

A Plurilingual Approach to Teaching Irish Grammar in English-medium schools

Cur Chuige Iteangach do Theagasc Ghramadach na Gaeilge i scoileanna meán-Bhéarla

Aisling Ní Dhiorbháin & Tara Concannon-Gibney

Seimineár an Earraigh Sealbhú

4 Márta 2025

DCU Ollscoil Chathair
Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City University

An Chomhairle um Oideachas
Gaeltachta & Gaelscolaíochta



SEALBHÚ

Lárionad Taighde DCU
um Fhoghlaim agus Teagasc
na Gaeilge

Leagan amach na cainte

- Cúlra & comhthéacs an taighde – éagsúlacht teanga & chultúrtha in Éirinn, cad atá i gceist le cur chuige ilteangach/ cur chuige ionduchtach
- Ceisteanna an taighde, modheolaíocht & rannpháirtithe
- Conas a cuireadh an cur chuige ionduchtach ilteangach i bhfeidhm
- Taithí na múinteoirí & na bpáistí ar an gcur chuige ionduchtach ilteangach

DCU Ollscoil Chathair
Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City University

An Chomhairle um Oideachas
Gaeltachta & Gaelscolaíochta



SEALBHÚ
Lárionad Taighde DCU
um Fhoghlaím agus Teagasc
na Gaeilge

Background & Context

Cúlra & Comhthéacs an Taighde

DCU Ollscoil Chathair
Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City University

Is tír ilteangach í Éire

- A multilingual country with over 200 languages spoken daily (CSO, 2017, 2022).
- The most widely spoken home languages other than English/Irish are Polish, Romanian, French, Spanish and Portuguese (CSO, 2022).
- At least 12% of primary school children speak a home language that is different from Irish/English (Department of Education, 2024).
- **92%** of primary school children & **96%** of post-primary students attend English-medium schools where Irish is taught as a subject (Department of Education, 2024).

Plurilingualism or Multilingualism

Multilingualism

- **Focus:** societal language use, the coexistence of different languages within society.

Plurilingualism

- **Focus:** Individuals' dynamic, fluid, active language use
- A language user's potential to actively use all of their linguistic knowledge at varying levels of proficiency and for different purposes

(Council of Europe, 2001; 2020; Galante et al., 2022)

A Plurilingual Approach to language teaching

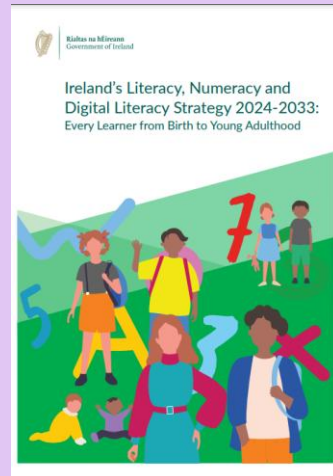
- **Partial** competences are valued - language skills do not need to be at equal levels within or across the different languages (Council of Europe, 2001; Council of Europe, 2020; Piccardo, 2013).
- **All linguistic knowledge is an asset.**
- A plurilingual approach to language education gives learners the opportunity to use all of their linguistic & cultural repertoire in school (Concannon-Gibney et al., 2022; Little & Kirwan, 2019; Galante et al., 2022).
- Plurilingualism supports **pluralistic approaches** & **language interconnectedness** rather than monolingual approaches in which different languages are considered as separate entities (Piccardo, 2013; Galante et al., 2022).

A Plurilingual Approach to language teaching

- Languages are learned more effectively when students make cognitive and affective connections with their repertoires of languages, cultures and lived experiences
- Plurilingual approaches validate all linguistic knowledge and can empower learners
- Plurilingual approaches are linguistically, culturally, racially and socially inclusive & can challenge linguistic hierarchies.
- There is no one way to implement a plurilingual approach (Galante et al., 2022; Payant & Galante, 2022)

Plurilingualism in Policy

- *Ireland's Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy 2024-2033: Every Learner from Birth to Young Adulthood* (Government of Ireland, 2024).



Feasacht Teanga

- Tá béim ar fhorbairt na feasachta teanga & idirnascthacht teanga sna curaclaim ag léibheal na bunscoile & ag leibheal na hiarbhunscoile.

‘Children for whom English is an additional language (EAL) bring greater awareness and appreciation of languages and cultures to a classroom. Encouraging children to explore similarities and differences between languages and cultures can be of great benefit to the classroom language-learning environment by fostering a greater appreciation of languages.’ (Government of Ireland, 2019, p.9).

