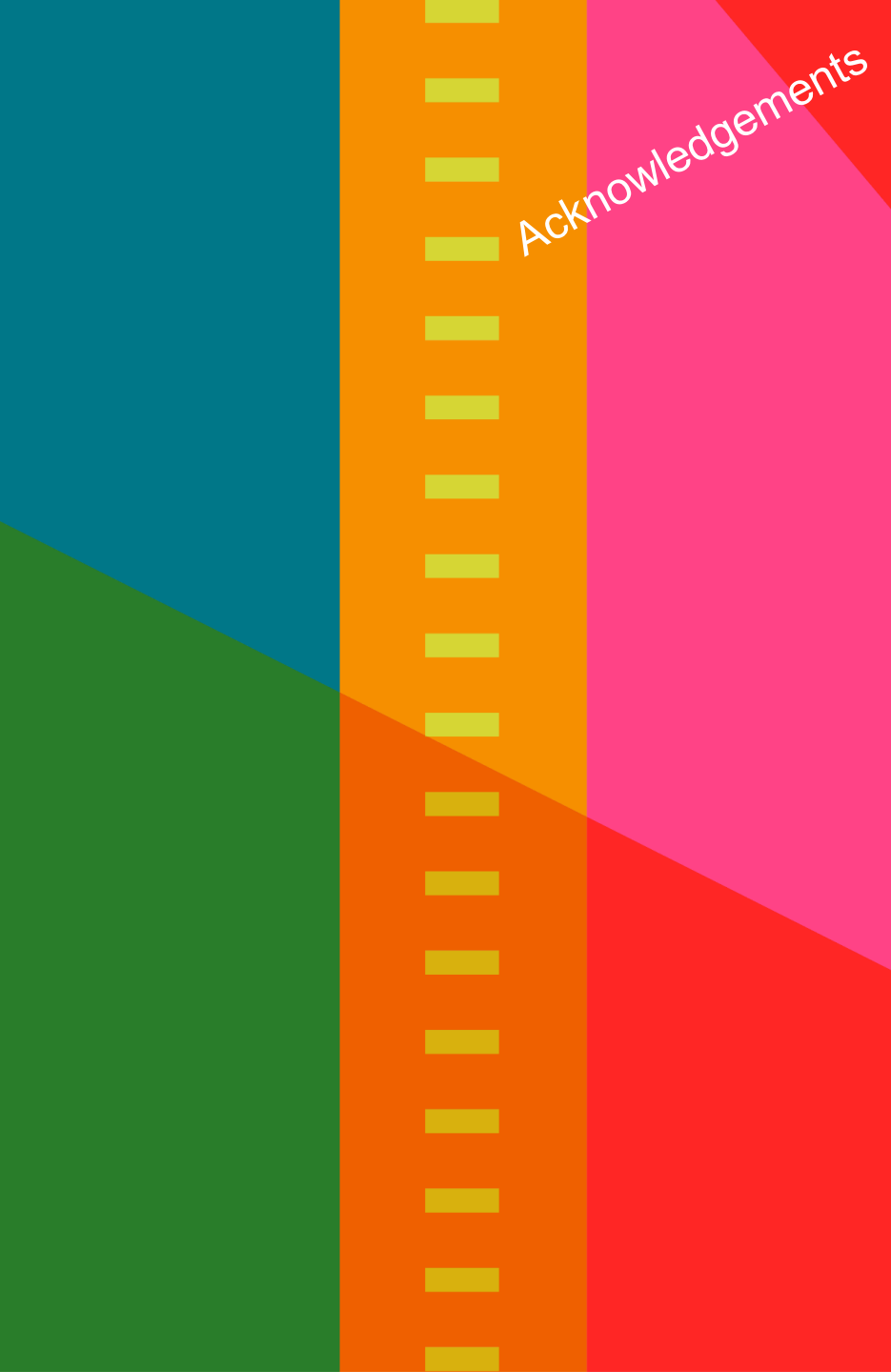


# Virtual Language Exchanges



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Acknowledgements

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Albacete**

**Collège la Chaloupe Saint-  
Leu, la Réunion**

# Introduction

- What is a virtual language exchange?
- Why did we start ours?



# overview

- Why we set up virtual language exchanges
  - How we went about organising them
    - Problems encountered
  - The advantages over a residential exchange
- What do we want our students to gain from any exchange





## **What is a virtual language exchange?**

- **An online platform for exchanging messages and communicating with real people who are native speakers the target language or languages**



## **What is a virtual language exchange?**

- **An online platform for exchanging messages and communication**
- **It might begin with an email partnership in years 7 and 8 – frequency and content of emails managed in the classroom. We started our email exchange in year 7 not specifically with the idea of a virtual exchange in mind but as a way of bringing real people and real language to our students, so that they could see the practical use of what they are learning**



## **What is a virtual language exchange?**

- **An online platform for exchanging messages and communication**
- **It might begin with an email partnership in years 7 and 8 – frequency and content of emails managed in the classroom**
- **As lockdown arrived, we began setting up Teams or Zoom meetings for classes in Year 9 and 10, having already gone the process of matching our students with appropriate email partners. This needs to be done in agreement with the partner school at specified times and using preferably using breakout rooms**



## **What is a virtual language exchange?**

- **An online platform for exchanging authentic messages and communication**
- **It might begin with an email partnership in years 7 and 8 – frequency and content of emails managed in the classroom**
- **Begin setting up Teams or Zoom meetings from Year 9 with email partners in agreement with partner school at specified time and using breakout rooms**
- **I suggest using varied media used to develop cultural knowledge – video, music recordings, PowerPoint**





