

Curriculum for English as a Foreign Language in Steiner Waldorf Schools

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General aspects and aims for Classes 1 to 12

The aim of foreign language teaching in Steiner Waldorf schools is to encourage a positive attitude towards people of other cultures and languages, as well as fostering human understanding generally through establishing the ability to empathise with another person's perspective and way of seeing the world. Learning foreign languages offers the individual other perspectives on his or her own language, culture, attitudes and mentality, thus helping the pupil see the world in a more differentiated way.

The aims therefore of learning foreign languages are composite. On the one hand, the practical, utilitarian goal of being able to understand another language through listening and reading and being able to express oneself with a good degree of fluency in speaking and writing. On the other hand, to introduce the students to the character, customs and traditions, literature, culture, geography, history typical of the peoples who speak the given language. The third, pedagogical aim of foreign language teaching is to assist the overall development of the child through the subject specific qualities, as well as giving the individual insight into different ways of viewing the world, thus broadening the pupil's own perspective.

Learning foreign languages orally strengthens the pupil's ability to listen to another person, to follow and grasp the other person's spoken and unspoken intentions, since it enhances sensitivity to language at all levels and not merely the semantic level. This encourages greater powers of understanding, forming balanced judgments and empathy, all qualities needed in complex social situations. Being competent in at least two other languages supports the ability of flexible, mobile thinking, since the different languages allow access to different realms of experience and this in turn stimulates greater interest in the world and other people.

Language is threefold in its basic nature. It facilitates self-expression, communication and provides a framework for dialogue, speaking and listening. Secondly, language is a means of structuring and representing concepts and thoughts. This enables the child to map his or her experiences. The universal principles of syntactical relationships enable the translation of meaning from one individual to another but also from one language to another. Every language can be translated into every other. Thirdly, language is revelatory by nature. In contrast to materialistic conceptions of language, Steiner Waldorf takes the view that language, in its phonic, lexical and syntactical elements gives expression to something of the essence of what it describes. This is why language is such a powerful formative force. Gaining insight into the syntactical and grammatical structures common to all languages provides a good basis for the subsequent study of language and linguistics.

Teaching methods

Initial contact with the foreign language in school is a broad experiential and contextual one, which becomes increasingly more conscious through analysis. There is an intrinsic progression from oral to literate language and the oral element remains paramount. In building literacy on orality, there is a strong emphasis on the gesture and situation. Language holds a middle position between movement which is internalised to become speech and speech which is further internalised in thinking.

Given that a large percentage of communicated meaning in normal conversation is non-semantic, there is a strong emphasis on gesture, pantomime, body language and the entire non-verbal realm of orality remains important throughout the curriculum.

Working intensively with language harmonises and extends the child's affective responses to the world. Not only do the pupils become more articulate; they have more to say. Thus the process of foreign learning languages can serve to meet the developmental needs of the child as well as enabling them to develop abilities which serve their own individuation process whilst developing social competence.

In working with the nature of language itself, and assuming that the teaching method respects the inner principles of language and language acquisition, the child engages his or her own being with the being of language itself.

During the first three years of instruction the child is immersed in the orality of the language within the context of the lessons, most, if not all of which are conducted entirely in the foreign language. The children are introduced to a range of activities, verbal exchanges (greetings, question and answers to everyday situations), verses, poems, counting rhymes, skipping chants, songs and games designed to engage them and carry them in the stream of the language without the need for translation or explanation.

Once a repertoire has been built up within the first 3 to 4 lessons, new material is continuously introduced whilst existing material is regularly repeated and extended through variation. As well as oral work, the children enact situations in a lively way.

It is not necessary for the children to have an intellectual grasp of all they hear and repeat. During this time they are able to develop a sensitivity to the basic intonation patterns of the foreign language in a way that will be much more difficult after the age of 10 or 11, when the plasticity of the speech apparatus and its neural counterparts are that much more formed and therefore less malleable. This is an important factor in Steiner Waldorf language teaching methodology.

Teaching is entirely through the spoken word, in commands (do this, do that), question and answer exchanges, singing and reciting by heart (i.e. without visible text), and this is often accompanied by gesture, pantomime and the use of pictures. Whole exchanges of dialogue can be learned by heart and an extensive range of vocabulary and grammatical structures are acquired in situ, as it were, rather than in an abstract or schematic way. In fact during the first three years the children are systematically introduced to and exercise unconsciously all the major elements of grammar as well as building up a wide vocabulary of common words. Just as the movement curriculum supports the child enter into the stream of movement from the periphery, so too in language lessons the children are helped to engage in the stream of language, which forms their language organs (perceptual and speech producing organs), builds up active situational vocabulary in memory, forms habitual structures of expressions, idioms, intonations. In short the child is helped to step into the stream of language. At a later stage this stream, as in the movement curriculum is reflected back in awakened consciousness and ability.

By the end of Class 3 the children's vocabulary should include: parts of the body, articles of clothing, phrases describing the activities associated with daily domestic and school life, the objects visible in the classroom and home, the colours, the times of the day, the days of the week, months, seasons, typical weather conditions, common forms of transport, familiar professions and what they do, common phenomena in nature – plants, animals etc., being able to ask and answer simple questions using the vocabulary listed above. They will also have regularly used the main forms of the verbs, tenses, be familiar with personal pronouns, directional prepositions, some adjectives and adverbs and the common question words.

Assessment at this level is a matter of the teacher noting the apparent potential of the individuals in the class in terms of memory, pronunciation and courage to speak, and discussing these with the class teacher and parents.

