

Variety in repetition

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Introduction

Confession of a foreign language teacher!

As I started teaching French at a Waldorf school, the most important directive I received was to use great variety in my classes.

Along with the ultimate and unique book: "Le livre rose" for Gr. 1-4 (1), the "bible" of a Waldorf French teacher, I was given a big smile to enhance my confidence and with the understatement: "You are French, you can do it", I made my "début" as a French teacher like many of us in what I would call now, "the greatest chaos". A chaos that was sometimes "sympatique", sometimes scary, when I look back through the keyhole of my memory door...!

I did not really know how to use this manual and felt very frustrated looking at all the rhythms, rhymes, games, and songs it contained!

What was I supposed to do with these?

I decided to put this book aside and use my own: my "childhood" book; I knew a wealth of rhymes, ring games and rounds which I had learned during my school time, especially at recesses. To date, I was still singing them and sharing them with my own children anyway!

As far as variety was concerned, it was not a problem! Twelve years of active childhood were making me strong, I would know how to put variety into my program for Grade 1 to Grade 4, no doubt!

As the first year passed by, my students received a repertoire where variety was ruling like I think nowhere else in the country! A real immersion, three times a week! But it looked more like playing than the apprenticeship of a language! I soon realised that something was not quite right: the children were not settled in my classes. They were noisy, they were all over their desks, they were not interested, not motivated except for: "having fun"! Discipline was taking 70% of my time and energy in class. My relationship with the children was nice but not very deep. This unrest was alarming, and it showed me that I was not reaching the students' needs. But what were their needs?

I was making the children repeat a song or a rhyme, it sounded easy to do, but it did not seem to affect them much in anyway. I slowly realised the concept of repetition was not as simple and as easy as it sounded!

In this paper we shall look into what is at the heart of language teaching, namely the aspect of repetition and its creative component: *variety*. We shall see why both of these aspects are important in our lessons and, through examples, how it can be done to address the needs of the children.

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A) Reflexions on repetition; why and how it works.

Repetition is everywhere. It is in the rhythm of the seasons, in our folk celebrations like Christmas, Thanksgiving, Rosh Hashana; it is in our traditions whichever we make them; it is in the rhythm of our day.

When a child is brought up to do certain tasks every day, the repetitiveness of this rhythm gives him/her confidence. It becomes natural and gives the child a sense of settlement and happiness; he can go on working or experiencing other things. This is what R. Steiner calls unconscious repetition.

These rhythmical repetitions are like stepping-stones that offer strong foundations to a person throughout his/her life. We look forward to them because they allow us to experience sensations and emotions. They offer us a rhythm where monotony has no place. In "The Little Prince", the fox tells us about how important the repetitiveness of a rite is: "That is what makes a day different from the other days, an hour different from other hours. There is a rite, for example, by my hunters (he says) they dance on Thursdays with the maidens from the village. Thus, Thursdays are wonderful days! I go for a walk up to the vineyard. If the hunters were to dance any day, the days would be identical and I would have no holidays".

(2)

Repetition offers also a chance to always do better, to progress at something we just did: "I'll know better next time" is one of the most common expressions in people's everyday life experience. But life is such a vast field of experience that repetition always has a new face.

Reoccurring situations always look anew. They carry freshness, spontaneity, diversity and thus take us further in our lives in such a way that we don't realise we are going through events that repeat themselves. In the end we learn more about life and we are allowed to strive at the same time. This aspect is reflected in the same way in the learning of a foreign language. This is where we find a common thread between the rhythm of our lives and the learning of a foreign language namely in the variety in repetition.

The use of repetition is crucial in the learning of a foreign language as it is what anchors it in our memory. Working orally on a text, we look at re-saying words, re-doing gestures, over and over again to make it as perfect as possible, to know it as well as we can and as a result we memorise it. Memorising is a fulfilling act. It brings pleasure and joy as well as a sense of security because it is the completion of an act that belongs to only oneself and for which we can be proud of. It helps us find our place in our own life. It brings balance as well as confidence in oneself. But why is it then that when we hear the word "repetition", it sets some kind of alarm in our mind? Children are often quick at reacting to it! "No, not again!", "Boring!" they say.

