

**Literacy
Association of
Ireland**



**Cumann
Lítearthachta
na hÉireann**

Newsletter Spring 2022

Literacy and Diversity: New Directions

The Literacy Association of Ireland
will host the 22nd European
Conference on Literacy in Dublin
from July 4-6, 2022

Registration now open!

www.literacyireland.com



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Write to Us

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A Message from the President of the Literacy Association of Ireland



Dear Members,

Welcome to the spring/summer 2022 edition on LAI Literacy News.

We are delighted to continue our series of webinars given by LAI executive committee members in partnership with Navan, Tralee and Monaghan Education Centres. Our schedule of events commences in March with two repeat webinars following requests from members and teachers. These are *Every Lesson a Language and Literacy Lesson: From Research to Practice* with Dr Sylvaine Ní Aogáin and Patrick Burke and *Teaching and Assessing Writing* with Dr Gerry Shiel and Dr Eithne Kennedy. In April, Dr Claire Dunne will present *An Fheasacht Fhóineolaíoch a Fhorbairt* and in May Dr Sinead McCauley Lambe will offer a webinar entitled *Whole Body Handwriting for Infants*. Our webinars continue to be very well attended, with numbers in excess of 150 attending each event from all over Ireland.

In September we will accept applications for our 9th biennial award for outstanding Master's thesis. Please check our website for information on submissions and deadlines. The finalists will present their research at the LAI symposium in November.

Finally, this year we are honoured to host the 22nd European Conference on Literacy together with the 46th Annual Conference of the Literacy Association of Ireland. The conference is jointly organised by the Federation of European Literacy Associations and it will take place at St Patrick's Campus, Dublin City University from July 4th to July 6th, 2022. The conference theme is **Literacy and Diversity: New Directions** and the following subthemes will be explored:

- **Subtheme 1:** Literacy in the Early Years
- **Subtheme 2:** Effective Literacy Instruction
- **Subtheme 3:** Digital Literacies
- **Subtheme 4:** Literacy Environments
- **Subtheme 5:** Inclusive Practices in Literacy for Diverse Learners
- **Subtheme 6:** Lifelong Development of Literacy Skills

Keynote speakers include Jean-Francois Rouet, Université de Poitiers, France and Professor Anne Burke, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada. The panel of Irish literacy educators will include Dr Tara Concannon-Gibney, Dr Eithne Kennedy, Dr Gene Mehigan and Dr Brian Murphy.

LAI will offer a summer course for Irish primary school teachers in tandem with the conference which will include attendance at the conference (facilitated by LAI executive committee members) and two additional days on Thursday 4th and Friday 5th July. The course will carry an entitlement of extra personal vacation (EPV) days. Our members will have the opportunity to book a place on this course at a reduced rate before it is advertised to the wider teaching community. Registration is now open through the conference website.

The executive committee is very grateful to the members of the conference organising committee for the exceptional work they have undertaken. Ba mhian liom mo mhíle buíochas a ghabháil leo.

Le gach dea-ghuí,

Regina Dunne

Hon President LAI

'BARD'

A language pattern and approach which ensures accuracy in oral and written communication **as Gaeilge** – Step up to become a BARD 🧠✍️!

Deirdre Gallagher/Ní Ghallachóir

Introduction

*In one **word**? A sequence of letters which convey meaning. This meaning/communication has been gifted to the human mind. Each word has roots, a history, tells a story. Language evolves with its ebbs and flows. It is a fluid entity, obeying few boundaries. This very fluidity can be challenging for the aspiring language learner & communicator as they embark upon, and pursue, their language learning voyage. By virtue of using language patterns, we set out markers and create parameters which ensure accuracy in communication.*

A second point of note is that language cannot exist without memory. Metacognitive practices and decoding skills lead us to deeper understanding of progress and language. By employing these very practices and skills, we equip ourselves to make associations, instill confidence, set goals and peak curiosity. The 'BARD' approach and accompanying resources combine language patterns, metacognitive strategies and decoding skills to achieve structure for success.

