



Let's take languages outside the classroom!

The MFL motto and ethos at my previous school was ***Let's take languages outside the classroom.*** From the big banner when you entered the MFL department corridor to our approach to lessons, you couldn't escape it!

Languages are a life skill, meant for use outside the classroom, not just to pass an exam, and we must provide opportunities for such skill to get tested in real life situations outside the classroom. It is what I call the BIG MATCH. I believe that the learning that takes place in the classroom is the practice, the coaching needed, just like when we train for a big football match.

How to take languages outside the classroom?

Physical or Virtual Exchanges

These can be core to any language department, although, physical exchanges can take time and money to organise! If physical exchanges aren't possible, why not try a **virtual exchange**? You can arrange a mini project with your partner school and using Breakout Rooms and an application such as Zoom, Teams or GoogleMeet, students can work collaboratively with their partners.

[Check out this blog article I wrote for Global School Alliance about how to set up a virtual exchange.](#)

The BIG football match: real situations to put the language into practice! This is a massive motivating factor and one that allows you to raise the profile of languages in your school community.

Routes into Languages: The Language Leaders Award

This association runs many great competitions and awards involving languages: Spelling Bee, Film and Eurovision competitions are some of their hot activities, to mention a few! My favourite one is the *Language Leaders Award*. Students need to apply to take part in the programme and the best applications, not necessarily the best linguists, will get selected. To obtain the award, students need to prepare and deliver two MFL lessons to local primary schools.

This activity, in itself, is very powerful, as it allows students to reflect on their own language learning experience and why they are learning their second language in the first place! Younger students also love being taught by Senior School pupils.

MFL lunches

I have previously worked on these with Y10 students who periodically book a table in the dining hall and serve Spanish/French/German food. Selected students get invited to these and the only condition to enjoy the wonderful delights of European food is to speak the target language while they have lunch.

Debating competitions

Competitions can be a great way to motivate and engage Y10-Y13 students. In a debating session, students are given a motion to prepare, well in advance, and will compete against other students in their selected language. This is a great activity for the most able students. You could run your own debating competition in school or cluster of local schools.



MFL magazine

We previously implemented a MFL magazine with the help of A Level students. The idea is to create a MFL magazine with school news in French, German and Spanish and of course it includes interviews!

School Theatre productions.

If funds and resources allow, theatre productions carried out by specialised companies in the target language, such as **Onatti tours** are worth every penny and students love them.

Language International week

At my previous school, we were lucky to have an International school site with students from all around the world: China, Japan, Thailand, Russia, Italy, France, Spain and South Korea just to mention a few!

As a result, we organised an annual International week with a wide range of activities aiming to raise the profile of languages and celebrate diversity, global dimension and tolerance in all students. The activities take place during break, lunch and after school and include things like:

- **Cooking sessions:** make dumplings, French pancakes, a Spanish paella or Austrian Tafelspitz
- **Traditional dancing sessions**, where International students showcase traditional dances and/ or songs
- **A special international assembly run by the students**
- **Screening of international films**
- **MFL school debating competition**
- **International photo booth**, run by students, where photos with different flags and prompts are taken celebrating diversity.

We also incorporated a **Language Day for Y9 students**, run by international students. It consisted of language workshops where international students teach a little bit of their language and elements of its culture to all Y9 students, who are off timetable for the event.

I appreciate that very few schools have an International school site, however, most schools have students from different international backgrounds and this is an opportunity for those students to feel proud of their heritage and raise the profile of languages!

Start small and pick one or two elements to celebrate and build as is suitable for your school and learners.

The Stephen Splender Prize

This is a great, poetry, translation competition open to the whole of the UK at all levels. Translation is a great skill and students tend to love it, believe it or not! Running a workshop/ club for students on translation is a great asset which can lead to the **Stephen Splender Prize entry**.

The British Film Institute workshops

The BFI runs lovely film workshops for all key stages and main languages. I firmly believe in the power of film when learning a language! Having Netflix, Amazon Prime or just YouTube open a huge opportunity to exploit cinema in the classroom and the BFI has helped me tremendously to develop teaching techniques and materials which incorporate the use of films.

MFL Drama Competitions

Both *The North London Collegiate School* and *The King Alfred School* organise Spanish and French Drama competitions, respectively, for Y11-Y13 students. Students perform up to 10 minutes sketches or short plays in the target language. This is a great opportunity for students who are good at drama to shine in a language!

The BFI runs lovely film workshops for all key stages and main languages. I firmly believe in the power of film when learning a language!

Feedback from parents and students alike is fantastic each year. It does require a lot of time to prepare students for these plays, so it represents a lovely, periodical, language extra-curricular activity: MFL Drama Club. It is a fantastic project for a language assistant to coordinate should there be the time and interest available.

Advertise your programme!

Make professional looking A2 posters advertising your annual MFL extracurricular programme, which can be placed around the school and emailed to parents. It makes a difference, and it emphasises your logo and unique selling point: taking languages outside the classroom.

Teaching languages is intrinsically linked to teaching culture and preparing our students for their BIG Match (real communication in another language)! The *more matches* they take part in, the more real practice they will get and the more motivated our learners will become. A rich extracurricular MFL programme allows that to happen - playing the exciting match of languages until they come face to face with their personal languages World Cup!



About the author

Esmeralda Salgado

Esmeralda is an Advanced Skills Teacher (AST) and a former Head of MFL and Digital Lead. She has taught languages for over 20 years from KS2 to KS5 in different school settings: in state and independent schools. Her GCSE and A Level results are excellent with a 100% success pass grade (9-4) at GCSE in the summer 2022 and 56% 9 to 8 grades. Esmeralda is passionate about the use of digital tools and collaborative projects among schools and has extensive experience in using eTwinning and Erasmus projects as tools to enhance the teaching and learning experience in the MFL classroom. Esmeralda is a Silver Pearson National Teaching Award winner for Secondary School teacher of the year and has collaborated to write one of the Language Gym Books: Spanish Verb Pivots with GianFranco Conti. Currently a MFL consultant, writer, blogger and CPD provider Esmeralda is going back to the classroom as Head of MFL from September.

To find out more, please visit:
go.pearson.com/MFLGCSE24