Foghlaimíonn an scoláire faoi struchtúr na teanga agus conas a oibríonn sí. Spreagtar an scoláire chun gnéithe na teanga nach bhfuil inchomparáide leis an mBéarla (foclóir, gramadach, comhréir agus foghraíocht) a thabhairt faoi deara. (Sonraíocht Ghaeilge na Sraithe Sóisearaí, lch.6)



An Inductive Plurilingual Approach to Teaching Irish Grammar

- An inductive approach to the teaching Irish grammar encourages learners to:
 - (i) discover grammatical rules in Irish
 - (ii) articulate the rule in their own words using metalanguage,
 - (iii) to make **cross linguistic** comparisons, i.e. compare and contrast patterns and rules in Irish with similar patterns and rules in English and home languages * **This is one way to implement a plurilingual approach**

(Ó Duibhir, et al., 2016; Ní Dhiorbháin & Ó Duibhir, 2017).

Research Questions

Ceisteanna an Taighde

DCU Ollscoil Chathair
Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City University

Research Questions

Teachers

- What are teachers' views regarding an inductive plurilingual approach to teaching Irish grammar?
- What impact does professional development have on English-medium teachers' knowledge for implementing an inductive plurilingual approach to teaching Irish grammar?

Children

- What are the views of children in English-medium primary schools on an inductive plurilingual approach to teaching Irish grammar?

Methods

Modheolaíocht

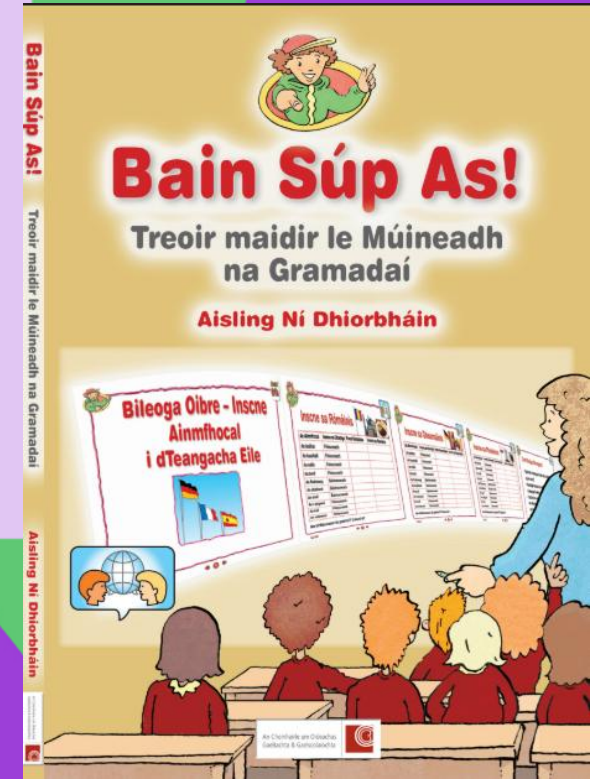
DCU Ollscoil Chathair
Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City University

Research Participants

- **Five** urban English-medium primary schools
- **11 teachers** and **291 children in 4th, 5th and 6th class** took part in inductive plurilingual grammar lessons over a six-week period.
- **Purposive sampling:** primary schools with a high percentage of children from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds were selected to participate in the research.
- **60-80%** of children in the five schools spoke home languages other than English or Irish

Method

- The researchers provided teachers with all the teaching resources.
- One of the researchers with experience in working for the Professional Development Services for Teachers modelled lessons and provided in class and virtual support to teachers prior to and during the project.
- This is an example of ‘coaching’ as professional development (Ali et al., 2018; Desimone & Pak, 2017).
- Teachers taught one or two lessons per week over 6-week period.
- The lessons were plurilingual grammar lessons



Sample

- Pilot: One school participated in the research in November/ December 2023. Three teachers and three classes (n=84)
- Main study: Eight teachers in 4 schools took part in the research post-Christmas in January 2024.
- Children in 4th-6th class aged 10-12 years (n=291) participated in the research.

