

18. - FRENCH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

I am Gloria. I am a French teacher at this school, and I teach students French. Teaching a language is much more than teaching grammar or phonetics: it is teaching how people express themselves, how they feel and, above all, it is teaching their culture.

When you teach pupils about another culture, you are bringing them closer to people who are different to them, which helps them develop a more tolerant outlook and helps them become a better citizen of Europe.

We learn new things in the class, ways of seeing things and life differently. Little by little they will come to the conclusion that differences do not mean being poles apart but an enrichment for all concerned.

The textbook, though very entertaining, is not our only methodology: we do listening comprehension, we do activities; we work on the computer, we work with magazines, newspapers...but, at the same time, they also compose songs, or go to the theatre.

A subject like a foreign language, which is a living language, allows us to do many other kinds of activities which may be a bit different from those which are done in other subject areas.

We have taken part, for a long time now, in exchanges. Some days ago, we hosted a group of students from Toulouse, who attended lessons with our students. They visited the city, got to know Spanish family life, and, this is, of course, an experience which is not only enriching for our students, but it is also unforgettable.

I will move on now to talk a little bit about assessment which is very important in a Foreign Language class where enthusiasm, participation, willingness to work, and teamwork are taken into account.

And then, there is a more technical aspect: you know that a language consists of an oral and a written part. The pupils hand in their workbooks, we do written tests, oral tests: in a nutshell, everything they are capable of and nothing beyond their possibilities.

You know that the nitty-gritty of learning a language has as its final goal communication – this is why we learn a foreign language. We learn it to communicate not only with our French neighbours.

French is not only spoken in France. It is spoken in many other countries and the basis of communication is that it be useful. If we go to France, then we can talk to our neighbours and we will be able to make ourselves understood.

We have at school now, students who come from Northern Africa, which is to say Morocco and Sub-Saharan Africa. They speak French, and it can be very useful: it can be a wonderful objective, to be able to communicate with these students and help them integrate themselves in a country which is different for them. And which, at first, they might feel a bit left out. It is a language which can allow us to get closer to them, and make them feel far more warmly at home.