

# **The response of one Irish primary school to linguistic diversity**

***Déirdre Kirwan PhD***

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# Overview

- Scoil Bhríde (Cailíní)
- Home languages
- Examples from the classroom
- Reflections from teachers, parents and pupils

# **Scoil Bhríde (Cailíní), Blanchardstown**

- Girls' primary school in a western suburb of Dublin
- 1994: First non-native speaker of English enrolled
- 2018: 80% of pupils have a home language other than English or Irish
- Most of the 80% had little or no English when they started school
- Currently more than 50 home languages in addition to English and Irish:  
Afrikaans, Amharic, Arabic, Bangla, Benin, Bosnian, Cantonese, Dari,  
Cebuano, Estonian, Farsi, Foula, French, German, Hebrew, Hindi, Hungarian,  
Igbo, Ilonggo, Indonesian, Ishekiri, Isoko, 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.

# What about home languages?

*If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart –*

Nelson Mandela

*The limits of my language are the limits of my world - Wittgenstein*

- Historical influence
- Identity
- Cognitive benefits
- Why monolingualism in the midst of linguistic diversity?



# Two overarching educational goals

- To ensure that ***all*** pupils 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 and French), and home languages.

# Strengths and supports – school

## School strength:

- Curriculum delivery of English and Irish languages

## Primary School Curriculum – aim:

*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)*

# Strengths and supports – parents

## Parental strength:

- Supporting the maintenance and development of their home language
- Rich resource for learning – crucial for literacy development

## Primary School Curriculum – principle:

*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)*

# Strengths and supports – children's learning

## The home language:

*...is the default medium of [the child's] 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, 2014).*

## Primary School Curriculum – principle:

*The child's existing knowledge and experience form the basis for learning (ibid.: 8)*

# 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.

# Unexpected outcomes

## The 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 migrant parents) for Irish language classes for members

# Unexpected outcomes

## Learner autonomy

### Primary School Curriculum – aim:

- *To prepare the child for further education and lifelong learning* (Government of Ireland, 1999: 7)

### Primary School Curriculum – principle:

- *The child is an active agent in his/her learning* (Ibid.: 8)
- *Collaborative learning should feature in the learning process* (ibid. 9)

# Social engagement/cohesion

*Establishing lasting peace is the work of education; all politics can do is keep us out of war – Maria Montessori*

## **Primary School Curriculum – aim:**

- *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 (Government of Ireland 1999: 7)*



# **Examples from the classroom**

# Junior Infants: age 4 - 5

- 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;
  - use English, Irish, French and/or their home language when carrying out tasks that support the learning of the various concepts encountered in primary school

