

An Cur Chuige Cumarsáideach

(The Communicative Approach)

Background

This Example showcases a multi-grade class of senior infants and first class in an English-medium school. There are twenty-eight children in the class, many of whom are multilingual. All children are learning Irish as an additional language. This learning experience focuses on children's Oral Language, although Reading and Writing are also integrated throughout. The learning experiences are set in the context of shopping with a particular focus on **interactions and play**. The emphasis is on **enjoyable, interactive and purposeful communication**, with the target language used as early and as often as possible.

Teagasc trí Mheán na Gaeilge

Note how the teacher uses **Gaeilge amháin** during the learning experiences. This is a key principle of successful second and additional language learning and teaching. It not only ensures increased exposure to the language, but also enables the teacher to model accurate, creative and fluent Gaeilge. The teacher used many **props and concrete materials** to support the children's understanding.

An Cur Chuige Cumarsáideach

The teacher uses *an cur chuige cumarsáideach* to develop and reinforce the children's ability to communicate with each other through Irish. *An cur chuige cumarsáideach* is a recommended approach to teaching a second and additional languages. This approach is child-centred; the main emphasis is on engaging children in enjoyable, interactive and purposeful communication that takes account of their daily lives and interests, both within language learning experiences and throughout the school day. When preparing a language learning experience, the teacher creates contexts with children whereby they will need to use the target language to complete a task. While this will involve new language, children will also be drawing on and using their existing language as they engage in the task. Children may participate in a variety of language activities including revision of known vocabulary in the early phase of the language learning experience,

but they know that they are doing so to support communication. When using a communicative approach, it can be helpful to organise the learning experience in three phases:

- *an tréimhse luathchumarsáide*
- *an tréimhse chumarsáide*
- *an tréimhse iarchumarsáide*

Language teaching may move fluidly across the three phases of *an cur chuige cumarsáideach*. This learning experience builds on to the vocabulary, expressions and language functions that the children have been developing in the class over the previous two weeks.

An Tréimhse Luathchumarsáide

Fostering interest: At the beginning of the learning experience, children engage with known rhymes and songs. This **fosters the children's interest in using Irish that is already familiar to them**.

At this stage the children are using known language and we see their **confidence** in using Irish as they recite the rhymes and songs.

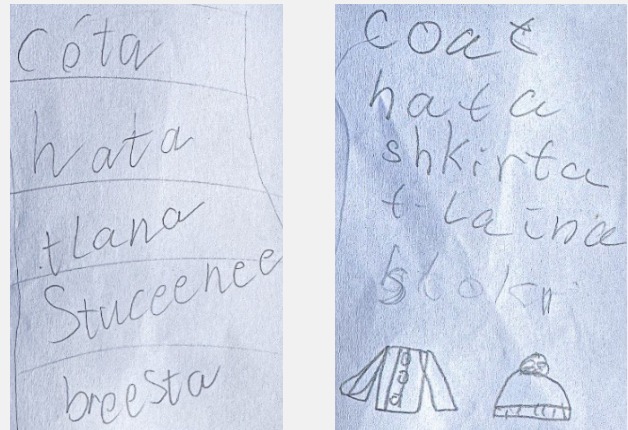
Revision: At this stage, the teacher begins with the revision of some words/phrases that the children already know and have acquired, related to the context of shopping. The children first have the opportunity to **practise the language they know** in an active way by greeting each other as they walk around the classroom. This **repeated practise** provides a rich scaffolding for the learning of all the children in the class.



New Language Input: At this stage of the learning experience, the teacher builds on the children's prior knowledge and begins to teach **new vocabulary and phrases**. In order to support acquisition of the new vocabulary and phrases, **repetition and imitation** are used to provide the appropriate support for the children to acquire the language accurately. It is important that new vocabulary is introduced in phrases/sentences as opposed to teaching words in isolation.

Language practise: Once the new language has been taught, the children are provided with the opportunity to **practise the new vocabulary and phrases** before moving on to the *tréimhse chumarsáide*. This gives the children a great opportunity to use the new language in a communicative context and it also gives the teacher a good opportunity to assess the children's language and pronunciation. The **concrete materials** support the children's interest and understanding. When the children have had adequate practise, the teacher starts to move towards the *tréimhse chumarsáide*. This involves the teacher and a child modelling the task for the class. Following this the children work in a pair to model the task. This approach provides repeated opportunities for all children to hear the target language. When the teacher is confident that the children understand the task at hand, the children begin to work more independently in groups.

progress in Irish. Again, scaffolds such as peers, concrete materials and print in the environment will be available to the children to give them the **appropriate support for authentic language use** in this phase of the learning experience. The presence of blank lists on the tables encourages children to 'have a go' at writing a shopping list.



