

# Assessing young foreign language learners

## *When assessment serves learning*

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### *Abstract*

This paper is about the first in a series of diagnostic tests developed for young learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) in year one of primary education. In Lower Austria, learners who transit from kindergarten to primary school have already had their first experiences in EFL. This suggests that starting from scratch with little or no information about what the learners already understand or can do in the foreign language would be a waste of time and a loss of opportunities for new input. Thus, a diagnostic test has been developed which can be used by primary school teachers to assess their learners' current ability in the foreign language, so as to be able to plan and guide their teaching in a more informed way. The playful and communicative organisation of the test allows diagnosis without putting stress on learners or teachers and fits into classroom practice without disturbing the regular workflow. As tasks rely completely on pictorial input, the test can also be used to assess other languages, if the instructions are translated accordingly. This paper presents the test specifications of the test and several item exemplars.

## Frühes Fremdsprachenlernen beurteilen

### *Wenn Beurteilung dem Lernen nützt*

#### *Zusammenfassung*

Dieser Beitrag beschreibt den ersten diagnostischen Test in einer Testserie, welche für junge Lernerinnen und Lerner von Englisch als Fremdsprache im ersten Jahr der Primarstufe entwickelt wurde. In Niederösterreich haben Kinder, die vom Kindergarten in die Primarstufe wechseln, bereits erste Erfahrungen mit Englisch als Fremdsprache gemacht. Das bedeutet, dass ein völliger Neuanfang ohne Informationen über den Lernstand der Schülerinnen und Schüler in der Fremdsprache eine Vergeudung von Zeit und neuen Lernmöglichkeiten darstellen würde. Daher wurde ein diagnostisches Testinstrumentarium entwickelt, welches Lehrkräften der Primarstufe erlaubt, die Fähigkeiten ihrer Schülerinnen und Schüler in der Fremdsprache einzuschätzen, um ihren Unterricht besser planen und organisieren zu können. Der spielerische und kommunikative Aufbau der Testinstrumente erlaubt eine Diagnose ohne Druck oder stressreiche Situationen und der Ablauf kann problemlos in das tägliche Unterrichtsgeschehen eingebettet werden. Nachdem die Aufgabenstellungen zur Gänze auf bildhaftem Input beruhen, kann der Test nach einer Übersetzung der Instruktionen auch für die Beurteilung von Kompetenzen in anderen Sprachen herangezogen werden. Der Beitrag präsentiert die Testspezifikationen und einige Beispiele.

#### *Keywords:*

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Diagnostic testing  
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#### *Schlüsselwörter:*

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## 1 Introduction

Foreign languages are taught early in Austria. Some federal states provide English as a foreign language (EFL) in kindergarten and with the transition to primary school all children receive compulsory tuition in a foreign language. Although the curriculum provides various options, 99.8% of all primary school pupils were learning English in the academic year of 2012/13 (Statistik Austria, 2013)<sup>1</sup>.

The curriculum for foreign languages aims at first encounters with and the ability to communicate in a foreign language (FL) in order to establish a positive attitude and motivation towards languages. Moreover, curricular guidelines suggest that FL tuition at primary level should support open and unbiased relationships and the co-operation of the learners with speakers of foreign languages and people from other cultures. Ultimately, FL education in primary schools is also expected to support the development of social competencies and a feeling of participation and union within an international community.

Thus, FL tuition for young learners aims at initiating first experiences in a natural atmosphere appropriate to the children's age and stage of development. It aspires to be enjoyable and to create positive attitudes towards the foreign language and relies on a task-based and communicative approach that focuses on topics, situations and activities which match the learners' interests (Mewald, 2001).

Most European countries employ language specialists to teach the FL in primary schools. Austria integrates the FL into the daily routine in the first two years, i.e. the class teachers implement FL education flexibly. In years three and four, FL tuition comprises one lesson per week. This amounts to a total teaching time of 30 FL lessons per year. With this amount, Austria ranges among the countries that allocate the smallest number of lessons to FL education within Europe: in Spain, the first foreign language is taught for 70 hours per year, in Italy it is 99 hours and Luxembourg offers the first FL 180 hours per year<sup>2</sup>. Considering the small amount of time the implementation of FL education at primary level is given in Austria, discussion of possible impact and effectiveness is crucial. This is especially important because research has shown that the small amount of teaching time is even reduced because a lot of the time allocated to FL teaching is, in fact, used for other purposes (Buchholz, 2006) and that only intensified programmes fulfil curricular expectations sufficiently (Buchholz, Mewald & Schneidhofer, 2007).