Table 1: Schools that participated in research, the class-group and the number of children

School	Class-group and Number of Children
School A	Class 4 (n=28) Class 5 (n=28) Class 6 (n=28)
School B	Class 4 (n=27) Class 5 (n=27) Class 6 (n=27)
School C	Class 5 (n=24) Class 6 (n=24)
School D	Class 4 (n=24)
School E	Class 4 (n=27) Class 6 (n=27)
Total number of children	291

Data Collection

- Pre & Post focus groups/interviews with teachers (n=11)
- Focus groups with children from each class in every school (n=60)
- Observation in some classes

Home Languages other than Irish/English spoken by children who engaged in focus groups

Liotuáinis, Polainnis, Sínis, Spáinnis, Tamailis, Fraincis, Teileagúis, Hiondúis, Puinseáibis, Laitvis, Araibis, Gearmáinis, Rúisis, Portaingéilis, Iarúibis, Urdúis, Rómáinis, Bulgáiris, Iodáilis

Lithuanian, Polish, Chinese, Spanish, Tamil, French, Telugu, Hindi, Punjabi, Latvian, Arabic, German, Russian, Portuguese, Yoruba, Urdu, Romanian, Bulgarian, Italian



Inductive Approach

- Each class focused on one grammatical pattern at a time.
- The teachers presented the ppt.x slides **(enhanced input)** on the interactive whiteboard & guided the children to discover the rule.
- Cad a thugann tú faoi deara? An bhfeiceann tú riail/ patrún?
- *What do you notice? Do you see a rule/pattern?*



**Cad a thugann tú
faoi deara?**



Tá peann **dubh** agam.





Tá mála **bándearg** agam.





Tá bosca **glas** agam.





Tá cóta **deas** agam.



- An bhfeiceann sibh riail?
- An bhfeiceann sibh patrún?



Tá cóta **deas** agam.



Innéacs



Tá bosca **glas** agam.



Innéacs



Tá mála **bándearg** agam.



Innéacs



Tá peann **dubh** agam.



