

### Previous Experience:

- 5 years of Irish lessons at school; 3 classes of 55 minutes a week for the first two years and 4 classes of 45 minutes a week for the last three years. This included the GCSE exam in which I gained all but 2 marks **yet proved a huge waste of time when entering the reality of using the language.**
- 5/6 Saturday morning Conradh na Gaeilge classes designed to 'eliminate the pen and paper from learning Irish' but in reality **regurgitated the repetition of grammatical basics and the small number of lessons I attended reflect the efficiency of it.**

### An Ocr:

- While genuinely uncertain about the number of times I've watched the videos, **I am sure that they've all been watched at least ten times.** However I did not follow them numerically – as I think Muiris mentioned doing? – and rather chose the ones I felt weakest in and it worked for me. **I found it took around 3 - 4 times before I could cut out the visuals and listen only to the sound.** However a mistake I did find myself making was not talking the sounds as much as is required; thus probably slowing the building up of confidence in speaking the language which is something I know I need to work on and am currently doing.
- I found the videos to provide me with the essential base vocabulary before attending the course as intended and personally had no problem with the quality of the visuals. An essential element of the system and in my opinion the technological presence has the potential to connect particularly with young people for obvious reasons as well as the flexible ability to work from home as an advantage to everybody.

- For some feedback and views from young people I showed some of the 19 videos to a few friends who showed interest (– there is no worry here with exploiting them etc.) The surprising element to me was a positive response, not because of the videos but of the willingness to watch and learn which actually exists to a level more than I had thought. **The general opinion on the videos was at first very overwhelming hearing the mass of sound, which was lessened on repetition and picking up new chunks became rewarding and reason enough to watch again. I observed this in people who I'm sure have not even made the internal decision to want to learn Irish but were nonetheless interested in the different concept of learning.** They found no particular problem that would be off-putting with the visuals but said they could be made more appealing. However one person simply looked at the number of videos and said they couldn't sit and re-watch 19 over and over again. **A friend who never had any experience at all with Irish before actually came back to me after watching the videos saying he was interested in doing a course which actually encouraged me.** What I'm saying here is probably of little use and predictable but I just thought it might be useful to see the actual response in young people with different interests of the language.
- In my own opinion the videos have a great potential but for what seems to be the large majority of young people who don't have a strong interest in the language it would take **utilising as many of those who do in communities to talk to others and gently encourage the programme, keeping it relatively prominent within groups of friends**

**and combining this with the kind of entertaining events/nights you were talking about to make the language relevant and enjoyable to young people.** I'm not sure if you would agree or see it feasible but I know this is something I can do to some degree locally and one of the few ways I can think of to bring the language back to young people (from what I think would work in my area at least). **Consequently, should the desire to learn emerge, the resources are there to facilitate the beginning of this in 'An Ocr'. From feedback I would also mention an online presence to accompany the videos with music etc. but I realise this might not be ideal for the charity.**

- [The above are just a few ideas from my own experience and may or may not be relevant or useful.]

Weekend:

- Arrival on Friday; Going into the first weekend I didn't really know what to expect being my first time at a course anything like this. **I found myself made more than welcome and the talking with the parents and showing around a crucial part to any young person attending the course.** Upon experiencing the first live, full conversation in Irish at first I felt naturally out of place, as it was the first time I was ever in a situation I genuinely knew very little of what was going on around me like that. **However I found myself increasingly comfortable as I knew I was made welcome and not pressured to speak or interact much** – I find this particularly crucial and have talked about this with others as I have been told being constantly expected to input above their comfort would put people off the experience altogether. **I think it also important to note that**

**going into the first weekend I had definitely passed the first stage in deciding I wanted to learn Irish but had not yet decided I could**, past experience obviously contributing to this, but after experiencing the reality of the language being spoken naturally in real life it really consolidated this and I began to think becoming fluent may now be a reality for me. Of the great experience I had in Gaoth Dobhair, that is something that stands out for me and I think it to be important for people going to these courses to experience it also, particularly if they are coming from a background where they have never heard anything like it before. **Knowing about the voice in the videos also caused me to see them in a new light. The 'briefing' in English** in the foreign languages room about the course, level of Irish participants have, about the site etc. before switching it off **is also important to people in making them feel comfortable according to some feedback**. I found no problems with the accommodation or sleeping arrangements or bathrooms upstairs.

- **Saturday; I personally loved the 'traditional alarm clock' and think every house should have that!** In terms of **breakfast which includes all cooking and housework, it is best shared so not only is everybody contributing, but it is turned into a learning experience**. I've come to realise that **vocabulary learned for one particular activity is relevant to many others**, such as the example of brushing the teeth you gave and is important to note. **What also was prominent to me was the flow of things rather than strictly imposed timelines which would dampen the natural feel to the experience**. In particular for the first weekend having other people of roughly my own age there helped me to enjoy the experience more. **With other people care must be taken not to revert to English as is the**

easy thing to do however, despite this being something which is received reluctantly but gratefully on the first week. I think a strong emphasis has to be placed on the role and importance of where which language is spoken, although honestly this was not so much of an issue after the first weekend.

- I found the computer work and learning about the senses particularly useful as a wide range of useful phrases was learnt in these things. For the learner I also think these particular types of examples, like making the curry, are also most useful for looking or listening to the recordings of and continuing the learning at home.
- The ceol agus craic on the Saturday nights in my opinion were excellent and again some of the highlights of the experience and effective in bringing you into the local community.
- Sunday; I think the opportunity to learn other skills such as camera and computer work are a positive aspect to a participant and adds again to the learning experience. It makes it so learning Irish is almost naturally secondary hence comes more easily.
- I found visitors calling in on different days had a particularly positive effect on learning; they brought someone else to talk to and listen to and made you more accustomed this. **One thing however I think would particularly benefit a new participant is emphasising the basic conversation you are likely to come across 'passing' someone. I know this is largely covered, but I had been caught out on a few occasions particularly on the first weekend not knowing how to reply to certain 'greetings' as such.**
- **The taking home of media I think is crucial** but if more people should take up the course it would be increasingly difficult to

send out hardware. Perhaps it would be an idea to set up a private, encrypted intranet styled page solely for the media from the weekends. Again online may not be ideal, and nothing is ever really private there.

Media/Useful but need editing:

*(I've had to rename some of the files so I'll give my name and a brief description)*

- Weekend 1:
  - **Deccy\_12 – Sound – first Friday computer work**
  - DW\_B0361 – *Sound – Senses*
  - DW\_B0362 - *Sounds – Outside*
  - Videos from first weekend on computer work
  
- Weekend 2:
  - A lot of these videos are useful and I don't think need much editing; the equipment ones in particular
  - Breakfast sound file
  - Making the curry sound file

***Some of the files are of a very bad quality and very little voice can be heard in them, for example I have a DW\_B0357 and a DW\_B0358 which sound like they have been put in a pocket; others such as ones with John(?) I think are best left unedited.***