



Portsmouth LA Primary Language Leads

Languages in Portsmouth Update - December 2025

Dear Colleagues

2025 is drawing to a close, and we can reflect on the highs and lows this year has brought us. And very importantly, we can start to think about the exciting opportunities and challenges that the New Year will bring.

For now, let us enjoy these last days of the winter term.

Wishing you a peaceful, relaxing festive break and looking forward very much to continuing to work with you in months to come,

with best wishes, Liz. (lizlord0502@gmail.com)



One of the best CPD events for everyone involved in languages education is the annual **ALL Language World conference**. The theme for the 2026 conference is '**Collaboration: at the heart of languages education**' – which fits in beautifully with how we are working together in Portsmouth!

The conference will run from **13 to 14 March 2026** and will take place at the **Leonardo Hotel, Hinckley Island, Leicestershire**. To find out more and to book a place, visit <https://www.delegate-req.co.uk/lw2026>



An early Christmas present



The Association for Language Learning (ALL) are offering a 10% discount off membership fees, either for current or new members. The code is ALLPortsmouth10 and is valid until 31 July 2026.

Please do think about joining our association which supports languages colleagues and languages education in so many ways. Together we are stronger!

Dates for your diary

Dates have been set for next year's joint meetings of the ALL Primary Hub, Portsmouth Network Leads and the Solent Language Network.

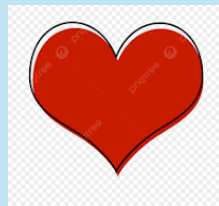
Wednesday 4 February 2026: Online – details and meeting link will be sent early in the New Year

Wednesday 4 June 2026

Suggestions for speaker and venue gratefully received.

Coming together from different education settings is a powerful driver for building connections and creating opportunities for collaboration.

We are very keen for these meetings to be a focus for everyone interested in languages teaching and learning. Together, we can make a difference!



Celebrating Languages in Portsmouth

After the successful focus on Languages at Work, we have started planning for next year's 'Week of Celebrating Languages in Portsmouth' which will take place during the week beginning 16 March 2026. Actually, it looks like our celebrations may creep into the following week, so it may become a 'Festival Fortnight of Celebrating Languages in Portsmouth'!

Our next planning meeting will be held online on We will hold an initial planning meeting online on Tuesday 13 January at 1600. Please do get in touch if you would like to attend, or, indeed, if you have ideas to share. (lizlord0502@gmail.com)

We now have an ALL Branch on the south coast and the Isle of Wight for languages colleagues – this looks like it will be fun!

Association for Language Learning @ALLSCIOW
South Coast & Isle of Wight Branch

SOUTHAMPTON MFL FESTIVE TEACHMEET



16TH DECEMBER 2025

HOW DOES IT WORK?

- For MFL and primary languages colleagues
- Choose to share or come and listen
- Sharing slots of 5 or 10 minutes
- Share a resource, approach, idea
- All welcome. Free entry!
- Network with other MFL teachers
- Enjoy a mince pie!

SIGN UP TO SHARE



Parking on street (2 hours): streets local to campus
Pay and display: University road

WHEN AND WHERE

Tuesday 16th December
4:00 – 5:30 pm

University of Southampton, Highfield campus.
Building 28

QUESTIONS?

allsouthcoast@gmail.com



And another key date for diaries:

Following the success of our first-ever *cross key stage languages conference* held at ALNS at the beginning of July, we will run a similar event, again at ALNS, on *Wednesday 8 July 2026*.

Do let us know if you are aware of speakers you think we should invite – or, indeed, if you would like to deliver a session at our conference!

A message from Declan Baharini about the North East Festival of Languages – so many amazing opportunities!

“We have opened part of our Festival programme to all UK schools and hope that your schools will take part. We encourage schools to pick and mix and create their own festival programme.

