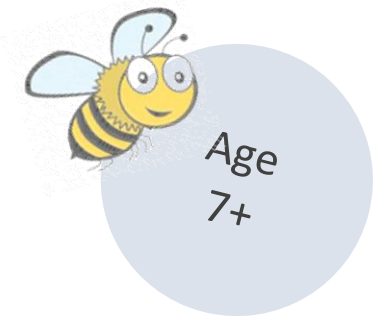


Welcome, bienvenue, wëllkomm!



Context:

- A primary school in Dublin, Ireland. English is the language of schooling. The Irish language is a curricular subject with 3.5 hours per week teaching allocation. There are 34 children in this Second Class (age 7+). 26 children speak home languages other than English. Within that group there are 9 different language backgrounds.
- The example below is taken from a lesson based on *Social, Personal and Health Education* (SPHE) where the class is discussing the area of feelings and how to make people feel welcome.

Reasons for choosing this activity:

- The teacher wants to explore, with the children, the importance of making everyone feel welcome and included in the group/class.

Description:

- A discussion is held between the teacher and children on the importance of making everyone feel welcome and included. Particular attention is paid to the situation where new children join a class that is already established. Children agree that this can be a difficult situation for these pupils and particularly so if they speak a language other than the language of schooling (→ meaningful language learning).

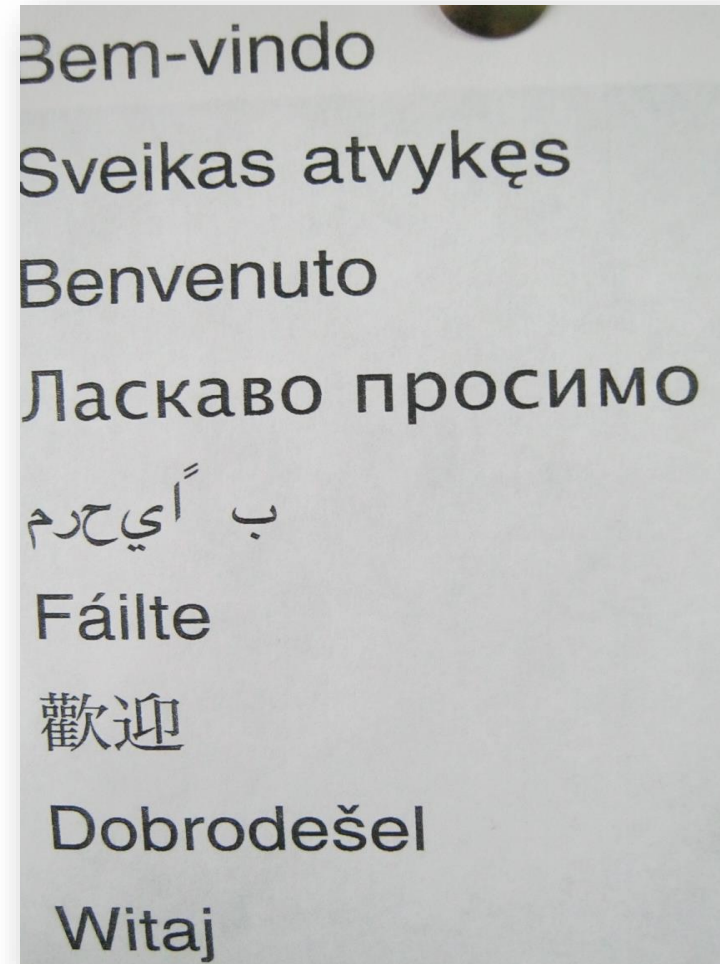
- One outcome of this discussion is the decision to make a poster with the word 'welcome' written in the languages of the classroom. Children place the poster on the classroom door. They come up with this idea themselves, explaining that when new children will see the word 'welcome' written in their home language this might help to make them feel included (→ active language learning).
- It is decided that if new children have a language that is new to the class, it can be added to the list (→ language learning is a process).
- Children contribute the appropriate word(s) in their home language(s) (→ relying on linguistic repertoires). Some children know how to write them. Those who are unable to do this bring in a copy of the written word from home.

Comment:

- These children find themselves in a classroom environment where empathy with classmates is actively encouraged.
- Children's personal experience of language contributes to building a plurilingual oral and sight vocabulary.
- This becomes an asset for all children and the teacher.

Observation:

- This exercise has the advantage of publicising the languages of the classroom; creating awareness that it is possible to say the same thing in a variety of languages; affirming children by demonstrating that all their languages are valued; making clear many aspects of language awareness, e.g., sounds, orthography, etc.
- Taking the time to discuss orally and involve the children in writing the word(s) from their own languages creates a greater investment in the task than would have been the case had the teacher simply researched the words and made the poster herself. It is also more effective from a learning perspective for all the children of the class.



Example 1: Welcome poster in many different languages