



CLUSTER OF RURAL SCHOOLS EL JONC

1. Activities undertaken to identify the languages used by the pupils

We carried out an oral survey of the language or languages normally spoken at home. We constructed a sort of bar chart on the blackboard showing the situation of the different languages.

The vast majority spoke Catalan, although some families spoke Spanish . This year there are no immigrant children in the Upper Cycle apart from a Colombian girl. In the Middle and Initial cycles there are children from Romania and the Maghreb.

Each pupil explained where his/her family came from; whether both parents were Catalans, whether only one of the two was Spanish, whether they had cousins or aunts and uncles living within or outside Catalonia and who spoke a language other than Catalan.

We widened the area of interest by talking about the children in the school who were from another country and which language or languages they spoke at home and at school.

We made a list of all the languages in normal use, that is to say languages that were used naturally for communication within the family, so that the language learnt at school, English, did not count. The languages were:

Catalan

Spanish

Arabic

Romanian

Portuguese (we have some twins from Brazil)

We widened the area again to talk about other people in the town who had come from abroad and the language they speak, for example a family in Menàrguens from the Gambia.

One activity that we enjoyed was writing greetings and farewells in different languages. We came up with several, either from trips, from hearing them on television, or ones



provided by the teacher from places visited, etc. Everybody made a composition on A3 paper of all the greetings and with illustrations.

The teacher read the same phrase, 'Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year', in different languages, and the pupils had to guess what the language was. Then we did the same with the list of languages on the cover of the Portfolio. They had difficulty in identifying the official languages of Spain, but had no problem with French and English.

By widening the area of interest yet again, we talked about the tourists we had met during the holidays and which languages they spoke: German, Basque, French, Japanese, etc.

We showed story books in different languages: English, French, Maltese, Greek, German, etc.) as well as postcards with phrases in the language of the country. The pupils enjoyed seeing books in different languages; one or two of them were brought to school by the pupils.

On a more personal note, each pupil wrote down which language they would like to learn apart from English and the ones they already spoke, and why. The winner was Italian because of its pleasant sound and Japanese for the TV cartoon series and also technology.

2. Classroom Presentation Activities

I showed them the box and I shook it without opening it. They were very excited in trying to guess what was inside. The truth is that the ELP box has a very attractive design.

Before opening it, I read the title in different languages. The funniest was Basque; they had difficulty in guessing it. The pupil who managed it said: 'such a strange expression could only be Basque.'

I gave them out and they opened them. Some were disappointed because they thought there would be CDs inside. But the booklets are quite attractive and everybody wanted to start using them straightaway.

I persuaded them to prepare a corner of the classroom where they could keep all the boxes. We put up a mural entitled 'Our European Language Portfolio' with the characters



from the Portfolio and the names of the five competences: reading, writing, listening, speaking and oral interaction.

We had to explain what each competence consisted of. They quickly understood the difference between 'speaking' and 'oral interaction', and they saw clearly that the latter is the most difficult aspect of learning a new language.

What was most difficult was to get across to them the usefulness of the descriptors. They needed to understand that these served for any language, even though we would only use them for English.

At one point we took the chance of working on the language biography. Since the unit dealt with a shipwreck, we imagined that we were washed up on an island and met the natives who spoke a language that we didn't understand. How would we learn it? This is when we reflected on how we learn languages.