

The background of the slide features a stylized, 3D-rendered illustration of several human figures holding hands in a circle. The figures are rendered in a light blue, semi-transparent style, giving them a soft, ethereal appearance. They are set against a solid, vibrant blue background. The figures are positioned in a way that suggests a group or community, with their arms raised and hands clasped together. The overall aesthetic is clean, modern, and positive.

# French in Early years Education

From language to languages



# The project aims

1. To gather information on methodology to teach a foreign language to pre-schoolers
2. to develop a teaching program through a pilot in early years' establishments (EYEs)
3. to transfer the findings to a training course for Child Development Officers (CDOs) to enable them to introduce some French to the children.



- In the first instance this involved a lot of reading and research on established theories regarding the way children learn language in general and an additional foreign language (L2) in particular.
- the second step consisted of a pilot scheme to trial in situ a variety of approaches identified with young children.
- Lastly I designed and delivered some training to CDOs and other EYEs' staff over 10 weeks.

# Early year sector four capacities



## **“successful learners**

where the foreign language learning contributes to an awareness of how their own language works and promotes the understanding of different features in their own and others’ spoken language.

## **Confident individuals**

who welcome interactions with a foreign language speaker, exchanging greetings and simple information about themselves in the Foreign Language (names for example).

## **Effective contributors**

who join in paired and group activities, following simple instructions in the foreign language using clues such as mime and gesture.

## **Responsible citizens**

who have a growing awareness of life in another country and are introduced to books, music, food and festivals reflecting different cultural traditions.”

# Play is a major component of the way young children learn.



- "It is a natural way to engage with the reality of the environment around them, whether it be concrete interaction with solid materials, accessing abstract concepts, mastering motor development or practising social skills, etc. Mary D Sheridan (1977)"
- *Play feeds development which in turn feeds the quality of play. Play not only aids development its quality defines it too. The introduction of a second Language (L2) must include adaptations of games and activities traditionally present in EYEs.*



# Children learn better when they are allowed to experiment with a certain degree of freedom.



- “A sense of freedom, choice and control in play means that boundaries are set and regulated by children themselves. As a result play promotes and protects esteem and maintains attention for learning to take place”. Howard (2010a)
- *The learning environment must be planned to provide the children with a variety of potentially enriching experiences to choose from. These experiences shall dictate some of the French language content.*



## Careful planning and flexibility: conundrum?

- **There is both a need for careful planning** and identification of the potential learning outcomes linked to the experience arising from an activity **and a need for flexibility** as the children might actually take the learning experience in a totally different direction to the one anticipated by the adult who planned it. Pamela May(2011)
- *This type of responsive teaching places a greater demand on the creativity and flexibility of the teacher. Nursery learning and teaching is far more children led than any other sector I have worked in.*

## Draw on all senses to stimulate learning.



- Brain research points to the importance of the five senses in relating information.
- “The right hand hemisphere receives sensorial signals and because of the right brain’s link to emotions it releases pleasurable signals. This encourages the child to repeat the experience and leads to enhanced learning.” Howard Gardner (...) Janet Moyles (2010)
- *Using activities involving all senses when introducing new language will not only make the experience more relevant and realistic it will also maximise the learning potential of the children.*

# The importance of affective relationship in language learning.



- In Krashens' words, the learner has to be "affectively disposed to "let in" the input." Elaine Weitzman & Janice Greenberg (2002)
- *If the adult is a trusted and well liked figure he/she is much more likely to be accepted in the games children play allowing this "grown-up" to gently introduce angles which will enrich the experience for the children.*
- *Thus CDOs seem much better placed to deliver L2 than a visiting specialist.*



Learning has to be relevant and purposeful  
Consistency and repetition are also essential.



- “Young children always find that new knowledge makes more sense if it is linked to something within their own experience. New knowledge for them, needs to have a purpose, this has sometimes been called “knowing how” rather than “knowing that”.

Pamela May (2011)

- If an experience occurs daily in the children’s routine they are much more likely to learn from it, copy it and absorb it. It is therefore essential that the introduction of L2 is embedded in their daily interaction to achieve maximum impact.

Elaine Weitzman & Janice Greenberg (2002)

There is a definite sequence to follow when introducing new language / concepts be it in English or a Foreign Language.



- The child must experience the reality of the item / idea before associating it with a name. This combination then has to be internalised and generalised to some extent in order to be recognised even in a different guise.
- When introducing L2 it is thus important to use items already present in the children's environment.

