IRISH AND POLISH IN A NEW CONTEXT OF DIVERSITY IN NORTHERN IRELAND'S SCHOOLS

EUGENE MCKENDRY

Queen's University Belfast

ABSTRACT

While Modern Languages are in decline generally in the United Kingdom's post-primary schools, including in Northern Ireland (Speak to the Future 2014), the international focus on primary languages has reawakened interest in the curricular area, even after the ending in 2015 of the Northern Ireland Primary Modern Languages Programme which promoted Spanish, Irish and Polish in primary schools. This paper will consider the situation in policy and practice of Modern Languages education, and Irish in particular, in Northern Ireland's schools.

During the years of economic growth in the 1990s Ireland, North and South, changed from being a country of net emigration to be an attractive country to immigrants, only to revert to large-scale emigration with the post-2008 economic downturn. While schools in Great Britain have had a long experience of receiving pupils from diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, firstly from the British Empire and Commonwealth countries, Northern Ireland did not attract many such pupils due to its weaker economic condition and the conflict of the Northern Ireland Troubles.

The influx from Poland and other Accession Countries following the expansion of the European Union in 2004 led to a sudden, significant increase in non-English speaking Newcomer pupils (DENI 2017). The discussion in Northern Ireland about a diverse democracy has hitherto concentrated on the historical religious and political divide, where Unionist antipathy led to the Irish Language being dubbed the 'Green Litmus Test' of Community Relations (Cultural Traditions Group 1994). Nevertheless, the increasing diversity can hopefully 'have a leavening effect on a society that has long been frozen in its "two traditions" divide' (OFMDFM 2005a: 10).

This paper will revisit the role and potential of Irish within the curricular areas of Cultural Heritage and Citizenship. An argument will also be made for the importance of language awareness, interculturalism and transferable language learning skills in Northern Ireland's expanded linguistic environment with a particular focus on Polish.

Keywords: Irish, Polish, Diversity, Newcomer, Education, Northern Ireland

1. Introduction

The 2011 Census for Northern Ireland returned 10.65%, some 185,000 people with 'some ability in Irish' (NISRA 2012). Of these, some 65,000 could 'speak, read, write and understand Irish'. As there are no historical Irish-speaking Gaeltacht districts remaining in Northern Ireland, this figure is made up of learners, with some small revivalist Irish-speaking communities and a few people originally from the Gaeltacht areas in the Republic of Ireland.

The main difference from Gàidhlig in Scotland, for example, is that the Irish language has the status of being the first official language in the Republic of Ireland and holds a firm presence in the educational, social, political and indeed economic arenas there. This allows learners in the North of Ireland to benefit from opportunities such as the summer colleges in the Gaeltacht and access to Irish television and radio, as well as BBC Northern Ireland's Irish language service, and so on. The current derogation on the official status of the Irish language in the European Union will be ended completely by the 1st January 2022 (Eur-Lex) and the enhanced status of Irish in the Union (European Union 2016) is already raising its profile further and creating employment. Even with Brexit where people from Northern Ireland may not be eligible for European Union jobs as UK citizens, Northern Ireland residents have dual UK/Irish citizenship and many hold Irish passports, thus finding themselves in a position to avail of any opportunities arising from the end of derogation.

On the negative side, the Northern Ireland state traditionally and the Unionist community in general are negatively disposed to the language, to the extent that it has been dubbed the 'green litmus paper of community relations' (Cultural Traditions Group 1994) The antipathy to the language is well attested (McKendry 2007; De Brún). Opposition to Irish-medium schools and an Irish language act are policy and manifesto commitments of Unionist parties. At the time of writing (July 2017), the introduction of an Irish Language Act is a stumbling block to the reintroduction of a devolved government in Northern Ireland.

Most schools in Northern Ireland are either Controlled, that is under state management with Protestant churches represented on the boards of governors, or Maintained, that is mainly under Catholic Church management. Not one Controlled or Protestant state school offers the language and it is disappointing to note that the Integrated school movement which aims to attract both Catholic and Protestant pupils also ignores it, with a few honourable exceptions. The language is therefore mostly restricted to the Maintained or Catholic schools. Despite this, prior to the introduction of the Northern Ireland Curriculum (NIC) in 1989, Irish was the second most popular language in schools and General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examination entries at age 16, after French (Table 1).

