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■ USING A BILINGUAL (ENGLISH-FRENCH) TEACHING METHOD TO AID L3 FRENCH VOCABULARY LEARNING

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Bilingvalne osobe poseduju veće iskustvo, kao i drugačije strategije i jezičku svest u odnosu na svoje monolingvalne vršnjake (Cenoz/Ulrike 2000). Uprkos ovoj prednosti, te sposobnosti često ostaju nedovoljno iskorišćene u obrazovnom okruženju. Da bi se ispravio ovaj nedostatak, razvijen je dvojezični nastavni materijal koji se posebno fokusira na francuski vokabular. Materijal podstiče učenike da aktivno upoređuju engleski i francuski jezik, omogućavajući im na taj način da se oslone na sličnosti i razlike između ova dva jezika. Takav uporedni pristup ne poboljšava samo njihovo razumevanje francuskog, već i pospešuje njihovo znanje engleskog jezika. Efikasnost ovog pristupa ocenjena je putem post-testova. Učesnici su ocenjeni posle mesec dana nastave, a zatim i tri meseca kasnije, kako bi se procenili neposredni rezultati i dugoročno zadržavanje naučenog vokabulara. Rezultati su bili jasni: eksperimentalna grupa, koja je koristila dvojezični nastavni materijal, pokazala je znatno bolje zadržavanje i usvajanje vokabulara trećeg jezika (L3) u poređenju sa kontrolnom grupom. Ovo je važno i za period neposredno posle nastave ali i na duži rok, što sugerise da uključivanje dvojezičnih strategija u nastavu može dovesti do efikasnijih rezultata u učenju jezika. Korišćenjem inherentnih prednosti koje dvojezični ljudi imaju, obrazovni sistemi mogu bolje podržati usvajanje jezika, što koristi učenicima kako u njihovim trenutnim studijama, tako i u njihovom širem jezičkom razvoju.

Ključne reči: dvojezično učenje, prethodno jezičko znanje, usvajanje trećeg jezika, učenje jezika, međujezički uticaj.

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's globalized world, learning foreign languages—often more than one at a time—has become essential for most students. This necessity arises from several factors, including the increasing interconnectedness of societies and the demands of the modern job market. For Hungarian speakers, the need for multilingualism is particularly significant. Given the unique nature of the Hungarian language, which is not widely

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spoken outside of Hungary, proficiency in foreign languages is crucial for effective communication on the international stage.

This emphasis on multilingualism is clearly reflected in Hungary's educational policies, as outlined in documents such as the National Core Curriculum (NAT) 2020 and its associated framework curricula. According to the NAT (2020), students must begin learning their first foreign language by the fourth year of primary school at the latest. Typically, a second foreign language is introduced by the ninth grade, although this is not mandatory across all secondary school types. Recent data from the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (2023) reveals that nearly 400,000 secondary school students in Hungary were studying English during the 2022/2023 academic year. German was the most common second foreign language, with over 174,000 students, followed by French, with 18,200 students. Notably, French ranks as the second most commonly chosen third language among Hungarian students.

The importance of multilingualism is also underscored in the introductory section of the NAT for foreign languages. The document emphasizes that fostering individual multilingualism is one of the key language and educational policy goals of our time (NAT 2020). Additionally, the NAT specifies that foreign language teaching should consider students' existing knowledge, including their mother tongue and any foreign languages previously learned, along with the language learning strategies they have acquired in other subjects (NAT 2020: 314).

This study aims to explore whether English, as a first foreign language, can facilitate the learning of French as a second foreign language. To investigate this, a teaching aid was developed in the summer of 2022. This tool employed a comparative method to teach both languages, with tasks specifically designed to encourage students to leverage their existing knowledge of English in learning French vocabulary. In the present paper, after a brief introduction of the theoretical background, I will go into the details of the research, explaining its methodology and objectives, and then present the results obtained, placing them in the context of the previous related literature.

2. MONOLINGUALISM AND MULTILINGUALISM IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

If we aim to develop this “integrated, cross-linguistic and cross-cultural approach” (NAT 2020), it is important to take into account the differences between first and second language learners.