# Common observations



- A “**silent period**” is a natural stage when children are learning their first language. It ties in with the (much shorter) silent stage which appears when pupils learn a second language. A lot of oral / aural repetition is needed before you can expect the learners to produce the name for a given item.
- Also it is worth mentioning that **errors** exists in both L1 and L2 and **are transitional forms** of language before a rule acquisition. Indeed many skills’ development seem to feature in both L1 and L2 acquisition.

## Simplified speech and repetitions are key in L2 as in L1 acquisition.



- “Learners need input that is adjusted to their level.”  
Rod Ellis (1999)
- “The child might not understand the FL but can be helped if the teacher remembers to **“say less, stress, go slow, show”**”. Elaine Weitzman & Janice Greenberg (2002)
- *Teachers should not hesitate to simplify their sentences, exaggerating the important words speaking clearly and slowly and using mimes and gestures to help understanding. This reinforces the importance of imbedding the language in relevant situations which will help to convey meaning.*



# Story telling

- The same approach applies to the use of story books. Elaine Weitzman & Janice Greenberg (2002)
- Rephrasing the text so it matches the illustrations increases simultaneous recognition. Giving learners a chance to observe the illustrations, welcoming their interruptions and extending the topic in the child's L1 will allow the teacher to exploit the text from a cultural point of view too.

## Language acquisition is better if L2 has socioeconomics / affective relevance



- “It is interesting to note that the degree of success achieved in L2 acquisition can be linked to the importance of the L2 in the outside world, the attraction the L2’s culture holds for the learner, the amount of exposure to this language through various media and its relevance to facilitate communication with a person/ group which holds a special place in the learners’ life. Also there are advantages if there are similarities between L1 and L2.”
- Myriam Met( 1998) Rod Ellis (1985) Marianne Nikolov (2009) Beverly A Clark (...) McLaughlin (1984)

# The “Critical age” theory .



- There seems indeed to be a period whereby the plasticity of young children’s brain would allow them to internalise new systems more effectively, whereas older brains have a more rigid structure that doesn’t allow the creation of new infrastructures but merely allowing their analysis through existing “grids” thus impacting on the depth of “absorption” of new systems.

Or so it is described by Myriam Met in “Critical issues in Early second language Learning”(1998).

- However, as long as one isn’t looking for native like language skills it is also agreed that over the same period of time adults have the capacity to learn L2 faster and that they reach a higher level of competence faster. This is mainly due to developmental stages and access to a more sophisticated way of learning.

Rod Ellis (1999) Carol K Sigleman and Elizabeth A Rider, Marianne Nikolov (2009)



# Old & new

- Nonetheless many agree that there are some advantages to learning a L2 at an earlier stage even though it is accepted that the outcome might not be native like competences.
- Young children are uninhibited, more open to new cultures and concepts and will reproduce foreign sounds more readily and achieve better accents.  
Myriam Met (1998) Rod Ellis (1999)

## Explicit and Implicit acquisition.



- The former is the conscious effort to learn rules and structures, study a language to be able to use it; the latter is the subconscious absorbing of a language through passive exposure. My aim was to achieve a balance whereby the children were explicitly taught some aspects of the language but hopefully would also implicitly absorb most of the language through repeated exposure to relevant phrases in meaningful contexts. I used French to comment on / describe daily routine events such as morning greetings, choice of snacks, expressing basic needs which can be used repeatedly improving its recycling appeal and maximising its impact.



# Applying the theory

| Successful approach                         | Example   |
|---|---|
| <b>learning through play and all senses</b> | Using play dough to make a face as instructed in French (see photo 1)   |
| <b>interactive activities</b>               | Making pancakes for “La chandeleur” (See photo 2)   |
| <b>active learning approaches</b>           | Putting the pictorial recipe back in sequence (see photo 3)   |
| <b>relevant and purposeful context</b>      | Using French for greetings / praising / daily routine activities  |
| <b>consistency and repetition</b>           | Commenting on snacks each day “j’aime les pommes / bananes/ oranges”  |
| <b>simplified speech</b>                    | Focusing on single words like le vent, la pluie, as a first instance rather than the whole phrase “il y a du vent”  |
| <b>on-going formative assessment</b>        | Tracking a child’s progress from reactive to productive, keeping evidence like the paper caterpillar they made and used to name the colours of the rings and count them in French. (see photos 4) |



# Curriculum for Excellence Modern Languages

The early level

MPayen-Roy 2011



### Nursery school :

### Cultural awareness

### La chandeleur

- Learning outcomes:Towards - I have taken an active part in daily routines, responding to instructions which are accompanied by gesture and expression. I can listen to and show understanding of familiar instructions and language from familiar voices and sources. LAN 251MA
- I am starting to grasp that the world is a multicultural place with a variety of interesting cultural differences (food, festivals...)and language.
- I can recognise selected items as they are being named
- I use pictures, and context clues, personal experience, general knowledge to infer meaning

Success criteria:I can answer my name using “Je m’appelle” when asked.

