What is the MELT project?

The multilingual Early Language Transmission (MELT) Project is a partnership between four language communities – Breton in Brittany, the Frisian language in Friesland, Swedish in Finland, and the Welsh language in Wales. The Project was funded by the European Commission, which occurred between November 2009 and October 2011.
Background

• It is widely accepted that the early years is advantageous to acquiring language skills – these language skills are best introduced at an early age from six months to four years.

• The promotion of minority languages at this early age is crucial to long term learning

• Teachers need the correct skills to introduce language to young children

• Understanding and awareness of language varies from one organisation to another

• The object of the MELT project was to address these issues
The MELT project aimed to:

- Identify best practice in language acquisition and immersion methodology
- Increase the skills of early years practitioners
- Provide young children with a strong educational foundation
- Provide information to parents on bilingualism
- Strengthen language communities and promote cultural and linguistic diversity
How did the MELT project achieve these aims?

• By researching the early years provision in the four language communities
• By providing information to parents on the benefits of bilingual pre-school education
• By developing a practical guide for early years practitioners
• By employing an individual to work with practitioners and children in the four language communities
• Collating all the information and presenting the final MELT document in a final conference in Brussels in October 2011
Information about the playgroups

• 10 groups from a variety of social background from six counties in South East Wales
• 1 day care centre
• 50 practitioners
• 260 children
Linguistic facts

- 3 playgroups including day care nursery, consisted of all Welsh-speaking practitioners
- 6 playgroups consists of third of practitioners who were Welsh speakers
- 2 playgroups consists of all practitioners who were non-Welsh speakers
- Amongst the playgroups there were fluent and less fluent learners
Structure of the toolkit

The toolkit was presented to the playgroups under different topics which included ideas for activities based on language development.

• Adults as linguistic models
• Collaboration with parents on linguistic matters
• Everyday situations and the physical environment
• Working with themes
• How to stimulate children’s language use
• Reflection
• Examples of exercises and activities
Activities

• Implementation of activities initially in the Welsh language
• Need for guidelines to be bi-lingual
• Guidelines consists of language patterns to coincide with the activities
• Uncertainty/lack of training linked with language immersion techniques – drilling/` methods mainly
• Importance of repetition of language patterns linked with songs
Evidence

- Methods of introducing language immersion techniques of activities provided to non Welsh speaking practitioners
- Children did not always hear Welsh being spoken if there were practitioners in the setting who were learners
- Convincing practitioners to use Welsh only with children from non Welsh-speaking homes
- Uncertainty of Welsh nursery rhymes
- Further training in story telling techniques
Positive feed-back

• Enthusiasm towards the project
• Positive attitude to activities
• The need to focus on language activities
• The need to hold discussion concerning immersion language techniques
• Good feed-back on children’s enjoyment of activities
• Positive feed-back from learners
Parents’ response

• Reasons for choosing Welsh-medium education:
  - job opportunities
  - the need to be bilingual
  - where parents were bilingual children can speak freely in either language to them
  - creates a sense of identity
  - perform better in exams and tests in the curriculum

• Parents welcomed the emphasis on research into language immersion techniques