

Erasmus in Málaga (Múinteoir Barry)

During the final week of August, I had the wonderful opportunity to travel to Málaga, Spain, as part of the Erasmus+ programme. The experience provided an excellent combination of professional development, collaboration and cultural immersion. It gave me the opportunity to develop new approaches to teaching and learning while also exchanging ideas and experiences with fellow educators from schools across the broader Galway region.

The main focus of the week was a CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) course, which was delivered by the Plus Project European Academy. CLIL is an educational approach in which the learning of subject content is combined with the development of an additional language. Throughout the course, we explored both the theory underpinning CLIL and, importantly, practical strategies that can be applied within the classroom.

One of the key areas explored was the principles and benefits of CLIL methodology. We considered how language learning can be successfully incorporated into the teaching of other curricular areas, allowing pupils to develop their communication skills while simultaneously engaging with meaningful subject content. This approach places language in a practical and purposeful context and encourages pupils to use their developing language skills as a genuine means of communication.



A particularly useful element of the course was learning how to design lesson plans that integrate both content and language objectives. Rather than viewing language learning and subject learning as two separate areas, we examined ways of planning lessons in which both can complement one another. This encouraged us to think carefully about the language pupils need in order to access particular topics and how teachers can explicitly support the development of this language throughout a lesson.



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We also explored a variety of strategies for supporting language development within subject teaching. This included considering the importance of scaffolding, modelling language, using visual supports and providing pupils with opportunities to communicate and collaborate. These strategies are particularly valuable in helping pupils to build confidence and ensuring that learners with different levels of language proficiency can participate meaningfully in lessons.

Sharing ideas with colleagues was a particularly valuable part of the experience. Exchanging perspectives allowed us to consider how similar approaches might work in different school settings. Varied discussions throughout the week encouraged us to reflect on our own classroom practice. Every session provided opportunities to consider practical ways of applying our learning. Reflecting together also helped us identify some of the common challenges experienced by teachers. As the week progressed, the value of professional collaboration became increasingly apparent. Learning alongside colleagues made the course both engaging and relevant to our own contexts. Many of the conversations continued beyond the formal course sessions and added greatly to the overall experience. An important feature of Erasmus+ is the opportunity it provides for this kind of professional exchange. Returning to our schools with new ideas and resources will allow the benefits of the programme to extend beyond those who travelled. Gaining a broader perspective on teaching and learning was therefore one of the most rewarding aspects of the week. Alongside our professional development, we were also given opportunities to experience the culture and history of Málaga. Roaming through the city on a guided walking tour gave us an insight into its streets, architecture and historic landmarks. In addition to exploring the city itself, we learned more about some of the people who have contributed to Málaga's cultural identity. The visit to the childhood home of Pablo Picasso was a particular highlight of the cultural programme. As one of Málaga's most famous figures, Picasso provided an interesting connection between the city's local heritage and its international cultural influence. Such experiences added another memorable dimension to an already rewarding week.

Experiencing Málaga itself also reinforced many of the ideas discussed during our course. Being in a different linguistic and cultural environment highlighted the importance of communication, context, visual cues and confidence when using another language. In this sense, the cultural aspect of the Erasmus+ programme complemented our professional learning particularly well.