# Why we set up virtual exchanges

**2017**

**Established exchange link in Albacete, Spain**

**No established/running exchanges in France  
or Germany**

**New Heads of French and German set up  
exchanges, first visits 2018**

**Erasmus programme in Spain and la Réunion**



**Numbers rose dramatically between 2017 and 2019**

**Popular activity in all 3 languages**

**Devastated to cancel summer 2020**

**Not willing to forego another exchange visit**

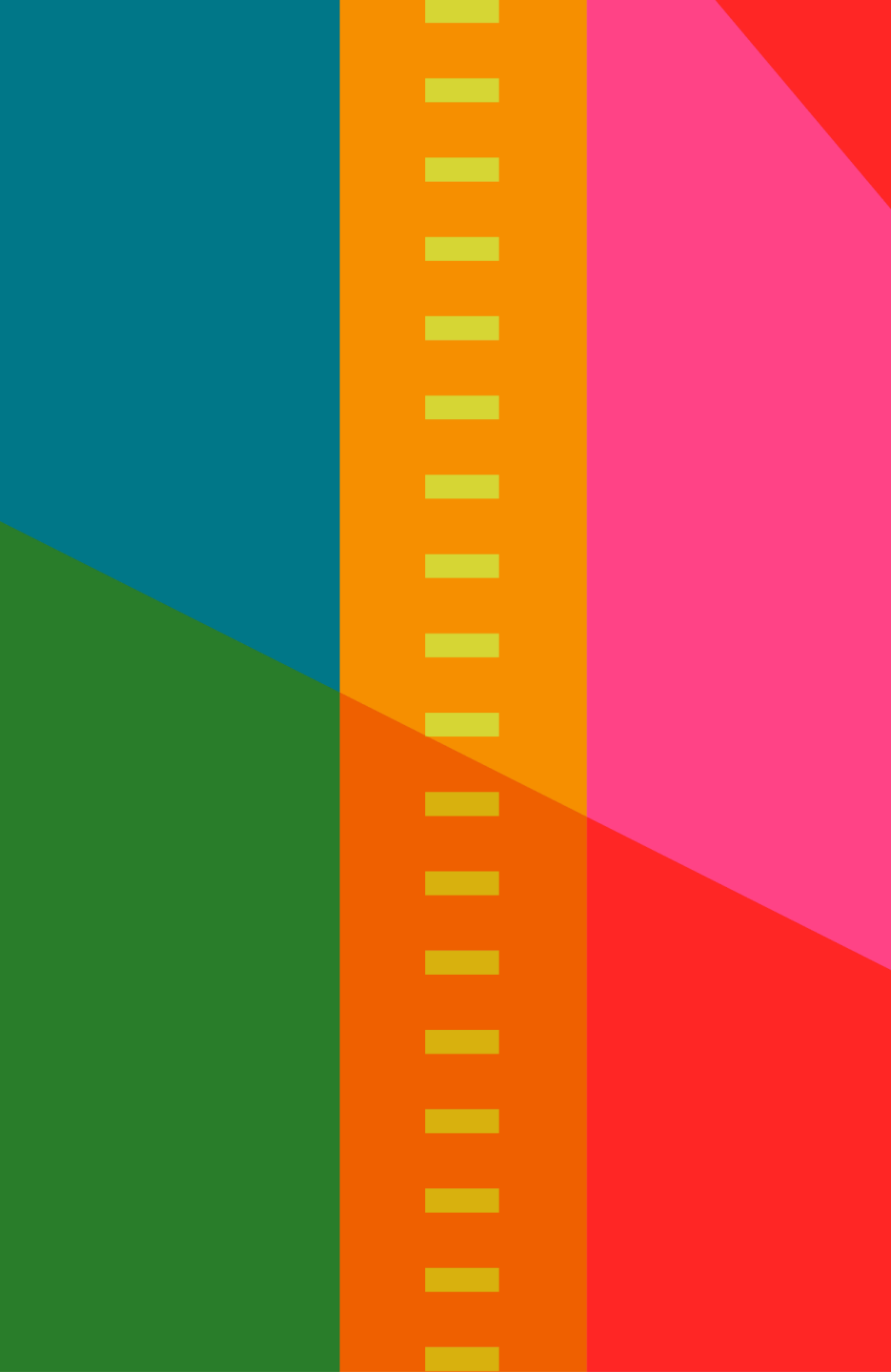
**Students asked about an exchange**

**King's Ely "Taking languages out of the classroom"**

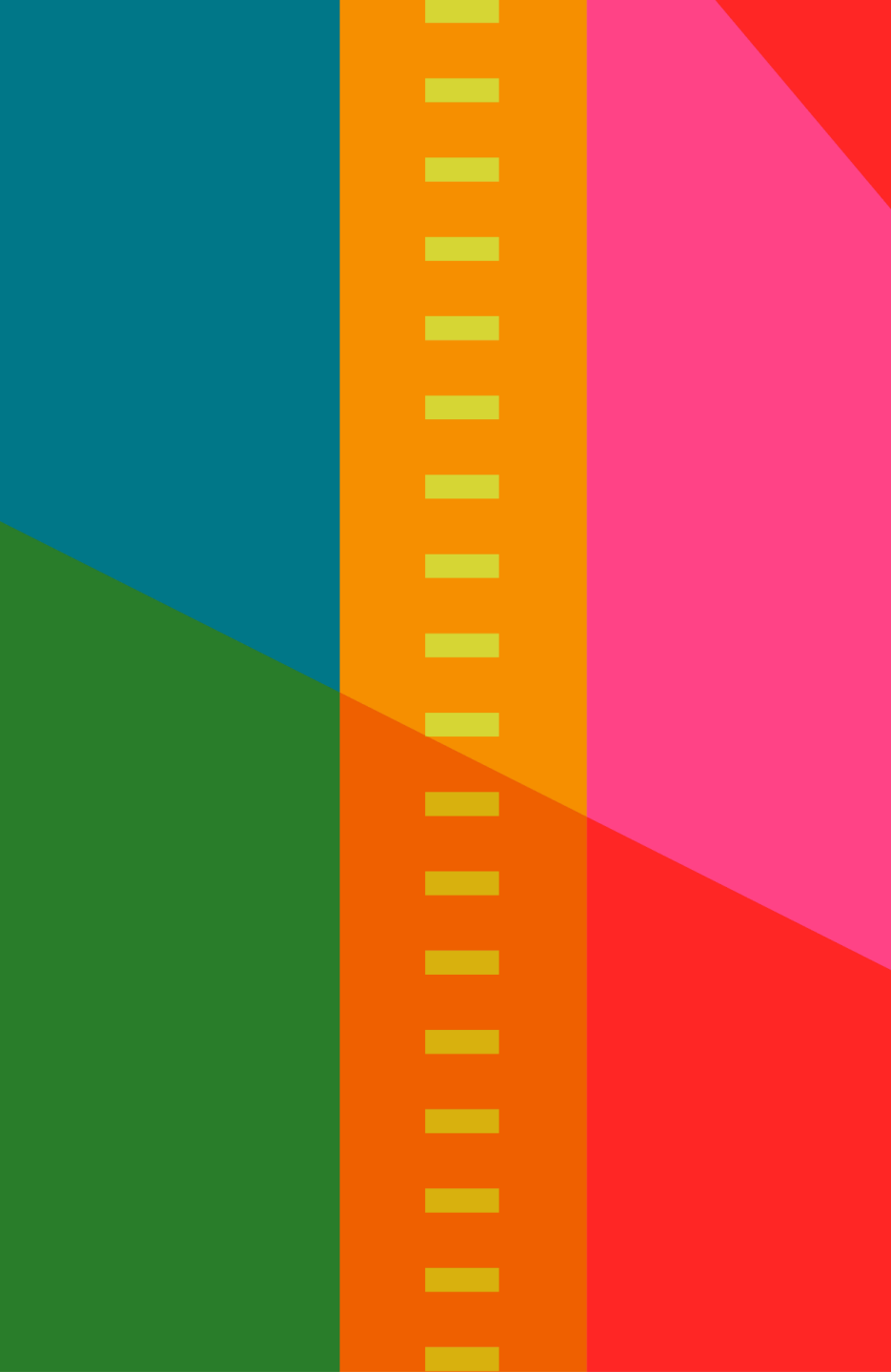


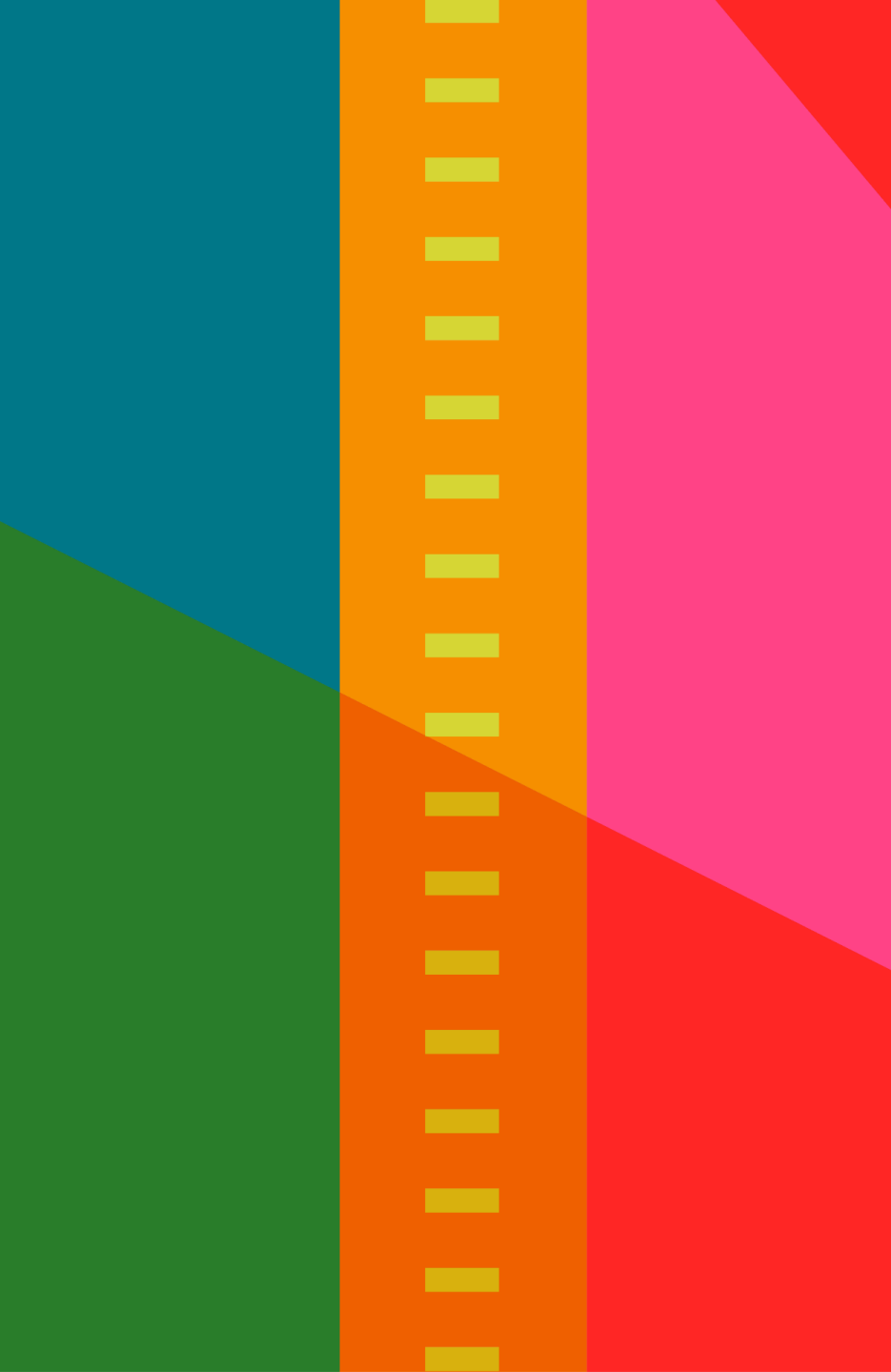


How we set up our  
virtual exchanges