1. Spreagadh 'BARD'

Tá ról lárnach agus fiúntach ag patrúin i bhfoghlaimeoireacht. Is patrún teanga Gaeilge é 'BARD' a bhfuil trí mhórbhuntaíste aige:

1. Láidríonn sé feasacht teanga
2. Cinntíonn sé cruinneas in ord na bhfocal
3. Soláthraíonn sé struchtúr rathúil

Séard atá i gceist le 'BARD' ná cur chuige nua a leagann scéim tógála abairte amach i scileanna labhartha agus scríbhneoireachta. Bronnann acmhainní 'BARD' úinéireacht ar fhoghlaiméirí as a gcuid foghlama féin. Is cur chuige teanga é a oibríonn go héifeachtach is go snasta, agus tá an cur chuige seo ina bhuntaíste mór in aschur na teanga. Glactar leis go forleathan go mbíonn dúshláin is constaicí le sárú ag foghlaiméirí maidir le haschur labhartha is scríofa. Aithnítear go gcuireann éiginnteacht sa chumarsáid bac ar fhoghlaiméirí drogallacha mímhúinéacha. Éascaíonn 'BARD' an próiseas agus feictear dul chun cinn cinntitheach is céimitheach i measc na bhfoghlaimeoirí.. Tógann 'BARD' muinín is cinnteacht – leagann sé síos na céimeanna cearta le leanúint. Ina theannta sin, déanann BARD freastal ar stíleanna foghlama éagsúla is cuirtear béim ar ionchuimsiú. Is leigheas nó réiteach é ar chumarsáid stadach - níl srian ar shileadh abairtí a thuilleadh.

2. 'BARD' & Fealsúnacht

Aithnítear bard mar fhile nó amhránaí. Is é an aidhm atá le 'BARD' (& acmhainní 'BARD') go n-éireoidh foghlaiméirí muiníneach agus líofa sa Ghaeilge, go gcanfaidh siad í go glórmhar! Meallann is spreagann 'BARD' foghlaiméirí Gaeilge i dtreo muiníne is cruthaitheachta. A bhuíochas leis an gcur chuige seo, tugann foghlaiméirí patrúin na teanga faoi deara agus tógtar creatlach cruinn láidir in ord na bhfocal. Laghdaítear gá

ceartúchán ó áisitheoirí is múinteoirí toisc go gcothaíonn 'BARD' féintreoir, féinstiúradh is féincheartúchán. Mar fhoghlaiméirí teanga ar bith, caithfidimid muid féin a thraenáil go neamhspleách chun patrúin a aithint. Éiríonn le 'BARD' cumarsáid chruinn bheacht a bhaint amach. Nach é seo mian is sprioc gach foghlaiméora?

Bímid ceangailte go mothúchánach le habairtí a chruthaímid féin – ár nguth údarach. Feabhsaítear agus neartaítear guthanna Gaeilge trí úsáid 'BARD' gan stró. Is féidir le foghlaiméirí/grúpaí ranga corpas mór abairtí a chumadh go neamhspleách nó le chéile agus iad ag baint úsáide as an gcur chuige seo. Chomh maith leis sin, is modheolaíocht éifeachtach é 'BARD' má shantaítear athbhreithniú rialta a dhéanamh ar ghramadach agus ord na bhfocal. Príomhghné eile den chur chuige seo ná ionchuimsiú. Tugann an ghrafaic 'Step Up to become a BARD' an treoir chuí d'fhoghlaiméir ar bith a bheith ina chumarsáidí rathúil Gaeilge. Cuir i gcás, foghlaiméirí le disléicse - is saineolaithe iad i dtuiscint agus i bpatrúin. Osclaíonn BARD an doras dóibh siúd a bhfuil cumas folaigh iontu is tugann sé cuireadh dóibh a mbríonna féin a thógáil. Soláthraíonn 'BARD' céimeanna rathúla ionas gur féidir linn go léir a bheith rannpháirteach i scéal cumadóireachta na Gaeilge.

3. Fís 'BARD'

Is foghlaiméir teanga cumasach é an duine atá in ann patrúin a aithint. Forbraíodh ár n-íchinn chun patrúin a aithint. Tugann sé deis dúinn ár saol a chaitheamh ar shlí níos éifeachtaí agus i gcás teangacha, tugann patrúin an cumas is muinín dúinn cumarsáid níos éifeachtaí a dhéanamh. Cad a tharlaíonn nuair a ghlacann foghlaiméirí seilbh ar a bhfoghlaim féin? Tá freagra geal dearfach ar an gceist seo. Dearbhaítear cruinneas cumarsáide, is méadaítear toil agus féinmhuinín i measc an phobail labhartha is scríbhneoireachta. Tagann borradh ar dhaoine ag filleadh ar an teanga toisc go n-aithníonn siad go bhfuil ról acu i dtógáil a dteanga fein. Forbraíonn foghlaiméirí a nguthanna Gaeilge go céimitheach, go comhfhiosach agus go muinéach trí úsáid a bhaint as 'BARD', agus cuireann na hacmhainní le scileanna metachognaíocha. Tuigeann an foghlaiméir go mbeidh sé/sí rathúil sa chumarsáid má leantar an t-acrainm éasca 'BARD' is laghdaítear meon diúitach drogallach i leith na teanga. Fréamhaítear freagracht is úinéireacht sna foghlaiméirí. Tá a gcinniúint ar an aistear foghlama ina lámha féin.