Table 1: Northern Ireland GCSE Modern Language Entries 1988

	French	Irish	Spanish	German	Italian
1988	8747	1518	942	867	141

Education reform in Great Britain (1988) and Northern Ireland (1989) made language study compulsory at Key Stages (KS) 3 and 4 (ages 11-16). The rationale for introducing a language was economic, particularly in the context of membership of the European Economic Community, later the European Union, a rationale which was used to marginalise Irish at the time. The original 'Proposals for Reform' consultation paper in March 1988 (DENI 1988a) put forward that a pupil would have to study one of French, German or Spanish before taking up Irish which would have prevented many schools and pupils from choosing the language due to lack of resources and the burden a second modern language would have placed upon many pupils. After a vigorous campaign a compromise was reached whereby the legislation (1988b) required that all schools should provide one of French, German, Spanish or, as an afterthought, Italian. However, in addition, Dr Mawhinney, the Minister of Education responsible, announced that:

> A school may, if it wishes, offer Irish in addition to these. Where a school offers Irish, pupils … will be free to choose from among the languages offered – whether French, German, Spanish, Italian or Irish – in order to satisfy the requirements of the common curriculum
>
> (Irish News newspaper, 22 March 89).

This meant nevertheless that many schools dropped Irish as they had not the budget capacity to offer two modern languages or were uncertain about the position of Irish, particularly as the compromise had been somewhat grudgingly conceded by Dr Mawhinney:

> Parents who choose to have their children take Irish instead of one of [the European mainland languages], at a time when the importance of the European dimension is growing, should think carefully about the future consequences of such a decision
>
> (Irish News newspaper, 22 March 89).

The economic imperative emphasised here is somewhat outdated in contemporary economic and globalised circumstances and particularly in light of increased diversity in Northern Ireland's schools and society with so many newcomer pupils. "The term 'Newcomer' is used to refer to a pupil who does not have satisfactory language skills to participate fully in the school curriculum

and does not have a language in common with the teacher" (DENI website). The term has entered common usage to describe pupils from families arriving after the expansion of the European Union in 2004.

Since September 2004 in England, however, and later in Northern Ireland (2007), modern languages study is no longer compulsory at Key Stage 4 (age 14 to 16 years old). Outside Wales, where Welsh language is still compulsory until the end of KS4, United Kingdom (UK) pupils, including Northern Ireland, are now only required to do 3 years of modern language study at Key Stage 3 (age 11-14) in post-primary education – the lowest compulsory language education in Europe. This has led to a marked drop in language study at secondary and university level throughout the United Kingdom. Since 2002, the British Council and the Centre for Better Education's *Language Trends Surveys* have charted the uptake, or more correctly, perhaps, the downturn of language examination entries in England & Wales. In 2002, 76% of pupils sat a GCSE examination in a language at the end of Key Stage 4. By 2011, this had fallen to 40%, with a rise since then to 49% in 2016 due to the introduction of the English Baccalaureate in 2010 (Board and Tinsley, 2017).

It is no longer possible to gain a university degree in German in Northern Ireland. Ulster University (UU) announced in 2015 that it would cease to offer degrees in French, German or Spanish. Queen's University Belfast (QUB) still provides degrees in French and Spanish and Portuguese, but over the years has dropped Classics, Italian and Slavonic Studies, which taught Russian and Polish. The perceived importance of Russian diminished with the ending of the Soviet Union and it was not foreseen how Polish could ever be relevant in Northern Ireland! Irish continues to be offered at QUB and UU Magee in Derry.

2. The Primary Modern Languages Programme

The 1989 Northern Ireland Curriculum, which made languages compulsory from ages 11 to 16, just as in England, stated that: "Primary schools don't have to teach a language other than English, but may do so if they wish" (Great Britain and Northern Ireland. 1989 [ERNIO] 10). The Northern Ireland Primary Modern Languages Programme (PMLP) was set up in 2007. The Programme aimed initially to develop a network of peripatetic Spanish language tutors going from school to school at Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 (age 3-7). At the then Minister Caitríona Ruane's suggestion, Irish was soon added and schools were also able to offer Polish for local pupils in order to promote integration of newcomer Polish pupils. Tutors were employed from amongst the Polish community. Although generously funded, the PMLP had been developed in haste from a local Education Library Board project (CCEA, n.d.) rather than for any

defined linguistic, economic or cultural reasons and concerns were soon raised about the focus on Spanish and the peripatetic approach which neglected the development of in-house teacher competences and made no provision for continuity beyond KS1, lower primary. Initially, it also ignored previous primary experience and practice in Irish and, to a lesser extent, French. Funding ceased in 2015, at which time 17 schools and 3 tutors offered Polish to local pupils.

3. Which Language?

In the non-Anglophone world, English is the language of choice, but which language do we choose in an English-speaking environment? The Nuffield Report of 2000 lamented:

> As each language valiantly fights its own corner, we are losing the greater battle…We talk about communication but don't always communicate. There is enthusiasm for languages but it is patchy. Educational provision is fragmented, achievement poorly measured, continuity not very evident. In the language of our time, there is a lack of joined-up thinking
>
> (Nuffield 2000:5).