It is interesting to see that the sounds of the word in itself carry boredom: re-pe-te-re in latin, to re-peat, , re-pe-ter... The german word might be interpreted a little different: "wieder-holen" is a little different to experience as it means: "zurück-holen" "to fetch again." Nevertheless it inspires the same feeling as the other words. Taken out of context, they reflect an arduous work requiring patience, concentration, tenacity. These are qualities we have, if we are strongly motivated for something. But we don't display them easily if we don't have strong motivation. R. Steiner calls this state "the sleeping will" and he writes: "We cannot (...) expect the sleeping will to pull itself together to directly control the process of remembering".(3)

Thus, the linking chain seems to be the motivation in learning which by common sense can only be solicited by variety.

B) About variety and why variety in repetition.

The term "variety" reflects an idea about divers ways in which we can present things. It includes diversity, liveliness, musicality and colorfulness: artistic components that affect our motivation in learning and experiencing languages.

R. Steiner tells us: "Only when you affect what is habitual in people can you bring order into their will and thus into their power of remembering. (...) everything that awakens intense interest in children also helps strengthen their memories".(4)

Thus, through variety in repetition we allow the children to learn in a lively manner with joy and fun, with curiosity, suspense and surprise. We break the aspect of repetitiveness, of boredom to bring a feeling of liveliness into their work. We allow them to remember and enjoy a poem for example, in the same way what the experience of life has allowed them to remember of their own "biographies".

Variety allows us also to reach more children as they all learn in different ways. Some learn visually, some auditorily, others emotionally or intellectually. The greater the variety in repetition, the greater the chance of comprehension and learning experience for each. Furthermore, whatever the level of the students, the ones that progress quickly and easily always have the impression to learn something new each class; for the ones that have more difficulties, a new variation in the work might touch them and give them a special chance to grasp the work. This aspect addresses the needs of the different temperaments of the children: sanguine, choleric, melancholic and phlegmatic.

Thus within the variety in repetition we can have:

- a variety where rhymes, songs, finger-plays and games complement each other on a specific theme as well as where progression within the repetition covers the main goal. It allows the children to experience the same vocabulary in different ways but especially in a progressive way.

A new element is added to each lesson to make it interesting. We shall go through an example to illustrate this point in the next pages.

An other aspect which seems to be the key for proper learning and memorising is repetition with great variety. This allows the child to experience depth in learning and joy at doing it. This is when a text will be worked on in different ways to allow active learning, confidence at memorising, joy and pride at knowing. This is the aspect of teaching that offers the greatest challenge to the teacher as it demands his/her most flexible and creative side.

Within this aspect, there is an essential element which provokes movement in the process of learning and thus brings liveliness and diversity: that is the use of oppositions or “polarities”.

The “in and out” of things bring a very special rhythm of harmony and balance to the children. Christoph Jaffke explains to us: “Zwischen polaren und unendlich variablen anderen Formen vollzieht sich im Idealfall ein so lebendiger Wechsel, daß ein Spannen und Lösen, ein Prozeß des Einatmens und Ausatmens stattfindet, in dem ernstes Bemühen ebenso seinen Platz hat wie befreiendes Lachen.“ (5)

C) An overview of possible variations in repetition

An overview of possible variations might help us face this challenge in a more active and concrete way. It is the hope that these guidelines will help - especially in stressful and tiring times – and trigger new ones, new ideas as to make it as interesting and exciting to the children as possible. But it is in fact the dialogue that exists between the teacher and the students that will provoke the teacher’s creativity in finding ways to make it as lively and as artistic as possible for them. Ida Bisaz sums it up very nicely when she says: “Unser eigentlicher und gültigster Lehrplan ist nach wie vor das Kind”. (6)

These ideas reflecting the opposite aspects of polarities might be classified in two categories:

- 1) Form and content
- 2) Activity or movement

1) Form and content

a) Sitting versus standing and moving around:

From Gr. 1-3, it is important to have a harmonious rhythm within the program where changing position ie. sitting/standing/moving around alternates in a reasonable way, refreshing the children and responding to their need for movement.

b) Sleeping-waking-dreaming:

When a teacher gives a picture in the form of a narration for example, to his/her class, through the quiet attention they give their teacher, the children "dream the picture".