From Classes 4 or 5 a more conscious learning of language coincides with the new developmental stage the children are now entering. They continue to practise what they have learned but begin also writing and reading, as well as being made aware of the structure and spelling of the language. Drawing on what the children have learned by heart and ear in the first three school years, the children start by writing what they already know and understand. Once the phonetic values and letters have been established the children can move onto unfamiliar texts.

The methods of book writing and use of materials follow the patterns established by the class teacher. In fact close collaboration is essential for all stages of foreign language learning, in terms of classroom management skills and habits, but especially in the teaching of grammar. The foreign language teacher must build on grammatical concepts established in the mother tongue by the class teacher. Topics being discussed in main-lesson, such as farming or arithmetic can reappear in the foreign language lessons, once the basic skills have been established in the main-lesson.

In terms of teaching economy, it can make sense wherever possible to delegate specific topics from the main-lesson to one or other subject lesson. Relevant aspects of geography and history, for example, can be taken by the foreign language teacher. However the main area of collaboration lies in the class teacher creating work habits and behaviour standards

with the class that are resilient enough to encompass the foreign language lessons. Given the high risk factors, especially at self-conscious ages, for pupils in expressing themselves in a foreign language, not to mention the sheer amount of things that have, ultimately to be painstakingly learned, the task of foreign language teaching depends on good co-operation.

The words of any language carry with them something of the outlook of the people who speak that language. Thus there is always an untranslatable content differentiating words in one language from those used in other languages for the same thing or concept. For this reason direct translation is avoided as far as possible. Therefore gesture, pictures, movement, direct situational experience or word-games are relied on to facilitate comprehension. Great imagination is required on the part of the teacher to awaken appropriate inner pictures in the child's mind that associate sounds, words and content. However, the effort is amply rewarded by a much stronger affective response by the pupil, which by and large leads to long term memory, rather than short term or 'list-orientated' vocabulary. Words on their own are relatively useless. They must be bedded into useful grammatical structures, i.e. whole sentences that can be varied.

The topics chosen by the teacher and the pace at which they are covered depends on the teacher's assessment of the capacities of a given class, but are likely to include simple conversations about school and home, family, the weather etc. There will also be question and answer sessions involving a knowledge of numbers, the time, the season, the times of the day, the content of the reading material, or recent events of interest to the class. Activities will usually include the recitation of poetry and speech exercises, singing, discussion of grammar points such as singular or plural, verb forms (which may be recited and learned by rote), the conjugation of verbs in various tenses, aspects of history, geography or culture.

Throughout the Middle School, the children continue their oral work, which always remains at the heart of the teaching. This often takes the form of acting out short plays or scenes. Reading material is introduced once the children are familiar with the letters and can read familiar sentences, usually in Class 5 and form a focus for vocabulary work. The children also build up their own reference book with systematic lists of vocabulary, often grouped by theme, grammar rules and tables showing declensions. This is preferred to the use of a set grammar book as it gives the teacher greater flexibility in the sequence of themes introduced and the act of formulating a rule they themselves have worked out is an important aid to memory. One can also limit the amount of grammar to what it is strictly necessary to know. Grammar is very much reduced to a 'need to know' basis in the Middle School.

The children often have a separate book to record all the poems, verses, songs and exercises they have learned (invaluable if there is an unexpected change of teacher). They also have exercise books in which written work is practised either in class or as homework. No text books are used to teach from, though dictionaries are introduced at the end of Classes 6 or 7, when they children are familiar with their use.

It is essential to have three weekly lessons in each language throughout the school, if high standards of language ability are expected. In the Upper School this may increase to 4.

Class 1

Teaching Method

In their first year at school, the children absorb everything in a mood of wonder and empathy. The starting point of foreign language learning is choral speaking and singing, based on imitation. These activities are mostly accompanied by gestures and mimicry. As soon as possible, the children should be given opportunities to speak both in smaller groups and individually. Poetic language - rhythm and rhyme - forms one of the two main pillars in language learning. The other pillar is prose, everyday language, which is also cultivated right from the beginning.

Language games feature prominently throughout the Lower School. While participating in these, children are totally dedicated to the actions and the accompanying language activities. Great importance is attached to story-telling. By listening attentively, the children learn to

entrust themselves to the flow of the new language. Through this inner activity, they develop the ability to understand the gist of a story, something that plays an important part in language learning all the way through school.

By the end of Class 1, the great majority of the children should have mastered what has been dealt with in the course of the school year. This can only be achieved by thorough and frequent revision of what has been introduced and studied so that the children can continually practice anew what they have already learned.

Possible Lesson Content

- Singing-games
- Verses and songs involving meaningful actions (e.g. “These are my eyes, and these are my toes ...”)
- Finger-plays
- Acting upon simple commands like, “Go to the blackboard!”, “Look out of the window!”
- Rhythmical and practical counting exercises (cardinal numbers)
- Naming parts of the body; daily activities (eating, washing, dressing); basic colours
- Elements of everyday speech that enable the children to participate in simple conversations and short dialogues about their family, friends, pets, favourite foods, pastimes etc.
- Language games repeating individual structures or items of vocabulary (e.g. “Have you got ...?” “Is it ... ?”)
- Listening to and memorizing simple stories

Goals

By the end of Class 1, the children’s active vocabulary should include:

- The main colours
- The main objects in the classroom
- Parts of the body
- Days of the week, the months and seasons
- Numbers from 1 to 20

The children should also be able to respond to simple commands and basic questions.

