



Case Study 1

A new student in the class – peer reactions

In September, a new student joined the second year of the technical school – Amir. He came from Syria with his family, who have been living in Poland for two years. Amir speaks English well, but is just learning Polish. In the first days, he is quiet and attentive, observing how other students behave. He sits on the last bench and smiles shyly when someone speaks to him. The teacher introduces him to the class and asks the students to help him find his way in a new place.

Initially, the reactions are positive – several boys show him the school, and others explain how the electronic diary works. However, over time, minor tensions appear. During physical education lessons, someone makes fun of his accent. When Amir doesn't understand the teacher's order and asks in English, laughter can be heard in the background: "Hey, Englishman, now you're in Poland!" A few students look away, pretending not to hear, and others laugh half-heartedly.



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After the lesson, one of the girls, Magda, says to a friend: "He's nice, but sometimes I have the impression that he doesn't understand what's going on. It's hard to get along." No one reacts, although everyone feels that the situation is uncomfortable.

A few days later, during a Polish language lesson, students are to prepare a project about family traditions. Amir prepares a presentation about Syrian dishes and customs. On the day of the speech, you can see that he is stressed. He speaks with an accent, searching for words. When he shows a photo of a traditional lamb dish, someone at the back of the room murmurs, "Ugh, do they eat that?" Some of the class laugh, others are silent.



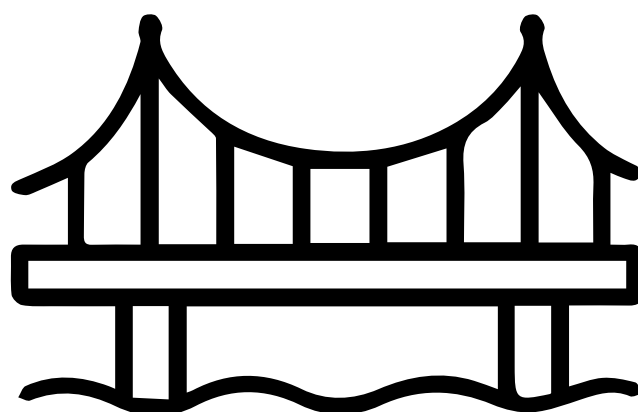
After the lesson, Magda decides to approach Amir. She says, "I enjoyed your presentation. I didn't know that New Year's Eve looks so colorful in your country." Amir smiles with relief and replies, "Thank you. In Syria, we also learn about Poland. Now I'm learning to live here."

A week later, the teacher organizes a "diversity day" in the classroom. Students bring dishes from different countries and talk about family traditions. Amir prepares hummus and pita bread. Magda helps him translate the recipe. The atmosphere is different – lighter, more open. Several people admit they have never had the opportunity to talk to someone from the Middle East.

After that day, a new normal is slowly emerging in the classroom. Students begin to speak to Amir more often in Polish, but patiently and simply. He, in return, is becoming increasingly willing to participate in class life, plays football with his classmates, jokes, and asks for help when he does not understand something. Relationships become more natural.

When, after a few weeks, a program on diversity airs on the school radio station, Amir volunteers to read a fragment of a text about Syrian culture in Polish. The class applauds, and the teacher notices that someone who was "the new one" not so long ago is now one of the class's essential voices.

Amir's story shows that it only takes one person who decides to show curiosity and support to change the dynamics of the entire group. Sometimes a small gesture – a word, an invitation to talk, an interest in another person – becomes the beginning of building a bridge.



Questions for reflection and discussion

1. What emotions could have accompanied Amir in the first weeks in the new class?
2. Which behaviours of pupils supported his integration and which hindered it?
3. What was the turning point in the relationship between Amir and the class?
4. What role did Magda play? What intercultural competences did she show in her actions?
5. How would you react in a situation of an accent joke?
6. How can a school support the integration of pupils with a migration experience?
7. What can be done to make diversity in the classroom a real value, not a challenge?

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