- 
- **We used existing partner schools and I know that we are lucky to have a number of them in place and understand that many schools have lost their exchanges altogether**

- 
- **Used existing partner schools**
  - **We Checked that they were keen to be involved before starting any advertising or discussion with students and parents**

- 
- **Used existing partner schools**
  - **Checked that they were keen to be involved**
  - **There was Regular contact with colleagues in the link schools to discuss the organisation of meetings:**

- 
- **Used existing partner schools**
  - **Checked that they were keen to be involved**
  - **Regular contact to discuss organisation of meetings:**
  - **Timing of meetings**
  - **Whether we should Separate year groups for whole exchange meetings**
  - **Discussed and planned the key themes for each meeting**
  - **Use of breakout rooms and this allows teachers to praise, support and monitor the amount and quality of communication**





Problems  
encountered

- **Reliability of technology – trial runs essential**



- **Reliability of technology – trial runs essential**
- **Setting up breakout rooms after you start the meeting is very time consuming**

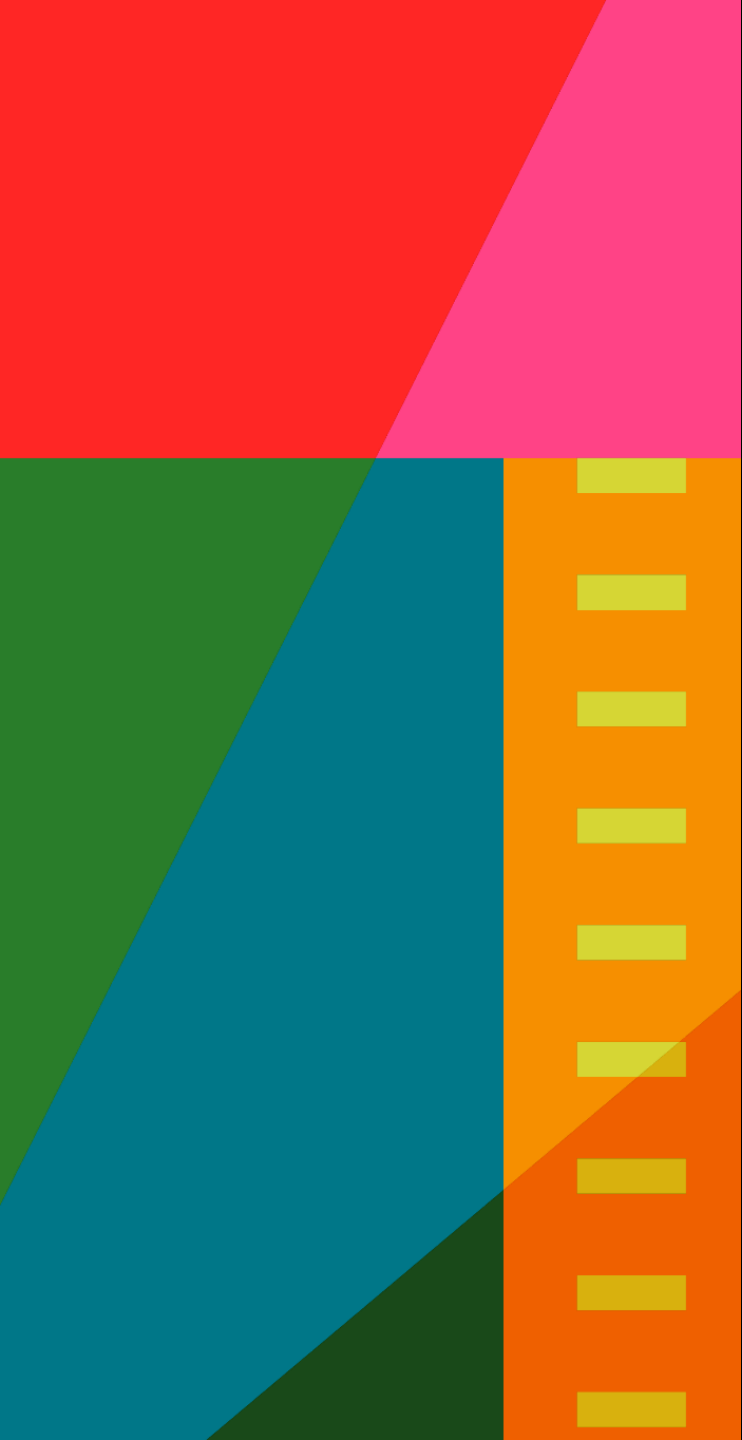


- **Reliability of technology – trial runs essential**
- **Setting up breakout rooms after you start the meeting is very time consuming**
- **Data Protection!**



