

Covid-19 and language education: Making home schooling motivating and fun

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Overview

- Language(s) in Europe
- Experience and lessons learned from Scoil Bhríde (Cailíní)
- ECML's *Treasure Chest*
 - structure
 - supporting home schooling
 - developing children's plurilingual repertoires
- Conclusion

Language in Europe

- According to the Council of Europe's *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, **plurilingualism** is “a communicative competence to which all knowledge and experience of language contributes and in which languages interrelate and interact” (Council of Europe 2001: 4)
- The Council of Europe's plurilingual approach entails that all the languages in the learner's repertoire have a part to play in his or her education
- *“The exercise of democracy and social inclusion depends in part on language education policy”* (Council of Europe 2007)
- EU language policy objective: every European citizen should master two other languages in addition to their mother tongue (Council of the European Union 2019)
- EU aspiration to be united in diversity underpins the whole European project. Languages can build bridges between people, giving us access to other countries and cultures, and enabling us to understand each other better

Scoil Bhríde (Cailíní), Blanchardstown

320 pupils from
4 to 12 years

80% from immigrant
families

Most had little or no
English when they
started school

51 home languages,
most of them
unknown to teachers



Afrikaans, Amharic, Arabic, Bangla, Benin, Bosnian, Cantonese, Cebuano, Dari, Estonian, Farsi, Foula, French, German, Hebrew, Hindi, Hungarian, Igbo, Ilonggo, Indonesian, Isoko, Itsekiri, 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, Visayan, Xhosa, Yoruba

Approach adopted in Scoil Bhríde (Cailíní)

Two overarching goals

- To ensure that **all** pupils gain full access to education, which means helping them to become proficient in the Language of Schooling (LoS)
- To exploit linguistic diversity for the benefit of **all** pupils by implementing an integrated approach to language education that embraces the LoS, languages of the curriculum (Irish and French), and Home Languages (HLs).

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
- **Open language policy:** no restrictions placed on pupils' use of their HLs at school, whether inside or outside the classroom
- **Strong emphasis on development of language awareness:** HLs treated as a resource for *all* learners
- **Strong emphasis on the development of literacy skills in English, Irish, French and HLs:** writing and speaking support one another in many different ways; importance of parental involvement in their daughters' literacy development.

Outcomes

- Pupils achieve unusually high levels of metalinguistic awareness
- Thanks to a strong emphasis on writing, minority pupils develop high levels of age-appropriate literacy in English, Irish, French, and HLs
- Pupils' achievement in Irish is ranked in the top 12% of primary schools nationally
- From an early age pupils undertake ambitious autonomous learning initiatives
- The inclusion of HLs promotes well-being, self-esteem, and social cohesion
- In the standardized tests of English and Maths that pupils take each year from First Class (6½+) to Sixth Class (11½+), the school performs consistently above the national average

Lessons learned – listening

We need to listen more

- By listening we hear what children are interested in, what they have difficulty with, what they do and do not like. We hear their questions
- Listening and what we learn from it can become a fertile ground for learning because we are using the interest and curiosity of the child as the starting point
- When they propose an idea, they will be motivated and engaged in carrying it out
- Keying into children's interests and curiosity supports the development of the *learners' autonomous skills*, the skills necessary for driving their own learning

Lessons learned – child-centred learning

- Start from the child's existing knowledge and experience. This forms the basis for learning
- Use dialogue and discussion to introduce/ explore new material. Create an environment where children's contributions are encouraged in whatever language they know
- When learning is **meaningful** to them, i.e., when they make their own **contributions**, children's interest and curiosity are aroused and they become **active learners**
- Active learning can happen independently and/ or collaboratively
- This also supports children's ability to self assess, .e.g., what I know/ don't know/ need to do in order to learn
- Whichever language they use helps children to clarify what they know, acquire new concepts, and deepen concepts already learned
- Parents and the life of the home are very important in supporting children's learning

Towards plurilingual education

There are many reasons why HLs are important for young learners:

- Learners' HLs are:
 - central to their sense of self (identity)
 - the default medium of their discursive thinking and their cognitive tool for learning
 - ever present in the unspoken stream of their consciousness
- To suppress HLs is cruel, foolish and doomed to failure (European Commission 2020a: 14, 15)
- If learners are to be fully included in the life of the school/ learning situations, ways must be found of including their HLs in the educational process (European Commission 2020b: 24,25)

