

Celebrating Diversity through Translation.

Student teachers and their lecturer, working together with Portsmouth EMAS and a translation expert from the University's School of Languages came together recently to deliver an event in a local primary school in Portsmouth. The event focused on promoting and celebrating languages and culture through translation with Year 5 pupils.

Understanding and translating languages is important in helping pupils make sense of the world around them. Nowadays, many pupils speak English and at least another language at home and the aim was to give an excellent experience focusing on knowledge and skills essential to support them through a variety of activities during the day.

Learning a language is the key to "break down barriers between people and have a better understanding of their own culture" (Byram, 1997) and to this end the pupils became experts in translation for a day as many of them speak not only English but also Afgani Punjabi, Arabic, Bengali, Cantonese, Dari, Farsi, Polish, Romanian, Swahili, Urdu and Vietnamese.

The day started with 'hello' cards in various languages, being given to the 62 pupils. They had to find their matching 'hello' partner and form groups of 8. Sitting at tables in the hall, they were supported by 2-3 trainee teachers at each table. One of the presenters then read out a story in French but initially without additional support. She then read the story again but this time employed a range of strategies to aid understanding such as pictures, colour coding of key words, intonation, props, noises and characters to act out the scenes. Understanding a text without knowing all the words was a challenge for the learners and the support teachers enabled the pupils to face this challenge by identifying the approaches to understand the text better.

There then followed a presentation on translation, where and how it is used in storytelling. The student teachers had prepared a translation game each to practise with the pupils on their tables and to develop confidence in this skill.

Each table was then assigned a book in a foreign language, borrowed from the Ethnic Minority Achievement Service in Portsmouth. At least one learner was able to speak and read this language. During the whole day, the learners' targets were to translate their stories into English and to present them as a role play in front of all pupils and teachers present. The student teachers monitored and facilitated this process throughout the day.



This cross-cultural celebration was a great success. Every learner was able to present their role play and was able to understand that speaking more than one language is an advantage, allowing them to discover languages in an interactive environment.

This day was also beneficial for the PGCE Students of the University of Portsmouth by understanding the importance of learning a language from a young age and the techniques that primary teachers use to allow their learners to discover a new language and a new culture in a short amount of time.

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