Innéacs

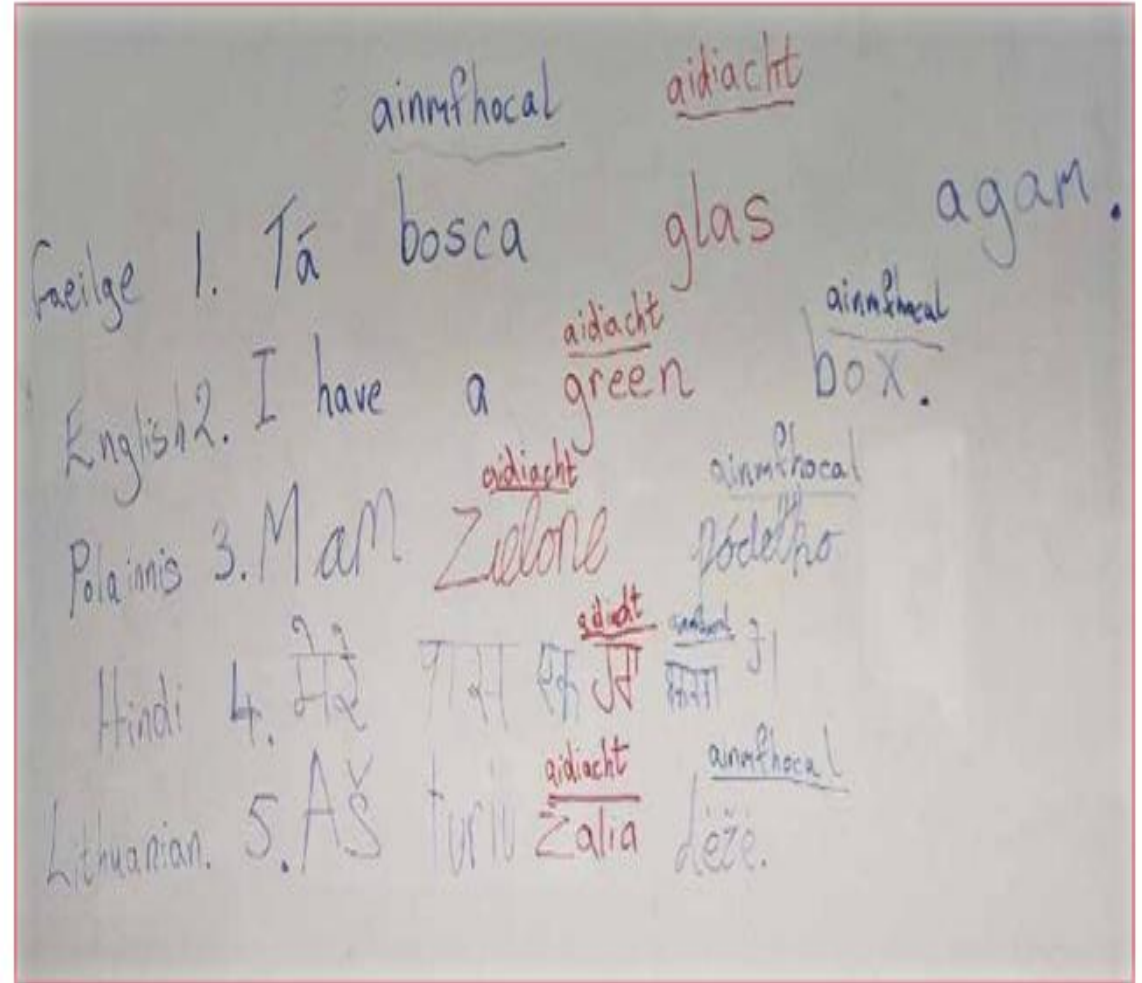


Tháinig na páistí ar an riail. Tagann an t-ainmfhocal i ndiaidh na haidiachta sa Ghaeilge.

Inductive Approach

- Teachers gave the children the opportunity to talk about the same pattern in their home languages.
- Children wrote samples from their home languages on the board - using one colour for the adjective and another colour for the noun.
- They were the experts.

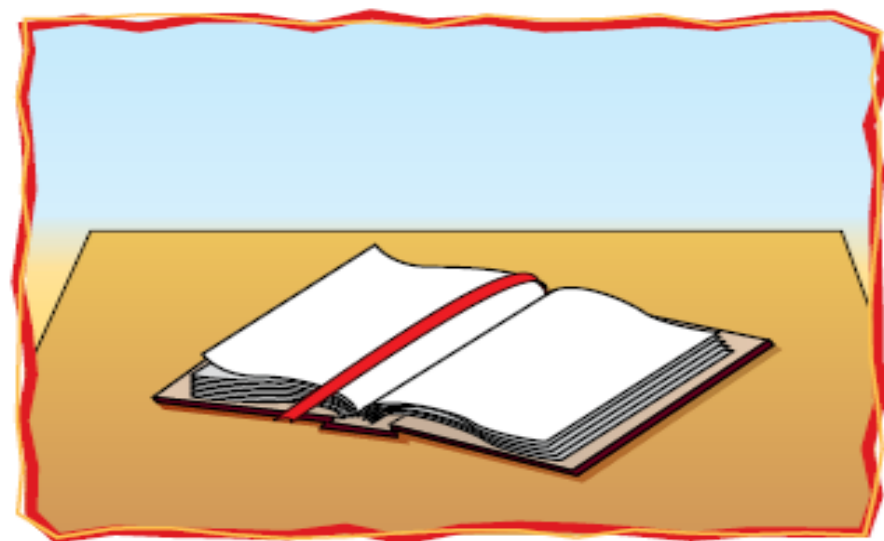
Figure 2: Example of the sentence: 'I have a green box' written in Irish, English, Polish, Hindi and Lithuanian





An Dialann Mhachnaimh

- Cad a d'fhoghlaim mé?
- Míniú ar cad a d'fhoghlaim mé
- Mo shamplaí féin
- Cad a cheap mé?





Dialann Mhachnaimh

1. Cad a d'fhoghlaim mé?

Ia bosca glas agam,
Ia brídeál corra agam.

2. Miniú ar cad a d'fhoghlaim mé

La hailín ar deis sa ainmfhocal agus
arís aidiacht.

3. Mo shamplaí féin

Ia bosca glas agam
I have a green box

4. Cad a cheap mé?

I think it was a good way to
learn, ~~because~~ because she did
all the lessons in Ghaeilge

An Dialann Mhachnaimh

Chláraigh na páistí an riail sa dialann mhachnaimh.

+ D'fhoghlaim siad meiti-theangam.sh *ainmfhocal, aidiacht*

Patrún a hAon: Tagann an aidiacht i ndiaidh an ainmfhocail sa Ghaeilge.



**Cad a thugann tú
faoi deara?**

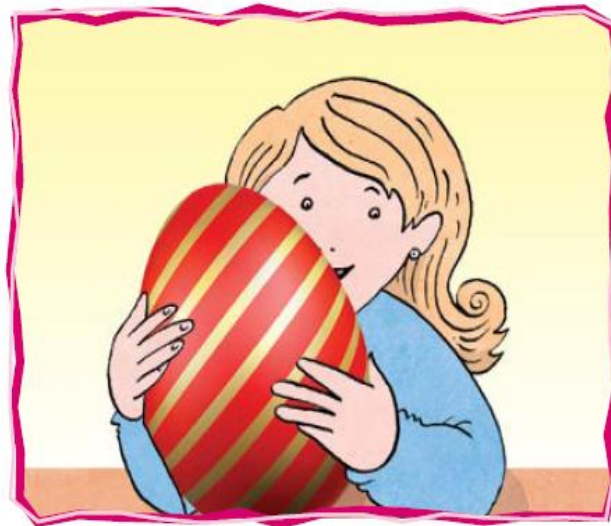


Tá cathaoir **d**hearg agam.