4. Ról 'BARD'

Tá ról úsáideach ag an gcur chuige seo i mbunscoileanna, in iar-bhunscoileanna, in ollscoileanna go pointe áirithe (An Dioplóma sa Ghaeilge) agus go deimhin i measc fhoghlaiméirí fásta Gaeilge – áit ar bith ina n-aimsítear foghlaiméir Gaeilge. Tapaíonn foghlaiméirí an deis a gcuid abairtí féin a chruthú le tacaíocht na n-acmhainní. Glacann siad seilbh ar an teanga go fonnmhar is go héasca. Deimhnítear go mbíonn bainc bhunpatrún an-éifeachtach i bhfoghlaim teanga. Ar ndóigh, tá deis ann patrúin teanga eile a fhorbairt ón mbunpatrún 'BARD' m.sh. BRAD, BAR, BAA srl. De réir a chéile, cuireann foghlaiméirí lena stór patrún agus éiríonn siad níos cumasaí agus níos compordaí i dtógáil abairte. Tá solúbthacht ag baint le hacmhainní 'BARD' - grafaicí/póstaeir, pacáiste in oiriúint d'obair aonair/bheirte/ghrúpa, fráma i gcothú na saorscríbhneoireachta, áis teicneolaíochta, cluiche boird/míreanna mearaí agus spreagthach i dtascanna labhartha agus araile. Tá difreáil curtha i bhfeidhm agus féidearthachtaí ann na hacmhainní a mhúnlú de réir chomhthéacsanna oideachais éagsúla.

5. Conclúid

Pre-famine Ireland was a bilingual nation, with post-famine Ireland becoming predominantly monolingual over time. The people had to recarve their Irishness, their identity through the medium of English in a post-famine country. They forged this identity through literature, dance and song. No other European nation has misplaced their native language as much as Ireland. We see this monolingual dominance lasting very much to the current day. How do we redress this balance? Nuair a thugtar na scileanna cuí d'fhoghlaiméirí teanga a mbríonna is a n-abairtí féin a thógáil is a chruthú, tugtar na scileanna riachtanacha dóibh a bheith ina

gcumarsáidithe muinéacha, cruinne, spreagúla, éifeachtacha is toilteanacha ar feadh an tsaoil. Tuigtear go mbíonn sé ríthábhachtach athbhreithniú rialta a dhéanamh ar phatrúin bhunúsacha teanga. Déantar é seo trí éisteacht leo, ord na bhfocal cruinn a úsáid, athrá a dhéanamh orthu is patrúin a úsáid in idirghníomhaíochtaí labhartha agus sa scríbhneoireacht. Soláthraíonn 'BARD' réimse patrún a chothaíonn líofacht. Feictear cumarsáid nádúrtha faoi bhláth. Seo í áilleacht 'BARD' mar chur chuige! Cinntítear buaine na teanga. Cum Gaeilge bhreá – bí i do bhard!

If literature is the penned gift of the imagination, language patterns are the strands of fluency in communication. Más í an litríocht bua peannaireachta na samhlaíochta, is iad patrúin teanga snáitheanna líofacht na cumarsáide. 'BARD' and related resources can be viewed here: <https://twitter.com/deelangall> and <https://www.instagram.com/deelangall/>

'BARD'

A language pattern and approach which ensures accuracy in oral and written communication *as Gaeilge* – Step up to become a BARD 🗣️✍️!

Deirdre Gallagher/Ní Ghallachóir

Introduction

In one word? A sequence of letters which convey meaning. This meaning/communication has been gifted to the human mind. Each word has roots, a history, tells a story. Language evolves with its ebbs and flows. It is a fluid entity, obeying few boundaries. This very fluidity can be challenging for the aspiring language learner & communicator as they embark upon, and pursue, their language learning voyage. By virtue of using language patterns, we set out markers and create parameters which ensure accuracy in communication.

A second point of note is that language cannot exist without memory. Metacognitive practices and decoding skills lead us to deeper understanding of language. By employing these very practices and skills, we equip ourselves to make word associations, instill confidence, set goals and peak curiosity. The 'BARD' approach and accompanying resources combine language patterns, metacognitive strategies and decoding skills to achieve structure for success.

