

9. Language comparison

3rd – 9th grade

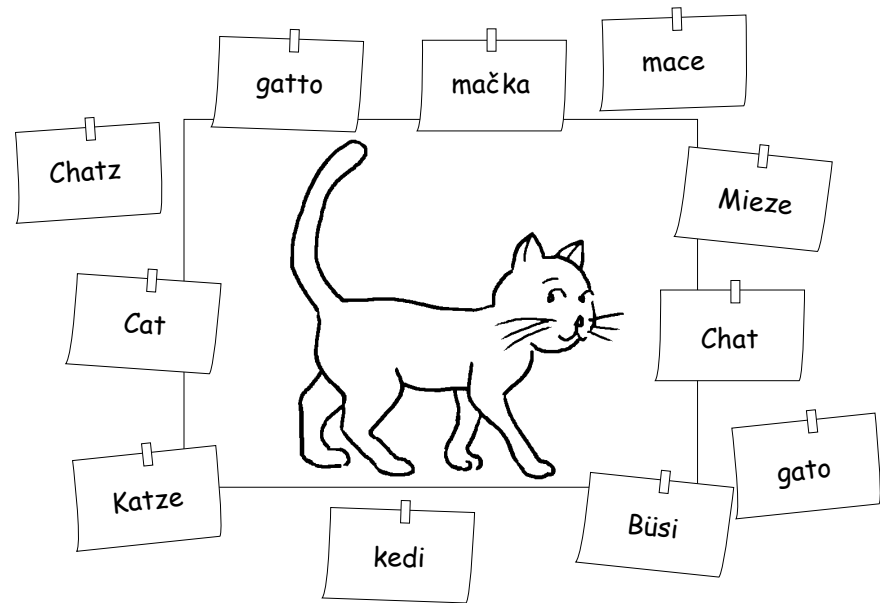
45 minutes



Comparing the students' first language with the language spoken in school (e. g. German), as well as comparisons between the standard (written) language and dialect versions of the heritage language is possible on various levels of difficulty. These exercises take advantage of the students' bilingual competences in an ideal way and can lead to very interesting learning opportunities. Naturally, this can involve any additional languages that the students may know, either from school or elsewhere.

Suggestions:

- Comparisons and vocabulary collections, i. e., the word ("cat" in various languages, words in dialect for certain things in the heritage language and the language of the school, etc..



- Look for words which are the same, or similar, but actually have a completely different meaning (e. g. German "Hund" – Albanian "hundë" (nose); Turkish "armut" – (pear) in German.)
- Comparing and collecting of phrases, such as "good morning" in many languages; word-for-word translations of phrases, such as "what time is it?", "what is your name?".
- Equivalence of proverbs, common sayings. Example: which English proverb most closely resembles a certain proverb in your own language?
- Comparing compound nouns (which are ubiquitous in German) and consist of several connected word elements (e. g. Haustür = front door, Wandtafel = wall board, grasgrün = green as grass, Autofahren = driving a car, etc.) How are the compound nouns formed in your first language?
- Comparing syntax (sentence structure). Compare how sentences are built, based on a few sentences. Write the sentences in the heritage language, leaving enough space to repeat under each one the same sentence in the school language. Then, connect with an arrow the parts which belong together. Do this with other sentences as well, compare and draw conclusions.
- Translating short texts: where do difficulties arise, and what needs to be formulated differently? (Here, two students could translate a short poem, to compare them and discuss their experiences.)
- Comparing the standard language and dialect(s) in the first language (possibly also the school language). This may require student research, involving the internet, books, and talking with their grandparents.