When the teacher asks them what the story was about, they "wake up" and talk about it individually, bringing to consciousness what they were just "dreaming" about.

c) Taking in and giving out:

The polarity between listening to how the teacher delivers a recitation: listening to the tone, the clear pronunciation (hopefully!), watching the gestures; and for the children to speak it out in chorus at first, then individually.

d) Singing versus speaking:

Singing gives a chance to experience the value of the vowel sounds, bringing the children to an exclamation experience while speaking give them an incarnation experience through the consonants.

e) Understanding versus telling a story:

The quiet process of taking in a story and being able to retell it back as a group as each child participates in the retelling or individually.

f) Chorus work versus individual work:

When speaking in chorus the language incarnates in the group, each individual is being carried by the group while the final learning process starts when they have a chance to speak individually.

g) Listening versus watching:

Children listen and comprehend a story through an attentive observation of the words they already know versus watching the teacher miming the story.

h) Loud, quietly, mute:

Children repeat a text loudly, then more quietly, and in the end, in a mute way for a deeper experience of concentration, which demands more will from them to do.

i) Humour versus seriousness:

A humoristic text takes the student outward especially if it can be carried out through gestures or movements; this corresponds to the breathing-out phase during a lesson, whereas a serious, touching text will bring the child inward to their thinking and feelings corresponding to the breathing-in part.

j) Nominal versus verbal:

Choosing texts that contain nouns versus texts that put the emphasise on verbs or actions:

Ex.: Point to the ceiling I am sitting
 Point to the door... I am standing...

k) Sounds: consonants versus vowels:

Learning a text that contains a lot of consonants versus one that emphasises the sounds of vowels. By reoccurring consonants it could be clapped or stumped. Same by reoccurring words.

l) Organising a lesson around three or more senses: An example in Grade 2

- Sense of hearing: the teacher claps numbers, the children have to guess how many times he/she clapped.

- Sense of sight: While saying a rhyme, the teacher in front of the children puts a small object in one of his/her hands, putting them above each other and alternating, left hand above right hand several times, the children have to guess which hand contains the object. A simple observation exercise but tricky for some children.(from H. Hell)

- Sense of thought: The teacher chooses a number between 1 and 20, the children have to guess which one it is. The numbers that have already been called are written on the blackboard as long as the number has not been discovered.

All these activities can be led by a child afterward.

m) Addressing the temperaments:

Saying a text in a melancholic, choleric, phlegmatic or sanguine way.

2) Activity or movement

a) Use of props versus miming, versus drawing on the blackboard when telling a story or introducing a rhyme.

b) Variations in the “moving” or the gestures of the teacher presenting a text: children have to guess what the story is about or which story it is about.

c) Language versus gestures:

Reciting a text with gestures then saying it mute, only with gestures.

The class could be divided in two groups: they take turns saying it and the others doing the gestures.

The text could be acted out then done again at the fingers scale or vice et versa.

This is part of the three stages principles Alain Denjean shares with us in his book: “Die Praxis des Fremdsprachenunterrichts an der Waldorfschule”.(7)

„Grundsätzlich sollte der Lehrer bei Bewegungen an die “drei Bühnen” denken, die ihm zu Verfügung stehen. Die eigenen Hände bilden die erste, und auf dieser Bühne spielen die Finger ganz besonders fein; hier wird das Sprachliche in der Artikulation besonders gepflegt. Die zweite Bühne ist die eigene Körpergestalt: Die Sprüche und Kinderreime auf dieser Bühne wirken konzentrierend, sie fördern die Erlebnisqualität und lassen den Schüler am meisten in ein atmendes Sprechen hineinkommen. Die dritte Bühne bildet der vordere Bereich des

Klassenraums, vor den Sitzreihen; da wird „groß“ gespielt und nicht zu früh, zum Beispiel das, was auf den anderen Bühnen erfolgreich geprobt wurde. Diese Bühne eignet sich für kleine Szenen, für manche Dialoge und für große Bilder, die in der ganzen Dauer einer Unterrichtsstunde entfaltet werden. Das variierte Umgehen mit den drei Bühnen hilft uns, in künstlerischer statt in mechanischer Weise unser Erziehungsvorhaben zu verfeinern.“

e) Slowly or fast:

This variation is particularly adequate for pronunciation exercises at the end of Grade 3 and up. It would be important to finish slowly to allow the children to settle down.

f) Left out words in Gr. 4 and up:

One group recites a text; verbs for example, will be left out but mimed. Or with the help of a bean-bag, a person receiving it, has to say the verb in order for the story to go on. This demands concentration for the whole group!