There is general agreement among researchers that bilingualism and multilingualism have a beneficial effect on the learning process. For almost two decades, Cenoz and Ulrike (2000) have stressed that second language learners have more experience and strategies at their disposal and handle languages differently, as the first and second languages help them to learn other languages.

Other studies (De Angelis 2007; Jessner 2008) have shown that students who learn several foreign languages have increased meta-linguistic awareness. Smith (1982: 449) defines meta-linguistic awareness as “the ability of children to reflect on language as a subject”; Jessner (1999: 203) defines it as the ability of students to “reflect on their language use, compare their language systems, and develop language learning strategies different from those of their less experienced peers”. Thus, Jessner also

sharply distinguishes students who speak two languages from those who speak only one. Meta-linguistic awareness in these definitions also means that students are able to manage their own linguistic processes in a conscious way, the word 'reflect' appears in both definitions. This awareness can be effectively increased, according to the results of several studies, if both second and third foreign languages are present in the classroom: by comparing languages, students can move forward more easily and quickly in the language acquisition process (Tápainé 2007, 2008a, 2008b; T. Balla 2011, 2014; Heyder-Schädlich 2014; Haukås 2016).

The results of these studies have shown that the presence of mother tongue, first and second foreign languages in the foreign language classroom has a positive impact on the learning process. One reason for this may be that language transfer is an integral part of third language acquisition: students use elements learnt from previous languages both consciously and less consciously, and language-related skills and abilities (e.g. learning methods) are often present across languages (Tápainé 2007, 2008b; T. Balla 2011, 2014).

The studies mentioned above have focused on the benefits of comparing languages in general, but there are also studies that have looked specifically at the impact of the second language on the process of third language acquisition in vocabulary learning. For example, a study by Bartolotti and Marian (2016) found that students performed better in word accuracy than their peers who did not call upon their second language. Stamer-Vitevitch (2012) and Ringbom (2001) also report similar results: in all cases, learners relied heavily on vocabulary acquired from previous languages. In all cases, this helped them: these students had a richer vocabulary than their peers who had studied the same language as a second language, and they performed better on vocabulary tests than the control group.

3. METHODOLOGY

The aim of the present study was to gain insight into whether the use of prior knowledge of English helps Hungarian native speakers to learn French vocabulary. Based on the results of the aforementioned articles, I hypothesized that bilingual students would perform better on vocabulary tests than the control group, especially in cases where the linguistic elements of the two languages are identical, meaning, that the word exists in both languages in the same written form, with the same meaning and usage and same pronunciation. In cases where there are similarities but minor differences between the two languages, I hypothesised that members of the control group would perform better, as they would not show as many pronounced errors due to negative transfer.

Prior knowledge of a second language and any prior knowledge of a third language was an important criterion in the selection of the students in the study, so the students in the groups all started ninth grade in the school year 2022/2023. This eliminated possible errors of measurement due to different ages (all students were between 14 and 15 years old) and also allowed for the appropriate timing and design of the tasks, as they all started from the same textbook. In order to avoid errors due to different second language skills, I selected students who had been studying English for the same length of time, who had not attended private tutoring sessions, and who had not received extra practice

at home. The English language level of the participating students was approximately the same: they were between a strong B1 and B2 level.

The groups thus selected were as homogeneous as possible: a total of 17 students participated in the groups, and a further 16 students received traditional teaching in two control groups, where no prior knowledge of English was taught. A total of 14 boys and 19 girls participated in the study, with the following group distribution: 7 boys and 9 girls in the control groups and 7 boys and 10 girls in the experimental groups.

The participating groups started at the beginning of year 9 in September with the same A1 level textbook from a French textbook family, so the bilingual tasks focused on the vocabulary of the related curriculum over the one-month teaching period. During the preparation of the tasks, I also consulted the teachers of the groups participating in the research, in order to avoid as much as possible measurement differences due to different teachers (and teaching styles). Here, the teachers explained their objectives and foreseeable difficulties for the next academic year, so that the tasks were prepared in accordance with their plans (see Appendix 1).