You can see the **UK schools programme** online here: <https://expressyourselfne.com/uk-schools/>

You can **download a pdf of the UK Schools programme** here: <https://expressyourselfne.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/UK-SCHOOLS-PROGRAMME-FESTIVAL-2026.pdf>

Both have all the links to events and activities – check the relevant activity page for details and you will find the registration details under the ‘How do I get involved?’ section on each activity page.

For activities open to UK schools listed in the programme – you can register for most of these via this email: info@expressyourselfne.com providing the name of the activity, your school name and address, the school lead contact name and email and the number of pupils participating and what Key Stage they are in – use this email for registration for:

All of the **classroom activities** listed in the UK programme - apart from Fun with Japanese and Exploring and Celebrating Indigenous African Languages (see the activity pages for those registration links)

All of the **languages and careers webinars** apart from Where can Languages Take Me? On 26th March (register with British Council – link on the activity page)

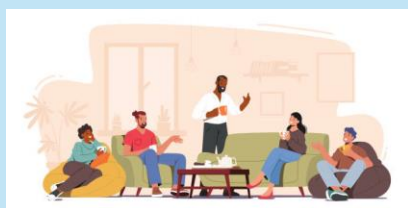
All of the **live languages and cultures events** in March open to UK schools (note for events with recordings, you are asked to specify if you will attend live or just want the recordings, most of which will not be available until the end of March)

The Karneval Mask competition 6 Jan-6 March. Note that all of the other competitions, celebrations and the resources and support listed have separate links”

Declan Baharini (she/her/hers)

Festival Co-ordinator

Note: Declan will join us for the first part of our Primary Hub/Language Leads/Solent Language Network on Wednesday 4 February (meeting link will be sent in the New Year. Her enthusiasm and passion are hard to resist!)



At a recent meeting with primary colleagues, we had a very brief discussion about whether it would be helpful for me to facilitate a session for primary colleagues on being a languages lead.

We have some very experienced colleagues who have been languages leads for KS2 (and KS1) French and Spanish for some considerable time. At the same time, we have primary colleagues who are relatively new to this role.

Could you answer the questions below to help consider the best way forward?

- * would you find it helpful to take part in a workshop about the role of the languages subject leader?
- * even as an experienced languages lead, would you be prepared to attend and share your experiences and expertise?
- * would you prefer to meet online or face to face?
- * given that there is no funding available for this training, and we would have to meet after school, what time would you prefer?
- * would you prefer two shorter sessions (45 - 60 mins each) or a longer session?
- * when, in the school year, would you like this training to take place?
- * what would you hope your main takeaways from this training would be?
- * any other comments or suggestions?

The National Consortium for Languages Education (NCLE) has announced that their new CPD platform is now live.

Sign up to LEO

You can sign up to **Language Educators Online (LEO)**, NCLE's free online professional learning platform, via the **NCLE website**. With new modules coming soon, **sign up to the NCLE mailing list** to be the first to know when these go live!

Connect with your local Language Network

If you're interested in learning more about how NCLE is addressing regional and local needs, you can read more about the **National Priority Projects (NPPs)** and connect with the **NCLE Language Network's** leading these projects.

****And, of course, we are very fortunate to have a language network here in Portsmouth, the Solent Language Network, led by Rebecca Britti of Admiral Lord Nelson School and Aamir Kohli of Trafalgar School.**

NCLE has an exciting schedule of webinars planned for the year ahead. You can find more information about future webinars including how to register via the [NCLE website](#). Topics include:

- Languages for all - a social justice issue
- Practical ideas for promoting the use of the target language in the classroom

And from the University of Newcastle



We are writing to let you know about a [free package of materials](#) we have developed for you to set up your own 'Around the World Club' (ATWC) in your own school. This is offered by [ENACT Europa](#), Newcastle University.

In the **Around the World Club**, children of all ages can learn new languages and cultures while doing a hands-on cultural activity with the help of a free digital web app. As they learn a new language and culture each week, they go 'around the world'!

The Club develops intercultural understanding and global citizenship and its use in schools therefore helps develop policies and agendas in the areas of globalisation, equality, diversity and inclusion. The Around the World Club helps teachers bring the world to their classroom!