Class 2

Teaching Method

A strong element of dualism is necessary during this year (question/answer, yes/no, you/I). The children have a stronger need to communicate than in Class 1. They respond best to authentic situations, such as having a visit from a native speaker in the lesson, baking or cooking from genuine recipes, etc. The teaching should have a strong rhythmical element in both the lesson structure and the nature of the activities, with strong contrasts between quietly becoming conscious of sounds, exact pronunciation, etc. and lively involvement. There should be a dynamic balance between being loud and quiet, speaking and listening. There also need to be many variations around common themes (e.g. an ever-increasing range of possible answers to a given question, such as “How do you get to school?”)

Possible Lesson Content

- Activities from Class 1 to be continued and enlarged upon (e.g. poems, folk songs, objects in the classroom, commands, etc.)
- Rhythmical recitation of cardinal and ordinal numbers
- The twelve months and when children’s birthdays fall
- Vocabulary from the realm of natural features (mountain, river, tree, flower, moon, etc.)
- Articles of clothing
- Activities of daily routine (getting dressed, cooking, cleaning)
- Listening to simple stories, followed by acting out short scenes from these
- Talking about themselves (e.g. birthdays, age, family, pets)
- The forms of “to be” and “to do” in sentence forms (e.g. “I am the king”, “You are the queen”, “He is the prince”, “Where do you live?”)

Goals

By the end of Class 2 most children should

- know a range of nature (mountain, sun, moon, tree)
- know the cardinal numbers up to 100, ordinal numbers 1 to 10
- be able to respond to simple questions about themselves (e.g. “How old are you?” “When is your birthday?”, “What’s your mother’s name?”, “Have you got a brother?”)
- be able to use simple structures (e.g. “Is it ...?”, “Where is ...?”, “Have you got ...?”, “I’d like ...”)
- be able to follow simple stories
- be able to point out/name different objects in the classroom
- know a number of songs, verses, and nursery-rhymes by heart

Class 3

Teaching Method

In their third year at school, the children's growing understanding has to be taken into account and the children should be made more consciously aware of the use of language.

They now have a much stronger feeling for language, for nuances of both pronunciation and meaning. They require longer, more varied texts to learn. They enjoy acting out humorous scenes and short plays that involve individual pupils learning roles and acting these out alone. This year also sees intensive preparation for the coming year and the introduction of literacy. Texts are learned that will later be written, key elements of grammar are rehearsed orally (singular and plural, personal and possessive pronouns, articles). Recitation is part of every lesson.

Possible Lesson Content

- Dialogues and little conversations are more demanding now: Familiar topics are supplemented and new ones introduced. These include numbers, colours, places (town, village, country), forms of transport, times of day, the clock, clothes, food and drink, more complex commands, sayings and simple stories.
- Acting out and learning individual parts of a dramatized story
- Picture 'dictations' (e.g. "Draw a man with a red hat. His trousers are brown ...")
- Verb forms and tenses in sentence structures (in stories, see e.g. *The Pancake*, and poems with repetitive elements, such as "This is the Key of the Kingdom")
- Main prepositions (e.g. in the room, on the table, under the chair etc.)
- Important question words like 'who', 'how', 'what', 'when', 'where'

Goals

By the end of Class 3, most children should

- be familiar with basic items of food, clothing, furniture
- be familiar with forms of transport, places and directions (on the left, to the right)
- be familiar with times of the day (morning, evening etc.), clock times (hours, quarter hours, minutes)
- be aware of the different genders
- take a more active part orally (e.g. supply the next step of a story that the teacher is retelling)
- apply structures that have been thoroughly practised more freely (transfer)
- recognize the most common question words
- be able to use the main spatial prepositions in context
- recognize the main personal and possessive pronouns

Class 4

At about the age of ten children develop a new, stronger awareness of themselves. The oral work is continued, including speech exercises, verses, poems, songs, and question-and-answer games, but everything that the class has learned as a group must now be individualized.

Writing, which the children have been looking forward to, is introduced, and it becomes the main theme of the year.

More than ever before, the pupils need to consciously and clearly keep their school work in order. The lessons are centred on writing, spelling, and reading.

The language teachers and the class teachers should discuss and thoroughly plan the lessons together. Some of the children will need special attention because certain weaknesses appear when writing starts, weaknesses which were never apparent in purely oral work.

Writing in the foreign language is introduced using texts which the children have learned during the first three years. Usually it is not difficult for them to recognize in writing the words that they already know from their sound and meaning. The children read texts that they have written themselves before they are given printed texts. In this way they are confronted with known, acted out, practised texts in written form.

The first reader should be one of the stories which the children have heard during the first three years of English. An important principle of Rudolf Steiner's cannot be called to our attention often enough, that *everything* which is read in foreign language classes in the middle grades should first be taken in orally, either told or read by the teacher, without reading along.

Then copying the story from the board and illustrating it are to be recommended. In this way reading continues to be practised through writing. The illustrations support the understanding of the text, and the transition to known, but not memorized, texts can be made.

Vocabulary words can, after having been thoroughly practised orally, be written down in lists of word-families (e.g. parts of the body, the classroom, seasons, colours). These lists are only in the foreign language. At this point the children should not write word-for-word translations. As often as possible, the nouns should be used orally in complete sentences, with the appropriate verb forms and simple adjectives. Practising vocabulary in this way can be done effectively by having the teacher use the words in simple stories that the children already know. Then the children can copy two or three sentences which tell the main content of the story from the board. The text should include as much repetition as possible.

