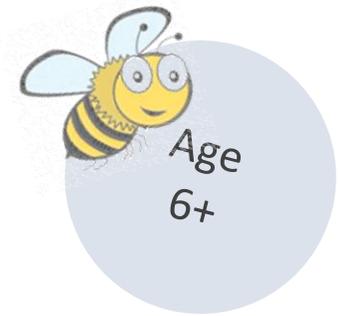


Identity texts (2)



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 3.5 hours per week for the teaching of the Irish language at this age level.
- There are 34 children in this First Class. 25 of these children speak home languages other than English. Within this group there are 12 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 children develop.

Reasons for choosing this activity:

- The teacher chooses this activity to encourage children's self-awareness/self-reflection and to further embed in literacy (using their home language(s) and the language of schooling), the oral vocabulary and phrase structures they are in the process of learning (→ continuous and coherent language learning).

Description:

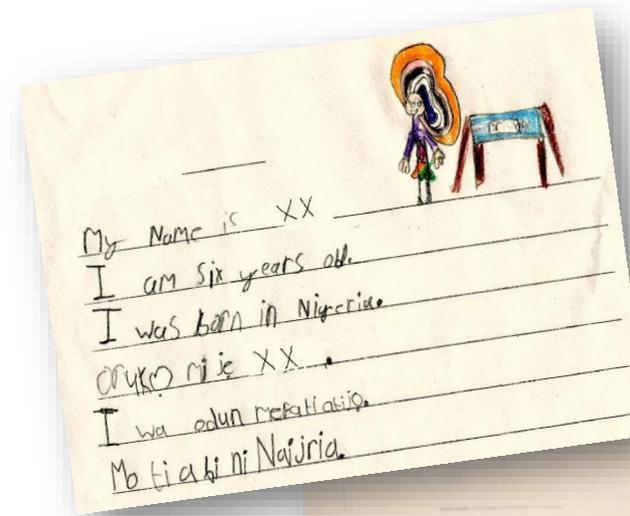
- The teacher introduces the conversation by encouraging children to tell their peers where they come from, e.g. country/town/part of the world (→ meaningful language learning). She also asks them to use their home language(s) as well as English when they are discussing this topic (→ relying on existing linguistic repertoires). As always, there is a variety of levels of knowledge of the language of schooling within the class. Some children are more talkative and contribute more than others.
- The teacher then suggests that the children write a short text that includes aspects of the information they have shared. Again, she encourages those who can write in their home language(s) to do so as well. Most children say that while they can use their home language(s) for speaking, they might need help to write it (see example 1 below). Some children are able to make an attempt at writing in their home language(s) as well as in English. A child from a bilingual home (Latvian and Russian) is able to write unaided in Russian, as her parents have already begun to teach her this language (see example 2 below). Even at this stage, a personal style is evident in her writing (→ autonomous learning).
- As always, those who have written their texts at home using their home languages are encouraged to read them for the class the following day. The children's sense of achievement is obvious as they read their texts in both languages for their classmates (→ active language learning). The personal confidence derived from this is an important asset in their continued enthusiasm for learning.

Variation:

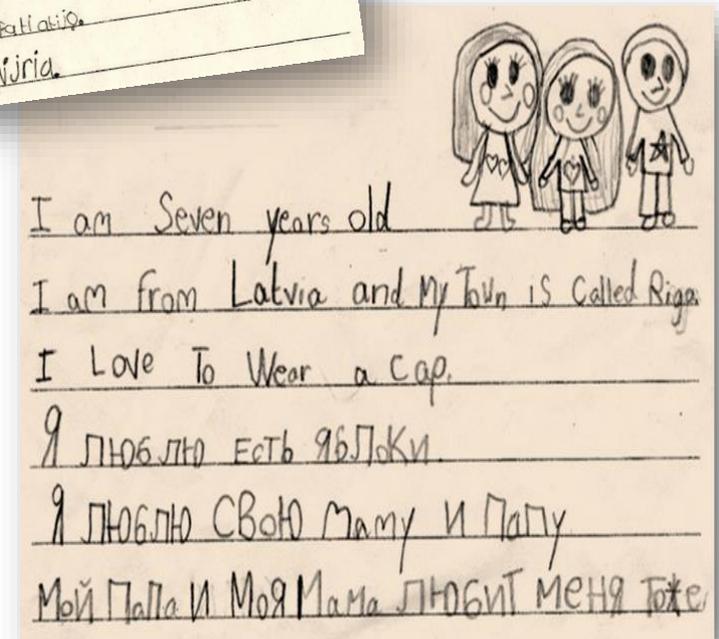
- Children themselves decide what they want to write as demonstrated in each of the examples below.

Observation:

- By using their home language(s) and the language of schooling both orally and in writing, children are able to derive cognitive benefits that aid their learning. One language supports the other.
- Drawing on their existing linguistic knowledge makes their learning more personal and interesting for them (→ 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 existing linguistic repertoires).
- Giving the children the freedom to choose which language they use helps to support learner autonomy. This results in the development of increasingly complex language use and expanded content delivery (→ coherent and continuous language learning).



Example 1: English written independently in class and Yoruba with assistance at home.



Example 2: English and Russian (entire text written in class without assistance by a child whose home languages were Latvian and Russian).