Three functions of home languages in the classroom

- In reciprocal communication with other pupils who have the same or a closely related HL
 - Play at the beginning of the school day and in the yard
 - Pair and group work (may use HL but report to larger group in LoS)
- For non-reciprocal purposes of display: “This what we say in my language”
 - In the most junior classes learning to count, working with shapes and colours, and action games are multilingual activities
 - Use of home languages scaffolds the learning of LoS and additional taught language
- As a source of intuitive linguistic knowledge that individual pupils make available to the teacher and the rest of the class
 - Enrichment of curriculum content and consolidation of curriculum learning

Developing language awareness

- Early emergence of language awareness – First Class (6½+)
 - A pupil from a Chinese family recognized and translated a number of words in a children’s publication from China, 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
- Introduction of fractions in Third Class (8½+)
 - Teacher associated *fraction* with *fracture* and elicited synonyms (*break, split*) and words for *break* in other languages
 - Romanian pupil offered *rupt*, which pupils quickly linked to the *eruption* of a volcano, *interruption* and *disruption*
- Making cross-linguistic semantic connections in Third Class
 - Having listened to a Filipino pupil reading versions of the same story in English, Irish and Tagalog, a pupil of Russian/Nigerian heritage explained that she now knew the word for hedgehog in Tagalog: *parkupino*
 - She worked this out “because it was almost at the end of the story and the spikes [of the hedgehog] reminds me of porcupine’s”

ILLEY links to written work:

- *Identity tests* (two languages. age 6+)

https://www.ecml.at/Portals/1/5MTP/Schank/documents/6-9_Identity_texts2_EN.pdf?ver=2020-12-11-141745-197

- *In the park* (three languages: age 8)

https://www.ecml.at/Portals/1/5MTP/Schank/documents/9-12_In%20the%20park_EN.pdf?ver=2020-12-11-141746-193isit

- *Report: A visit to the prospective post-primary school* (four languages. age 12)

https://www.ecml.at/Portals/1/5MTP/Schank/documents/9-12_Cuairt%20ar%20an%20Meánscoil_EN.pdf?ver=2020-12-11-141744-990

- *Plurilingual Fashion Show* (four languages: age 12)

https://www.ecml.at/Portals/1/5MTP/Schank/documents/9-12_PlurilingualFashionShow_EN.pdf?ver=2020-12-11-142720-557

Three unforeseen outcomes

- **The Irish language:**
 - minority language
 - increased status
 - increased use throughout school for purposes of communication
 - level playing field for all learners
 - a hinge between all HLS
- **Learner autonomy**
 - motivation, engagement, and ability to drive one's own learning
- **Social engagement/cohesion**
 - well-being, self-esteem, co-operation with others, social cohesion

HLs help with learning in school

Knowing their HL will help children to:

- Have confidence in who they are. Confidence is very important for success in learning and in life
- Remain connected to their wider family, e.g., grandparents, cousins
- Develop skills like observation, analysis, reflection, questioning, exploration – all very necessary for learning
- Transfer skills from HL to learning the LoS, additional languages, and subjects like Maths and Science as well.
- Be interested and motivated to learn
- Develop independent/autonomous learning skills

The ECML's *Treasure Chest* supports learning that is:

- Learner-centred, motivating and fun for everyone involved
- Develops learners' plurilingual repertoires – language of schooling, foreign languages and children's home languages
- Supports young people's wellbeing despite social isolation
- Gives parents/carers confidence in supporting their children's learning
- Includes self-management tools to develop learner autonomy and track progress

A word on self-management

- What do I know? *I can do....*
- What do I want/ need to know? *I want to be able to do...*
- What must I do to find out? / *How do I get to where I want to be?*
- Keep a portfolio. **Date the work.** Children can decorate the cover of the folder or box in which all language work is kept. They can see their progress as they look through the portfolio
- Do not compare children's work. Everyone goes at their own pace.

The ECML's *Treasure Chest*

The secret agent's handbook of exciting language challenges in **24 languages**.

Resources are presented under three headings:

– Learners:

language facts; language games; language fun

– **Parents**

activities for children aged 3-6

activities for children aged 6-12

– Teachers

“Z and alpha” generations: opportunities for language learning environments in times of confinement and beyond

A webinar for language teachers in English, French and German

Digital literacy for the teaching and learning of languages

Apples, bread, milk (...)



Food provides a lot of scope for developing different skills

Look inside your fridge, the kitchen cupboard, the bathroom cabinet (...). Ask your children: *What do we need to buy? What would you like to buy? (...)*

Make a shopping list

If the child can't write they can call out the names of items; if they can write, let them do it. It will take more time but it's meaningful and functional and they are learning. Praise them for all their efforts.