Singing and reciting continue to be an important part of the lesson.

The teacher must make sure that the pupils really understand the grammar structures which are being studied. They should be led to find the basic grammar rules and put them into words themselves. This means that they state the rules pragmatically, not the way they are usually found in grammar books. Discussions about English grammar are held in the children's native language.

Possible Lesson Content

The children write down poems, verses, or songs which they learned in the first three grades and which now make up their first reader. The second reader is the story that they write.

- The alphabet is practised, as are spelling and short dictation texts
- For the beginning of grammar work the children are first exposed to the following forms: the present tense of common verbs in combination with personal pronouns (other tenses may appear in the context of a text), classes of words, plurals, common adjectives, prepositions.
- Work with question words is continued; questions with "to do" are practised in writing.
- Short texts are written, e.g. about animals or the weather, and household objects are described.
- The children learn and recite new poems about nature, the seasons, and topics connected with the main lesson blocks.
- Situation plays, little dramatic scenes, guessing games and similar activities continue to be an important part of the lessons.

Goals

By the end of the fourth grade the children should know the following:

- the English alphabet
- how to spell their own names and several commonly used words
- how to read words and sentences they have practised
- how to give simple descriptions
- the verb forms in the present tense
- the classes of words (nouns, verbs and adjectives)
- how to write simple sentences by themselves

Class 5

Guiding Principles and Teaching Methods

At this age (eleven years) children usually have a good rhythmical memory. They can and should learn a lot. It is also the age at which the beauty of the language can be cultivated. It is important that the children enjoy the language and that they are taught to enjoy it. The teacher can encourage this joy by enticing the children to be creative as often as possible, e.g. by giving homework which calls upon creative imagination. The lessons should be lively and full of variety, the teaching pace should vary but generally not be too slow. The children love to recite longer poems and sing more demanding songs. Their understanding of grammar develops as the teacher expands on the structures already learned in class four. Vocabulary words should be learned and practised more consciously now. The children can try out their creativity by writing little poems about specific topics such as a mood of nature or an animal. Oral work is continued with question-and-answer dialogs, speech exercises, and many various kinds of poems. Reciting is an excellent way for the pupils to develop good, clear pronunciation and authentic intonation. In addition, idiomatic expressions and general vocabulary are enhanced by recitation. The students should learn the poems by repeating what the teacher recites, not by reading them. When a new poem is introduced, it is enough for the teacher to give a short summary in simple words, without many details, but with a lot of imagination.

The richer and more varied the vocabulary becomes, the more the children should be encouraged to use the words they know in new, creative ways, for example in writing little stories. Hearing and reading many vivid and characteristic descriptions of people, places, and situations will arouse the pupils interest in the new words as such.

With the reader it is important to introduce new words before the pupils are confronted with them in the text. Topics related to the theme of the reader can also be taught. Questions about understanding the text are worked on orally with the whole class. Only after that does it make sense to have such questions answered in writing, e.g. as homework. Suitable readers are named under "Possible Lesson Contents".

The teacher introduces new grammar structures in the children's native language. Once this has been done and the structures have been practised and understood, the rules can be written down in a simple form in a grammar book, of course in the native language and in the children's own wording. It is best to have a separate book for these rules and not to write them in the same notebook with homework and vocabulary words. In this way each child makes his own grammar book which will continue to be used until class eight. From this point on, English grammar should be experienced more consciously, in that the teacher gives the students the opportunity to compare their own language with English.

A small class library which makes additional reading possible can help the students enjoy reading. Dramatic scenes and short plays are the best way to arouse the interest of the class.

Possible Lesson Content

- Recitation: An index with poetry suggestions for each class of the middle and upper grades – for the anthology *Poems for the Middle and Upper School* – can be found in the *Forum for Language Teachers at Waldorf Schools* 1997, pp. 98 – 106).
- Songs, poems, plays, stories
- Reading is practised using story books; especially appropriate are "*Ghosts at the Castle*" and "*Dick Whittington*", both with comprehension questions and exercises.
- The vocabulary used in the reader and for other topics is organized and practised systematically, including vocabulary tests and regular, short dictations.

Grammar Suggestions

- irregular verbs in sound groups
- the active forms of verbs in the present, past, and future tenses
- the present continuous
- the forms of to be, to have, and to do in the present and past
- questions and negations

- to order and to forbid
- plurals, including irregular forms such as foot, feet: child, children: ox, oxen
- question words
- prepositions

Goals

By the end of the fifth grade, the children should be able to:

- answer simple questions about the text
- tell short sections of a story in their own words
- recognize and use present, past, and future forms of common verbs
- recognize the difference in sentence structure between English and their own language

Class 6

Guiding Principles and Teaching Methods

The sixth graders are on the brink of puberty, and order, structure, and clarity in the teaching plans are especially important. The children should be enticed to apply their new thinking abilities to the structures of the language and to a systematic overview of it, as far as they have learned it and as far as they continue to learn new aspects of it. At this age it makes sense to learn the conjugations of the verbs. One can talk to the children about how much there is to learn, how much must be learned in, e.g. one month. One can also talk about the different methods to learn vocabulary words consciously. The results should be checked and tested regularly, because the children need visible proof of their progress: What have we learned? What haven't we been able to learn, and why?

Dramatic and heroic poetry play an important role in the oral work; the same applies to humour. Short dramatic scenes can be played. Discussions and indeed all oral work should include as many idiomatic expressions as possible.