An important aspect of the exercises was to get students to use their prior knowledge of English and compare the two languages by highlighting the similarities and differences between the two languages. In many cases, the tasks encouraged students to cooperate and work in groups, where teachers could also be involved in the task. After completing the tasks, the students were often instructed to reflect on what they had to focus on in the task, how the knowledge they had acquired related to the knowledge they had acquired in their previous language, and possibly how the expression differed between the two languages.

When teaching pronunciation, students also used English: with the help of teachers, they were given tasks where they had to group words according to whether they varied in pronunciation, discuss how the two languages differed, and express their opinions, thus reinforcing their awareness of the similarities and differences between the languages. The aim here was to raise awareness and awareness, as in both cases (similarity and difference) they need meta-linguistic awareness to decide how to use their existing knowledge of English to solve the task. In all cases, the tasks contained words where prior knowledge of the language could be easily retrieved, but also words where transfer often results in incorrect use of the language (e.g. in the case of so-called 'false friends').

Teachers in the control group were instructed before the start of the semester to try to prioritise 'traditional' teaching methods in their teaching. This means that the teachers in the control group did not use English in their lessons, and taught French primarily in Hungarian, where I specifically pointed out that if they did include reliance on English in their standard practices (for example, drawing attention to the differences and similarities between the two languages in pronunciation, or relying on prior knowledge of English in grammatical explanations), they should not do so during the research period. Thus, in the lesson, the students learned from the French textbook and received instructions and explanations only in English.

Immediately after the teaching period, students completed a vocabulary-focused test (see Appendix 2). The vocabulary test asked about Hungarian–French word pairs and phrases and assessed both the cases of words where the transfer worked well and those where the transfer was only partially applicable in the correct solution. The total score for the test was 30, with students scoring only on perfect solutions.

In order to get an insight into the long-term results, students completed the same test after 3 months in December. The main aim of this was to see how well the taught words were integrated into long-term memory after a period of not actively teaching the words, and what percentage of forgetting occurred in the control group and the experimental group.

At the end of the data collection, I asked students and teachers to give their opinions on the tasks and the teaching period: this was to give participants the opportunity to give feedback on the negatives and positives in a more informal way. The resulting data also provide an opportunity for qualitative analysis, which will allow us to gain a more complex picture of the background to students' performance.

4. RESULTS

The short-term results of the tests (Table 1) indicated that the experimental group acquired French vocabulary more effectively by consciously using their prior English knowledge. After the one-month teaching period, the experimental group achieved an average score of 24.94, compared to 23.44 for the control group. This translates to an average test score of 83.1% for the experimental group, while the control group scored 78.1%. The 5% difference in favour of the experimental group suggests that they were able to more effectively leverage their prior language knowledge, aided by the development of language awareness and the use of bilingual teaching tasks.

For the short-term analysis, the results from the three experimental groups and the two control groups were combined, as there was no significant difference between their individual means. Specifically, the first experimental group scored 25, the second 24.6, and the third 25.2. The control groups showed a similar pattern, with the first group averaging 23.5 and the second 23.45. These results underscore the advantage of bilingual education, as the experimental groups consistently outperformed the control groups in vocabulary acquisition, demonstrating the effectiveness of integrating prior language knowledge into the learning process.