This lack of joined-up thinking was noted at school level in the *Language Trends Wales Report* for 2014/15 and again the report for 2015/16 which found that "English, Welsh and MFL (Modern Foreign Languages)[1] were regarded in most schools as quite separate subjects, and that opportunities for the learning of one language to support others were being missed" (Language Trends Wales 2015/16: 19). This is in spite the fact that the Welsh education system, more than any other in Great Britain (England, Scotland, Wales) or Ireland, supports Triliteracy – working across English, Welsh and Foreign Languages:

> The evidence indicates that English, Welsh and MFL are regarded in most schools as quite separate subjects without the potential for collaboration or common approaches to teaching. This leads to the perception that, despite official guidelines, MFL has nothing to do with literacy in English or Welsh, a perception which has a negative impact on pupils' ability to transfer learning from one language into another.
>   The proposed introduction of a new curriculum which calls for improvements in the teaching of Welsh and which places English, Welsh and MFL within the same area of study, provides an opportunity to remedy this
>
> (Language Trends Wales 2014/15: 7).

---

[1] While the term 'Modern Foreign Languages' is used in Great Britain, 'Modern Languages' is used in Northern Ireland to allow for the inclusion of Irish.

Ironically, while arguing the importance of languages, sometimes the most anti-language people can be linguists or language promoters themselves. The graduate or supporter of language X is often a vicarious flag-carrier for that language, defending it against languages Y or Z. This is what happened in Northern Ireland with Spanish in the PMLP, for example, leading to such comments from Education Board Officers as "French has had its chance. It's time to do something else"; "German is too difficult for Primary"; "The problem is Irish. If we could get rid of it". A more profitable approach for the primary school would be an openness to a more general language awareness and sensitization, particularly now that Northern Ireland's primary schools are so much more multilingual with the presence of newcomer, including many Polish, pupils.

When the PMLP was introduced in 2007, the then minister expressed the hope, rather optimistically perhaps, that Irish might be introduced as a primary language into controlled or Protestant schools (Belfast Telegraph newspaper, March 21 2011). However, as the project drew to a close in 2015, not one controlled school chose Irish, and, more regrettably perhaps, only one integrated school.

4. Linguistic Awareness

In the period before the original education reform in the 1980s, the Inspectorate had recognised the validity of the broad concept of linguistic awareness:

> The language learnt at school…will provide an apprenticeship in foreign language learning, so that those pupils who in later life need or wish to acquire competence in a different language already have confidence, some idea of the objectives to be attained and some of the skills required
> (HMI 1987: §10).

Research and experience show (Hunt et al. 2005:373, citing Nikolov) that:

> In the Pecs study of Hungarian children's FL learning motivation (Nikolov, 1999), the most important motivating factors for children aged 6-14 included positive attitudes towards the learning context and the teacher; intrinsically motivating activities, tasks, and materials; and being more motivated by classroom practice than by integrative or instrumental reasons.

For older, post-primary pupils, the Lee *et al*. (1998: 43-44) study on attitudes to learning modern languages among year 9 pupils in England (age 14), for example, noted the extrinsic, instrumental rationale connected with eventual possible, but mostly unlikely, jobs and employment chances.

The revised Northern Ireland curriculum for Primary Schools mentions opportunities for young people to develop as 'Contributors to the Economy and Environment' (CCEA 2007: 4) but at an appropriate level, context and content. While languages have no statutory role in the revised curriculum for Primary, the potential for modern languages to enhance general language awareness and literacy skills is recognised:

> Second language learning improves children's communication and literacy skills, enabling them to develop their aural and visual memory and encouraging them to become clear and confident speakers as well as attentive listeners. Children are helped to develop a greater understanding of how language works by exploring the similarities and differences between their mother tongue and the second language. Moreover, learning a second language serves to consolidate ideas, concepts and skills already taught in other areas of the curriculum and, when combined with elements from the areas of Personal Development and Mutual Understanding and The World Around Us, can help to create a meaningful and real context in which to develop children's inter-cultural understanding
>
> (CCEA 2007:49).

Current curricular approaches such as Citizenship, Connected Learning also present opportunities to integrate language awareness and skills into the whole curriculum.

5. Irish and Cultural Diversity

As an indigenous language, the role of Irish is of a different order to that of other languages in Northern Ireland's schools. Historically the only second language being taught to a significant extent in the region's primary schools was Irish, offered in maintained Catholic schools (McKendry 1981; 2007). In 1974, DENI published its Primary Education Teachers' Guide. In the chapter on 'A Second Language' the specific references to Irish emphasize its advantages in the cultural and linguistic environment of Northern Ireland:

> … certain environmental factors which bear on the subject in Ireland. Unlike other languages, Irish does have immediate historical relevance for school pupils here. Surnames, Christian names, names of towns, … geographical features are in most cases derived directly from Irish … In everyday conversation … children here make use of words and idioms … which cannot be overlooked in a consideration of the teaching of Irish. These factors … confer certain advantages which no other language can claim to the same extent in Ireland
>
> (DENI, 1974: 106).