## Senior Infants: age 5 - 6

Classroom displays include the home languages of pupils

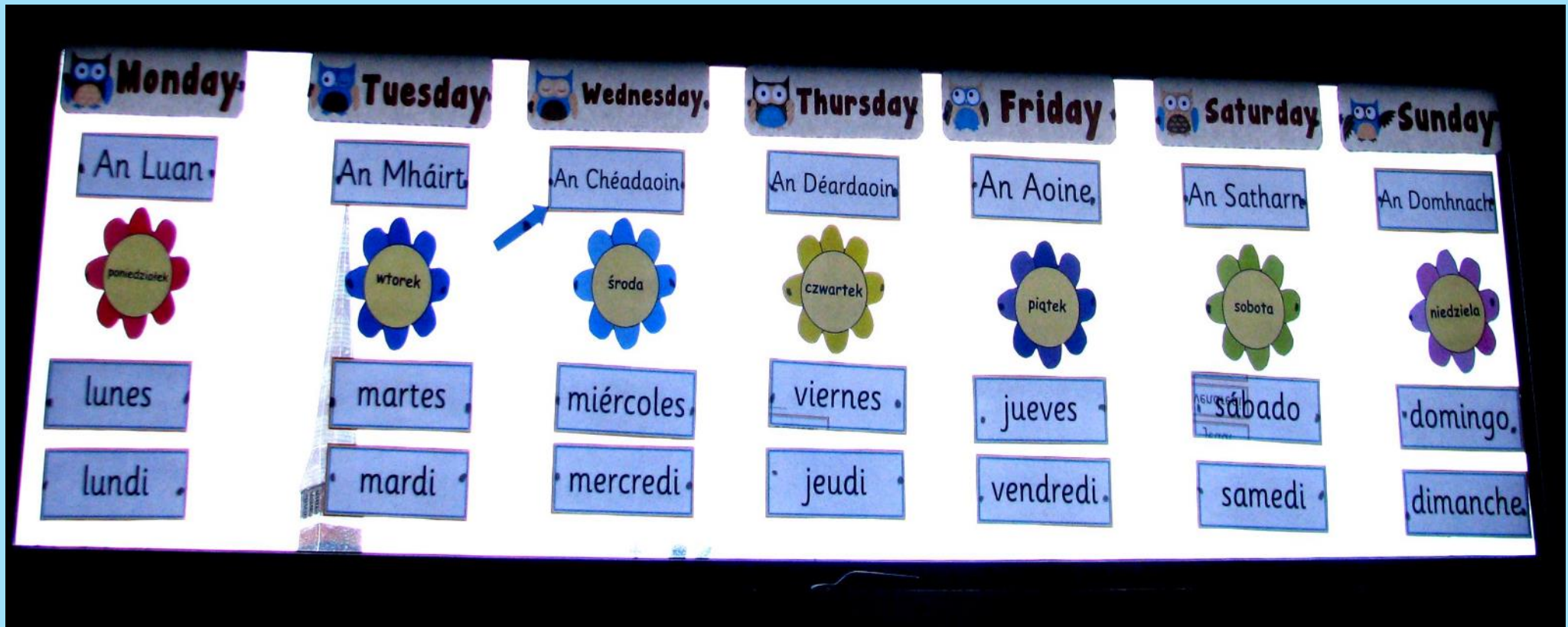
English

Irish

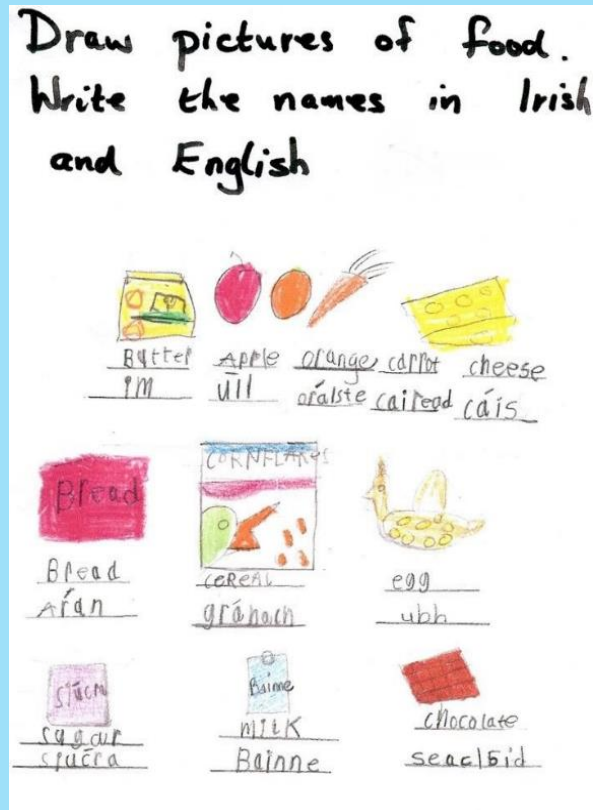
Polish

Spanish

French



Teachers provide worksheets that can be completed using English, Irish and home languages



English

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 കുക്കൂർ.  
Coconut comes from my country.  
കോconut് എന്റെ നാട്ടിൽ നിന്നു വരുന്നു

English  
Irish

# First Class: age 6 - 7

- Translation of key words and phrases into home language(s) is a regular feature of classroom interaction
- Emergence of language awareness
- Texts in two languages: English and Irish; English/Irish and home language

English  
Russian

I am Seven years old


I am from Latvia and my Town is called Riga

I Love To Wear a Cap.

Я люблю есть яблоки.

Я люблю свою маму и папу

Мой Папа и Моя Мама любят меня тоже



November 6<sup>th</sup>

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz  
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

My name is \_\_\_\_\_

mi nombre es \_\_\_\_\_

I am 6 years Old.

tengo 6 años.

I live in Dublin.

Yo vivo en Dublin.

I am in 1<sup>st</sup> class.

Yo Estoy en Primeros.

I am in Scoil Bhríde.

Yo voy al colegio Bríde.

I like school.

Me gusta el colegio.

I am from Spain

Yo soy de España.

201

English and Spanish

# Second Class: 7 - 8

- 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
- Class diary



## Making butter in many languages





**Dual language  
identity text**

Ako nang tawag ko  
I am eight years old.

Ako ay isinilang sa Ireland  
I was born in Ireland.

