

Lesson 6

Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga

Aim: That students will be informed about the Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga (Office of the Irish Language Commissioner) and that they will understand the work done by the Office.

Learning Outcomes: At the end of the lesson, students will understand:

- The work of the Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga.
- The way in which the Irish language is protected by law.

Requirements for the Class:

- DVD of the drama which is in Irish. The video clip entitled 'Lesson 6' on the DVD is to be shown to the class.
 - There are two versions of the drama on the DVD. You can select the version **without subtitles in English** by choosing "Gaeilge" at the beginning of the DVD or you can select the version **with subtitles in English** by choosing "English" at the beginning of the DVD.
 - The text in English of the drama is provided for the teacher in this booklet.
- A copy of the Worksheet to be photocopied by the teacher for every student. The Worksheet is provided in this booklet.
- Markers and white paper for the students.
- A large poster of the official *Language Rights Charter* to be hung in the classroom. This poster is in the teacher's box.
- A large poster of *Our Class Language Rights Charter* to be hung in the classroom. This Charter was compiled by the class during Lesson 5.

Start of Class:

1. At the start of the lesson, remind the students about the work done last week on Our Class Language Rights Charter. Draw the students' attention to the official Charter from the Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga and to the protection given to the Irish language in the Irish Constitution.

Development of Class:

2. Tell the students that they will be watching a drama which shows the work of the Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga and that they will be completing a worksheet based on it.
3. Show the DVD to the class.
4. Distribute the Worksheet to each student and show the DVD again.
5. Go through the answers which the students have given on the worksheets.

End of Class:

6. Divide the class into groups and give each group a task, for example:
 - Design a poster giving information about the Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga and showing how to contact it.
 - Design an information leaflet showing the various steps which the Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga follows when it receives a complaint.
 - Compose a suitable slogan for the Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga.
 - Design a suitable DVD cover for the Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga.
 - Write a drama about a complaint which the group has about language rights.

Drama about the Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga

This is the text in English of the drama on the DVD.

Introduction:

An Coimisinéir Teanga: “Seán Ó Cuirreáin is my name. I was appointed by the President of Ireland as the first Coimisinéir Teanga in 2004. I hope you’ll enjoy this short drama which gives an insight into the work of this Office.”

Scene 1:

The complainant is walking into a public office to get an identity card in Irish.

- Áine: “Hello. I would like to get an identity card in Irish, please.”
- Oifigeach: “I’m sorry, I’ve no Irish. How can I help you?”
- Áine: “Oh! So I suppose you want me to speak in English then. I’d like to get an ID card in Irish please.”
- Oifigeach: “Right, well, you’ll have to fill out one of these forms but I’m not sure that the card will be in Irish.” (She gives a form in English to Áine)
- Áine: “Can I get this form in Irish please?”
- Oifigeach: “I don’t think we have them in Irish.”
- Áine: “Oh! Well, you see, I really need this ID card as soon as possible and I can’t wait for you to get the Irish version.”
- Oifigeach: “Well, do you want to give me your details and I can input them straight into the computer. What’s your name please?”
- Áine: “Áine de Búrca.”
- Oifigeach: “What’s that in English?”
- Áine: “My name is in Irish. I don’t use the English version of it.”
- Oifigeach: “How do you spell it?”
- Áine: “Áine de Búrca.”
- Oifigeach: “OK. I think I’ve got that. I do have to tell you though that our computer system which creates the ID card doesn’t necessarily deal with the fada.”

- Áine: “Ok, well I’m very unhappy about this; that means my name is going to be spelled incorrectly on the card.”
- Oifigeach: “Well there’s not much I can do about that.”
- Áine: “Well, I think I’m going to have to make a complaint then.”

Scene 2:

Áine is seen walking out of the office and phoning the Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga. Niamh who works in the Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga answers the phone. Niamh is seen sitting at her computer holding the phone.