Many schools in north-east England have set up [ATWC clubs](#) and clubs have now run in [Uganda, Sri Lanka and Turkey](#).

You can hear the views of children and teachers [here](#) and learn about the Club's impact [here](#).

We provide guidance specific to [ATWC](#) on our website. We also have **funding available** to support schools in setting up their clubs, either through in-person or online RA assistance.

If you have any questions, please contact us at enacteuropa@newcastle.ac.uk. The Around the World Club has been shortlisted by **HundrED** as an innovative global education initiative: <https://hundred.org/en/innovations/7-the-around-the-world-club>.

ENACT Europa is a co-funded initiative by the European Commission that enhances language learning through cultural activities.

Reflections from Clare Seccombe about what a minimum core language content for KS2 might look like

The [Curriculum and Research Review 2025 \(CAR\)](#) was published on 5th November. [I have already written at some length about what it means for primary languages](#).

The first of the two recommendations for primary languages was:

a minimum core content for French, German and Spanish would provide greater clarity and consistency, especially for non-specialist teachers. Covering commonly occurring phonics, vocabulary and grammar, this should align closely with the content and teaching approaches at secondary and thus build more securely the foundations of knowledge for success at Key Stage 4 and beyond more securely. This should support a smoother transition into Key Stage 3. With a shared understanding of what constitutes 'substantial progress' in a language, secondary schools would be better equipped to build on students' prior learning.

The Government has agreed to put this into place. I have been pondering what this "minimum core content" will comprise. The second sentence of the above quotation is, I think, important: "Covering commonly occurring phonics, vocabulary and grammar". I would argue that it needs to be more far-reaching than this and not just vocabulary, grammar and phonics.

Here are my thoughts so far on what I think should be in the minimum core content:

<https://changing-phase.blogspot.com/2025/11/minimum-core-content-for-key-stage-2.html?m=1>

Visit the link to read further.

And, in Portsmouth, the KS2-3 Transition working party has already been working on identifying core content for KS2 French and Spanish.

We will share our work in the next few months but if you would like to attend our next (online) meeting on Monday 19 January, please do get in touch and we can send a meeting link.
(lizlord0502@gmail.com)

And on a lighter note, Clare Seccombe has been enjoying using SUNO with ChatGPT!

En mi estuche

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3klaDuzkdyY>

Second Suno song! El sistema solar, a pop song in the style of K-Pop.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rCCr3WmZiNw>

Lyrics created and tweaked in ChatGPT, song created by Suno, slide with lyrics created in PowerPoint, video created in Canva.

This will drive my UKS2s nuts!

El sistema solar	Mercurio – pequeño
El sistema solar	Venus – calor
Aquí los planetas	La Tierra – mi casa
Del sistema solar	Marte – color
	Júpiter – grande
	Saturno – anillos
	Urano – frío
	Neptuno – muy lejos

Following our meeting on 1 October when we were introduced to the delights of SUNO have any colleagues created any songs to use with learners? Would you be happy to share them?

Oak National Academy has recently announced the publication of more – free – languages resources.

<https://support.thenational.academy/our-languages-and-mfl-curriculum>

Preparing for the revised national curriculum

We're updating our teaching resources and curriculum plans and sharing guidance to help schools prepare confidently and reduce workload ahead of the revised curriculum in September 2028, and the updated GCSEs beyond.

[Sign up now](#) to receive:

- the latest updates
- expert guidance
- invitations to webinars
- free resources and helpful content.

Some thoughts from Gianfranco Conti – perhaps a little dramatic, and perhaps not representative of much of the teaching and learning that goes on in KS2 languages lessons but still offers some food for thought. What do you think?

(and please note, unusually, Conti hasn't included references to academic research.)

Why teaching single words in primary school languages lessons is a serious mistake:

Children do not store vocabulary as isolated items. Primary-age brains acquire language as auditory patterns and routines, not single labels.