I identify the appropriate ingredient when the teacher calls it out during various games.

I can make sense of the pictorial recipe.

I join in to try the “crêpes”.

Starter:Greet children, recap on “je m’appelle...” going round the group, using ball to prompt them.

Recap on previous learning.

Learning activitie: Introduce Chandeleur celebrations / context.

Teach some related vocabulary (oeuf, farine, lait, sel) with prompts.

I name they repeat, I place them on table, call an item and they race to touch it. True or false game, four corners game if room. They select an item, hide it and I try to guess it.

( All to focus on listening and recognising items rather than naming them straight away.)

Finisher:Look at pictorial recipe and make pancakes (crêpes). Bon appétit!

### Resources:

Soft ball.Flash cards of Epiphany.

Pancakes flashcards

Prompts for ingredients (empty milk jug, egg carton, flour container and salt shaker)

Crêpes recipe + ingredients

Cooking facility (pan / cooker/ oil)

### Comments





La petite chenille chart.pub



## La petit chenille 1

Food / numbers / colours

- **Learning outcomes:** Towards *I enjoy learning with others as we talk and listen together*. I can participate in familiar collaborative activities including games, paired speaking and short role plays. **LAN 255MB**
- I can match phrases I hear to captions I see
- I can recognise selected items as they are being named
- I can join in simple songs, repetitive story lines and choruses with others

### Success criteria:

I recognise the name of some of the food from the story.  
I recollect some of the colours and numbers and join in rhyming them out.  
I can place myself in a line according to the number of items I hold / on my card.

**Starter:** Greet children, recap on “*je m’appelle*”. Revise

**Learning activitie:** Look at story of the hungry caterpillar. Discuss food items. Count them, name their colour. Introduce some of the food items in French with oral games and prompts from story bag or fresh items from snack counter. I name they repeat, I place them on table, call an item and they race to touch it. True or false game, four corners if room. They select an item, hide it and I try to guess it. ( All to focus on listening and recognising items rather than naming them straight away.)

**Finisher:** Give each child items / flash cards in increasing number sequence (1 apple, 2 pears, three bananas etc...). Ask children to form a line in sequence. Read the story again and try to join in naming some of the food.

### Resources:

Soft ball.  
Prompts from story / story bag)  
  
A number of items fresh or flashcards / plastic prompts

### Comments



## La chenille 2

## Fruit / numbers

- **Learning outcomes:** Towards *I enjoy learning with others as we talk and listen together*. I can participate in familiar collaborative activities including games, paired speaking and short role plays. **LAN 255MB**
- I can match phrases I hear to captions I see
- I can recognise selected items as they are being named
- I can join in simple songs, repetitive story lines and choruses with others

### **Success criteria:**

I recognise the name of some of the fruit from the story.  
I recollect some of the colours and numbers and join in rhyming them out.

**Starter:** Greet children, introduce the story with “la petite chenille”, who becomes “la grosse chenille” and then “le papillon”.  
Mime crawling for la chenille and flying for le papillon, using fingers for petite / grosse.

**Learning activitie:** Look at story of the hungry caterpillar on power point this time. Discuss food items. Count them, Name them.  
Introduce some of the fruit in French with oral games and prompts from story bag or fresh items from snack counter.  
I name they repeat, I place them on table, call an item and they race to touch it. They select an item, hide it and I try to guess it. ( All to focus on listening and recognising items rather than naming them straight away.)

**Finisher:** Introduce little song to remember numbers to 6 on “farmer in his den” tune.  
Read the story again and try to join in naming some of the food.

### **Resources:**

Prompts from story (story bag)

Power point of story

### **Comments:**



La chenille qui fait des trous  
ou  
La chenille qui avait très faim.



de Eric Carle

# Réalisation des chenilles

Selon son âge aidez votre enfant à

- Découper un cercle pour faire la tête de la chenille.