Tá ubh mhór agam.



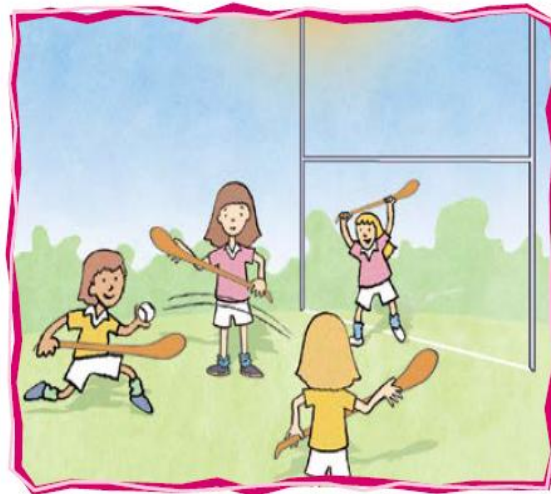


Tá pancóg **h**lasta ag Rónán.





Tá liathróid **b**heag ag Síle.





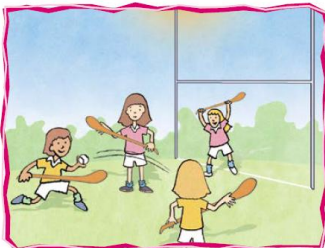
Tá cathaoir **d**hearg agam.



Tá pancóg **b**hlasta ag Rónán.



Tá liathróid **b**heag ag Síle.



Tá ubh **m**hór agam.



Tháinig na páistí ar an riail. Séimhítear ainmfhocal a thosaíonn ar chonsan i ndiaidh ainmfhocail bhaininscnigh.

The approach encouraged parental involvement in some cases

Sample- Gender of Nouns in Urdu

(kacami) food (M)	Arbie / urdu	charger (charger) F
(kurat algadam) football (F)		library (khan) M
(kurat sala) basket ball (M)		School (school) ng
(qalam) pencil (M)	150 words	company (company) M
(mumhai) rubber (M)		ketchup (ketchup) F
(biraya) sharpener (M)	170	gagar (carrot) M
(nukta) joke (M)		tomato (tomato) M
(mrhban) hello (Ng) F	paper (paper) M	gull (tomorrow) F
(qalam) pen (M)	sedehar (steady) ng	ag (today)
(yarsaa) forget (F)	fridge (frige) F	icecream (ice cream) M
(mugalad) folder (F)	table (table) ng	sandwich (sandwich) M
(ma) winter (M)	gurtel (shoes) M	balloon (balloon) F
(albitilz) beetle (ng)	nam (name) F	both (lots) M
(mudhiki) funny (F)	carpet (carpet) F	spring (spring) F
(hazar) fun (F)	wall (wall) M	Pizza (Pizza) M
(shukulata) chocolate (M)	pencil wala mil (milk) F	cake (cake) ng
(jdaan) very (M)	brjama (pants) M	noodles (noodles) M
(eid milad saeid) Happy birthday (M)	cupra (clothes) F	grapes (grapes) F
(saeid) happy (F)	Jumper (jumper) F	leh (one) F
(munzaeij) upset (F)	ketul (ketul) M	do (two) M
(yarsath) copy (F)	grey (grey) M	thair (three) M
(ghadib) angry	bdo (dad) M	char (four) F
(ghabian) foolish (F)	Happy mothers day (F)	panch (five) F
(saeidi yaun al'umil) Happy mothers day (F)		che (six) M
P kes so who (how are you) M		kurta (dress) F
ley theek hai (im good) F		heala (pink) F
theek (OK) F		panch (Six) M
		alafis (bye) M
		Asalamu + la + la + me (hello) F

An Cur Chuige Ionduchtach Iteangach

- Cur chuige simplí atá ann
- Bíonn na páistí agus na múinteoirí ag foghlaim óna chéile.
- Is fiú na struchtúir a chleachtadh sa teanga ó bhéal agus sa scríbhneoireacht Ghaeilge chomh maith.
- Is fiú iarraidh ar na páistí samplaí a aimsiú i gcomhthéacs.
- Is féidir naisc a dhéanamh idir teangacha trí theagasc ghramadach na Gaeilge.