Use your home language at home. When you go to the supermarket suggest to your child to look at the words written on the shelves/ labels for the items you are buying. Suggest to your child to write these words in the column beside the HL.

Apples, bread, milk (...)

| Home Language | Language of schooling |
|---------------|-----------------------|
| Apple | |
| Bread | |
| Milk | |
| Etc. | |

Wellbeing

Sink and float

- **Playing with water is a very calming activity for children**
- What you need:
- What to do:
- Some more ideas

Sink and float

| Image of object | Home Language | Language of Schooling |
|-----------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| | Metal key | |
| | Plastic spoon | |
| | Stone | |
| | Etc. | |

Some more ideas for wellbeing

AT HOME WITH WEAVING WELL-BEING

*Every day may not be a good, but
There is something good
In every day – Alice Morse Earle*

My Rainbow Moments –
A Wellbeing Journal for Kids

Wellbeing activities that cost nothing:

Sing a song, dance and be silly

Make up a story

Play board games or cards together

Put on a play

Do a jigsaw together

Use your HL! Use words and phrases you know in the LoS and other languages

Get Growing!



Grow your own onions!

What you need...
What to do...
Some more ideas...

PLANT seeds!

Lettuce/scallions/ beetroot/ pumpkins/
wallflowers/ nasturtiums /primroses, etc.

WRITE - Labels for seeds planted in the
garden/ pots on your windowsill

**Do it in your Home Language. In another
column write it in the Language of
Schooling/ another language**

Get Growing!

| Home Language | Language of schooling |
|---------------|-----------------------|
| Lettuce | |
| Beetroot | |
| Primroses | |
| Etc. | |

Read to your child – a word to parents

- Help your child to improve his/ her language skills by developing a love of books and reading. Read in your HL. Use your local library. Even if the books are not written in your HL, use the pictures to tell the story to your younger children in your own language. The earlier you start the better.
- Children will “read” pictures before they read words.
- Reading helps children to follow the sequence of a story and to empathize with what is happening. You can encourage higher order thinking skills by asking questions like: *What do you think she’ll do next? How do you think he’ll get out of there?*
- Don’t TEACH the storybook. Read it. It must be an enjoyable time spent together in a comfortable way that is interesting. This will encourage a child want to “read” more, to find out more. If there is pressure, this won’t happen.
- In discussions with our own pupils they told us that having reflected on their well-developed plurilingual skills – many of them could use up to 5 languages – they pointed to the importance of their parents reading to them in their HL when they were very young children. They also pointed out that it was very important for them to have been encouraged to use their HL in school.

Treasure Chest – Reading



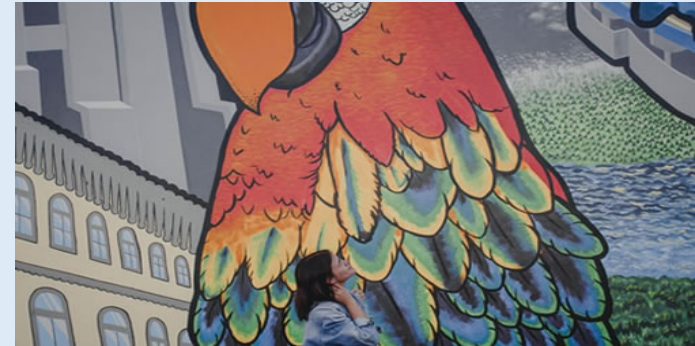
DISTANCE LEARNING: FREE DIGITAL READING RESOURCES FOR MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS

Multilingual reading resources are designed to help multilingual learners with their reading skills. Books and stories in a wide variety of languages give you the opportunity to explore new places, meet new characters and discover new languages.

Language of the website: English

Resources: wide variety of global languages

Age range: all ages



POBBLE 365 – AN IMAGE A DAY

This website provides a new weird, wonderful or thought-provoking image for each day of the year to inspire children to write a creative story.

Age range: 9+

Links to books – ILLEY

- Books without text

[https://www.ecml.at/Portals/1/5MTP/Schank/documents/Books without text FIN.pdf](https://www.ecml.at/Portals/1/5MTP/Schank/documents/Books_without_text_FIN.pdf)

- Multilingual books

[https://www.ecml.at/Portals/1/5MTP/Schank/documents/ILLEY Multilingual books FINAL.pdf](https://www.ecml.at/Portals/1/5MTP/Schank/documents/ILLEY_Multilingual_books_FINAL.pdf)



Go outside!