- Dessiner le visage de la chenille.



- Faire une petite boule de coton et la coller à l'emplacement du nez de la chenille.



- Couper deux petits morceaux de cure-pipe et les coller sous la tête pour faire les antennes de la chenille.



- Réaliser une guirlande d'anneaux de couleur.

- Coller la tête de la chenille à la guirlande de papier.



cliquer pour voir en grand

- La petite chenille est prête à faire des trous !



# Evaluation



- Behavioural signs such as quality of concentration and focus
- Engagement as opposed to reluctance to participate
- Enjoyment as opposed to being puzzled and withdrawn
- Noise level indicating disengagement as opposed to enthusiasm
- Oral feedback in English from children as we reviewed our learning at the end of the lessons.
- Ability to demonstrate understanding of foreign utterances (words or phrases) by reacting appropriately to instructions, associating accurately words / phrases heard and their representation (Flashcards/props/illustrations...)
- Ability to copy and reproduce French sounds / words or phrases
- And last as it doesn't necessarily feature as a lesson aim: quality and quantity of French language production.

# Variety of activities :

## Information in English:



- FL Teacher led session in English to pass on specific information.
- Discussing position / size etc... of France and Scotland on Maps
- Cultural information on French Festivals
- European Prince and Princesses (early years topic) attending the Royal wedding
-

## Practical involvement:



- Activities chosen by the FL teacher, involving hands-on involvement in creating a specific product linked to the theme studied in French.
- Making pancakes for “Chandeleur”
- Making dough people when working on parts of the body
- Making paper crowns when discussing Epiphany
- Making Caterpillars at the end of our story telling project



## Topic led lessons:

- FL Teacher led interactive activities planned to develop and consolidate a specific language area.
- Using Legos to display understanding of colours
- Practising Greetings with a puppet
- Exploring a story with props (Story bag resources)
- Acting out “head shoulders knees and toes”
- Putting “mister potato head” together led by the teacher in French