- Niamh: “Hello. This is the Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga. Niamh speaking.”
- Áine: “Hello. My name is Áine de Búrca. I was trying to get an identity card in Irish but I wasn’t able to. What can be done about this?”
- Niamh: “I will put you through to Sinéad Ní Chathasaigh and Sinéad will be able to deal with your complaint.”
- Áine: “That’s great. Thank you very much.”

Scene 2B:

Sinéad is seen in her office answering the phone.

- Sinéad: “I understand that you wish to make a complaint”.
- Áine: “I was trying to get an identity card in Irish with my name on it in Irish but I wasn’t able to. They didn’t have the application form in Irish either”.
- Sinéad: “Can you send me all the information please?”
- Áine: “I will send you an email. What is your email address?”
- Sinéad: “Send the email to eolas@coimisineir.ie. Please give me all the information about what happened and I will contact the public body about it. I will get back to you when I have investigated your complaint.”
- Áine: “Thank you very much. Goodbye for now.”

Scene 3:

An office scene with a computer and files on the table. The public body’s Irish language officer, Diarmuid Mac Eoin, is sitting opposite Séamus Ó Conghaile from the Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga.

- Séamus: “Hello, I am Séamus Ó Conghaile from the Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga.”
- Diarmuid: “Hello, Séamus, I am Diarmuid Mac Eoin, the Irish Language Officer for this public company.”
- Séamus: “It’s nice to meet you Séamus. My role in the Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga is to ensure that the language scheme is implemented correctly. Now it’s clear from my enquiries that you have made progress in relation to providing services in Irish. However, there are still difficulties.”
- Diarmuid: “Well, the website is in Irish and in English. The application forms and the information leaflets are available in Irish and English and certain offices provide counter services in Irish.”

They are seen talking to one another and ticking a list now and again.

- Séamus: “On another matter, a complaint was made to the Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga by a secondary school student who had difficulties when she tried to get an identity card in Irish. The complainant could not get an application form in Irish and she was told that your computer system could not manage the síneadh fada.”
- Diarmuid: “Well, the application forms should be available in Irish and English. I will have to enquire about the computer system; I’m not too sure about that.”
- Séamus: “Also, she noticed that the signs in the office were in English only.”
- Diarmuid: “The signs should be bilingual.”
- Séamus: “Yes they should. Under the Official Languages Act public companies must ensure that their signs are available (in Irish or) in Irish and in English.
- Diarmuid: “Well, as I said, I will get back to you about all this.”

Scene 4:

Áine is seen with a friend.

- Áine: “Look. I got my identity card in the post today. It’s completely in Irish.”
- Risteard: “That’s great. I must get my identity card. Have they spelt your name correctly?”
- Áine: “Yes. Believe it or not, everything is correct on the card, even my name!”

Teacher’s Notes:

Public bodies must comply with their direct duties under the Official Languages Act, which are as follows:

- Reply to letters or emails in Irish.
- Issue mailshots at the same time in Irish and English. Mailshots contain general information sent to the public.
- Provide important documents such as annual reports at the same time in Irish and English.
- Put up signs in Irish and English.
- Use stationery in Irish and English.
- Use recorded oral announcements in Irish and English, for example on phones.

In addition to the direct duties under the Act, public bodies must also comply with additional duties under language schemes. A language scheme is a statutory language plan which describes the services in Irish which the public body provides (e.g. one to one service, website, application forms etc) and how these services will be developed over a three year period.

The Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga monitors public bodies to ensure that language schemes are implemented.

Worksheet for Lesson 6

1. What difficulties did Áine de Búrca have when she tried to get an identity card in Irish?

2. What complaint did Áine de Búrca have?

3. What did Sinéad Ní Chathasaigh ask Áine to do?

4. What role has the man from the Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga, Séamus Ó Conghaile?

5. Name THREE things the public body has done to implement its language scheme?

6. How was Áine's complaint resolved?
