Games in the MFL Classroom: Cooperative Learning in Action

"A game is an activity or sport usually involving skill, knowledge, or chance, in which you follow fixed rules and try to win against an opponent or to solve a puzzle."
(Collins English Dictionary)

When playing games in the MFL classroom, students are actively engaged in tasks and activities using the target language for the purpose of communication. When planning cooperative learning activities such as games in the MFL classroom, the following summary may form a useful support. It is not intended to be exhaustive but rather a quick reference guide.

5 Basic Elements of Cooperation

Positive Interdependence:
Groups cannot succeed unless they work together. Teachers can create this by using the following:
Goal: Provide a clear goal.
Role: Give each student a job to do.
Resources: Limit resources to ensure sharing.
Incentive: Provide a perk/incentive for everyone.
Outside Force: Groups compete against each other.
Environmental: i.e. Students work around a defined area.
Identity: Group names/logos.
Sequence: Each student must complete a task before the next student can continue.
Simulation: Take on a role to act out a situation or resolve a conflict.

Individual Accountability:
Each student is responsible for contributing a fair share of the group's work.

Interpersonal/Small Group Skills:
Communication, leadership, trust building, decision-making, and conflict resolution.

Group Processing:
The group reflects on how well the group members are working cooperatively and how it would be possible to do even better.

Promotive Interaction:
Setting up a group environment that encourages students to support each other to achieve, i.e. small enough groups, sitting face-to-face, etc.

Adapted from Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. (1989), Cooperation and competition: Theory and research. Edina, MN: Interaction Book Company.

Stop the Bus

Materials needed:
Enclosed templates printed and laminated for reuse, or paper and pencil.

Preparation:
- Everyone gets a piece of paper and a pencil. Choose the categories (such as Names, Plants, Jobs, Famous People, Hobbies, etc.).

How to play:
- Person A shouts out A and then continues to run down the alphabet silently. The person to their left says STOP. Person A names the letter of the alphabet they got to. You can also decide to go in order starting with A, then B, then C, etc.
- Each player then tries to fill all the columns with something beginning with that particular letter. (Alternative version: you start the timer and stop after 60 seconds)
- When the time is up… pencils down!
- Players then compare their lists and count their points. Points are awarded as follows:
  5 Points if someone else has the same answer.
  10 Points if everyone has different valid answers.
  20 Points if nobody else filled in this category.
- Invented places/names don't count! And it's up to the group to decide if you will allow places that no longer exist.
- The player with the most points wins in the end

This game can be used to support the development of the following learning outcomes:
1.15 take part in routine classroom interactions such as pair and group work, asking questions, language games and activities, asking for help and repetition where necessary.
2.2 apply all language learning to creative activities such as producing simple poems, posters, presentations, games and drama.
3.1 name and describe some features of the target language country/countries such as geographical features, weather, places and landmarks, food.
3.2 discover and use facts and figures related to the target country/countries such as statistical data, festivals, inventions, famous peopl

						ABCDEFGH IJKLMNOPQ RSTUVWXYZ	

Dominos

Materials needed:
Enclosed templates printed, or paper, pencil, scissors and envelopes.

Preparation:
Students create their own Dominoes word cards. They begin with a small set of words/expressions and images of things that interest them and build up their set over time. They can draw these images or use photos of images.
At a later stage Dominoes can be made up of anything that can be paired:

- Questions and answers
- Synonyms
- Irregular verb forms.

How to play:
Learners can play with dominoes individually, in pairs or in groups.

You can find further references and instructions for this game in Little, D. et. al. (2017) Language Learner Autonomy: Theory, Practice and Research. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

This game can be used to support the development of the following learning outcomes
1.6 understand the general sense of a text on familiar topics.
1.7 identify specific information in a range of texts dealing with familiar topics.
1.15 take part in routine classroom interactions such as pair and group work, asking questions, language games and activities, asking for help and repetition where necessary.
1.13 ask and answer questions and exchange ideas, emotions and information on familiar topics in everyday situations.
1.19 create texts about aspects of their lives and topics that interest them such as family and friends, school, holidays, leisure activities, fashion, sport, celebrities.
1.17 write words and create short sentences using various media (emails, letters, blogs, postcards…) on everyday topics with accuracy.
1.22 produce and edit texts and interact with others in writing using appropriate digital technologies.

Template Dominos

Top Trumps

Materials needed:
Enclosed templates printed, or paper, pencil, scissors and envelopes as well as online research using the target language.

