

Multilingual Walls

MATERIALS NEEDED

Word cards, picture cards, objects

AIM OF THE ACTIVITY

The aim of this activity is to create opportunities to discover similarities and differences between words and phrases in different languages. The pupils take the role of “language reporters” who research, discover, and report about resemblances and together, the class discovers connections between languages. This activity also strengthens *lexical priming*¹ – when similarities in words and phrases become visible, the pupils will not only create positive connections to the new language(s), but they will also add to their personal repertoire of connections between words and phrases across languages.

PREPARATION FOR THE ACTIVITY

For each topic, the teacher prepares a selection of words and phrases with accompanying pictures, symbols, or graphs that will be crucial for the understanding of its key terms. Knowing what dialects and languages are understood and/or spoken by the pupils in their class will support teachers in their selection, especially if cognates can be identified and made use of in the process of developing *intercomprehension*². Each word or phrase will be presented on a wall with pictorial support and the representations of the word in the various languages spoken and learnt in the class.

SIGNIFICANT BENEFIT OF THE ACTIVITY

Multilingual walls serve as eye openers to create connections and find similarities between languages. If the pupils create the identification of language connections together with their peers, the priming effects will be even stronger. Additionally, the pupils should create multilingual lexical notebooks including only the words and specific languages they wish.

PROCEDURE

Teachers select words and phrases in advance. They write/place the words in the language of education on the board and ask the pupils to match pictures, symbols, or graphs. The pupils are also encouraged to contribute with their choice of words and phrases. The pupils tell the teacher the words and phrases in the languages they know, and they write the words/word cards themselves or with the help of the teacher and/or modern media.

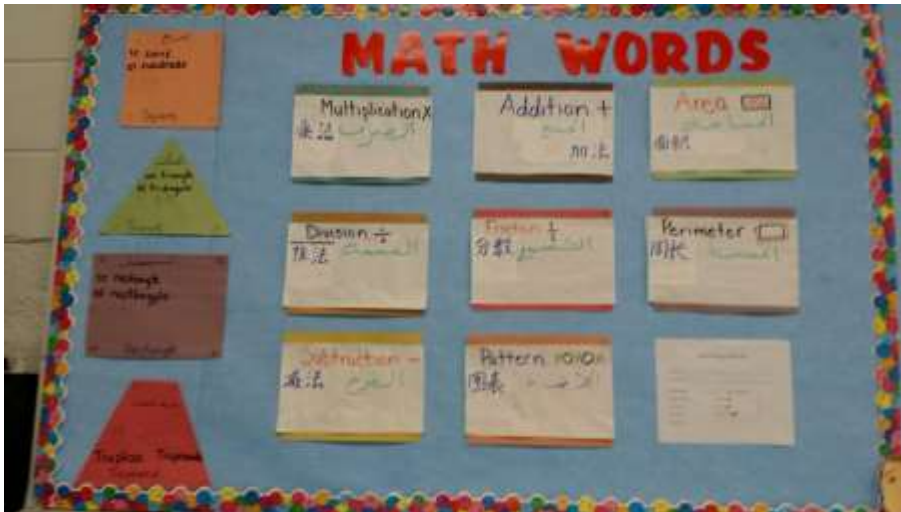
When words or phrases from other writing systems and alphabets occur, teachers can ask the pupils to write the word and phrases or to create a word card using modern media. The pupils present the words and phrases in their languages to their peers. In case of other alphabets, they explain what they are writing, what the letters mean and, if possible, write the matching Latin letters. Once the multilingual wall is complete for the moment, the class can compare the languages and the words.

¹ *Lexical priming* suggests we acquire/learn language(s) based on how words are used in the real world. Words are not confined to the definitions given to them in dictionaries, but they interact with other words in common patterns of use. Words are 'primed' for use through our experience with them, so that everything we know about a word is a product of our encounters with it. This knowledge explains how speakers of a language succeed in being fluent, creative, and natural. Source: <https://www.routledge.com/Lexical-Priming-A-New-Theory-of-Words-and-Language/Hoey/p/book/9780415328630#>

² The development of the capacity to co-build a meaning when different languages get in contact and pragmatically use it in a specific communicative situation. In other words, intercomprehension is also the capacity to understand a language (without necessarily having studied it before) in a given context by using the developed discursive competence. Capucho, F. “Línguas e identidades culturais: da implicação de políticos (socio)linguistas.” In Fábio L. da Silva & Kanavillil Rajagopalan (orgs), *A linguística que nos faz falhar*. São Paulo: Unicamp: Parábola Editorial, 2004. 83 –87

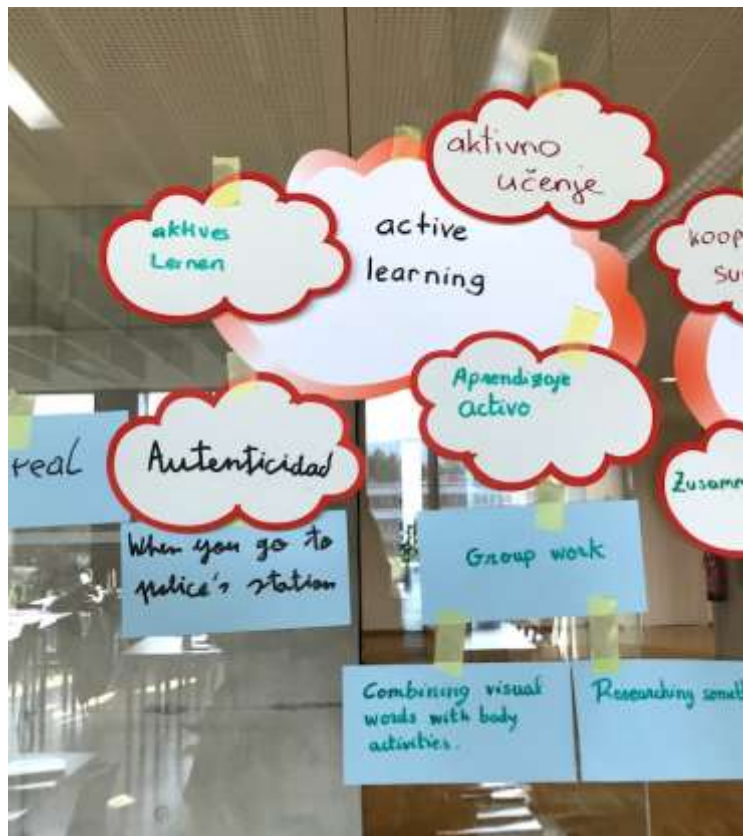
Which words are similar in which languages? Which letters are similar? Which are very different? The multilingual wall and lexical notebook entries can be supplemented whenever new words and phrases in connection with the topic or when new collocations of the words turn up.

EXAMPLES



Source:

https://twitter.com/a_jolly/status/425327518204567552



Source: ©Mewald