The geography and historical or legendary personalities from the foreign country are the main themes in classes 6 – 8.

When the foundation has been laid in grammar and vocabulary, the children should be taught to express themselves in English more freely. The content for written assignments can be letters, simple descriptions, diary entries, and short re-tells of stories.

In the sixth grade the teachers must be prepared for a wide span of abilities among the pupils. Therefore one should try to give all assignments in a way that there is something included for every level of ability. This does not mean that the class should be divided into ability groups! Of course relatively small groups of about 18 pupils make learning easier. It isn't sensible to divide children into ability groups at this age, but students who join the class later and have very limited knowledge of the language often need additional help outside of class for a certain period of time.

Possible Lesson Content

- Recitation: see the comment for class five
- Dramatic songs and poems
- Short dialogs from everyday life; life in town or in the country, holidays, household chores, shopping, seasons and festivals, the weather, illness, sports and games.
- Dramatic and humorous dialogs
- Readers: *The Flying Enterprise – The Ship that turned Over, Robin Hood, Little House in the Big Woods*
- Land and cultural studies: In the sixth grade the geography of England, Scotland, Wales or Ireland can be taught as an imaginary journey. The main characteristics of a region should be included: landscape, customs, dialects, folklore, culture, cooking and baking recipes.

Grammar Suggestions

- Passive in the present and past tense
- The adjective and its comparisons
- The active forms of the present perfect, past perfect and conditional, including questions and negations
- Adverbs and adverbial phrases
- a revision of the grammar topics already taught

Goals

By the end of the sixth grade, the students should be able to do the following:

- talk about themselves and their environment more freely
- talk more fluently about what they have read in class
- recognize examples of the newly learned grammar in the text and make up such examples themselves
- understand the grammatical terms being used

- be able to visualize some regions of the country they are studying

Class 7

Guiding Principles and Teaching Methods

The teaching style is similar to class six. The lessons should be lively and varied, which means one theme or activity, especially in grammar, is never done too long. The children should be given a lot to learn, and they should be expected to show what they can do in regular tests and dictations. The possibilities of group work can be explored. Notebooks (theme books) should show the highest level of their work. When this is not the case, the language teacher and the class teacher should speak to the child's parents, so that careless or incomplete work is improved and completed. The children should be made to understand the necessity of such expectations. Reports on subjects about the country being studied, especially America, its history and culture, are emphasized. These can form the reading content.

Possible Lesson Content

- Country and Culture studies of class 6 can be continued. Biographies such as *Captain Cook*, are very appropriate as readers, also the stories about *King Arthur* and, if not already read in Class 6, The *Little House* pioneer stories.
- little dramatic scenes from the reader
- vocabulary work, idioms, everyday language, colloquialisms, forms of polite conversation using modal auxiliaries

Grammar Suggestions

- Modal auxiliaries and their substitute forms
- Pronouns such as much/many; little/few; some/any; each/every
- Relative pronouns
- Word order Subject – Predicate – Object

Goals

By the end of the seventh grade, the students should be able to do the following:

- recognize the forms of simple and complex verb tenses
- understand sentence structure and word order
- answer questions about the text without help

Class 8

Guiding Principles and Teaching Methods

During this school year the teacher must prepare the children for the independent work in the upper grades. Each student should give an oral report suited to his or her interest and language abilities. In most cases the teacher's help will be absolutely necessary in the preparation phase. The use of a translating dictionary must be practised. The work in the theme books should become more and more the student's own responsibility.

Possible Lesson Content

- Recitation; see above, Class 5
- Down to earth descriptions of life in English speaking countries; historical, cultural, and up-to-date topics. Rudolf Steiner strongly recommended *A Christmas Carol* for this age level.
- The idiomatic colloquialisms are important, and the students should have regular opportunities to practise conversation in class.
- Class exchanges and pen-pals should be established and supported
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Grammar Suggestions

- Direct and indirect speech
- Conditional Clauses
- Adjectives and their irregular comparisons
- Adverbs and their irregular comparisons
- Conjugations and Prepositions

Goals

By the end of the eighth grade, the students should be able to do the following:

- use the forms of all the simple and complex verb tenses in active and passive
- understand and use sentence structure and word order correctly
- write short texts of their own with relatively few mistakes
- express themselves clearly, even if simply, in several every-day situations such as asking the way, making conversation.

English Language Teaching in the Upper School

Rudolf Steiner gave no specific recommendations for teaching methods for foreign languages in the upper school, except to say that the teachers should change their methods regularly in order to avoid routines which hinder creative learning processes. To help the students free themselves from self-conscious inhibitions during the transition to the upper school, it is important to awaken interest in the world and enthusiasm for people who have/had great ideals. Biographies are especially helpful. To counter the developing scepticism of the young people, the teacher's ability to spark enthusiasm and his/her sense of humour become more and more important. The teacher must also develop quick-wittedness, universal interests, and empathy to be able to sense the latent questions in the students' souls.

In recitation, the upper school should, in addition to group speaking, increasingly give speakers individual lines and then passages to speak.

For the upper school the description of learning goals is given for class 12, and all the upper school classes can use these guidelines as an orientation for their language work.

Class 9

Guiding Principles

The young people are still in the first phase of their third seven-year-cycle, and their emotional and imaginative lives are turbulent. This means that the centre of language teaching will have to be harnessing judgments and learning how to develop and use the capacity of judgment. To put it in an image, the young people must practice finding their way between Scylla and Charybdis, between rejection of the given and a whirlpool of capriciousness and disintegration.