- **Reliability of technology – trial runs essential**
- **Setting up breakout rooms after you start the meeting is very time consuming**
- **Forgetting to make participants presenters**
- **Data Protection!**





The benefits of a  
virtual language  
exchange over a  
traditional residential  
one



**No cost**

**It is absolutely free! Where a residential visit might be quite costly by the time you have factored in return travel, activities, meals and excursions. A virtual exchange requires no financial outlay.**

**All it costs is time and all participants are being rewarded in the form of quality language practice.**

## **Stress-free**

**It removes the anxiety that many students experience in the run-up to departure and on arrival in the foreign country to live with near strangers for a week.**







## Fostering friendships

Due to the nature of the language exchange, both partners enter the interaction as equals. Each one has language to practice and another language to help teach.

**Alternating between teacher and student roles in this situation means that they are supporting each other as friends.**

**Many more students will initially be attracted by the opportunity to practise their languages in a virtual situation than by going immediately to the country.**

**Use the earlier years email partnerships to engender interest in the people, the country and its culture and later you will see greater interest in actually going to see them in their own home.**



# In short....

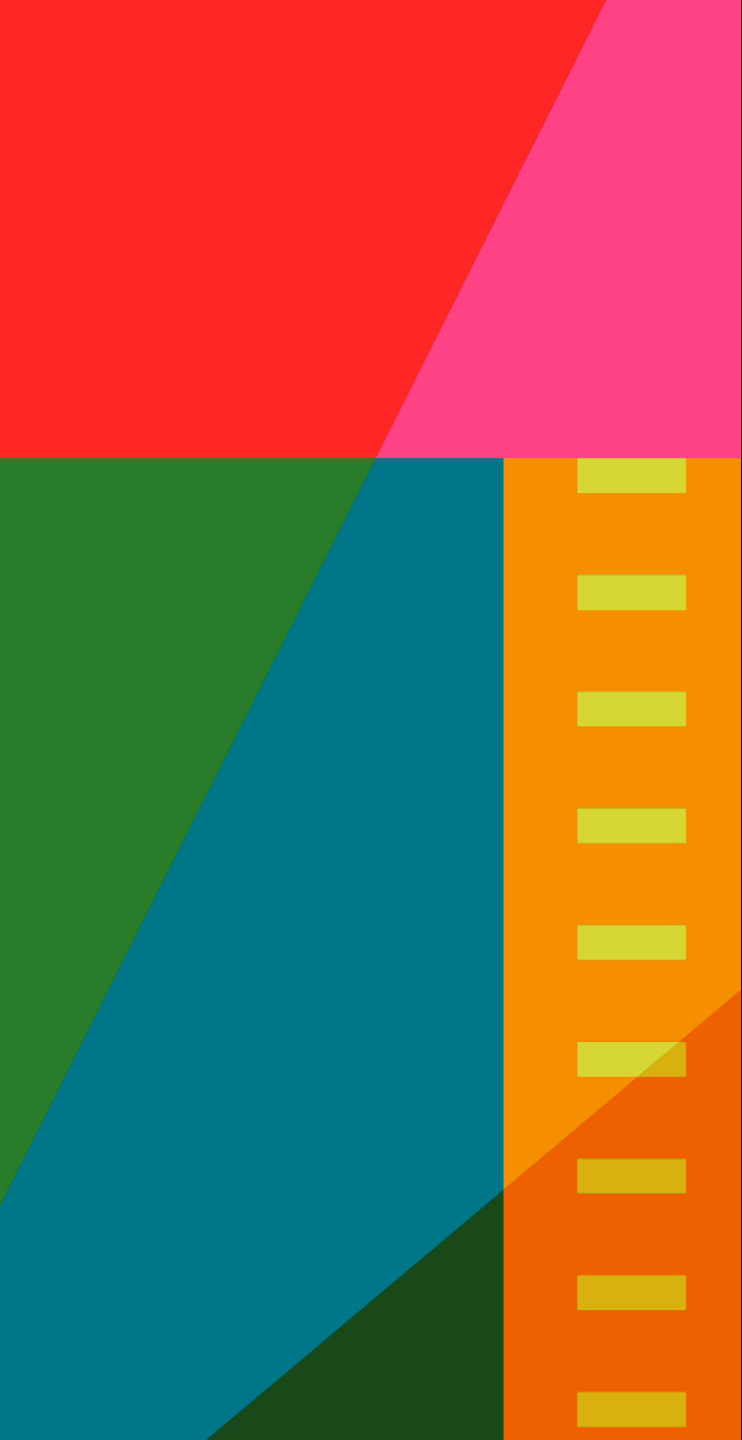
**We want confident and happy language learners.**

