



Making foreign language learning fun and inclusive

A teacher's perspective

Languages Connect is delighted to bring you the second in a new series of articles that provide practical resources and supports, from schools and teachers who are embracing the integration of modern foreign language education into the curriculum. Providing a voice to teachers, the series showcases real-life

classroom practices that have worked.

In this edition, Caroline Walters from St John's Girls' and Infant Boys' School in Limerick City provides insights from her classroom, as well as a readymade class activity for you to try.

I work as an English as an Additional Language (EAL) teacher in St John's Girls' and Infant Boys' School in Limerick City. We are a DEIS Band 1 school with 220 pupils, of which 100 speak a language other than English at home. As an avid Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) advocate, I was delighted that our school was chosen to take part in the *Say Yes to Languages* (SYTL) language sampler module for a 4th year.

This year we have introduced Spanish to our 3rd and 4th classes, while our 5th and 6th year groups continue with French classes. The children are really enjoying the experience. We have always used teachers in our school to deliver the module and each year new teachers get involved. I am also the mother of two bilingual children, and I fully welcome the introduction of an MFL specification in the redeveloped *Primary Language Curriculum*.

Fun through active learning

Our key focus is fun through exploring language awareness and building communicative competence along with cultural awareness. We teach key

vocabulary through active learning methodologies, using various objects and materials, flashcards, powerpoint presentations, songs, games and videos. Being active, moving around the classroom and showing comprehension through drawing and colouring is a great way to keep the children interested and involved.

A chance for everyone to shine

These lessons are hugely important for all the pupils in the class. Some children who may find other areas of the curriculum challenging, really enjoy learning a few words in another language. The pupils also use their known words as Gaeilge to add to the discussion on how words might be similar or different across languages. It also hugely benefits EAL learners, as they can add valuable contributions to the classes.

Such a plurilingual approach welcomes all languages into the classroom, from the languages of the school, the children's home languages and the languages of the wider community.

A plurilingual approach extended beyond the classroom

Our engagement has shown our school the huge benefits that the new MFL curriculum will bring to all schools and communities in Ireland. The positive feedback from the children led us to embrace more plurilingual practices, such as in our countdown to turn on our Christmas lights this year, which featured five languages and singing the *Jingle Bells* chorus in six different languages.

CAROLINE WALTERS

For more information about *Say Yes to Languages* and language upskilling opportunities for teachers, or to contribute to these articles, email primary@ppli.ie or visit www.languagesconnect.ie, we would love to hear from you!

Languages Connect promotes the personal, social, professional and economic benefits of foreign language skills to principals, teachers, guidance counsellors, parents and pupils. Funded by the DE and facilitated by PPLI, this is a key objective of *Languages Connect; Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017-2026*.



Activity – Let's learn about colours and fruit

Caroline Walters shares a simple activity that most teachers can replicate in their school, which combines vocabulary around fruit and colours, in different languages, in a simple but engaging way. This is

an activity combining and reinforcing various Key Competencies throughout the lesson, such as being a communicator and using languages along with being creative, being well and being an active learner.

What will the pupils be able to do?

- Learn the names of fruits and revise colours in various languages
- Notice similarities and differences across different languages
- Use vocabulary actively through playing games

Why is this relevant?

This lesson interlinks with a lot of other subjects in the *Primary Curriculum*. Fun through active learning

How are we going to learn the new words?

- Using concrete materials, such as coloured plates, recap on the colours previously taught and introduce fruit names using plastic fruit.
- Focus on repetition and reinforcement, rather than quantity of vocabulary.
- Re-enforce the vocabulary using a PowerPoint presentation with real



Resources section of the Languages Connect website bit.ly/LanguagesConnectPrimary.

Then what?

Pupils could draw their five favourite fruits in a bowl and tell the class. You can extend the activity by comparing likes and dislikes, exploring intercultural awareness.

How can we assess what has been learnt?

- Having a sheet with some fruit on it asking them to colour 'x' fruit 'y' colour can be a simple way to assess if the children know the vocabulary.
- Discussions about similarities and differences across languages will help assess their language awareness.
- Discussions around their likes and dislikes will also potentially highlight cultural similarities and differences





Interested to find out more?

More activities and ideas around this topic can be found in the below resources:

- MFL Teacher/Tutor Notes (pp 20-25)
- Language and Languages in the Primary School (pp 27-28)
- Language Adventures (p 15)

All these resources and more are available on the Resources section of the Languages Connect website, accessible via the QR code.



	English	Gaeilge		
				
				
				
				
				
				



What do we need?

- Different colour plastic plates; plastic fruit; matching fruit cards; sheet with fruit on it to colour, labelled with the fruit names in various languages.
- YouTube simple colour/fruit songs of your choice.

Where will we find the vocabulary?

Ask pupils who have proficiency in other languages to teach the words to their classmates and teacher. They might need to ask their siblings or parents/guardians before being able to provide the correct words, therefore give them notice and allow them the time to prepare for this task. This empowers the children to be the experts in the class and validates the importance given to their linguistic background and identity.

fruit images and the words.

- Ask the children to colour sort the fruit naming each fruit they pick and naming the colour as well.
- Vocabulary Races is a great interactive game that gets the children up and about to race each other to remember the words.
- Walking Snap or Guess What I Have are also very interactive, where children must find their matching fruit by walking around the classroom and asking each other questions.
- You could play a simple child-friendly song for the class to sing along. Super Simple Songs or any equivalent are sure winners: the simpler, the better.

These and more ideas are contained in the resource Vocabulary-Building Activities, available from the