

May 16, 2008

18/2008

E-Language

Please find below a good example of promoting the language in the broader communities and internationally. Maybe something we could expand in Australia using homeland governments to promote in their own countries

Regards
Stefan Romaniw

Turkish Language Olympics unite children from around the world

<http://www.todayszaman.com/tz-web/detaylar.do?load=detay&link=142871>



6th International Turkish Language Olympics started in on Friday, with students from 110 countries

In Colombian traditional dress, a girl speaks with a Yemeni boy. The Colombian girl says she has been learning Turkish for one year. A spectator interrupts: "How come you can speak it so well?"

She smiles, answering, "Because I like it." The girl adds, "I wish there were more opportunities to speak in Turkish, but at least I am able to write, because I have many Turkish friends on the Internet."

Students of Turkish from 110 countries around the world are competing with each other in the 6th International Turkish Language Olympics. They are also establishing friendships and taking pictures. Almost all of them are carrying cameras and the flags of their home country. When they see fellow competitors from other countries, they start up a conversation by asking if it is possible to have a picture taken together. Kids most in demand include an American Indian and a student from Mozambique who is strutting his stuff in traditional dress. The Mexicans, with their black sombreros and long red skirts, are also proving popular for snapshots. Before taking pictures, many of the students exchange hats: One typically universal combination saw a South African donning a Kazakh hat and chatting to a Swede in Turkish as the shutter clicked.

Participants at the Turkish Language Olympics are quick to establish relations with each other; their shared experience of trying to learn the same foreign tongue makes them feel it does not matter how far apart their countries may be, they have something in common.

"I heard there would be a Turkish Language Olympics, and I thought it sounded fun," says Rebecca Luthi from Switzerland. She adds that she has only been learning Turkish for three months but wants to continue until she is able to speak it fluently. She will compete in the singing contest. All together there are 13 categories, including conversation, writing, grammar, singing, poetry recital, presentation, general culture, article writing, and for Turks living abroad and attending Turkish schools: writing, singing and poetry recital.

Ahead of showcasing their abilities in Turkish at the semifinals, the students are excited; they are making preparations, mumbling their poems and singing their songs in corners. Some run after their teachers to get last-minute advice. A student from Bosnia and Herzegovina proudly tells his teacher that he was able to answer all the questions except one. Some of the students complain about difficult questions.

Ariwan Osman Saeed from Sulaimaniya, one member of a large Iraqi team and a competitor in the writing category, explains in perfect Turkish that in his country the Turkish schools are the best. He says his school has students from many ethnic and religious backgrounds, but that they are not conscious of these differences. He is a Kurd, but the Turkish school he is attending is a platform of unification for them. Eighteen-year-old Ariwan adds that he decided to learn Turkish because it is an important language in their region and he believes it will grow to be even more so in the future. He also hopes to study at a Turkish university, preferably reading computer engineering or genetics.

Even if Turkish is not an important language in their region, as is the case for Argentinean Marilina Bolanes, many choose a Turkish college because of the good education offered there. Marilina's teachers, newlyweds Hatice and Hüseyin Çelik, say they have 120 students of Turkish in Argentina, even some at the preschool level. They already have a primary school and hope to open a high school. They add that via the Turkish Cultural Center they have a number of professional students, including an Argentinean ophthalmologist who is very interested in Turkish culture.

Hüseyin Çelik underlines that, particularly for teachers working in faraway countries like him, the Turkish Language Olympics has a special importance, since it allows them to see friends and family back home. For example he was delighted to meet a former student at the event -- now working as a teacher in Poland. He adds that he and his wife are also planning to visit their parents in Bursa and Kütahya.

Some teachers, like Basri Atılgan who is working in Morocco, are luckier than others because they feel at home in their new country. He says he has been in Morocco since 1994, his students are very gifted at learning language and there are many similarities between Moroccan and Turkish culture. His school is very close to a city called Tetvan; when reminded that there is an east Anatolia town called Tatvan, near Van, he smiles. "Tetvan of Morocco and Tatvan of Turkey have been declared sister cities," he says.

The aims of the Turkish Language Olympics are to teach Turkish, introduce Turkish culture to the world and contribute to dialogue between different countries across the globe.

As Ercan Tapsız, a teacher from Uganda, points out, "If we, as teachers of Turkish, can make our students love Turkish, if we can contribute to making them good people and to their acting as a bridge between their countries and Turkey, what more we can ask?"