Inscne san Úcráinis



An tAinmfhocal	Inscne sa Ghaeilge	Focal Úcráinise	Inscne san Úcráinis
An leabhar	Firinscneach		
An buachaill	Firinscneach		
An cailín	Firinscneach		
An bord	Firinscneach		
An fhuinneog	Baininscneach		
An chathaoir	Baininscneach		
An scoil	Baininscneach		
An t-airgead	Firinscneach		
An t-úll	Firinscneach		
An múinteoir	Firinscneach		

An bhfeiceann tú patrún? Céard é?

innéacs



Inscne sa Pholainnis



An tAinmfhocal	Inscne sa Ghaeilge	Focal Polainnise	Inscne sa Polainnise
An leabhar	Firinscneach		
An buachaill	Firinscneach		
An cailín	Firinscneach		
An bord	Firinscneach		
An fhuinneog	Baininscneach		
An chathaoir	Baininscneach		
An scoil	Baininscneach		
An t-airgead	Firinscneach		
An t-úll	Firinscneach		
An múinteoir	Firinscneach		

An bhfeiceann tú patrún? Céard é?

innéacs



Inscne sa Fhraincis



An tAinmfhocal	Inscne sa Ghaeilge	Focal Fraincise	Inscne sa Fhraincis
An leabhar	Firinscneach		
An buachaill	Firinscneach		
An cailín	Firinscneach		
An bord	Firinscneach		
An fhuinneog	Baininscneach		
An chathaoir	Baininscneach		
An scoil	Baininscneach		
An t-airgead	Firinscneach		
An t-úll	Firinscneach		
An múinteoir	Firinscneach		

An bhfeiceann tú patrún? Céard é?

innéacs



Inscne sa Rómáinis



An tAinmfhocal	Inscne sa Ghaeilge	Focal Rómáinise	Inscne sa Rómáinis
An leabhar	Firinscneach		
An buachaill	Firinscneach		
An cailín	Firinscneach		
An bord	Firinscneach		
An fhuinneog	Baininscneach		
An chathaoir	Baininscneach		
An scoil	Baininscneach		
An t-airgead	Firinscneach		
An t-úll	Firinscneach		
An múinteoir	Firinscneach		

An bhfeiceann tú patrún? Céard é?

innéacs



Findings Torthaí

DCU Ollscoil Chathair
Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City University

Dearcthaí na Múinteoirí ar an gcur chuige

- **Positive Aspects:** (i) active learning, (ii) Inclusion of home languages and (iii) language awareness
- **Active Learning:** Children were actively engaged in learning & developing language learning skills
- **Inclusion of Home Languages:** Children made connections across languages; they were the experts and learning Irish became more interesting
- **Language Awareness:** Children developed awareness of structures across languages & metalanguage to talk about languages

Dearcthaí na Múinteoirí

I noticed a change in the children's attitude towards Irish when I approached it in a different way. They liked playing around with it and looking it up together and it made it a bit more collaborative - we were all learning together. (Teacher K, School E)

We're a very diverse school – loads of languages and in my class there's one particular child, he speaks three or four languages and he can get very frustrated with his English but it really gave him a chance to shine. (Teacher B, School A)

Dearcthaí na Múinteoirí faoin Forbhairt Ghairmiúil

- Teachers developed both content knowledge (knowledge of grammar rules) & pedagogical content knowledge (how to implement a plurilingual approach)
- Focused and supportive
- Modelling and feedback
- Value in providing resources for teachers
- Less reliance on the textbook
- Teachers said they would continue to use the approach
- Calls for a whole school approach and sustained practice

Dearcthaí na Múinteoirí faoin FG

Like seeing Eithne doing it the first time was really helpful. It was great to see how easy it was like to portray the different examples and using different things in the classroom like peann dearg agus mála bán dearg and things like that. It just shows how easy it is. (School A, Teacher C)

Being able to see it modelled, that was a big part of it. Looking at the lesson plans, I was overwhelmed and then once I actually saw it. (Teacher I, School D)

Dearcthaí na bpáistí ar an gcur chuige

- Themes

- (i) the benefits of the inductive approach

- (ii) the development of language awareness

- (iii) the benefits of the plurilingual approach.

(i) The Benefits of the Inductive Approach

- The children were unanimous that the inductive plurilingual approach was a fun approach in which they were actively engaged (problem solving).
- They believed they would have a better memory of the rules because they discovered them themselves.
- They would prefer to discover rules rather than have a teacher telling them & they linked this to developing skills for independent learning
- The children enjoyed using digital tools such as an iPad to find information and explained that this approach was more interactive than studying from the textbook.