**We want them to be engaged and responsible for their success.**

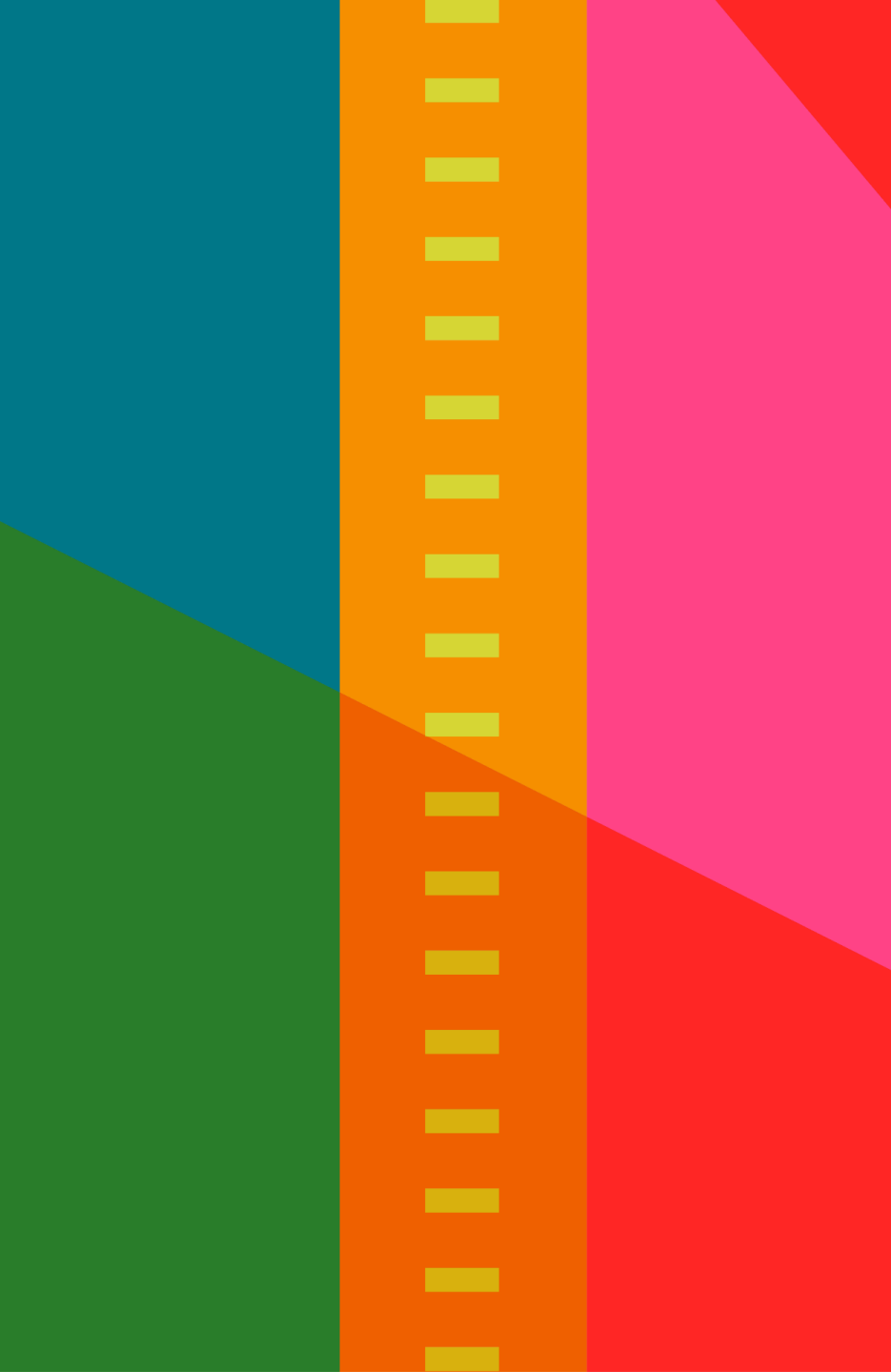
**We want them to understand other cultures.**

