

## The nursery rhymes workbook

### 1. Objectives

- Memorise lexicon and syntactic structures that can be reinvested in spoken interactions
- Identify regularities in the spoken language in French (possibly in another language).
- Practice discriminating and correctly pronouncing different sounds
- memorise a repertoire of nursery rhymes and songs
- Play with his voice alone and with others
- Locate and reproduce simple rhythmic formulas, either physically or with one's voice.

### 2. Emergence of practice and theoretical support

Nursery rhymes, rounds, lullabies, formulas and other children's songs belong to the oral tradition and have been passed down for generations. They constitute a musical genre and participate in a playful way to learning the language. Nursery rhymes are widely used in nursery schools, their first interest is the pleasure aroused by the singing: children like very much these moments of songs / mime / dance, pleasure of the ear, mouth and body. Moreover, they provide many opportunities for learning.

"(...) nursery rhymes, neither really poems, nor really songs, are much more than just a game and allow awakening to language, to numbers, to notions of space / time, to motor skills and sociability, and this, from the nursery and nursery school. They therefore have a real educational action, by making the child particularly sensitive to his environment and by facilitating him to learn a series of skills essential to his good development. It is therefore an important teaching tool available to persons involved in any way in the child's development. Thus speak Gauthier and Lejeune (2008, p.420) in a clinical psychology research.

To know more:

Gauthier J.-M. & Lejeune C. (2008) « Les comptines et leur utilité dans le développement de l'enfant ». *Neuropsychiatrie de l'enfance et de l'adolescence*, volume 56, novembre 2008. pp 413-421.

<https://orbi.ulg.ac.be/bitstream/2268/74134/1/comptine.pdf> (consulted on 16/01/18)

Bruley M.-C. & Painset M.-F. (2007). *Au bonheur des comptines*. Didier Jeunesse

[https://www.ac-paris.fr/serail/jcms/s1\\_837845/fr/les-comptines-les-enfantines-les-effets-chez-les-enfants](https://www.ac-paris.fr/serail/jcms/s1_837845/fr/les-comptines-les-enfantines-les-effets-chez-les-enfants) (consulted on 16/01/18)

Marie-France Painset runs activities in libraries and puts on shows around nursery rhymes..

<http://mariefrancepainset.net/les-petits-pouces/> (consulted on 16/01/18)

### Sing to learn

We all know from experience that singing helps to memorise. I often say that I learned English by singing the Beatles' songs, and I still remember the lyrics of a song in Spanish, learned in high school, whereas I don't speak Spanish. Thus, in class, we learn the list of days of the week, the months of the year, or the number nursery rhyme by singing, in French but also in other languages. It is much less boring and much more efficient than learning it by heart.

A study by Schön and Al (2008), *Songs as an aid for language acquisition*, confirms that the motivational and strongly emotional activity of singing can benefit language learning, particularly at the beginning of a language learning, when we discover new words and we need to isolate them in the spoken chain. Singing can thus help in language acquisition for at least two reasons: the emotional impact of singing has an effect on the level of activity and attention; and the melody helps in phonological discrimination (thanks to the link between rhythm and syllabic cutting).

For these reasons and also and above all for the shared pleasure in singing, I wanted to give the nursery rhymes a particular importance in my class, with a double objective: the **inclusion of the pupils' languages** and the **learning of French**.

## **Multilingual nursery rhymes**

They constitute a form of awakening to languages (see development on awakening to languages in the notice "digital multilingual picture books").

And on the other hand, this type of activity has been part of the programmes since 2015 under the name "Awakening to linguistic diversity" :

From the middle section, they will discover the existence of languages, sometimes very different from those they know. In playful situations (games, nursery rhymes...) or to which they can give meaning (DVD of known stories for example), they become aware that communication can pass through other languages than French.

Including pupils' languages through nursery rhymes makes it possible to establish a link between home and school and to reconcile the different languages in the pupils' linguistic repertoire. In addition, the emotional and symbolic dimension of languages is particularly present in singing, especially when the nursery rhyme is learned through the pupils' parents. These nursery rhymes, frequently coming from their childhood, often carry a strong emotional value, and the fact of transmitting them within their child's school is not insignificant for them. And even when the nursery rhyme is learned by the teacher using a CD, the recognition of the first language induced by a nursery rhyme is of great value to the child.

To work on singing also means to work on the voice, and thus to mobilise the "speaking body" and to anchor learning in the body, and it means to recognise, become aware and reactivate the body knowledge already acquired in the first language, not only phonatory but more widely gestural.

### To know more:

Schön D., Boyer M., Moreno S., Besson M., Peretz I. & Kolinsky R. (2008). *Songs as an aid for language acquisition*. *Cognition*, Volume 106, Issue 2, February 2008. pp. 975-983.