With two groups: one recites the text without the verbs, the other group says them.

g) Presentation of a question/answer text with gestures:

The group repeats it in chorus, then in two groups: one the questions, the other the answers. Then two people do the same thing.

One student acts it out, the group recites it.

One group recites the questions loudly, the other one mute. Vice and versa.

h) Knocking or clapping of a rhythm:

The children have to guess what poem it was, then they speak it out with or without movements.

i) Two groups recite a text line by line, interwoven:

1st group	2nd group
Jeannot-Lapin	De bon matin,
Sortait son nez	De son terrier...

j) Texts with the repetition of a paragraph or verse:

will be said by the whole class and the individual paragraphs by small groups or individual students.

k) Stamping, clapping, snapping:

Each action for different kinds of words. For example, in a Grade 4 and up we could stamp for the verbs, clap for nouns, snap our fingers for articles or adjectives.

An other example for earlier grades could be “The days of the week” as you will find on p.14

l) Forward versus backwards:

To strengthen the will for a stronger incarnation:

- Numbers
- Texts listing actions, for example:

La parfaite ménagère
Je casse les œufs,
Je mélange la pâte,
J' allume le feu....

m) Different effects with our voice:

Following Alain Denjean's advice: "Die Stimme wird genauso wie die Bewegungen variiert. Sie kann hell oder dunkel sein, der Redefluss kann schnell oder langsam und getragen sein. Die Stimme wird hoch oder tief eingesetzt, ohne dabei zu übertreiben und ohne dass sie verstellt wird."

n) Use of bean-bags for:

- counting
- directing a question to provoke an answer from someone.
- grammar – from Grade 4 and up – conjugation...

o) Use of skipping rope for:

- learning small rhymes, example: A la salade, je suis malade...
- counting: Mademoiselle, quel âge avez-vous? 1 an, 2 ans, 3.....
numbers: 1 to
Multiples: 2, 4, 6, .../3,6,9,...

D) Some examples

1) Example of progressive repetition in a Grade 3 class, with extension into Grade 4:

In Grade 3 the children have worked on the different trades, one of them being: L' horloger (the clockmaker) from H. Hell:

Je suis un horloger
Je répare les montres
Et les horloges cassées.
Je répare les mouvements
Les aiguilles et les cadrans
Un peu d'huile au balancier
Et voilà, la montre est réparée.
Je suis l'horloger.

This theme could takes us to a chorus recitation :

Bonjour Madame, quelle heure est-il?

Pointing to your wrist

Il est midi

It is noon

Arms straight above your head, joint hands

Qui vous l'a dit?

Who told you so ?

Fists on your hips

La petite souris

The little mouse

Mime a mouse with your hands
(you could bring them in front of your mouth
imitating the tip of a mouse s' nose...)

Où est-elle? Where is she ?

Your hands above your eyebrows

Dans la chapelle In the chapel

Make a steeple with your hands

Que fait-elle? What is she doing ?

Little movements with your fingers

De la dentelle Some lace

Imitating the work of a lace maker

Pour qui? For whom?

Pour les dames de Paris qui ont des souliers gris.

Imitate a "grande et belle dame", walk like her

And show one of your shoes (souliers).

The teacher first tells this traditional rhyme with all the gesture necessary. Children usually like it right away. They pick up each part very quickly as long as the gestures are expressive. Within one lesson, we do it as a dialogue – in two groups – taking turns in saying the questions and answers.

Next lesson: A quick repetition together with the whole text and we go on working in two groups again:

- One group says the questions, the other the answers
- One group says the questions, the other mimes the answers
- One group says the questions silently, the other says the answers: starting just with "Bonjour Madame..."
- One group says the questions, the other says the answers silently.

The children are ready to say it individually the next class.

They are also ready to use some of the expressions in a more practical way:
Quelle heure est-il?

Il est une heure

Il est deux heures...

Il est six heures

Il est sept heures

Il est midi

Il est une heure...