Possible Lesson Content

Central themes for readers are historical processes, events which have taken or are taking place in the world, in other words objective facts. On the one hand these can be biographies which help young people observe the hidden order in the life of a person as well as his ideals, or on the other hand essays, e.g. about the culture of the U.S.A. with such themes as oppression and slavery, discrimination, social customs. Causality provides the orientation: Each topic must be handled objectively and appropriately, and reasons must be given for judgments made.

The style of the reader should be demanding. (Exceptions are always possible when they are consciously chosen.) A good discussion of the content of the text is usually possible when the language level allows for the clear expression of distinctions. But the content should still be able to be grasped as a whole at this age level. Short stories or essays are preferable to long novels. The reader should have clearly organized sections so that even the weakest students don't lose track of the progress of the story.

At this age many young people find a new connection to the language: They want to use their minds and find a new understanding of the foreign language which they have only known at a certain level so far. The teacher must give them the chance to do this.

Dealing with polarities – a basic theme for this age group – the teacher will give biography texts a geographical and historical orientation. Texts about a country come alive when one focuses on the people and the circumstances they live/lived in. Caricatures, because they are so one-sided, can help students to learn to make differentiations if the caricatures that have been chosen make it possible to discuss fine points. But they can also increase the tendency to coarseness, a typical feature of puberty with the boys.

Vocabulary Work

When considering vocabulary, we must remind ourselves that vocabulary only comes into being when the will to speak connects with the contents at hand. A student has to want to say something. That is the educational task. The stimulus in the reader leads to the thoughts, the content, that the student wants to express in the foreign language: Thus the vocabulary which is being used is developed and reinforced. There are no specific fields of vocabulary words which are taught as programs or topics. Many students are happy to learn the vocabulary for everyday life, and the basic vocabulary of psychology enables them to describe the feelings and emotions of people in their readers, *as well as of themselves and their friends*, and to discuss these critically.

In the upper school work with idiomatic expressions becomes more intense. It becomes necessary to read between the lines and experience a language's characteristics.

The specialized vocabulary which results from the content of the reader is not a problem: A book about Martin Luther King Jr. has a different vocabulary than a book about Abraham Lincoln or Napoleon. The next book will expand the horizons. Vocabulary only comes to life in context. Young people remember vocabulary words much easier if they are connected with experiences than if they learn them from vocabulary lists.

About Grammar

The theme of this school year is to repeat all the grammar, filling in any gaps and expanding on topics, such as nouns that are always singular or always plural, that were only touched on in the middle grades. Everything about the language which was learned unconsciously or half-consciously should be lifted into the sphere of consciousness. Grammar is not necessary to learn a language, but it is an important tool to bring one's own language to maturity, to transform it from an organic to a soul level. A certain development, which started at 11 or 12 and will come to its conclusion at 16 or 17, reaches its climax here. Who speaks, when someone speaks? Until a child is 12, one can hear, when one listens carefully, that although the child is speaking and articulating, the language of his environment (mother, father, teacher) is very present in this thinking and articulating. At puberty this protective context disappears, the young person must now form *his own language out of himself. As grammar can only be conquered individually, it is a help in this. In the same way, a young person chooses the vocabulary which suits his/her way of expressing himself. The combination of personalized vocabulary and personalized grammar make possible the development of one's own style.*

Recitation

For English use: Afro-American poets such as Langston Hughes and others from the book "Poems for the Middle and Upper School"; Blake: Poison-Tree; passages from the U.S. Declaration of Independence (prose is important at this age). Otherwise the same criteria should be followed as for the reader. The poems should tend to be short and terse, with strong images which grip the feelings of the soul rather than feelings which are derived from the physical body.

Miscellaneous

Sometimes one would rather take a class down different paths of practice than those described above. These could be short scenes, sketches, e-mail contacts with students at a foreign school, or oral reports, written travel reports... *Or these can be in addition to the above.*

Class Ten

Guiding Principles and Central Ideas

The inner transformation process of puberty has passed its climax and is losing its power and drama. But a tenth-grader still has a strong tendency not to let anyone look into his soul. One must be aware that this is coupled with a certain speechlessness. Now the youths must learn to see that a language can help decipher and bring order into their turbulent inner lives. A foreign language can be a special help in expressing the “unexpressable.”

Now that the structures of grammar have been thoroughly grasped, (see class 9), they can be used as a foundation on which, bit by bit, the diversity and power of language can be experienced. The point is to help the students experience, with understanding and as individuals, what lies behind the perceived phenomena.

Possible Lesson Content

In order to guide the development described above in an authentic way, ideally there can't be any set list of possible contents for this age group. The teacher chooses the reader for the class based on his/her own enthusiasm and conviction, and because he wants it to be a discovery for the class. In a way, class 10 is a year in which one is free to make many choices. England and America have been studied and will be taken up again, but authors from the whole English-speaking world are yet to be discovered. Original literature should be used for these discoveries, possibly modern classics, possibly teen literature, with or without a connection to cultural studies of a certain English-speaking country.

Parallel to literature, topics of the day will strongly influence what is taken up during the language lessons. Situations which seem to be hopeless should be discussed in class ten to strengthen the students' growing idealism.

The poetry and biographies of the Romantic Poets offer something very special for the tenth grade. Often there is an inconsistency between the lives of these poets and the beauty of their poetic art. This arouses questioning thoughts in the students, and these can have a strengthening effect on them. In such a poetry block each student can present a poem of his/her own choosing and tell what this poem means to him. If all of these poems are passed out to be put in a booklet, the class has its own collection, not the collection chosen by the teacher. The end of the block can be, rather than a test, an essay on someone else's poem which the student can also relate to.