In 2012 the expected learning outcomes described in the curriculum were supplemented by the so-called "Grundkompetenzen 4" (GK4; basic competences that should have been developed by the end of year 4) (Felberbauer, Fuchs, Gritsch, & Zebisch, 2012) to provide a coherent framework of competence descriptors from A1 at the end of primary education to B2 at Matura level (A-levels). The GK4 performance descriptors provide a guideline for primary and secondary school teachers as well as for parents, who have high expectations of their children's FL ability after primary school (Buchholz, 2006), to assess the learning outcomes the children have managed to achieve.

Moreover, the GK4 descriptors provide orientation for the transition phase from primary to secondary school, where starting from scratch would create a situation of wasted teaching time and a loss of opportunities for new input if the learners' existing FL skills were not built on. Assessing the pupils' achievement in the FL based on the GK4 descriptors thus offers the opportunity to guide teaching and learning effectively and to avoid repetition or boredom in favour of an effective use of abilities that have already been acquired. It is equally important, however, to assess the learners' progress on their way to the basic competences described in the GK4. To be able to do so, the milestones from false beginner to basic user at A1 level, which most of the GK4 descriptors aim at, have to be defined. These milestones provide the opportunity to visualise the progress the learners are expected to make from year 1 to year 4 of FL education in primary school. The diagnostic test presented in this paper constitutes an attempt to capture the first of three milestones on the way to A1 level. Moreover, it offers teachers typical task types that have the potential to trigger performances which can exemplify this subdivision.

## 2 Formative assessment in foreign language education

Achievement in foreign languages is not graded in Austrian primary schools. This is a valuable and necessary predisposition to create the stress-free and positive atmosphere the primary school curriculum foresees for young learners' FL education. However, not having to grade does not mean that assessment is not important in primary foreign language education. On the contrary, the importance and value of assessment *for* learning and its effectiveness as a feedback tool to organise teaching and learning should not be underestimated. Formative

assessment can be carried out in many different ways. Its most frequent strategies, however, are observation accompanied by note taking, making use of self-assessment strategies through portfolio work, questioning, quizzes, or diagnostic testing (Black & William, 1998; Chappuis, 2009; Dodge, 2009; Stiggins, Arter, Chappuis & Chappuis, 2006).

The terms “testing” and “assessment” are often used “as if they were a single entity” (Allan, 1999, p. 4). Nevertheless, they trigger completely different expectations. Testing is generally associated with formality and unease, most possibly because it is commonly considered to provide summative feedback in the form of grades. The term “assessment”, on the other hand, usually holds a less threatening connotation because it is associated with ongoing procedures in more informal settings that are not necessarily succeeded by grades. However, it is not the procedures that define the qualities of “assessment”. It is actually the purpose assessment is aiming at, including the way its results are used that make assessment either formative or summative.

Chappuis defines formative assessment as the “formal and informal processes teachers and students use to gather evidence for the purpose of improving learning”, while summative assessments “provide evidence of student achievement for the purpose of making a judgement about student competence or programme effectiveness” (Chappuis, 2009, p. 5). Taking this into consideration, tests can be used for formative *and* summative purposes and they can therefore provide information *for* learning as well as *about* learning. While diagnostic tests support the learning process, achievement tests evaluate its outcomes.

Used as a formative tool, tests focus on the development of learning with the best possible product in mind. In this case, they are used to diagnose the learners’ or the programme’s strengths, weaknesses, or gaps in order to plan learning, teaching, or programme changes. Testing for formative purposes does not contribute to scoring, but it still holds considerable power through the feedback it can provide (Mewald, 2014, p. 25).

Any test, be it formative or summative in intention, has to be based on a theory of language which is reflected in a construct. If the feedback provided through a diagnostic test can be used to inform teaching and learning, it fulfils its formative purpose. Thus, it is the purpose that makes a test formative, not the results it provides.

## 2.1 Testing for formative purposes

Assessment is targeted at learning if the learners can answer the following three guiding questions phrased from their point of view and if test design aligns with these questions:

1. Where am I going?
  2. Where am I now?
  3. How can I close the gap?
- (Stiggins, Arter, Chappuis & Chappuis, 2006, p. 42)

To answer these questions, the learners must know the goals, the performances they are expected to produce in order to demonstrate goal achievement as well as the various steps that show them if they have achieved a goal partially, completely, or in a way that goes beyond the expected outcome. Noticing the gap in their output, be it non-verbal or verbal, is the only way learners can make use of strategies that help them close the gap (Swain, 2000). Playful teaching and learning associated with fun are wonderful and age appropriate at primary level (Halliwell, 1992). However, ignoring that even playful activities should and are expected to create communicative language competence that can be observed and assessed would create an attitude that is counterproductive to the goals the curriculum prescribes: that pupils should be able to communicate, as without communication, open and unbiased relationships and the co-operation of the learners with speakers of foreign languages and people from other cultures would not be possible.