- Teaching single words produces 'naming' not communication. Children can say 'dog' or 'cat' but cannot express 'I have a dog / I like dogs'
- Single words have no retrieval cue. Without a chunk or situation, the memory trace is weak and disappears quickly.
- Isolated vocabulary leads to catastrophic forgetting. Words taught without context or repeated use are lost within weeks (60 – 80%).
- Single-word teaching blocks later sentence building. When you introduce 'I have ...' students cannot connect it to the 30 animal names they memorised.
- It encourages translation not comprehension. Children learn "word = English equivalent" instead of understanding speech in real contexts.
- It produces a broken mental model of language. Learners think languages are lists of names for things, not tools for expressing, identity, preferences, routines or intentions.
- Chunks provide ready-made functional language. 'Me llamo ... J'ai un chien ... Me gustan los perros .. ' are usable, expandable and future-proof, whereas 'chien' or 'perro' come to a dead-end.

Conti's interest in language teaching and learning at Primary level continues (this time with references):

EVIDENCE-BASED PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING WITH YOUNGER LEARNERS

1. **Prioritise implicit learning:** children learn languages best through exposure, imitation, repetition, and routines rather than rule explanation.
2. **Teach in chunks, not grammar:** present ready-made phrases ("me gusta jugar al fútbol") instead of deconstructed stems or conjugation tables.
3. **Short activities (5–10 min):** their working memory and attentional stamina require rapid pace, variety, and frequent transitions.
4. **Multisensory input:** reinforce language through gesture, pictures, songs, actions, physical movement, and contextualised cues.
5. **High-frequency vocabulary:** focus on familiar, concrete, emotionally relevant topics (family, pets, food, school, hobbies).
6. **High repetition with low boredom:** recycle the same language through different games, stories, chants, and predictable classroom rituals.
7. **Strong modelling:** children need to hear accurate pronunciation first; avoid asking them to "guess" from written forms.
8. **Phonology before literacy:** emphasise sound, rhythm, and intonation before spelling rules or letter–sound equivalence.
9. **Physical classroom routines:** call-and-response, gestures, chants, classroom management cues (e.g., "¡Atentos!" → students respond).
10. **Narrative and play identity:** use characters, role-play, stories, and persona-based speaking; children perform languages naturally.
11. **Immediate feedback through modelling:** correct by providing the right version to imitate, not by "explaining mistakes."
12. **Avoid meta-language:** don't teach grammar terms, tenses, or "errors"; children don't internalise abstractions yet.
13. **Emotional safety first:** celebrate attempts, never shame; children are fearless speakers if protected from ridicule.
14. **Low linguistic ego:** use songs, choral reading, games, because they don't feel embarrassed yet — build confidence early.
15. **Assessment via performance:** judge communicative use, pronunciation, following instructions, turn-taking — not accuracy of writing or grammar.

Conti offers a more detailed comment on 5 of his principles:

These are 5 principles for effective language teaching at PRIMARY, informed by research. The principles take into consideration the following pivotal facts about young children:

(1) young children's linguistic development relies on implicit acquisition through imitation, repetition and socially mediated routines rather than rule-based learning, which aligns with the developmental constraints described by Piaget (1952), the sociocultural mediation of Vygotsky (1978) and the input-driven acquisition laid out by Krashen (1982).

(2) Their limited working memory capacity and attentional stamina make short, concrete, highly scaffolded activities essential, as demonstrated by Baddeley (2003) and Gathercole & Alloway (2008).

(3) Because children form phonological categories from auditory exemplars rather than analytic reasoning, accurate teacher modelling and phonology-first instruction are critical, as shown by Flege (1995), Kuhl (2004) and Field (2008).

(4) Primary-age learners internalise language through multimodal sensorimotor engagement and social interaction, not abstraction, a pattern evident in Asher's Total Physical Response framework (1977) and Bruner's narrative developmental model (1986).