Possible Ways of Practicing

The original texts must be prepared so well in class that when reading them the students hardly realize how difficult they are. This can be done in many ways. The teacher's oral introduction is only one possibility. As in previous classes, working with the new vocabulary before reading the text is a big help. Tenth graders are especially sensitive to the efforts of their peers. They respect every classroom endeavor of their classmates, (such as reports, minutes of a lesson, suggestions on how to phrase a grammar rule), and all of this intensifies their struggle to grasp the topic at hand.

At this age “Methods Competence”, learning how to learn, how to approach various tasks, how to develop operational competence, becomes very important. The main goal is to be able to complete every sort of given task, but there can be specialists in the class who concentrate on specific aspects of a task and work them through thoroughly. This livens up the class discussion and gives weaker students the opportunity to contribute something to the lessons, actively and successfully.

Assignments which require changing one's point of view or reading between the lines can be

very stimulating. A summary of a section of the text can be too difficult for weaker students and at the same time not challenging enough for good students. But if students are asked to write diary entries or correspondence between the protagonists, everyone can use his/her abilities to show what he has learned at his own level.

Vocabulary Work

Work with synonyms will become a very stimulating element in vocabulary work in class 10. An interest in the nuances of meaning awakens in the students as well as an interest in how facts can be exaggerated, played down, or covered up depending on how they are described. In connection with poetry, inner reactions will be observed and discussed: does the sound of a word correspond to its meaning? The students can discover metaphors and parables and make up their own. This kind of practice leads directly into the formal text-analysis of the following grades. At the same time it awakens the ability to correctly feel and grasp the meaning of unknown words while reading.

Recitation

Through the practice methods just described, the choral speaking of the previous years is transformed, and new dimensions are opened. In addition to the Romantics, (above all W. Blake, W. Wordsworth, and P. B. Shelley) poems by such poets as W. B. Yeats offer new discoveries. With a bit of imagination and an appropriate text, a tenth grade class can be transformed into a speaking orchestra. This can include poems spoken in rap with individual roles for certain lines or sound effects. It can also mean that individual students recite their interpretation of a poem the class has learned or they have chosen. Humorous texts and speech exercises should bring in a lighter note every now and then.

About Grammar

As a result of the work in class nine, the students have become more sure of themselves, and they have found a new relationship to grammar. More and more they develop a sense of style and the ability to further develop their own style. Well-known English structures such as the gerund and the participle can be studied for their usage and effect. The fine points of whether a noun, an adjective, or part of a verb is being dealt with, can be discovered in these structures. Passive sentences will no longer be just an alternative to active sentences, but they become a welcome way to avoid certain direct statements. Students should also be helped to develop a feeling for what it means when the person, the subject in an active sentence, is not mentioned, e.g. "Tea was brought in." Does anyone care about the maid who brought it in? With grammar, a teacher can stimulate the students and keep them "on their toes."

Conclusion

Youths of this age have gone through deep, difficult inner work on themselves – the world should now be presented to them in a way that lets a true and lasting response develop. The world's languages are the mediators. In all of his/her efforts, the teacher must feel reverence for the language and respect for the growing youths. With a "light diet" as a program, one will neither meet the expectations of youth, not even of the weak students, nor do justice to any of them.

Class Eleven

Guiding Principles and Central Ideas

The teacher's and educator's task is, above all, to bring the growing young person's thinking and willing together so that they lead to moral actions and the person can become a moral being. This task takes on more meaning in class 11 than it has had in any class before. The language lessons play an important part in this process.

On the whole, seventeen year-olds have passed the phase of puberty; they are open to intellectual and aesthetic questions. They are in an in-between state, between the morals they learned in the first two seven year periods and the ethics which an adult must develop, and they feel this. Experiencing one's own inner self started a few years before, but now the process gains intensity, depth, and distinctiveness, and a feeling for responsibility for one's own thoughts arises. At the beginning of the 21st century it is obvious that youths have a much wider horizon of real experience than two or three decades ago. This means that they see the polarities of life much more intensely and diversely than they used to. This must make it all the more difficult for them to take the polarities they have experienced into themselves (into their "I") so that their "I" can achieve an inner stability and continuity. The students may have had a foretaste of this in class 10 in the Romantic Poetry block (See "The Divine Image" and "A Divine Image" by William Blake). A person attains his/her real being through language. Rich language is a pre-condition for rich thinking. Learning two languages in addition to one's native tongue strengthens the growing youths in their relationship to the world, because in a different language they are confronted with a different way to react to the world, consciously and pragmatically as well as through different feelings and sensitivities. Literature offers rich opportunities to reach the depths of vicarious experience, and seventeen year-olds can make use of them. Learning to recognize oneself in a literary character is, in addition to the expansion and refinement of one's vocabulary, a central theme of language lessons in class 11.