**We want them to want to speak other languages.**

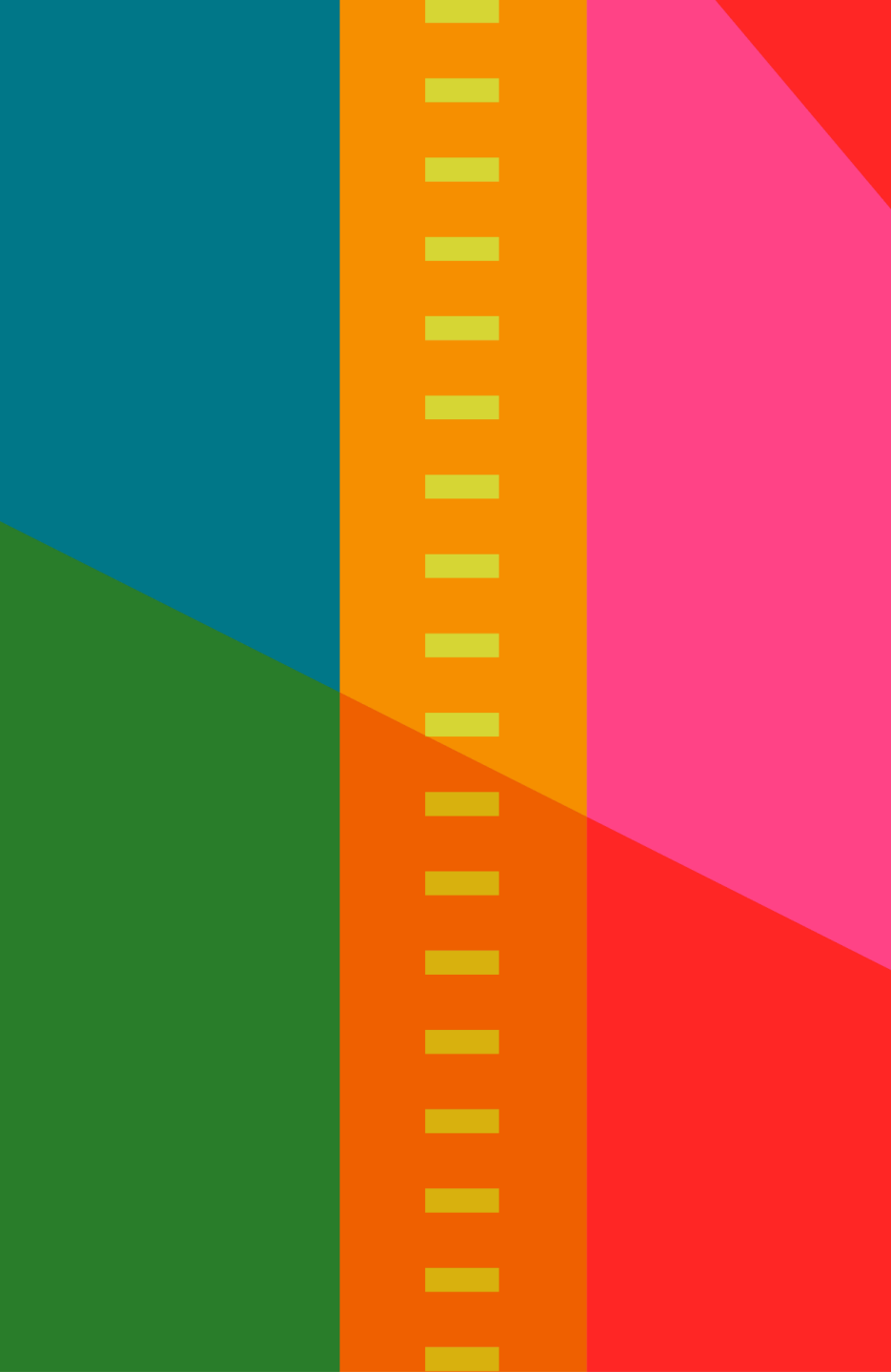




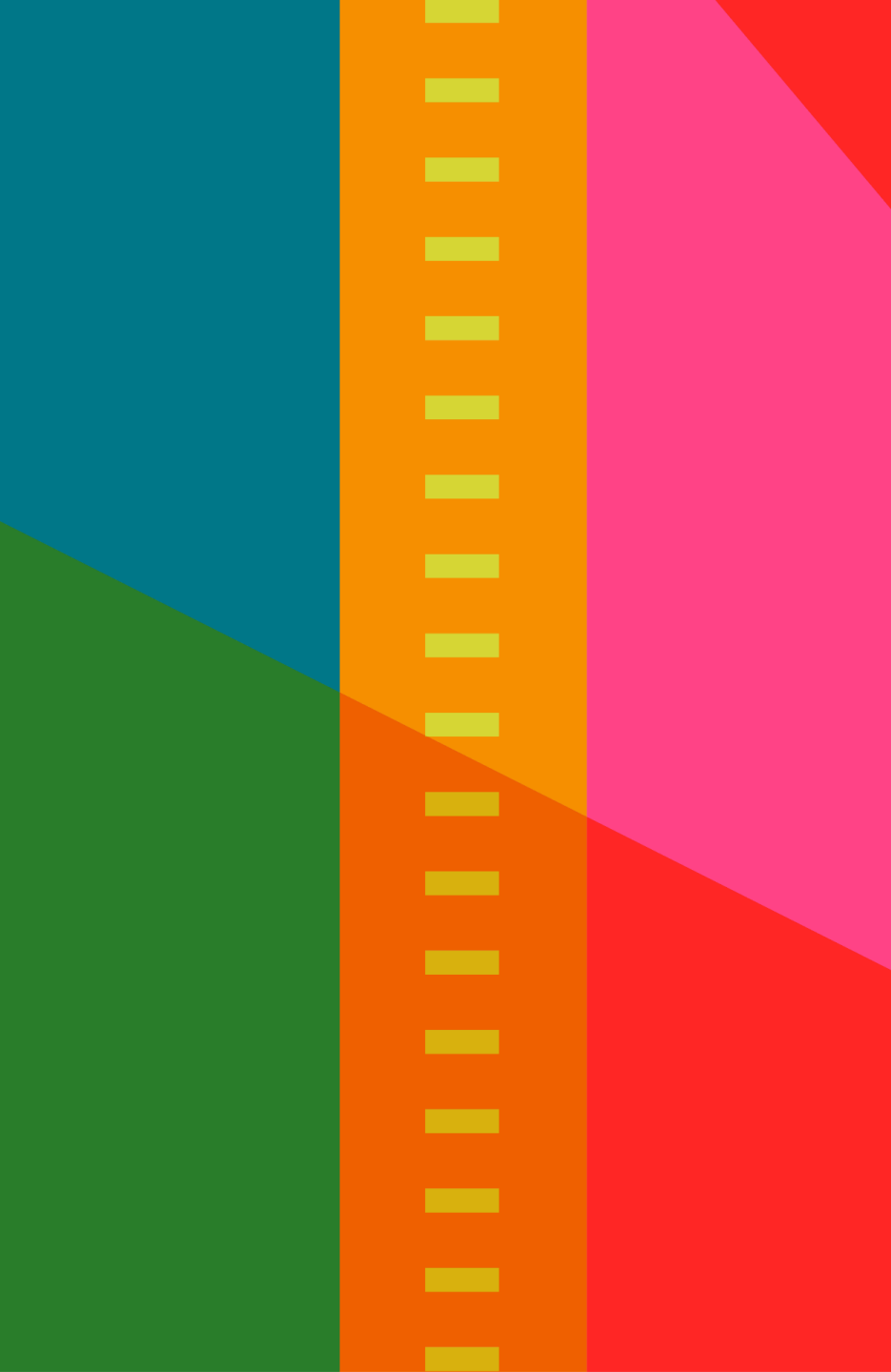
What do we want our  
learners to get from  
any exchange?