The descriptors provided through GK4 tell teachers and learners where they are going. To create target goals on the way to their aim, it is necessary and legitimate to produce descriptors that exemplify the milestones with finer differentiation to provide opportunities for visible progress at A1 level (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 32). The descriptors should not only be useful for teacher guided assessment but accessible for the learners in order to give them the chance to self-assess where they are at the moment of the assessment or during a phase of focussing on a particular competence or content area. Being able to identify the gap is not only important to know what should be done next but also to identify individual goals. Primary school classrooms are potentially heterogeneous entities and they should be inclusive in every direction. Learners do not only vary in aptitude, attitude or motivation, they also have varying predispositions to language learning

and production: some may still be in a silent phase but ready to provide non-verbal feedback, while others may be readily babbling along about any input they are given. Other learners may struggle because they are dealing with two unfamiliar languages, if the language of instruction is also new or insufficiently acquired. Some might be doubly challenged because of a cognitive disability that makes it harder for them to reach the goals than for the rest of the class. Having the opportunity to choose individual goals in addition to the curricular ones gives all learners the chance to be assessed in a fair way, which does not always entail equal treatment of all (Wormeli, 2006). Highly gifted learners might be bored if they had to follow a programme way below their current level and might thus even underachieve in assessment procedures with materials that are too simple. Therefore, a good diagnostic test does not rely on a yardstick that is “as long as the standard”, but that holds the potential to measure below and above the expected outcome.

As already mentioned, any testing or assessment has to take into consideration the learners’ age, their individual predispositions for, as well as their prior experiences with, language learning in school and outside. Learners should have a clear vision of what they should be able to do with the language and understand the tools that help them assess their achievement. For teachers and test developers to be able to choose the right tasks and materials, it is crucial to have a thorough understanding of the nature of language acquisition and learning at an early age. The following section attempts to frame the diagnostic test presented in this paper, providing a pedagogical background for its construct.

### 3 Second language acquisition of young foreign language learners

Following Gardner’s (1993) theories on developmental predispositions, early FL tuition should emphasise listening and spoken communication skills. Therefore, curricular guidelines propose that reading and writing should be considered teaching and learning aids in the first two years of primary education. Once pronunciation and intonation of the pupils’ active foreign language lexicon have been established and reading and writing have been consolidated in the language of instruction, these skills can be taught more actively.

In years one and two teaching emphasises listening comprehension and oral communication, but the learners are granted a silent phase if needed. Although at the beginning there will tend to be longer teacher-centred phases, more learner-centred activities such as partner work and group work will gradually take over.

According to Krashen’s (1981) Natural Approach to FL acquisition, comprehension precedes production, which is allowed to emerge in stages: the learners first show understanding through nonverbal responses, followed by single-word utterances. Combinations of two or three words and phrases follow, especially if lexical chunks that foster communication are provided. Due to the young age of the learners it may take a considerable time until communication at sentence level or more complex discourse appears. However, classroom routines are full of ritualised events that employ formulaic language. This encourages the early use of whole sentences. Moreover, the materials in foreign language textbooks frequently use set phrases which create routines that are easy to remember. Since the language of very young children is by nature formulaic and full of set phrases from stories, rhymes and songs, making use of fixed and semi-fixed phrases provides young learners with the necessary tools to communicate early and successfully, though not necessarily accurately. Thus, the early discourse of young learners is often the product of a special kind of processing that makes use of prefabricated units without building phrases from words or sentences from phrases.

In the monolingual primary school classroom input is always supported by mime, gesture, and media such as pictures, real objects, or film. Moreover, it connects to the pupils’ knowledge of the world (KOW) because linking formulaic language to situations the children are familiar with also aids comprehension. Rhymes, songs, chants, stories, role play, or sketches that make repeated use of set phrases support the acquisition of larger lexical units. These, in turn, create fluency at a very early stage of FL learning.

This approach is supported by research which suggests that early FL learning is highly dependent on visual and non-verbal stimuli and the children’s eidetic memory, i.e. children remember words in pictures which are stored ‘photographically’. Thus, colourful and lively pictures will not only foster the pupils’ imagination, they are also most likely to be stored effectively because they encourage very vivid and detailed recall (Hughes, 2008; Stevick, 1996; Willingham, 2009).