*I think it's better for you to discover them because it gives you more skill and it would be better for secondary school and college. You're also more likely to remember it, it's self-accomplishment rather than being told. I also think that it's better that we find it out because in the future there won't always be a teacher there to tell you something.
(School E, Sixth Class Child).*

(ii) Development of Language Awareness

- The children gave many examples of the rules they had learned and how they compared and contrasted structures across languages. They used the Irish metalanguage competently and confidently, e.g. masculine, feminine, noun and adjective (firinscneach, baininscneach, ainmfhocal & aidiacht).
- Some of the children expressed the view that learning Irish grammar could help them learn other languages.

We learned about firinscneach and baininscneach. I didn't even know they were a thing until then. It was interesting to kind of how to figure out if they're firinscneach or baininscneach. I liked learning that they weren't just words, that they have more depth. Ainmfhocal agus aidiacht. We did that in different languages. We chose a sentence and wrote it down and people came up to the board to see if it was more like English to see if the adjective is before the noun or like Irish where it was ainmfhocal before aidiacht. (School E, Sixth Class Child)

(iii) Benefits of the Plurilingual Approach

- The children explained that it helped them to learn Irish when they made a connection with their home language and that learning **Irish helped them make connections** across languages.
- The approach encouraged an interest in language learning and created opportunities for them to share knowledge from a diversity of cultures and languages.

It's easier learning it while you're comparing it with your language because it's easier to remember and then you get the hang of it. It's just really fun this way and I prefer it a bit more than the normal way. It's also fun to learn about what languages my friends speak and their rules in their language. You get to know a bit more about other languages and Irish. (School B, Sixth Class Child)

It was nice to see how other languages would say a certain sentence. We get to see how other people's languages sound like and show how our language looks like and sounds like. We can teach other people our language. We can also experience other languages and become familiar with them. (School B, Fifth Class Child)

Conclusions/ Conclúidí

Positive experiences of inductive plurilingual approach

- learner centred, active approach (Ní Dhiorbháin & Ó Duibhir, 2017; Ó Duibhir et al., 2016)
- cross linguistic language awareness (Jessner et al., 2016)
- development of language learning skills (Cummins, 2021)
- affirmation of linguistic and cultural diversity (Galante et al., 2022)

Supports for teachers – coaching & provision of
RESOURCES (Ní Dhiorbháin et al. 2024)

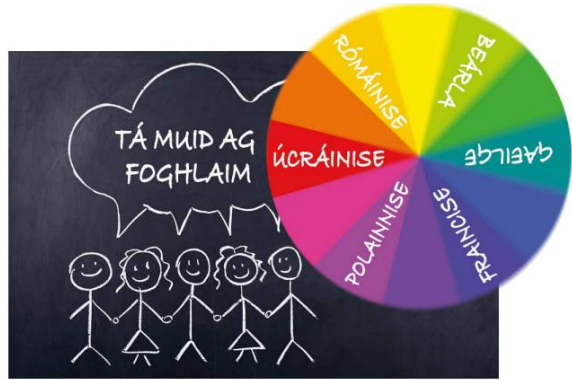
Consider extending the approach

Buntáistí Fhoghlaim na Gaeilge

- Tá an-chuid buntáistí ag dul d'fhoghlaim na Gaeilge mar gurb í an dara teanga choiteann atá á foghlaim ag mórchuid na bpáistí
- Chomh maith le buntáistí sainiúla na Gaeilge, tá buntáistí breise ann: *Forbairt feasachta teanga, forbairt scileanna foghlama teanga, treisiú an ilteangachais & tuiscintí idirchultúrtha inár scoileanna & inár bpobal.*

I know some languages were connected but I never made the connection between Irish and other languages.

(School A, Fifth Class Child)



