

# Múineadh na Gaeilge

Integration, language awareness and authentic language use

## Background

This Example is from a sixth class in a large, urban, English-medium school. The school welcomes children from a diverse range of linguistic and cultural backgrounds and the twenty-one children in this class speak 11 different home languages between them. In this school, children are encouraged to draw on their home language(s) to enhance learning as much as possible, both within and outside formal learning contexts, and within and beyond language-learning exercises.



This video showcases *Múineadh na Gaeilge* and focuses on

- Real-life authentic language use
- Integration of the three strands within a learning experience
- Language awareness

## Key Approaches In Video

### Real-life authentic language use

In this video, it can be seen that Irish that has a **real-life purpose** (the weather). In taking this approach, the teacher ensures that the new vocabulary can be **re-used** again informally in other contexts outside of the language lesson as it concerns the normal, everyday things we tend to talk about (in this example, the weather).

## Integration of Oral Language, Reading and Writing

This learning experience encompasses activities from the *Teanga ó Bhéal*, *Léitheoireacht* and *Scribhneoireacht* strands. As noted in the Primary Language Curriculum, although discrete language skills associated with each strand are essential, engaging with all three strands in an integrated way enables the child to become a more effective communicator.

## Language awareness

Language awareness activities feature throughout the lesson, both **pre-planned and incidental**. These activities enable children to examine **how other languages work** and to **notice connections between languages**. For the children in the class who speak languages other than English or Irish at home, the teacher encourages these children to share insights about these languages with the class. This knowledge-sharing contributes a rich source of information, learning and discussion for the rest of the class, and, indeed, the teacher.

## Múineadh trí Mheán na Gaeilge

Note how the teacher uses **Gaeilge amháin** in the video. This is a **key principle** of successful second and additional language teaching and learning. It not only ensures **increased exposure to the language**, but also enables the teacher to **model accurate, creative and fluent Gaeilge**. Where children speak back to the teacher in English, note how she responds as *Gaeilge* and, where feasible, encourages children to rephrase their utterance using Irish words or models the correct structure for the child.



## Preparation for Teaching and Learning

When preparing for teaching and learning, the teacher draws on her *knowledge of the children* (i.e. the next steps in their learning), *knowledge of the curriculum* (selecting Torthaí Foghlama, see below) and *knowledge of pedagogy* (e.g. connecting with home languages, authentic communication opportunities, group work). Her *invisible preparation* includes her moment-to-moment interactions with and observations of the children as well as the conversations she has with other teachers including the Special Education Teacher, all of which inform future learning. Her *visible preparation* includes the resources she has gathered to enhance the learning. For her *recorded preparation*, the teacher focuses on the Learning Outcomes in conjunction with the Progression Continua. This enables her to focus on the new learning for children in a more refined way as she prioritises certain elements of the Learning Outcome.

Snáithe	Torthaí Foghlama	Fócas na foghlama nua
Teanga ó Bhéal	TF 5: Stór Focal	Úsáidfidh na páistí nathanna cainte agus meafair éagsúla a bhaineann leis an aimsir chun an saibhreas teanga a fhorbairt.
Léitheoireacht	TF 5: Fónaic, aithint focal agus staidéar ar fhocail	Úsáidfidh na páistí réimse straitéisí go solúbtha agus go muiníneach chun focail a aithint i nGaeilge agus i dteangacha eile.
Scríbhneoireacht	TF 5: Stór Focal	Úsáidfidh na páistí stór focal agus frásaí nua chun réamhaisnéis na haimsire a scríobh. Úsáidfidh na páistí focail nua i dteanga eile sa phíosa scríbhneoireachta chun ceangail a dhéanamh le teangacha baile.

## Learning Experience 1: Weather phrases and language awareness

As a lead-in to the Irish lesson, children play Word Tennis (*Leadóg na bhFocal*) to activate prior knowledge. In pairs, children list weather phrases and words known to them in Irish or in a home language. Words from home languages are jotted down on whiteboards. After the activity, children explore the meanings of the words from other languages. They are encouraged to **make links** with words in a language they know to identify the meaning.

Following this, children worked in groups for the **pre-planned language awareness activity** 'Cad atá sa bhosca?' All groups have three *boscaí*, each of which contains a weather word inside ('sneachta', 'grian', 'teocht'). To work out what weather word is inside the box, the weather word has been translated into 5 different languages, all of which are displayed on the outside. Children discuss the words in the different languages to work out what word is inside the box. At the end of the activity, the teacher asks the class how they came to their decision as to what word was in the box to elicit a class discussion.



## Learning Experience 2: Input and practice

In this learning experience, the teacher focused on the new vocabulary, showing different weather phrases to the class, some of which may have been familiar, and others of which were new. They were

read aloud and practised together as a whole class. Following this, the teacher drew the children's attention to 's' *leathan* and 's' *caol* in *séideadh* and *sneachta* as this has been a focus in discrete reading lessons of late. This presented an opportunity for **incidental language awareness** work and a discussion ensued about broad and slender sounds in other languages, and children with knowledge of this from their own home languages shared these insights and examples with the class.

After this, children worked in groups to match the various weather phrases to a picture of a particular weather. This gave children a chance to practise

reading the phrases again in smaller groups, while the matching helped to consolidate the meaning of the phrases.



### Learning Experience 3: Real-life context for language use: Réamhaisnéis na hAimsire

In the final learning experience, children were given a **real-life communicative and practical task** of forecasting the weather. This gave the lesson an authentic context for communication. Children used the phrases they had practised earlier (and could use others if they so wished) to give their forecast.



In the second part of this learning experience, children wrote out their weather forecast. Children were invited to include words in other languages in their writing and could also draw on what they had explored in the language awareness activity '*Cad atá sa Bhosca?*'.

### Demonstration of Learning

Throughout the lesson, the teacher circulated to observe the children as they engaged in the various activities. Where necessary and feasible, she gave 1-to-1 instruction to re-teach/offer clarity. She

used questioning, conferencing and teacher-designed tasks as well to gauge children's learning and progress. The *cártaí ABCD* were used as a whole-class activity to assess children's ability to work out the meaning of the weather phrases. This is depicted in the video.

### Reflective Questions

1. The real-life application of the learning is clear in this video. As noted previously, one of the benefits of this approach is that children will be able to re-use these words informally for genuine communicative purposes. Recalling an Irish lesson you have taught recently, can you identify ways that you would tweak the lesson in order to foreground authentic language use that reflects the real-life communication needs of the children?
2. Language awareness (specifically, the comparison of languages) features prominently in this video. What specific aspects of language are children in the video exploring when they compare and contrast languages? How might a school without the same level of linguistic and cultural diversity achieve this?
3. Encouraging children to connect to their home languages validates their identities and provides a solid foundation for additional language learning. Can you identify some benefits of this approach for the native English/ Irish speaker too?

To view the video related to this Support Information document, click [here](#).