Il est minuit

The teacher stands in front of the class and becomes a clock : with his/her left arm, he/she points to an imaginary 1 o'clock, 2 o'clock... down to 6 o'clock, the right arm pointing to 12. He/she then changes arm: right arm to go on, up to 11 o'clock; for "midi" and "minuit": he/she puts the two arms up straight above his/her head, hands joint.

Children join with the gestures the 2nd time.

Next class: One individual student goes in front of the class and does the questions part of “La petite souris” while the group answers. He/she then invites four other students to the front and they start showing the time while the rest recites the hours.

Next lesson: We repeat what we have done the day before and add a guessing game with a wooden clock. A student or the teacher moves the hand around the clock, the children have to answer individually:
Quelle heure est-il? Il est 8 heures.

If we have the chance to have enough space for a game in a circle (Eurythmy room or gymnasium), the « Hanky game » would be a nice relaxing game to add. In the olden days, people including children, used to always carry a hanky in their pocket which means there was always a possibility for a spontaneous game as there was always a hanky available. This hanky suddenly turned into a mouse:

Make a knot
with the 2 points
for the ears

Tuck (a) at the
bottom of the roll

Game: Souricette, pendulette

The children sit in a circle and have to cover their eyes or at least close them while they sing a little song. One volunteer goes around the outskirts of the circle.

As long as our song goes, he/she is allowed to walk around but has to put the mouse behind someone before the song is over.

When the song is over everybody looks behind themselves. If they find the mouse, they (the person) have to get up and run around the circle, the opposite way of the other person. They both try to get first to the empty spot. The last one is the new mouse.

The song goes:

Pendulette, souricette,

Sauve-toi, sauve-toi

Où l’aiguille t’attrapera !

Another variant for a following lesson: Class asks the questions from the chorus rhyme : Bonjour Madame..., the teacher answers.

After asking other students (5, depending on the size of the class) to be clocks with their arms and the rest of the class to guess what they see, we go on with the introduction of “et quart” (quarter past) and “et demie” (half past” with the wooden clock:

Il est une heure et quart
Il est une heure et demie
Il est deux heures et quart
Il est deux heures et demie...

Then they have to guess : il est 6 heures et quart, il est 3 heures et demie, 3 heures et quart, 6 heures et demie...
When this is well anchored in their memory, we work on “moins le quart” and we leave it for the rest of the year.

In Grade 4 we shall do a review of this whole process and add new components to it for example:

In the rhythmic part, work on numbers, especially the multiples of 5: 5-10-15-20... with bean-bags or a skipping rope;

We could learn the recitation from H. Gerbert:

Pierre, lève-toi, il est 7 heures déjà !
Non, maman, je ne veux pas.
Pierre, lève-toi, il est 7 heures 10 déjà !
Non, maman, je ne veux pas.
Pierre, lève-toi, il est 7 heures et quart !
Non, maman, il est déjà trop tard !

Pierre, get up, it is 7 o'clock already !
No mum, I don't want to.
Pierre,.... 5 past 7
 10 past 7
 quarter past 7
No mum, it is already too late!

We could work on it as a little play. We can introduce it by miming it and acting it out with props like a pillow, a Teddy bear...

To the concept of “et quart”, “et demie” and “moins le quart” we add the rest of the numbers and finish learning the time.

This would be the new part to the process of learning the time in French.

To this, we can add the concept of
plus tard/plus tôt

later earlier

through a guessing game from the Livre rose (8): A child writes a time on the other side of the blackboard, the class must guess it asking:

Est-ce qu'il est 3 heures? Is it 3 o'clock?

The student answer:

Oui or non Non, plus tard
Non, plus tôt.

2) Examples for a variety in repetition

A pronunciation exercise that could be done towards the end of Grade 3 and up.

Pauvre petit pêcheur prend pauvre petit poisson.

After introducing it, acting it out with a fishing rod for example, the teacher starts.

To acquire speed and a proper pronunciation, the class repeats each part:

- Pauvre petit pêcheur
- Prend
- Pauvre petit poisson.
- Pauvre petit pêcheur prend
- Pauvre petit poisson.
- Pauvre petit pêcheur
- Prend pauvre petit poisson.

a) The group repeats the whole sentence at once after the teacher. Several individual students repeat, one at a time.

b) Stamping foot or clapping hands on P gives a rhythm.

c) We could also clap hands for pauvre then clap twice for pauvre petit.

d) We clap hands for pauvre and tap foot for petit.

e) An other version could be done fast and slowly.

f) The class is divided in two groups and one individual:

Pauvre petit pêcheur prend pauvre petit poisson.

