

Wordless Picture Books

Support Information

Background

The Example is from a mainstream Sixth Class in an all-girls primary school. There are 26 girls in the class. For the teaching of English, the teacher uses **station teaching** on a regular basis to foster the development of children's language skills across all three strands; oral language, reading and writing. The teacher plans for appropriate learning experiences at a variety of stations within the classroom and these stations are adapted and rotated on a regular basis. Some of the stations are teacher directed and others are independent stations where the children engage in language activities and tasks without the assistance of the teacher.



Station teaching affords children the opportunity to **work collaboratively** within smaller groups. Over time and with teacher guidance and scaffolding, the children have become accustomed to working collaboratively and independently in groups. Within station groups, the children take on **defined roles**, such as *reporter*, *leader* and *questioner* and engage in self-assessment and peer assessment. Similarly, these skills have been modelled by the teacher and over time, children have been scaffolded to independently take on these roles within collaborative groups.

The focus of this particular Example is on oral language development and the use of station teaching to promote oral language skills development within smaller groups. At the beginning of each week, the teacher chooses a specific area of focus for children's oral language development based on the learning outcomes for oral language. These skills are explicitly taught by the teacher over time and station teaching is used to consolidate learning and enable children to further develop these skills.

The teacher begins with a whole class discussion by describing and explaining the station activities. She then models the different group activities for the entire class and allocates children to different stations. Over time, the children begin to facilitate the station activity independently, allowing the teacher to move between the different station groups and converse or conference with individual children. Children are then divided into groups and each group spends 15 minutes at each station. At each station, children are provided with additional scaffolds such as **guiding questions, instructions and word banks**.

The Example presents the learning that takes place at one of the stations. At this station, wordless picture books are used to engage the children in oral language discussions.



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The teacher continues to change station activities and adapt them on a weekly basis in response to the focus of the lesson and the language skills being developed. The following are examples of a variety of additional stations set up by the teacher throughout the school year to promote the children's oral language development:

Conversation station: Topics are given to children and they have a timed conversation in pairs or groups. There is a focus on specific areas of communication e.g. eye contact, facial expressions, turn-taking, questioning.

Debating station: Statements are given to children and they have a formal discussion on these in groups. They work together to create strong arguments and they make points which are supported by the relevant information.

Descriptive language station: Images are given to children and they must describe what is happening in the image. Children decide what feelings are portrayed, the relationship of the image to their lives and questions based on the image are composed by the children and posed within the group.

Picture book station: Various picture books are given to children to read and discuss. Some picture books are wordless and students orally create a story based on the images and use creative vocabulary to do so.

Games station: Headbands/Heads Up, Pictionary, 30 Seconds, Charades. Various vocabulary games are played among children to develop a range of language skills.

Story creation station: Pictures, words and sentences are given to children and they orally create and sequence a story in groups.

Story cube station: Children roll story cubes and they create a story collaboratively based on the images rolled.

Blind retell station: A familiar story or text is given to children. Children partner up and stand face-to-face. Partner A does not look at a copy of the story/text while Partner B has a copy in their hand. Partner A retells the story from memory, and Partner B helps A whenever they get stuck or confused. Partner B is, essentially, a "coach", whose job it is to help Partner A accurately retell the story. Partner B reads the text and critically analyses what Partner A says as s/he compares it to the original story.

Mystery bag station: A mystery bag is given to children and they describe the contents using their senses. Children describe what they might smell using adjectives and describe what they hear when they shake the bag.

Mirror drawing station: Children are divided into pairs and each partner holds a whiteboard. Sitting with their back to each other, partner A draws an image on their whiteboard while giving clear instructions to partner B. The aim is for both children to end up with the same image on their whiteboards.

Spot the difference station: Children sit with their backs to their partners and must find the differences within their images by describing their image to their partner.

Would you rather station?: Children ask and answer questions based on choice and preferences, backing up opinions with three valid points. Children then critically assess their peers' answers.

