



# ECTs at the heart of ALL

#LoveMFLECTs

**E**mpowering yourself, personally and professionally  
**C**ultivating quality connections  
**T**ime to grow as a MFL teacher

# Introduction

Congratulations! You have finished your initial teacher training year and have made a good decision to join (or re-join!) the Association for Language Learning. The training may have been hard, but you have learnt about lesson planning, managing behaviour effectively and building productive relationships with pupils and colleagues. You have also secured a job as an ECT and are looking forward to having your own classes, a department in which to flourish, and really getting to grips with the joys and challenges of teaching languages.

You've had a year of close mentoring, focused observation and constant feedback. You know now that it'll be brilliant to have your own classes and your own room (hopefully), and to be able to invest your energies for the long term in the profession. Your career as a teacher has begun...

This mini publication is designed to support you to become an outstanding MFL ECT with some suggestions that will set you well on the way to success, career development and happiness.

Just dip in for handy hints, useful pointers, relevant reminders and some good ideas! We hope that you will also find time to play an active part in your professional subject association, too!



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Chair of ALL Board of Trustees



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ALL Co-Presidents 2025-2026

## 5 tips as a starter

Never forget why you wanted to be an MFL teacher in the first place! Use all your communication powers to remind everyone around you – colleagues, pupils, school leaders and parents – of the joy and power of language learning.

Embrace becoming part of your new community. Invest in positive relationships with pupils, staff (teaching and support) and parents. This is your new world where you want to thrive, flourish and succeed.

Establish and nurture your support networks. Be an active member of your local and national Association for Languages (ALL) community and fly the languages flag!

Prioritise keeping yourself happy and healthy with a positive work / life balance.

Be organised. A small investment of time early on will result in an easier time in the months to come. Remember no teacher is ever the finished article. You have been trained to be a reflective and research-informed practitioner; maintain this level of intellectual commitment to ensure you are always developing. Always keep learning and keep your passion alive!

## 6 ways to keep talking

### **Share your concerns and successes**

Build an open relationship with your ECT mentor and/or your head of department. If you are honest with them about how you are coping, they will be able support you when you need it. They will also be able to celebrate your successes with you!

### **Build a group of work friends**

Get to know other ECTs or new teachers. This is a good time to build friendships with people in the same situation and a chance to share your group knowledge and understanding ... as well as let off steam on occasions!

### **Make contact with the most important people in school**

Senior managers, your head of department and heads of year are important, of course, but don't forget the school administrative team, the caretaking staff, the SENDCO etc. These people can help you in more ways than you might imagine.

### **Protect your out of school friendships**

Make sure that there are people outside of the school who will support you and understand what you are doing but be aware when their eyes glaze over with yet another 'teacher story' not to overstep their listening generosity.

### **Join a union**

Not only are the unions important to protect your rights at work and ensure you have support should something unexpected happen, but they are also useful as a source of official information and to check salary and other entitlements.

### **Don't forget your initial teacher training (ITT) network**

Your former ITT tutors and mentors will appreciate your keeping in touch. They will love to hear how you are getting on and can give further advice. It is also a good idea to keep in contact with your former ITT peers to share good news and support one another as needed.

## 5 networks to support you

### **MFL department**

This network represents your closest professional colleagues. They understand better than anyone the challenges surrounding your particular subject and school context. Invest in positive, productive, honest and enjoyable communication with them.

### **School staff**

This network is your professional family. Give time to communicating with them on both social and professional issues. It can be useful to identify a 'buddy' outside your department to gain a different perspective on school life.

### **School social scene**

Particularly in your first years of teaching, participating in social events organised by staff can give you a completely different perspective. An after-school pub or café visit, or an outing to the theatre or a quiz night, can open a whole new level of communication with colleagues.

### **Social media**

Often called the biggest staffroom ever – easy and quick way to make contact with specialists all over the world.

Start with

@ALL4Lang and #mfltwitterati on X and Secondary MFL Matters on Facebook. You can also follow Association for Language Learning on LinkedIn and other social media platforms are coming soon so watch this space! And remember the monthly ALL Social Zoom is open to ECTs and trainees, too!

### **ALL**

Don't forget this fabulous community of MFL teachers connected through a professional body. ALL is alive at national, regional and local level and online, so make connections that suit you best! Full details of branches, hubs and networks: <https://www.all-languages.org.uk/about/community/local/>

Events: <https://www.all-languages.org.uk/events/>

## 6 Ways to protect yourself

### **Eat healthily**

Prioritise eating fresh ingredients and drinking lots of water. Choosing the right food should give you energy, make you feel good and help to boost your immunity. Occasional chocolate is fine, too!