1. Origins of 'BARD'

Recognising patterns is the key to language learning. 'BARD' is an Irish language pattern which increases language awareness, ensures accuracy in word order and provides a structure for success in oral and written production. 'BARD' resources give the language learner the tools to take ownership of his/her own Irish language learning. This is an approach which works effectively. 'BARD' caters to a variety of learning styles and fosters inclusion. The 'BARD' approach ensures progression for the language learner and can be highly effective in terms of Irish language learning and teaching.

2. 'BARD' philosophy

A bard is of course a poet/ a singer. The 'BARD' approach and accompanying resources want users to become fluent in the Irish language - to 'sing' it! 'BARD' motivates, elevates and inspires. Learners become equipped to notice patterns in word order and sentence structure. This reduces the need for facilitators & teachers to correct language learners. Correction (although useful in certain instances) is seen to have a somewhat minor impact on our ability to learn a language. To become successful language learners, it is incumbent on us to independently train ourselves in pattern recognition. 'BARD' provides an excellent training tool.

We are emotionally connected to sentences which we ourselves construct and create. With the assistance of 'BARD' resources, one can strive to strengthen and perfect one's authentic Irish language voice. Learners can independently and/or collectively create a large corpus of sentences using the 'BARD' approach. Establishing basic patterns (and working towards more complicated ones as time progresses) is a hugely effective way to learn a language.

'BARD' also provides an invaluable structure in order to regularly review grammar and word order. A further key advantage of 'BARD' is inclusion. The 'Step Up to become a BARD' graphic demonstrates how successful communication in Irish can be readily achieved. BARD' truly provides the steps to achieving 'language for all' and thus we can all be part of the Irish language story.

3. Irish language learning and historical context

Too often we hear people highlight their lack of confidence and hesitancy towards their learning relationship with Irish language. One ponders why this should be so? There is a myriad of social, economic and historical reasons for this, far too complex and far-reaching to be discussed here. More simplistic suggestions may include the way it is taught and its lack of functionality within the economic sphere. Fluency in Irish is often hailed as the luxury of those who attend(ed) Gaelscoileanna, current and former Gaeltacht inhabitants and individuals raised by bilingual parents. There is a need to change this narrative and make Irish accessible for all.

4. The 'BARD' vision

The ability to recognise patterns is the hallmark of good language learners. Our brains have been developed to recognise patterns. This allows us to live our lives more efficiently. In terms of language, patterns allow us to communicate more effectively.

The 'BARD' language pattern and accompanying resources empower the Irish language learner on their journey as they take ownership of their learning. They construct their own meaning and sentences by following fool-proof patterns and decoding strategies which guarantee accuracy in oral & written communication. Former reluctant learners may be encouraged to revisit the language, recognising that they no longer live on its margins. An invitation is extended to become an active participant in the language building process. Learners are given an opportunity to develop an authentic Irish language voice, and thus dissipate negative attitudes towards Irish.

We can develop our Irish language voice incrementally, consciously and confidently through the use of 'BARD' and accompanying resources. 'BARD' makes the language learner want to notice the patterns as they realise that success in communication is guaranteed via 'BARD' - such an easy acronym to employ!

5. Role of 'BARD'

This approach and accompanying resources have a role in primary schools, post-primary schools, universities (Diplóma sa Ghaeilge) and indeed among adult Irish language learners. Learners are given the opportunity to construct sentences independently, confidently and with ease. 'BARD' can be adapted to create alternative language patterns e.g. BRAD, BAA, BAR etc. The more patterns in a language learner's repertoire, the more skilled and agile they can be in sentence building. These resources can be adapted accordingly as graphics/posters, writing frames, sentence builder packages, technological tools, board games/jigsaws, and prompts in oral production among other possibilities. There is clearly significant scope to amend same to suit a variety of educational contexts.

6. Conclusion

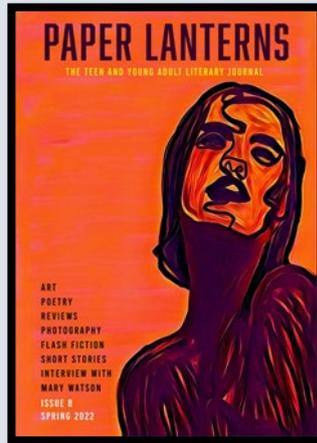
Pre-famine Ireland was a bilingual nation, with post-famine Ireland becoming predominantly monolingual over time. The people had to recarve their Irishness, their identity through the medium of English in a post-famine country. They forged this identity through literature, dance and song. No other European nation has misplaced their native language as much as Ireland. We see this monolingual dominance lasting very much to the current day. How do we redress this balance? Once you give a language learner the skills to construct sentences for themselves, you are gifting them with the skills to be a confident, motivated and effective language learner for life. The 'BARD' approach instills confidence. It is essential to regularly review basic patterns in language through listening to them, using and reworking word order, repeating them aloud, and employing them in spoken and written production. The beauty of 'BARD' is the development of a broad range of basic patterns. 'BARD' gives fluency and flow to language and provides certainty for the reluctant language learner. Everyone can step up with confidence to become a BARD! Cum Gaeilge bhreá gan stró!