Examples of children's *liostaí siopadóireachta* for 'An Siopa Éadaí'

An Tréimhse Iarchumarsáide

During this phase of the learning experience, the children consolidate the new language they have learned. In this Example, the teacher uses a game on Kahoot with the new language central to the game. As the teacher reads the questions aloud, the children listen, attend and respond. This pair work allows for **repeated exposure to the language** and the teacher can assess the children's progress.



An Tréimhse Chumarsáide

During this phase, the children have the opportunity to use and **practise the new vocabulary and phrases** they have learned, as well as language they have previously learned, in a communicative, independent manner, using a playful context. In this Example, the children are going to different shops, a task which reflects their daily lives and interests. We see the teacher, through **playful interactions**, providing additional support to children by modelling the correct use of the new language and **extending** the language of the children who are making good



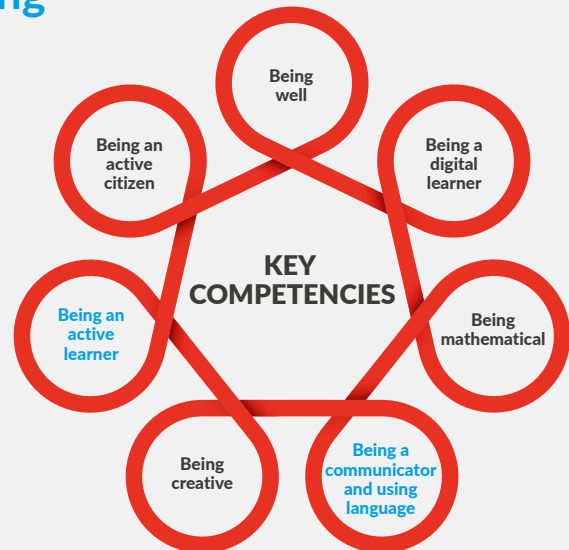
Preparation for Teaching and Learning

When preparing for teaching and learning, the teacher draws on her **knowledge of the children** (e.g. the next steps in their learning), **knowledge of the curriculum** (selecting the elements of Communicating and Exploring and Using to choose Torthaí Foghlama across stage 1 and stage 2, see below) and **knowledge of pedagogy** (eg scaffolding and extending learning, *an cur chuige cumarsáideach*). Her **invisible preparation** includes her moment-to-moment interactions with and observations of the children as well as the conversations she has with the Special Education teacher, all of which inform future learning. Her **visible preparation** includes the resources she has gathered to enhance the learning such as the items for the various shops and the game on Kahoot. For her **recorded preparation**, the teacher focuses on the Learning Outcomes in conjunction with the Progression Continua. The Learning Outcomes selected below all come from the *Teanga ó Bhéal* strand.

Gné	Torthaí Foghlama	Fócas na foghlama nua
Cumarsáid	TF 3: Gnásanna sóisialta agus feacht ar dhaoine eile	Focail agus frásaí Gaeilge a úsáid le linn gníomhaíochtaí comhroinnte.
Fiosrú agus Úsáid	TF 7: Iarratais, ceisteanna agus idirghníomhaíochtaí	Ceisteanna dúnta, simplí a chur agus freagraí gairide, simplí a thabhairt chun eolas a fháil.

As children work towards achieving these Learning Outcomes and engage in rich language learning experiences, they simultaneously build and develop **key competencies** as outlined in the Primary Curriculum Framework. The key competencies most relevant to this learning experience are:

- Being a communicator and using language through the development of understanding and enjoyment of meaningful interactions
- Being an active learner through active participation and engagement in playful learning experiences both individually and with others



Demonstration of Learning

In this Example, the teacher used a range of **intuitive assessment** approaches including posing appropriate **questions** and fostering **discussions** to scaffold learning and engagement with the language. The teacher engages in **observation** during the game on 'Kahoot' where she gauges the children's level of understanding.

Reflective Questions

1. The teacher begins by reciting rhymes and songs in Irish with the children. How does this support the children to speak Irish during the learning experience?
2. What are the aspects of *an cur chuige cumarsáideach* used by the teacher that interest you the most? Why was this interesting to you? Are there opportunities to use this approach in your own practice?
3. The reflection of the children in this Example shows how much they enjoyed this learning experience and how motivated they were to learn and use Irish. How did the teacher support them in the different phases of *an cur chuige cumarsáideach*?
4. How can the children's different language backgrounds and home languages be brought into the Irish learning experiences?

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