[https://pdflegend.com/download/songs-as-an-aid-for-language-acquisition-59f9e720d64ab23ff0852f65\\_pdf](https://pdflegend.com/download/songs-as-an-aid-for-language-acquisition-59f9e720d64ab23ff0852f65_pdf) (consulted on 28/12/17)

Sur Elodil, language awareness activities through nursery rhymes:

<http://www.elodil.umontreal.ca/fileadmin/documents/Guides/eal/20-disciplines-musique.pdf> (consulted on 28/01/18)

An experiment on the site of the Lyon Academy:

<http://www2.ac-lyon.fr/ressources/rhone/langues-vivantes/spip.php?article402> (consulted on 28/01/18)

## **Nursery rhymes in French**

The main objective is the learning of oral language, in connection with the activities and with, as support, the gesture and the movement, the dance and the mime, the mimics. The rhymes accompany the action and put it into words. The accompanying gestures, the finger games and the sound effects are as much help to the comprehension and the entry in the language for allophones. I sometimes simplify the words to allow the acquisition of simple sentences necessary for the daily life, even I invent new nursery rhymes for the needs of the cause, in an aim of learning simple words and sentences, and because existing nursery rhymes can sometimes be too complicated for children to appropriate them effectively for a language purpose.

Under these conditions, nursery rhymes can offer speaking apprentices "models" of speech that they can grasp, what Lentin and Canut call "creative semantic-syntactic patterns" (Canut, 2009). (see file on digital echo albums).

### To know more:

Canut E. (2009). Apprendre à parler pour ensuite apprendre à lire et à écrire. Congrès FNAME. <https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-00524227/document>

## **3. implementation**

## **In French**

The nursery rhymes rhythm the life of the class, announce, accompany the moments of the collective life and participate in the ritualisation of the activities. Each key moment of the day corresponds to a nursery rhyme that puts it into words: a rhyme to say hello, one to say the weather, one to say one's good appetite, one to say we line up or we circle up, one to say that we are silent.

## **In the pupils' languages**

It is not always possible, but we prefer when nursery rhymes are taught to us in class by the parents. They come to class and they teach them to us directly. We also take the opportunity to record the nursery rhyme on the digital tablet, which gives us a good support for later learning sessions and also allows us to put the nursery rhyme on the school's blog. It is also easier for us to have a reliable model to train us to have the most correct pronunciation possible. The parents tell us how they learned it: about a nursery rhyme in Wolof, a mother told us that she sang it, as a child, when she was playing hopscotch. When we talk about this nursery rhyme, it becomes "the nursery rhyme of.....' s mother " Which is much more meaningful for young children than a title.

## **The nursery rhymes workbook**

It brings together all the nursery rhymes, rounds or formulas learned in class. It is at the disposal of the pupils in the classroom library so that they can flip through it, at will. All the songs and nursery rhymes learned in class are included, together with an illustration that allows them to be identified. The workbook is a tool that encourages pupils, alone or with others, to repeat and reinvest songs learned with the whole class.

## **4. Impact**

### **Multilingual nursery rhymes**

Pupils have no difficulty learning these nursery rhymes (much less than adults) and fewer pronunciation difficulties: this putting unknown sounds in their mouths is a game for them, they like it a lot. They are very proud to sing nursery rhymes in their own language and very respectful of those of friends: there are no more laughs or mockery when listening to a new song (as it may have been the case a few years ago). The different sounds are no longer surprising, plurilingualism is part of the ordinary, we are really learning to live together.

### **Nursery rhymes in French**

It is difficult to measure the impact of nursery rhymes on language learning, but what is observed and which is of great interest for second-language learning is that nursery rhymes allow children to practice articulation and pronunciation of French even before the child can produce personal statements. Here are two examples:

- Abdelhakim was 5 years old and hardly spoke in class. On the other hand, he could perfectly say the rhymes of the class in French. We could therefore be reassured about his language skills. And in fact, today, in last section of nursery school, he speaks well.
- Liên's first language is Vietnamese, she begins to speak French, but the pronunciation is very difficult because very different from Vietnamese, which does not prevent her from singing loudly all the nursery rhymes, in French and in the other languages, and pronouncing them well. The nursery rhymes allow her to practice pronunciation in a secure context thanks to the group's repetition and protection: her voice is not put forward and she has the right to make mistakes. In addition, it seemed to me that learning a nursery rhyme in her language had unlocked something in the little girl who then began to sing with renewed ardor with the group.

## **Examples**

### **Nursery rhymes in French**

The rhyme "*The snail sleeps*" has been rewritten by simplifying the syntax from an existing rhyme, so that pupils can better capture the syntactic patterns (in reception and production). The nursery rhyme is said accompanied by gestures to promote understanding and memorisation.

Text of the nursery rhyme	Gestures
<b>The snail is sleeping.</b> <b>There's sunshine outside.</b> <b>A cloud passes .....</b>	<i>A hand shows his closed fist.</i> <i>The second hand forms a circle.</i> <i>The second hand passes over the closed fist waving.</i>
<b>And it's raining!</b>	<i>The fingers of the second hand are patting the closed fist.</i>
<b>The snail is happy.</b> <b>He shows a horn .....</b> <b>two horns .....</b>	<i>The closed fist is recovering and waddling.</i> <i>The index of the closed hand stands.</i> <i>The middle finger of the closed hand stands.</i>

### **Multilingual nursery rhymes**

<https://read.bookcreator.com/pL34gNih0TShsL5qWGPTTpXufRG2/sf28alwrS5Keiu8eOTIAfw>

### **Multilingual performance at the theatre**

<http://mat-cologne-besancon.ac-besancon.fr/category/vie-de-lecole/>