the last types.

**2. Question about experiences and imagination of children**

These are completely open-ended questions. They don't have a fixed answer. The answer is never wrong. The teacher is open to any answer the child gives. The questions triggers children's thinking, starting from their experiences, and imagination. This kind of question leads to interaction and dialogue, between teacher and child, but also between children as they might come up with completely different answers.



An example:  
If there is a snake in your room, what do you do?



An example:  
What would a great day look like? What are you doing that makes it special?



An example:  
If you could grow anything in the yard, what would it be?



An example:  
What do you think about the new playground?



### 3. Questions about the opposite

Here the speaker (the teacher) says the opposite of what is the reality or does something that is deliberately wrong.



*An example:*

In the construction corner. Children have built a very high tower. You indicate you will put a very heavy big box on top.



*An example:*

A snake in your bedroom is not scary, right?

This triggers immediate reaction with children, even the shy children or those who have not yet a lot of words to express themselves. The children react spontaneously, with words or in a non-verbal way. The teacher can read the non-verbal expression of the children and express it in words.



*An example:*

On a hot day, teachers says: "Aaaah, it is so cold today."

Minh shouts: "hot!"

Teacher: "Are you sure it is hot today?"

Minh nods.

Teacher: "Minh says it is hot today. What do the other children think? How do you know?"

.....



*An example:*

In the construction corner. Children have built a very high tower. You indicate you will put a very heavy big box on top.

Tu and Ly: (screaming) "no, teacher!"

Teacher: "Should I not put this big box on top?"

Tu and Ly: "no" (while shaking their heads)

Teacher: "Oh, you don't want me to put the box on top. Why not?"

Tu: "fall"

Ly: (indicates the tower will fall)

Teacher: "You are such good engineers. If we put this big box on top, the tower will fall".

This example shows that children with limited levels of expressive Vietnamese can still engage in a meaningful dialogue that challenges their thinking skills.

#### 4. Why and How

Questions Why and How trigger longer answers and sentences. Even if a child can only answer in 1 word, the teacher can elaborate the answer, turn it into a sentence.



*An example:*

How does a snake kill its prey?

Teacher: "How does a snake kills its prey?"

Ly: "poison"

Teacher: "Yes, some snakes use poison to kill mice and rat." "How does the poison get in the rat? Does the snake give the rat an injection?"

Ly: (gestures a biting movement)

Teachers: "Indeed, the snake needs to bite the animal to get the poison in the animal." "Not all snakes use poison, but we must be very careful when we see snakes!"



*An example:*

Teacher: "How do you help your parents to feed the chicken at home?"

Hanh: "In the afternoon, I take some corn seeds and then leave in a corner of the garden. The chicken will come and eat..."

Teacher: "So you put the corn seeds in the corner of the garden? Would that always be the same corner?"

Hanh: "yes, always"

Teachers: "Why do you put the seeds in the same place?"

#### 5. Closed questions

- Yes/no questions
- Who / What / Where
- Either / or



*An example:*

- Can a snake fly?
- Where do snakes live?
- What does a snake eat?
- What is this?

The answers to these questions are often knowledge driven. They have limited answer options and the answer itself is often only a single word sentence.

However, closed ended questions can be useful as language support in cases where a child is not yet fully confident in the new school language.



An example:

Child: Hungry (not well pronounced) (The child is tapping its tummy)

Teacher: Lan, are you hungry?\*

Child: yes

Teacher: Who else is hungry? Maybe it is time for lunch!

\*The teacher repeats what the child says, in correct language/pronunciation and at the same time checks whether she understands the child well. The child feels acknowledged and receives a good model of the correct word.

Closed ended questions can be a good entry point to generate a more open interaction or discussion. Some children will say yes and others no, and you can build up from there.

## 6. Questions to point at something



An example:

Where is the snake in this picture?

This question triggers no verbal interaction. Children can simply point. Teachers sometimes use this technique to find out whether children understand certain words (passive or receptive language). However, by integrating the same word in more triggering questions, teachers can still get a good idea of children's understanding



### Task

Can you find more examples for each type of questions? What is the interaction level of your example questions?



### Task

Look back at the list of 5 questions you made before (questions you have asked the children in your class today or the past days).

1. What kind of questions did you ask?
2. How could you ask questions with more interaction potential?



#### Task

1. Chose the theme of this month/week.
2. Chose a lesson or corner activity.
3. Work out examples of good questions

### 5.4.Using books and stories in a multi-lingual context

Stories are rather abstract. The child explores a (fictive) world which not always reflects the child's own world. So, we need to introduce the child to this world in different ways, e.g. by making use of introductions (before the actual story telling), by telling and retelling the story, by using expanding activities.

The goal of using books is to expand the child's world and to expose the child to rich language. Children will be exposed to new vocabulary (sometimes they know these already in their home language, but not in Vietnamese), and develop cognitive and communication skills.

Telling stories and using books is an excellent way of creating opportunities for interaction. A book is a great start for a thematic focus. You could work with the topic of the book for a week or two. This means that your activities, also in the corners, and materials are all linked to the book you are working with.

Below you can see how we can use books to develop children's language and create language rich interactions. Each step is illustrated by an example. Not all steps and activities are done in one day. In Annexure 1 you will find an additional example.

#### 1. Select a picture story book

Try to find a nice, funny, exciting picture book, adjusted to the development level of the children.

- Maybe the story is related to a theme in your class?
- Maybe the story is related to the child's interest and experiences? If you see different interests, you may let the children select between a few stories, and use the other as 'choice' for a next activity.
- Maybe the story is related to the child's daily world?
- Maybe a child brought a book to school?
- Maybe the book appeals to children's sense of humour or imagination?
- Maybe it is a story book? But it could also be a factual book? In this section we will focus on story books.
- Make sure you like the book yourself.

Once you have selected the book, you need to read it carefully again and identify what the story is really about. What is the **essence** of the book? What is the **main idea**? This is not always obvious. Often these main ideas are a bit abstract and new for children.



An example:

<b>Bilingual</b>	Berebrouckx, A. (1998). De eend van Jules. Antwerpen: Uitgeverij Zwijsen België Nv.
<b>Title</b>	The duck of Jules
<b>Content</b>	Jules is a young boy who is very lucky because he has a new T-shirt. The shirt has a duck on it. Jules is proud. Today he will wear his shirt to go to school. He pulls on the shirt, but he cannot find the duck anymore. He goes searching everywhere, but cannot find the duck. Eventually, he walks to school, very sad. We can see that the duck is on his back, but Jules doesn't know.
<b>Essence</b>	This book is not about ducks! It is about something that is gone/lost. It is about searching and being sad because you have lost something.
<b>Form</b>	Pictures and text
<b>Level</b>	3– 5 year old (but preferably younger children)



(Source: Berebrouckx, A. (1998). De eend van Jules. Antwerpen: Uitgeverij Zwijsen België Nv.)

2. Introduction activity

You do this activity **before** reading the book.

With an introduction activity you expose the children to the main idea of the book. You ask varied **questions** and naturally introduce and repeat specific **words**.



An example:

Type of activity	One child has disappeared under a scarf
Grouping	5-6 children
Material	scarf
Process	Use a scarf or piece of material and cover one of the children with it. Ask the other children where their friend has disappeared.
Vocabulary	Vocabulary that can be introduced in a natural way: Hide – disappear – guess – go – search – finding back - under
Possible questions	Possible questions the teacher asks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Where is Ly? What would have happened to her?</li><li>- Where could we search in class?</li><li>- How is it possible that we do not see Ly anymore?</li><li>- Did we loose Ly now?</li><li>- Who has ever lost anything? What did you lose? How did you feel then?</li><li>- How can you find someone back?</li><li>- .</li></ul>

3. Telling the story

Just read the story as it is written in the book. Show the pictures. Do not stop or ask questions. If necessary, you could make the language of the book a bit easier or reduce the text. But this will not be necessary when you take an age appropriate book. You could first tell the story to children with weaker language skills (1); do the retelling also with them (2) and then tell the story again with a mixed group (3) (stronger and weaker language skills). This will make the children with weaker language skills more confident to participate.



An example:

Type of activity	The teacher tells the story
Grouping	Whole group or small groups of 5-6 children*. Other children can then be engaged in free play or another corner activity which they can do independently.
Material	The book
Process	Just read the story as it is written in the book. Show the pictures. Do not stop or ask questions. If necessary, you could make the language of the book a bit easier or reduce the text. But this will not be necessary when you take an age appropriate book.



4. Retelling the story

Retell the story to a small group of children (5-6). Other children can then be engaged in free play or another corner activity which they can do independently.

Use the picture book or selected pictures from the book.

You can use your own words and adjust the language to the child’s level. Ask questions and interact with children. This is the time for interaction! Repeat key words in a natural context.

When you retell the story, children become more confident with the story. Repeating even more than 2 times is good. Children will be able to start telling the story for themselves, to each other, they will be able to draw the story or role play it.



An example:

Type of activity	The teacher retells the story
Grouping	5-6 children*. Other children can then be engaged in free play or another corner activity which they can do independently.
Material	The book or selected pictures from the book
Process	<p>You can use your own words and adjust the language to the child’s level. Ask questions and interact with children. This is the time for interaction! Repeat key words in a natural context.</p> <p>When you retell the story, children become more confident with the story. Repeating even more than 2 times is good. Children will be able to start telling the story for themselves, to each other, they will be able to draw the story or role play it.</p>
An example	<p>(this will be different based on the interaction and participation of the children)</p> <p>Teacher: “Let’s read this book together. Do you remember what happened?”</p> <p>Ly: “Jules duck. Gone”</p> <p>Teacher: “yes, This boy Jules lost his duck, the duck on his shirt. Let’s have a look.”</p> <p>Minh: “Jules has a new shirt.” “With a duck”.</p> <p>Teacher: “Yes, and today he will wear it for the first time.”</p>

5. Expanding activities

With expanding activities you can further enrich the child’s understanding on certain topics in the book. You could also introduce the child to more vocabulary. Prepare what you will do, but also which **questions** you will ask and what are target new **words**.

Do expanding activities in a small group of children (5-6). Other children can then be engaged in free play or another corner activity which they can do independently.



Example 1:

Type of activity	Teacher and children discuss ducks.
Grouping	5-6 children
Material	Ducks, scarf
Process	There are several ducks on the table. Together with the children, the teacher discusses similarities and differences between the ducks. The colors are discussed. The teacher has a piece of fabric with her. The children are asked to close their eyes. Then, the teacher puts the piece of fabric over the ducks. They discuss what might happened and where the ducks could be located. Then, each child (in turn) is requested to close his/her eyes and guess which duck has disappeared under the piece of fabric.
Vocabulary	Vocabulary that can be introduced in a natural way: <i>colours, size, big, small, smaller, hidden, gone, search, ...</i>
Possible questions	Possible comments and questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Do you know where ducks live?</li><li>- Can ducks swim well?</li><li>- Where would the little yellow duck go?</li><li>- If you hide something, have you lost it? Who did already lost something?</li><li>- Do you dare to put your hand underneath the piece of fabric?</li><li>- Do you think the big orange duck can still come back?</li></ul>



Example 2:

<b>Type of activity</b>	Drawing and painting.
<b>Grouping</b>	5-6 children
<b>Material</b>	T-shirts (or pictures of T-shirts), duck drawing, paint
<b>Process</b>	The teacher draws a duck (using a print template) on the T-shirt of every child. While doing, it is discussed how the duck can look and where it will be on the T-shirt (on the back). The children may then choose to paint the duck in yellow or orange. This can also be done with a drawing of a T-shirt.
<b>Vocabulary</b>	Vocabulary that can be introduced in a natural way: <i>belly, back, front, top, bottom, paint, cut, shirt, favorite</i>
<b>Possible questions</b>	<p>Possible comments and questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Have you ever painted on a piece of fabric?</li> <li>- Would your mum allow you to paint on your clothes?</li> <li>- Do you prefer to see a figure on your belly or on your back? Why</li> <li>- do you like that more?</li> </ul> <p>Do you have a favourite animal? Would you like to have that also</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- on your T-shirt?</li> <li>- Do you like a yellow duck or do you prefer an orange duck?</li> </ul>

Not all these activities need to be done in one day. It is even better if each activity gets enough time for children to explore, interact and learn. Example: One can have introduction activities on Monday, tell the story for the first time on Tuesday, do expanding activities on Wednesday and Thursday and retell the story on Friday. Alternatively, some activities can happen parallel to each other (at the same time) during corner play. Consider adjusting all your activities and materials to the theme of the story you are working on.



#### Task

1. Choose a story book (1')
2. Read the story book (10')
3. Identify the essence/main idea of the book (10')
4. Create an introduction activity (20')
5. Create 2 expanding activities (20')

**Task**

1. Revisit the activities you designed in the task above.
2. See how you can enrich the activities; develop more expanding activities.
3. What questions can you ask in each activity? Prepare.
4. What will be the target words for each activity?
5. What techniques can you use? Identify what you will do in each corner.

**Task**

1. Choose a theme
2. Choose a book
3. Work out activities for all corners related to the theme and story
4. Prepare questions and techniques

**Task**

1. Apply the activities prepared in your class
2. How did it go?
3. How was the involvement and wellbeing of the children?
4. How was the interaction with the children? Who talked most?
5. Did you follow the initiative of children? How?
6. What would you want to change

(Note: The tasks above will be more valuable and richer if you do them with some peers.)

