

**The changing landscape of education: the response of one
primary school
to linguistic diversity among its pupils**

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Overview

- Language education at Scoil Bhríde (Cailíní)
- The Primary School Curriculum
- Home languages
- Examples from the classroom
- Summary

Scoil Bhríde (Cailíní), Blanchardstown

- Girls' primary school in a western suburb of Dublin
- 322 pupils, almost 80% of whom have a home language other than English or Irish
- Most of the 80% had little or no English when they started school
- Currently 49 home languages in addition to English and Irish:
 - Afrikaans, Amharic, Arabic, Bangla, Benin, Bosnian, Cantonese, Dari, Cebuano, Estonian, Foola, French, German, Hebrew, Hindi, Hungarian, Igbo, Ilonggo, Indonesian, Ishekiri, Italian, Kannada, Kinyarwanda, Konkani, Kurdish, Latvian, Lingala, Lithuanian, Malay, Malayalam, Mandarin, Marathi, Moldovan, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Shona, Slovakian, Spanish, Swahili, Tagalog, Tamil, Ukrainian, Urdu, Vietnamese, Visaya, Xhosa, Yoruba.

Two overarching educational goals

- To ensure that ***all*** pupils including those from immigrant homes gain full access to education, which means helping them to become proficient in the language of schooling
- To exploit linguistic diversity for the benefit of ***all*** pupils by implementing an integrated approach to language education that embraces the language of schooling, languages of the curriculum (Irish; French in penultimate year), and home languages.

The Primary School Curriculum

General curricular aims:

'To enable the child to live a **full life** as a child and to **realise his/her full potential** as a unique individual' (Government of Ireland 1999: 7)

'To enable the child to develop as a **social being** through living and co-operating with others and so **contribute to the good of society**' (ibid.)

'To prepare the child for **further education and lifelong learning**' (ibid.)

Some fundamental principles:

'The child is an **active agent** in his/her learning' (ibid.: 8)

'The child's **existing knowledge and experience form the basis for learning**' (ibid.)

'**Collaborative learning** should feature in the learning process' (ibid. 9)

'**Parents** are the child's primary educators, and the life of the home is the most potent factor in his or her development during the primary school years' (ibid.: 24)

Home language

The home language ...is the default medium of their self-concept, their self-awareness, their consciousness, their discursive thinking, and their agency. It is thus the cognitive tool that they cannot help but apply to formal learning, which includes mastering the language of schooling (Little, 2015).

School policy: four principles

- **Inclusive ethos:**
 - the school welcomes the diversity of its pupil population and acknowledges that each pupil has much to contribute to her own education (autonomy, identity, 'action knowledge')
- **Open language policy:**
 - no restrictions placed on pupils' use of their home languages at school, whether inside or outside the classroom (agency, 'action knowledge')
- **Strong emphasis on development of language awareness:**
 - home languages treated as a resource for all learners
- **Strong emphasis on the development of literacy skills in English, Irish, French and home languages:**
 - writing and speaking support one another in many different ways; importance of parental involvement in their daughters' literacy development.

Impact on Irish Language

- Raised status for Irish language
- New perception of Irish language by children – using it for communication purposes
- Increased interest – request from Parents' Association (indigenous Irish and immigrant parents) for Irish language classes for members

Examples from the classroom








Junior Infants

- Teachers cultivate a secure, nurturing classroom environment
- Pupils encouraged to:
 - express themselves using whatever language comes naturally to them
 - share words and phrases in their own language(s) relevant to topics under discussion, e.g., different colours, types of food, items of clothing, weather
 - use English, Irish and/or their home language when carrying out tasks that support the learning of basic mathematical concepts
- In the course of the year the teacher gradually includes all languages present in the class in classroom displays
- Maths as a multilingual activity (video)

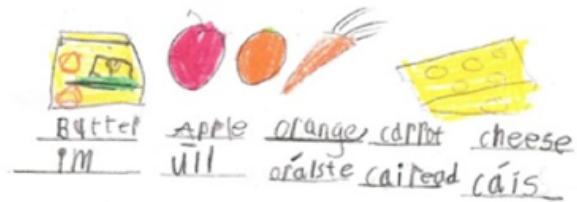
Senior Infants

- Days of the week gradually taught in English, Irish and all other languages present in the class
- Other classroom displays include individual pupils and their home language
- Pupils play classroom games in pairs: one pupil calls out an action – foot to foot, elbow to elbow, etc. – in English or Irish, her partner class out the action in her home language, and both pupils perform the action
- Teachers provide worksheets that can be completed using English, Irish and home languages