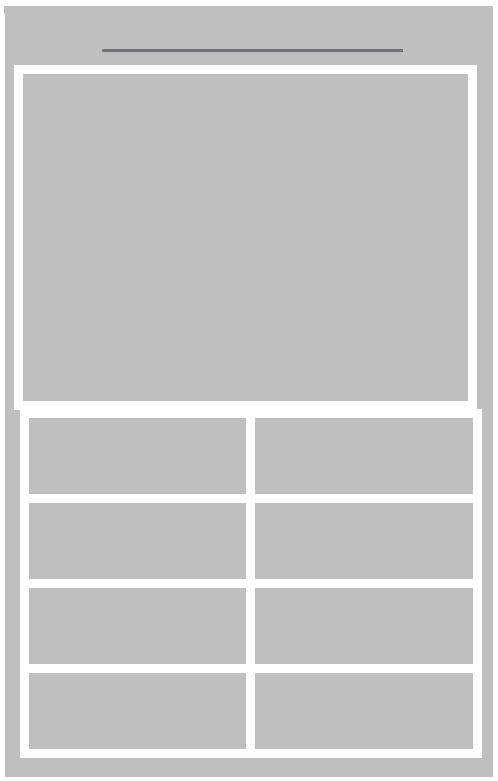
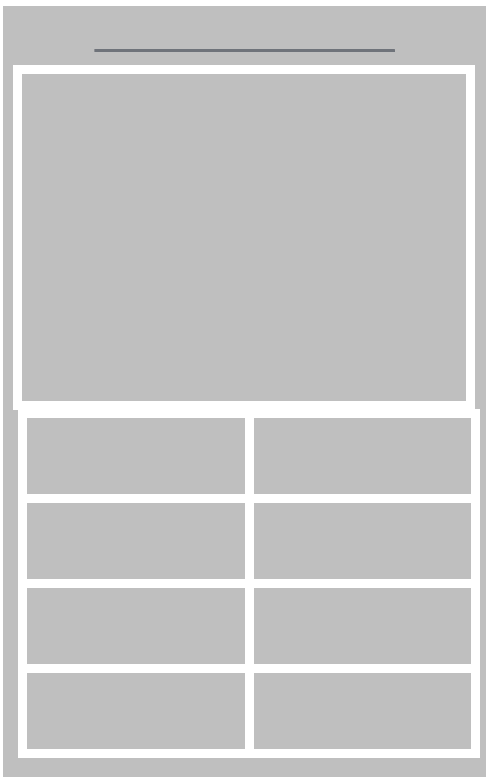
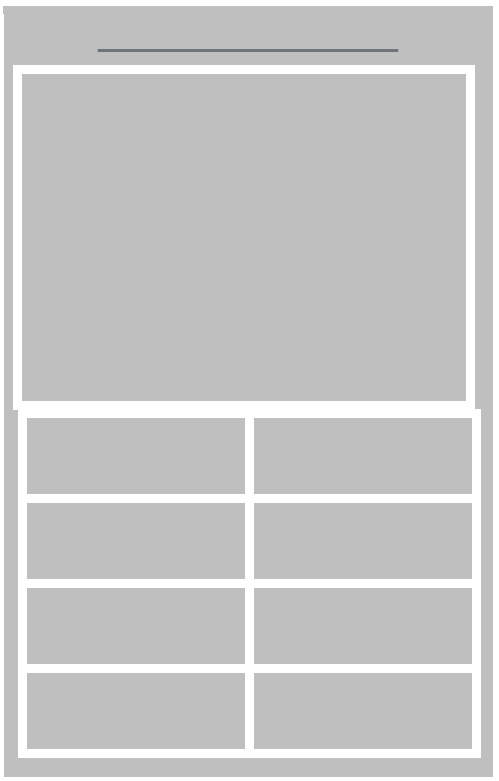
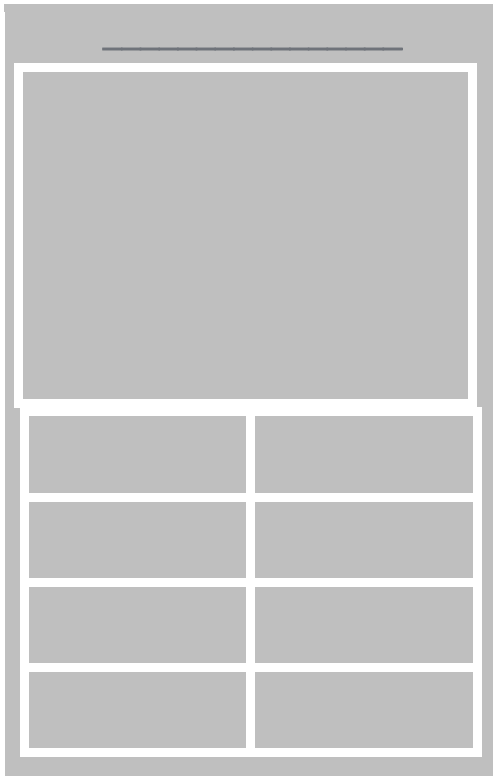
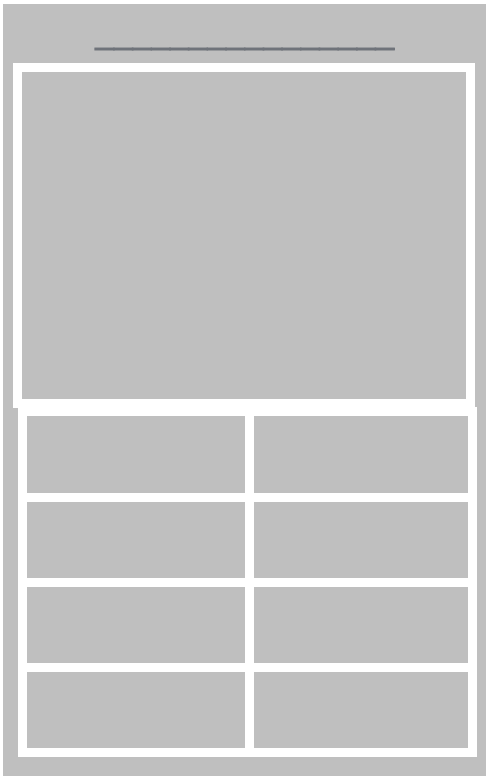
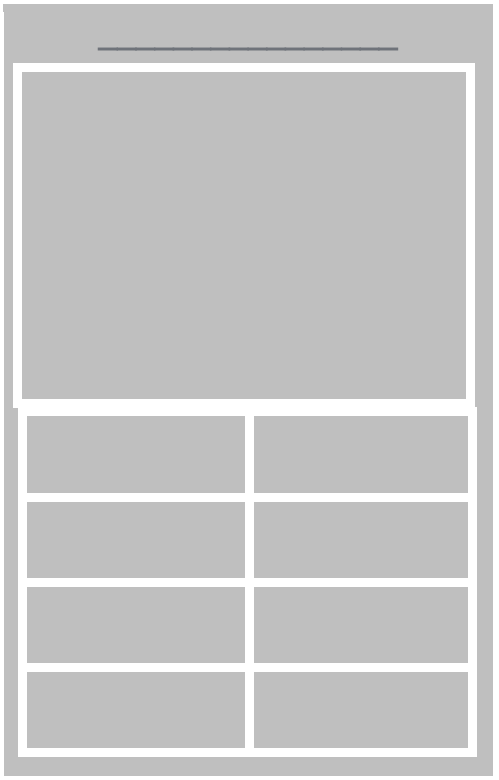
Preparation:
Students can play commercially produced Top Trumps as well as those created by themselves.
Students create their own Top Trumps.
They begin by researching areas of interest such as famous people, geographical features, statistical data, etc. in the target language and use these facts to create playing cards.