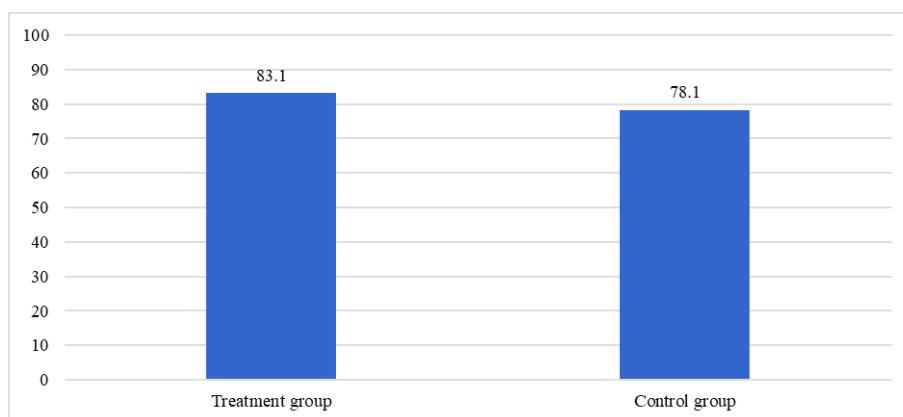


Table 1. Short-term results

The long-term results (Table 2) reveal a much clearer difference between the two groups: after three months, the experimental group exhibited a minimal forgetting rate, with an average score of 23.29, while the control group scored significantly lower, with an average of 19.25. Initially, the experimental group had scored 83.1%, which slightly decreased to 77.6%, reflecting a 5.5% forgetting rate. In contrast, the control group's score dropped from 78.1% to 64.1%, indicating a much higher forgetting rate of 14%.

The long-term differences between the control and experimental groups were more pronounced. The first experimental group averaged 78%, the second 75.33%, and the third 79.33%. For the control groups, the first averaged 66.1%, while the second averaged 63%. These results highlight a greater variation between the groups over time. Importantly, even the best-performing control group (66.1%) performed nearly 9% worse than the lowest-performing experimental group (75.33%).

Overall, the data clearly shows that the experimental group, which used prior English knowledge to learn French, retained the vocabulary far more effectively over time than the control group. This suggests that the bilingual approach not only enhances short-term language acquisition but also significantly reduces the rate of forgetting, providing a more durable and effective learning outcome.

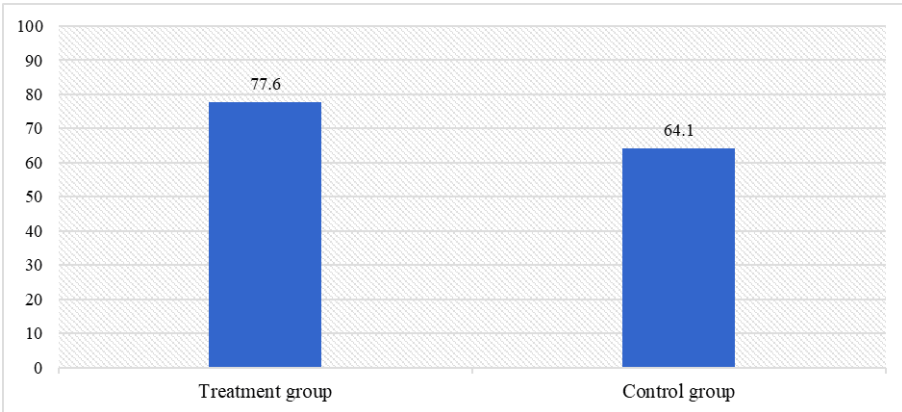


Table 2. Long-term results

The experimental group not only outperformed the control group by 13% in the long-term results but also demonstrated a significantly lower forgetting rate of 5.5% compared to the control group's 14% (Table 3). The data indicates that the experimental group retained most of their acquired vocabulary during the three-month period of inactivity, while students taught through traditional methods failed to transfer much of this knowledge from short-term to long-term memory. This highlights that bilingual education is not only more effective in the short term but also proves to be significantly more successful over the long term.

