

# The Big Picture 2

## Materials and Resources for ESOL Tutors



## 5 The Irish Political System

### Lesson plan and exercises

#### Objectives

##### The students will be able to:

- understand the basics of political structure in Ireland and Irish vocabulary use
- increase vocabulary to do with describing the political situation in a country
- understand the basics of election campaigns and how candidates run for office
- increase vocabulary to do with local elections.

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## 5.1 National and Local Government - Lesson Plan

Objectives:	At the end of the activity students will be able to understand the basics of political structures in Ireland and Irish vocabulary use	
Functions:	Reading for specific information, vocabulary building	
Level:	Elementary-Pre-Intermediate, Basic Literacy Can be adapted for higher levels	
Materials:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Irish Government</li><li>• Categories Worksheet</li><li>• Words in Irish Worksheet</li><li>• Irish Politicians Writing Frame</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>page 73</li><li>page 74</li><li>page 75</li><li>page 76</li></ul>

### Instructions:

1. Give each student the **Irish Government** text. Before you read, find out what students know about the Irish government.
2. Have students work alone or in pairs to look up the words in bold. This can be done as a homework assignment or the text may be broken up into smaller sections and done as an ongoing assignment. Have students complete the chart and check it together. Practise the pronunciation of the Irish words used. Students may want to discuss the basics of the Irish language or contribute words they know in Irish.
3. If you have a mixed-ability class, less advanced students could do the scanning exercise on the **Irish Government Words Worksheet** instead of the **Categories Worksheet**. If the class is doing both exercises, check the answers and again practise pronunciation if needed.  
Ask students if the titles in their country are similar to the English words (president, prime minister, etc.). If they are different, write them on the board.
4. Give the students the **Irish Politicians Writing Frame**. Using the text, have them write down information about Michael D. Higgins and Micheál Martin. Encourage them to find out other information about the two figures. If these are not presently in office, try to find recent pictures of the present president and prime minister.

## 5.1 National and Local Government - Lesson Plan (continued)

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### **Consolidation/extension activities:**

- Arrange a trip to the Dail.
- Assign students a minister and have them find out information. Make a wall chart with the different political parties, government structures and major figures.
- Have students write to a government minister about an issue.

## 5.1 National and Local Government - Irish Government

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The Republic of Ireland is a **sovereign**, independent, democratic state with a **parliamentary** system of government. Ireland is a parliamentary **democracy**. The **National Parliament** is called the *Oireachtas* in the Irish language and has a President (*an tUachtarán* in Irish) and two houses. These two houses are the **House of Representatives** (*Dáil Éireann*) and the **Senate** (*Seanad Éireann*). The *Seanad* has 60 members.

The *Dáil* has 160 members (called *Teachtaí Dála*, **deputies** to the Representative Assembly or TDs) from 39 constituencies. Each **constituency** elects three, four or five members - this depends on the population.

The **Constitution** of Ireland is the basic law of the State. The Constitution lists the **fundamental** rights of the citizen. There are five kinds of rights.

They are personal rights, the family, education, **private property** and religion.

The president is **chief of state** and this role is mostly **ceremonial**. The current president is Michael D. Higgins. This is his second term. The **term** lasts 7 years. The president can be elected again only once. The president lives in the President's House. It is called *Áras an Uachtarán* and is in Phoenix Park, Dublin 7. It has ninety-two rooms.

The current **prime minister** (*Taoiseach* in Irish) is Micheál Martin of the Fianna Fáil **party**. He **leads** a Fianna Fáil/Fine Gael/Green party **coalition government**. These parties won the 2020 Irish **general election**.

Leo Varadkar leads the Fine Gael party. He is the deputy prime minister (*Tánaiste* in Irish) and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment. Eamon Ryan leads the Green party. In the local government, **councillors represent** the people in each area.

## 5.1 National and Local Government - Categories Worksheet

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Read the text on Irish Government. Look up the words in bold and put them in the correct category.



Noun	Verb	Adjective

## 5.1 National and Local Government - Words in Irish Worksheet

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Look at the text on Irish government. Find the English word for each Irish word. Write it in the space next to the word.

**Oireachtas**

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**an tUachtarán**

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**Dáil Éireann**

---

**Seanad Éireann**

---

**Teachtaí Dála**

---

**Áras an Uachtarán**

---

**Taoiseach**

---

**Tánaiste**

---

## 5.1 National and Local Government - Writing Frame - Irish Politicians

Look at the text on Ireland.