In years three and four pupils are introduced to reading and writing as soon as the pronunciation of the words to be read or written is stable. Both skills follow careful oral preparation and are used to support communication rather than to replace it. Taking the learners’ low concentration spans and their need for frequent remedial support into consideration, reading and writing are important memory aids. When the pupils process information, when they think or remember, neurological systems are activated. Multi-sensory

activation of the brain during these processes not only increases the pupils' level of concentration, but their ability to recall information and their long-term memory of linguistic information are supported simultaneously. Thus, multi-sensory teaching assists the building and strengthening of mental connections required in the development of literacy (Cameron, 2010, p. 142).

However, according to Jensen (1996, p. 6), "no intelligence or ability will unfold until or unless given the appropriate model environment". Therefore, in order to support young learners' learning potential, their needs, abilities, and interests have to be addressed in an appropriate way and a natural model environment needs to be created through activities and tasks that model communicative situations as realistically as possible.

In order to describe the kind of communication that can be expected from young FL learners after one year of FL acquisition, some theoretical considerations have to be taken into account: several studies suggest that adolescent learners are faster and more effective at second language acquisition than younger learners (Ellis, 2010; Krashen, Long & Scarcella, 1979; Olsen & Samuels, 1973). However, this only holds true in instructional settings where explicit learning is in the foreground. Young learners are very dependent on acquisition and implicit tuition if the FL is delivered primarily or solely at kindergarten or school. If sufficient exposure to naturalistic environments is provided, young learners are able to catch up with older ones (Snow & Hoefnagel-Höhle, 1979) in the speed and effectiveness of their FL development. Moreover, if there is appropriate input and sufficient contact, they manage to achieve more native-like accents than adolescent or adult learners (Oyama, 1976). The role of exposure is also emphasised by Wong Fillmore (1979), who found that the use of formulaic expressions supported participation in communication with more advanced peers, which in turn improved the learners' communicative competence. The formulaic language was used to join groups and to pretend that the conversation was comprehensible (even if it was not), to give the impression of speaking the language well with a few well-chosen words and to ask friends for help.

In the 1960s SLA research used to focus on errors in the study of learner language. This initial concept was soon found to be inefficient and thus "rapidly superseded by the study of developmental patterns [...] and variability" (Ellis, 2010, p. 41). Finally, pragmatic features became important in the last two decades. The finding that FL acquisition follows a natural order (Krashen, 1981) in a regular and systematic fashion (Ellis, 2010), leads to the adoption of three aspects in the assessment of young learners' second language competence: the silent period is preceded by the use of formulaic sequences, which in turn is followed by language that is characterised by structural and semantic simplification. Thus, the first two diagnostic tests assess non-verbal reaction to aural input through total physical response (TPR) and drawing (picture dictation), simple spoken interaction through information gap as well as oral production through picture description or other stimuli. The third and fourth tests also assess basic reading competence at word, chunk and sentence level, and writing at word and chunk level.

## 4 Test specifications for test 1

The aim of diagnostic testing in year one of primary education is to provide teachers and test takers with information about what the test takers can do in the foreign language. Diagnostic test 1 has a focus on listening, oral production and spoken interaction.

### 4.1 Purpose of the test

In listening, the test takers' strengths and weaknesses in direct meaning comprehension are diagnosed (Weir, 1998). In oral production and spoken interaction their strengths and weaknesses in communicating naturally are assessed in tasks that resemble the classroom activities they are familiar with. The feedback is interesting to the teachers and the test takers themselves in order to guide teaching and learning. Head teachers can also make use of the information to adjust the teaching programme in collaboration with teachers.

### 4.2 Description of test takers

The test takers are pupils in their first year of primary education. The majority of test takers will be six years old when they take the test.

### 4.3 Test level

The difficulty level of the test is supposed to encompass the level A1 in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment* (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001). In order to meet the needs of the test takers, the level descriptors for A1 are supplemented by further descriptors that describe three milestones on the way to A1. In test 1 the test takers are expected to respond to items at the lowest level (milestone 1).

### 4.4 Test construct

The purpose of the test being diagnosis, detailed information on what the items are expected to assess is required. The basic competences the tests intend to measure are described in terms of the performance descriptors, the strategies and the task types listed in the construct space (see Table 1).

