***OUR CLASSIC SCHOOL: BREAKING LANGUAGE BARRIERS***

These days the problem of multiculturalism is as relevant as ever. My Motherland Ukraine is one of the places where it is also becoming more and more urgent. Though ours is not a rich country, it seems a paradise to those from even poorer ones. And they come. And settle here in considerable numbers: our class register list contains quite a few family names which sound unusual even to a Southern-Ukrainian ear. There is a variety of accents, differences in mentality. How do we avoid collisions? How do we foster tolerance?

Learn more about the ways of life other than your own ones! A person whose heart is open to more than one culture will never start a war between the nations bearing these cultures. Also, multilingual people tend to be more tolerant than monolingual ones.

Kherson Classic School N 6 claims to be ‘humanitarian’, with an emphasis on language studies, and our teachers always stress that “languages accumulate cultural values and reflect the peoples’ mentalities”. Thus, besides our native Ukrainian tongue, we learn English, German and French; also, everyone speaks Russian – I am proud of my unique school where they teach us four international languages.

We start learning English as a FL at our school when we are 6 years of age, and this tradition dates back to the 1960s – the rough days of the Soviet Union and the ‘iron curtain’. What did they learn English for if they never met a foreigner? The older school teachers explain the country yet needed diplomats and military interpreters; also, the very well-educated Soviet intelligentsia loved reading English authors in the original.

Our first teachers of English in the 1960s were unique: a few former Russian refugees to Britain who returned to our dear Motherland after Stalin’s death. They spoke English the way the native speakers did. Those people established the tradition of high standards language skills which we still keep. Also, having spent a number of years in Britain which gave them refuge at the hardest time, our ELTs of the 1960s (the Rein brothers, for example) were the part of both their own and the foreign nations – each as if had two hearts… They are described to have set the examples of tolerance every day of their teaching lives. Very courageous people, they endured much of an ordeal of their epoch and never lost their faces.

One needs to be courageous to be tolerant – then, now, ever…

I will finish school in three years. I’ve made up my mind to follow our teachers’ tradition of breaking language barriers. Connecting everyone – not separating.

I will teach English.