

## In the classroom

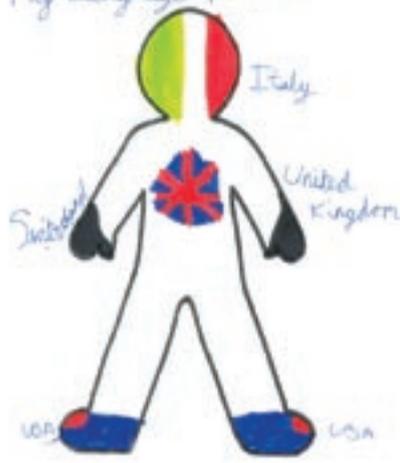
Children create their own 'language portraits' with the flags and colours of the countries and languages that mean something to them.

My language portrait



Catalina Garcia de Miguel

My language portrait



Daniela

My language portrait



Elenie

### PROFILE

Catherine Rodrigues,  
St Edmund  
Campion Catholic  
Primary School

A language graduate, Catherine worked in the travel industry both in the UK and overseas before changing career eight years ago to become a Primary Teacher. She is the Languages Coordinator at St Edmund Campion Catholic Primary School in Maidenhead, Berkshire where she teaches Latin, Spanish, French and Japanese. She won the ALL / Routes Primary Language Teacher of the Year Award in 2015.

# Embarking on a multilingual journey

Year 3 marks a big step in children's growing independence and award-winning teacher **Catherine Rodrigues** believes it's the perfect time for the students to start learning about their classmates' different languages and cultures

**A**t the start of Year 3, children experience quite a few changes. In the school where I teach they are educated in a different part of the building and join the older children in the junior playground for the first time. The arrangements for drop off and pick up are also different as children are encouraged to become more independent.

Year 3 is also the time when children first start to learn a language. Rather than bombarding them with a new language in this period of transition from infants to juniors, we spend some time at the beginning of the autumn term looking at language in general. We talk about how many languages there are in the world. (There are in fact 6,000-7,000 but most

children guess that there are about 20-100.) We look at a language map of the world and identify the prominence of some languages across continents; leading us into discussions about the Age of Discovery, colonisation and migration.

### Flying the flag

Children start to think about their own language background. Of course this is immediately obvious for some children, particularly those who are bilingual, but even those who are monolingual start to think about their extended family or even the languages spoken in the countries they have visited on holiday. Children then have great fun creating their own 'language portraits', decorating them with the flags



Catherine Rodrigues



**“The rest of the class listen enthralled as they learn about a different culture”**

and colours of the countries and languages that mean something to them.

At this stage, I take note of those children who speak another language at home and invite them to prepare a lesson on their language and culture. I give guidelines on what to include, encourage parents to support their child in the lesson preparation at home and invite them to come into school to assist their child in teaching the lesson.

It is evident that children enjoy the independent research at home as they prepare the lesson for their classmates. They usually put together a PowerPoint presentation including details such as the location of the country/countries where their language is spoken; its capital city and national flag; simple greetings in the language; interesting facts about the country and typical foods.

### Food for thought

The rest of the class listen enthralled as they learn about a different language and culture from a classmate. A popular part of the lesson is trying out the typical foods that the children kindly bring in. We have enjoyed Spanish tortilla, French cheese, Polish ham and sausage, Colombian pastries, Welsh cakes, Italian pizza, cake from Slovakia, savoury snacks from Hungary and Dutch cheese and biscuits.

What I really enjoy is seeing the children grow in confidence and their pride when sharing their language and culture with the rest of the class. This is often the first time they have spoken in depth to the class about the non-English side of their identity and the rest of the children show genuine interest and respect as they learn more about each other.

And can you imagine the look of pride on the faces of the mums, dads and grandparents who have come into school to support them? It is their language and culture that they are passing on to the

rest of the class through their child or grandchild, and it really is heart-warming to see this happening in the classroom.

In the playground at the end of the day children and parents can be overheard discussing whichever language the children have been learning about that day. What is important is that children who have another culture and language are celebrated and that the respect that they earn amongst their peers endures.

With the right foundations, the process of opening children's eyes to the world begins to take form in the classroom. Here they start to understand just why it is so important to learn to speak other languages and to develop an interest in other cultures.

By the end of the autumn term, the Year 3 children are not only growing in independence but are also ready to appreciate the joy of studying a new language and culture.

### Further information

- **The Routes / ALL Language Teacher Awards** recognise very special language teachers and student language ambassadors who motivate and inspire young learners and support colleagues by sharing their expertise and ideas. Find out more on our website [www.all-languages.org.uk](http://www.all-languages.org.uk)

- **Catherine Rodrigues** will also be outlining her primary multilingual journey approach and how this works in practice at her school at our Language World conference, which takes place at Dunchurch Park in Rugby on 11-12 March 2016. For more information, and to book your place at the conference, go to <http://tiny.cc/LW2016>



Catherine asks her students to teach the rest of the class about their language, culture and food