While the position of Irish was a matter of considerable controversy during curriculum reform in the late 1980s (McKendry 2007), one of the innovations of the Northern Ireland Curriculum was the statutory force given to the Cross Curricular Themes. The themes include 'Education for Mutual Education' (EMU) and 'Cultural Heritage' which were linked:

> Several respondents suggested that there should be opportunities for pupils to gain awareness of aspects of history, culture and traditions which contribute to the cultural heritage of Northern Ireland. The government welcomes and accepts this suggestion as a positive measure aimed at lessening the ignorance which many feel contributes to the divisions in our society. The government also believes it to be appropriate and necessary that the curriculum of every child should contain elements in Education for Mutual Understanding which has already helped to foster valuable cross-community contacts among our schools
>
> (DENI 1988: §2.13).

It was intended that lessons or units covering the Irish language element in placenames, personal names, dialect, music, history, etc. could be introduced without controversy and contribute to an awareness of Northern Ireland's cultural heritage, moving from the Local to the National and the International (NICC 1989). Linking language to Cultural Heritage, many controlled schools welcomed and participated in this broader intercultural approach to language in a content-integrated primary classroom.

The argument for integrating language diversity culturally and linguistically into the primary curriculum is accepted. Comparison can be made with reform in Wales and Scotland where the role of their indigenous languages and the concomitant cultural heritage were recognized as central to learning from the beginning of Curriculum Reform. So, the *Cwriclwm Cymreig* in Wales (ACCAC) and the *Studying Scotland* area in the *Curriculum for Excellence* in Scotland (Education Scotland) currently include linguistic heritage in their recommendations. The Northern Ireland Curriculum themes of EMU and Cultural Heritage were however 'conjoined' after a few years, and then subsumed into the much wider area of Citizenship. At Key Stages 1 and 2, the primary school years, the Revised Northern Ireland Curriculum incorporates aspects of Citizenship in *Personal Development and Mutual Understanding* (PD&MU), while at Key Stage 3 and 4, there is a statutory area called *Learning for Life and Work* which includes *Local and Global Citizenship*. Language diversity, however, is barely mentioned in the revised curriculum documentation for these areas, even after the arrival of so many newcomer pupils, and the particular role of Irish is likewise absent (Northern Ireland

Curriculum n.d. *Who Am I*?). But the importance of a content-integrated approach to the primary curriculum carries through Citizenship and into the current focus on *Shared Education*

> In addition, all subject strands, but in particular, religious education, history, geography, English, languages, drama and art and design provide opportunities for teachers to design learning programmes that explore identity, diversity and promote reconciliation, developing the attitudes and dispositions
>
> (DENI 2015: 14).

There have, nevertheless, been some noteworthy projects aiming to share awareness of cultural and linguistic heritage across an integrated curriculum. Developing from a Shared Education project, Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta, the Council for Irish-Medium Education, published *GaelTrail,* a classroom resource designed "to enable pupils of Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 to discover the origins of the Irish language, its spread, development and its impact" (Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta). Another notable project was developed by Gael Linn, an entrepreneurial organisation founded in 1953 with the main aim "to foster and promote the Irish language and its heritage throughout Ireland as a living language and as an expression of identity" (Gael Linn website). It is one of six lead organisations designated for funding in the Irish language voluntary sector by Foras na Gaeilge (the body responsible for the promotion of the Irish language throughout the whole island of Ireland) to support the teaching of Irish as a school subject in English-medium schools and in adult education, and the creation of opportunities for school pupils to use Irish. In 1997, Gael Linn developed a sixth-form post-primary Enrichment Programme entitled *Aspects of a Shared Heritage* aimed primarily at pupils who had little awareness of their Gaelic heritage. A revised and updated edition was published in 2016, subtitled *Essays on linguistic and cultural crossover in Ulster*, with chapters on local varieties of English, Hiberno-English and Ulster-Scots, hoping to attract Controlled and Integrated schools as well. This multilingual, culturally diverse approach can now be extended to recognise the more diverse environment in our schools introduced with newcomer pupils. For primary schools, the local Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) launched in 2016 a project entitled *c*, with the aim 'to build capacity within primary schools outside of the Irish-medium sector, so that they can teach elements of Irish and shared cultural heritage using existing staff & resources'.

6. Newcomers

Northern Ireland's schools have changed radically following the accession of the A8 Eastern European countries to the European Union in 2004 and the arrival of a significant number of newcomer pupils, bringing with them new cultural and linguistic diversity. Languages should no longer be seen solely in terms of the traditional stand-alone curricular languages (French, German, Spanish, Irish), but in a wider multilingual and linguistic awareness context, keeping in mind the Nuffield comment above (Nuffield 2000: 5) on the lack of cohesion and the Revised Curriculum's KS3 Modern Languages statutory encouragement of Language Awareness. Aronin and Singleton suggest that increased migration and globalisation have led to what they call a new linguistic dispensation with English as a *lingua franca*, but also to greater multilingualism. They cite the example of the Republic of Ireland (and to a lesser extent Northern Ireland) where:

> …alongside a 'traditional' bilingual population using Irish and English in their daily lives there are now tens of thousands of individuals operating in Polish and English, Mandarin and English, Russian and English, etc.
>
> (Aronin & Singleton, 2008: 7).