Annexure 1:

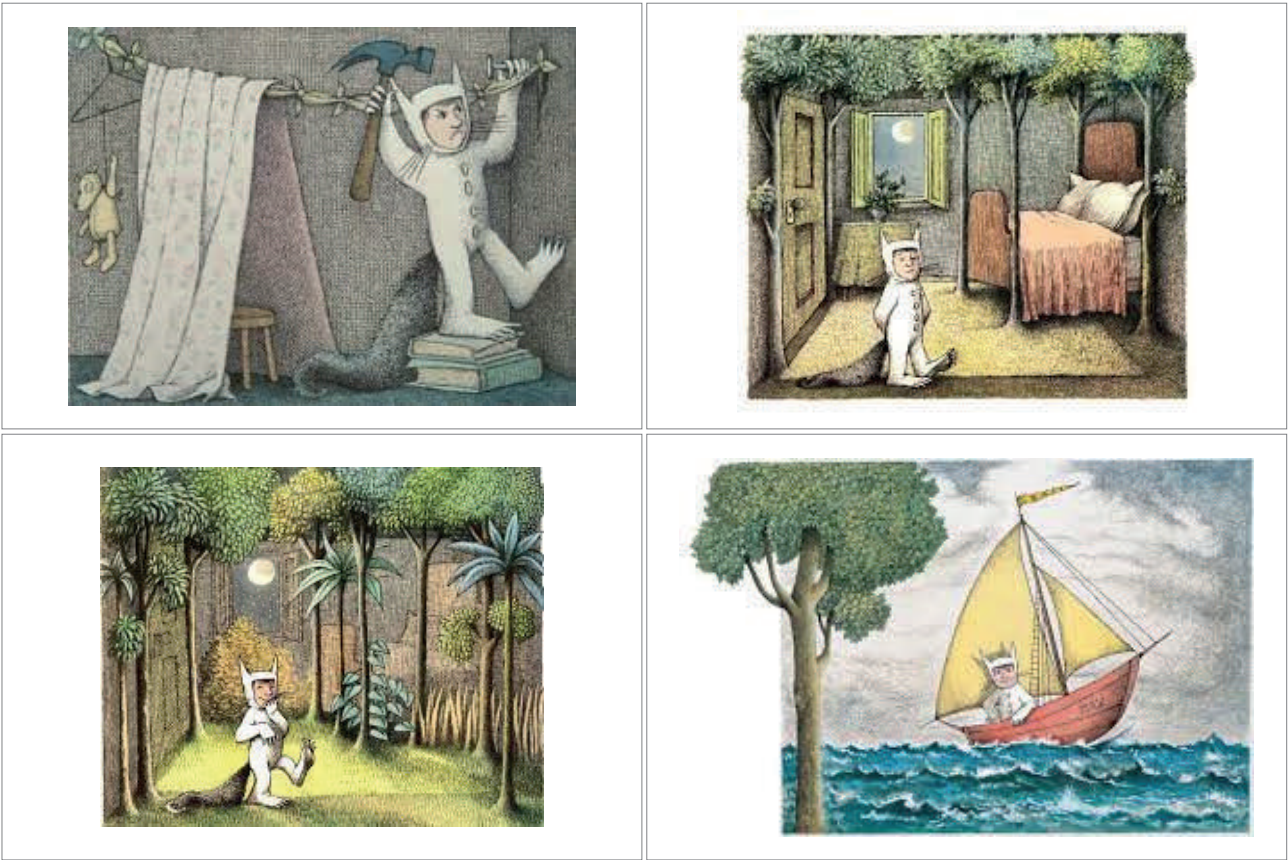
Where the wild things are, an example of how to work with picture books

Below you will find an example of how to work with picture books in the class and corners. The descriptions below integrate many approaches described above:

- Starting from the wellbeing and involvement of children and applying 8 action points to improve
- Creating a language rich environment by establishing (a) safety, (b) meaningful activities and interactions and (c) giving language support through interactions
- Applying different techniques in the corners which enhance interaction
- Asking varied questions

1. Book details

Reference	Sendak, M (1963). Where the wild things are. New York: Harper & Row
Content	Max, dressed in his wolf costume, is being naughty. He is sent to bed without dinner. But his room transforms in a different world. He sails to an island full of malicious monsters, called “wild things”. He becomes their king. There is a party. But Max feels lonely. He sails back.
Essence	A dream about monsters
Form	Pictures and text
Level	(4 – )5 year old, older preschool children







(Source: Sendak, M (1963). Where the wild things are. New York: Harper & Row.)

2. Introduction: monsters

Type of activity	The teacher shows a picture of a monster/or soft toy monsters. She talks with the children about monsters. She introduces the word ‘wild thing’ as used in the book (without referring to the book).
Grouping	5-6 children
Material	Monster doll or pictures of monsters.
Process	The teacher brings a monster doll or picture of monster. She introduces the topic of monsters. She asks the children about their experiences and emotions. All experiences are valuable. Not all monsters look the same. Explore how monsters behave, how they look. Also explore the emotions linked to monsters.
Vocabulary	Vocabulary that can be introduced in a natural way: monster, wild thing, scared, fear, cry, dream, nightmare, ...
Possible questions	Possible questions the teacher asks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Have you ever seen a monster? Where was that?</li><li>- How do monsters look like?</li><li>- Can you look like a monster?</li><li>- How do monsters behave?</li><li>- Are you scared of monsters?</li><li>- What do you do when you are scared?</li></ul>

3. Core: telling and retelling

1. Telling the story

Type of activity	The teacher tells the story
Grouping	5-6 children
Material	The book
Process	The teacher tells the story by reading the original text and points at the pictures she is talking about.

2. Retelling the story

Type of activity	The teacher and children jointly tell the story
Grouping	5-6 children
Material	The book
Process	Based on questions and remarks the teacher and children tell the story. The teacher pays attention to children’s experiences and emotions.



<p><b>Possible questions</b></p>	<p>In the section about Max being naughty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What is Max doing?</li> <li>- What do you think his parents think about this?</li> <li>- Why is he sent to bed without dinner?</li> <li>- How does he feel here?</li> <li>- ...</li> </ul> <p>In the section about max in the jungle and in the boat:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What is happening here? What happened to his room?</li> <li>- Would you like to be there?</li> <li>- What is going to happen now?</li> <li>- Where do you think is he going?</li> <li>- ...</li> </ul> <p>In the section about the Wild thing island:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Is max scared?</li> <li>- Would you be scared?</li> <li>- Which monster you find the scariest?</li> <li>- What is Max doing?</li> <li>- What would you do when this happened?</li> <li>- ...</li> </ul> <p>In the section about Max becoming a king:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Why does max become the king, the boss of the monsters?</li> <li>- What are they doing all night?</li> <li>- ....</li> </ul> <p>In the section about travelling back:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How do you thing Max is feeling here (picture in front of his tent)?</li> <li>- Why would he feel like that?</li> <li>- How would you feel?</li> <li>- Max is homesick. He misses his home. Have you been homesick?</li> <li>- What does max do?</li> <li>- Do the monsters agree?</li> <li>- What happens when he comes home?</li> <li>- Do you think this has really happened to Max?</li> </ul>
----------------------------------	---

#### 4. Expanding activities

##### 1. Four emotions

<p><b>Type of activity</b></p>	<p>4 basic emotions</p>
<p><b>Grouping</b></p>	<p>5-6 children</p>
<p><b>Material</b></p>	<p>Mirror, book</p>

<b>Process</b>	<p>The children look back to the monsters in the book. How do they look like? How do their nose, eyes and mouths look? What faces do they make? Children pretend they are monsters and pull monster faces in front of the mirror.</p> <p>The teacher then refers back to the emotions discussed in the book: fear, sadness, happiness, anger. Can they pull angry, scared, happy and sad faces in front of the mirror? Can they recognise each other's emotions?</p>
<b>Vocabulary</b>	Vocabulary that can be introduced in a natural way: face, nose, mouth, lips, teeth, scary, fear, sad, happy, ...
<b>Possible questions</b>	<p>Possible comments and questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How do the monsters look?</li> <li>- Can you make a scary monster face?</li> <li>- How would you feel when you see a monster? How would that look like?</li> <li>- Do you think monsters can be scared too? Why?</li> <li>- ....</li> </ul>

## 2. Monster masks or monster drawings

<b>Type of activity</b>	Making masks or drawings (or both)
<b>Grouping</b>	5-6 children
<b>Material</b>	Paint, crayons, cardboard, ribbons, scissors, staples, paper plates ...
<b>Process</b>	<p>The children close their eyes and imagine a monster (any monster). The teacher guides them to help their thinking ("Can you see it clearly? How does its face look like? What colour does it have? How does his skin feel?"). Children then draw their monster (each monster will look different, the teacher allows these differences). Based on the drawing they can then make a mask.</p> <p>Alternatively, they immediately make the mask.</p>
<b>Vocabulary</b>	Vocabulary that can be introduced in a natural way: imagination, mask, face, skin, rough, smooth, colours, fur, pointed and flat teeth, feathers, beak, nostrils, ....
<b>Possible questions</b>	<p>Possible comments and questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Can you see it clearly?</li> <li>- How does its face look like? What colour does it have? How does his skin feel?</li> <li>- How are you going to attach this to the ribbon?</li> <li>- ....</li> </ul>

## 3. Creating wild thing island

<b>Type of activity</b>	Children change the whole class or one corner into the monster world or wild thing island.
<b>Grouping</b>	<p>This can be a corner activity: 5-6 children</p> <p>This could also be a whole class activity</p>

<b>Material</b>	Class materials, drawings, cloth, lanterns, ...
<b>Process</b>	<p>The teacher suggests to create wild thing island. But how does the island look like? How does the world of monsters look like?</p> <p>The children brainstorm. The teacher can support the brainstorm by capturing the ideas in a visual mindmap. She also asks how the children want to change the corner/class. Then the children can start doing.</p> <p>If this is a whole class activity, the teacher takes several ideas from the brainstorm and asks children to form group according to the ideas for action (e.g. children said that (1) they would make scary monster drawings, (2) they would make the class dark, (3) they would collect scary noises. These could be 3 different groups. Each group gets into action. Teacher might have to help each group with triggering additional ideas about how to do this.</p> <p>Note: consider leaving the corner/class decorated like this for as long as you are working on this theme/ book (1 or 2 weeks).</p>
<b>Vocabulary</b>	Vocabulary that can be introduced in a natural way: create, build, world, material, light, dark, ...
<b>Possible questions</b>	<p>Possible comments and questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How does the world of the monsters look like?</li> <li>- How can we make our class a monster world?</li> <li>- What should we do?</li> <li>- How can we do that? What materials would we need?</li> <li>- How would you feel if you lived in monster world?</li> <li>- ....</li> </ul>

#### 4. Building an obstacle course

<b>Type of activity</b>	The children build an obstacle course
<b>Grouping</b>	5-6 children
<b>Material</b>	Materials for the obstacle course
<b>Process</b>	<p>Max is sailing from his room all the way to monster island. That is far away. The waves are high and the wind is blowing. On the island he does all kind of strange things: dancing, hanging in the trees, ... The children are going to build the way from one side of the class (Max' room), to the other side (Wild thing island) with a variety of movement tasks.</p> <p>The children set up an obstacle course. They can decide on how it should work and what materials are used. The teacher keeps referring to "what would happen in the world of the monsters?" The course could include: jumping, rolling, pulling faces in front of the mirror, crawling , swimming, rowing, ...</p> <p>Adjust according to available materials and ability of the children.</p> <p>Before the start, the teacher runs through all the tasks, and shows the example or asks a child to demonstrate what to do.</p>

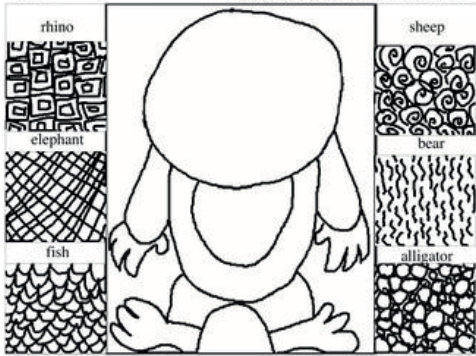
<b>Vocabulary</b>	Vocabulary that can be introduced in a natural way: again, time (as in another time), run, quick, jump, slow, fall, sail, swim, difficult, careful, easy, challenging, ...
<b>Possible questions</b>	<p>Possible comments and questions (depending on the course):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How do you think monsters run?</li> <li>- How does the road in the island look like?</li> <li>- How can we make it more difficult?</li> <li>- Is it challenging enough?</li> <li>- What materials could we use?</li> <li>- ...</li> </ul>

#### 5. Doing the obstacle course

<b>Type of activity</b>	The children engage in the obstacle course as built by 1 group
<b>Grouping</b>	Whole class
<b>Material</b>	Materials for the obstacle course
<b>Process</b>	Before the start, the obstacle course builders (children) and the teacher run through all the tasks, and show the example/demonstrate what to do.
<b>Vocabulary</b>	Vocabulary that can be introduced in a natural way: again, time (as in another time), run, quick, jump, slow, fall, sail, swim, difficult, careful, easy, challenging, ...
<b>Possible questions</b>	<p>Possible comments and questions (depending on the course):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Don't run too quick, or you may fall off your boat</li> <li>- We are real monsters. But how would monsters run?</li> <li>- Do you find this difficult? How would it be more challenging?</li> <li>- Can you remember: did Max fall?</li> <li>- While jumping: in the book, there were monsters that were hanging in the tree? How did they do that?</li> <li>- Jump one time with both feet in the hoop and one time with both feet between the hoops</li> <li>- ...</li> </ul>

#### 6. Monster patterns and visual texture

<b>Type of activity</b>	Worksheet based activity: drawing visual textures in a monster
<b>Grouping</b>	5-6 children
<b>Material</b>	Worksheet, pencils (optional: loose materials such as rice, confetti, feathers, sand...)