How to play:
Learners can play Top Trumps in pairs or in groups.

- Each player receives the same number of cards. They turn over the card at the top of the pile only.
- Player A selects a category and calls out the value on the card. Each player then calls out their value in the same category and the highest value wins. (Players agree in advance whether the lowest or highest category wins the round).
- If there is no clear winner (i.e. if all values are the same) the cards are put in the middle of the table and players read the value on their next card. They must stick with the same category. This continues until one player wins the round (they take all cards on the table as well).
- If a player has only three remaining cards, they may turn them all over and select the best value across all three cards.

This game can be used to support the development of the following learning outcomes:
1.3 identify specific information in texts related to familiar topics such as announcements, conversations, simple news items.
1.7 identify specific information in a range of texts dealing with familiar topics.
1.13 ask and answer questions and exchange ideas, emotions and information on familiar topics in everyday situations.
1.19 create texts about aspects of their lives and topics that interest them such as family and friends, school, holidays, leisure activities, fashion, sport, celebrities.
2.1 recognise, describe and use language patterns such as word order, verbal system, nouns, adjectives, spelling and punctuation conventions.
3.1 name and describe some features of the target language country/countries such as geographical features, weather, places and landmarks, food.
3.6 select, process and present information through the appropriate use of digital technologies, and evaluate it for truth and reliability.
3.8 compare and contrast aspects of personal interest in the target language country/countries with those in their own country and present them using a range of media.
3.10 compare and contrast the use of numbers in the target language country/countries and in their own, with regard to familiar topics such as prices, age, dates, seasons.
1.17 write words and create short sentences using various media (emails, letters, blogs, postcards…) on everyday topics with accuracy.
1.22 produce and edit texts and interact with others in writing using appropriate digital technologies.

Template Top Trumps

Tabu

Materials needed:
Commercially produced board game which contains cards with a key word (the packs of cards come in themes – jobs, places, hobbies).
Alternatively, students can create their own version using word cards in areas that interest them (see template on the following page).

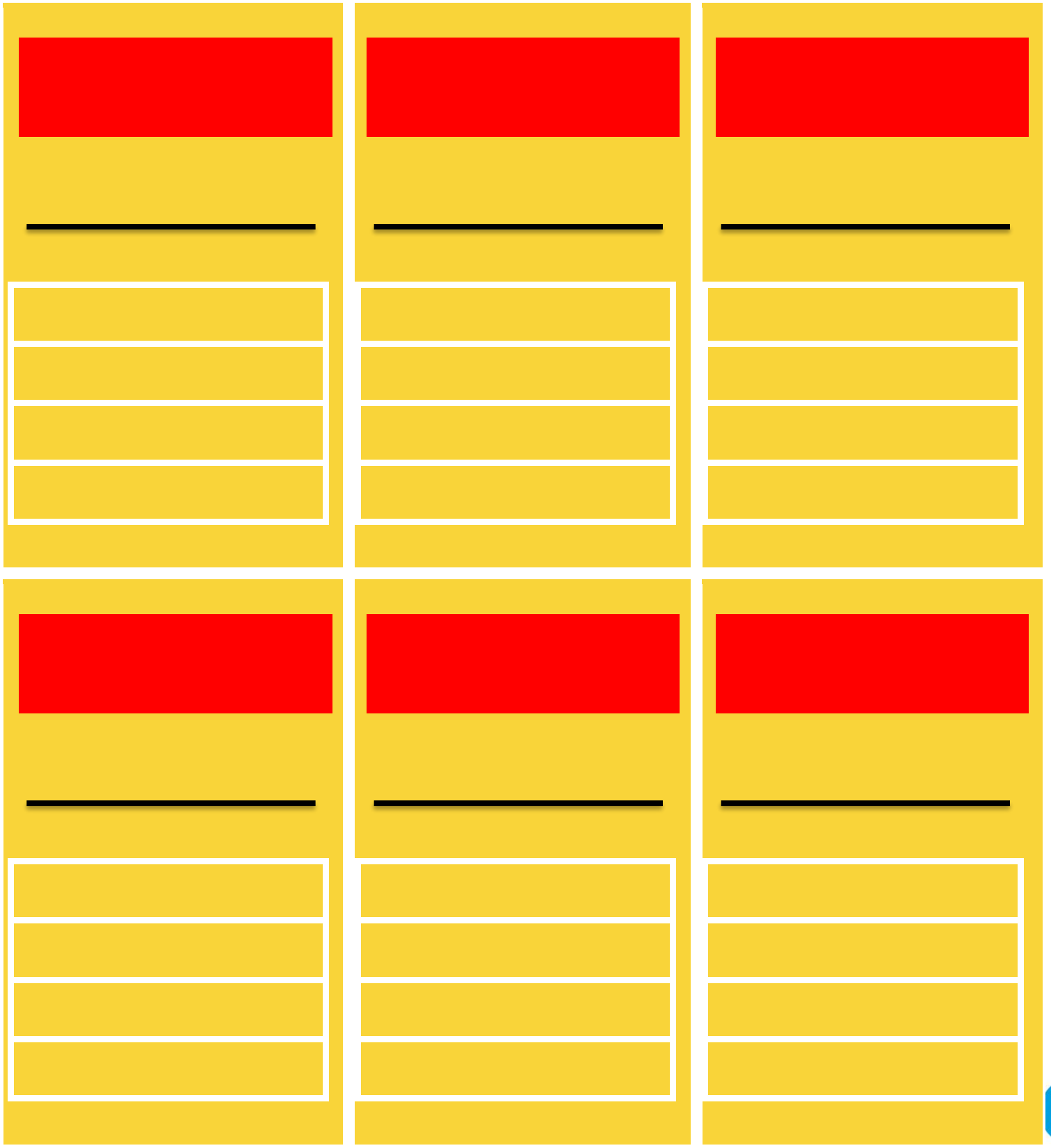
Preparation:
Students play Tabu in groups.