If literature is the penned gift of the imagination, language patterns are the strands of fluency in communication.

Más í an litríocht bua peannaireachta na samhlaíochta, is iad patrúin teanga snáitheanna líofacht na cumarsáide.

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Paper Lanterns Teen and Young Adult Literary Journal is delighted to announce we are two years old this Spring. We are in the production process for Issue 8 (cover shown here), and honestly, we can't believe we survived this far. We would like to thank all the art and writing teachers who encourage their students to submit to the journal. The number of teens who submit poetry, short stories, flash fiction, book reviews and art has grown steadily issue by issue. We aim to have half the pieces we print come from teens ages 13-18, and we're thrilled to have surpassed that for the last two issues.

We are currently interested in features written by teens. We are looking for pieces about anything that interests them: love for arts, sports, change they want to see, their experiences. If they feel passionate enough to write about it, we want to read it. While we welcome more academic or journalistic features, we would love to read personal essays and creative nonfiction. The submission period for creative writing is timed to each issue (open through April 9 for Issue 9), however submissions are open year-round for art/photography and features, You can find more information about submissions here:

<https://paperlanternslit.com/submissions/>

Issue 8 features an interview with author Mary Watson. Caroline O'Donoghue's book *All Our Hidden Gifts* is our book club book, and Caroline shares her thoughts about the writing process. We talk to DJ Keith Marshall in our Creative Careers column, and we have two amazing features by teen writers, developed in a Fighting Words Northern Ireland writing workshop. You can preorder Issue 8 here:

<https://paperlanternslit.com/product/paper-lanterns-issue-8/>

We are finalising details for our first in-person launch in a few weeks, and we would love to see you there! We will still hold a YouTube launch which will feature readings by contributors who cannot join us in person. We hope to livestream the launch, as well.

Look for us at the IFLD in May, where we will host a workshop on the many ways to write for Paper Lanterns and show young people how the submission process works. Our teen reviewers will be reviewing the events live. We'll also be chairing two YA author events, and we will be available to chat at the drop-in space/journals marketplace.

We will hold our second teen short story contest this summer, partnering again with Tertulia Books in Westport. There are two categories: 13-15 years and 16-18 years, with a cash prize for the winner of each category. Last year, Deirdre Sullivan was our guest judge. We'll announce the theme and further details soon.

We will be posting details for all these events as they solidify. You can find the information for events, submissions and ordering on our website www.paperlanternslit.com. We're also on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook, where we do most of our announcing. Once again, we'd like to thank all the teachers who have supported us in our fledgling years. We look forward to many more to come.

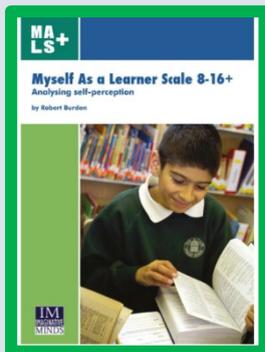
ENHANCING READING MOTIVATION FOR LEARNERS WITH DYSLEXIA

Miriam Colum and Roisin Lowe

Miriam Colum is a Senior lecturer and the head of Department of Inclusion, Religious Education and Student Life in Marino Institute of Education, Dublin. She is a former primary school teacher with experience in mainstream and special school settings.

Róisín Lowe is a teacher graduate of Marino Institute of Education currently in her second year of teaching. She has been a member of the Dyslexia Association Ireland (DAI) since she was six. She has a keen interest in researching and supporting teachers with dyslexia and other learning difficulties.

The Rose report (2009) refers to dyslexia as a learning difficulty that mainly disturbs the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling. While not exclusive, some scholars advocate for concentrated, structured and continuing phonics interventions to support children with dyslexia (Brady, 2011; Pavey, 2012; Rose, 2009; Singleton, 2009). This article will outline five different approaches / resources that the authors have used in their classrooms to encourage reading motivation for learners with dyslexia.



Myself As A Learner Scale

This tool gives an opportunity for learners to identify how they see themselves as learners and as problem solvers. It is a good way of understanding the perspective of the learner and be able to work from their strengths.