### **Enjoy lunch**

Always sit and eat your lunch, ideally in a social setting and at a table that does not have a screen nearby. Of course, lunches become “working” on occasions, but try to make this the exception, not the rule.

### **Get enough sleep**

Making sure that you get enough sleep to be able to face the challenge of teaching will help enormously. Remember the first week after a holiday is always challenging and tiring, but you will adapt.

### **Remember the value of exercise**

Plan some sporting activities into your week. Maybe a walk to and from school, a swim or jog, or an exercise class or visit to the gym? Your body will thank you for remembering it is more than just a vehicle for your brain!

### **Embrace mindfulness**

School is a place of noise, energy and mental demand. Consider finding yourself pockets of peace. Find a quiet place to spend some time every day, learning to pause or give some moments to a mindfulness activity.

### **Give pupils jobs**

When you are teaching a full timetable, you cannot be the one who always runs around after pupils. Delegate tasks to pupils and, if they want you to do something, give them the responsibility to remind you/follow up.

# 7 routines to adopt

## **Classroom Target Language (TL)**

Teach gradually more complex TL classroom language in each advancing year group (and maybe some additional “fun” phrases), and insist on them being used.

## **Seating arrangements**

If you are not sure how to arrange your room, speak to colleagues about what they do and why. Everyone has their own preference (unless there is a departmental/whole school policy to follow) and different formats work in different environments. If you are planning to use a seating plan, share it publicly and stick to it.

## **Uniform**

Make it clear that you understand the school expectations as this reinforces the fact that you have the system behind you; particularly in environments where behaviour might be more challenging, this sends the first message. Obviously, this can also be an opportunity to use the TL!

## **Equipment**

Make sure that you know your school’s expectations and then be confident to enforce them. If pupils come without pens/books/paper, have a clear idea of how you will deal with this and stick to your rule.

## **Beginning of lessons**

If you can hook your pupils into a lesson early on, things will be easier as pupils are engaged quickly. This may often follow a pattern but may also vary, to keep you and them interested and on the ball.

## **End of lessons**

Think about what you want to get out of your final few minutes. Perhaps a check of the learning that has taken place, targets for next lesson and even recognition of what pupils did well in the lesson? Give yourself time to be ready for the next lesson by packing away and having a final plenary activity which allows everyone to be ready to leave the room swiftly and tidily.

## **Develop your routines**

If something is not working, don’t be worried about changing the emphasis. As long as you are not undermining a whole school policy or rule, build and develop your own set of ideas until you are happy with them.

## 4 ways to be organised

### **Your diary**

Take time at the beginning of term, half term and each week to ensure your diary is up to date and you know exactly what is happening. It is easy to miss things as a busy teacher!

### **Your classroom**

If you and your pupils have a clear idea about where things belong, they are more likely to put them back there! Between lessons make sure your room is tidy to receive the next class; this can transform a class's attitude. If pupils see you care enough to make the room tidy, they might leave it in the same way.

### **Your time at school**

Always aspire to use your time fruitfully. If a task looks big, set a time limit and just get it started; sometimes it's easier to chip away at major challenges in bitesize chunks rather than put them off. Use the time when you feel freshest to do the most challenging tasks.

### **Your time away from school**

Even if you take work home, consider making a rule to keep certain nights / weekend days free. Your home life should be separate from your work life and should provide an opportunity to switch off, relax and think about other things. This will keep your brain agile and capable of the intense activity required of it at school.

# 7 Ways to Reduce Marking Workload

## **Get the positive habit**

Use time as you circulate the classroom to offer positive reinforcement and encouragement. Identify positive aspects of good work. Perhaps write positive comments in ten books / planners during a single lesson? Positivity is infectious!

## **Listening/Reading/Writing**

For listening activities and other whole class tasks, consider peer marking and then take the register and gather marks in TL as you go through.

## **Speaking**

Listen to speaking activities in pairs during whole class work. Aim to assess four pairs a week as you build up a picture of the whole class every 3-4 weeks.

## **Writing**

When pupils are completing a written task, use the time to circulate closely and review individual's work. Use this as teaching and marking time – underline where an error is and ask pupils to correct it, move on and then return to check correction.

## **WAGOLL**

Share good examples – What A Good One Looks Like. This can be on the visualiser/PPT slide. It can be from a pupil in another class if pupils are reticent to share. A great way to raise the bar!