(5) Finally, avoidance of metalinguistic terminology and rule explanation is necessary because children cannot reliably manipulate abstract linguistic concepts, a limitation explained in Piaget's concrete operational stage (1970) and confirmed in Lightbown & Spada's synthesis on child L2 learning (2013)

Once again, any thoughts?

Cognitive Load theory for languages teachers

<https://frenchteachernet.blogspot.com/2025/11/cognitive-load-theory-for-language.html?m=1>

Cognitive Load Theory was famously described by Dylan Wiliam as "the single most important thing for teachers to know". This post from Steve Smith is all about cognitive load and Cognitive Load Theory, but with language teachers in mind.

Have a read of Steve Smith's blogpost on how aspects of cognitive load may impact language learners.

Looking for more ideas to gamify your language lessons and engage learners?

Silvia Bastow shares some great ideas in this blog.

30+ Fun and Effective Games for the Languages Classroom: Silvia Bastow

<https://www.fraubastowmfl.co.uk/post/30-fun-and-effective-mfl-games-for-the-languages-classroom>

Another interesting read

From classroom to career: How languages helped shape my life path

Languages graduate and public relations professional Oliver Buckley recounts the journey from school language lessons to running international multi-language business projects.

By Oliver Buckley, Director at Kekst CNC.

<https://www.thelanguagesgateway.uk/blog/6-november-2025-from-classroom-to-career-how-languages-helped-shape-my-life-path/>

I found the following two articles absolutely fascinating and full of food for thought.



The Motor Power of Speech: A Journey into Language Learning

[Mariya Nariychuk](#) Transformational Educator & Coach

Imagine someone telling you for the first time: “Speech is 100% motor.” This simple statement flipped everything I thought I knew about language upside down. For years, I’d approached language as purely mental - a game of vocabulary, grammar rules, and memorization. But that one statement completely shifted my perspective on how we learn and use languages.

I first encountered this concept during an intensive training program, where I was learning to become a Spelling-to-Communicate practitioner under the expert guidance of my mentor. The method, developed by Elizabeth Vosseller, was

demanding, but it opened my eyes to a deeper truth: communication isn't just about what's in your head—it's about how your body brings those thoughts to life.

Carry on reading here: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/motor-power-speech-journey-language-learning-mariya-nariychuk-szafc/>

The Beauty of Being Bilingual (or Multilingual!): Cristina Lozano Argüelles, an American academic, also posted this recently on LinkedIn:

We often talk about how learning another language expands our world, but it also quietly reshapes the way we speak our first language.

I was reading a new study in *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition* (Martín-Villena, Lozano & Sorace, 2025), and it captured something I see every day in myself and in so many multilingual colleagues: our first language subtly shifts depending on the life we've lived in our second one.

Take Spanish.

If you grew up with it, you probably learned early on that you don't need to say *yo* in "yo como plátanos." The verb ending already tells you who's doing the action, so most of us simply say: "como plátanos".

But the study shows that this elegant little feature of Spanish doesn't stay untouched once English enters the picture, especially if English becomes the language of your environment, your work, your daily mental load.

Researchers compared three groups: monolingual speakers in Spain, bilinguals who learned English through classes, and bilinguals who moved to an English-speaking country. The more immersed you are in English, the more likely you are to include the subject in Spanish, even when you don't need to.

This doesn't mean you're making a mistake (although you need to be aware of this pattern if you are a translator). It means we have a flexible mind: adapting, blending systems, finding efficiency across languages.

When I read this, I couldn't help smiling. It puts data behind something many of us feel but rarely articulate: bilingualism isn't two separate files in the brain. It's an ecosystem. And ecosystems shift with experience.

For multilingual professionals, that's an important truth:

Your language patterns reflect your life. They carry traces of every place you've lived, every conversation you've had, every context where you've needed to switch, interpret, renegotiate meaning. Your first language grows with you.

And that, in my view, is one of the most beautiful things about being multilingual.

