



**Student Perceptions on Language Learning:**  
*A Summary of the EU Day of Languages 2020 and of Student Exit  
Cards of the Event*



**International Languages Educators' Association**  
**[www.ilea.ca](http://www.ilea.ca)**

*ILEA Institutional Members include: school district departments, faculties of languages/education, exchange and culture organizations, specialized language centres, embassies/consulates. To have your institution included in ILEA Membership and its Forums, please email [info@ilea.ca](mailto:info@ilea.ca) and you can also follow ILEA on its social media (Facebook, Twitter).*

## Background

In its partnership with the European Union Delegation to Canada, ILEA members from various school districts across Ontario recognized the EU Day of Languages as a useful opportunity for program promotion and the awareness-raising of strategies and processes for language learning. Starting in 2020, this partnership was brought to the virtual world with the intention of developing ideas and resources further in the future. ILEA partnered with the OCDSB (Ottawa-Carleton District School Board) that had already run successful celebrations in person for six years to help lead the virtual initiative and to introduce other school districts for future cooperation. The EU Day of Languages 2020 event was therefore coordinated by the EU Delegation to Canada (and its partners), ILEA Ontario and the OCDSB. Two key aspects were part of the event.

- Availability of sample lessons/resources for various languages to serve as an introduction of the language to be housed on the ILEA website – see <https://ilea.ca/edl/>
- Availability of representatives of European languages to be welcomed virtually into a teacher's class for a quick lesson and discussion about the language (via school boards that are members of ILEA)

ILEA also produced documents related to language awareness in general and the EU Day of Languages specifically in order to assist school districts and their teachers with this initiative and as a way for bringing focused attention to language learning at the start of the academic year.

Students were also invited to fill in an “exit card” after participating in language lessons. These exit cards were collected electronically and were reviewed by ILEA. The findings that follow in this report give a snapshot into the learning objectives, thoughts and preferences of IL (International Languages) students in Ontario.

### **Language Experience Exit Card – Reflection Questions**

*After viewing the language lesson clip on the ILEA website or experiencing the lesson in class:*

What are some items that you still remember after you completed the brief mini lesson?

I think that I can develop my language skills best by.....

I think language learning is important because.....

Topics/themes/functions of interest to me are.....

Plans to use this international language for the following purposes (list as many as needed):

## ILEA Website Links and Resources of Use

[www.ilea.ca](http://www.ilea.ca) (main page)

<https://ilea.ca/edl/> (EU Day of Languages page)

<https://ilea.ca/2020/06/01/update-on-intercultural-understanding-in-il/> (Intercultural Understanding Resources for Language Classrooms)



## Summary EDL Virtual Events 2020

The OCDSB (Ottawa-Carleton District School Board) was the first school district to participate in the virtual version of 2020's virtual celebration, mostly since the teachers of the International Languages Program were already aware of the program from past in-person events and were ready to incorporate the celebration in spite of delays and other complications that came with pandemic times. This worked out very well as it also gave ILEA (International Languages Educators' Association) Ontario a chance to help get events off the ground while communicating and showing other districts the work involved.

18 classes had an invited speaker over mostly two Saturday morning sessions within the OCDSB. In addition, three language programs internally agreed to do a "round robin" of language exchanges within each other in order to promote the EDL (2 Greek, 1 Czech, 1 Swedish); these four had two additional language sessions presented within each class resulting in an additional 8 classes for the event, bringing the total each within the OCDSB to 26 classes. Three other classes in Ontario were also connected to these events later in the fall and one was postponed for winter 2021, resulting in a total of **30 classes** receiving a presentation to recognize European Union Day of Languages. It is our estimate that approximately **470 students** experienced a session.

The online visits were more successful than many could have imagined during the preparation stage of the celebration. Of particular note, it was a very interesting and pedagogically useful characteristic that many speakers made connections with learners by asking them to either respond or write in chat their experience with the presentation language and any connections learners had to that language. Some presenters offered a quiz at the start for learners to try to make connections to the language (perhaps even words in English that relate in some way to the new European language being introduced). Some speakers tried to make connections between languages as well that helped to raise language awareness among learners (for example what does Greek have that is similar to Spanish etc.). Students were very engaged and the live presentation along with chat functions and then unmuting to practise the sample language worked very well. Students also had good questions.

Considering the availability of speakers and the ability to manage this event during a pandemic, it has become clear that there was sufficient interest on the side of learners and sufficient resource on the side of presenters. Consideration is needed for future growth in 2021 as all speakers who volunteered to present were used more than once, some presenting three or four times.

ILEA developed a resource regarding the event and how to message about the objectives within programs along with materials and activities to help educators. This has been extremely well-received by educators and it is hoped that an expansion of this resource can be done in 2021 in preparation for the next event (which at this time is assumed to be virtual once again). Many educators have found the framing of the event's intentions and the awareness activities of great use and would like to see more in the future. The video clips on the website are also getting recognized but need to be expanded and more streamlined for the future. Many OCDSB students



visited the ILEA website after their own live classes to try other languages and have started to ask for an introduction lesson for every European language, including those considered minority languages in Europe. ILEA and the European Delegation to Canada need to continue to work on the posting of sample video clips (ideally a website link rather than a downloadable file) in the future regardless of what is offered live or not. It would be wonderful to eventually have a video clip of all languages in Europe (and also minority languages in Europe that have recognition for example Catalan etc.).

## Summary of Exit Card Responses

1. What are some items that you still remember after you completed the brief mini lesson?
  - 62% Language Items such as Words/Phrases/Greetings/Expressions
  - 31% Cultural Information
  - 7% Linguistic Items such as Pronunciation/Letter Sounds
2. I think that I can develop my language skills best by.....
  - 55% Communicating with Others/Dialogues/Interactions
  - 25% Practising Work from Class/Reviewing/Summarizing Notes
  - 20% Accessing Forms/Varieties of Media/Resources from Teacher and Self
3. I think language learning is important because.....
  - 39% Communicating with Others
  - 31% Cultural Identity of Self and Cultural Understanding of Others
  - 20% Growth/Cognitive and Personal Development
  - 10% Employment Opportunities
4. Topics/themes/functions of interest to me are..... (most often mentioned)
  - 38% Communication Goals/Language Development Items/Forms and Functions
  - 31% Cultural Information (including geography, history, customs)
  - 20% Literature/Arts (movies, music, stories etc.)
  - 10% Travel and Hospitality Items
  - 1% Technology
5. Plans to use this international language (students were allowed to check more than one item, therefore percentages show the amount of student exit cards that mentioned the goal for language use):
  - 66% Hobbies/Interests/Extracurricular Activities
  - 58% Personal Connections (friends, acquaintances, relationships)
  - 52% Family/Heritage/Identity
  - 36% Work Opportunities
  - 20% Study Related including exchanges, credits for specific programs
  - 10% Travel



*Student Comments on Skill Development:*



*Student Comments on Learning Rationale:*