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Preparation for Teaching and Learning

When preparing for teaching and learning, the teacher uses her knowledge of the **children's likes, interests, curiosities and abilities**. In the context of this particular Example, the teacher described the children's growing ability to express and justify opinions as a result of working together in collaborative groups and taking on clearly defined roles within these groups over time. Using this **knowledge of the children and content knowledge** of the Primary Language Curriculum, she identified appropriate learning outcomes from the **Oral Language strand** and the focus of new learning. These are as follows:

Learning Outcome (LO)	Focus of new learning
LO9: Retelling and elaboration	The children are creating narratives using imaginative language.
LO10: Playful and creative use of language	The children are learning to manipulate language creatively.
LO12: Description, prediction and reflection	The children are describing and predicting experiences associated with the books in imaginary contexts.

Using her knowledge of **pedagogical approaches**, the teacher tailored learning experiences accordingly; connecting them with the needs and abilities of children and the learning outcomes identified.



Using her content knowledge of the Primary Language Curriculum, the teacher also identified additional **incidental learning** relating to other **learning outcomes in the Reading strand** that took place during the learning experience. These are as follows:

Learning Outcome (LO)	Focus of new learning
LO2: Motivation and choice	Critically respond to texts.
LO6: Vocabulary	Independently uncover the meaning of words.
LO7: Purpose, genre and voice	Critically reflect on the imaginative aspects of texts.
LO8: Response and author's intent	Discuss various interpretations of a text.
LO9: Comprehension	Apply comprehension strategies to engage with text and draw on personal experience and personal knowledge.

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Assessment

Opportunities were built in for a range of assessment approaches including teacher observation and self-assessment. As previously highlighted, children are **scaffolded by the teacher** to get to the point where they can independently engage within stations. Prior to children's independent participation at the wordless picture book station, the teacher adopted a range of **intuitive assessment approaches** over time.

These included **posing appropriate questions** and fostering discussions to scaffold learning and engagement with wordless picture books. In doing so, the teacher gathered important information about the children's abilities to apply a range of comprehension strategies as they continued to interpret and critically reflect on the wordless picture books. Over time and as a result of **planned interactions** such as **conferencing** with groups and individual children, the teacher was enabled to assess learning related to particular learning outcomes at regular intervals. The teacher gained information on the children's ability to respond to wordless picture books, reflect on the imaginative aspects of the books and draw on personal experience and knowledge.



Using teacher-designed rubrics, the children have been scaffolded to **self-assess** at each station before moving to the next station. As demonstrated in the video, the teacher engages in a group discussion with the children, during which they are asked to focus on how they have demonstrated specific skills within their stations.

Additional information on using wordless picture books

Wordless picture books are just what they sound like—books without words (or sometimes with minimal words) that tell a story through pictures. Because they don't rely on words to express their stories, wordless picture books can be used to develop important literacy skills, such as:

- Detecting sequence
- Identifying details
- Noting cause and effect relationships
- Making judgments
- Determining main idea
- Making inferences.

Here are some ideas for how you can use wordless picture books with your children to help develop their reading, writing and comprehension skills.

- Encourage discussion
- Introduce new vocabulary
- Encourage storytelling
- Learn about story structure and sequencing
- Develop comprehension skills
- Inspire writing.

Additional information on wordless picture books can be found at the following link:

<https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/blog-posts/brian-smith/why-wordless-picture-books-work/>

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Reflective Questions

- This Example highlights the teacher's focus on enabling children to work independently in groups. What benefits do you see in this approach?
- What opportunities do you see for incorporating station teaching in your classroom? What challenges might this present?
- The children's reflection in this Example indicates their enjoyment and motivation during this learning experience and the teacher regularly provides time for children to talk about their learning. To what extent are pupils provided time to talk about and reflect on their learning in your school?
- The teacher identified Learning Outcome 7 Purpose, genre, and voice within the reading strand as a focus for new learning. Consider how the children's learning as demonstrated in this Example might transfer to the children's learning for Tortha Foghlama 7 Cuspóir, seánra agus guth in Gaeilge.



To view the videos related to this support information click here.