English
Irish
Polish
Spanish
French

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
An Luan	An Mháirt	An Chéadaoin	An Déardaoin	An Aoine	An Satharn	An Domhnach
						
lunes	martes	miércoles	viernes	jueves	sábado	domingo
lundi	mardi	mercredi	jeudi	vendredi	samedi	dimanche

Draw pictures of food.
Write the names in Irish
and English



English

Irish

Malayalam

Food

Bia

ഭക്ഷണം

I like to eat egg.

എനിക്ക് മുട്ട തിന്നാൻ
ഇഷ്ടമാണ്

My favourite fruit is apple

എന്റെ ഇഷ്ടഫലം ആപ്പിളാണ്

My favourite vegetable is

cucumber

എന്റെ ഇഷ്ട പച്ചക്കറി

കക്കരിയാണ്

Coconut comes from

my country.

കേരളം. കേരളം

പാലക്കാട് നിന്നും വരുന്നു

First Class

- Texts in two languages: English and Irish; English/Irish and home language
- It is a regular feature of classroom interaction that the teacher asks individual children, or children with a shared language background, to translate key words and phrases into their home language
- Emergence of language awareness
 - Six-year-old pupil from a Chinese family was able to recognise and translate a number of words in a children's publication, but translated *gate* as *door*
 - Explained that in her language, door is used to describe a means of entry both indoors and outdoors, while in English two different words are needed to take account of the different locations

English

I am Seven years old



I am from Latvia and my Town is called Riga

I Love To Wear a cap.

Russian

Я люблю есть яблоки.

Я люблю свою маму и папу

Мой папа и моя мама любят меня тоже

English

My Name is



I am six years old.

I was born in Nigeria

Yoruba

Orukọ mi ni

I wa odun mefififin.

Mo ti a bi ni Najiria.

Second Class

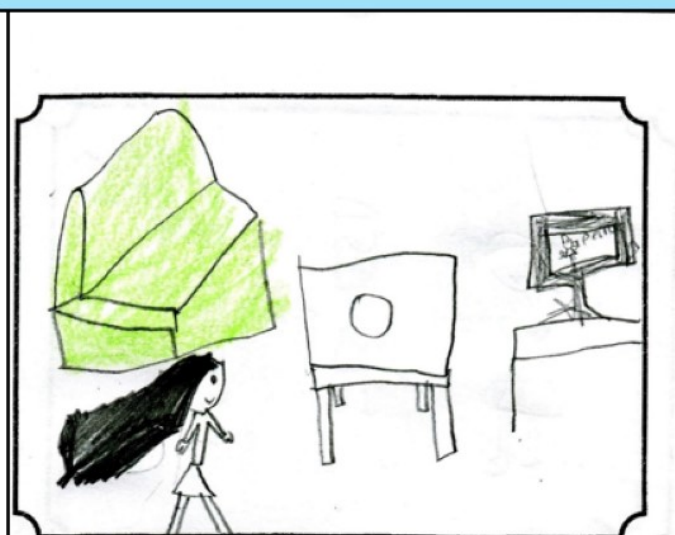
- A more elaborate approach to written composition in English
 - Choose a topic
 - Write a first draft
 - Revise the draft
 - Present it to the teacher for final correction
 - Read the draft aloud to the class
- Dual-language texts become more elaborate
- Autonomous decision of pupils to translate chorus of “It’s a small world after all” into 11 different languages (video)

English



I love my mum and Dad. They love me too! My best friends are Eden, Neepa and Anna. I like to watch television. I play with my cousins, Karen, Aaron and Rocco.

Spanish



Yo amo a mi mamá y mi papá. Ellos también me aman! Mis amigos son Eden, Neepa y Anna. Me gusta ver televisión. Yo juego con mis primos Karen, Aaron and Rocco.