Ang pamilya nala sa pilipinas.  
My family is from the Philippines.

Ang ating nanay at tatay ay filipino  
My mom and dad is filipino.

Ako ay matutong mag salita nang tatlong wika  
I speak three languages They are English,  
Irish and filipino.

# **Third Class: age 8 - 9**

## **Fourth Class: age 9 - 10**

- Some children start to write in three languages
- Children from English-speaking homes show an interest in writing in three languages
- *The clue is in the word*

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

Bhí mé sa pháirc. Bhí  
mé ag scáit. Thit mé ar  
an talamh. Bhí brón orm.  
Thosaigh mé a  
Thit mé ar m  
cos agus ce  
Mamaí 999. Thá  
atharcha. Bhí  
Khuir an bha  
lindealón mo ru  
mé abhailt ag  
sion sa seomra

## Irish English Hungarian



A parkban vagyok. Épp görkorizom. Lestem. Szomorú  
Vagyok. Sirok. Megittottam a: térdem, a bokám, hasam és a fejem.  
Anyá hinta a: 999-et. A mentő autó jött. Eltörtém a  
lábam! A nővér be kötötte a lábam. Haza mentem és  
be ültem a szobámban.



A pupil from a Filipino family wrote her dog Oliver's diary in Irish

6.2.2015

Oliver 🐾 🐾

Oliver

Bhí Oliver sa pháirc.  
Bhí an cat sa pháirc freisin.  
Thosaigh Oliver agus an cat ag  
sugraadh agus tith Oliver sa  
ghrill.  
Déan deifir! arsa Oliver.  
"Ag teacht!" arsa an cat.  
Tá éis tamail, chonaic an  
cat an peist ar an talamh.  
"Mama tá aras am" arsa an  
cat.  
Bhí Oliver foin gearr, agus chonaic  
se iora rua agus chonaic an iora rua  
Oliver, Thosaigh Oliver ag tith.  
"Stop, stop!" arsa an cat.  
Bhí an iora rua ar an gearr.  
Thosaigh Oliver ag tairn.  
Tá éis tamail bhí tairn ar  
Oliver agus an cat agus bhí siad  
ina coddala.

**Fifth Class: age 10 - 11**  
**Sixth Class: age 11 - 12**

- 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

ridere

Dormi Jesu

Dormi Jesu! Mater ridet

dolci

Quae tam dulcem somnum videt,

Dormi Jesu blandule!