Conduct an interview with the child / other teachers / family members to establish interest / motivation in reading.

Ask questions such as:

- Do you enjoy reading? Why / why not?
- What is your favourite form of reading? (reading aloud / someone reading with you / to you / audio books etc.)
- What do you read? (books, magazines, apps)
- What are your favourite topics?
- Is there any book you really want to read?
- Come up with your own questions based on the interest of the child.

High-Low Readers

High Low readers are popular in schools and enhance reading motivation for many reasons:

- They have a high level of interest, are age appropriate content and a lower level of reading ability
- They are really good to use in the senior end of primary school
- They support achievement as learners will be able to finish books.
- These come in fiction and non-fiction
- There are follow up activities available (storyboards, fact file etc)

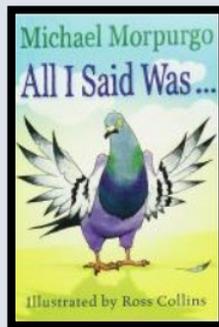
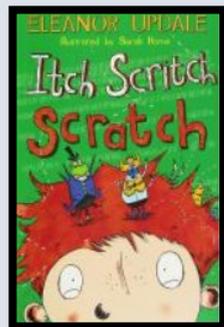
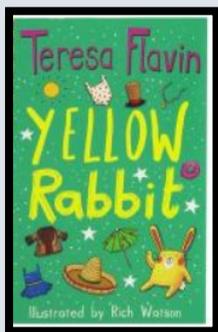
www.folens.ie/programmes/fast-lane-literacy

www.barringtonstoke.co.uk

www.highnoonbooks.com

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<https://www.readingrockets.org/article/highlow-books-children>

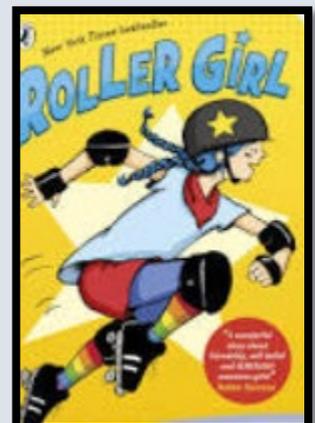


Examples of high low readers

Graphic Novels

Graphic novels can be an alternative to books and motivate children to read for the following reasons:

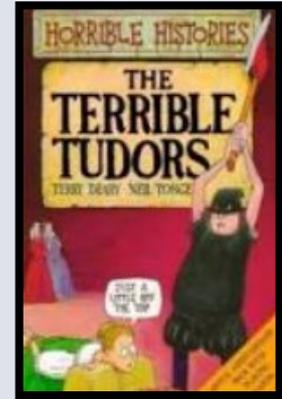
- There is an emphasis on graphics / pictures to stimulate interest
- These are high interest readers
- The reader can access new vocabulary, engage in the plot, characterisation etc
- These can be used to begin a story that is followed up by a book



Text Friendly Books

The following sets of books can be used in the classroom for reading motivation:

- Barringtonstoke books
- Horrible Histories,
- Tom Gates,
- Hank Zipzer,
- DK books – annotated diagrams



Please remember to work from the strength and the interests of the child as it is not one set of approaches that suits everyone.

References:

Brady, S.A. (2011) Efficacy of Phonics Teaching for Reading Outcomes: Indications from Post-NRP research. New York: Taylor and Francis.

Pavey, B. (2012) The Dyslexia Friendly Primary School. London: Sage

Rose, J. (2009) Identifying and Teaching Young People with Dyslexia and Literacy Difficulties; An Independent Report From Sir Jim Rose to the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families. Nottingham, DCSF Publications.

Singleton, C. (2009) Intervention for Dyslexia: A Review of Published Evidence on the Impact of Specialist Dyslexia Teaching. Hull: Author





Every Lesson a Language and Literacy Lesson: From Research to Practice

How can reading be integrated meaningfully with history? Why does vocabulary development matter in science? Can grammatical concepts be explored in engaging ways throughout the school day? This bilingual webinar will explore evidence and research-based approaches that teachers can adopt to develop language and literacy (English and Irish), across the curriculum, in content-orientated lessons, for children in primary schools.



Presented by:
Sylvaine Ní Aogáin & Patrick Burke
THURSDAY 24TH MARCH 2022 7 PM - 8 PM





Teaching and Assessing Writing

This online session, which is targeted at primary and post-primary teachers of English, will address current issues in the teaching and assessment of writing, including pre-requisites for successful writing experiences for children, motivation and engagement in writing, classroom approaches to teaching writing processes and genres, and formative assessment of children's writing. Where relevant, links will be made to the primary language curriculum and the post-primary Junior Cycle specification for English.