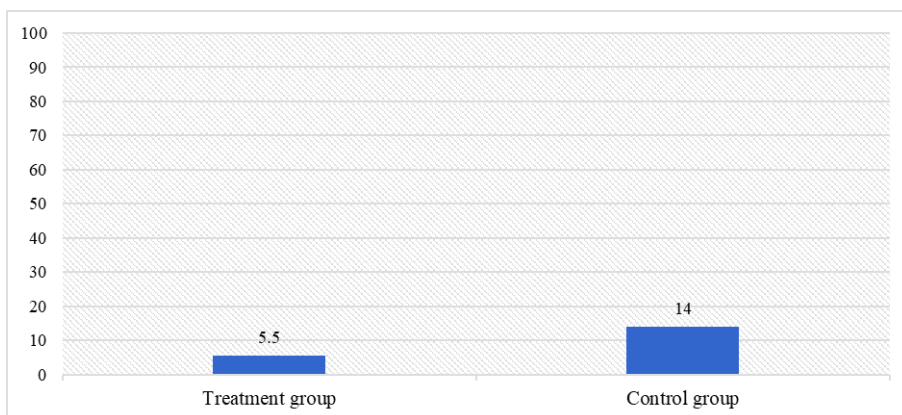


Table 3. Forgetting rates in the long term

Based on student feedback, two key aspects of the experimental method stood out: linguistic awareness and the affective, emotional experience. Among the experimental group, these factors were frequently mentioned in their responses. Ten out of 17 students expressed that they enjoyed attending the classes and found this learning approach to be a positive experience. Additionally, eight students highlighted the usefulness of the language awareness method.

Students remarked on the benefits of realizing they already had some knowledge, noting that this approach meant “less learning” and allowed them to “figure things out faster.” Two students also reflected on how the learning experience changed their feelings about English, with one noting that they “didn’t think English was good for that,” and another appreciating that “it was worth the time” they had spent learning English, as it proved valuable in learning French.

This feedback underscores the dual impact of the experimental method: it not only enhanced linguistic awareness, making language learning more efficient, but also positively influenced students’ emotions and attitudes toward the learning process. This suggests that integrating prior language knowledge can create a more engaging and effective learning environment, benefiting students both cognitively and emotionally.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present study advocates for the benefits of bilingual education, aligning with existing literature that underscores the advantages and effectiveness of multilingual education. In the context of the French-English language pair, Hungarian students who participated in the bilingual education program demonstrated more effective acquisition of third-language vocabulary compared to their peers in traditional language programs. Additionally, these students reported that the bilingual method was not only more successful but also had a more positive impact on their motivation than previous methods they had experienced.

However, the findings of this study should be interpreted with caution due to several limitations. The small sample size, the short duration of the research, and the focus

on a specific language pair (French–English) restrict the generalizability of the results. Consequently, broader conclusions cannot be drawn without further investigation.

To obtain a more comprehensive understanding of multilingual education, additional research is necessary. Future studies should examine student motivation and performance over the long term and explore other aspects of language use beyond vocabulary acquisition. It would also be valuable to investigate the advantages and disadvantages of bilingual education for adults, as well as to conduct research involving native Hungarian-speaking students with different language pairs. This would help determine whether the observed benefits extend beyond the French–English context.

The results of this study clearly indicate that bilingual education not only enhances student motivation but also accelerates language acquisition compared to traditional methods. Given the need for a greater focus on practical multilingual education within the Hungarian school system, these findings cannot be overlooked. They present a viable alternative for achieving effective language learning more quickly and easily.

To implement such a solution, it is crucial that schools provide the necessary tools, teaching materials, and methodological training that build upon students' prior language knowledge and skills. Bilingual education offers an alternative approach that could lead to more effective language learning with lower rates of forgetting. By incorporating bilingual methods into the curriculum, educators can create a learning environment where students are better equipped to retain and use foreign languages in practical, real-world situations.

In conclusion, while the present study provides valuable insights into the potential benefits of bilingual education, it also highlights the need for further research. Expanding the scope of studies to include diverse language pairs and long-term assessments will be essential in confirming the effectiveness of bilingual education across different contexts. By addressing these gaps in research, educators and policymakers can make informed decisions about how to best integrate bilingual education into the Hungarian school system, ultimately fostering a more multilingual and globally competent student population.