How to play:
The aim of the game is to describe the word to your team, without saying the Taboo description words underneath – this can be simplified, by allowing students use those words)
E.g. The word is "Bäckerei" and you can't say the words Brot or backen. However, for juniors, you can flip it, that they can use these words as their helper words. It can be scaffolded beforehand, by suggesting sample verbs and starts of sentences that might be useful for the theme, e.g.

Es ist ein Ding ….
Es ist ein Beruf
Man kann.....kaufen/essen, etc
Dort arbeiten.....

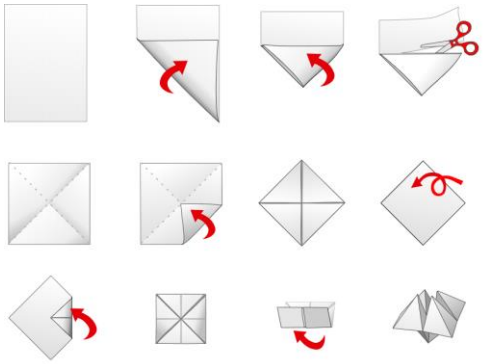
This game can be used to support the development of the following learning outcomes:
1.2 recognise frequently used words and phrases related to areas of immediate relevance and experience, including the language of routine classroom interactions.
1.3 identify specific information in texts related to familiar topics such as announcements, conversations, simple news items.
1.9 pronounce words accurately enough to be understood, with appropriate intonation.
1.10 convey simple descriptions, presentations or announcements on familiar topics.
1.11 interact in routine exchanges with pronunciation and intonation which is clear enough to be understood and with appropriate non-verbal language.
1.13 ask and answer questions and exchange ideas, emotions and information on familiar topics in everyday situations.
1.17 write words and create short sentences using various media (emails, letters, blogs, postcards…) on everyday topics with accuracy.
2.4 identify similarities and differences between the pronunciation, intonation and rhythm of the target language and that of other languages they know.
2.5 compare grammar and vocabulary of the target language with that of other languages they know, making connections and distinctions as appropriate.
3.1 name and describe some features of the target language country/countries such as geographical features, weather, places and landmarks, food.
3.2 discover and use facts and figures related to the target country/countries such as statistical data, festivals, inventions, famous people.
3.4 identify and explain some aspects of the target language country/countries in areas such as everyday living, interpersonal relations, customs and behaviours, social conventions.
3.10 compare and contrast the use of numbers in the target language country/countries and in their own, with regard to familiar topics such as prices, age, dates, seasons.

Template Tabu



Fortune Teller

Materials needed:
Paper, scissors, pencil and/or coloured markers.



Preparation:
These are made by students in class and can be tailored to any level or theme. Students create questions and answers in the TL. They can also practice numbers and colours as and if required.

This game can be used to support the development of the following learning outcomes:
1.2 recognise frequently used words and phrases related to areas of immediate relevance and experience, including the language of routine classroom interactions.
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1.11 interact in routine exchanges with pronunciation and intonation which is clear enough to be understood and with appropriate non-verbal language.
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1.17 write words and create short sentences using various media (emails, letters, blogs, postcards…) on everyday topics with accuracy.
1.17 write words and create short sentences using various media (emails, letters, blogs, postcards…) on everyday topics with accuracy.
1.18 write a series of phrases and sentences linked with simple connectors such as but, and, or, as.
2.4 identify similarities and differences between the pronunciation, intonation and rhythm of the target language and that of other languages they know.
2.5 compare grammar and vocabulary of the target language with that of other languages they know, making connections and distinctions as appropriate.