<b>Process</b>	<p>Children get a sheet with a monster drawing. They can draw its fur/skin/feathers. How does the monster look like? How does it feel?</p> <p>The teacher could share some sample textures (like that of an elephant, fish, ...). The children draw the pattern.</p>  <p>Alternatively: children can decorate the skin of the monster with pieces of paper, sand, beads, feathers, confetti, rice, ....</p>
<b>Vocabulary</b>	<p>Vocabulary that can be introduced in a natural way: fur, feathers, rough, smooth, lines, stripes, circles, squares...</p>
<b>Possible questions</b>	<p>Possible comments and questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Which monster are you drawing?</li><li>- How does that feel like? Do you like touching such a monster?</li><li>- Is it difficult to draw such a pattern?</li><li>- What materials do you want to use?</li><li>- ...</li></ul>

Not all these activities need to be done in one day. It is even better if each activity gets enough time for children to explore, interact and learn. Example: One can have introduction activities on Monday, tell the story for the first time on Tuesday, do expanding activities on Wednesday and Thursday and retell the story on Friday. Alternatively, some activities can happen parallel to each other (at the same time) during corner play. Consider adjusting all your activities and materials to the theme of the story you are working on.

## Annexure 2:

### The matching game: nine techniques for enriching corner play

---

#### Nine techniques

##### **Observe and help build the play**

Via a little conversation with the children at the start, you help divide the roles in the play and what the role entails, what materials are needed and what could happen.

You then take a step away from the play and observe. You do not engage in play, but you are observing what is happening. You can describe in language what you see happening. Through observation, you can collect information to use later (e.g. interests of the children, preferred materials, level and content of the play, ...)

##### **Give input via a book that was read**

Create a corner where children can play out elements of the story of book that was read before. They can play this in the construction corner, the home corner, ...depending on the content of the story. You can choose to use elements of the book in different corners. Provide the key materials or let children collect and make the key materials for the story.

##### **Give input via playing a role**

You take up a role and play the role, using supporting materials. By doing so you can show the children how this works in real life.

##### **Give input by posing a problem**

You take up a role in the play and bring up a problem. This enriches the play with an additional idea and opportunities for children to talk.

##### **Play along with the children**

You play along with the children. They are in the lead. They decide what they do. You just support and help them to interact, with you and with each other.

##### **Whispering some ideas for action**

You play along with the children. They are in the lead. They decide what they do. You whisper sometimes in the ear of one of the children what they could do or say.

##### **Director/manager**

You do not play along but you follow what is happening in the corner. You give advice, suggestions or directions.

##### **Evaluating and reflecting together**

You discuss with some children or the whole class how the play went. You trigger them to describe what they did, you add to their phrases. This will inspire other children for the next time.

##### **Jointly documenting**

After playing you sit with some children to “record” some of their experiences, discoveries, conclusions, or agreements.

## Nine examples



*An example:*

You ask in the market corner: "Who will be the seller of fruits? Who will sell fish?" or "Who will come and buy at the market?" or "What will you do? What do you need? What could happen?" Then you let children play and observe how they engage, you describe what you see "Aha, mommy is buying tomatoes and beans in the market".



*An example:*

You provide the children with the book of The duck of Jules, with some small ducks, with a T-shirt with a duck painted on the back.



*Examples:*

1. You act as a customer to the market: "I am daddy. Today I want to cook the favourite dish of my two children." Ask the children what their favourite food is. Come to a decision to what you will cook. Go with the children to the market corner and play the role of the customer. "Good day, madam. Today I want to cook this dish for my children. What do I need? What are the ingredients? How much will that cost?" (these are a few of possible questions you can discuss with the children (both those taking the role of your children and those being the sellers at the market.)
2. You act as the mother of a teddy bear that got hurt. "Doctor, can you help me? My little daughter is feeling sick. She is coughing and I think she has a fever."



*Examples:*

1. In the market corner. You go to the seller who sells shoes. "I would like to buy these shoes for my son, but what must I do if they do not fit?"
2. In the market corner. You go to the seller who sells shoes. "Oh dear, this pair only has two right shoes/ I cannot buy that. What should we do?"





*An example:*

You join the building activity in the construction corner. You say: "Look what Ly is doing. That looks like a good idea to make a bigger tower, what do you think?"



*Examples:*

1. You play along in the market corner. You whisper in the ear of the seller of fruit: "You can now say: 'Good day madam, how can I help you?'"
2. You play in the doctor's corner. You whisper in the ear of the doctor: "You could ask: 'where does it hurt? Are you nauseous?'"



*An example:*

"The blocks for building the tower are in that box".



*An example:*

"Do you remember what the seller of shoes said when you asked what to do when the shoes were not the right size?"



*Examples:*

1. "You were checking which things can float and which things sink. Let's make a drawing of all things that float on this sheet and of things that sink on that sheet."
2. "What objects have we not yet checked? Let's write down what we would like to check next time".

**Published on February 2021, by:**

© 2021 VVOB – education for development  
Julien Dillensplein 1 bus 2A, 1060 Brussels, Belgium  
Telephone: +32 2 209 07 99; Website: [www.vvob.org](http://www.vvob.org)



### **Some rights reserved**

This work is a product of the staff of VVOB, based on the collaboration, findings and experiences of VVOB and its partners in the 'Mitigating Preschool Children's Barriers to Learning in disadvantaged and ethnically diverse districts in Central Vietnam' (BaMi) programme and complemented by relevant literature. The findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed in this work do not necessarily reflect the views of VVOB, its Board of Directors, or the funding donors. VVOB does not guarantee the accuracy of the data included in this work. The boundaries, colors, denominations, and other information shown on any map in this work do not imply any judgment on the part of VVOB concerning the legal status of any territory or the endorsement or acceptance of such boundaries.

### **Rights and Permissions**

Responsible Editor:

Sven Rooms

© 2021 VVOB - education for development



This work is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial Share-alike 4.0 International license (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0). Under the Creative Commons Attribution license, you are free to copy, distribute, transmit, and adapt this work, only for noncommercial purposes, under the following conditions:

Please cite the work as follows: *VVOB – education for development. 2021. "Language Rich Interactions In The Preschool – A Guide For Preschool Teachers"*

All queries on rights and licenses should be addressed to VVOB, Julien Dillensplein 1 bus 2A, 1060 Brussels, Belgium - Telephone: +32 2 209 07 99; E-mail: [info@vvob.org](mailto:info@vvob.org); Website: [www.vvob.org](http://www.vvob.org)

### **Disclaimer**

This publication contains references to other publications and websites. VVOB cannot be held responsible for current or future content of these publications and websites, nor for the content of external publications and websites that refer to this publication of VVOB.

This publication was produced with the financial support of the Governments of Belgium and Flanders. Its contents are the sole responsibility of VVOB and do not necessarily reflect the views of these actors. The Governments of Belgium and Flanders cannot be held responsible for the content of this publication.

**(Co-)funded by:**



**Belgium**  
partner in development



**Flanders**  
State of the Art



3-5 Nguyen Binh, Hai Chau District, Da Nang, Viet Nam  
+84 (0) 236 3923332  
<https://vietnam.vvob.org>  
<http://fb.com/vvobvietnam>

# LANGUAGE RICH INTERACTIONS IN THE PRESCHOOL

A guide for preschool teachers



## **PART 3: VALUING AND USING THE DIVERSITY IN THE LOCAL CONTEXT AND CULTURE**

# Content

**Part 3: Valuing and using the diversity in the local context and culture**

Chapter 6: Valuing the diversity of the local context.....	01
6.1. Why is the local context important?.....	01
6.2. What is the current situation in the education system?.....	02
6.3. What are our beliefs?.....	03
6.4. How to value cultural diversity?.....	11
1) What is culture?.....	11
2) What is prejudice, stereotype and stigma?.....	12
3) How to respect and value cultural diversity?.....	14
Chapter 7: Using the local context and new perspectives on culture in the classroom.....	15
7.1. Introduction.....	15
7.2. Collecting materials about local cultures and communities.....	16
1) How to collect stories?.....	16
2) How to capture and describe the stories?.....	17
7.3. Creating playful and language rich activities and interactions.....	20
1) Reviewing and selecting the collected materials.....	20
2) Designing activities.....	21



**PART 3:**  
**VALUING AND USING THE DIVERSITY**  
**IN THE LOCAL CONTEXT AND CULTURE**





# Chapter 6: Valuing the diversity of the local context



### This chapter aims to:

- Give you a better understanding of how the differences between home and school culture and context can be a barrier which impacts the wellbeing and involvement of children
- Give you a better understanding of the current situation in multicultural classrooms
- Let you explore your current beliefs on culture and education
- Help you discover concepts as culture, cultural diversity, bias, stigma and discrimination
- Create a better understanding of social norms and practices in daily life

In this Chapter, especially 6.3., we will follow the experiential learning model of Kolb (White et al., 2009). Via concrete stories, pictures and questions, the reader will have a learning experience. Reflective questions will then help to review why something happens that way. This will help to identify what can be learnt from this and, as a last step, plan for change.

### 6.1. Why is the local context important?

Many preschool children experience barriers to learning and participation in the classroom. These barriers keep them from benefiting fully and developing to their full potential. In a multilingual setting where children having a different home language from the language of instruction in the school, communication is often perceived as a barrier. But this is not the only barrier.

Children often experience the differences between home and school culture and context also as a barrier. They do not feel at home in school and this may impact negatively on their wellbeing, especially at a young age. When activities, materials and tasks in the classroom do not link to the context and experiences of the child, the child will not feel confident or at ease. Children feel that their background is not valued or not important. They also have challenges in understanding what they are taught due to learning contents that are disconnected from the children's daily lives. The gap between their local context and the school context will also impact the involvement of the child. Children's involvement is higher when activities and materials are meaningful and linked to their interests.



#### Examples:

School Vanh Khuyen is located in Kon Tum province. The school is preparing for Tet. Teacher Ha, who is from the Kinh ethnic group, teaches about how to make banh Chung. She does not mention any local Tet customs, nor ask the children to share their experiences and habits for Tet.

Linh, like most children, is from the Mo Nam ethnicity. In Linh's village Tet is celebrated, but not with Chung cake. Linh's village has other traditions to celebrate Tet. The whole village shares a meal and new cages are made for the buffaloes. Linh cannot relate her own experiences of Tet to what the teacher is telling. During this lesson Linh's involvement goes down.



Preschool teachers and their school leaders can play a pivotal role to increase the levels of involvement and wellbeing in their classrooms and school environments. By developing their competences to support and value ethnic diversity in the class, teachers can reduce existing sociocultural barriers and take significant steps forward in ensuring that all children are developing to their full potential. This is in line with the intentions of the new ECE curriculum which gives more space to teachers and schools to design and adapt the curriculum implementation and encourages teachers to increasingly use the local context in their classrooms.

This material helps teachers to better understand how they can create the best circumstances in the classroom to help children develop to their full potential, while valuing and using their language and cultural background. This material helps teachers to take the first steps.



**Task**

Teacher Ninh works in a school in a small hamlet in the Central Highlands. The theme of the month is “My family”. Teacher Ninh shows a picture of a family. She asks Vu (4 years old, his family is part of the Ba Na ethnic group) to describe what he sees.

1. Describe what you see on this picture.
2. Is this picture showing how dinner at your place/in your family looks like?
3. Look at the picture through the eyes of Vu. Does the picture represent Vu’s family?
4. How will this impact on Vu’s wellbeing and involvement?
5. Why?



**6.2.What is the current situation in the education system?**

A descriptive study executed by the Institute for Studies of Society, Economy and Environment (iSEE) in Kon Tum gives us an idea of how schools and education systems currently deal with diversity. The findings are reflected below.

The study shows that the knowledge, attitude and practices towards cultural diversity is heavily impacted by the policies regarding promoting mainstream language, Vietnamese. Schools face difficulties of integrating other ethnic minorities’ language in the classroom.

Culture, to educators is understood as something that is fixed. They see culture as in *what people have and what people do*. Cultural materials are integrated into the curriculum and physical school environment. One can see activities about common festivals, typical decorations, houses, dresses and tools of ethnic minority groups. However, what is missing is *what people think*.

Teachers, school leaders and education officers indicate achievement and development gaps between Kinh and ethnic minorities, and they think of solutions to help overcome this enormous difference. They work hard to implement educational interventions to remedy the gap between Kinh and ethnic minority students.

Such approach, however, implies that ethnicity and language are perceived as a deficit or a problem, not as an asset. It also creates a situation where the majority ethnicity seems to get a higher status than the minority group. This may have an impact on the wellbeing of children and the community. They start interiorizing a feeling of inferiority. This also influences the teacher's expectations and approaches, which has a direct negative impact on the learning outcomes of children.

The descriptive study shows a need for deeper cultural awareness, rethinking ethnic status gaps and practices of togetherness. Starting with deeper knowledge and practices of culture and cultural diversity, schools and teachers will automatically give more space to the use of mother tongue, helping children experience a safe and welcoming environment (see part 2). Moreover, by revising the long-held beliefs of ethnic minorities and reflecting on cultural differences, teachers can explore new ways of integrating their widened perspectives of culture into the pedagogy. In this process, community participation plays a vital role. Both parties, school and community, are then in an equal position to share and learn from each other and to discover possibilities to work together to foster learning outcomes of their children.

### 6.3. What are our beliefs?

To value cultural diversity and achieve a bigger cultural awareness, we need to explore our own beliefs. Our beliefs determine how we act.

When we look at an image or a situation, we tend to immediately make up our mind and formulate an opinion. But where does that opinion come from? Why do we have that opinion?

Our beliefs, knowledge and understanding are created based on many sources of information:

- Our own pre-existing experience and knowledge
- What we see and hear in the media (internet, social networks, television, books, newspaper, ...)
- Our experiences lead to opinions which we tend to stick to
- What we were taught (by teachers, by parents, by the community,...)
- What we heard from someone who we believe is an expert

But to what extent is what we heard, what we were taught, what we read correct? Often the reality can be different depending on the perspectives you take. Sometimes we think or conclude things based on assumptions, but we do not really understand why.

Our understanding will be expanded by curiosity. By asking questions we can verify whether what we assume is correct.

There are many reflection tasks below. These will help you to explore your beliefs and to start questioning them.

In section 6.4 we will explore our beliefs about culture and how we can challenge these beliefs to become more open and respectful to differences.



