

Languages – Why bother?

Aims To give a business visitor to school material to use with students in a classroom.

Objectives At the end of the activity, students will be able to:

Timings This activity is designed to last approximately 60 minutes

Method

Agree with the teacher how you will introduce yourself. Some teachers like to introduce visitors themselves. Also agree what time you are finishing.

Introduce yourself by saying your name and briefly what your job is or was. If you have any knowledge of a modern language, tell students about it and how it has been useful to you.

Then read aloud, slowly:

"True or false:

"More than half of the world's languages have no written form. (*True. Probably fewer than a quarter of the world's languages have written forms.*)

"Most people in the world are monolingual; that is, they only speak one language. (*False*)

"I want to get you talking about languages – whether they're important or not in today's culture.

"This activity is designed to establish how much the students know about the business community and attitudes to foreign languages.

"In twos or threes, consider the statement on the card I'll give you. What sorts of people might make that statement? Can you think of arguments for and against your statement? I'll give you a few moments to think about it and then we'll get you to share your thinking with the rest of the group."

Hand out one card to each pair/three. Leave them to discuss the point for 3 to 5 minutes, then warn them "one minute left".

Stop the students talking, and invite each pair to:

- (1) read out their card
- (2) say who might make the statement
- (3) outline views for and against
- (4) say what **they** think

When each pair/3 have fed back, ask whether there are any general conclusions that can be drawn from the discussions (eg English speakers are insular, courtesy is important, language learning is about more than just the language ...)

Ask a student to put these on the whiteboard, or you write them up.

Conclude by thanking the students for co-operating, and wish them luck for the future.

Statements / questions for discussion:

1 Internationally, some languages are more important than others

2 English is the most commonly spoken language in the world

3 It's embarrassing to travel abroad and not speak the language

4 English speakers don't need to learn another language

5 Speaking more than one language makes people more employable

6 It is rude for two Germans to speak in German if there is an English person present

7 It is patronising when English people speak S-L-O-W-L-Y and C-L-E-A-R-L-Y to foreigners

8 English is the language of business

9 In 50 years time, English will be the language of business

10 In the global village of the future, we will all speak the same language

11 The most widely spoken language is Hindustani –we should all speak that

12 The Welsh are wasting time learning Welsh

13 Esperanto was created after WW2 as a European language. All Europeans should learn to speak it

14 Morse-code, Shorthand, Music and Maths are not languages