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SUMMARY

USING A BILINGUAL (ENGLISH-FRENCH) TEACHING METHOD TO AID L3 FRENCH VOCABULARY LEARNING

Bilingual individuals possess greater experience, strategies, and linguistic awareness compared to their monolingual peers (Cenoz/Ulrike 2000). Despite this advantage, these capabilities often remain underutilized in educational settings. To address this gap, a bilingual teaching material was developed, specifically targeting French vocabulary. The material encouraged students to actively compare English and French, allowing them to draw on the similarities and differences between the two languages. This comparative approach not only enhanced their understanding of French but also reinforced their knowledge of English. The effectiveness of this approach was evaluated through post-tests. Participants were assessed after one month of instruction and again after three months to evaluate the immediate results and the long(er)-term retention of the vocabulary they had learned. The findings were clear: the experimental group, which used the bilingual teaching material, demonstrated significantly better retention and acquisition of L3 (third language) vocabulary compared to the control group. This was true both immediately after the instruction and over the longer term, suggesting that incorporating bilingual strategies into teaching can lead to more effective language learning outcomes. By leveraging the inherent advantages that bilinguals have, educational systems can better support language acquisition, benefiting students both in their immediate studies and in their broader linguistic development.

KEYWORDS: bilingual teaching, prior language knowledge, third language acquisition, language learning, crosslinguistic influence.

APPENDIX

1. Vocabulary tasks

1. Kösd össze a szavakat az angol megfelelőjükkel! [Match the words with their English equivalents.]

Une caméra	logo
Un jury	brioche
Un piano	guitar
Un logo	star
(...)	

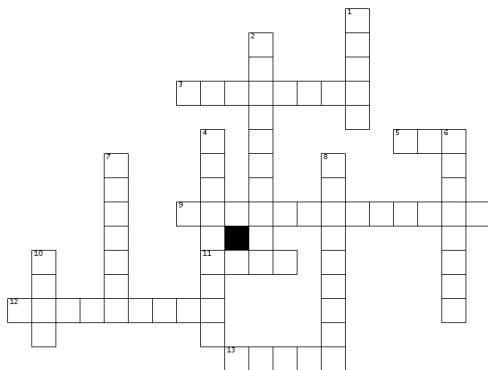
2. Keress az angolra hasonlító szavakat a könyv első leckéjéből! Írd le őket! Ugyanazt jelentik-e, mint az angol nyelvben? Eltér-e a kiejtés? [Find words that sound like English from the first lesson in the book! Write them down! Do they mean the same as in English? Do they have different pronunciation?]

francia szó [French word]	az angoltól eltérő jelentés (igen/nem) [meaning differs from English (yes/no)]	az angoltól eltérő kiejtés (nem/kicsit/nagyon) [pronunciation differs from English (no/a little/very)]

3. Írd be a hiányzó betűket a szópárokba! [3. Fill in the missing letters in the word pairs.]

dalmatian- dalmati__
 guitarist- guitarist__
 musician- musici____,-ne
 magician- magici____,-ne
 pianist- pianist____
 (...)

4. Írd be a keresztrejtvénybe a szavak francia megfelelőit! [4. Write the French equivalents of the words in the crossword.]



Vízzintes

- 3. Moroccan
- 5. age
- 9. international
- 11. father
- 12. present
- 13. Russian

Függőleges

- 1. blonde
- 2. professor
- 4. grandfather
- 6. Spanish
- 7. family
- 8. grandmother
- 10. mother

5. Ejtsétek ki együtt a szópárokat (angolul és franciául! Melyik szó a legnehezebb számodra? Melyik nyelv kiejtése áll közelebb a magyarhoz? [5. Pronounce the word pairs together (in English and French! Which word is the most difficult for you? Which language is pronounced closer to Hungarian?]

6. Húzd alá az azonos szóalakokat! Szerinted melyiknek nehéz megjegyezni a helyesírását franciául? Jelöld meg pirossal! [6. Underline the identical word forms. Which one do you think is difficult to remember the spelling of in French? Mark it in red!]

Un homme heureux?

« Je suis milliardaire » présente un homme extraordinaire, Hugues Barthélémy: un homme d'affaires riche et compétent. Qui a une banque privée? Hugues Barthélémy. Qui a un journal? Hugues Barthélémy, bien sûr. Qui a une société multimédia internationale et deux chaînes de télévision (Bar-Télé et Télé-my)? Hugues Barthélémy, bien sûr. Il a aussi un personnel compétent: un banquier et un avocat. Il a une équipe forte et douée. C'est un producteur incontournable, (...)