**Task 1:** Raising and taking care of children

Work in groups of 3 or 4 teachers (or a combination of teachers and parents). (You can also do this task alone, but it is more interesting to work with someone else).  
Think about how you want to raise and take care of children at home and in the school?  
How does it look like? Why? Make a drawing about the result of the discussion



**Task 2:** Describing pictures

Work in the same group. Look at the four photos below. Name the things you can see and share what you already know about this or what you think about this.

<p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>	
<p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>	



**Task 2:** Describing pictures

Work in the same group. Look at the four photos below. Name the things you can see and share what you already know about this or what you think about this.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....



.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

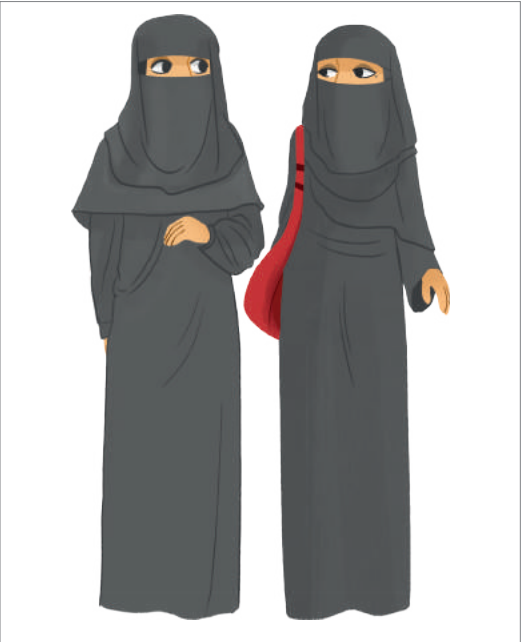
.....

.....

.....

.....

.....





### Task 2: Reflection

1. Look at the picture below. Is there a difference between the way how you think about the person with the tattoo above and below? Why?
2. How do you know what you already know?
  - Did you write above that tigers are dangerous? How do you know that a tiger is very scary? Have you ever seen a tiger in real life?
  - Did you describe the person with tattoo as a gangster? Why do you think that people with tattoos are gangsters? Why do you think that they are scary and not nice people?
  - Where does this thinking come from?



3. Have you ever considered whether what you think about things or people is correct?

When we look at an image or a situation, we tend to immediately make up our mind and formulate an opinion. It is good to question where this opinion comes from.

4. What can you learn from this exercise?
5. How can you use what you have learnt in future practice?



### Task 3: Discovering some situations

#### Situation 1: Motionless

Mrs. Hong has just returned home from work. She sees her husband lying motionless on the sofa. There was some blood on the side of the sofa. The cabinet was open. What happened?

#### Situation 2: Crossing the river

An cannot swim. She has to cross the 30 m deep river. The bridge has collapsed during the flood. An will cross the river, holding the cable. But unfortunately, An loses her grip. What will An's fate be like?

#### Situation 3: Completely silent

Hearing the noise on the ground floor, Mrs. Le walks downstairs. She saw a man holding money in his hand while Ngan Giang was lying motionless on the floor. What should Mrs. Le do?



### Task 3: Reflections

1. Are you sure you read and interpreted the situation correctly?
  - a. Situation 1:
    - Maybe Mrs. Hong's husband killed a mosquito on the side of the sofa?
    - Maybe nothing happened to Mrs. Hong's husband? Maybe he is sleeping?
  - b. Situation 2:
    - Maybe the river is not very deep and An can walk?
    - Maybe there is a boat that picks her up?
    - Maybe An has lost her grip right at the starting, while she is still standing on the riverbank?
  - c. Situation 3:
    - Maybe the man is Mrs. Le's husband?
    - Maybe Ngan Giang is the cat?
2. How are our understandings created? Where do our knowledge, understanding, beliefs come from?
3. Is what we believe always correct? Can you give an example?
4. What can you learn from this exercise?
5. How can you use what you have learnt in future practice?



### Task 4: Perspective: Another story

A father travels in the train with his four children. The children are creating quite some noise: they do not sit in their chair, they cry and scream. The other passengers are getting annoyed. One passenger walks to the father and asks him to reprimand his children, to make sure they behave well and be quieter.

The father answers: "I am sorry, I have no idea how to do this. My children are upset, I am upset. Yesterday they lost their mother. I lost my wife."



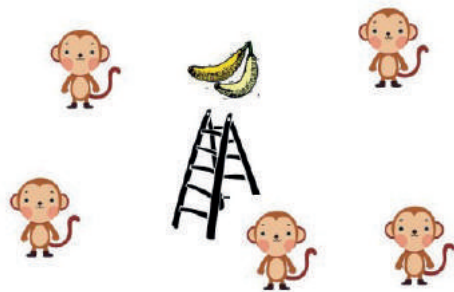
#### Task 4: Reflections

1. If you were the passenger, what would you have thought when you saw the noisy children?
2. Did your opinion change once you know what happened to the children?
3. Did it ever happen to you that you were misunderstood because people didn't have all information available? Did it ever happen that you misunderstood someone because you had not all information? Describe your example.
4. What can you learn from this exercise?
5. How can you use what you have learnt in future practice?



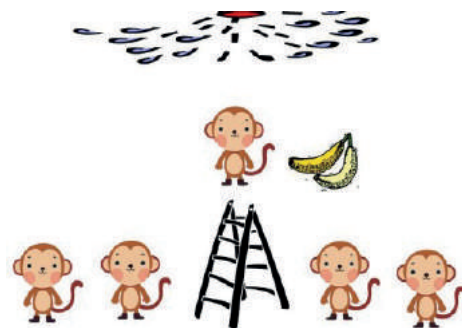
#### Task 5: Why do we do what we do?

*Example 4: The story of the five-monkeys*



A researcher puts five monkeys in a garden. There's a bunch of bananas hanging from a string, with a ladder leading to the bananas.

When the first monkey goes for the bananas, the researcher sprays all five monkeys with freezing water for five minutes. Sometime later, when a second monkey inevitably tries to go for the bananas, the researcher once again sprays all five monkeys with the cold water for five minutes. The researcher then puts the hose away and never touches it again. But, when a third monkey tries to go for the bananas, the other four attack him to prevent him from climbing that ladder. They are afraid of the punishment that may come

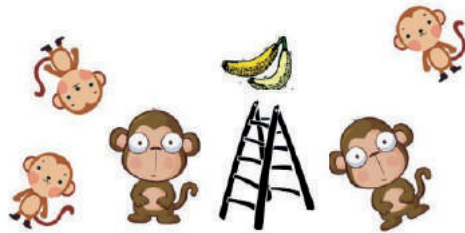






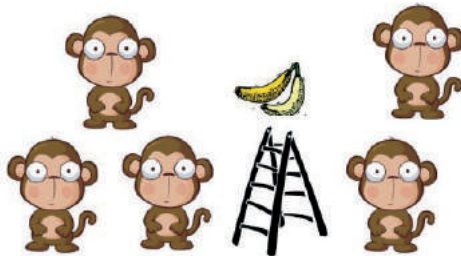
Then, the researcher replaces one of the monkeys with a new monkey who wasn't part of the original experiment and was never sprayed with water. And, as soon as he touches the ladder to go for the bananas, the other four monkeys attack him to keep him from doing so. If he tries again, they attack him again. Thus, the new monkey learns not to go after the bananas because he'll get attacked if he does.

The researcher replaces a second monkey with another new monkey. When this monkey goes for the bananas, the other four attack him, including the new monkey who was never sprayed with water. The researcher then continues to replace all the monkeys one at a time, until all five of the original monkeys are removed from the cage. Each time the newcomer goes for the bananas, the others attack, even when they, as new monkeys, have never received punishment for going after the bananas.



And thus, the new monkeys, who have never been sprayed with cold water, learn not to go after the temptation of the bananas.

The researchers hypothesize that, if they were to ask the monkeys why they don't go for the bananas, they'd answer "because that's the way it's always been done"



1. Can you think of examples of things we do "because that is the way we have always done"?
2. What can you learn from this exercise?
3. How can you use what you have learnt in future practice?

Source: This story is based on research by Stephenson, however his experiments never involved a ladder nor bananas. The story is relevant but not a report of a real experiment.

Stephenson, G. R. (1967). *Cultural acquisition of a specific learned response among rhesus monkeys*. In: Starek, D., Schneider, R., and Kuhn, H. J. (eds.), *Progress in Primatology*, Stuttgart: Fischer, pp. 279-288.). [https://www.throwcase.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Cultural-Acquisition-of-Specific-Learned-Response-Stephenson\\_1966.pdf](https://www.throwcase.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Cultural-Acquisition-of-Specific-Learned-Response-Stephenson_1966.pdf)

Pictures: <https://balancedworklife.com/5-monkeys-experiment/>



### Task 6: Assumptions:

What is in the red circle? Why do you think so?

A 13 C

We see the first three letters of the alphabet. We assume that in the symbol in the circle is B.

What is in the blue circle? Why?

12 13 14

We see a sequence of numbers. We assume that the symbol in the circle is 13.

What is in the blue circle? Why?

A 13 C 12 13 14

Both sequences have the **same** symbol in the middle!

But because of the sequence we **assume** that in the first sequence the symbol is a B and in the second it is a 13. Our thinking is influenced by the sequence and leads to making assumptions. Assumptions could be wrong. Maybe the first sequence is "A13C" and the second "12B14"?



### Task 6: Reflections

1. What can we learn from the examples above?
2. Do you have an example of a similar situation in your life?
3. Our understanding is expanded by curiosity and ability to ask questions: what could be good questions to ask in all the examples above?
4. How can you use what you have learnt in future practice?



### Task 7: Back to our drawing about How to care for children

In Task 1 you made drawing on how you raise children.

1. Can you find examples of certain beliefs or perspectives that influenced your drawing?
2. Now, after doing all the tasks above, is there anything you would want to change? What?
3. Why would you want to change this?
4. What can you learn from this exercise?
5. How can you use what you have learnt in future practice?

From the tasks above we have learned that we do not always know why we are doing certain things or why we think certain things. Sometimes we take one perspective to look at situations, but another perspective would give another answer. Sometimes we think or conclude things based on assumptions, but we do not really understand why.

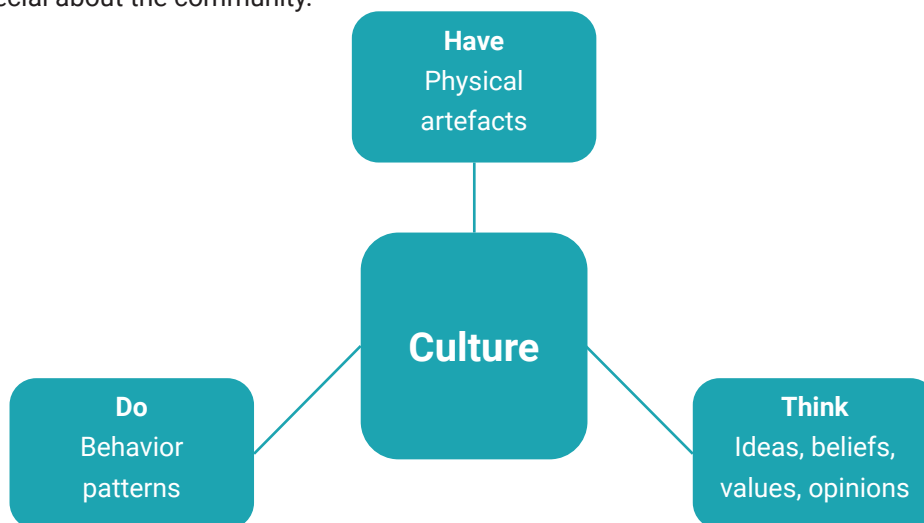
It is important to be curious and ask questions. By asking questions we can verify whether what we assume is correct. Our beliefs influence how we think about different cultures. In the next part we will explore our beliefs about culture and how we can challenge these beliefs to become more open and respectful to differences.

## 6.4. How to value cultural diversity?

### 1) What is culture?

Normally, people think about culture as special element one can see in their community (such as a festival, traditional custom, ritual practices etc.). Culture is more than objects, it is a process. There are many definitions of culture. Gary Ferraro (1995) defines it as: “**Culture is what people have, what people think and what people do as members of a society.**” So, in fact, culture is everything that happens in the community.

Culture is the characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people, including language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music and arts. Each daily practice always has a story behind it and this can tell something special about the community.





### Task 1: Different customs

#### Part a

1. Look at the picture below taken in the Ganges river in India.
2. Many people in India regard the Ganges river as a sacred river. Do you know anything about the customs and rituals that happen in and around the Ganges river? Try to find some information.
3. What do you think about the customs and rituals?
4. What do you feel?



#### Part b

1. In northern Vietnam there is a custom of grave removal and reburial. Do you know about this custom?
2. What is the meaning of the custom of grave removal and re-burial for the Vietnamese?
3. What do you think people who do not know this custom would think about it?
4. Do you know any other burial rituals from people inside or outside Vietnam?



### Task 2: Reflections

1. What can you learn from this exercise?
2. How can you use what you have learnt in future practice?

## 2) What is prejudice, stereotype and stigma?

Facing cultural or other differences (like in the task above), we tend to focus on the differences (e.g. difference in ethnicity, food, language, profession, social class, beliefs, geography, age, gender, ...). These differences are labelled and used to distinguish between “us/we” and “them/they”. Often, we attach negative attributes to the differences, also known as **stereotypes**. We sometimes quickly formulate ideas and comments which are not based on facts or experience but based on pre-existing ideas. This is called **prejudice**.

This focus on differences, together with labelling and stereotyping, leads to certain groups getting a **stigma**. They are perceived as inferior and devalued.

Prejudices and stereotypes can lead to **discrimination**. The whole process leads to a power imbalance.

