Motivating children to speak English during pair work is easier said than done. At times it is because the children want to talk about the topic itself, which is almost impossible at the early stages of foreign language learning and at times it is because they lack the motivation to try. This problem also occurs due to the formulation of the activity: Is it an open activity or is it a closed activity? Is there a reason for the children to talk to one another for a real purpose (providing missing information) or is it a practice activity where the goal is just to “say something”? The purpose of the following is to provide a concrete example of a textbook activity that can be adapted so that the children are actually forced to speak during pair work.

In almost every topic of the lower primary First Choice textbooks, there is an arts and crafts idea. The following idea is based on Animals, Activity Book, page 17 but can be transferred to any similar page. The children are expected to read the instructions to make an origami frog and carry out the activity in pairs or even alone. It has been observed in practice that children actually don’t need to use the English language to really do this activity at all; they can look at the pictures. In a pair situation, perhaps they will read the text out loud, but in the folding of the origami frog, the children often speak in German to one another.

How can this be changed? How can learners be “forced” to speak English in this activity? Below are a few ideas for working with the text shown on this page.

**Matching:** Cut up the pictures and the instructions. Have the children first match picture and text. Then, put the steps in the correct order. Here you can involve a few games such as taking away the pictures, mixing them up, choosing one and the other child has to read off the correct step. This can also be done as a whole class matching: Give each child a picture or a corresponding text. Have them walk around to find their partners by saying what’s on the paper. Then put the pairs in order of the steps of the activity.

**Gap fill:** Take the text and create two gap fills; version A has different words missing than version B. Then have the children read their texts out loud to one another and write in the missing word that they hear from their partner. In an added twist, you can mix up the steps on the different versions so the children have to put the steps together. They can, as well, add their own illustrations. Finally, they can check their answers with what is in the book.

**Running dictation:** Create a gap fill from the text with these words missing: back, bottom, center, corners, half, jump, legs, square, turn. The gap fill can be in order of the steps or mix up the steps. The step numbers can also be removed. Write the words on the board and do a chain or some sort of quick drill with them. Then erase the words. Cut up each of the sentences into strips and hide/place them around the room. Distribute the gap fill. Tell the students and demonstrate: Work in pairs. One person finds a sentence. Put it in your head. Walk back to your partner. Say the sentence to your partner. Your partner writes it on the paper. Take turns. Now your partner finds another sentence and does the same thing. The other child has to find the correct instruction on the paper and write in the missing word(s). The learners can thus correct the order of the instructions and their spelling of the missing words with the textbook. If the missing words were the verbs in the imperative form, this could lead to a discussion of the use of the imperative in German or in any other languages spoken in the classroom.

These ideas require that the teacher type in the text on the page or cuts up the text and the pictures, but the ideas add much more in terms of speaking to the English classroom. Ribbit!