Presented by:
Dr. Eithne Kennedy & Dr Gerry Shiel
WEDNESDAY 30TH MARCH 7 PM - 8 PM

Bilingual resources for promoting Irish at home:

Bain sult as do chuid Gaeilge a úsáid sa bhaile! Cúpla áis dhátheangach do Sheachtain na Gaeilge.

- Irish all around me - An Ghaeilge Mórthimpeall
- Praise, praise, praise! - Mol an óige agus tiocfaidh sí
- Speaking and reading in Irish - Ag labhairt is ag léamh as Gaeilge
- Fun at home - Spreagadh agus spraoi sa bhaile

WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO!

- From top to bottom:
1. Dr Sylvaine Ní Aogáin & Patrick Burke's Webinar
 2. Dr Eithne Kennedy and Dr Gerry Shiel Webinar
 3. Dr Claire Dunne sharing resources for promoting Irish at home during her Webinar
 4. Dr Sinéad McCauley Lambe Webinar
 5. Dr Gene Mehigan in action during hi Webinar on Fluency in Reading



Whole Body Handwriting For Infants
Dr Sinéad McCauley Lambe

GROSS MOTOR SKILLS

Not Just For PE. Physical Education

Before looking for 'new' programmes - look at what we already have!

Dr

LAI @LiteracyIRL · 08/12/2021

What inhibits fluency? There are many important factors to consider!
@genemehigan #laiconnects




REFLECTIONS ON . . . THE GREAT EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION LANGUAGE WAR

Dr Sinéad McCauley Lambe



Since beginning my journey into early childhood education, I have learned that this sector appears to have its own “language.” And the more I think about how language is analysed and used in early childhood education, the more I think about Brian Friel’s *Translations* and how this play portrays the “the role and impact of language on human experience” ([Larson, 2019](#)). Set in 1833 Ireland, it tells the story of a moment of historical transition, a clash between languages and cultures that would see the Irish hedge schools replaced by a national education system in which English would be the official language. In Friel’s hands, the power shift illustrated by this change from the Irish to English language captures how the use of a particular language is deeply connected to our identities, and that, “without language, a thing or person has no meaningful existence, identity or presence” ([Dreiling, 2015](#)).

While not as drastic as the historical shift that provides the backdrop for Friel’s *Translations*, the early childhood education sector in Ireland has experienced a significant societal and professional shift in recent years. This has seen the identity of early childhood education evolve and change and its presence and visibility increase on a national scale. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the criticality of a quality early childhood education and care system has become clear for all to see. Nonetheless, the sector remains in a state of flux, and the struggle to achieve equality in relation to working conditions and a greater societal acknowledgment of the importance of early childhood education is ongoing. Perhaps it is this period of identify building and change that has initiated what I call “The Great Early Childhood Language War.”

As a lecturer in Early Childhood Education who is a primary school teacher by “trade,” I have been struck by the apparent tension around the use of particular language in the context of early childhood education. I sensed early on in my journey that it was not okay to use the word “teacher,” that “educator” or “practitioner” was preferred. It was also not okay to use words like “lesson” or “school.”

At first, it was difficult to get the hang of things. My brain had to employ the equivalent of the “replace” tool on Microsoft Word. I had to replace “teacher” with “educator,” “lesson” with “activity,” and “school” with “setting.” Sometimes I tripped up. Whenever this happened, I immediately corrected myself, because to use such language in the early childhood education sphere seems to imply that one does not fully “understand” early childhood education.

The words “teacher,” “lesson,” and “school” appear to conjure up images of a didactic system, where the “teacher” is an authoritarian, and where “lessons” are teacher-led and involve only passive learning. The word “school” seems to give the impression of a rigid, rule-bound place where children conform and are not permitted to express their individuality; a place where children’s agency is not promoted or supported. In my

experience as a “teacher,” this could not be further from the truth. And from my experience of “teaching” infant “teachers,” this is certainly not the truth. I have observed a huge demand from teachers to educate and upskill themselves in relation to early childhood education. There is great understanding and knowledge among infant teachers that child-led learning is effective, that following children’s interests is critical, and that enabling children to demonstrate agency is central to education. Despite the language and terminology that might be used.

For years, most teachers have been doing all of these things, albeit under another guise and using different language. Assigning daily “jobs” to children who thrive on being given responsibility, asking children to share their stories and their news, acknowledging individual learning needs and interests, emphasising the uniqueness and individuality of all children, and wholly embracing the idea of active, hands-on learning.