Third and Fourth class

- Spontaneous translation between languages continues as opportunities present themselves
 - *First five sentences of one child's story: It was a frosty morning. Lucy woke up. The room was cold. She was late for school because there was a car crash. She thought it was because of the frost.*
 - Each sentence translated into a different home language: Irish, Spanish, Bangla, Hebrew, Hungarian
- Several pupils wrote about a hedgehog found in their teacher's garden
 - One pupil read aloud the text she had written in Tagalog
 - Another pupil, of Russian/Nigerian heritage, said she now knew the Tagalog word for hedgehog: *parkupino* reminded her of *porcupine*

Third and Fourth Class

- Dual-language texts become more elaborate
- Some children start to write in three languages
- One Filipino girl started keeping a diary about the exploits of her dog, Oliver, which she wrote entirely in Irish
- Children from English-speaking homes show an interest in writing in three languages
 - They may get help learning a third language from an older sibling who is learning a foreign language at secondary school or from a fellow pupil

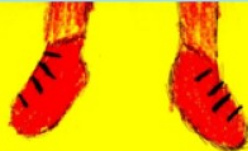
English

I was in the park. I was skating. I fell on the ground. I was sad. I began to cry. I fell on my knees, ankles, foot and 999. The ambulance. My foot was put a bandage. I went home down in the

Irish

Bhí mé sa pháirc. Bhí mé ag scátáil. Thit mé ar an talamh. Bhí brón orm. Thosaigh mé a cry. Thit mé ar mo cós agus ceann. Mair 999. Tháinig aithreacha. Bhí Chuir an bhcairdleán ma rú. Mé abbaile agus síon sa seomra.

Hungarian



A parkban vagyok. Épp gyakorlom. Leestem. Szomorú vagyok. Sírok. Megvitöttem a: térdem, a bokám, hasam és a fejem. Anya hívta a: 999-et. A mentő autó jött. Elköttem a lábam! A nővér be kötötte a lábam. Hazamentem és beültem a szobámba.

Albanian

Na ishte një herë, një vajzë e vogël që quhej Lucy dhe një djalë që quhej Tom dhe kishin një gjyshe që quhej Amber. Ata jetonin në një kasolle në qytetin Waterfall. Një ditë gjyshja e tyre ishte e sëmurë. Amber i tha Lucy dhe Tom që të shknin në dyqan për të blenë bukë. Dhe ata shkuan. Gjate rrugës ata dëgjuan një sirenë që këndonte. Ata shkuan tek ajo. Dhe e pyetën "Si quhesh?" Dhe sirena tha "unë quhem Katie".

English



Once upon a time there was a girl called Lucy and a boy called Tom with a grandma called Amber. They lived in a cottage at Waterfall Town. One day their grandma was ill. Amber told Lucy and Tom to go to the store for some bread. So off they went. On their way they heard a mermaid singing. They went to her. They asked "what is your name?" The mermaid said "I am Katie".

A pupil from a Filipino family wrote her dog Oliver's diary in Irish (same teaching as everyone else; no parental help)