To provide diagnostic feedback on the test takers' oral communicative competence, the following outcomes will be assessed:

1. an appropriate response to the task (non-verbal or verbal) and basic turntaking strategies (task achievement & communicative skills)
2. the ability to produce clear and natural speech by using standard pronunciation and stress (clarity & naturalness of speech)
3. the linguistic range demonstrated in the choice of words and phrases that are appropriate to fulfil the task
4. the accuracy demonstrated in the choice of words and phrases that are correct

To provide diagnostic feedback on the test takers' written communicative competence, the following outcomes will be assessed:

1. an appropriate response to the task (task achievement)
2. the linguistic range demonstrated in the choice of words and phrases that are appropriate to fulfil the task
3. the accuracy demonstrated in the orthographic presentation of the text

Test 1 triggers and assesses performances aiming at the descriptors which exemplify milestone 1. The subsequent tests 2-4 will aim at milestones 2 and 3 as well as GK4 performance descriptors.

	The test taker.....	Skills	Strategies and tasks	Tests	GK 4 Nr.
LISTENING COMPREHENSION	understands words, phrases and sentences	Listening 1 (L1)	Understanding of isolated words, phrases and sentences; identifying, matching, sequencing, colouring, numbering, labelling	1-4	L1c
	understands instructions addressed by the teacher or by peers to him/her and follows short, simple directions	Listening 2 (L2)	understanding of contextualised words, phrases and sentences; non-verbal response, identifying, matching, sequencing, colouring, numbering, labelling	1-4	L1b
	understands simple songs, poems, rhymes, dialogues and stories	Listening 3 (L3)	understanding of specific information; non-verbal response, identifying, matching, sequencing, colouring, numbering, labelling	2-4	L2b L2c
	understands questions and statements about subject matter, especially after repetition	Listening 4 (L4)	see above (all)	2-4	L1d L2a
ORAL PRODUCTION & SPOKEN INTERACTION	communicates in everyday situations; asks and answers simple questions	Spoken Interaction 1 (SI1)	functional discourse, informal conversation, very basic turntaking; non-verbal and verbal response supported by pictures and notes/prompts	1-4	L1e SI1b SI2b
	introduces himself/herself and others; tells and communicates about himself/herself and his/her surroundings in words, phrases and sentences	Spoken Interaction 2 (SI2)	rehearsed personal statement; supported by pictures, objects and notes/prompts	2-4	L1a SI1a SI2a
	describes objects, animals, people and feelings in words, phrases and sentences	Oral Production 1 (OP1)	description; matching, labelling, describing picture cards and pictures	1-4	OP1a OP1b OP1c
READING COMPREHENSION	understands meaning of familiar words, phrases and sentences in combination with pictures and objects	Reading 1 (R1)	identifies known items in written text; matching, sequencing, labelling	3-4	R1a R1b R2a R2b
	understands meaning of known words, phrases and sentences in familiar songs, poems, rhymes, dialogues, stories and non-fictional texts	Reading 2 (R2)	understanding of very basic information; selecting, matching, sequencing, labelling	3-4	R3c R2b
	understands the gist and main idea of very short texts on familiar topics	Reading 3 (R3)	understanding of gist and main idea; selecting, matching, sequencing, labelling	3-4	R3b R3a
WRITING	labels pictures with familiar words or chunks	Writing 1 (W1)	copying	3-4	W1a W1b
	writes simple and familiar words or chunks	Writing 2 (W2)	writing from memory or with support; paired activities (information gap)	3-4	W1c
	writes very simple and short texts with the help of key words and phrases or using models	Writing 3 (W3)	writing with support using models	3-4	W1d W2a W2b

Table 1: Construct space.

## 4.5 Structure of the test

Test 1 consists of three sections:

Section I features 10 items which test receptive understanding of short phrases based on a short warm-up activity (a song, rhyme, chant, TPR activity the learners are familiar with) in a whole class setting.

Section II features two tasks: an information gap activity and a description of a picture or an object/objects carried out in pair work.

Section III consists of a picture dictation which checks receptive understanding of whole sentences. This activity is carried out as a whole class activity but analysed individually. The tasks involve the children in colouring, numbering, selecting (tick, cross, underline) or sequencing.

## 4.6 Time allocation

The total testing time is 25 minutes.

The time for administration in Section II is 5 minutes.

## 4.7 Item formats

The items are based on test taker feedback showing receptive understanding through actions in Section I.

Section II comprises two speaking tasks which require the test takers to identify items with the help of their peers and to describe pictures to each other. At a later time this may include items that require the test takers to find differences in pictures.