Write some facts about Michael D.Higgins and Micheál Martin.

You can also add new information.

Michael D. Higgins  
is the



Irish Defence Forces from  
Ireland, [CC BY 2.0](#), via  
Wikimedia Commons

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Micheál Martin is the



Oireachtas (Open Data) PSI  
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## 5.2 Politics in My Country - Lesson Plan

Objectives:	At the end of the activity students will have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• increased vocabulary to do with describing the political situation in a country</li><li>• practised reading comprehension</li><li>• practised sentence structure</li><li>• compared sentence structure in different languages</li></ul>
Skills practised:	Reading, writing and speaking
Level:	Elementary – Pre-Intermediate ESOL Literacy
Materials:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Politicians Writing Frame page 79</li><li>• Government in my Country - Writing Activity page 80</li><li>• Politics in my country - Text page 81</li><li>• Word order Worksheet page 82</li></ul>

### Key Vocabulary

- politics • nowadays • freedom • to be allowed • safe • corruption

### Focus on language:

- Sentence structure/word order
- Comparatives, for example much less safe/more freedom/much more corruption

### Instructions:

1. Pre-reading: Discuss what students know about Albania. Discuss the title as whole-group activity or in pairs. Invite students to talk about their own countries if they wish. Talk a little about politics in Ireland as a model. Ask for information about politics in Ireland from the students.
3. Ideas for reading:
  - Jigsaw reading
  - Write up a few simple true and false questions on the board.
  - Blank out words; gap-fill. Teacher reads text and students check their answers. Practise reading aloud. Teacher reads aloud to model pronunciation. Read together as a group. Break into pairs and practise paired reading. Invite volunteers to read individually.

## 5.2 Politics in My Country - Lesson Plan (continued)

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3. Ways to introduce and teach sentence structure/word order:
  - Introduce word order by writing one or two simple mixed-up sentences on the board. Students work in pairs/small groups to put the words in the correct order and to write out a correct sentence.
  - Give out cards to pairs/small groups (for example with two sentences per group). Students make the sentences, write them down and then pass the cards onto another group. Continue until the cards have circulated around all the groups.
  - To demonstrate word order, give a card with a word written clearly on it to each student. Give them 30 seconds to stand in the correct order holding their cards.
  
4. Politics in my country - **Word Order Worksheet**.

Comparing word order in English and other languages is a valuable exercise to:

- raise awareness of mother tongue 'interference' in English
- help students to recognise/analyse and eventually correct own errors.
- raise awareness of others' languages for example, scripts written in a different direction. This can also promote tolerance (for example, Roman script-literate learners not understanding why non-Roman script-literate learners need so much more time to write in English).
- give students an opportunity to share their own linguistic experience with the group. Have the students come up to the board and write the same sentence in their different languages. Discuss.

5. Have students choose political figures in their country and complete the **Politicians Writing Frame**. If this is a painful topic, they may choose past politicians, politicians from other countries or additional Irish politicians.
  
6. Hand out the **Government Writing Activity**. Students could discuss the questions as a small group or as a pair speaking exercise, report what they have learnt about the other person's government and work on the writing as a class or homework exercise.

## 5.2 Politics in My Country - Writing Frame

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Look at the text on Ireland. Write some facts about politicians in your country.

\_\_\_\_\_ is the \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ is the \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## 5.2 Politics in My Country - Text

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Politics have changed a lot.

Nowadays people have more freedom.

They do what they want and they say what they want to say.

This was not allowed before because Albania was under a dictatorship for forty-five years.

Now there are more political parties.

The worst thing is that people are much less safe than before.

There is much more corruption.

**Spartak from Albania**



## 5.2 Politics in my Country - Word Order Worksheet

Put the words in the correct order. Write out the sentences again. Put in the correct punctuation. Remember that with expressions of time there are two possibilities.

### Example:

more	nowadays	people	freedom	have	.
------	----------	--------	---------	------	---

**Nowadays people have more freedom.**

or

**People have more freedom nowadays.**

1. are now political there more parties

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2. more much corruption is there

---

---

3. safe than people before are less much

---

---

4. was Albania dictatorship for a forty-five years under

---

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Look back at the text, page 81 and check your answers.