Some interesting 'finds':

German 

das Wasser
der Freund
die Mutter
der Finger
das Glas
die Milch

English 


Water
Friend
Mother
Finger
Glass
Milk

But watch out for...

bekommen
der Rat
das Gift

to receive
advice
poison



ne pas aller droit au but		tourner autour du pot
être bloqué, ne pas progresser		tourner en rond
s'interrompre soudainement		tourner court
ne rien faire (en attendant ou par paresse)		se tourner les pouces
prendre une mauvaise direction (figuratif)		mal tourner
s'évanouir		tourner de l'œil
oublier le passé, passer à autre chose		tourner la page
refuser d'aider ou ignorer		tourner le dos

FEMININE FRENCH NOUNS ENDING IN -IE

French nouns ending in -IE are always feminine

Une autobiographi*e* An autobiography

Une batteri*e* A drum

Une biographi*e* A biography

Une boucheri*e* A butcher

Une bougi*e* A candle

Une boulangeri*e* A bakery

Une buanderi*e* A laundry room

La calligraphi*e* Calligraphy

La c er moni*e* Ceremony

Une copi*e* A copy

Une  piceri*e* A grocery store

La foli*e* Crazyness

L'harmoni*e* Harmony

Une herni*e* A hernia

Une librairi*e* A bookstore

Une  t isseries*e* A bakery

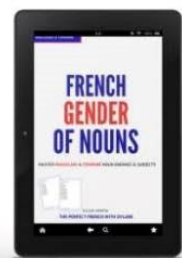
Une pharmaci*e* A pharmacy

La pluvi*e* Rain

Une prairi*e* A meadow

La sorti*e* Exit

Une �picerie	FEMININE	a grocery store
La folie	NOUNS	craziness
L'harmonie	ending in	harmony
Une hernie	-IE	a hernia
Une librairie		a bookstore
Une �t�isserie		a bakery
Une pharmacie		a pharmacy
La pluie		rain
Une prairie		a meadow



PALABRAS EN ESPAÑOL QUE NO EXISTEN EN OTROS IDIOMAS

(SE PUEDEN TRADUCIR CON MÁS PALABRAS, PERO DIFÍCILMENTE HAY UN EQUIVALENTE EXACTO)

MADRUGAR

LEVANTARSE MUY TEMPRANO, ESPECIALMENTE AL AMANECER.



SOBREMESA

EL RATO DESPUÉS DE COMER EN EL QUE TE QUEDAS ALREDEDOR DE LA MESA A PLATICAR.



CONSUEGRO/A

EL VÍNCULO ENTRE TUS PAPÁS Y LOS PAPÁS DE TU PAREJA.



ESTRENAR

USAR POR PRIMERA VEZ ALGO.



FRIOLENTO/A

PERSONA QUE CON FACILIDAD SIENTE MUCHO EL FRÍO.



FUENTES: RAE | HuffPost | CNN | Instituto Cervantes.

 PICTOLINE

This is such fun!

AT Frenchies" refers to **Alex and Tom**, a pair of Parisian content creators who teach the French language and culture through humorous, accessible online videos on platforms like Youtube, TikTok and Instagram. They have gained a large following by creating relatable content about life as French natives in the US, which evolved into a focus on language and culture lessons.

A fun look at how to say 'I don't know' in French:

<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/1Hvuofje1zo>

Macron's best tips for learning French

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R0vDwc6Ades>



And from the ever-generous Catherine Cantin:

Writing a New Year card in French

Bonne année 2026 !

Happy New Year 2026!

Cher/Chère.....

