



Language Cafés - Developing Conversational Language Skills in School

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Abstract

The Language Café project is a tutoring and socio-cultural programme for international exchange students at Lund University and pupils at Fågelskolan in Lund, Sweden. The pupils are from grade 8 and 9 (aged 14-15) of the Swedish compulsory school. Students and pupils meet in the school cafeteria, in a relaxed atmosphere, to discuss and talk about topics such as everyday life, culture, traditions and spare time activities in their different countries.

The Language Café Project is carried out in collaboration with the International Desk at the University of Lund. The project is regarded as an Extra Curricular Activity and the international students receive an official certificate from the university and Fågelskolan, confirming their participation. This document can later be included in their cv:s.

Aims

- *pupils have the opportunity of practising the foreign language they learn talking to native speakers*
- *pupils get inspired, motivated and acquire self-confidence*
- *pupils learn to use strategies to overcome language barriers and develop their communication skills*
- *both pupils and students gain from the mutual exchange of knowledge*
- *pupils and students widen their perspectives on the world and develop understanding of different codes and cultures*
- *students get the chance to learn about everyday life and traditions in Sweden*

Method

- *small groups of pupils chat with international students in a relaxed atmosphere*
- *the cafés are arranged 6 times each term*
- *we serve coffee and homemade Swedish pastries baked by our pupils*
- *in the 8th grade (aged 14) the pupils speak English with students from all over the world*
- *in the 9th grade (aged 15) the conversation is in French, German and Spanish, the languages taught at our school*
- *we prepare and follow up during lessons*

The Language café project started at Fågelskolan, which is a secondary school in Lund, Sweden. The project involves the pupils of Fågelskolan and international students from different parts of the world who study at the University of Lund. The project was initiated to create interesting and motivating opportunities to achieve the goals for foreign language studies. These goals include increasing the students' ability of communicating, developing conversational skills and learn how to express their own ideas in a foreign language. The Language Café project provides an opportunity to meet the pupils at an individual level. The pupils get the chance to speak at a level which they find comfortable and also around topics they find interesting.

At Fågelskolan they have worked with the Language Café project since 2002 and found it very rewarding. Fågelskolan has reported a high level of goal achievement in foreign languages at their school. The thesis is that the Language Cafés have contributed to develop the pupils' well working conversational skills.

Fågelskolan received the European Language Label for the language cafés in 2004 and the project has been on-going since 2002. Fågelskolan joined as a partner in the European project Nellip in 2012. From the language cafés many interesting new collaborations have started. Fågelskolan has had a spin-off called **Walk and Talk** where international students are invited to accompany the teachers and pupils on fieldtrips, for example on the yearly walk of 1.5 Swedish miles. There the pupils and the international student walk together while speaking and practicing languages. Another aspect is that the international students are given an opportunity to see more of the surrounding areas and its environment.



In eight grade English the possibility of inviting Australian students to be a part of the Australia studies has been given due to the language café project. In that example the pupils of Fågelskolan can **practice the Australian accent** as well as gaining more insight of what life there is like.

For Christmas international students have been invited to present **Christmas traditions** in different languages where the languages studied are spoken. Speeches around Christmas traditions are given in English, French, German and Spanish. The international students have presented carols, specific foods that are eaten during the holiday and also given information about the traditions around gift-giving.