## Responsive tasks:

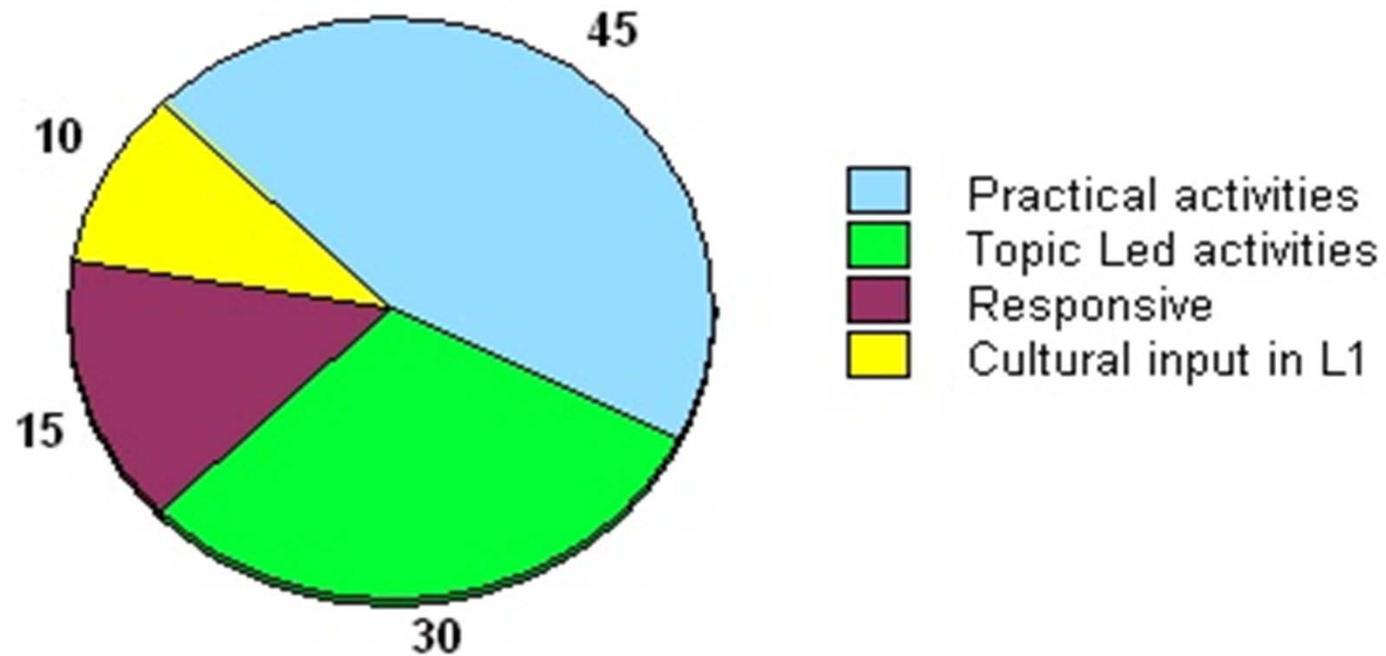


- Children led activities where the FL teacher is commenting on activities taking place in the EYE but not specifically planned for the introduction of L2.
- Weather
- Commenting on colours used by children when painting / colouring in
- Naming snacks at snack time
- Naming vehicles (bikes/ carts/ prams) used by kids in outdoor areas
- Naming items in the garden area

# Findings:



## Successful methodological approaches



# Feedback



- All parents were delighted that their child was exposed to some French.
- They were able to tell me that the children were keen to use their newly acquired language at home, using simple greetings, singing songs, naming colours or proudly counting to ten! I took that as an indicator of success. As it was consistent across establishments I'm confident in using it as a reliable, "trustworthy measure of quality" which in turn should define the validity of my project



- At the same time I'm very aware that the establishments where maximum impact was achieved were the ones where the CDO was co-teaching with me, reinforcing, consolidating and even extending the learning in between my visits.
- It reinforced my belief that the CDO was the person best placed to deliver the L2 because of the special bond with the children, the frequency with which the CDO can use the L2 in relevant contexts and using meaningful scenarios and items.

# CDO training



- I focused on the materials and content I had used during my experience in the pilot. It included classroom management language to teach specific vocabulary through songs, rhymes, storytelling and physical games
- This was well received but I found this audience to be more reserved and self-conscious than my usual cohort of primary teachers. I could feel a distinct awkwardness on the part of the participants as they found themselves in a learner's position again.



- The way I approached the French language itself also turned out to be a difficulty. Because of previous training experience I had thought that participants would value an overview of the French sound system to boost their oral confidence. Instead I found out through the end of course evaluations that some actually found it quite threatening.
- The same thing happened when I touched on the concept of gender and articles in the French language (“le versus la”). It brought back memories of dreaded French grammar lessons for some (especially more mature participants) and it seems that they hit a virtual learning wall.



- I used the evaluations, discussions with participants, dialogue with my line manager and colleagues to make sense of what had happened and try to remedy it. Looking at the situation objectively and systematically was important to maintain the project's validity.
- Several points emerged, practical ones like:
- The venue wasn't very conducive. Participants liked the locality / proximity but sitting on tiny nursery chairs, with no tables to lean on to take notes, wasn't very conducive.
- The nursery's provision of refreshments was very welcome after a day's work but it took time away from the session.



- The sessions were too long, staff were tired or had to leave early due to childcare commitments
- Mixing staff from several EYEs didn't create a comfortable enough environment for staff to relax and lose their inhibitions about speaking a foreign language in front of other adults.
- And methodology ones like:
- I spent too long on what was perceived as “grammar” (gender / articles / sounds)
- The lesson planners worked well in the pilot (delivered by myself, a native speaker specialist) but I couldn't expect the same level of language competence from the average EYEs' staff delivering with no support.
- I devised the content of the programme based on my experience in the pilot but it did not reflect the reality of what the experience would be for a CDO.



| <b><u>Issue</u></b>        | <b><u>Action taken</u></b>  |
|----------------------------|---|
| <b>venue</b>               | Targeted nursery but move to staff room or nearby secondary school.   |
| <b>Refreshments</b>        | Served 15mn before course   |
| <b>Timing</b>              | From 10 to six sessions 1 hour only, to be topped up by support visit (co-teaching)   |
| <b>Target participants</b> | One EYE at a time / partner nurseries   |
| <b>Language competence</b> | Redrafted and greatly simplified to include mostly words and phrases around festivals, numbers, colours and similar traditional basic topics. |
| <b>Course content</b>      | Language suitable to be embedded in daily routine and scenarios relevant to a CDO, not a visiting teacher.                                    |
| <b>Program of work</b>     | Planners available as sample but concentrate more on opportunities for learning identified by stakeholders.                                   |