## **Give your marking weight, importance and time in lessons**

Use marking to set targets, establish an individual dialogue, suggest practice/correction opportunity and then build in response time as part of your lesson plan.

## **Don't forget pupil power**

Teach your pupils how to assess others as this should lead to better awareness of criteria, engagement in their own learning and eventually improvement in their own quality of work.

## 5 Ways to keep developing professionally

Never fear asking questions – always useful! Aspire to professional dialogue about real issues with teaching colleagues.

Keep an eye out for MFL-related blogs and webinars. For example, there are regular Social Zoom sessions:  
<https://www.all-languages.org.uk/events/>

Find ideas and great resources online and by sharing ideas with colleagues but remember that it is likely that you have to adapt them for your own students' needs/level of language.

Be inspired by speakers at *Language World*, the annual ALL national conference for language teachers, and other ALL events. Contribute to the lively discussions and come back laden with ideas for your learners and your teaching.

Join your local ALL network, branch or hub (see [www.all-languages.org.uk/events](http://www.all-languages.org.uk/events) for details) or join a relevant webinar to get together with other language teachers, hear inspiring talks and take away ideas to try in your classroom. Don't be afraid to share your own ideas or ask for suggestions if you are faced with a particular challenge.

## 9 ways to make the most of the ALL website

Check this fabulous information and networking resource on a regular basis. ALL is a professional association, aimed at teachers like you, with a recognised voice nationally and at government level.

Check out the Language Learning Journal, published by Routledge on behalf of ALL. In this international peer-reviewed journal, you can access scholarly articles on current aspects of foreign language and teaching for foreign language teachers, language teacher educators, researchers and policy makers. <https://www.all-languages.org.uk/research-practice/language-learning-journal-llj/>

Check the ECT page: <https://www.all-languages.org.uk/ect-years/> and look for the download link: '*ALL as your Language teaching career begins*' which gives you shortcuts to pages curated especially for you.

Make good use of research and reading, such as *Learning from the Classroom* on the ALL website where teachers share their action research. <https://www.all-languages.org.uk/research-practice/learning-from-the-classroom/>

Read the ALL Barry Jones archive collection: <https://www.all-languages.org.uk/student/barry-jones-archive/> for helpful readings on everything from target language, learning strategies, cultural awareness, creativity, grammar and boys' attitudes to language learning.

Keep an eye on the information about the national *Language World* conference for MFL teachers, as well as early bird offers and ideas for how to become involved.

Browse the links and suggestions to keep your subject and cultural knowledge alive, especially in the Language Zones.

Respond to calls for your views and consultation. Your voice is important in your MFL teaching community. Let us know if you want anything more from the website!

And there's even a shop with great ideas for Christmas and birthday presents?!

# 9 Ways to Stay Inspired

## **Power of praise**

In evaluation of anything – your teaching, pupils' learning – make sure you focus on WWW. Remember two stars FIRST, then one wish!

## **Challenge your learners**

Introduce a really challenging “Word/Phrase of the week” to your classes and encourage them to build it into the lesson. Celebrate the achievement/appearance of your chosen challenge!

## **Challenge your learners**

Aspire to maximum TL from you and from your learners. Reward the whole class for achievement of the 100% model. Have an inter-class competition to achieve the highest percentage!

## **Build in cultural opportunities**

Consider how to integrate cultural richness into your lessons. This could be trips, as well as creative use of film clips, competitions, authentic texts, visits by native speakers ... the list goes on!

## **Prioritise your passion**

Build your interests / talents into your language teaching. Whether it's football or baking, reading or singing, just share your passion as a way of enjoying yourself and inspiring others.

## **Share the good news!**

Take every opportunity to share the achievements of your class with others, including in assemblies, through displays, school newsletter etc.

## **Inspirational quotes**

Display inspiring quotes – in a range of languages – as inspiration for you and your pupils to work hard, stay on task and develop your language skills.

## **The sky's the limit**

Consider the possibilities rather than the limitations of languages. Cross-curricular project? Why not? Fashion show? Yes please. Language-focused evening festival? Once a year might be possible. You might inspire not just an individual but a whole class/year group/school/staff!

## **Set targets**

Set yourself targets every term and keep them at the forefront of your consciousness; don't let anything distract you, achieve them, pat yourself on the back!

## Recent ECTs look back...

Being an ECT was totally different from my experience of the PGCE course.

I started at my school in July, which was great because it gave me the opportunity to get my foot in the door and familiarise myself with the students and the school systems before I took responsibility for classes and a Year 9 tutor group in September. Support from colleagues is a real strength of my school, and my biggest piece of advice is that you should never be too proud to ask for advice! They all remember what it is like to be newly qualified and can offer support in a way that other ECTs can't.

