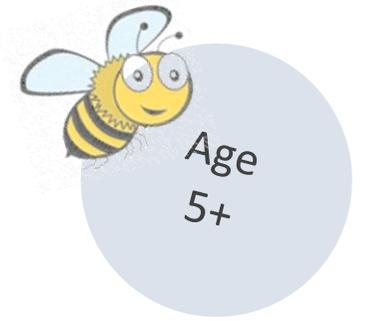


Identity texts (1)



Context:

- A primary school in Dublin, Ireland. English is the language of schooling. The Irish language is a curricular subject that is taught in an integrated manner with English. The official *Primary School Curriculum* allocates 2.5 hours per week for the teaching of the Irish language at this age level.
- There are 24 children in this Senior Infant Class. 20 of these children speak home languages other than English. Within this group there are 13 different language backgrounds.
- The *Social, Personal and Health Education* module of the Primary School Curriculum (PSC) requires that children be able to discuss and appreciate the strands of *Myself*; *Myself and others*; *Myself and the wider world*. The nature of the PSC is spiral, thereby allowing the same topic to become more complex as pupils develop.

Reasons for choosing this activity:

- The teacher chooses this activity to encourage children's development for self-reflection.
- This topic also provides an opportunity to encourage children to use their respective home languages and to embed their developing oral language skills in literacy in a topic that is about themselves, i.e., a topic that is hugely interesting and familiar to them (→ meaningful language learning).

Description:

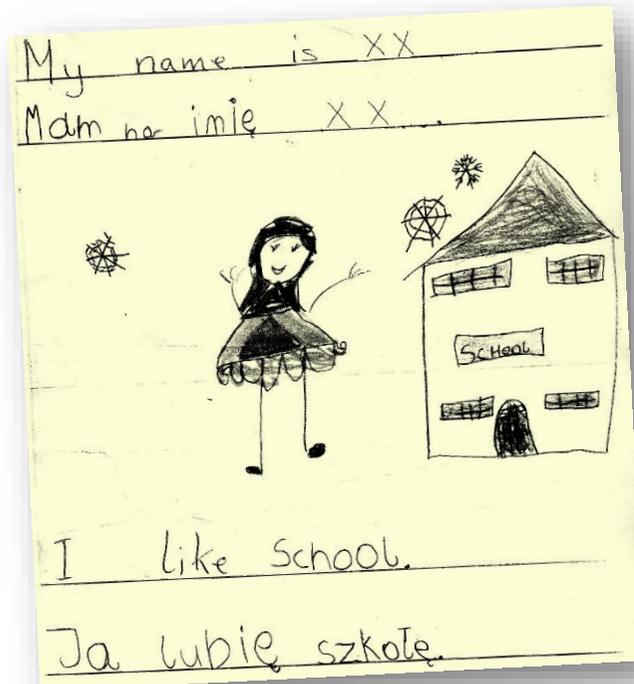
- The teacher introduces the conversation by encouraging children to describe themselves. The topic ranges over their names, ages, what they like to do, games they like to play, etc. (→ meaningful language learning). There is a variety of levels of knowledge of the language of schooling within the class. Some children are more talkative than others. Those who listen, learn from their peers and are able to contribute similar information applicable to themselves, e.g., *I have straight/curly hair; brown/ hazel eyes* (→ active language learning). The teacher encourages children who have a home language other than English to share their information in that language too (→ relying on existing linguistic repertoires). Some children repeat what others have said about hair, eye colour, etc. while others offer additional information regarding their country of origin and/or the language(s) they speak at home (→ autonomous learning).
- The teacher encourages children to write a short text about themselves. This is done in school. The teacher then suggests that those who speak a language other than the language of schooling should bring home their texts and ask their parents to help them rewrite it in their home language. In this way, both languages support each other in terms of children's oral and written language learning. Children's pride the following day, when they are invited to read their texts in both languages for their classmates, is a testament to how using their existing linguistic repertoires builds self-confidence and enhances learning.

Variation:

- Children are encouraged to write freely on the topic as each of the examples below demonstrates.

Observation:

- By using their home language, children are embedding their familiarity and understanding of the vocabulary/phraseology in question (→ meaningful language learning). By using more than one language, they learn that whichever language is used, the integrity of the information remains the same (→ relying on linguistic repertoires). Giving the children the freedom to choose which language they use helps to support learner autonomy.



Example 1:
English and Polish



Example 2:
English and Tagalog