Elastics

Materials needed:
Elastics.
Preparation:
Elastics: Students play in groups of three.
Skipping: Students play in groups of three or more.
How to play:
With elastics, two students each put one end of the elastics around their ankles and stand opposite each other. A third student jumps over, on and to the side of the elastics while saying the rhyme. Etc. Etc.:

German	Seite Seite Mitte Breite Seite Seite Mitte Raus	In einer Badewanne saß eine dicke Dame Alte Dame lachte Badewanne krachte	Trick Track Donald Duck Mickey Maus Rein Raus
French			
Italian			
Spanish			

For jumping patterns and other information please go to: https://www.wisst-ihr-noch.de/80er/spielzeug-80er/gummitwist-ein-einfaches-waeschegummi-brachte-uns-alle-zum-huepfen-1081/

This game can be used to support the development of the following learning outcomes:
1.9 pronounce words accurately enough to be understood, with appropriate intonation.
1.11 interact in routine exchanges with pronunciation and intonation which is clear enough to be understood and with appropriate non-verbal language.
2.2 apply all language learning to creative activities such as producing simple poems, posters, presentations, games and drama.
2.4 identify similarities and differences between the pronunciation, intonation and rhythm of the target language and that of other languages they know.

Skipping

Materials needed:
Skipping rope: use either one long skipping rope for group skipping or one shorter one.

Preparation:
Students play in groups of three or more

How to play:
Students skip while singing the rhyme, jumping out at the end.

German	Dos à dos, face à face, donnez-vous la main et changez de place	Salade, salade, je suis malade ! D'avoir mangé trop de salade Ce soir. Un, deux, trois, quatre, cinq...	Quel âge, as-tu, petit enfant ? 1 an 2 ans 3 ans 4 ans.....etc
French	Eins zwei Polizei Drei vier Offizier Fünf sechs alte Hex Sieben acht Gute Nacht Neun zehn Kapitän Elf zwölf einige Wolf Drin steckt eine Maus Die muss raus	Verliebt verlobt verheiratet geschieden, wie viele Kinder wirst du kriegen eins, zwei, drei.....	Hilfe Hilfe, ich ertrinke, bitte …..... komm zu Hilfe, kommst du nicht dann hol ich dich, mit dem Stock versohl‘ ich dich .....
Italian			
Spanish			

This game can be used to support the development of the following learning outcomes:
1.9 pronounce words accurately enough to be understood, with appropriate intonation.
1.11 interact in routine exchanges with pronunciation and intonation which is clear enough to be understood and with appropriate non-verbal language.
2.2 apply all language learning to creative activities such as producing simple poems, posters, presentations, games and drama.
2.4 identify similarities and differences between the pronunciation, intonation and rhythm of the target language and that of other languages they know.

I went to the supermarket….

Materials needed:
None.
Preparation:
Students play in groups of three or more.
Starting phrases may be:

- Ich packe meinen Koffer und ich nehme mit:
- Je suis allé(e) au supermarché et j'ai acheté :…

How to play:
Students stand in a circle and start off with the above phrase. Each new student adds another item and it continues around the circle. Whoever forgets an item or says it in the wrong order, must sit down and is out. (The teacher should write down each word as it is said, so that they can adjudicate with minimum stress) . **This game can be used to support the development of the following learning outcomes:**
1.9 pronounce words accurately enough to be understood, with appropriate intonation.
1.10 convey simple descriptions, presentations or announcements on familiar topics.
1.11 interact in routine exchanges with pronunciation and intonation which is clear enough to be understood and with appropriate non-verbal language.
1.12 use simple polite forms in formal and informal situations such as greetings, thanks, introductions, and respond appropriately.
1.14 understand and use numbers as appropriate in everyday situations such as shopping, exchanging numbers, sequencing events.
1.15 take part in routine classroom interactions such as pair and group work, asking questions, language games and activities, asking for help and repetition where necessary.

What time is it Mr. Wolf

Materials needed:
None.
Preparation:
Students play in groups of three or more.
How to play:
Mr. Wolf stands at the top with their back to the students who are as far away as possible from the Wolf. The students shout in TL "what time is it Mr. Wolf "and the wolf replies in TL, "its …. o'clock". Students take as many steps as hours mentioned.
At some stage the wolf says "dinnertime" in the TL and chases the students to catch the next "wolf". Practices time and numbers.
This game can be used to support the development of the following learning outcomes:
1.9 pronounce words accurately enough to be understood, with appropriate intonation.
1.11 interact in routine exchanges with pronunciation and intonation which is clear enough to be understood and with appropriate non-verbal language.
1.14 understand and use numbers as appropriate in everyday situations such as shopping, exchanging numbers, sequencing events.
2.2 apply all language learning to creative activities such as producing simple poems, posters, presentations, games and drama.
2.4 identify similarities and differences between the pronunciation, intonation and rhythm of the target language and that of other languages they know.
3.10 compare and contrast the use of numbers in the target language country/countries and in their own, with regard to familiar topics such as prices, age, dates, seasons.