Si non dormis, Mater plorat

Inter filia cantans orat

Blande, veni, somnule

dormitory  
dormir

Mater Misericordiae  
Maternity

cantant  
chanter

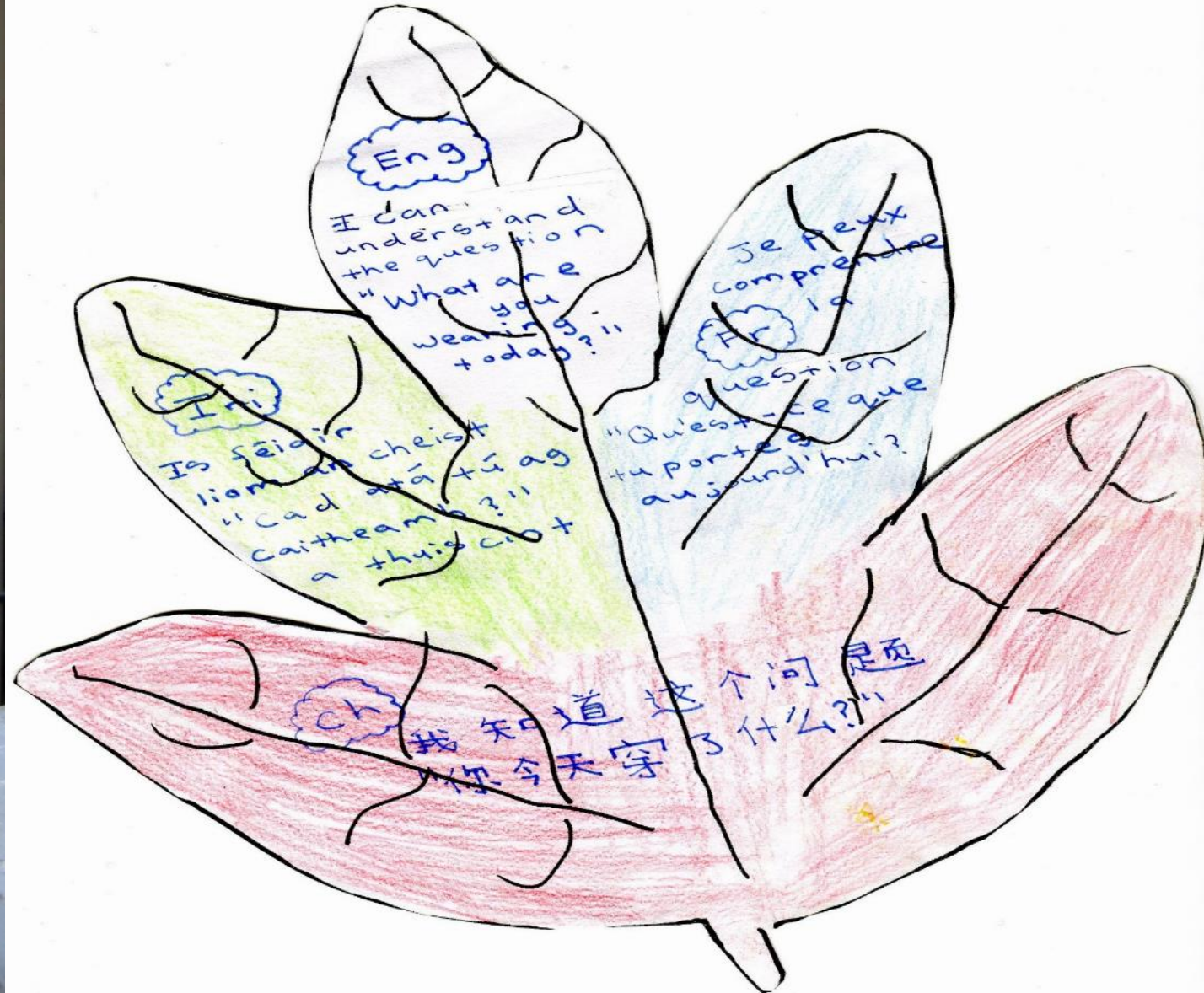
EN

12:27

19/11/2014



# Self-assessment is introduced



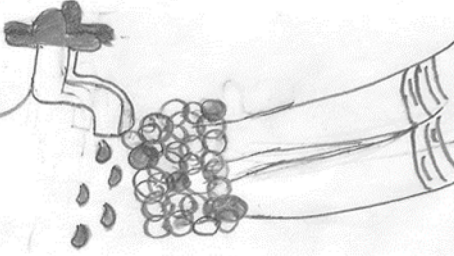
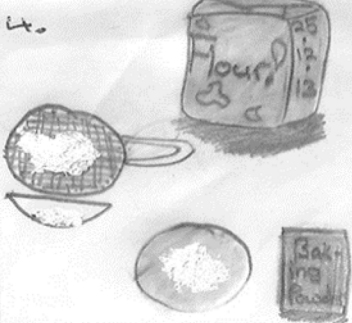
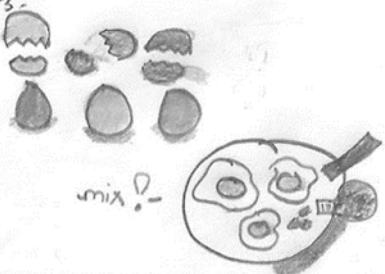


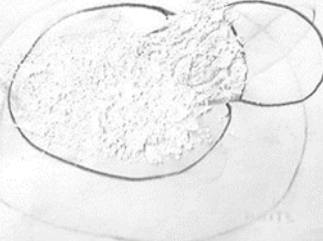
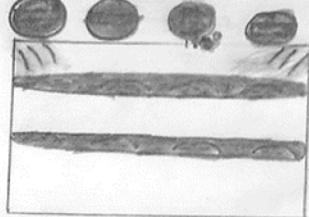
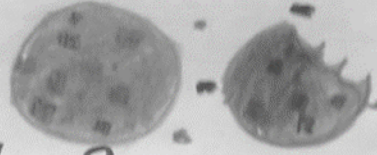
# Fifth and Sixth Class

- Pupils begin to teach themselves new languages
- Pupils improvise dramas to show how similarities between some languages allow speakers of those languages to understand one another
- Pupils use their plurilingual skills to write multilingual letters, recipes, diaries for fun or to respond to linguistic challenges like writing a story in English using as many French words as possible