Cur Chuige Ilteangach do Theagasc Ghramadach na Gaeilge

i mBunscoileanna Béarla

Aisling Ní Dhiorbháin, Tara Concannon-Gibney,
Eithne Ní Dhubhghaill



A Plurilingual Approach to Teaching Irish Grammar

in English-medium primary schools

Aisling Ní Dhiorbháin, Tara Concannon-Gibney,
Eithne Ní Dhubhghaill

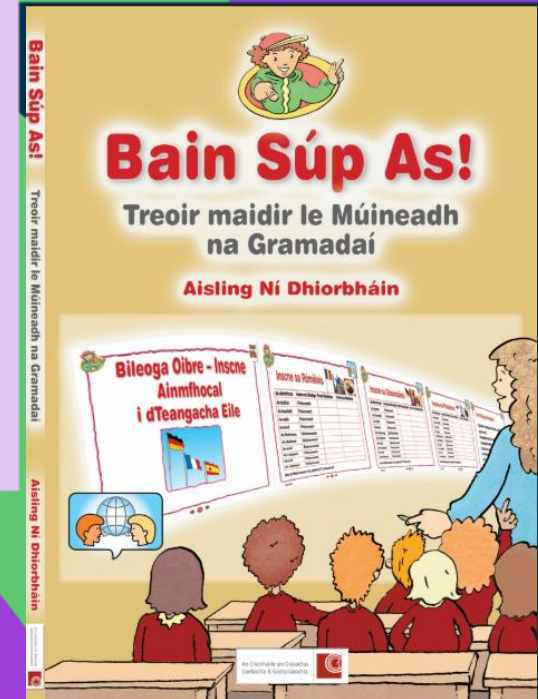


Míle Buíochas leis na múinteoirí & na páistí a ghlac páirt sa taighde

Buíochas le COGG

Buíochas le hEithne Ní Dhubhghaill

Beidh na háiseanna ar fáil go luath



Ceisteanna: Questions?

- aisling.nidhiorbhain@dcu.ie
- tara.concannon-Gibney@dcu.ie



English



Gaeilge

Tagairtí: References

Council of Europe. (2001). *Common framework for references for languages: Teaching, learning, assessment*. Council of Europe.

Council of Europe. (2018) *Common framework for references for languages: Teaching, learning, assessment: Companion volume*. Council of Europe.

Central Statistics Office (CSO). (2017). *Profile 7: Migration and diversity*.
<https://www.cso.ie/en/csolatestnews/presspages/2017/census2016profile7-migrationanddiversity/>

Central Statistics Office (CSO). (2022). Migration and diversity.
<https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cpsr/censusofpopulation2022-summaryresults/migrationanddiversity/>

Cummins, J. (2021). *Rethinking the Education of Multilingual Learners : A Critical Analysis of Theoretical Concepts*. (1st ed.). Channel View Publications.
<https://doi.org/10.21832/9781800413597>

Concannon-Gibney, T., de Brún, J., Ní Dhiorbháin, A., Ní Láimhín, M., & Ó Duibhir, P. (2022). *Pedagogical strategies, approaches and methodologies to support literacy and digital literacy development for Gaeilge and EAL*. Department of Education.
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7881298>

Department of Education (2024). *Statistics*. <https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/key-statistics/>

Tagairtí: References

Galante, A., Chiras, M., dela Cruz, J. W. N., & Zeaiter, L. F. (2022). Plurilingual guide: Implementing critical plurilingual pedagogy in language education. Plurilingual Lab Publishing. https://www.mcgill.ca/plurilinguallab/files/plurilinguallab/plurilingual_guide.pdf

Government of Ireland. (2024). *Straitéis Litearthachta, Uimhearthachta agus Litearthachta Digití na hÉireann, 2024-2033: Gach Foghlaimoír ó Bhreith go Duine Óg Fásta*. <https://www.gov.ie/ga/foilsuichan/i-dtreo-straitéis-nua-litearthachta-uimhearthachta-agus-litearthachta-digití-leirbhreithniú-ar-an-litriocht/>

Jessner, U., Allgäuer-Hackl, E., & Hofer, B. (2016). Emerging Multilingual Awareness in Educational Contexts: From Theory to Practice. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 72(2), 157–182. <https://doi.org/10.3138/cmlr.274600>

Little, D. G., & Kirwan, D. (2019). *Engaging with linguistic diversity: A study of educational inclusion in an Irish primary school*. Bloomsbury Academic.

Ní Dhiorbháin, A., & Ó Duibhir, P. (2017). An explicit-inductive approach to grammar in Irish-medium immersion schools. *Language Awareness*, 26(1), 3–24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09658416.2016.1261870>

Ó Duibhir, P., Dhiorbháin, A. N., & Cosgrove, J. (2016). An inductive approach to grammar teaching in Grade 5 & 6 Irish immersion classes. *Journal of Immersion and Content-Based Language Education*, 4(1), 33–58. <https://doi.org/10.1075/jicb.4.1.02dui>

Piccardo, E. (2013). Plurilingualism and Curriculum Design: Toward a Synergic Vision. *TESOL Quarterly*, 47(3), 600–614. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.110>

Seimineár an tseachtain seo chugainn

Dé Máirt 11 Márta

19.00

Gareth Caulfield

**Transmitting Minority Languages Within the
Majority Language Classroom: The Case of Welsh**