Class Project: Create your own board game

Instructions for students:
You are going to work in groups of no more than 4 people to create a board game which will practise your knowledge of the work we have done so far this year.

Age range: You are designing the game for language learners of your own age. You need to create something that is easy to understand, is fun to play, and will practise both knowledge and skills from this year's work.

Theme: You are going to create a game which requires players to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the language we have covered this year, in order to move around the board, and so, to win. Your game must not be based purely on luck. You can use ideas from existing games if you wish.

Rules: Try to keep the rules simple. Keep the following in mind:
· The game is meant for both educational and enjoyment purposes.
· The game should be for 2, 3 or 4 players.
· Decide the end goal of the game. Do players race to reach a final destination, or do they proceed around a circular board, competing to accumulate points or tokens?
· You must have enough spaces on the board and different ways of getting to the end point to keep the game interesting.

Draft: Make a rough draft of your board design. This will allow you to try it out and to make improvements.

Components of a traditional board game should include:

A path: Make sure to add a starting and, if necessary, a finishing place, and to set out a clear direction for the players to follow. Decide whether or not to split the path, to create shorter-but-harder and longer-but-easier routes, or to create a circular route to extend the game time.

Squares: Create squares where something special happens when you land on them. These can be identified by shapes (squares, circles, etc) or pictures (animals, film characters, sports equipment, etc). As this is an educational game, most of these positions should instruct players to pick up cards and answer questions. Make sure that there are also some squares that randomly redirect players or cause them to gain/lose points. (Do not make the penalties on these squares too evil. Players need to be able to recover from random setbacks.)

Playing cards: Having different types of cards (e.g. cards that change a player's location, "chance" cards, cards that players can collect throughout the game to represent achievements) will greatly increase the number of ways in which the game can unfold. As this is an educational game, you will need squares where players have to pick up cards and answer questions, in order to proceed or gain points. However, you should include a small number of squares with cards that randomly cause a player to change his or her score/position/accumulated points/location in the game (like "chance" cards in Monopoly).

Game pieces. At the design stage, rough game pieces can be created from paper, and a dice can be can be created from a six-sided pencil. If you wish, you can bring in pieces from games at home. (If you do this, you must take responsibility for them!)

Give your game a test-drive. Try out your prototype design with your group and make changes if you encounter any unforeseen problems. Ensure that the game rules are fair and that the questions to be answered are based on work we have done this year. Some questions should be easy, some should be harder, and some should be really hard.

The final version: Write up the instructions and rules for your game. If you want, you can base the look of your game on a sport, a film or a book. You should only work on this design element when everything else described above is finished.

This game can be used to support the development of the following learning outcomes:
1.3 identify specific information in texts related to familiar topics such as announcements, conversations, simple news items.
1.7 identify specific information in a range of texts dealing with familiar topics.
1.13 ask and answer questions and exchange ideas, emotions and information on familiar topics in everyday situations.
1.17 write words and create short sentences using various media (emails, letters, blogs, postcards…) on everyday topics with accuracy.
1.18 write a series of phrases and sentences linked with simple connectors such as but, and, or, as.
1.19 create texts about aspects of their lives and topics that interest them such as family and friends, school, holidays, leisure activities, fashion, sport, celebrities.
2.1 recognise, describe and use language patterns such as word order, verbal system, nouns, adjectives, spelling and punctuation conventions.
2.7 monitor and assess their own learning, using feedback they receive to reflect on what they need to improve and to set goals for improvement.
3.1 name and describe some features of the target language country/countries such as geographical features, weather, places and landmarks, food.
3.2 discover and use facts and figures related to the target country/countries such as statistical data, festivals, inventions, famous people.
3.3 reflect on what they have learned about the country/countries associated with the target language.
3.4 identify and explain some aspects of the target language country/countries in areas such as everyday living, interpersonal relations, customs and behaviours, social conventions.
3.6 select, process and present information through the appropriate use of digital technologies, and evaluate it for truth and reliability.
3.8 compare and contrast aspects of personal interest in the target language country/countries with those in their own country and present them using a range of media.
3.10 compare and contrast the use of numbers in the target language country/countries and in their own, with regard to familiar topics such as prices, age, dates, seasons.
1.17 write words and create short sentences using various media (emails, letters, blogs, postcards…) on everyday topics with accuracy.
1.22 produce and edit texts and interact with others in writing using appropriate digital technologies.