Another thing I have learnt is that I really can rely on my skills and knowledge to enable me to adapt to the constant change of school life. I have taught out of specialism this year, but the understanding of pedagogy which I developed through the PGCE course has made this achievable. School life will always throw curveballs at you, but by the time you qualify, you will absolutely be equipped to handle them in style!

My final piece of wisdom - which might surprise my PGCE academic tutor! - is to take the time to have some fun at work! Teenagers are amazing people, and they're the reason I've enjoyed this year so much. Get involved with the extra-curriculars, the school events, the pastoral role - and it will pay dividends both in terms of professional development and wellbeing.

*Jake Perrett - West Somerset College (ECT1)*

I have been incredibly fortunate with my ECT1 school. They have a robust support structure in place, where ECTs are never deployed for internal cover, and we have fortnightly meetings with SCITT trainees and ECT2s to share successes and work through challenges.

My school has an open-door policy, and my mentor teaches across the corridor from me. Her frequent drop-ins have been supportive and encouraging. Little and often with the feedback and praise has allowed me to take it onboard and quickly demonstrate my growth. I have also used my reduced timetable to observe other colleagues which is so useful to me as it resonates with how I prefer to learn by watching.

I have also been fortunate to have a head of department who resources a medium-term plan well ahead of term, allowing me to tailor the resources to each group. Not to brag, but I also have a TA who has a languages background and have really enjoyed being able to deploy them effectively especially in my GCSE class with a real variety of prior attainment.

*Araba Brock - Kingsbury Green Academy (ECT1)*

I started out my ECT years at Dartford Grammar School with a TLR role managing the 4-year Japanese Excellence Programme. I found it very challenging having to approach colleagues who were not keeping to deadlines or would push back on arrangements I had made. I've learned that being a people pleaser and a manager of sorts doesn't work - it's important to maintain boundaries and to stand by your decisions after taking all factors into consideration. Ultimately, I think this gains you more respect in the long run. Although I'd say I'm still developing these skills, I now feel more confident in leading others and hope to emulate my own manager who is a fantastic role model.

*Hannah Wells - ECT Year 2 and Co-ordinator of Japanese Excellence Programme at Dartford Grammar School, Kent.*

# Wise Words from ALL Members

Come and get to know them at ALL events and the *Language World* conference!

## **Wendy Adeniji:**

If you teach mid and low prior attaining learners, they struggle to memorise a lot of information. Choose some key phrases, such as verbs in the three main tenses, that they can recycle in different contexts and use them over and over again in starter activities, vocabulary learning, writing and speech, so that their use becomes automatic.

## **Liz Black:**

Maintain a good work life balance and enjoy spending time with your family and friends.

## **Jane Bland:**

Get to know the students in your class and show you care about them as individuals. Notice their achievements, their likes and their other interests. Be at the door when students arrive to 'meet and greet', ask them if they've had a nice weekend, are feeling better, won their basketball match etc.

## **Nickey Brown:**

Think about the context of what you're teaching and how you can ensure that it engages pupils emotionally.

## **Vincent Everett:**

If there are ideas and approaches that don't fit with what you believe in, give them a try. That's when you really find out something new.

## **Steven Fawkes:**

Keep your own life alive!

You are the most motivating thing in your classroom, and you inspire your learners. The things that motivate you will communicate to your class, so don't be afraid to share them with your learners!

## **Anna Lise Gordon:**

Take ownership of your own professional development to keep growing as a teacher! This includes refreshing your language skills, engaging with pedagogy, reading widely, seizing opportunities to collaborate with others within and beyond your school ... and being a pro-active member of ALL, of course!

**Rosemary Hicks:**

Remember to say no from time to time and ensure you make time for yourself. Our job can be time-consuming if we let it and if we don't look after ourselves nobody else will. Make sure you use the help offered to you and get to the staff room for a break at least once a day.

**Greg Horton:**

Language learning is about speaking. Never let any learner leave your lesson without having spoken in the target language.

**Alison Organ:**

Keep your passion for the language alive by continuing to listen to music, watching films and, if possible, visiting the areas which inspired you when you were first learning it.

**Clare Seccombe:**

"Whoever wants to reach a distant goal must take small steps."  
Saul Bellow.

Break the learning down into small steps, with each step scaffolded and modelled, to increase learner confidence and success.