This process is based on subjective perception, or simple generalizations from a few personal expressions for an entire ethnic community. These perceptions or behaviours can be unconscious or conscious. Stereotypes are spread via media, education, rumours, in families and organisations.

Terminology

Terms	Explanation
Stereotypes	Stereotypes are widely held but fixed and oversimplified images or ideas of a particular type of person or thing.
Prejudice	Prejudice is a bias in the way of thinking about someone / something. Prejudices can be based on stereotypes.
Discrimination	Discrimination is the unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people or things.



Task 3: Finding the stereotypes

1. Read the phrases below (all taken from magazines and newspapers)  
*Originally from a Hmong, Seo A Dinh's academic results are always at the top of the class.*  
*We need to help upland people move from stilt house to ground floor to suit new life.*  
*True to the honest and sincere nature of the mountainous people, Giang Seo Mi told me: "This land is the place to feed me, it will also be the place to take me back to my grandparents, I won't go anywhere".*  
*Without a lively look, an inspiring voice, and a delicate figure or fashionable clothes like the Kinh people in the city, Vu Sinh's mountain and forest beauty is still enough to captivate many city men like me.*
2. Can you find the prejudices, stereotypes and stigma in the texts above?
3. Can you find other examples of stereotypes, stigma and prejudice?
4. Have you ever experienced prejudice or stigma? Can you describe?
5. What are the consequences of prejudice and stigma?
6. What can you learn from this exercise?
7. How can you use what you have learnt in future practice?

Many preschool children from ethnic minorities not only have difficulty in learning a new language but also have challenges in understanding what they are taught due to learning contents that are disconnected from the children's daily lives. This results in false beliefs about them being less competent than majority (Kinh) children. These beliefs influence teacher's expectations and approaches, which has a direct negative impact on the learning outcomes of students.

### 3) How to respect and value cultural diversity?

Respecting diversity means **exploring differences between people, communities, populations in a safe, positive, and cherished environment**, without stereotypes, prejudice and stigma.

It also means **understanding each other and working with tolerance so you can make the most of the unique individuality that each individual can bring**.

This results in all people and communities being proud and confident about their culture.



#### **Task 4:** Start the conversation

1. Engage with a colleague or someone from the community. Discuss what you have learned in this chapter. What can you learn from the other person?
2. What can you learn from this exercise?
3. How can you use what you have learnt in future practice?

Below you will find some ideas on how you can review your beliefs about ethnic minority communities and how you can contemplate cultural differences. When teachers explore and broaden their perspectives, pedagogical practices will improve. The ideas below can become part of TPD (see Part 4).

- Learn the local language. This will increase the connection between teacher, children and community.
- Set up book reading groups with teachers and school leaders. Share and read materials from a variety of sources on ethnic minority topics, cultural diversity, child learning and development, etc. Contemplate how the media are portraying and strengthening the portraits of ethnic minorities.
- Sharing moment: share lessons and experiences, together with classroom instructional materials-integrated into weekly PTM at school. Promote teacher discussion and reflection on specialised topics.
- Movie time: watch movies and discuss together issues about race, gender equality, and indigenous groups around the world.
- Organise exposure visits to share and learn from schools, businesses, social enterprises about cultural diversity and how to apply in the working environment.

The participation from the community plays an essential role in the cultural learning experience of teachers and the community itself. This experience leaves participants in an equal position to learn and share:

- Demonstrating and co-teaching about local cultural practices between teachers and parents
- Sharing of parents and community about indigenous knowledge in agriculture, jungle skills, etc.
- Storytelling circle by the fire

In the next chapter you will read more on how to collect stories from and with the community and use these for playful and language-rich learning moments in your preschool.

## Chapter 7: Using the local context and new perspectives on culture in the classroom



### This chapter aims to:

- Support teachers in **collecting** various materials (songs, folklores, orally told stories, etc.) about local cultures from the community
- Give concrete handles on how to **create** playful and language rich activities and interactions using stories and materials collected:
  - To techniques that can be applied in corner play,
  - To different ways of asking questions and
  - To a method of using story books
- Help you to try out and reflect in your classroom
- Provide concrete situations in which you can establish a culturally diverse learning environment
- Let you review previous practices and identify ways to improve

### 7.1.Introduction

Many ethnic minority preschool children not only have difficulty in learning a new language but also have challenges in understanding what they are taught due to learning contents that are disconnected from the children's daily lives.

Although there are many examples of local artefacts being used as decoration or for special events, teachers find it difficult to use the children's living environment to develop meaningful learning activities or to adapt the national curriculum to fit with local context/culture.

Ethnic minority students are rarely represented or underrepresented in teaching and learning materials. Teaching and learning materials rarely include positive and empowering stories of ethnic minorities.

Many parents do not fully master the Vietnamese language, which impacts on the interaction between teachers and parents and the parental involvement in the education of their children.

#### What can schools do?

As described in Part 1 and 2, promoting the usage of mother tongue in everyday interactions, is not only beneficial for the language development of the young child (also Vietnamese!) but will also create a safe and welcoming school which fosters children from all ethnicities.

#### Suggested activities include:

- Form groups of parents and teachers who collect cultural materials from a variety of sources (reputable people in the village, elders, texts, Internet, etc.) and communicate the results in various formats (teaching materials, games, plays, books, documentaries, exhibitions, social media posts, etc.).
- Project-based learning model: a topic or theme can be discussed from the perspective of and with contributions from different cultures (e.g. rice, plants, animals, festivals, etc.).



- Conversation about daily life activities and issues. Diversity is in big and small things. Talk with children about those daily life diversities when the opportunities arise in daily activities: the way you eat (not only what), when you go to bed, how important it is to dress for certain occasions, the way you address older people, the way how you cut fruit, ...  
Philosophy for children: Discuss issues that do not have a clear cut answer, e.g. what is a super hero and what characteristics should a super hero have? Ask children about their opinions and let them listen to each other.
- Use children's mother tongue in the classroom through language exchange activities among children, between children and teachers, and among teachers. Greet children upon arrival in their mother tongue.
- Organise a village tour with children acting as a tourist guide.

In this chapter we will look at how teachers can collect and use materials from the local context and culture.

## 7.2. Collecting materials about local cultures and communities

If we want to bring the community, context and culture of the children to the classroom, it is good to collect cultural materials from a variety of sources. How to go about that?

By inviting parents and teachers into one space, they can build their collective actions towards educating children. By working together, teachers and parents can explore more new ideas and belief of each other when it comes to cultural differences and parenting/ teaching style. Below we suggest possible ways of doing this. But this can be adjusted to your needs and context, or maybe you even find different approaches that work for you?

### 1) How to collect stories?

1. **Be surprised while sharing Childhood memories:** Through a sharing session about participant childhood's memories, parents and teachers will understand other's unforgettable story behind each normal object. Sometimes, an ordinary thing for one person becomes a special thing for someone else. To understand a person, especially a child, we must not take anything for granted, be open and be surprised. This session also opens the safe zone for participants to share their thoughts and get close to each other.

**Why?** Culture is not only what we have and do, but also what we think. Why do we do what we do? What is the underlying belief? Participants look deeper into their daily practices and notice their cultural characteristics.

Through this exchange parent and teachers have the chance to explore the cultural practices in the community. For some teachers, this is the first time they learn deeply about other ethnic's culture even though they have been working here for a long time. This session enhances the confidence of parents and supports them to be proud of their identity.

2. **Be receptive to and use the stories and experiences of children** (action point 4) to build activities. This can be something that the child shares about what happens in the daily life of the children. Some examples:

"Teacher, my mother went to the Sunday market to buy food for the family."

"Teacher, my father will prepare "com lam" for my birthday (rice in bamboo stick)."

"Teacher, yesterday I helped with the dishes."

"It was so much fun last weekend, we went out to have ice cream!"

## 2) How to capture and describe the stories?

How does a story look like? It is not enough to mention an artefact, festival or practice. The story needs to describe in detail what this is about.

- Describe the full context. You can use What, Who, Where, When, Why and How question. The Why question is very important! Asking these questions helps you to see culture as what people have, do and what they think. How people think explains often why they do what they are doing.
- Make sure all information is accurate. Ask more than one person. Ask people who know, e.g. older people often have the full background of a cultural practice.
- Find the underlying meaning of the cultural practice.
- Add pictures and illustrations.
- Make sure the story has one main focus that attracts attention.

Below are some examples of stories collected by teachers and parents, with the help of iSEE, in Dak Ui, Kon Tum.



### Example: **Weaving**

Mr. A Chong, from the Se Dang ethnic minority, lives in Vang Hra village, Dak Ui commune, Dac Ha district, Kon Tum province. He is a traditional weaver. Weaving is a traditional profession, passed down from generation to generation and preserved till today.

People from the Se Dang group are surrounded by immense bamboo forests, and close to nature. This is reflected in the woven products for daily life, such as mats, baskets, flat baskets, which are all made from bamboo. This requires a lot of carefulness, meticulousness, skilfulness as well as knowledge about the types and usability of the bamboo. The trees must be straight, not too old, not too young, and enough knots so that the end-product is strong. The trees are cut into small chunks, then smoothened, dried. Then the weaving can start. Making the rim is the most difficult stage. It needs strong hands.





**Example: 1st birthday ceremony**

The date a child is born, the family and the whole village are happy. However, they are still cautious during the first year of the child. But when the child turns 1, the whole family happily throws a celebration to welcome the little child. It is the baby's 1st birthday party.

The customs of each region and family of the So Ra ethnic minority in Dak Ha, Kon Tum might slightly differ, but in general, some rituals are always part of it. The family will raise or buy a pig or a chicken (depending on the financial condition of each household). On the day of the party, the family will let the child touch the pig with his/her right hand to inform heaven and the gods that today the family will celebrate the child. Then, the animal will be slaughtered and the boiled liver will be placed on the child's head. Grandparents, parents, and those who come to join the celebration also put the liver on the child's head to wish the child health, intelligence, and good performance at school. The rest of the animal will be cooked into different dishes for people joining the celebration.



**Example: Sleeping in the forest**

There is a small fire, a temporary shelter, or a tent set up in the middle of the forest or coffee hills. There is a family happily gathering in the darkness in the middle of nature.

Sleeping in the forest, it be a strange phrase to many people, but here in Dak Ui, Dak Ha, Kon Tum, it is something very familiar. There seems to be a connection between the forest and the people here. The forest is indispensable. It is where people look for food such as cassava, roots, leaves, bananas, ginseng, and bamboo shoots. Besides, many households own fields that are far away in the hills. They plant fruit trees, cassava, coffee, banana, etc.





In the past, people would walk to the forest and to save travel time, they chose to sleep in the forest or in the fields in the hills, in tents or temporary houses, to be protected from rain and wind. Gradually, sleeping in the forest might no longer be due to the distance, but it became part of the culture and the happiness of the people. Many families even went to the forest for a week or a whole month. For them, the forest is the most peaceful place.

During the season, the men often sleepover to look after the fruits and crops. The woman and the elderly will stay home to take care of the children. But in the weekend, the children will go with their mothers and grandparents to the forest to sleep. That is pure happiness! During the day, the adults work on the fields for cultivation, go deep into the forest to find food, weave or look after younger children. Each person does their task until the evening. The father and boys then set up a fire, adults have rice and wine, children have cassava and baked potatoes. The whole family can just gather like that. That simple happiness is the strongest connection of the To Ďra people in Dak Ui with the mountains and forests. The forest is not only gold and silver but also the soul of the people.



**Task:** Collecting your own stories

1. Engage with children and parents to collect stories and interests as described above.
2. What has surprised you?
3. What stories or memories or ideas have you collected?
4. Is your story described in detail? Do you need more information?
5. What can you learn from this exercise?
6. How can you use what you have learnt in future practice?

### 7.3.Creating playful and language rich activities and interactions

#### 1) Reviewing and selecting the collected materials

Now you have collected many stories which describe cultural practices. A group of teachers can read the stories and discuss what was collected. Not all stories are age appropriate or in line with the interests of young children. It is good to look at the stories from the perspective of the child. Together you can select what you want to work with in your classroom. Some questions that will help you to decide what to use are below:

- ❖ What creates opportunities for playful learning activities?
- ❖ What will get highest involvement by children?
- ❖ What is age appropriate?
- ❖ What is related to the theme that is the current focus in the class? (Note: the story can be linked to the theme, but the story can also become the class theme.)

Below are some examples of stories that could be relevant to children. These can be cultural stories that were collected by teachers and parents, but these could also be stories shared by children in the classroom.



*Example: **New rice***

When the new rice is harvested in Kon Năng Treang village in Dak Ha district, local people from the Se Dang group have a festival to celebrate the new rice. They come together for a meal. There is a special dance in which men and women hold hands and depict scenes from daily life. There is music and people wish for good luck, health and a good future harvest.



*Example: **Ice cream***

Today, Le arrives at school and during the circle time she shares that she ate ice cream last night. The teacher asks her more about this. What were they celebrating? What flavour does she like? Do other children like ice cream? Where did she have the ice cream?





**Task:** Select a story from all the materials that you have collected

Review the collected materials and stories and select what you want to work with in your classroom:

1. What creates opportunities for playful learning activities?
2. What will get highest involvement by children?
3. What is age appropriate?
4. What is related to the theme that is the current focus in the class?

## 2) Designing activities

Look at the selected materials or stories and start brainstorming on some corner activities that relate to the theme of the local story or materials. Do not forget to ask the children what they want to learn or what they are interested in! They can be part of the brainstorm. Work out each activity. Make sure that it is meaningful, playful and language-rich (applying all skills from Part 2). Make sure your activity is not reinforcing stereotypes.