7. Hány szónak tudnád megadni az angol megfelelőjét? Írd le ezeket! Ezek közül hányat írunk ugyanúgy angolul, mint franciául? [7. How many words can you give the English equivalent of? Write them down! How many of these words are spelled the same in English as in French?]

8. Hogyan fordítanád az alábbi szavakat angolra? Kösd össze a párokat ! [8. How would you translate the following words into English? Put the pairs together !]

Danser	stressed
Présenter	arrive
Un spectacle	first
Extraordinaire	tv programme
Arriver	severe
(...)	

9. Melyik a megtévesztő szavak? Karikázd be, ahol eltérés van a két nyelv között (jelentés, kiejtés)! [9. Which are the misleading words? Circle where there is a difference between the two languages (meaning, pronunciation).]

10. Karikázd be az angolra hasonlító szavakat a szövegben! [10. Circle the words that sound like English in the text.]

Pas de scandale au deuxième show de Talents. Les candidats sont là, avec des spectacles magnifiques. C'est le petit clown qui quitte la villa, c'est vrai que les clowns

ne sont pas très à la mode actuellement. Manu, le candidat en fauteuil roulant, gagne le show avec un slam génial. Ce garçon a beaucoup de charme. Le Don Juan du show, Raphaël, est un peu malade. Il ne chante pas très bien, mais le public le sauve. Sarah ne danse pas en jean mais en tutu, elle est magnifique, et pourtant Brigitte la critique toujours. Elle est vraiment méchante avec Sarah. Pourquoi elle ne l'aime pas? Sa petite préférée est Alice, tout le monde le sait. (...)

11. Írd ki a szavakat a szövegből! Eltérnek-e az angol jelentésüktől? Hogyan alakul a kiejtésük? [11. Write out the words from the text. Do they differ from their English meaning? How are they pronounced?]

12. Keresd meg a szavak francia megfelelőit a szövegben! Melyek a megtévesztő szópárok? [12. Find the French equivalent of the words in the text. What are the most misleading word pairs?]

performances _____

fashionable _____

nowadays _____

save _____

favourite _____

entitled _____

story _____

answer _____

13. Alkoss mondatokat a megadott mondatrészekkel! Írd le őket! [13. Make sentences with the given parts of the sentence! Write them down.]

Il

écoute un médicament

arrive la radio

regarde le bus

bavarde froid

fait ses devoirs

prend
 au travail
 des photos
 la télé
 avec sa famille

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

(...)

14. Melyik igét tudtad többször is felhasználni? Mi ennek a szónak az angol jelentése? [14. Which verb could you use more than once? What is the English meaning of this word?]

Írj 3 francia és 3 angol mondatot ezzel a szóval! [Write 3 French and 3 English sentences with this word!]

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

2. Vocabulary test

Add meg a neved rövidítését (Pl.: K.D.)! [Enter the abbreviation of your name (e.g.: K.D.)!]

1. feladat

Add meg a szavak francia megfelelőit! Írd mögé a szó nemét! (m-hímnem, f-nőnem)

[Give the French equivalents of the words. Write the gender of the word after it (m-male, f-female)]

dal

gitár

zongora

kávézó

limuzin

gitáros

zenész

bűvész

első (nincs neve)

végül (nincs neve)

2. feladat

Hogyan írjuk helyesen franciául? [How do you spell the words in French?]

Milliárdos:

Család:

Gazdag:

Kompetens:

Tragédia:

spanyol

3. feladat

Mely betűk hiányoznak a szavakból? [Which letters are missing from the words?]

Zenész: musici.....,-ne

Bonyolult: compli.....,e

Házasság: mar.....,-e

zongorista: pianist.....

bank: ban.....

járni valahova: fré..er

4. feladat

Döntsd el, milyen neműek a alábbi főnevek, ill. melléknevek! [Decide the gender of the following nouns and adjectives!]

jeune

extraordinaire

professeure

pianiste

tragédie

riche

guitare

piano

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