Possible Lesson Content

Dramas are especially suitable to bring about a critical discussion of polarities. These discussions can lead the student to a fruitful understanding of his/her own inner life. In drama, opposites can be very clearly juxtaposed, not only in the constellation of characters but also within a main character him/herself. To let this character come to life through reading, through imagining oneself in that character's position, through defending or accusing the character leads to a strong intervention of the will forces in one's thinking, and feelings are aroused to become the mediator between the two. There are few dramatists who fulfil the aesthetic, and pedagogically sensible criteria of universality, relevance, and tightly-knit presentation as richly as William Shakespeare. But the blossoming of drama in Great Britain, and to a certain extent in the U.S.A. in the 20th century also justifies work on a modern drama. As representatives for many authors we can name H. Pinter, A. Ayckbourn, T.S Eliot, G.B. Shaw, A. Miller, P. Shaffer, E. Albee, A. Bennett, T. Williams, D. Hare, T. Stoppard, and T.Wilder.

One should not ignore the fact that dramas are not reading texts but rather, as Rudolf Steiner called them, orchestral scores. Expressive gestures, choreography, stage settings, costumes, lighting, and make-up in connection with the text are what brings the play to life – and this should be made clear to the students. The genuine home of a drama is the stage. This doesn't mean that a drama must become a stage production, but transforming short passages of the text into stage scenes for which the students design costumes, make-up, the choreography of the scene, or the stage set, and present their ideas to the class, gives the students a sense of what drama can be.

Such drama work may take up half of the school year. The other half can be used for literature, especially for the modern classics such as *Brave New World*, 1984, or *Animal Farm*, but also for more recent books from any English-speaking country which the teacher finds suitable for the class.

Recitation

Short sections of key scenes of the Shakespeare drama that has been chosen are good for recitation in class 11. These can very well be in preparation for the actual work with the drama. Recognizing the passage later on, and knowing the lines exactly, will enrich the lesson's discussions. If a modern drama is chosen, the poetry of Shakespeare's time, including his own can be taken up and explained. This is one of the ways to convey a perspective on the lives and world views of the Elizabethans. Another way would be to discuss their viewpoints on microcosm and macrocosm.

Such recitation can lead into a general understanding of the development of the English language. From Shakespeare's "Early Modern English" the leap back into the past, to "Middle English" and the *Canterbury Tales*, or to "Old English" and *Beowulf* is not so far. Or the leap can be to the present, to "Modern English" with Robert Frost, Carl Sandburg, William Stafford and Alice Walker among others. A short summary of the historical facts which influenced the development of the English language could accompany the work described here. And considering the possibility of "English as a World Language" as a theme in class 13, it would make sense to have the students write these things down.

Vocabulary Work

Work on enlarging the class's vocabulary should arise from interpretation discussions. How can I speak about what I have read with all the nuances of my feelings so that others can comprehend my thoughts and either agree or disagree with them? In addition to teaching such a vocabulary which facilitates understanding and discussion of differing points of view, it would make sense to work on elements of style which refine written expression. For example, the use of a whole variety of conjunctions, correctly differentiated in comparison to the German usage (*e.g.* "while" or "during") as well as the skilful use of connectors (*such as "as" and "so"*) with which the thoughts in a new sentence refer to and include the thoughts in the previous sentence. With these, the writer proves how well he/she can subdivide and organize his/her thoughts, making it easier for the reader to understand the thoughts presented. This means that there must be a lot of writing in class 11, all of which must be corrected and then discussed in a way that the students can learn not only from their own but also from each other's mistakes.

If we want to acquaint the students with a very typical element of the English language, we should give them the chance to use several phrasal verbs quite often, so that they become absolutely sure of themselves when using these verbs. "By learning to speak, one learns to be," and acquiring a broad vocabulary in a foreign language allows the foreign language to become a part of this "being."

About Grammar

All the exercises which one could consider grammar work must be in the service of an improvement in the students' ability to express themselves, especially in writing. "Improvement" here means coming closer and closer to what is characteristic of the English language. If there are such things as typical English constructions, then certainly they are the infinitive, the participle, the gerund, the special use of articles, and nominal and verbal expressions. (*See the Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary*). The students should practise using these grammatical constructions in many texts of their own so that they eventually develop a style which is characteristic of the English language, a style which is brief and to the point, and which is marked by strength and diversity of expression.

Class Twelve

Guiding Principles, Central Ideas, and Suggestions for Lesson Content

Carefully selected examples of present day English literature should be used to give the young people an impression of the great variety of contemporary literary forms and contents. (*Works which are being used presently are The Great Gatsby, Death of a Salesman, Native Son, Tortilla Curtain, Educating Rita, My beautiful Laundrette, A long Way Down* among others.)

The students' individual, independent work with the literature at hand should be at the centre of all teaching. In class, every student should present a book which he/she is interested in and which suits his/her language ability: a book report. In this context, the presentation of a scene, a passage of the text, or a poem, with conviction and in an artistic way, is just as important as the student's personal point of view regarding the chosen book and his paper developing this point of view in detail.

Cultural events and current affairs continue to be discussed regularly and to be dealt with in depth from time to time.

Goals

By the end of the twelfth grade, the students' language competence should include the following:

Auditory Comprehension: They should understand fluently spoken English, in as much as it deals with familiar themes, current affairs, and important events of the day.

Reading Comprehension: They should grasp the fine distinctions in the meaning of words and in style, in complex informative articles and essays as well as in literary texts; when reading long, informative articles extensively, they should be able to find and understand the main points.

Oral Language: They should be able to read even difficult texts, such as those mentioned in auditory comprehension, with understanding, and they should be able to make clear, detailed comments on them without help. They should be able to use an adequate repertoire of idioms and common expressions.

Written Text Production: They should be able to express themselves in a clear and detailed way on a wide spectrum of themes of personal interest, to write summaries, and to answer questions about familiar literary themes and write commentaries on them at an appropriate level.