

MARILLE: Template for practice examples

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Title/ name of example: Nouns	
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Example from	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mainstream majority language teaching <input type="checkbox"/> Other subject: _____
	<input type="checkbox"/> Special classes for non-native speakers of majority language (second language classroom)
Type of example: <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching material <input type="checkbox"/> Classroom video <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lesson plan/ scenario <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	
Target group (Age, type of school, languages,...):	13 years old, 7 th graders, Upper level of comprehensive school Languages: Russian, Estonian, Somalian, Albanian, Lingala (+ French), Dari, Chinese and Finnish
Detailed description of example:	<p>The main distinction of word classes in Finnish is the inflection. On the basis of inflection words are divided into three major classes: nouns, verbs and undeclinable words. Nouns inflect for cases, verbs for persons and undeclinable words do not have inflection. The class of nouns have also four subcategories on semantic basis: subjectives, adjectives, numerals and pronouns. Pupils who study Finnish as a mother tongue have learned (or at least studied) the word classes on the basis of meaning. So they are familiar with the names of the word classes, but on the 7th grade they are usually quite confused of the word classes. The most confusing groups are nominal forms, i.e. nouns derived from verbs. According to pupil's sense of language the meaning of nominal forms is 'doing' although words are nouns, i.e. names for things we do. So the distinction based on meaning does not suffice to identify nouns.</p> <p>The aim of the lessons is to make pupils aware of the distinctiveness of the grammatical form so that at the end of the lessons they would be able to identify nouns on the basis of inflection (case suffixes).</p>

However, for pupils whose mother tongue is other than Finnish there is a further distinction to learn concerning nouns namely different noun groups on the basis of declination. Declination is a grammatical feature that is automatic for pupils whose mother tongue is Finnish. For them it's self-evident that e.g. the word *hattu* 'a hat' has the forms *hatun, hattua, hatussa* etc. and the word *vesi* 'water', instead, the forms *veden, vettä, vedessä* etc. According to present understanding these forms are best learned with model words in the meaningful contexts. So these lessons concentrate on the grammatical distinction of word classes.

In the plurilingual context the starting point is the diversity of languages in the classroom. Grounds for word classes differ in different languages. The first target is to raise pupil's language awareness on words in general. Therefore pupils first make lists of words in their own language according to a given criterion. After that they will work with pairs exploring their words and, eventually, translating them into Finnish. The "subcurriculum" of the lesson plan is that all the pupils in the class will acquaint an array of foreign words so that they would be able to become familiar with the languages of their fellow class mates.

The pedagogical clue is that pupils produce most of the material to be explored by themselves. Accordingly the texts they write into their exercise books will be individually created. Thereby they also differ from the texts other pupils write into their exercise books.

Yet the main concern in teaching grammar, too, is language use. Therefore at the end of the second lesson pupils do something meaningful with nouns they have written: they will write a dialog.

The other "subcurriculum" is that nouns pupils write would bring forth issues that are important to pupils. In this sense the nouns can arouse discussion on topics that are current to pupils.

Which aspects of knowledge, skills and attitudes relevant for plurilingualism are promoted in this example?

Knowledge and understanding

The differences of how grammatical categories are formed in different languages. The importance of grammatical form in addition to meaning. The concept of case as a distinctive feature of nouns in Finnish.

Skills (language use) Can produce words in mother tongue according to given criterion.

Can analyze words and sentences. Can separate word stem and suffixes. Can compare forms in mother tongue and in other languages. Can identify nouns from other word classes. Can use nouns productively in making dialog. Recognizes nouns in newspaper headlines.

Attitudes

Recognition of own language knowledge. Pupils find out that they know all kinds of things about languages but lack language (metalanguage) to express their knowledge. This should improve their understanding of the value of the grammar as a dynamic System.

Evaluation of example

Positive:

Teaching is based on pupils' own words and sentences. Pupils have to be active in searching their words and sentences and discussing with their pairs. There is also a lot of discussion and interaction.

Negative:

Plurilingual context is taken account as a basis of contrastive analysis. Yet it would be interesting to discover what would be the next step further. Another thing to improve is the understanding of pupils why word classes or nouns are important in general.

Other comments: One example for taking this approach a step further would be to include all languages spoken in class and to analyze together how grammatical features differ from language to language.