Pour l'année 2024,

je te souhaite

du bonheur

de la joie

de la santé

de l'amour

de l'argent

de réaliser tes rêves

Dear

For 2024,

I wish you

happiness

joy

health

love

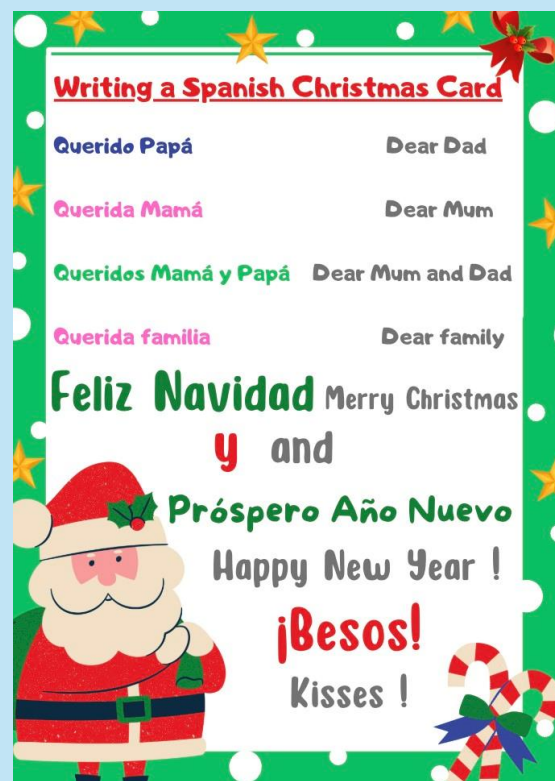
money

for your dreams to come true

**Amitiés
À bientôt**

**Best wishes
Be in touch soon**

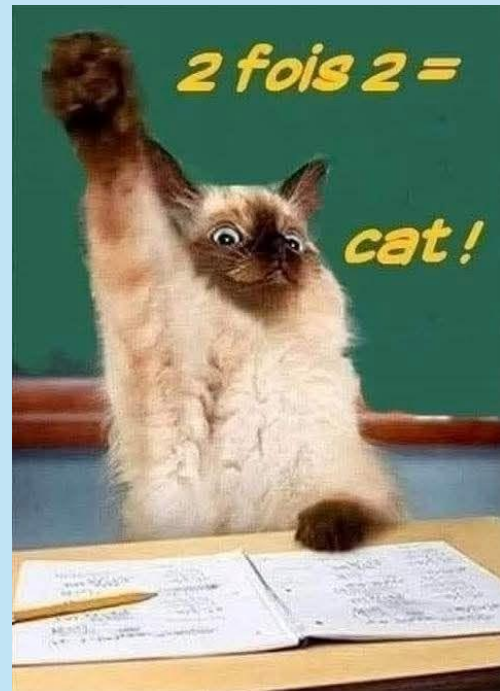
Bonne année !



And signing off, as always, with a smile:

Where are my specs?





Cats and Christmas – a bit of a theme here



The best laid plans



Maybe having everything online isn't the best idea ...



¡ Disfruta !

El árbol cansado

Había una vez un árbol que se sentía inútil. Sus ramas ya no daban tantos frutos como antes, y el viento le susurraba que su tiempo había pasado. Un día, un viajero cansado se detuvo bajo su sombra. No buscaba frutos... solo descanso. Y allí, entre el silencio y las hojas, encontró paz.

El árbol comprendió que su valor no dependía de lo que producía, sino de lo que ofrecía sin darse cuenta: refugio, calma, vida.

A veces no necesitas dar más, solo estar presente.



And this ...