Bang Bang

Materials needed:
Flashcards (with images and/or phrases).
Lucky–Dip Box (non–transparent bag).
Stop clock. (Sample templates provided)

Preparation:
This game can be used for introduction of new vocabulary or for revision purposes. Before the lesson prepare a number of cards with words and phrases that you want the class to practise. Include a few cards with the word 'Bang!'
This game can be scaffolded to suit different levels where phrases are used or the image only is on the card.

How to play:

- Shuffle the cards and put them in the lucky–dip box.
- Divide the class into two teams, Équipe Paris & Équipe Toulouse.
- Decide on a set time for the game.
- Call a student from Team A to the board. Without looking they take a card from the box, look at it, and write the word/phrase on the board from memory. They must also read the word/phrase aloud.
- If the student is unsure, they can call a friend for assistance from their team (each team has four calls only for the duration of the game).
- If the word/phrase is spelled correctly the student gets to keep the card, if it is not spelled correctly the card goes back into the box.
- Next call a student from Team B to the board and repeat the process. If a student takes a '*Bang!*' card their team loses all their cards which go back into the bag.

This game can be used to support the development of the following learning outcomes:
1.9 pronounce words accurately enough to be understood, with appropriate intonation.
1.11 interact in routine exchanges with pronunciation and intonation which is clear enough to be understood and with appropriate non-verbal language.
1.15 take part in routine classroom interactions such as pair and group work, asking questions, language games and activities, asking for help and repetition where necessary.
1.17 write words and create short sentences using various media (emails, letters, blogs, postcards…) on everyday topics with accuracy.
2.1 recognise, describe and use language patterns such as word order, verbal system, nouns, adjectives, spelling and punctuation conventions.
2.2 apply all language learning to creative activities such as producing simple poems, posters, presentations, games and drama.
2.4 identify similarities and differences between the pronunciation, intonation and rhythm of the target language and that of other languages they know.
2.5 compare grammar and vocabulary of the target language with that of other languages they know, making connections and distinctions as appropriate.

Templates Bang Bang!

Play for Points

Materials needed:
Flashcards (relevant to the Unit of Learning)
Blu–tack
Teacher Preparation:
Prepare flashcards with images of words/ expressions in the target language. Before the pupils arrive, write random scores on the board. With the Blu–tack stick one of the flashcards on the board over each of the random scores.

How to play:

- Divide the pupils into two teams (Eg. Équipe François & Équipe Françoise)
- Équipe François & Équipe Françoise nominate a student to say the phrase associated with the flashcards. If the student is correct, they can remove the flashcard to reveal the number of points they have won for the team.
- The winning team is the team with the most points once all the flashcards have been removed. (As an alternative on the scores could include negative numbers so that a team's score could go down as well as up)

This game can be used to support the development of the following learning outcomes
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2.1 recognise, describe and use language patterns such as word order, verbal system, nouns, adjectives, spelling and punctuation conventions
2.4 identify similarities and differences between the pronunciation, intonation and rhythm of the target language and that of other languages they know
2.7 monitor and assess their own learning, using feedback they receive to reflect on what they need to improve and to set goals for improvement
3.1 name and describe some features of the target language country/countries such as geographical features, weather, places and landmarks, food.

Headbanz

Materials needed:
Flashcards (relevant to the Unit of Learning) with head bands
Or
Post-its

Preparation:
Students play in groups
The teacher prepares a set of post-its with words or pictures (of famous people, places and landmarks, foods, etc.)

How to play:

Students work in groups to try and figure out what the image/word on the post-it describes. Students ask questions in the target language which require a Yes/No answer. If the answer is Yes, they can continue asking questions, if the answer is No, they must stop, and it moves on to the next player.
If they choose to take a guess and they are wrong, it moves on to the next player.

This game can be used to support the development of the following learning outcomes
1.9 pronounce words accurately enough to be understood, with appropriate intonation
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1.15 take part in routine classroom interactions such as pair and group work, asking questions, language games and activities, asking for help and repetition where necessary
2.1 recognise, describe and use language patterns such as word order, verbal system, nouns, adjectives, spelling and punctuation conventions
2.4 identify similarities and differences between the pronunciation, intonation and rhythm of the target language and that of other languages they know
3.1 name and describe some features of the target language country/countries such as geographical features, weather, places and landmarks, food.
3.2 discover and use facts and figures related to the target country/countries such as statistical data, festivals, inventions, famous people.
3.4 identify and explain some aspects of the target language country/countries in areas such as everyday living, interpersonal relations, customs and behaviours, social conventions.
3.8 compare and contrast aspects of personal interest in the target language country/countries with those in their own country and present them using a range of media.

Notes