Write two of the sentences in your first language.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

Compare your sentences with another student's sentences.

Discuss the different word order in different languages.

## 5.3 Candidates and Election Campaigns in Ireland - Lesson Plan

Objectives:	At the end of the activity students will be able to understand the basics of election campaigns and how candidates run for office	
Functions:	Reading for specific information, comprehension, skimming and scanning	
Level:	Pre-Intermediate-Intermediate Can be adapted for higher levels	
Materials:	• Text	page 84
	• Activity Sheet	page 86

### Key Vocabulary

- see vocabulary in text

### Instructions:

1. Give each student the **Election Candidates and Campaigns in Ireland Text and Activity Sheet**. Have students read the eight sentences and make sure they understand the statements. Tell students there is a mistake in each sentence.
2. In pairs or individually, students skim and scan the text to find the corrections. Give them a specific amount of time and let them know how much time they have left at regular intervals. Students should write the corrections when they find them.
3. Check the exercise as a class.
4. Have them read the text as a comprehension exercise or vocabulary building exercise.

### Consolidation/extension activities:

- Compare and contrast election campaigns in their countries.
- Students prepare questions on the text and ask each other.

## 5.3 Candidates and Election Campaigns in Ireland - Text

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People who run for election are called candidates. The election candidates will launch campaigns and ask people to vote for them. They will canvass their local areas - this means they will travel from house to house, meeting the people in each one, explaining why they are running for election, and asking for support.

They will also distribute leaflets in their local areas, explaining who they are and why people should vote for them. They will also place posters of themselves throughout the area.

Most election candidates will run for election with the help of a political party. A political party is a large organisation of people who all have the same ideas about how the country should be run.

Most of the parties have different ideas about the best way to run the country, so anybody who decides to be an election candidate will look at the different ideas of all the parties and decide which ones they think are best. They will then run for this political party.

If a candidate decides that he or she does not agree with the ideas of any of the political parties, he or she will run as an Independent candidate.

In Ireland, there are six main political parties.

The main political parties in Ireland are called: Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, the Labour Party, the Green Party, Sinn Féin and the Social Democrats. If a candidate decides to run as a member of one of these parties, he or she will receive help and support from other members of that party.

On Election Day, people go to a place called a polling station to cast their vote. Polling stations are usually schools that have been closed for the day. When people arrive at the polling station, they are given a piece



## 5.3 Candidates and Election Campaigns in Ireland - Text

of paper called a ballot paper. The ballot paper has the name of all the election candidates on it. Voters mark the paper beside the name of the person that they would like to see elected. This is done in secret.

After Election Day is over, officials examine the papers and the votes are counted for each of the election candidates. The candidate with the most votes wins a position to represent the people.

Non-Irish nationals living in Ireland can also stand for election to any local council. If you do not belong to a registered party, then you only need fifteen electors registered in your local area to nominate you. Then you can run for local office as an independent. If you win, you can be a councillor in your area.

### Note

#### **Numeracy extensions:**

This section can be used to reinforce and develop a number of numeracy skills:

- Provide opportunities for discussing and comparing population in Ireland with the learners' own countries to give practice with writing and reading and communicating very large numbers. Highlight the Irish conventions for writing these numbers.
- Discuss differences between voting systems, for example 'first past the post' and proportional representation.
- Use the number of TDs from each party elected to calculate, for example the representation of each party in government, the make-up of the current government, the number of people each party represents, etc.

## 5.3 Election Candidates and Campaigns in Ireland - Activity

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Each sentence has one mistake.

Look at the Election Candidates and Campaigns in Ireland text and correct the mistakes.

The first one is done for you.

1. People who want to stand for election are called <sup>candidates</sup> ~~campaigns~~.
2. A political party has one or two people in it.
3. There are seven main political parties in Ireland.
4. On Election Day, people go to the bank to vote.
5. People cast their vote on a registration form.
6. When voters vote for someone, everyone can see who they voted for.
7. The president decides who wins the local elections.
8. Non-Irish nationals cannot run for local elections.



