

Language Awareness

Support Information

Background

This video example presents a language awareness learning experience in a medium-sized, urban, all-girls primary school. The school is culturally and linguistically diverse, with approximately 70 different languages spoken within the wider school community. This linguistic and cultural diversity is valued and celebrated through whole-school practices including Language of the Month, monthly assemblies, European Languages Day and Intercultural Day, as well as classroom-based practices where children are encouraged to draw on their home languages to support learning.

This example showcases sixth class children who collectively speak nine languages. Exploring, using and communicating in multiple languages is the norm in the school, and children are consistently encouraged to make contributions in their home languages across all areas of the curriculum.

This learning experience builds on children's experience of the *Languages Connect* programme, through which they have been learning French. Children have had opportunities to make connections between French, English, Irish and the children's home languages, promoting language awareness and natural transfer of language skills, strategies and knowledge.



Learning Experience

In this learning experience, children explore the interconnectedness of languages through the theme of food. The lesson begins with a focus on greetings, examining how to say “hello” and “goodbye” in a variety of languages and discussing why some languages resemble one another while others differ based on linguistic origins.

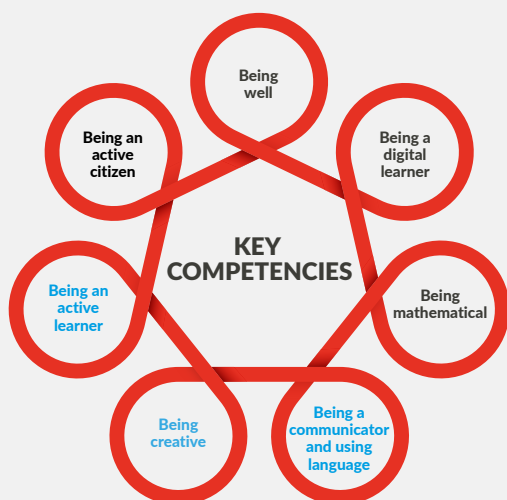
Children then work as *Language Detectives*, using their collective linguistic knowledge to match pictures of foods with their corresponding words in multiple languages. They compare vocabulary, identify patterns, and contribute additional words from their home languages to expand on the class's shared bank of multilingual vocabulary.



Drawing on their real-life experiences and previous experience of learning French, children work collaboratively to create a multilingual weekly lunch menu for the school. They discuss appropriate foods for different times of day, revise the days of the week in English, Irish and French, and make cross-lingual comparisons as they design their menus. Throughout this activity, the children use the linguistic skills developed in one language to support their learning in another, gaining insight into how languages work and relate to each other.

Key Competencies

This learning experience supports the development of the following key competencies:



Being an active learner:

Children take initiative, apply their prior language knowledge and engage in activities to compare vocabulary, sounds and patterns across languages. They make discoveries independently and collaboratively, strengthening their ability to manage and extend their own learning.

Being creative:

As the children create their multilingual menus they explore and use language imaginatively. Children choose vocabulary, explore linguistic connections and develop original multilingual texts using a child-centred and creative approach.

Being a communicator and using language:

Throughout this learning experience children draw on a range of languages including their home languages to interact, discuss, compare and express ideas. They experience enjoyment and pride in their linguistic identities and develop an appreciation of the link between languages and cultures. The children are curious about the similarities and differences in languages. This curiosity activates and nurtures children's innate language awareness skills.

Preparation for Learning and Teaching

In preparation for this learning experience the teacher used the **Primary Language Curriculum (PLC)** to select the relevant learning outcomes including:

Elements	Strands	Learning Outcomes
Understanding	Reading	LO 4: Phonological and Phonemic Awareness – recognising and comparing words across languages.
Understanding	Reading	LO 5: Word Recognition and Word Study – using existing language skills to decipher texts in different languages.
Understanding	Writing	LO 5: Vocabulary – selecting appropriate vocabulary across various languages.
Communicating	Oral Language	LO 1: Engagement, Listening and Attention – actively listening and attending to languages, including unfamiliar ones.

Using her **knowledge of pedagogy**, the teacher designed a thematic learning experience (food) that used an integrated approach to language learning that emphasises connections within and across languages. Language development was based on prior learning, ensuring that new vocabulary, structures and skills were learned in meaningful, authentic contexts. This integrated approach was supported through group work, collaboration, explicit instruction and carefully scaffolded support from the teacher.

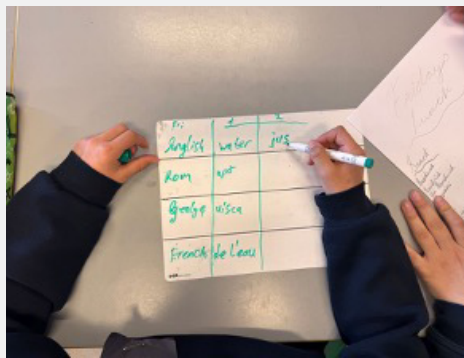
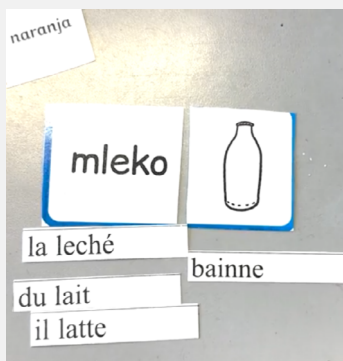
The teacher drew on her **knowledge of the children** and their prior language learning to develop learning activities that provided opportunities for all children to share their linguistic and cultural heritage. She considered what languages the children were already using at home and in school and designed tasks that encouraged them to make meaningful connections between these languages and the new learning.

By providing opportunities for children to contribute words, phrases and cultural references from their own backgrounds, the teacher fostered a sense of belonging and affirmed the value of every child's identity. This invisible preparation ensured that the learning experience was inclusive, responsive and reflective of the diverse strengths that each child brings to the classroom.

Demonstration of Learning

Throughout this video example, the children demonstrate their learning in varied ways;

- They recognise and compare vocabulary across the languages represented in the class and use their language awareness skills to decode and match food-related words in many languages. As they collaborate, they ask questions, draw connections and identify linguistic patterns.
- The children's multilingual menus showcase their ability to transfer learning between languages, select appropriate vocabulary, and communicate meaningfully using many languages.
- When exploring and encountering unfamiliar/new languages children apply their language awareness strategies and draw on their full linguistic repertoires to identify the word.



Reflective Questions

1. Can you identify moments from this learning experience that demonstrate the transfer of skills across languages?
2. How did group work support pupils during the language awareness activities?
3. What was the role of the teacher in the language awareness activities?

An tEispéireas Foghlama seo a chur in oiriúint don Ghaeilge

Gaeilge (T1) i Scoileanna Gaeltachta/lán-Ghaeilge:

D'fhéadfaí tabhairt faoi na heispéiris foghlama éagsúla i scoil lán-Ghaeilge/scoil Ghaeltachta i gceacht Gaeilge nó i gceacht NTI. D'fhéadfaí teangacha atá cosúil leis an nGaeilge a chur san áireamh chomh maith chun go mbeidh béim ar an gceangal idir an Ghaeilge agus teangacha eile. Mar shampla, tá Gaeilge na hAlban an-chosúil leis an nGaeilge. Cé nach bhfuil an ceangal chomh láidir céanna idir an Bhreatnais agus Gaeilge, tá cosúlachtaí ann go fóill. Focail shamplacha don tasc faoi ainmfhocail a bhaineann le bia: arán, úll, mil, coirce, im, cáis.

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