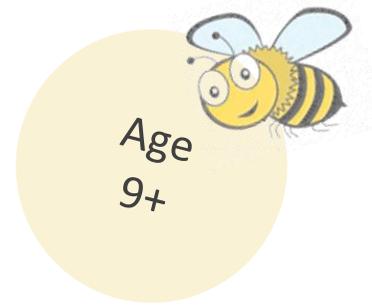


Autonomous Christmas writing



Context:

- A primary school in Dublin, Ireland. English is the language of schooling. The Irish language is a curricular subject with 3.5 hours per week teaching allocation.
- There are 32 children in this Fourth Class (age 9+). 22 of these children speak home languages other than English. Within this group there are 14 different language backgrounds.

Reasons for choosing this activity:

- The examples shown here are all the result of autonomous work by children. They are not required to do this for homework but are, for their own individual reasons, inspired to express themselves on the topic of Christmas in their own individual ways (→ meaningful language learning).

Description:

- The first example illustrates an autonomous translation of a Christmas poem by a Filipino child who, having read a book of Christmas reflections, is motivated to translate this poem from English into her native Tagalog (→ relying on existing linguistic repertoires).
- The second, is an example of original poetry in English and Irish, written autonomously by a native speaker of Yoruba (→ language learning is a process).

This is an output of the project “Inspiring language learning in the early years – Why it matters and what it looks like for children age 3-12” (2016-2019) of the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML). The ECML is a Council of Europe institution promoting excellence in language education in its member states. www.ecml.at/inspiringearlylearning

- The last example is a story written autonomously in English by a German speaker. It illustrates the writer’s understanding for a character who finds herself in an environment where no one knows her language.

Variation:

- Each example reflects an individual expression to the topic of Christmas.

Observation:

- The curiosity, motivation, interest, reflective and analytical skills awakened by this kind of interaction, while eminently supportive in giving access to language learning, is not confined to that area alone. Once unearthed by the children, these skills become a transferrable asset to additional areas of learning.

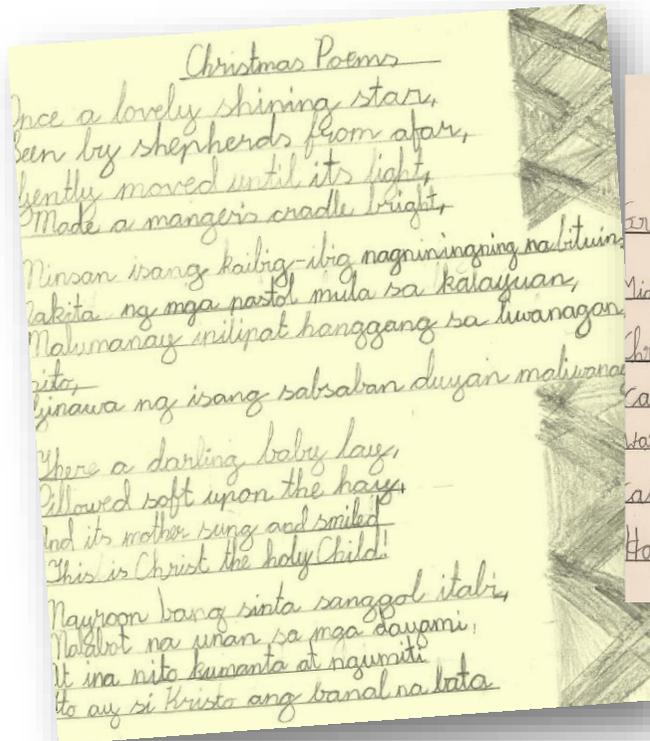
Comment (1):

- When children are affirmed in their efforts, knowing that their full linguistic repertoire can be used, it affords them further possibilities for deeper and increasingly reflective thought and expression (→ continuous and coherent language learning).

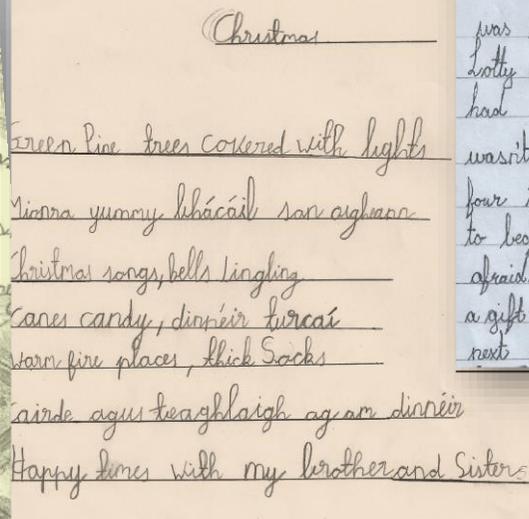


Comment (2):

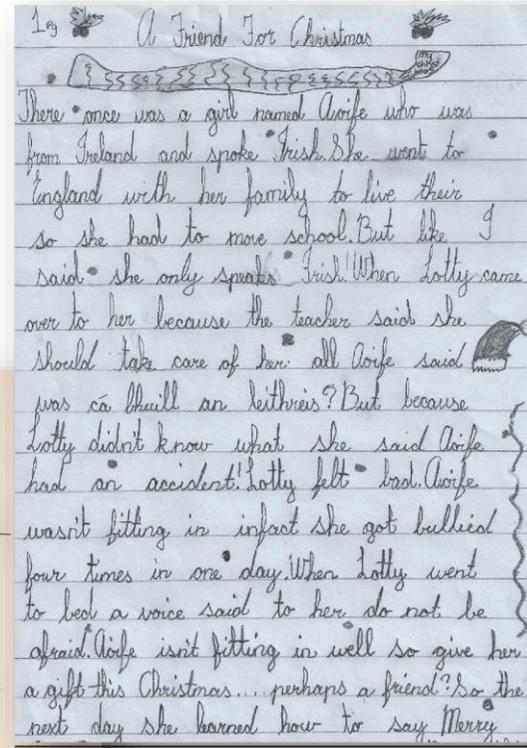
- Being encouraged to use their home languages stimulates children's interest and motivation to go further than the demands of the curriculum and the classroom (→ language learning is a process).
- Understanding what it feels like to be in a linguistically diverse environment helps in the development of empathy (see example 3).



Example 1: Christmas poem translated from English to Tagalog



Example 2: Christmas poem written in Irish and English by a speaker of Yoruba



Example 3: Christmas story written in English by a speaker of German