In Section III the test takers draw lines, tick, underline, or circle answers provided in pictures or graphs to identify the correct items. The test takers may also colour or sequence pictures with the help of numbers from 1-10 they have to write. Identifying or responding to items must not require the test takers to read text or to write words, phrases or sentences by hand.

## 4.8 Instructions

All instructions are in English and formulated in a language that is easy to understand for all test takers because it uses routine patterns the test takers should be familiar with from standard classroom situations. Teachers and test designers are in touch to avoid language the test takers would not be familiar with.

## 4.9 Item exemplars

### 4.9.1 Song (warm-up)

The teacher and the pupils sing song "Head and shoulders, knees and toes" once. The pupils mime the actions, the teacher does not.

Let's sing "Head and shoulders, knees and toes" together.

### 4.9.2 TPR (Total Physical Response)

The teacher gives instructions but does not mime the actions.

Now do what I say: Touch your nose, touch your eyes, touch your fingers, touch your knees, touch your shoulders, touch your toes, touch your head, touch your mouth, touch your ears, touch your belly.

### 4.9.3 Information gap

The teacher selects the picture cards for each pair according to the test schedule and puts the materials (see Fig. 1) on the desk. Pairs are called out to do the activity (ideally this is done outside the classroom; the rest of the class is taught by another teacher). The pupils sit opposite each other with a ring binder in between.

Teacher: Let's now do a pair work about..... (category<sup>3</sup>). Candidate A (use name), you put six pictures on your grid.

Prompts: Do it now. Start now. Put the pictures on your grid, please – like this. (The teacher uses a separate grid and pictures to demonstrate the activity.)

Candidate A (use name), you say the words from one to six.

Candidate B (use name), you put the pictures on the numbers on your grid.

Now let's check. Are your pictures the same? (Teacher removes ring binder)

Yes, well done. / No, there's a mistake. Look – A (use name) has got.... And you have got....

Now it's your turn, candidate B (use name).

The same instructions are given to the second candidate.

Example output:

Number one is a ....colour + object/One is colour + object /Colour + object is one/One, colour + object /colour + object, one  
Number one is the + animal/fruit/vegetable/school thing (whole sentence response)

With very able pupils, interaction is encouraged:

Candidate B (use name), read out your words now.

Candidate A (use name), you say yes or no.

Example output:

"Yes" or "No", "Yes, number ... is ... ", "No, number one isn't...."



Fig. 1: Materials for the information gap.

### 4.9.4 Picture description (in pairs)

The teacher hands out a picture puzzle<sup>4</sup> or a card with picture detail (according to readiness) to each pupil.

Now look at this picture. (Teacher hands out picture cards)

Tell me what you can see, A and B (use names). (Teacher addresses both pupils through mime and gesture)

The teacher prompts if necessary and makes sure both pupils get talking.

What's this? (T points at something in the picture). What colour is it? How many ... can you see?  
Can you say what you can see, .... (name)? Please say what you can see, .... name.

If production is not possible:

Please show me the.... Please point at the.....

#### 4.9.5 Picture dictation

The teacher hands out task sheets (see appendix) and reads out the sentences once. The pupils complete the task sheets. The time between sentences is 5 seconds. The pupils should have coloured pencils ready.

Let's colour this picture.

Colour the pencil case dark green.  
Colour four cherries red.

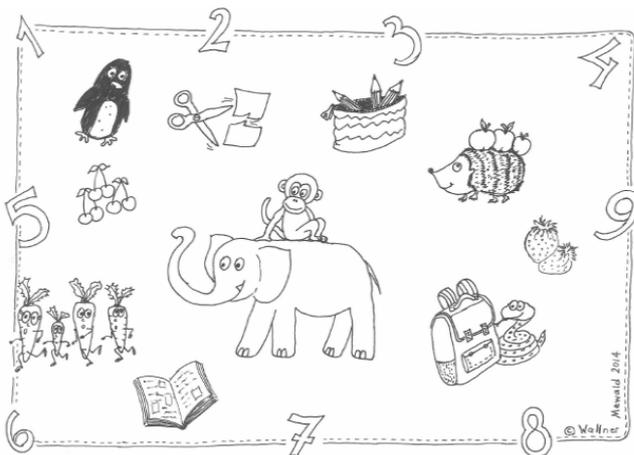
Let's write numbers.

The hedgehog is number eight.  
The penguin is number five.

And now, more colours.

Colour three carrots yellow.  
The monkey has dark green eyes.  
The elephant has orange ears.  
Two apples are green and one apple is red.  
The schoolbag is dark blue and the scissors are light blue.