Out of a total Northern Ireland population of 1.8 million in the 2011 Census, 4.5% of the resident population of Northern Ireland, over 81,000, were born outside of the UK or the Republic of Ireland (NISRA 2012). This represents an increase of 199% since the 2001 census. These numbers will grow as in 2014, 11.2% of births in Northern Ireland were to mothers born outside the UK (Russell 2016), showing that many migrant workers have established roots in the region. Russell notes that in 1997, only 2 babies were born in Northern Ireland to mothers from the A8 countries. By 2014, this had risen to 1258, a figure which together with 1211 from the rest of the world gives the percentage total of 11.2%.

   Children who enroll in school without enough English to participate fully in the curriculum are designated as English as an Additional Language (EAL) or 'Newcomer' pupils. In 2016/17, there were more than 80 newcomer languages spoken by pupils in Northern Ireland's schools, with Polish and Lithuanian being the most common (DENI 2017b). Table 2 lists figures provided via e-mail by the Department of Education for Northern Ireland for the top ten home languages of children with English as an Additional Language in primary and post-primary schools in Northern Ireland in the school year 2016/17 (DENI Personal e-mail communication). Fifty-six languages are listed, down to Serbian/Croatian/Bosnian with 6 pupils, and 142 speakers of 'Other Languages'. The 2016/17

Schools Census (DENI 2017c) total of 13,943 newcomer pupils (4.1% of total enrolment) has increased from 1366 (0.4% of total enrolment) in 2001/02 and an increase of 5,200 pupils from five years prior (DENI 2017a). While most are children both of whose parents have moved to Northern Ireland for economic reasons, some pupils will be children of mixed nationality parentage with one parent being of local origin. A few pupils are children whose parents are in management positions in local and international firms.

Table 2: The Ten Top languages spoken by Newcomer pupils 2016/17

1	Polish	4751	6	Latvian	395
2	Lithuanian	2017	7	Malayalam	384
3	Portuguese	907	8	Arabic	380
4	Romanian	710	9	Hungarian	350
5	Slovak	407	10	Tetum	337

Burns et al. (2016: 8) report that there are limited data and/or research available on key ethnic groups in Northern Ireland. Although the United Kingdom and Ireland were not among the countries studied, the 2006 OECD report reviewing the 2003 PISA assessment suggests that immigrant children in some OECD countries can lag more than two years behind their native counterparts in school performance. Writing about the immigrant experience in the Republic of Ireland, Devine (2011) argues that:

> Securing migrant children's educational well-being involves not only focus[es] on skills acquisition in the areas of English language, but fundamentally on providing such children with an experience of education which recognises the totality of their personal, social and cultural background.
>
> (Devine 2011:74a)

European policy documents emphasise how important it is for pupils to acquire the host country's language (European Commission [EC] 2008), but the value of maintaining and fostering the heritage language is also recognised, particularly as regards human capital (Niessen and Huddleston 2009). The European Union (European Commission 2009) also considers that language diversity should be recognised as a valuable resource in society. Nevertheless, the principal linguistic objective for newcomer pupils is that they acquire a good level of competence in English. Already in 1975, the UK government's Bullock Report recommended that a school should "adopt a positive attitude to its pupils' bilingualism and wherever possible should help maintain and deepen their knowledge of their mother tongues" (Bullock 1975: 294), but little attention has been paid

traditionally to whether or not the languages of the home or the community were maintained or developed. In Northern Ireland the DENI response to the consultation on the *Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education (CRED) Policy Analysis Report* states:

> The subject of the policy is not to promote linguistic diversity but rather to educate children and young people to develop self-respect and respect for others, including those for whom English is an additional language
>
> (DENI 2011: §2.3).

Some provision is made for home language education by the various communities' cultural organisations. So, for example, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce Northern Ireland set up a Chinese Language School in Belfast in 1983 with classes in Cantonese and Mandarin for school pupils and adults and prepares students for state examinations. Among the more recent arrivals, the Polish Educational and Cultural Association Northern Ireland (PECA) was formed in May 2012 and is connected to the Polish Saturday School in Belfast which began in 2007 and to other Polish Language Schools operating in Northern Ireland. The national qualifications, GCSE, Advanced Supplementary (AS) and Advanced (A-) Level are available in a range of community languages, including Polish, from English examination boards (Department for Education [England] 2016), reflecting their longer standings as community languages in England, but not for more recent Accession languages such as Lithuanian.