### Example activity 1: New rice

<b>Type of activity</b>	Circle talk: exploring the theme
<b>Grouping</b>	All children or in small groups of 5-6 children
<b>Material</b>	Big sheet of paper or white board, marker; pictures of harvesting rice
<b>Process</b>	The teacher shows some pictures of the harvesting in the village and introduces the topic. What does the festival after the harvest look like and what happens? What would you like to learn about? All contributions of the children are listed in words and pictures on the mind map.
<b>Vocabulary</b>	Festival, rice, harvest, celebration, music, wish ...
<b>Possible questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- What do we harvest? Have you helped your parents to harvest? How does that work?</li><li>- What happens during the festival?</li><li>- Why do we celebrate?</li><li>- How do you feel during the festival? How do your parents feel?</li><li>- What would you want to wish?</li><li>- What would you like to learn about the festival or harvesting?</li></ul>

Based on this first exploration with the children during circle time, the teacher can design a variety of activities with the children.



**Example: New rice**

During the circle time, children indicated that their parents dance a special dance and that they want to learn this dance. They are also interested in the clothes people wear. One child says that her parents drink and make wishes.

All these contributions can become activities for the whole class or for corner activities.

Below we have worked out 5 example activities:

1. Dance
2. School garden: plant and harvest
3. Charades
4. Draw wishes
5. Explore and design clothes

Many more activities can be developed, based and triggered on the theme, in line with children's interest and using and exploring the diversity of the local context. Some additional ideas:

6. Playing on local instruments, invite a community member
7. Building instruments
8. Build a community house in the construction corner, after a visit to the community house (and children draw a plan)
9. Discuss and prepare the food for a festival, tasting new rice
10. Comparing foods around different areas in Vietnam.



**Example activity 2: New rice**

<b>Type of activity</b>	Dance
<b>Grouping</b>	All children or in small groups of 5-6 children
<b>Material</b>	Space
<b>Process</b>	A member of the community is invited to help children learn a simple version of the dance.
<b>Vocabulary</b>	Left, right, hold hands, jump, walk, turn, down, up, both,...
<b>Possible questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- What is the name of this dance? What is the name for it in your language? And in Vietnamese?</li><li>- Why do we celebrate?</li><li>- Shall we ask Ms. X to show us? Who will ask?</li><li>- When Ms. X makes this move, what does that look like?</li><li>- Is it difficult to do this dance?</li><li>- Look at what Ms. X does. What does she do with her hands?</li><li>- What is different?</li><li>- How must we do the moves?</li></ul>





Example activity 3: **New rice**

<b>Type of activity</b>	Planting and harvesting
<b>Grouping</b>	Small groups of 5-6 children
<b>Material</b>	Soil (free or in pots), seeds, water
<b>Process</b>	<p>The children create a school garden. They plant and grow, water at times and harvest when the vegetables are ready.</p> <p>The activity can start with a circle talk with the children. Make a mindmap of the ideas and plans of the children (This is applying technique 9: documenting, see Chapter 5.2). Children can bring some seeds from the plants they grow at home.</p>
<b>Vocabulary</b>	Seed, plant, harvest, cook, straight, plough, dig, hands, wash, ...
<b>Possible questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What tools do we need?</li> <li>- What shall we plant?</li> <li>- Why do you want to plant this?</li> <li>- How does that work, planting?</li> <li>- How can we make the seed grow?</li> <li>- Do all the plants need the same? How?</li> <li>- How do your parents do that? Have you asked them?</li> <li>- How deep must the seed go?</li> </ul>



Example activity 4: **New rice**

<b>Type of activity</b>	Charades
<b>Grouping</b>	All class or small groups of 5-6 children
<b>Material</b>	List of daily activities, optional: white sheet
<b>Process</b>	<p>In the dance many daily life activities are represented. In this activity, children will act out certain activities of daily life, and the other children guess what they are doing. This can also be done via shadows (child stands behind a white sheet with a strong light behind the child).</p> <p>The teacher can make a list of activities, but the list can also be drawn up by the children, once they understand what is going to happen. The list can be created by a class brainstorm.</p> <p>The teacher whispers the activity in the ear of a child, the child acts it out, the rest guesses. Children can also give each other the activity or topic for acting out.</p> <p>The words can relate to harvesting, but depending on the suggestion of the children, any activity of daily life can be used.</p>
<b>Vocabulary</b>	Planting, cutting, harvesting, weeding, dancing, cooking, chopping wood, ...
<b>Possible questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I wonder what Ms. X is doing. What do you think?</li> <li>- Why do you think so?</li> <li>- What do the others think? Let's ask Ms. X?</li> <li>- Do you have ideas for other activities? Which ones?</li> <li>- Who would like to whisper an instruction for Y?</li> <li>- Who would like to act out?</li> <li>- Was it difficult the act out? Why?</li> </ul>



Example activity 5: **New rice**

<b>Type of activity</b>	Collecting and drawing wishes
<b>Grouping</b>	All class or small groups of 5-6 children
<b>Material</b>	Crayons, paint, paper, pencils
<b>Process</b>	When celebrating new rice, adults wish for good health and a good new harvest. These are wishes. A wish is when you hope something is going to happen. But what can we wish for? In a conversation with the children the teacher explores their wishes. There is a general brainstorm. Then children can draw or paint their wishes. When they are finished they are invited to share with the other children. The teacher can write, on the drawing, "I am wishing for ... (what the child says)". All drawings can be combined in the Big Wish-book of the class.
<b>Vocabulary</b>	Wishes, hope, want, feel, see, ideas, ...
<b>Possible questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- I wonder what you would wish for?</li><li>- Is that a wish for yourself or for someone else?</li><li>- Why do you wish this?</li><li>- What do the other children think about this wish?</li><li>- Can you draw your wish?</li><li>- Can you tell me about your drawing?</li></ul>



### Example activity 6: New rice

<b>Type of activity</b>	<p>Designing clothes</p> <p>This activity has 3 sub-activities:</p> <p>6.1. Visit to community member who can show traditional clothes</p> <p>6.2. Traditional clothes of other people: research with books or internet</p> <p>6.3. Art and craft activity</p>
<b>Grouping</b>	Small groups of 5-6 children
<b>Material</b>	Crayons, paint, paper, pencils, loose parts, natural materials, cell phone to take pictures
<b>Process</b>	<p>During the festival, adults wear traditional clothes. How do these clothes look like? Who makes them and why should they be worn on such occasions? Maybe they first need to go and find out? A visit to one of the family homes can be phase 1 of this activity. In phase 2 children can compare traditional clothes of people in other communities in Vietnam or in the world.</p> <p>The group can then jointly discuss what they can do with all this information and how: make clothes, draw or paint clothes?</p> <p>Phase 4 is the actual designing, painting or making clothes in the classroom. Elder children can be asked to draw a plan before actually crafting the clothes.</p>
<b>Vocabulary</b>	Clothes, colours, long, short, dress, trousers, materials, ...
<b>Possible questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What are we going to ask Ms. A?</li> <li>- What do we want to know? What are you interested in?</li> <li>- How do we call this in your language?</li> <li>- Do all traditional clothes look the same? What is different?</li> <li>- Which one do you like most? Why?</li> <li>- Can you explain what is on you plan?</li> <li>- Do you have other ideas?</li> <li>- How could we make this?</li> <li>- What materials do we need? What can we do with what we have in our class?</li> <li>- What patterns do you want to use?</li> <li>- Is it difficult?</li> <li>- How do you feel about your costume?</li> </ul>

The activities above do not all have to happen in 1 day. It is nice to focus for a certain period on one theme. Develop many activities and corners so the theme/story you collected in the community is clearly visible in all materials, activities, corners and interactions for a period of time (e.g. 2 weeks). Consider closing the corners that are not linked to the theme of these activities (e.g. close the doctor's corner if not related to the topic.)

The same process can happen to stories children bring to the classroom or experiences, interests and worries they share. Below an example:



*Example: **Ice cream***

Today, Le arrives at school and during the circle time she shares that they went out last night to eat ice cream. The teacher asks her more about this. What were they celebrating? What flavour does she like? Do other children like ice cream? Where did she have the ice cream? The children are so excited about the ice cream, that the teacher decides to use this story to develop corner activities.



*Example: **Ice cream***

During the circle time, children show excitement about the ice cream story of Le. They want to set up an ice cream shop. Some children want to find out how to make ice cream, others want to work on a menu and others indicate that they need beautiful cups to serve the ice cream. The teacher captures all the ideas in a mind map.

All these contributions can become activities for the whole class or for corner activities.

Possible activities include:

1. Ice cream making
2. Decoration of classroom to look like an ice cream shop
3. Developing and designing a menu
4. Preparing advertisement
5. Constructing an ice cream machine
6. Tasting and smelling different flavours, exploring senses
7. ...

Many more activities can be developed, based and triggered on the theme, in line with children's interest ...



**Task:** Design activities

1. Brainstorm with the children on possible corner activities that relate to the theme of the local story or materials. What do children want to learn and do?
2. Work out each activity. Make sure they are meaningful, playful and language-rich (applying all skills from Part 2).
3. Make sure your activity is not reinforcing stereotypes.
4. Use the checklist below or make your own checklist. What is important?

The checklist below helps us to make sure that the activities value diversity, is child centred, playful and language rich.

Checklist	Yes	No	Explain how/why
<b>Diversity</b>			
a) Does the activity use the context known to the child?			
b) Is it respectful?			
c) Is it valuing diversity (not including stereotypes)			
<b>Objectives</b>			
d) Is the activity linked to the curriculum?			
e) Is it linked to several development domains?			
<b>Child centred and playful</b>			
f) Is the activity child-centred? Does it start from child initiative?			
g) Is the activity playful?			
h) Is it a meaningful activity for children?			
<b>Language rich environment</b>			
i) Have you prepared which techniques you will apply? What will be your role? Identify what you will do in the corner.			
j) Have you prepared the target words for this activity? Which?			
k) Have you prepared the questions you will ask? Is it a variety of questions?			
l) Have you consulted and discussed with parents to get more ideas, materials, support?			

**Published on February 2021, by:**

© 2021 VVOB – education for development  
Julien Dillensplein 1 bus 2A, 1060 Brussels, Belgium  
Telephone: +32 2 209 07 99; Website: [www.vvob.org](http://www.vvob.org)



### **Some rights reserved**

This work is a product of the staff of VVOB, based on the collaboration, findings and experiences of VVOB and its partners in the 'Mitigating Preschool Children's Barriers to Learning in disadvantaged and ethnically diverse districts in Central Vietnam' (BaMi) programme and complemented by relevant literature. The findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed in this work do not necessarily reflect the views of VVOB, its Board of Directors, or the funding donors. VVOB does not guarantee the accuracy of the data included in this work. The boundaries, colors, denominations, and other information shown on any map in this work do not imply any judgment on the part of VVOB concerning the legal status of any territory or the endorsement or acceptance of such boundaries.

### **Rights and Permissions**

Responsible Editor:

Sven Rooms

© 2021 VVOB - education for development



This work is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial Share-alike 4.0 International license (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0). Under the Creative Commons Attribution license, you are free to copy, distribute, transmit, and adapt this work, only for noncommercial purposes, under the following conditions:

Please cite the work as follows: *VVOB – education for development. 2021. "Language Rich Interactions In The Preschool – A Guide For Preschool Teachers"*

All queries on rights and licenses should be addressed to VVOB, Julien Dillensplein 1 bus 2A, 1060 Brussels, Belgium - Telephone: +32 2 209 07 99; E-mail: [info@vvob.org](mailto:info@vvob.org); Website: [www.vvob.org](http://www.vvob.org)

### **Disclaimer**

This publication contains references to other publications and websites. VVOB cannot be held responsible for current or future content of these publications and websites, nor for the content of external publications and websites that refer to this publication of VVOB.

This publication was produced with the financial support of the Governments of Belgium and Flanders. Its contents are the sole responsibility of VVOB and do not necessarily reflect the views of these actors. The Governments of Belgium and Flanders cannot be held responsible for the content of this publication.

### **(Co-)funded by:**



**Belgium**  
partner in development



**Flanders**  
State of the Art





3-5 Nguyen Binh, Hai Chau District, Da Nang, Viet Nam  
+84 (0) 236 3923332  
<https://vietnam.vvob.org>  
<http://fb.com/vvobvietnam>

# LANGUAGE RICH INTERACTIONS IN THE PRESCHOOL

A guide for preschool teachers



## **PART 4: HOW TO SUPPORT TEACHERS IN CREATING LANGUAGE RICH INTERACTIONS AND ENVIRONMENTS?**

# Content

**Part 4: How to support teachers in creating language rich interactions and environments?**

Chapter 8: Creating an enabling environment.....	01
8.1. What is an enabling learning environment for teachers?.....	01
8.2. How to create an enabling environment?.....	03
Chapter 9: Encouraging collaborative learning.....	05
9.1. Why collaborative learning?.....	05
9.2. Some ideas for collaborative learning.....	05
Chapter 10 : Supporting and coaching.....	07
10.1. Class observation.....	08
10.2. Coaching and support conversation.....	10
Annexure 3: Observation guide for a language rich environment.....	12
Observation guide for language rich corner play.....	12
Observation guide for other activities.....	14
<b>References</b>	<b>16</b>



## INTRODUCTION

Preschool teachers can play a pivotal role in addressing many of the barriers, experienced by children from ethnic minorities, and by doing so, increase their levels of involvement and wellbeing in their classrooms and school environments. It is therefore important to give attention to teachers' professional development needs.

This part is targeting school leaders, core trainers, and BOET/DOET officers. This part uses and applies some of the contents of the TPD sourcebook (VVOB (2020). Supporting school-based Teacher Professional Development - A practical source book for TPD facilitators. Da Nang, Vietnam).

The sourcebook can be found in the publication section in the VVOB Vietnam website at <https://vietnam.vvob.org/en/publications> or QR code access:



**PART 4:**  
**HOW TO SUPPORT TEACHERS IN**  
**CREATING LANGUAGE RICH**  
**INTERACTIONS AND ENVIRONMENTS?**



## Chapter 8: Creating an enabling environment



**This chapter aims to:**

- Give you a better understanding of an enabling environment for professional learning
- Unpack the role of school leaders, BOET and DOET officers in creating a supportive and enabling environment

Although new knowledge and skills can be introduced during a training or workshop or via reading this material, the actual learning takes place at school, in the classroom, where teachers try to implement what they have learnt. Attending a training on how to improve the language and interaction in the classroom is just the first step of the learning process for change.