The teacher collects the task sheets.



**Fig. 2:** Task sheet for the picture dictation.

## 5 Conclusion

The diagnostic test presented in this paper was developed and piloted between November 2014 and January 2015 in two primary schools in Lower Austria. Piloting caused slight adaptations in the instructions. Its first implementation as a diagnostic test at the transition level from kindergarten to primary school is scheduled for September 2015. Item difficulty and validity measures based on the results from piloting which are still pending may cause final adaptations.

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## Appendix

### Grundkompetenzen 4: GK4 (descriptors for basic competences acquired by year 4)

Source: Felberbauer, M., Fuchs, E., Gritsch, A., & Zebisch, G. (2012). *GK 4- Grundkompetenzen „Lebende Fremdsprache“ - 4. Schulstufe*. Retrieved 01 18, 2015, from ÖSZ:  
<http://www.oesz.at/download/gs/GK4-Broschuere.pdf>

#### HÖREN/VERSTEHEN (L = listening)

L1 Erfassen sehr einfacher Äußerungen unterschiedlicher Länge im Rahmen erarbeiteter Gesprächsstoffe, sofern langsam und deutlich gesprochen und gegebenenfalls multisensorische (auditive, visuelle, kinästhetische) Unterstützung angeboten wird.

L1a Kann altersgemäße Grußformen verstehen.

L1b Kann sehr einfache Ankündigungen, Anweisungen, Bitten und Fragen im Rahmen der Unterrichtsorganisation verstehen.

L1c Kann sehr einfache Fragen und Aussagen zu Familie und Freundeskreis, zur Schule, zum Tages- und Jahresablauf, zu Wetter und Kleidung, zu Befinden, Gesundheit und Ernährung, zur Freizeitgestaltung, näheren Umgebung und zur Natur sowie eventuell zu anderen Bereichen verstehen.

L1d Kann auf andere Pflichtgegenstände (BE, BuS, M, ME, SU, WE) bezogene sehr einfache Anweisungen, Fragen und Aussagen verstehen.

L1e Kann sehr einfache altersgemäße Gespräche bzw. Dialoge zu den in Grundkompetenz 1c und 1d genannten Bereichen verstehen.

L2 Verstehen sehr einfacher Hörtexte unterschiedlicher Länge (auch über Medien), sofern sie thematisch an Bekanntes anschließen und multisensorisch unterstützt werden.

L2a Kann sehr einfache situativ aufbereitete Informationen, z. B. auch Sachtexte im Wesentlichen verstehen.

L2b Kann Reime, Liedtexte und rhythmische Sprüche (Chants) verstehen.

L2c Kann altersgemäße, gegebenenfalls sprachlich adaptierte längere Texte, z. B. Geschichten, Märchen, Fabeln und Sketches, inhaltlich erfassen.

#### LESEN/VERSTEHEN (R = reading)

R1 Lesen und Verstehen bereits erarbeiteter Wörter und Wortgruppen in der Fremdsprache, vorausgesetzt das Klangbild des verwendeten Wortschatzes ist gut abgesichert.

R1a Kann gesprochene Wörter und Wortgruppen adäquaten Schriftbildern richtig zuordnen und vorlesen.

R1b Kann Wörter und Wortgruppen (z. B. auf Wortkarten, in Form von Anweisungen und Informationen) lesen und verstehen.

R2 Richtiges Lesen und Verstehen bereits erarbeiteter, sehr einfacher Aussagen, Fragen und Antworten, z. B. aus Dialogen und Sachtexten, vorausgesetzt, das Klangbild ist gut abgesichert.

R2a Kann sehr einfache Fragen, Antworten und Aussagen adäquaten Schriftbildern richtig zuordnen und vorlesen.

R2b Kann sehr einfache Fragen, Antworten und Aussagen lesen und verstehen.

R3 Lesen und Verstehen sehr einfacher Texte zu bereits erarbeiteten Themen.

R3a Kann Glückwunschkarten, Einladungen oder kurze, sehr einfache elektronische Nachrichten lesen und verstehen.

R3b Kann sehr einfache, kurze Texte zu Themen wie Familie und Freundeskreis, Schule, Tages- und Jahresablauf, Wetter und Kleidung, Befinden, Gesundheit und Ernährung, Freizeitgestaltung, nähere Umgebung, Natur usw. lesen und verstehen.

R3c Kann sehr einfache Texte, z. B. in bereits bekannten Kinderbüchern, mitlesen, lesen und verstehen.