One group individual the other group

They try to say it as smoothly and as clearly as they can increasing the speed.

A traditional rhyme: possibly for Grade 3:

The teacher presents the text first, saying it and acting it out as much as possible:

Bonjour Lundi, comment va Mardi?

- Très bien Mercredi
- Je viens Jeudi
- Dire à Vendredi
- Qu'il s'apprête Samedi
- A danser Dimanche.

The children repeat twice after the teacher.

They are then divided in two groups to do the dialogue: the teacher goes from one to the other to establish the idea of the dialogue, the groups switch roles.

The second time, the teacher helps but with a soft voice to give the groups a chance to say it almost by themselves.

Second day:

a) The class is divided in two groups again:

The door group	the window group
Bonjour	Lundi
Comment va	Mardi
Très bien	Mercredi
Je viens	Jeudi
Dire à	Vendredi
Qu'il s'apprête	Samedi
A danser	Dimanche.

b) They change parts

c) The first group in a) says it silently, we hear only the days of the week.

d) They change parts.

e) The second group in a) says the days of the week silently, we hear the other group saying the first part.

f) Individual children take turns.

g) Stumping, clapping...

Lundi	(stump feet x2)
Mardi	(clap hands x2)
Mercredi	(snap fingers x2)
Jeudi	(snap tongue x2)
Vendredi	(pound fists x2)
Samedi	(tap index fingers together x2)
Dimanche	(do the whole row of actions starting from the top (Bakiss Laurent))

h) Increase the speed as much as the children can take it, saying it properly and finish slowly to bring them "together" again.

i) Game of the missing day:

The teacher enumerates the days of the week omitting one, then two; the children guess which one.

A child takes turn doing it.

j) Another game:

A student (1) thinks of a day – he/she whispers it in the teacher’s ear (somebody has to be the witness...and he/she is in control!) The others(2) have to guess which one it is and ask the question:

Est-ce que c’est...Jeudi?

The student answers :

Oui, c’est jeudi

or

Non, ce n’est pas jeudi.

Later on we shall introduce ”avant “ “après” – (before-after)

The student (1) can answer

Non, c’est avant jeudi

Non, c’est après mardi

The student (2) will then conclude :

C’est mercredi

This brings us to...

Hier	aujourd’hui	demain
Yesterday	today	tomorrow

just as a game.

These last two examples should be in the category of progressive repetition but as it belongs to the “days of the week” theme, I decided to leave it in this part of my work as these two categories intertwine themselves during a lesson.

A poem in Grade 2: Le chant du coq

One way of introducing a poem could be done by telling a story in the children’s mothertongue at the end of a French class. This can give the teacher an opportunity for some “intimacy” with the children while taking them on an imaginary journey, depending on how you tell the story...

My grand’mother always raised a lot of chickens. She was well-known among people who liked healthy food for she raised her chickens and hens in a large enclosed garden. She fed them with home-grown grains and constant fresh water. She raised them with a lot of care and people agreed she was selling the best eggs and the best chickens in the village. From time to time she even sold a rooster to make a “coq au vin”!

Once she had a rooster (what kind of a sound does a rooster make?) “Cocorico!” in French!

Well, not all of them! Because this one did not sing “Cocorico”. It was a special one that was a little different from the others. It sounded like somebody who knows several foreign languages!

Instead of saying cocorico, one morning it would say: Heu, eu, eu, eu and it added: Are you making my fire?

Next day it called: Ha, a, a, a, who is going to cook me?

Next day again: Ho, o, o, o, is it going to be soon?

And again: Heu, eu, eu, eu,

Ha, a, a, a,

Then from the distance, the echo, a tired echo, answered him:

Ho, o, o, o,

Shut your mouth, you dummy!

Next class or a couple of classes later, the teacher recites:

Le chant du coq

Chaque matin le coq demande :

Heu, eu, eu, eu !

Fait-on mon feu ?