# Early years sample training programme

## French



- **Basic greetings**
- Names / ça va?+ answer / Bonjour / Aurevoir / S'il te plait / merci / de rien
- **Cultural Awareness**
- French festivals and their celebrations (months/days)
- **Numbers**
- Birthdays / date
- **Colours**
- Using what's in the playroom (Rainbow song)
- **Weather / geography / clothes**
- Match weather to clothes / seasons / countries (Ecosse / France)
- **Snack time**
- I would like... / I don't like it / I like it (Story telling)
  
- Please note these topics are flexible and opened to suggestions which might better suit your curricular programme at the time. (Parts of the body / caterpillars / Prince and Princesses etc...)

# Pre 5- P7 progression example



|                              | Introduction<br>P1 term 1   | Primary 1<br>Term 2 /3   | Primary 2  | Primary 3   | Primary 4  | Primary 5   | Primary 6  | Primary 7   |
|------------------------------|---|--|--|---|--|---|--|---|
| <b>Listening and Talking</b> | Explore patterns and sounds through songs and rhymes. Respond verbally or non-verbally to simple classroom instructions and greetings | Develop and show understanding of single words, reproduce them in relevant context. (Colours, days of the week...) Answer simple questions, verbally or not (Ça va?) | Show ability to use phrases, (Name, greetings), ask and answer simple familiar questions about themselves. | Increased accuracy in pronunciation and intonation. Greater awareness of the relationship between the printed word and its sound. | React to and use routine phrases. Be aware of pronouns (Je / tu / il / elle) Show awareness of gender distinction. | Take part in simple scripted role-play. Show awareness of negatives and plurals. Use appropriate pronouns. (Je/tu /il elle) | Show more initiative in participating in dialogues and group talk. (Games) Use linking words. Be aware of plural pronouns (Nous / vous / ils/ elles) | <p><b>Use a range of pronouns and appropriate verb endings.</b></p> <p><b>Manipulate adjectives and their agreements.</b></p> <p><b>Use a range of preposition with some accuracy.</b></p> <p><b>Demonstrate understanding of sound system.</b></p> |
| <b>Reading</b>               | With teacher's help access cultural information through stories, festivals, comparisons with own culture, in English                  | Show Awareness of story books in foreign Language.   | Match a word to a picture.<br><br>Be exposed to wall displays.   | Match phrases to illustrations. (Weather) Be aware of foreign accents and punctuation.  | With support extract information from familiar language in short paragraph. Sequence a story.                      | Access short simple text with support and extract straight forward information. Reading for enjoyment.                      | Access longer text of mainly familiar language for different purposes.   | <p><b>Access longer text with some unfamiliar language with less support for a variety of reasons.</b></p> <p><b>(Research/ enjoyment/correspondence ...)</b></p>   |
| <b>Writing</b>               | N/A   | Fill in their own name appropriately.  | Simple labelling with support.   | Fill-in one word gap with support from reference materials / teacher.   | Be aware of a sentence's different components .<br>Reconstruct a sentence.   | Write short sentences about simple familiar topics.   | Use writing frames to re-create simple language to suit their own needs.   | Use reference materials and writing frames to show more independence in creating their own texts.   |

# Conclusions



- When delivering a foreign language in EYEs, purpose, relevance, repetition and simplification are paramount.
- The foreign language should be embedded in the daily routine.
- Festivals in the foreign country provide an interesting backdrop for comparison of cultural customs but relevant follow-up practical activities will both reinforce the cultural aspect and recycle exposure to basic L2.
- Topic led activities focusing on specific teaching points are better delivered by language specialists as they can deliver a richer language experience but the stand alone nature of their lessons has a lesser impact on the learner.
- CDOs and EYEs' staff are in a better position to deliver purposeful, relevant and consistent FL input. They also have the advantage of established affective relationships with the children that foster a better climate for Teaching and Learning in general.
- It is therefore important to provide CDOs and EYEs' staff with appropriate training.

# Next steps



- It is essential to emphasise the post-training support available to staff through access to staff tutors, websites, audio materials...etc.
- It would be useful to develop a suitable support pack including audio recordings of stories, rhymes and core language areas.
- It would be desirable to devise a reporting tool in collaboration with the Eyes to inform parents of specific areas of FL covered. It would provide opportunities for the parents to support their child's learning at home and provide an opportunity to gather written feedback from parents.