### 8.1.What is an enabling learning environment for teachers?

An environment where teachers feel safe to try out, where they can take initiative and own the changes they are making, where they feel supported and motivated, is called *an enabling learning environment*. The table below further explains which elements are essential in an *enabling environment*.



**Task**

1. Are you creating an enabling environment for your teachers to grow, where they can take initiative and lead their own learning, where they feel supported?  
Fill in the checklist below.
2. Identify opportunities for improvement.

	Yes	No	Can improve	Comments: Formulate challenges and opportunities, next steps,...
Trust, safety and respect:				
Teachers trust their leadership and colleagues.				
Teachers dare to share their challenges.				
Teachers feel safe to try out new things and make mistakes.				
Teacher’s attempts to improve are recognised and appreciated.				
Successes, even when they are small, are celebrated.				

Shared leadership:				
Teachers can take the lead in the topics they have expertise in.				
Teachers are given responsibility to help other teachers to grow.				
Teacher initiative is encouraged.				
Cooperative culture:				
There is a habit of working and learning together.				
All team members need each other to get to the intended outcome, creating language rich environments.				
Shared meaning, vision and mission:				
All teachers have the same understanding of language rich environments and interactions.				
All teachers have the same understanding of valuing diversity and local context				
There is a common vision and mission: they know where the school is going and why.				
New approaches become part of the district guidelines.				
Clear communication:				
There is clear communication about expectations, innovations and change.				
Support the whole process:				
There are a series of TPD activities that help teachers with every step				
Continued support needs to be planned for each step.				
Time is provided for teachers to learn and observe colleagues				
<b>Conclusions and way forward:</b>				
<p><i>Formulate priorities to work on. What will you do? How? When?</i></p>				



## 8.2. How to create an enabling environment?

### 1. The role of the school leader

What can a school leader do?

- Develop a school wide vision on language and diversity in your preschool.
- Integrate school based TPD on language rich environments and valuing diversity in planning and monitoring.
- Identify learning and support needs of teachers.
- Create a learning culture which is conducive to collaborative learning, promoting enquiry and building capacity; teachers learn from and with each other. The SL supports learning by facilitating professional reflection (bring teachers together to jointly reflect on the teachers' classroom observations of learners and subsequent actions) and problem solving. This can include learning from peers across schools, districts, provinces.
- Space for teacher's initiative; autonomy for teachers to try out new approaches and adapt existing plans and methods.
- Create a safe environment where teachers can share their worries, challenges and opinions and where teachers can try out, make mistakes, and improve.
- Do targeted monitoring of class practice (environment, materials, interactions, activities), document and celebrate successes towards higher wellbeing, involvement and participation in learning of all children.
- Create practical conditions to implement by providing resources, materials, space and time for teachers to learn and develop.
- Apply support and coaching (see later).

### 2. The role of the BOET

BOET creates an enabling environment for schools and teachers by doing the following

- Encourage schools to develop a clear vision on language and diversity, guidelines with links to the policy.
- School leaders and teachers need to feel safe when implementing changes towards quality preschool education.
- Identify learning and support needs of schools, school leaders and teachers.  
Develop capacity of teachers and school leaders on identified needs regarding language rich interactions and valuing diversity via effective (school based) TPD:
  - Encourage sharing of good practices during cluster PTM, professional training and other inter-school exchange.
  - Facilitate reflection and improvement via analysing existing practices and find opportunities for more child-directed activities.
  - Support with resources and expertise (inspiration guides, videos, ...).
- Ensure that all TPD offered to schools and teachers is in line with early childhood education approaches and policies (e.g. child-centred education, Strengthening Vietnamese).
- Ensure that all TPD offered to schools and teachers is of high quality and effective.
- Support/develop capacity of school leaders in how they can support and coach their teachers as learning professionals.
- Monitor, document and harvest practices in the district. Analyse and learn from it. Formulate conclusions and recommendations for provincial and national level.

### 3. The role of the DOET

DOET creates an enabling environment for districts, schools and teachers

By doing the following

- Encourage BOET and schools to engage with preschool methodologies via a clear vision on language and diversity, guidelines with links to the policy. BOET, school leaders and teachers need to feel safe when implementing changes towards quality preschool education.
- Identify learning and support needs of BOET, schools, school leaders and teachers.
- In collaboration with BOET, develop capacity of teachers and school leaders on identified needs via effective (school based) TPD.
  - Encourage sharing of good practices during provincial education networks and cluster PTM and other inter-school exchange.
  - Facilitate reflection and improvement via analysing existing practices and find opportunities for more child-directed activities.
  - Support with resources and expertise (inspiration guides, videos, ...).
- Ensure that all TPD offered to schools and teachers is in line with early childhood education approaches and policies (e.g. child-centred education, Strengthening Vietnamese).
- Ensure that all TPD offered to schools and teachers is of high quality and effective.
- Support/develop capacity of school leaders, via BOET, in how they can support and coach their teachers as learning professionals.
- Monitor, document and harvest practices in the district. Analyse and learn from it. Formulate conclusions and recommendations for national level.
- Function as a hub for exchanging effective preschool language and diversity practices within the province.
- Develop synergies between national, provincial and district on preschool learning.



#### Task

1. Look back at previous task. Read the opportunities for improvement you identified.
2. Check the list above “By doing the following”: can you pick up additional ideas for action? Formulate at least 3 actions: “I will....”

## Chapter 9: Encouraging collaborative learning



### This chapter aims to:

- Explain how school leaders and officers or any other TPD facilitator can encourage teachers to learn with and from each other.

### 9.1. Why collaborative learning?

In this guide many new approaches and ideas are discussed. Applying these in the classroom means changing practices. Changing habits is not easy. Fortunately, teachers are not alone. They can work together.

Learning is easier when you do it together.

- Teachers can share their experiences.
- Teachers can learn from the experiences from other teachers?
- Teachers can jointly develop, design and try out

Together teachers know more than alone. Together teachers can find solutions for challenges they experience. They can inspire each other.

As a school leader, core teacher or BOET officer you can encourage teachers to work together and learn with and from each other.

### 9.2. Some ideas for collaborative learning

#### 1. Co-teaching

Teachers can jointly prepare a lesson or activities including the creation of language rich environments and interactions. They can then do it together, each taking an active role and spending time with children. After the lesson they can reflect together, e.g. by using the checklist in Chapter 4: Creating a language rich environment.

#### 2. Peer observation

Another way how teachers can learn from each other, is by observing and being observed. You can encourage this. There are two options:

##### Observing a good practice of a teacher

Do you like **what a teacher is doing** in her classroom? Ask her if others may come and visit her class. Encourage colleagues to observe how she is applying a specific action. Check how it impacts on the wellbeing and involvement of the children.

Ask teachers to discuss with the observed colleague what they have learned.

In this case the observed teacher is sharing a good practice in a natural context. The observer is learning.

This is not a demonstration lesson. It is a lesson that could take place any day of the year.

##### Asking feedback from the observer

Maybe some teachers would like the input from each other on what they are doing? Encourage teachers to ask a colleague to come and observe them. The observed teacher clearly identifies what the visitor should observe. Maybe a specific action point? Maybe the interaction with children? The effect of the teacher on the well-being and involvement on some specific children?

After the observation, the observed teacher discusses with the observer what she has observed. What can the observed teacher learn from this? Can the observer inspire the observed teacher with some next steps?

In this case the observed teacher is learning. The observer is giving feedback and ideas.

#### 4. Professional Teacher Meeting

In your school professional teacher meeting (PTM) or cluster PTM or in your discussions with colleagues you can integrate learning and working on language related topics. Here are some ideas.

a. A **case** to discuss:

1. Invite a teacher to share a case from the classroom. The case is selected based on the objective of the PTM (e.g. asking open ended questions, using symbols for classroom management, playful interactions in the classroom, ...).
  - 1 The teacher starts from the case, explains all steps:
    - What have you observed?
    - What barriers did you see?
    - What have you changed or tried?
  - 2 The teacher **asks** colleagues for additional ideas. "I have tried this, but I would like your ideas".
  - 3 Discuss challenges.
2. Ask colleagues to do the same in the same or the next meeting. Make this a standard item on the agenda of each school PTM/cluster PTM.

b. Language Rich Environment **inspiration** sessions:

1. Focus on one circle of the Language Rich Environment.
2. Ask all teachers to share examples of how they all have applied changes pertaining to this circle.
3. Have you thought of capturing some video or pictures to illustrate how the circle was done? Watch it together and discuss.
4. Challenge each other to come with more creative ideas!

c. **Good practice** exhibition:

1. All participants prepare a poster (alone or in pairs):
  - 1 Describe a successful change in your class,
  - 2 How it was initiated?
  - 3 What effect did it have?
2. All participants engage with the posters, ask questions and interact.

d. **Challenge and solution session.**

1. Share a challenge on a well-defined topic.
2. Ask all your colleagues to generate solutions and ideas.
3. Select some possible ideas.
4. Discuss together how you can apply this in practice.

For more ideas, consult Chapter 3 of the TPD Source book (TPD sourcebook (VVOB (2020). Supporting school-based Teacher Professional Development - A practical source book for TPD facilitators. Da Nang, Vietnam).

## Chapter 10: Supporting and coaching



### This chapter aims to:

- Explain how school leaders and officers or any other TPD facilitator can coach and support teachers in their learning process

Professional development about language rich environments, applying and reflecting on the results and the way how to improve can be done via many methods of school based TPD: inhouse professional development per topic (training), professional teacher meeting, demonstration lesson, ...

The TPD source book can give you hints and tips for each of these methods (Chapter 3).

Here we want to zoom in on how a school leader (or any TPD facilitator or officer) can have a **coaching** conversation with a teacher after a class **observation**. This coaching conversation will be more powerful if it is complemented by some video recordings.

### Video coaching

Video coaching is coaching that uses not only information noted by the observer during the observation but also video recordings. The conversation becomes more interesting because the teacher can also see what the observer (the coach, the school leader) has seen. The teacher can reflect more on what has happened, and the coach can listen more. By watching the video together, the teacher may realize points for further improvement by themselves.

Teachers can record themselves or ask a colleague to do so. The coach and the teacher can watch the video together and have a coaching conversation.

However, teachers do not always feel comfortable about being recorded.

What can you do?

- Ask *permission* of the teacher. Respect the teacher's choice.
- Use the *teacher's cell phone* for recording. By doing so the teacher remains the owner of the recordings
- Record *short* clips that show good practices, but that also have potential for improvement.

### Focus

A key word in TPD in general and in coaching specifically is *focus*. The more specific the observation objective is, the more learning effect your observation and coaching will have. Remember that it is the person who is observed and coached who should set the objective. But this is done jointly.



**An example:**  
The focus of today's observation with teacher Nhung is the use of varied questions during corner work. The school leader (coach) will not focus on classroom decoration, but specifically on the use of age appropriate and interaction stimulating questions. The school leader will note down the questions asked by the teacher and also make notes on how these trigger language, wellbeing and involvement with the children



- Task**
1. Compare the following observation objectives. Which one has more focus?
    - a. "using varied questions during corner play with 4 year old"
    - b. "applying child centred approach"
  2. Identify 3 examples of possible observation and coaching objectives related to language rich environments and interactions. (Remember that it is the person who is observed and coached who should set the objective!)



**Answer:**  
The observation objective "using varied questions during corner play with 4 year olds" has more focus. It will guide the observer to look for specific examples and opportunities for improvement. The discussion or coaching conversation after the observation will lead to more specific and concrete discussions. It will be easier to identify concrete points for improvement. E.g. "I will ask more how and why questions during corner play time."

1. Class observation

This class observation is not part of teacher assessment, but solely for teacher professional development. By doing class observations, school leaders help individual or small groups of teachers in their professional development.

In the tables below you will find some points for attention and tips and tricks. You can also use this table as a check list.

### Before:

- I create a comfortable, safe and friendly atmosphere, that focuses on learning. I clarify that this observation is not part of teacher's assessment.
- I work with teachers to identify their critical needs for support and coaching. I use this as a starting point for the observation and learning. The observation can also lead to identification of learning needs.
- We jointly agree on a clear learning and observation focus.
- We agree on the **observation tool** (or part of a tool) that will be used.
- I ask permission of the teacher to make some video recordings with the phone of the teacher which will be mainly using for reflection meeting after class observation.

### Observation tool

An observation tool is a form that allows you to keep focus during observation. The tool needs to correspond with the objective for the observation. More focus will improve the learning potential of the TPD activity.



*An example:*

- In Annexure 3 (page 12) an observation tool can be found to observe the language rich environment. This tool provides guidance for observing both corner activities as other activities
- The checklist of Chapter 5 can also be used as an observation tool.

Both tools can be used entirely, or certain parts can be selected, depending on the objective of the observation and coaching activity.

### During:

- I create a comfortable, safe and friendly atmosphere, that focuses on sharing, interaction and learning.
- I ask permission to make short video recordings with the phone of the teacher.
- I use the **observation tool** to observe.
- I observe the teacher's approach in relation to the children's actions (verbal and non-verbal).
- I write down what I have seen/heard (observations), not interpretations or judgements.
- I record short video clips that show good practices, but that also have potential for improvement.
- I am focused and present.

### After:

- I thank the teacher for the observation.
- We agree on a moment to discuss the observation soon after the observation.
- I look through my notes (observations) and identify:
  - o Positive and good examples of language rich interactions and environments
  - o Opportunities to expand language learning.
- I select video clips that have most potential for learning on the agreed observation focus.





### Task

1. Plan a class observation with one of your teachers.
2. Use the text above to guide you.
3. After the observation you can use the points for attention and tips and tricks as you check list. What did you do well? What could you improve?
4. Formulate at least 3 actions: "Next time, I will...."