My book of trees

You can make your own book of the trees in your neighbourhood

Find out their names, make rubbings of their bark and draw their leaves, flowers and fruit

Your book will help you to remember the names of the trees and the shapes of the leaves

More ideas about this in the *Treasure Chest*. How to do it

Use your Home Language followed by Language of Schooling and other languages where appropriate

Make books – lots of them!

If your child cannot read words, use pictures to help her make a book

- A picture or drawing per page
- A decorated page for the book cover
- Staple them together and you have a book

- Encourage your child to “read” aloud in your HL
- She may need help at first
- Praise and affirm her efforts. This will build her confidence

As your child progresses she will use words and sentences to make her books

Make more books!

As children progress to writing words and phrases, their books will become more complex

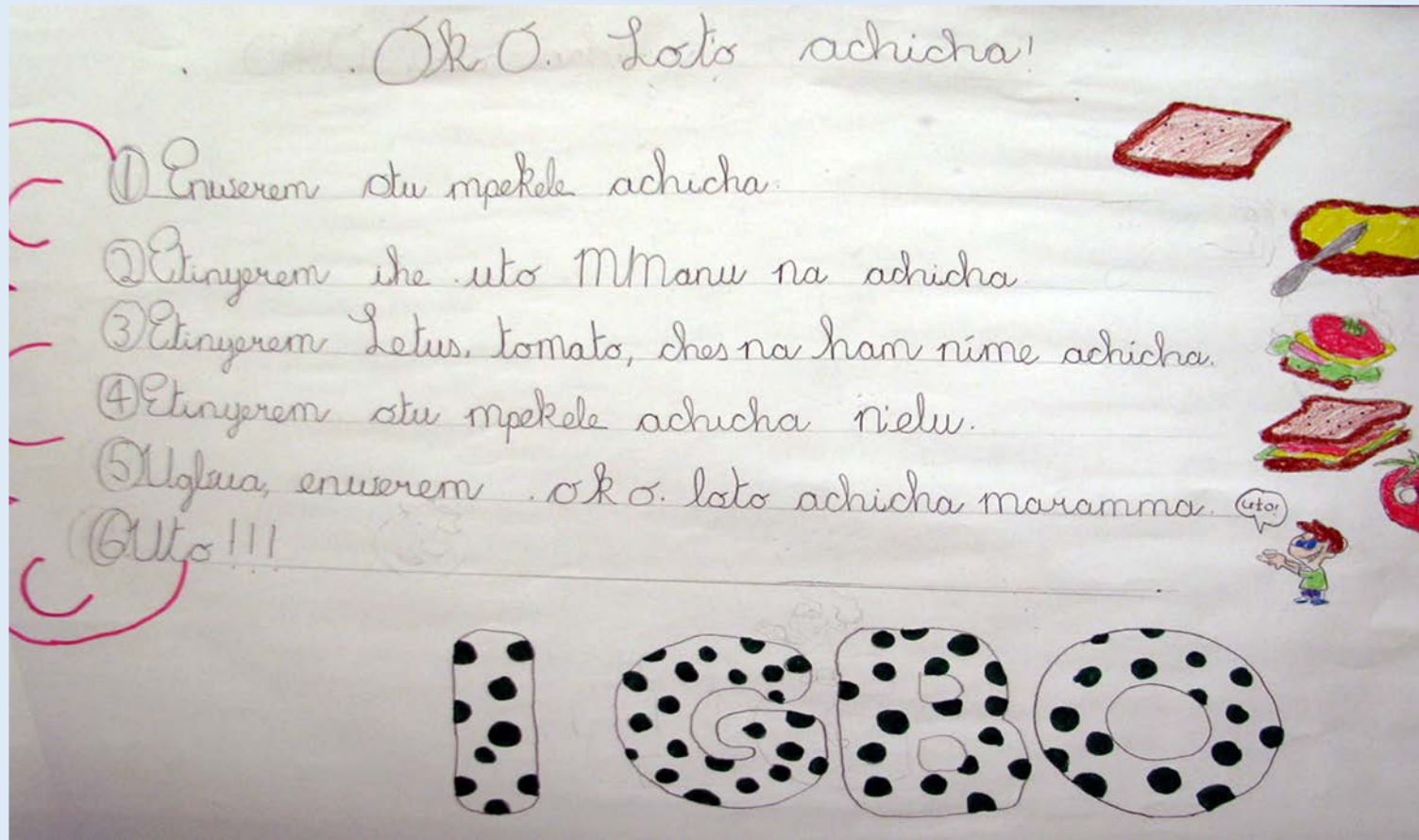
Food is a perennial topic. When the child is ready, he can write:

- The names of the foods he knows
- A list of the foods he likes, e.g., *I like ...*
- How to make a sandwich
- Recipes for simple dishes

Books can be written as a dual language book in the HL, LoS, and/or any language the child is learning

Books are for reading. Read aloud. Praise and affirm efforts.