# The same recipe in four languages

English  
Irish  
French  
Benin

<p>1.</p> 	<p>1 Wash Your Hands! Mí do lámha! Lavez vos mains! Kpobo ué!</p>	<p>1.</p> 	<p>1. Sieve the flour, add the baking powder. Críathraigh an plúr an Púdar. Passer au tamis la farine et la poudre. Umue flour ye ahen, umue baking powder. Bae.</p>
<p>3. Add the eggs and the vanilla. Mix! Cuir isteach na huibheacha agus an fanaile. Measc suas iad. Ajoutez les œufs et la vanille. Mélangez. Umue eggs ube vanilla bae.</p>	<p>3.</p>  <p>mix!</p>	<p>4. Add the chocolate chips and mix again. Cuir isteach an seadair. Ajoutez le chocolat. Umue chocolate chips, ufuenkukugbe.</p>	<p>4.</p> 
<p>2.</p> 	<p>2. Chop the butter, mix the butter + sugar. Gearr an t-im, measc an t-im agus an siúcra. Coupez le beurre et mélangez le beurre et le sucre.</p>	<p>5.</p> 	<p>5. Fold the flour into the mixture. Fill an plúr. Mélangez la farine. Uubue flour mae bae mix re.</p>
<p>7.</p> 	<p>7. Bake at 180° degrees for 12-15 mins. Cuir isteach san oighean é ar 180° ar feadh 12-15 mínead. mettez dans le four. Pour 12-15 minutes.</p>	<p>ENJOY!</p>  <p>Yum?</p>	

## **Sixth Class (11½+): *Cuairt ar an Meánscoil (A visit to the post-primary school***

*Chuaigh mé agus mo chlann go dtí Pobal Scoil Mhín. Talagang yumao sa gabi. Nous avons vu beaucoup filles e garcons. 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 la piece. Thosaigh said ag scoilt ar na páistí. Si Rabia, si Duska, at si Ana 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 apropos de volcan sur le tableau. We also saw a bit of Romeo and Juliet. Four of my neighbours were part of the play.*

**(Irish, Tagalog, English, French)**



## 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 succesful. **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.



## 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.

My favorite Is mise Marceline. Tá mé cuíig bhliain

many trophies deag d'ois. Tá mé a

like the colour Star high. Nil fíor co

you think is liom spórt. Is aoibh

my friends! Bhuaigh mé a lán to

with them Is aoibhín liom na da

with them! aqua. Is aoibhinn liom

of my story mé igronaí siopadóireac

agus ag scatail le m

Bain taitneamh astu!

## Irish

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-

## French

## 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. 有的时候 hou 和他们 hua

ban. Enjoy!



# What the teachers think

- *...Children are responding very positively to the open language policy – even their body language, demeanour within class; the speed and accuracy with which they answer questions when their own language is involved; regardless of subject, their interest increases if it is something to do with home or their own language or their own experience; therefore when they respond it is with much more developed thought... equally in writing (BD: June 2014).*
- *When you bring in the home language the lights come on (SOC: October 2013)*

# What the parents think

- *... finding the similarities between your own home native language and English and Irish... and French.... it definitely speeds up the learning of English. (Italian L1)*
- *[happy about] the school's interest in our language. Before, my daughter was ashamed to hear us speaking it. Now she wants to read and write in it. (Malayalam L1)*
- *... when my child came home and told me that the teacher asked her to say something in Yoruba I sat down and cried because I thought 'someone wants to know about our language' (Yoruba L1).*

## Pupils' reflections: without home language

*closed; not fair; terrible; not able to speak; empty;  
wouldn't understand; pretending; rejecting;  
devastated; without an arm or a leg; sad;  
very shocking*

# Pupils' reflections: without home language

- *[A new pupil] told me that in her former school you were not allowed to speak your own language. I found that very shocking (L1 German)*
- *It's so, so sad because it's like blocking a huge doorway...it's like taking away an advantage of exploring (L1 Kurdish)*
- *...don't hide away from your own language because it's what makes you **you** and it's special and it's, you can't, it's like having an arm or a leg, you can't take it away from you (L1 German)*



## 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 allows us] get personal into each other's cultures and languages; it's very useful for friendship, for knowledge, so in many ways we're all expanding... it makes you feel closer because you have a perspective on that person's point of view. (Kurdish L1)*
- *Sometimes it's, like, when we learn a language it's easier to learn other ones; sometimes it's not really about which language you're learning it's, like, how to learn a language. (English L1)*
- *It's like when two people speak the same language there's a kind of bond between both of them (Yoruba L1)*

**Thank you**  
**Go raibh maith agaibh**

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