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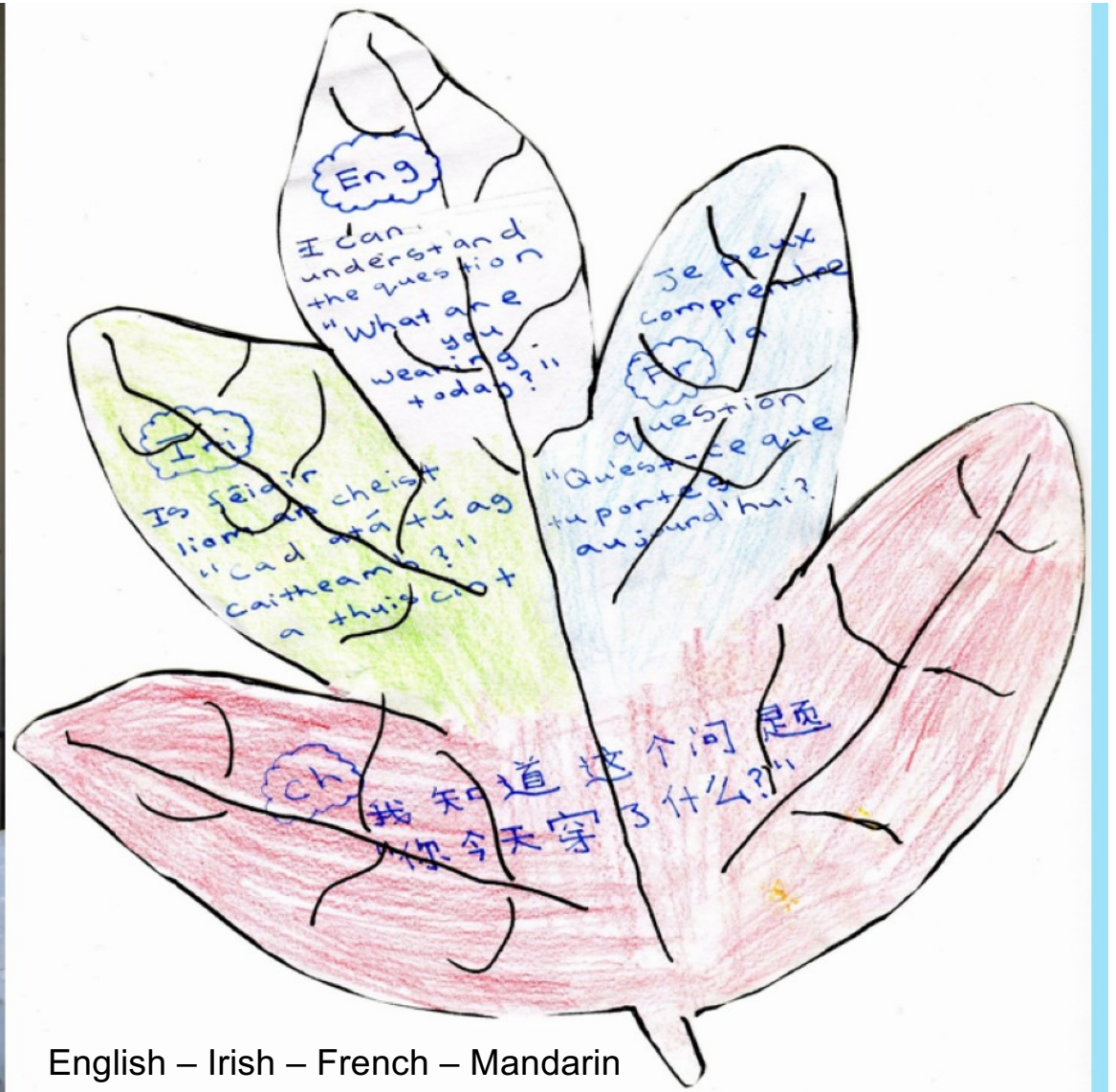
Oliver 🐾🐾

Oliver
<)

Bhí Oliver sa pháirc.
Bhí an cat sa pháirc, freisin.
Thosaigh Oliver agus an cat ag
suyrachadh, agus tith Oliver sa
spóill.
'Déan deisir!' arsa Oliver.
'Ag teacht!' arsa an cat.
Thar éis tamaill, chonaic an
cat an feist ar an talamh.
'Má tá cearas am' arsa an
cat.
Bhí Oliver gan gearr, agus chonaic
se iora nua, agus chonaic an iora nua
Oliver, Thosaigh Oliver ag tith.
'Stop, stop!' arsa an cat.
Gearr an iora nua ar an gearr.
Thosaigh Oliver ag gearr.
Thar éis tamaill bhí tuisle ar
Oliver agus an cat, agus bhí siad
ina cúlata.

Fifth and Sixth Class

- Pupils begin to learn French: another language in which to express curriculum content
- Pupils draw on all the languages at their disposal to translate a Latin Christmas carol
- A German-speaking pupil on sz in Hungarian:
 - “... it's the same in German, where you have *ch* but you say *sh*...and do you remember when we were doing the homophones and we had the same words like I said with the three words cherry, church and kitchen, you have Kirsche, Kirche and Küche”
- Self-assessment introduced: the language tree and the self-assessment leaf (video)



English – Irish – French – Mandarin

Fifth and Sixth Class

- Pupils use their plurilingual skills to write multilingual letters or diaries for fun or to respond to linguistic challenges like writing a story in English using as many French words as possible
- One English-speaking pupil interviewed classmates to find out why Irish is “backwards” (adjective follows noun); concluded that it’s actually English that is “backwards”
- Pupils improvise dramas to show how similarities between some languages allow speakers of those languages to understand one another (video)

A Story in English Using French Words!

Overview: A Story in English Using French Words!

Madame and her **fiancé** went to the **café**. **Madame** ordered **café au lait** and a **baguette**. Her **fiancé** got **creme du lait** and a **croissant**. **Madame** said, "Bon Appetit!"

After that, another woman gave a **brochure** about the new **manicure** shop across the road. **Madame** was so excited but her **fiancé** wasn't! So he decided to buy her a **bouquet** of flowers while **Madame** was getting her nails done.