How to make a sandwich ...

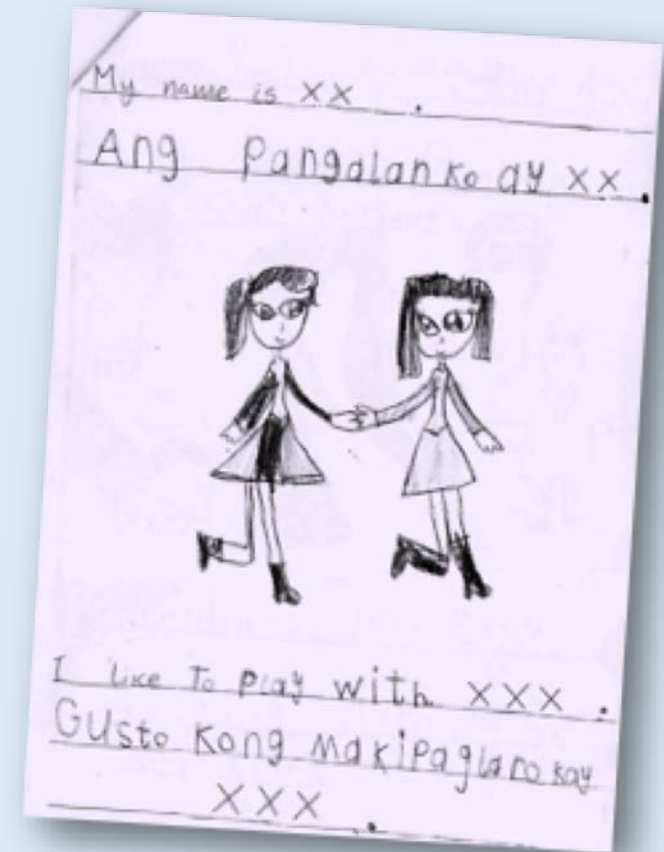


Can you find the word in Igbo that means 'bread' in your language?

Inspiring Language Learning – why it matters and what it looks like for children age 3 to 12 years

Make a book about me

HL, LoS
and other
languages too



Make more books on different topics

Wildlife in your locality:

Birds, insects, small animals

Clothes I wear in:

Rain, snow, summer, winter

Different kinds of pets:

Dogs, cats, hamsters, rabbits, etc.

Use HL, LoS and other language(s) where appropriate.

Read aloud. Praise and affirm efforts

Have fun with languages

Madame – a bilingual story

Written by
a speaker
of Tagalog

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.

Diary

Keep a diary.
Write some of
it using all the
languages you
know!

To find out more go to:

<https://www.ecml.at/ECML-Programme/Programme2016-2019/Inspiringlanguagelearningintheearlyyears/Inspiringpractice/tabid/3062/language/en-GB/Default.aspx>

Telling stories

- Children learn in the simplest of ways. They love to hear stories about you, their parents, (grandparents and extended family too) when you were their age. What did you enjoy doing? What was school like when you were a child? Where did you live? What was your favourite food and pastime? All you need are your memories!



Remember to use your
Home Language!

Keeping in contact with those we love: talking on the phone and writing letters

- Dear Grandma, dear Grandpa



Writing a letter can be strongly motivating as it is a means of getting in touch with those we miss. This activity supports your child's sense of belonging and develops his/her communication and writing skills.

In conclusion

- Use of HLs in linguistically diverse environments contributes to successful outcomes for all pupils
- A pedagogical approach that is learner-centred and inclusive of contributions from children leads to increased motivation, engagement and ability to drive one's own learning
- Listen to and use the contributions children make to support the development of plurilingual repertoires
- Use the ideas and examples from the ECML *Treasure Chest* to stimulate children's interest and engagement in language learning

What pupils said about using their home languages at school

Key words in pupils' responses to the question: "What would it be like if you couldn't use your home languages in school?"

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

Key words in pupils' responses to the question: "What are the benefits of using your home languages in school?"

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

To professionals who deal with parents and children

- Keep advice consistent across all professional support systems
- Value home languages
- Encourage parents to maintain and develop their home language
- Let the languages of the children be seen and heard in school
- Keep advice consistent across all professional support systems

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