Chaque matin le coq demande :

Ha, a, a, a !

Qui me cuira?

Chaque matin le coq demande:

Ho, o, o, o !

Est-ce bientôt?

Chaque matin le coq demande :

Heu, eu, eu, eu !

Fait-on mon feu ?

Chaque matin le coq demande :

Ha, a, a, a !

Qui me cuira?

Et l'écho fatigué, lui mande:

Ho, o, o, o !

Tais-toi, nigaud!

Louisa Paulin

To learn it together, the children repeat each sentence after the teacher

- Chaque matin le coq demande:
- Heu, eu, eu, eu !
- Fait-on mon feu ?

Then again

- Heu, eu, eu, eu !
- Fait-on mon feu ?

Same for each part, emphasising the Heu, Ha, Ho part, especially the very last part.

We review Heu, Ha, Ho in order and disorder. We then say the whole poem together. The group leads, the teacher says it softly.

Next class:

The teacher says

- Chaque matin le coq demande:

The students answer

- Heu, eu, eu, eu !
- Fait-on....

They exchange roles.

An other time:

A group does the repetition: Chaque matin...

An other does the rooster call

An other the question.

An other variant:

A dialogue half silent – half spoken.

The very first word: “Chaque” is said to give the start and then silently.

All we hear is the rooster through out the poem and the echo at the end.

Putting it on stage:

- One group says the repetition: Chaque...
- One rooster on stool (optional) taking the position of a rooster, with a hat or a mask representing the head of a rooster if we want.
- One small group for the echo at the back of the room with one person being the echo.
- Alternative: a rooster for each question.

E) Emotional support as an impulse to learning.

The aspects of progression and variety in repetition allow us to experience language to its fullest. Progressive repetition allows us to recognise the element of development and continuity as found in life. This, we could assimilate to unconscious repetition. Variety in repetition moreover, promotes creativity, thus providing a more personal and deeper learning experience.

This last aspect is the most important part of the whole experience because it brings joy in learning. We can only agree with R. Steiner when he comments:

“Why do artistic activities affect the formation of the will particularly strongly? Because first, practice is based upon repetition, and second, what people receive through artistic activity always gives them joy. People enjoy art again and again, not just the first time. Art has a quality that can excite people not just once, but can time and again directly give them joy. For this reason, we directly connect the artistic element with what we want to achieve in teaching.” (7)

Through his work R. Steiner gives us tools and the means of working in an artistic way. He encourages us to use our imagination at all times in our teaching. Teachers, however, often have an overload of work, which prompts them to use and reuse faded “creative” ideas. When done without an artistic component, pure theory actually drives us away from our original intention which was to teach a language in a meaningful way. It leads to monotony and disinterest among the children, and discouragement and lack of energy among the teachers. Creative repetition is, for most of us, the most difficult task to fulfil. But couldn't we simply have the courage and try to follow R. Steiner's advice, to

“Realise that we do have a categorical imperative! This categorical imperative is:

“Keep your imagination alive.”(8)

Conclusion

My intention in choosing this theme was to help us, foreign language teachers, to keep a perspective in our work, to stimulate ideas in order to strive in our task to educate the children in a creative environment. We should not be afraid to use our imagination even at times when we feel overloaded with work because the effect of our creative work during our lessons carries us and generates a feeling of accomplishment. This, in turn, takes us further in our work with the children. Furthermore we should not forget that our imagination and creativity are enhanced through the communication and exchange which results from working together. Teamwork with other language teachers as well as with the teachers of a class gives us the support and help we need.

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- (2) Antoine de Saint Exupery : Le Petit Prince , chap. 21, p. 84, my own translation
- (3)-(4)-(9) R. Steiner: The Foundations of Human Experience, Lecture Eight
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- (5) Christoph Jaffke in: Zum Fremdsprachenunterricht – Kiersch: Zur Begründung und Durchführung des Fremdsprachenunterrichts in den ersten drei Schuljahren.
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- (7) Alain Denjean: Die Praxis des Fremdsprachenunterrichts an der Waldorfschule, 2000. Chap. 1: Der Unterricht in der Unterstufe, p. 35
- (8) Recueil de Poèmes, Chants, Jeux et Comptines pour les quatre premières classes des Ecoles Waldorf. p. 72