**Make new friends.** Learning can be fun! Although conventional language classes and online resources are effective, they can also feel isolating because of written assessments, preparation for exams and speaking tests. A virtual exchange connects the individual with other learners who may have similar challenges and motivations. It's a great opportunity to exchange learning tips with them, clarify things you don't understand, practice your language skills



**Experience Artificial Language Immersion.** A language exchange can be seen as microcosm of the country. It can offer the opportunity to enhance exposure to the language and develop familiarity with its sounds and intonation patterns. This gives students time to adapt to the language without having to travel. It also offers an contact with the language and its speakers in a safe environment.

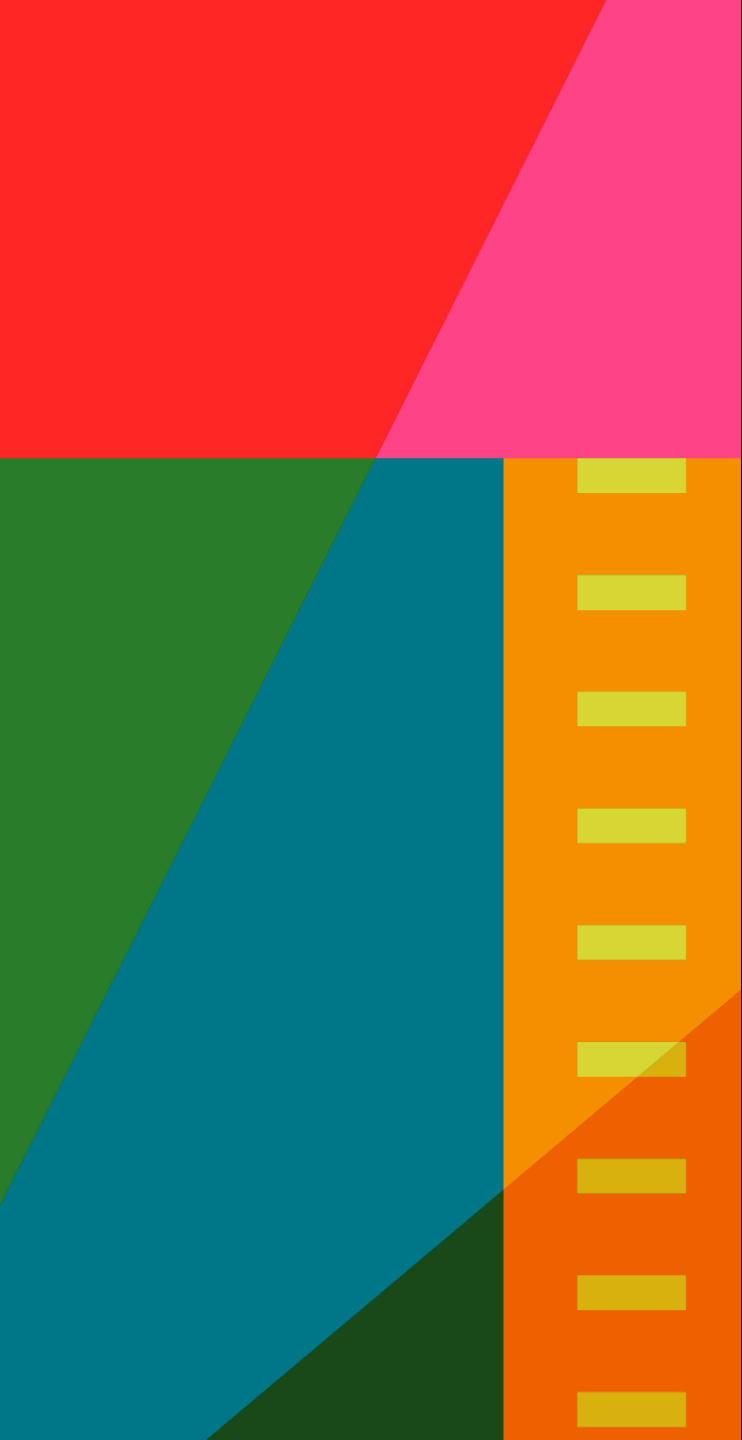


**Learn with games and activities.** A language exchange program is designed to allow experiential learning through games and other interactive activities that challenge and reinforce existing skills. This also makes it easier for students to maintain their own motivation and continue engaging with the target language!

# What our students say

- It's great being able to just talk to them for about 10 minutes or as long as I want without having to live there!
- I like sharing stories and music.
- I have never been to Germany, but this makes me want to go. I hope there's a real exchange too soon.
- I went on the exchange 2 years ago. It was good but this means I can dip in and out of the language and not get so stressed about having to try to speak in German all the time.
- It has been good to learn lots of new words that we don't learn in school and to find out more about how they celebrate different things.
- What's nice is being able to play games online with people in other countries. It means I get to make friends with my partner's friends too!





Thank you all for listening! I hope you have found some motivation to start an exchange where you there wasn't one before.

On the next slide, there are some links to help you find a partner school.

# Where to find a partner school

<https://www.britishcouncil.fr/en/schoolsonline/partner>

<https://www.britishcouncil.org/school-resources/partner>

<https://www.partnerschulnetz.de/en/>