**Lisa Stevens:**

Never think that your idea is less valid because you're 'a newbie', nor that an old idea is a bad one. An idea is an idea, and what works for you is always valuable! When you go to a conference, training or anywhere else that is full of exciting new ideas, don't try to do it all on Monday. Pick one or two ideas to try out first, then add others in the coming weeks.

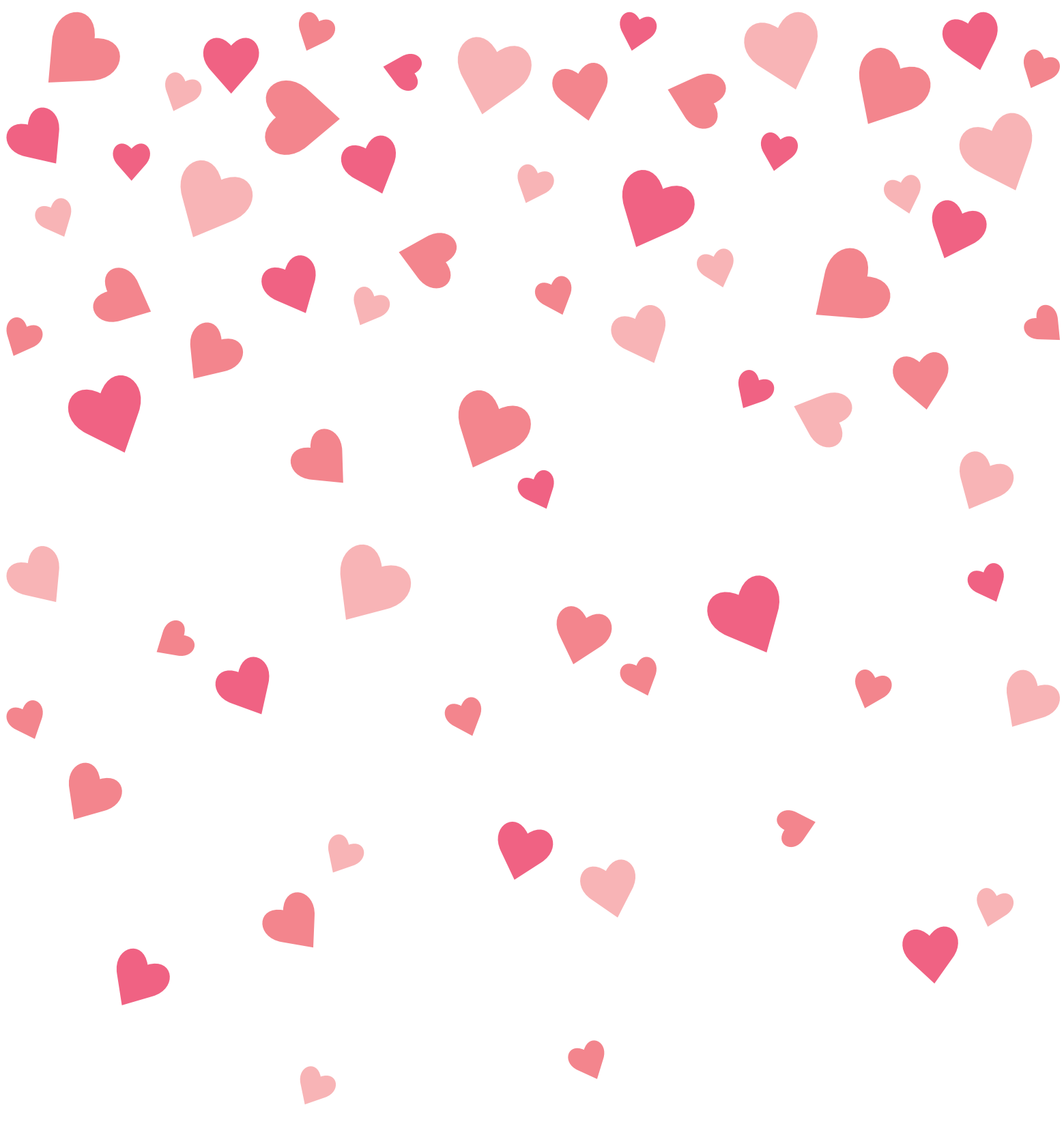
**Jennifer Wozniak:**

Students need to be involved in tasks where they can speak as much in the target language as possible. Competitions, quizzes and creating moments where pupils can argue with each other in the target language keep motivation levels high and rewards for communicating in the target language offer chances for constant self-improvement.

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**ALL - collaboration at its best!**

