

The languages around us

Teachers' notes

This activity is designed to take place as part of a module in Transition Year for students who have been learning the target language (TL) up to Junior Cycle.

By engaging in these activities, students will:

- investigate what languages other than English/Irish can be found around them for a variety of uses and purposes.
- work collaboratively to unlock the meaning and significance of the examples they find.
- become aware of the multilingual and multicultural society they live in.
- recognise aspects of their culture and language present in the community they live in if they are a speaker of a language other than English.
- notice similarities and differences between these languages and English/Irish, as well as between the cultural dimension conveyed by these languages and their own.
- engage with language-related activities outside of class time.



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Task overview:

Students investigate the presence of foreign words in their own community. They also explore what cultural aspects such words represent.



Culture focus:

All cultural aspects that are conveyed by the examples in foreign languages found by the students.



Language focus:

The main focus is on learning the vocabulary related to public spaces and hangouts, street signs, tourist signs, government signs, people and so on. Foreign words that have become common in English, such as cappuccino, panini and petite are also touched upon.



Time: 3/4 class sessions + 1 out-of-class session + exhibition



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→ Procedure:

Session 1 (in class):

- Introduce the notion of community and its different levels.
- Level 1: Me, my family and my friends
 - Students work individually and reflect on the languages spoken by their family and friends.
 - Students present their reflections in visual form
 - These can be displayed around the classroom.
- Level 2: Me and my school
 - The teacher divides the students into small groups. Each group is going to be assigned a group of people within the school. This could be teaching staff, administration staff or auxiliary staff. Each group of students then prepares a survey to put to their target group about the languages they speak.
 - Students brainstorm in their groups and come up with possible questions for the survey using the Languages Connect whiteboards. <https://bit.ly/2ZtnRyG>
 - Students share questions they have come up with and decide on the final ones they will choose for their survey.
 - Students have one week to carry out the survey and prepare a follow-up presentation of the results for the rest of the class.



Session 2 (in class):

- Students present their group's survey results to the rest of the class and a poster is made to represent the different languages spoken in the school.
- **Me and my community**
 - The teacher divides the students into small groups. Each group brainstorms in order to compile a list of foreign language words they have seen in their community. Students might not realise that certain commonly used words are of a foreign origin. We suggest each group focuses on one category for this exercise.
- **Examples of categories:**

Cars Food Drinks TV shows/cinema/advertisements Shop signs Video games

 - Each group can either write the words they found on an A3 page or make a digital poster featuring them.
 - The posters should be placed around the room for students to have a clear view of. The teacher should encourage students to discuss the words and their meanings.
 - The teacher should bring the class together to pick out some words and have a discussion about them. Where have you seen this word? In what context do people use it? What language is it from? Why do you think the English language borrowed this word?

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➔ Procedure:

Session 3 (outside of class):

After school, small groups of students go out into their community and try to find foreign words/expressions that are representative of a TL culture. Examples of where to look could include: shop/restaurant signs, leaflets for tourists, menus, etc. They then take pictures of these words in the location and context they were found. With regard to the meaning of a word, students can be encouraged to ask a native speaker or check a dictionary.

Session 4 – 5/6 (in class):

- Back in class, students share what they have gathered and arrange their findings into categories, i.e. ads for food and drink, information notices, languages represented, etc.
- **Questions the teacher can ask at this point are:**
 - What words have you found and what do they mean?
 - As far as you know, are all the signs correct from the point of view of grammar and spelling?
 - What kind of TL culture products are advertised and therefore particularly popular in our community?
 - Why are these signs in a foreign language rather than in English/Irish?
 - What foreign words or borrowed words have become commonly used in your community?
 - Why do you think it is important that different languages are present in our communities?
- If appropriate and if students have been to other countries, they may be asked to share what signs they saw written in English when travelling.
- Students may use their creativity, artistic, digital and organisational skills to create and run a photograph exhibition to show to the school and/or local community. Students could also create multilingual invitations for parents, teachers and members of the community.

