

Intercultural Guidelines:

Examples of Good Practice

Name of activity: Celebrating and Showcasing the Languages Spoken by the School Community

Year group

TY leading, whole-school initiative

Procedure

After surveying the languages spoken by the school community and finding out who speaks which language, the initiatives below could be started:

- A quiz is run involving the whole school which interrupts lessons (like DEAR). Students read sentences from their home language (this could be pre-recorded) over the intercom. Each class has a template and have to identify the languages spoken, e.g. “The first speaker spoke Arabic, the second speaker spoke Portuguese...” and so on. Students have to agree and there is one entry allowed per class.
- Likewise, writing samples are collected and displayed on the corridor and numbered. Students have to identify the script, for example “Writing sample 1 looks like Russian, the second could be Farsi...” and so on.
- Students are made aware of how many home languages are spoken in the school community and language-related prizes are given out, e.g. for the student who speaks the most languages, for the student who took up Irish at age 11 and is progressing well in it, for the student who arrived with no English aged 14 and is achieving well in all subjects, for the best French accent, etc.
- Students have to say hello in a different language each day for a week.
- Students from different language backgrounds in TY have to prepare a lesson to teach their peers some interesting aspect of their language. For example: “My language is very different to English in that___”, “The hardest thing to learn is___”, “This is the alphabet”, “This sound/letter doesn’t exist in English” or “This is how we pronounce this letter... Repeat after me”. Students go from room to room to learn something different about each language which is showcased. Where possible, students research and use the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) to describe/transcribe sounds in their language for their peers. Students learn to pronounce unfamiliar sounds characteristic of other languages. Students can put together a trivia quiz about different languages. See link.

<https://ed.ecml.at/Facts/LanguageTrivia/tabid/3129/Default.aspx>

Annual initiative /embedded in classroom practice

For European Day of Languages 26th September

Key skills

1. Information processing
2. Critical and creative thinking
3. Communicating
4. Working with others

An Intercultural Look at our Schools is an adaptation of the project “A roadmap for schools to support the language(s) of schooling” (2017-2019) of the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML). The ECML is a Council of Europe institution promoting excellence in language education in its member states. www.ecml.at/roadmapforschools

Looking at Our Schools: A Quality Framework for Post-Primary Schools

DOMAIN 1: LEARNER OUTCOMES

DOMAIN 2: LEARNER EXPERIENCES

UNESCO sustainable development goals

Goal 3: Good health and wellbeing

Goal 4: Quality education

Goal 10: Reduced inequalities

Value added (e.g., wellbeing, digital skills, presentation skills, building confidence or cross-curricular links)

Students come to appreciate difference and the linguistic diversity there is in their class and school. Students learn about and compare/contrast different languages, creating interest in and respect for language learning.

Wellbeing (positive identity and self-image) of students who may not previously have valued the language(s) spoken at home.

Building bridges between home and school.

Students engage with their parents in relation to their home language (for the quiz/trivia/for teaching aspects of their home language).

Presentation skills and the confidence and ability to teach (an aspect of their home language).

Any event/initiative to mark European Day of Languages can be uploaded to the European Centre of Modern languages database, available at: <https://edl.ecml.at/Events/EventsDatabase/tabid/1772/language/en-GB/Default.aspx>

Links and resources

The students themselves and the languages they speak are the resources for these initiatives.

For comparisons between English and other languages students speak, TY students when giving their lessons about their home language can refer to Learner English by Michael Swan (Cambridge University Press) and choose some quirky aspect of their language to highlight to their peers. Taking Spanish as an example, adjectives can be plural ('3 tall children'), there is one word for both 'to make' and 'to do' but there are two verbs for 'to be' and the letter 'U' is always pronounced in the same way as opposed to English where it can be pronounced in two different ways (as in 'umbrella' and 'university').

See: <https://edl.ecml.at/Games/Whichlanguageisit/tabid/3202/Default.aspx>

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