

Letters from Felix



Context:

- The project takes place in the kindergarten of the European School (ES) in Brussels III (www.eeb3.eu). The ES are multicultural and multilingual institutions for children from all EU countries. There are seven language sections in this school (Dutch, English, French, German, Greek, Spanish, Czech), where children learn their mother tongue. Teachers and children from 10 different classes with different languages of schooling participate in the project based on the book *'Letters from Felix- A little rabbit on a world tour'*.
- The book tells the story of young girl, Sophie, and her favourite cuddly toy, a rabbit called Felix. On the way back from her holiday, Sophie loses Felix at the airport. Felix then travels around the world and writes letters to Sophie describing his experiences in the different countries he visits. The book features real letters in envelopes. It has been translated in many different languages (see page 2).

Reasons for choosing this activity:

- The choice of the book is inspired by the school-wide theme for the kindergarten section 'Children of the World'.
- The project is one of a series that aims to introduce foreign languages and cultures and nurture children's interest in books/stories. It enhances cooperation and collaboration across language sections and supports contacts between children across the sections.

Description (1):

Children of all classes listen to and discuss the story. They can choose any of the class activities based on the story (→ active and holistic language learning)

- going through and talking about real photographs of sights of places; listening to the national anthems of the countries that Felix visits;
- "writing letters" to their own favourite toys just as Sophie does in the story;
- getting to know poems related to the theme of "Children of the World";
- making "Felix books" (drawing/painting of the city/country that Felix visits with a pre-printed picture of Felix stuck on it);
- building various landmarks from the book using construction resources such as *Kapla/Lego*, etc.
- Using the book's storyline, teachers of the different classes produce a screenplay with short and simple dialogues to be performed on Book Day. Each teacher translates his/her part into the section's language. For each scene, a background picture (on a large sheet of cardboard) is prepared. This shows various features of the different countries visited by Felix.
- Before the performance, the story is repeated in each class, this time using only the illustrations. The children retell the story so that they are very familiar with it.

Description (2):

- On Book Day, the teachers act out the story together with all children. Each scene is introduced by music from the country featured in the scene. Each teacher-actor performs in his/her own language. As the children know the story well, they enjoy the performance very much. They also listen to one part of the performance in their own language (→ relying on existing linguistic repertoires).

Observation:

- Children enjoy the story. They look forward to each new letter from Felix.
- The story enables them to learn a lot about the cities and famous places of the UK, France, Italy, Egypt, Kenya and USA, their atmosphere, landmarks and national cuisine (→ meaningful language learning). They talk enthusiastically about which countries they have already visited and what they had seen (→ active language learning). They are also interested in learning basic expressions, e.g., greetings in different languages.
- During the performance, children are exposed to foreign languages in an entertaining and relaxed atmosphere. They watch the performance attentively despite it being performed in different languages. Additionally, one of the positive outcomes of this activity is a successful teambuilding experience for teachers.
- The activity helps to achieve some outcomes of the European School Early Education Curriculum, e.g. developing a common culture; identifying differences between cultures and countries; getting to know some of Europe's most famous characteristics and symbols; appreciating stories, songs and artistic works from Europe's heritage (or children's own country heritage).

Reference:

A. Langen/C. Droop: Letters from Felix: A Little Rabbit on a World Tour.
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www.ecml.at/inspiringearlylearning