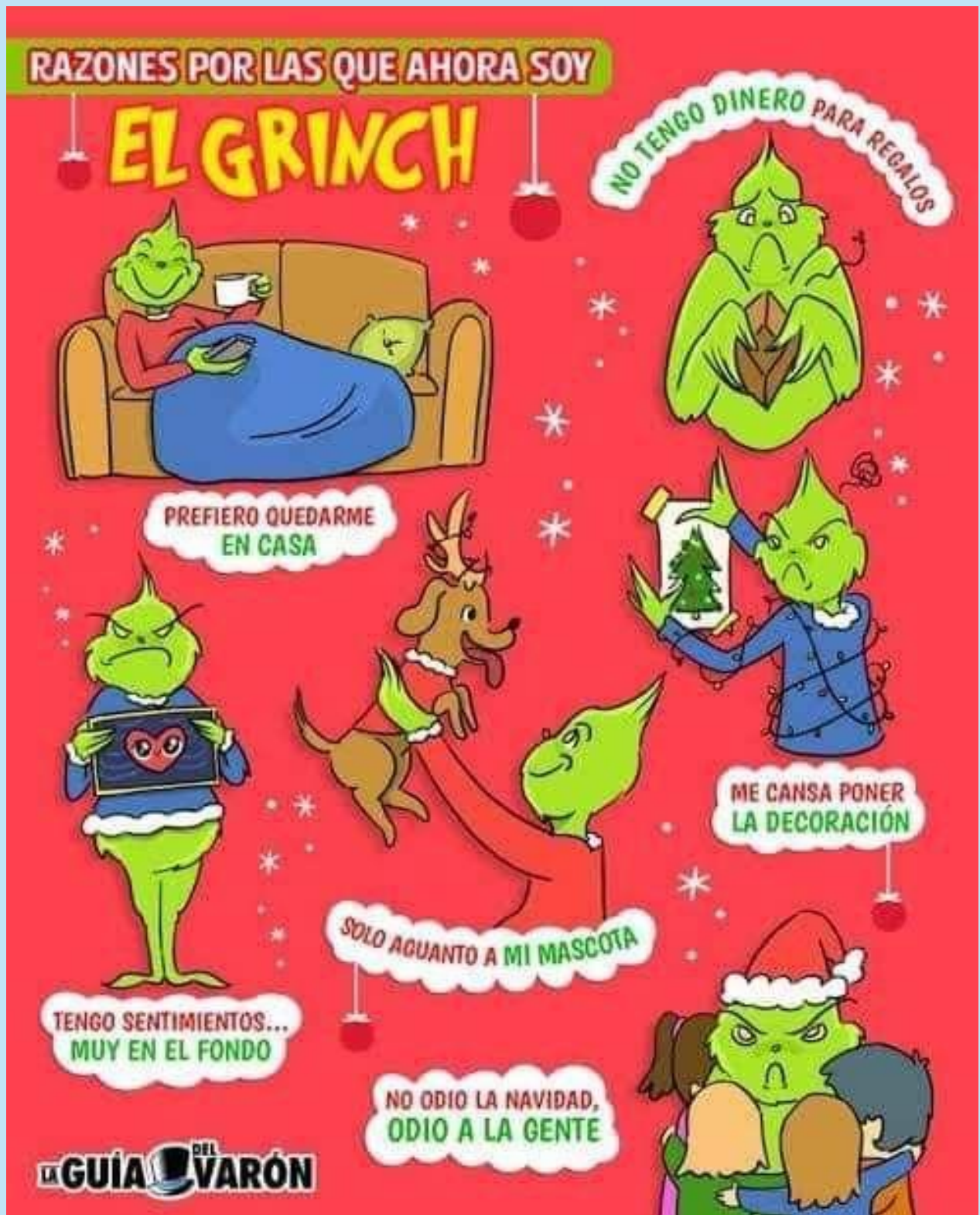


Miyamoto Musashi

**“Debes comprender que hay más de un camino
hacia la cima de la montaña.”**

@Estoicismo

I'm sure this isn't you!



Couldn't resist these !



German has the best words



And Japanese isn't bad either!



Betsubara

(Japonés)

La idea de que siempre hay un espacio extra en el estómago para el postre, incluso después de haber comido mucho.

@diccionariovip

But, of course, words can be beautiful
in any language ...

conticinio

Del lat. *conticinium*.

1. (*m. p. us*) Hora de la
noche en que todo está en
silencio.

**A parting word from one of my favourite poets,
Brian Bilston**

The Good Old Days

Pity the poor children
of today, with their calendars
stuffed with chocolates,

never to know the thrill
of opening a small cardboard door
and discovering behind it

a picture of a bell.

Brian Bilston

And from Snoopy ...



*Restez proche des gens qui vous font
sentir comme un rayon de soleil.*



**Wishing you, your colleagues and your learners,
good health and peace in the remaining weeks of 2025.**