## 5.4 First Africans Elected in Ireland - Lesson Plan

Objectives:	At the end of the activity students will have <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• increased vocabulary to do with local elections</li><li>• practised reading comprehension and summary skills</li><li>• increased confidence in reading newspaper articles</li></ul>
Functions:	Reading for specific information, comprehension, skimming and scanning
Level:	Pre-Intermediate-Intermediate Can be adapted for higher levels. Basic Literacy
Materials:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Text page 89</li><li>• Speaking and Writing Worksheet page 90</li></ul>

### Key Vocabulary

- local elections
- town council
- councillor
- to be elected
- public office
- successful
- barrier
- to win a seat
- to join a political party

### Instructions:

1. Pre-reading: Students predict from the headline what the article will be about. Ask what the students know about local elections.
2. Introduce new vocabulary (see **Vocabulary Work** on page 88).
3. Hand out the **Text** and the **Speaking and Reading Worksheet**. Students read the text and work in pairs to (orally) re-tell the story in five sentences in their own words. The emphasis is on picking out the key points from the text, not on accuracy. Ask sample phrases from a few pairs, then re-tell the story again in five simple sentences for listening comprehension practice and to reinforce vocabulary.
4. Put the sentences in the correct order. Students work in pairs and then go back to the text to check.
5. Writing a summary: Model useful phrases for summarising on the board. Students work in pairs to write a short summary containing three key points in their own words. Encourage students to put away the original text when they are doing this and to work from memory. Students pass around completed work/read other students' writing. Ask for volunteers to read out summaries.

## 5.4 First Africans Elected in Ireland - Lesson Plan (continued)

### Suggestions for consolidation/extension activities:

Authentic material (for example, news) can be used with low-level groups provided the task is specific and appropriate for the students' level.

### Examples:

- Play a YouTube clip of international news. Ask students to listen for the names of any countries that they hear.
- Play the radio news headlines. Ask the students to listen for how many news items they hear.
- Look at the news headlines online. What countries are they about? What names are mentioned?

### Vocabulary work

#### Brainstorming

- Brainstorm in pairs/small groups first, followed by feedback as a whole group activity.
- Draw a spidergram on the board. Write words up/invite students to come up to the board and add words.

#### Underline new words

Give students a fixed (small) number of new words/phrases to underline in the text. Limit the words. Too many new words at once are overwhelming and students are less likely to remember them.

#### Dictionary work

- Find synonyms.
- Translate. Common-language students work in small groups.

#### Students teach each other new words

Give out new words on cards to pairs (a different word per pair). Each pair has to put the word(s) in a sentence. The pairs then split up, move around the room and explain the meaning to other students. Students write down new words and explanation/sentence. Continue until students have collected all the new words.

#### Running dictation

Place new words on cards around the walls of the room. Students work in teams. Team members take it in turns to go the wall, memorise the word, run back and dictate it to a nominated writer. Continue until all the words have been collected. The team then works together to put the words in a meaningful sentence.

## 5.4 First Africans Elected in Ireland - Text

### Speaking

Read the headline first. What do you think the article is about?

Talk to a partner.



#### **Nigerians take two local council seats**

Two Nigerians were the first Africans to be elected to public office in Ireland in the local elections in June 2004.

Rotimi Adebari (Independent) and Taiwo Matthew (Independent) won seats on Portlaoise Town Council and Ennis Town Council.

Both councillors said that they will work very hard for all the people in the community and not just the immigrant populations.

Councillor Adebari said that “colour is no barrier”.

He said: “The people here are wonderful people.”

Two female African candidates were not successful in the local elections. Benedicta Attoh (Independent) in Dundalk and Tokie Laotan (Independent) in Galway did not win a seat.

However, after the election political parties contacted the women to talk about joining a political party.

## 5.4 First Africans Elected in Ireland - Speaking and Reading

### Speaking

Talk to a partner.

In five sentences, re-tell the story in your own words.

### Reading

Put the sentences in the correct order.

Number one is done for you.



Two female African candidates were not elected.  
.....  
.....

They were the first Africans who were elected in Ireland.  
.....  
.....

1 Two Nigerians were elected in Ireland in the local elections in June 2004.  
.....  
.....

However, after the election political parties contacted the women to talk about joining a political party.  
.....  
.....

The two men won seats on Town Councils.  
.....  
.....

### Writing a summary

On a separate page, write a short summary of the article in your own words. Try to remember *three key points*.

### Useful phrases for writing a summary

- This article is about
- This article explains that
- According to this article,
- Firstly,
- Secondly,
- Finally,