## 2. Coaching and support conversation

This conversation is not part of teacher appraisal or assessment. It is a very powerful tool in teacher professional development. The school leader helps individual or small groups of teachers reflect, identify points for growth and take the next steps in their professional learning and in their professional development.

Instead of giving direct instructions, a coach aims to unlock a person's potential to maximise their own performance. It is helping them to learn rather than teaching them. As a coach, **you don't need to give the answers**, nor solutions or advice. You actually help the person you coach to find answers and a way forward.

### Before:

- See "After" Class observation

### During:

- I thank the teacher for the observation.
- I take time for the conversation and remain focused.
- In case of video coaching: We jointly watch video clips
- I invite teachers to self-assess and state what they are satisfied with and what they are not satisfied about, regarding to the selected objective within creating language rich environments and interactions.
- I share observations where relevant.
- I ask deepening questions. I relate the children's wellbeing and involvement to the teacher's actions.
- I help teachers to keep focus and reflect deeply on what was observed. I am specific and use concrete examples that I have observed (action teachers and effect on children).
- I invite teachers to suggest how to change/adjust the language and interaction environment.
- I help teachers to come to a specific and feasible way forward.
- I ask teachers what support they need for the next steps.
- I link the observation to further opportunities for professional development:
  - o I share and jointly discuss guides such as videos, lesson plans, ...
  - o Teachers get the opportunity to try out the suggested adjusted approaches
  - o Teachers can observe a good practice of a peer (in school or district) who is more experienced in this area (e.g. this teacher is good in asking open ended questions)
  - o Teachers can collaborate with other teachers to jointly learn more about selected topics
- I ask teachers how the coaching conversation was experienced. "Can something be improved in my approach?" "What should happen during the next observation and discussion, to make it a more worthwhile learning experience for you?"

**After:**

- I create opportunities and timing for teachers to try out/practice new approaches.
- I link the observation to further opportunities for professional development:
  - o I share and jointly discuss guides such as videos, lesson plans, ...
  - o Teachers get the opportunity to try out the suggested adjusted approaches
  - o Teachers can observe a good practice of a peer (in school or district) who is more experienced in this area (e.g. this teacher is good in asking open ended questions)
  - o Teachers can collaborate with other teachers to jointly learn more about selected topics
- I follow-up implementation of what was agreed upon.
- I encourage and celebrate teachers' achievement.
- I reflect on my coaching by answering the questions in the box "task".

The TPD source book can give you more hints and tips:

- Chapter 3.4.: an example of a coaching conversation
- Chapter 4.8.: how to coach and support?

**Task**

Answer the following reflection questions after your coaching conversation:

1. How did it go in general?
2. Did you focus on the topic that was agreed upon?
3. Did you use different types of feedback?
4. Did you mostly ask questions, or did you talk mostly?
5. Did you jointly determine the next step for the coachee?
6. Was it respectful and developmental?
7. What are your points for learning?

## Annexure 3: Observation guide for a language rich environment

With the use of a viewer or observation guide classroom observations can become more focused and the discussion after the observation will have a greater impact.

Some suggestions:

- Agree with the observed teacher what the focus of attention will be
- Write down concrete observations, not judgements or interpretations
- Ask permission to make video recordings. Record brief/short clips. Consider using the phone of the teacher you observe. Use these recordings to jointly discuss progress, using the viewer guide as guideline.

### 1. Observation guide for language rich corner play

Organization of corner work	What have you seen? Write down concrete examples.
1. Is the corner easy to handle for children? Can they work independently? What did you see?	
2. How is there interaction with the other corners?	
3. How are the groups composed (boys and girls, different ages, different abilities)?	
4. Is there a visible link between materials and activities in the corners and the theme and learning goals? How?	

#### 1. A positive and safe classroom climate

1. Can the children try things themselves? Are own initiative and participation possible? What examples have you seen?	
2. Do the children get space to speak? Is there respect for their own language (home language, regional dialect, mother tongue)?	
3. Is it cozy in the corner? What can you see that shows that the children feel at ease there (do they laugh, ...)? (observable behavior)?	
4. How is the layout and decoration of the corner related to the world of the children? Is attention paid to the home environment of 'all' children?	

2. Meaningful offer and tasks

1. Is there enough material in the corner to reach the intended goals?	
2. How is the corner adjusted to the interest and living environment of the children?	
3. Are the materials and the games lifelike, close to reality, rich and varied? Can the children recognize their own life situation? How?	
4. How does the corner challenge children? Is the "gap" between what the child is able to do and what the child should do not too big? Does the child get opportunities to develop in different development domains (competencies)? Which?	
5. How do the materials in the corner offer opportunity for open play (interpretation by the children/ differentiation)?	
6. How do the design and materials offer opportunities for interaction between the children?	
7. Are the goals for playing in the corner in line with the development goals, and curriculum goals? Is working in the corners a means for achieving functional goals? What do you see?	

**3. Language support via interaction**

1. Does the teacher take time to observe the play in the corner for social skills / language skills / ...? When and how?	
2. How does the teacher play in the corner? How does she give incentives for language enrichment (question / problem clarification / articulating what you see the children do)?	
3. What does the teacher do to make her language offering understandable for the children during the play (repeat your language offering in other words / visual support such as gestures - prints - objects ...)?	
4. Does the teacher try to find out whether the children understand the language offerings properly and whether she understands the children correctly (meaning negotiation)? How?	
5. How does the teacher give feedback which is mainly focused on the content of what the child says and less on the form (correct language)?	
General:	

2. Observation guide for other activities

1. A positive and safe classroom climate

1. What could you see that shows that the children were at ease?	
2. In what way does the teacher discuss the activities with the children?	
3. Do the children speak spontaneously with each other? With the teacher? How? When?	
4. What makes the classroom attractive, beautiful, tasteful and cozy?	
5. Are the children positively confirmed? How?	
6. What atmosphere do you feel in the classroom? Note, chaos can be positive!	

2. Meaningful offer and tasks

1. What did you see that shows the involvement of the children during the activities? Some examples!	
2. What signs of initiative do you see? Can children make their own choices? Make proposals?	
3. Were the children intensely involved during the task? Were they enthusiastic? What did you see?	
4. Which activities were based on the theme?	
5. Do the activities match the level of development of preschoolers? A few examples?	

3. Language support via interaction

1. In what way does the teacher discuss the activities with the children?	
2. Has the teacher encouraged the children to solve a problem themselves? How?	
3. What efforts does the teacher make to understand the children? Did the teacher check whether the children understood her?	
4. Does the teacher connect with what the children can do and enjoy? Does the teacher stimulate the children to gain new experiences and to start research? How? Examples!	
5. What questions does the teacher ask? Have you heard open questions and thought-provoking questions?	
6. Does the teacher give feedback to the children? Which activities? For product, content or, process?	
7. What encouragement from the teacher do you hear?	
General:	



## References

---

- Allport, G. (1954), *The nature of prejudice*, Addison-Wesley Publishing Company. <https://archive.org/details/natureofprejudic00allprich>
- Berebrouckx, A. (1998). *De eend van Jules*. Antwerpen: Uitgeverij Zwijzen Belgie Nv.
- Colpin, M., e.a. (1994). *Taal-Materiaal. Talig omgaan met materialen in de kleuterklas*. Deurne: Wolters
- Colpin, M., e.a. (1995). *Taal-Verhaal. Prentenboeken, verhalen en drama in de kleuterklas*. Deurne: Wolters Plan-
- Colpin, M., e.a. (1997). *Taal-Centraal. Taalbeschouwing in de kleuterklas*. Deurne: Wolters Plantyn.
- Cummins, J. (1979). Linguistic interdependence and the educational development of bilingual children. *Review of educational research*, 49, pp. 222-51.
- Cummins, J. (1984). *Bilingualism and Special Education. Issues in the Assessment and Placement*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Grøver, V., Rydland, V., Gustafsson, J.-E., & Snow, C. (2020). Shared book reading in preschool supports bilingual children's second language learning: A cluster-randomized trial. To appear in *Child Development*.
- Hadley, E. B., & Dickinson, D. K. (2019). Cues for word-learning during shared book-reading and guided play in preschool. *Journal of child language*, 46(6), 1202-1227.
- Hadley, E., Newman, K., & Mock, J. (2020). Setting the Stage for TALK: Strategies for Encouraging Language Building Conversations. *The Reading Teacher*, <https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1900>
- Jaspaert, k. (ed.) (2003). *Taal-verhaal. Prentenboeken, verhalen en drama in de kleuterklas*. Mechelen: Wolters Plantyn.
- Regan A. R. Gurung, Loreto R. Prieto, 2009. *Getting Culture: Incorporating Diversity Across the Curriculum*. Stylus Publishing: Virginia.
- Schubert, D., Schubert, I. (1986). *Monkie*. Rotterdam: Lemniscaat.
- Socialist Republic of Vietnam (2016). plan to implement the project "Strengthening Vietnamese for preschool and primary school children from ethnic minority areas" for the period 2016 - 2020 with a vision to 2025. Decision no. 1008/QĐ-TTg02. Hanoi: Ministry of Education and Training.
- Stephenson, G. R. (1967). Cultural acquisition of a specific learned response among rhesus monkeys. In: Starek, D., Schneider, R., and Kuhn, H. J. (eds.), *Progress in Primatology*, Stuttgart: Fischer, pp. 279-288.). [https://www.throwcase.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Cultural-Acquisition-of-Specific-Learned-Response\\_Stephenson\\_1966.pdf](https://www.throwcase.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Cultural-Acquisition-of-Specific-Learned-Response_Stephenson_1966.pdf)
- Verhelst, M. (Ed.) (2009). *Framework of reference for Early Second Language acquisition*, Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
- Verhelst, M. (2010). A box full of feelings. Promoting infants' languages acquisition all day long in The task based approach to language education, from theory to practice (Van den Branden, K. Ed.).
- VVOB. 2020. *Ensuring children's wellbeing and involvement in Vietnamese preschools: A practical guide for reflective teachers*.
- VVOB (2020). *Supporting school-based Teacher Professional Development - A practical source book for TPD facilitators*. Da Nang, Vietnam.
- White, P., Laxton, J. & Brooke, R. (2009). *Reflection: importance, theory and practice*. Leeds: University of Leeds.
- Zipoli, R. P., Jr., Coyne, M. D., & McCoach, D. B. (2011). Enhancing Vocabulary Intervention for Kindergarten Students: Strategic Integration of Semantically Related and Embedded Word Review. *Remedial and Special Education*, 32(2), 131-143.
- <http://earlyyearsblog.eu/7-tips-to-make-shared-book-reading-even-more-beneficial-for-dual-language-learners/>
- <https://kleutergewijs.wordpress.com/2020/02/26/5-tips-voor-krachtige-voorleesmomenten-met-meertalige-kleuters/>
- <https://www.teachervision.com/teaching-strategies/getting-know-your-students>
- <http://www.oecd.org/education/ceri/oecdtoolkitonteachingfordiversity.htm>
- <https://www.arts.kuleuven.be/cto/materialen/kleuter/taalverwerving/Taal-materiaal-verhaal-centraal>
- <https://meertaligheid.be/assets/pdf/meertalige-taalverwerving.pdf>
- [http://taalunieversum.org/onderwijs/taalforum/toon\\_vraag.php?vraagid=104](http://taalunieversum.org/onderwijs/taalforum/toon_vraag.php?vraagid=104)
- <https://metrotaal.be/content/3-bouwstenen/1-kennis/bronnenkaart-meertalige-taalverwerving.pdf>

**Published on February 2021, by:**

© 2021 VVOB – education for development  
Julien Dillensplein 1 bus 2A, 1060 Brussels, Belgium  
Telephone: +32 2 209 07 99; Website: [www.vvob.org](http://www.vvob.org)



### **Some rights reserved**

This work is a product of the staff of VVOB, based on the collaboration, findings and experiences of VVOB and its partners in the 'Mitigating Preschool Children's Barriers to Learning in disadvantaged and ethnically diverse districts in Central Vietnam' (BaMi) programme and complemented by relevant literature. The findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed in this work do not necessarily reflect the views of VVOB, its Board of Directors, or the funding donors. VVOB does not guarantee the accuracy of the data included in this work. The boundaries, colors, denominations, and other information shown on any map in this work do not imply any judgment on the part of VVOB concerning the legal status of any territory or the endorsement or acceptance of such boundaries.

### **Rights and Permissions**

Responsible Editor:

Sven Rooms

© 2021 VVOB - education for development



This work is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial Share-alike 4.0 International license (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0). Under the Creative Commons Attribution license, you are free to copy, distribute, transmit, and adapt this work, only for noncommercial purposes, under the following conditions:

Please cite the work as follows: *VVOB – education for development. 2021. "Language Rich Interactions In The Preschool – A Guide For Preschool Teachers"*

All queries on rights and licenses should be addressed to VVOB, Julien Dillensplein 1 bus 2A, 1060 Brussels, Belgium - Telephone: +32 2 209 07 99; E-mail: [info@vvob.org](mailto:info@vvob.org); Website: [www.vvob.org](http://www.vvob.org)

### **Disclaimer**

This publication contains references to other publications and websites. VVOB cannot be held responsible for current or future content of these publications and websites, nor for the content of external publications and websites that refer to this publication of VVOB.

This publication was produced with the financial support of the Governments of Belgium and Flanders. Its contents are the sole responsibility of VVOB and do not necessarily reflect the views of these actors. The Governments of Belgium and Flanders cannot be held responsible for the content of this publication.

### **(Co-)funded by:**



**Belgium**  
partner in development



**Flanders**  
State of the Art



3-5 Nguyen Binh, Hai Chau District, Da Nang, Viet Nam  
+84 (0) 236 3923332  
<https://vietnam.vvob.org>  
<http://fb.com/vvobvietnam>