The Northern Ireland education system is built upon an 'equality agenda' (OFMDFM 2005a) going back to the Good Friday Agreement of 1998. When the Agreement was signed, there was little awareness of multilingualism in Northern Ireland, other than the general wariness of Irish among the Unionist population and the emergence of an immersion Irish-Medium education sector.

Until recently, the educational focus on community relations in Northern Ireland has been on its longstanding religious and identity differences rather than other social divisions and issues, and ethnic minority communities attracted little attention in education or society. As Northern Ireland becomes an increasingly multicultural society, however, newcomers can hopefully play an important 'leavening' role beyond the workplace:

> But minority ethnic people are welcome here not just for the economic contribution that they can make. They make an important contribution to the social, public and cultural life of Northern Ireland. They also have a genuinely leavening effect on a society that has long been frozen in its "two traditions" divide
>
> (OFMDFM, 2005b: §3.5).

The suddenness and rapidity of this growth in immigration has led to challenges. The 'equality agenda', as embedded in the 'Shared Future' document (OFMDFM 2005a) and the Racial Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland (OFMDFM 2005b), acknowledges that:

> The speed and extent of the increase in numbers of migrant workers in Northern Ireland – and the sheer diversity of the people involved – pose complex challenges for Government and society alike
>
> (OFMDFM 2005b: §3.15)

7. Diversity in the Curriculum

The Department of Education has funded the Inclusion and Diversity Service (IDS) as the regional service which provides advice and support to schools regarding provision for 'Newcomer' pupils in Northern Ireland (Education Support for Northern Ireland [IDS]). While their primary aim is to encourage integration through the acquisition of English, IDS and the Department of Education recognise the value of the home or community language and culture. Comprehensive 'Toolkits for Diversity' have been produced for pre-school, primary, post-primary and special schools (Integrate Ireland 2007) as well as an impressive range of letters translated into multiple languages for schools to give to parents, covering topics such as attendance, the school dentist, school concerts, etc. As integration is the primary aim, rather than assimilation into the host school and society, multilingual and intercultural awareness are promoted. One can look, for example, at the British Council's education packs aimed at helping help pupils and teachers celebrate and explore Chinese culture and language (British Council 2014, 2017), to see how the cultural content can be integrated into the classroom and community.

Taking up again the PMLP aim of fostering awareness of Polish among local pupils, one could propose that through encouraging pupils' awareness of the different languages, one could also hope to integrate newcomer pupils into our classrooms, make local pupils more linguistically aware in general and allow for access to and greater appreciation of the indigenous linguistic and cultural heritage. Linking this to the well-established context for Irish and Cultural Heritage, as we saw, many controlled schools thereby took the opportunity to participate in this broader intercultural approach to Irish language.

8. Szacunek

A project of particular note was developed by Gael Linn in 2007. Entitled *Szacunek – Meas* ('Respect'), it aimed to promote a greater understanding of Polish language and culture amongst the local community in the districts of Armagh and Newry. The project won a Council of Europe European Award for Languages (European Commission 2008) and a special award for the promotion of languages in the community. The judges commented:

> The success of the project and the pride of the participants in their achievements were evident during the visit. The project provides an intellectual and cultural stimulus for them and fosters mutual respect for the cultures and communities
>
> (CILT 2008).

Irish and Polish classes and visits to the Gaeltacht were arranged. Particular Irish/Polish links were investigated, such as the memory of the executed revolutionary leader Robert Emmet, celebrated in a popular poem, *Pocałunek Roberta Emmet*, and linguistic similarities were investigated, such as affricates and palatalization and similarities in vocabulary. There is a clear potential for this and similar initiatives to encourage integration of newcomer pupils and adults into the local culture and society and to provide a context for greater respect of diversity in, and a wider, deeper appreciation, of the value of newcomer languages as well as Irish.

The Polish Government now promotes its language and culture in the United Kingdom within the new diversity. For example, Professor Agnieszka Kiełkiewicz-Janowiak from the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań presented the position and future of Polish language in the UK during a lecture at University College London in November 2016, and the Polish Prime Minister Beata Szydło discussed the possibility of teaching Polish as a language in British schools when meeting with the UK Prime Minister Theresa May in November 2016 (The Guardian newspaper, 29 November 2016). Any such welcome developments would more beneficially be progressed within the wider context outlined in this paper