When they were both finished, they met at a **restaurant**. **Madame** was very happy. She then decided to open her very own **boutique**. It was called **Madame's Boutique**. Her store was **unique**. She gave strangers **brochures** of her **boutique** and it was successful. **Madame** and her **fiancé** were very happy.

Every Monday **Madame** went to **ballet** lessons in a studio. There was a **cuisine** next to her **boutique**. The **chef** was called **Alexandre**. He was very strict chef.

Cuairt ar an Meánscoil

Chuaigh mé agus mo chlann go dtí Pobal Scoil Mhín. Talagang yumao sa gabi. Nous avons vu beaucoup filles e garçons. Thosaigh an phríomhoide ag caint . The whole room started to quiet down. We were told that all the sixth class children were to make their way to the door. Ensuite, une fille a amenée nous dans une piece . Thosaigh said ag scoilt ar na páistí. Si Rainmay, si Petra ,at si Anais at ako nag paghati-hatiin sa isang grupo. We went into one of the English Classes and we did a Volcano Quiz . Une femme a demandé une question difficile et facile a propos de volcan sur le tableau . We also saw a bit of Romeo and Juliet . Four of my neighbours were part of the play.

English, Irish, French, Tagalog

A multilingual fashion show (Sixth Class)

- Planned by the pupils
- Pupils acted as models and commentators, using every language available to them: English, Irish, French, home languages
- Each pupil invented a model and wrote about her in as many languages as possible
- *Marceline* is one example

English

My name is Marceline. I am 15 years old. I am in Holly star High. I am not that girly. I do alot of sports.

Irish

My favorite Is mise Marceline. Tá mé cuicig bhliain

many trophies deag d'ois. Tá mé a

like the colour star high. Nil fear ce

you think is liom spórt. Is aoibh

my friends! Bhuaigh mé a lán to

with them Is aoibhin liom na da

with them! aqua. Is aoibhinn liom

of my story mé igronaí siopadóirear

agus ag scatail le mi

Bain taitneamh astu!

French

Je m'appelle Marceline. J'ai

Je vais à l'école "Holly Star t

J'aime le sport. J'adore le bas

J'ai gagné beaucoup de J'ad

couleurs bleu et aqua. J'adore

amis - je fais le magasin tou

Je vais avec mon ami

Amusez-

Mandarin

我的名字是 Marceline. 我今年 15 岁.

我在 "Holly Star High" 上学. 我不是一个

girly girl. 我很喜欢运动. 我最喜欢

的是篮球! 我 ying 了很多的 jiang

杯. 我很喜欢蓝色和水蓝色真

的很漂亮! 我非常喜欢我的同

学和朋友! 我 jing 常和我的同学出去

gou wu. 有的时 hou 和他们 hua

ban.

Enjoy!

Scoil Bhríde's Approach: four assumptions

- Plurilingual pupils will learn most effectively if they are encouraged to use all the languages at their disposal autonomously – whenever and however they want to
- Even very young children can be trusted to know how to use their home language autonomously as a tool of learning
- The development of oral proficiency, literacy and language awareness is a complex process in which reading and writing support listening and speaking and *vice versa*
- Language awareness is a tool to support learning but also one of learning's most valuable outcomes, and it develops spontaneously when pupils make autonomous use of the languages at their disposal.

Scoil Bhríde's approach: key features

- Reflective and analytical dimensions of learning are firmly rooted in what pupils themselves contribute
- Because classroom interaction takes account of their existing knowledge, skills and interests, pupils tend to be fully engaged
- Pupils are agents of their own learning: as they progress through the school, their ability to direct and evaluate their learning becomes increasingly apparent
- The development of literacy in English as the principal language of schooling feeds into but also depends on the development of pupils' literacy in their home language, Irish and (in Fifth and Sixth Class) French.

Social engagement/cohesion

Pupils' reflections: without home language

closed; empty; pretending; rejecting;

losing an arm or a leg;

devastated; sad; blocking;

A child without a language is a child without a soul.

Pupils' reflections: with home language

*possibilities; advantage; exploring; yes!;
personal; friendship; knowledge; expanding;
closer; warm; spark; point of view;
perspective; together; help; learn; supports;
great; speak out; be courageous*

*It's like when two people speak the same
language
there's a kind of bond between both of
them*

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Thank you
Merci
Go raibh maith agaibh