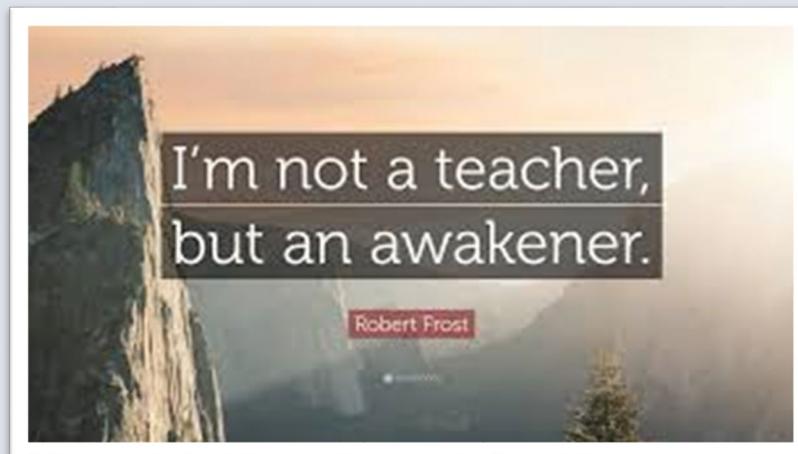
There is no doubt that the introduction of the [Aistear Framework](#) (NCCA, 2009) shone a light on the importance of play-based learning in infant classrooms and beyond. It also challenged teachers to reflect on their practice. And while many may have struggled to adapt their practices to align with the Aistear Framework, schools and teachers across the country have embraced play-based learning. Many of the teachers who successfully made this transition actively sought out professional development about how to incorporate playful learning pedagogy across the infant day – this was frequently done on their own time, for which they were not remunerated. Many teachers are also part of online sharing forums where playful learning is celebrated and championed. And so many “teachers,” in both the early childhood education and sectors want to, and **are**, learning from each other all the time. They are advocates of each other and recognise the shared knowledge, the shared skill-sets, the shared vision of both professions. Nonetheless, the language war rages on, sometimes silently, sometime hidden, but always there.



It strikes me as odd that words such as “teacher,” or “teach,” come under great scrutiny in relation to early childhood education, while the language used in this sector in relation to the children themselves appears to go without criticism. Terms like “Wobblers,” and “Wobbler Room,” for example, are commonly used to refer to children between 12 and 24 months. At 20 months, a child can typically feed themselves and take off their clothes. They can turn the pages of a book and stack 3 to 6 small blocks on top of each other. They have developed sophisticated motor skills, problem solving skills, and communication skills. The Aistear Framework even acknowledges these capacities and that these children are “competent and capable learners” (NCCA, 2009, p.72), who are deserving of respect. But the word, “Wobbler,” does not invoke images of a child who is capable, competent, or respected as an individual with rights. Nor do some of the names of individual settings across the country.

The word “teach” is defined by the Oxford Dictionary as “to help somebody learn something by giving information about it.” The educator and children’s rights activist, [Parker Palmer](#), describes “teaching” as a much richer endeavor. Palmer likens teaching skills to those involved in using a knife – it takes skill to murder someone with a knife and it takes skill to heal someone with a knife. The difference between the two lies not in the hand that controls the knife, but in the heart that controls the hand. We seem to spend so much time and energy focusing on the language used in “teaching,” or “educating.” Perhaps our time energy would be better spent focusing on the hearts of our “teachers’ and “educators” and on education itself, so that we can become the teachers and educators that our children and the world needs.

Maybe “the old language is a barrier to modern progress,” as Maire suggests in Friel’s *Translations*. Maybe it is not. Maybe our language around early childhood education needs to change over time. And maybe it will. But instead of creating divisions over language and terminology, and becoming burdened and side-tracked by how to best verbalise what we are and what we do, perhaps we could unite in our common goal to “love learners, learning and teaching life” ([Palmer, 2017](#)).





SOME SNAPS FROM OUR LAI CONFERENCE 2021

Top from left to right -

1. Tomás O'Maildamh
2. LAI President Regina Dunne presenting
3. Bernadette Dwyer - Keynote Speaker
4. Áine Ní Ghlinn and Dr Claire Dunne - Fireside Chat
5. Past President Dr Jennifer O'Sullivan welcomes attendees
6. Past and Present Presidents - Dr Jennifer O'Sullivan and Regina Dunne
7. LAI Goodie Bags sponsored by ABC suppliers
8. Past President Niamh Watkins and Regina Dunne
9. Adrian Lohan - LAI Book Awards

