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WE ARE EUROPE PROJECT, CASE STUDY (FINLAND)

About the process in We are Europe project

This year I taught English to classes 8 and 9. When I introduced the main theme of We are Europe project to the classes all but one were interested and eager to start. The atmosphere in one class seemed to be a bit hesitating. But after talking for a while they, too, one by one got interested.

We started talking about what the pupils would like to know about the youngsters in other European countries and also how they would like to get that information. They mentioned presentations, videos and Skype connection. This was a good basis for thinking about their own topics. We discussed as well what kind of things they relate to Finnish culture and we made a mind map of their suggestions. Every group listed more or less the same kind of things: food, festivals, sport, school, events, traditions, music, fashion, sauna, language and stereotypes to mention a few. After that they were asked to form groups of two or three according to with whom they would like to make their project work and what the topic would be. It didn't matter if they chose the same kind of topics because every group would carry it out in their own way. The forming of the groups and choosing their topic was very easily and quickly done.

We spent three lessons for preparing the project work. If that wasn't enough the pupils were supposed to finish the tasks in their own time. As a result we had very different presentations, slideshows and videos carried out in personal ways and seen from different aspects. As a teacher I mostly helped

them with the language in case they needed it. I tried not to interfere in the content unless they asked for help. Once ready, the pupils had their talk in front of the class and the class was allowed to make comments. Some pupils added more things into their presentations on the basis of the feedback from the class. Mostly they were satisfied with each other's work. As a teacher I felt satisfied and happy for the enthusiasm and sincerity the pupils showed towards their own and classmates' work. In one group there was some excellent co-operation going on - when making slideshows and videos they gave material from their own lives from one group to another; they really seemed to enjoy this project!

Merja Wessman

Something in French as well

My French students did their bit as well. The ninth graders wanted to make a little play. Everyone was into it right away. They decided about the plot together and then wrote the script in two groups of four thinking at the same time how to share the roles. They wanted me to check the language. One beautiful sunny afternoon they went to town centre to film their play with their iPads. Later on they edited it. The ready story has two parts. It's about some friends, Finnish and French, seeing the town together. Later there are also two French tourists. At the end they all meet in front of St Olaf's castle.

Some eighth graders describe their ordinary school day in their presentation. This work was optional.

Sixth graders first created a travel info of a country that interested them. Everyone did a slideshow of their own. After watching their ads we decided to do one more about Savonlinna, altogether. Each pair prepared one slide and thus we had some facts about our town in French.

Merja Wessman

Telling stories in pairs

This was something we did only in the very final lessons of the the term.

I asked the pupils to find a partner with whom they were supposed to tell a story or a fairytale of their own. The theme could be anything. The rules were these: they should tell the story in turns phrase by phrase. The other one said a phrase and the other one wrote down what he / she said. They continued where the other one stopped, in turns. They were asked to accept everything their partner said and not to argue about it. They were given only about thirty minutes' time for doing this. Technically, they used google.docs inviting their friend to use the same platform. The results were hilarious and the themes changed from romantic stories to actual fairytales, from some kind of trips to adventure stories with a little twinkle in their eyes.

During the following lesson they wanted to hear one another's stories. This kind of studying was a success and great fun for everybody.

Merja Wessman