## AN GESPRÄCHEN TEILNEHMEN (SI = spoken interaction)

SI1 Mit sehr einfachen sprachlichen Mitteln im Rahmen der erarbeiteten Gesprächsstoffe mit Kindern oder Erwachsenen Kontakt aufnehmen.

SI1a Kann in verschiedenen Situationen altersgemäß grüßen und sich verabschieden.

SI1b Kann im Unterrichtsverlauf sehr einfache Anweisungen erteilen, um etwas bitten, Fragen stellen und Antworten geben.

SI2 Mit Unterstützung (Redemittel, Bilder, Impulskarten usw.) in sprachliche Interaktion treten und sehr einfache Gespräche führen.

SI2a Kann sich an sehr einfachen Gesprächen über Familie und Freundeskreis, Schule, Tages- und Jahresablauf, Wetter und Kleidung, Befinden, Gesundheit und Ernährung, Freizeitgestaltung, die nähere Umgebung, die Natur und andere Themen aus verschiedenen Pflichtgegenständen (BE, BuS, M, ME, SU, WE) beteiligen.

SI2b Kann sehr einfache Gesprächssituationen bewältigen, wie z. B. etwas einkaufen, sich nach etwas erkundigen und Auskunft geben, einen Wunsch äußern sowie etwas anbieten und darauf reagieren.

SI2c Kann sprachlich sehr einfache Sketches und Geschichten nachspielen.

## ZUSAMMENHÄNGEND SPRECHEN (OP = oral production)

OP1 Mit sehr einfachen sprachlichen Mitteln über erarbeitete Themen und Inhalte kurze Informationen geben (allenfalls mit multisensorischer Unterstützung).

OP1a Kann über sich selbst sprechen und sich selbst beschreiben.

OP1b Kann sehr einfache Aussagen zu Familie und Freundeskreis, Schule, Tages- und Jahresablauf, Wetter und Kleidung, Befinden, Gesundheit und Ernährung, Freizeitgestaltung, zur näheren Umgebung, der Natur und zu anderen Themen aus verschiedenen Pflichtgegenständen (BE, BuS, M, ME, SU, WE) tätigen.

OP1c Kann Gefühle, Vorlieben, Abneigungen und Wünsche ausdrücken.

OP2 Bekannte, sprachlich sehr einfache Texte mit multisensorischer Unterstützung wiedergeben.

OP2a Kann Reime, rhythmische Sprüche (Chants) und Liedtexte wiedergeben.

OP2b Kann sehr einfache kurze Geschichten, z. B. Bildgeschichten, oder Kurzfilme wiedergeben.

## SCHREIBEN (W = writing)

W1 Schreiben fremdsprachiger Wörter und Phrasen im Rahmen der erarbeiteten Themenbereiche.

W1a Kann Wörter und Phrasen abschreiben.

W1b Kann sehr einfache Lückentexte (mithilfe eines vorgegebenen Wortschatzes) ergänzen.

W1c Kann persönliche Listen aus einem vorgegebenen Wortschatz, z. B. Einkaufslisten, TV-Programme, Vorlieben, erstellen.

W1d Kann sehr einfache kurze Texte nach Vorgabe von Satzanfängen und vorgegebenem Wortschatz schreiben.

W2 Abschreiben und Übertragen sehr einfacher kurzer Sätze im Rahmen der erarbeiteten Themenbereiche.

W2a Kann sehr einfache kurze Texte mithilfe eines vorgegebenen Wortschatzes verändern, z. B. Einladungen, Glückwunschkarten, elektronische Nachrichten, Wetterberichte, Personenbeschreibungen usw.

W2b Kann sehr einfache schriftliche Dialoge mithilfe eines vorgegebenen Wortschatzes verändern, z. B. Sprechblasen zu Themen wie Einkaufen, Freizeitgestaltung, Wegbeschreibungen usw.

<sup>1</sup> Source: [http://www.statistik.at/web\\_de/Redirect/index.htm?dDocName=064757](http://www.statistik.at/web_de/Redirect/index.htm?dDocName=064757)

<sup>2</sup> Source: [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/Education/eurydice/documents/facts\\_and\\_figures/taught\\_time\\_EN.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/Education/eurydice/documents/facts_and_figures/taught_time_EN.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Categories in test 1: animals, food, school things

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.sfz-wien.at/images/sfz\\_img/Materialien/Wimmelbilder/ssr\\_wimmelbilder\\_schule\\_bunt.pdf](http://www.sfz-wien.at/images/sfz_img/Materialien/Wimmelbilder/ssr_wimmelbilder_schule_bunt.pdf)