9. Conclusion

Tonkin   describes a global tendency towards 'individual bilingualism and multilingualism, the creation of a language ecology that allows an individual to move in and out of overlapping linguistic codes with relative freedom' (Tonkin 2003: 326). The linguistic and cultural landscape in Northern Ireland has changed

radically with the arrival of so many Newcomers introducing their languages and cultures, a new linguistic dispensation (Aronin & Singleton) which may have a positive and enriching effect upon a divided society and upon its attitudes towards indigenous languages and culture. It is too early to say, however, if a pluralist or an assimilationist policy will emerge for newcomer languages (Baker: 399ff.). As regards the education of the local school population, it is possible that, rather than the PMLP's peripatetic, external approach to language learning at early primary level, an in-house language awareness and capacity building approach could build on diversity and Cultural Heritage, proceeding from Local, to National, to International (the Cultural Heritage Cross- Curricular Theme model), embracing the various strands of the revised Northern Ireland Curriculum. This would prove more fruitful than parroting a few phrases which is often the only outcome of language experience at primary school (Collen *et al.*:15-16), and even at secondary level. Likewise, when moving to post-primary, we must realise and accept that for many, perhaps a majority, of Northern Ireland's pupils, language learning may not go beyond Key Stage 3, age 14. So, again, the revised NIC, which focuses on cross-curricularity, could foster a more integrated cross-curricular approach around linguistic awareness as a foundation for study of a particular language, and the particular benefits of Irish can again be emphasised within a diverse social, linguistic and cultural context.

REFERENCES

Aronin, Larissa and David Singleton. 2008. "Multilingualism as a New Linguistic Dispensation", *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 5(1), 1-16.

ACCAC: Awdurdod Cymwysterau, Cwricwlwm ac Asesu Cymru/Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales. *Developing the Curriculum Cymreig*. Available at: http://wasacre.org.uk/publications/wag/E-developingthecurriculumcymreig.pdf (accessed 23 November 2016).

Baker, Colin. 2006. *Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* (4th ed.). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Belfast Telegraph. 2011. "Ruane: Teach Irish in every Northern Ireland school". *Belfast Telegraph,* 21 March 2011.

Board, Kathryn and Teresa Tinsley. 2015. *Language Trends 2014/15 The state of language learning in primary and secondary schools in England*. Available at: https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/language_trends_survey_2015.pdf (accessed 30 October 2016).

Board, Kathryn and Teresa Tinsley. 2017. *Language Trends 2016/17 Language teaching in primary and secondary schools in England. Survey Report.* British Council. Available at: https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/language_trends_survey_2017_0.pdf (accessed 7 July 2017).

Board, Kathryn and Teresa Tinsley. 2017. *Language Trends Wales 2016/17 The state of language learning in secondary schools in Wales*. British Council Wales/Cymru. Available at:

https://wales.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/language_trends_wales_2016-17_0.pdf (accessed 7 July 2017).

British Council. 2014. *Year of the Horse Education Pack.* Available at: https://schoolsonline.britishcouncil.org/classroom-resources/year-of-the-horse (accessed 23 November 2016).

British Council. 2017. *Year of the Rooster Education Pack.* Available at: https://schoolsonline.britishcouncil.org/classroom-resources/list/year-rooster (accessed 7 July 2017).

Bullock, Sir Alan. 1975. *A Language for life: Report of the Committee of Enquiry appointed by the Secretary of State for Education and Science under the Chairmanship of Sir Alan Bullock FBA.* London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office 1975.

Burns, Stephanie, Ruth Leitch and Joanne Hughes. 2015. *Education Inequalities in Northern Ireland, Summary Report March 2015* Belfast: School of Education Queen's University Belfast

Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta. n.d. *GaelTrail.* Available at: http://www.comhairle.org/english/wp-content/uploads/Gael-Trail-English-Final.pdf (accessed 23 November 2016).

CCEA. Northern Ireland Curriculum. 2007. *The Northern Ireland Curriculum Primary Statutory Document.* Available at: http://www.nicurriculum.org.uk/docs/key_stages_1_and_2/northern_ireland_curriculum_primary.pdf (accessed 23 November 2016).

CCEA. Northern Ireland Curriculum. n.d. *Languages are Child's Play: Guidance for Primary Teachers and Managers on a Successful Introduction to Early Language Teaching and Learning.* Available at: http://www.nicurriculum.org.uk/microsite/pl/docs/Guidancev2.pdf   (accessed   23 November 2016).

CCEA. 2016. Primary Irish: Aspects of Shared Cultural Heritage. Available at: http://ccea.org.uk/curriculum/key_stage_1_2/connected_learning/piasch (accessed 7 July 2017).

CILT. European Award for Languages UK. 2008. Available at: http://www.cilt.org.uk/eal/szacunek.htm (accessed 16 January 2011).

CSO/NISRA. 2011. *Census 2011: Ireland and Northern Ireland.* Available at: http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/releasespublications/documents/population/2011/Cen2011IrelandNorthernIreland.pdf (accessed 23 November 2016).

Collen, Ian, Eugene McKendry and Leanne Henderson. 2017. *The Transition from Primary Languages Programmes to Post-Primary Language Provision.* Belfast: QUB, NICILT.

Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (n.d.) *GaelTrail.* Béal Feirste: Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta. Available at: http://www.comhairle.org/gaeilge/resources/ (accessed 7 July 2017)

Cultural Traditions Group. 1994. *Giving voices: the work of the Cultural Traditions Group 1990-1994.* Belfast: Community Relations Council.

De Brún, F. 2010. '"Ulsteria": the fortunes of the Irish language under Stormont, 1921-72' in A.F. Parkinson and E. Phoenix, (eds.) Conflicts in the North of Ireland 1900-2000. Dublin: Four Courts Press. 202-222.

Department for Education (England). 2016. Press release: Community languages saved to ensure diverse curriculum continues. Department for Education and The Rt Hon Nicky Morgan 22 April 2016. Available at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/news/community-languages-saved-to-ensure-diverse-curriculum-continues (accessed 7 July *2017).*

Department of Education Northern Ireland (DENI). 1974. *Primary Education Teachers' Guide*. Belfast: HMSO.

DENI. 1988a. *Education in Northern Ireland: proposals for reform*. Bangor: DENI.

DENI. 1988b. *The Way Forward*. Bangor: DENI.

DENI. 2011. *Summary of responses to the public consultation document.* Available at: https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/de/cred-policy-analysis-report.pdf. (accessed 23 November 2016).

DENI. 2015. *Sharing Works: A Policy for Shared Education.* Available at: https://www.deni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/de/shared-education-policy.pdf (accessed 23 November 2016).

DENI. Personal e-mail communication. *Home Language of newcomer pupils, 2016/17.* 25/08/2017.

DENI 2017a. School Enrolments-Summary Data. 2016*.* Newcomer pupils 2001/02 to 2015/16. Available at: https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/school-enrolments-northern-ireland-summary-data (accessed 11 February 2017).

DENI. 2017b. Statistical Bulletin 2/2017 *Annual enrolments at schools and in funded preschool education in Northern Ireland, 2016/17*. Available at: https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/education/Statistical%20Bulletin%20combined..Census%20statistical%20bulletin%20-%20Feb%2017%20FINAL%20revised.pdf (accessed 30 July 2017).

DENI. 2017c. *Newcomer pupils by school type, 2011/12 - 2016/17* Available at: https://www.educationni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/education/Statistical%20Bulletin%201516%20-%20March%20%2820.07.16%20update%29.PDF (accessed 7 July 2017)

Devine, D. 2011a "Securing migrant children's educational well-being: Perspectives on policy and practice in Irish schools". In M. Darmody, N. Tyrell and S. Song (eds.) *The Changing Faces of Ireland: Exploring the Lives of Immigrant and Ethnic Minority Children.* Rotterdam/Boston/Taipei: Sense Publishers. 73-88.

Devine, D. 2011b. *Immigration and schooling in the Republic of Ireland: making a difference*? Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Education Scotland/Foghlam Alba. n.d. *Studying Scotland/Ionnsachadh Alba*. Available at: http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/studyingscotland/index.asp (accessed 23 November 2016).

Education Support for Northern Ireland. n.d. *Inclusion and Diversity Service (IDS).* Available at: http://www.education-support.org.uk/teachers/ids/ (accessed 23 November 2016).

Eur-Lex. *Access to European Union Law*. Council Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2015/2264 of 3 December 2015. Available at: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32015R2264 (accessed 7 July 2017).

European Commission: Languages - European Language Label. 2008. *Szacunek/Meas – Respect.* Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/education/language/label/label_public/index.cfm?fuseaction=project_award&award_id=7095 (accessed 7 July 2017).

European Commission (EC). 2008. *Green Paper. Migration and mobility: Challenges and opportunities for EU education systems*. Brussels: EU.

European Commission (EC). 2009. *Commission staff working document. Results of the consultation on the education of children from a migrant background*. Brussels:EU.

European Union. 2016. *Rules governing the languages of the Institutions.* Available at: http://publications.europa.eu/code/en/en-370204.htm (accessed 16 November 2016).

Gael Linn. Available at: http://www.gael-linn.ie/Default.aspx?treeid=78 (accessed 23 November 2016.

Great Britain and Northern Ireland. 1989. *Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989.* (ERNIO) Belfast: HMSO.

Guardian, The. 2016. "Poland PM and Theresa May discuss teaching Polish in UK schools". *The Guardian*, 29 November 2016.

HMI 1987 *Curriculum matters 8: Modern Foreign Languages to 16*. London: HMSO.

HMSO Northern Ireland *Primary Education: Teachers' Guide* 1974. Belfast: HMSO.

Hunt, Marilyn J., Ann Barnes, Bob Powell, Geoff Lindsay and Daniel Muijs. 2005. "Primary modern foreign languages: an overview of recent research, key issues and challenges for educational policy and practice". *Research Papers in Education*, 20(1): 371-390.

Integrate Ireland Language and Training & Southern Education and Library Board. 2007. *Together towards inclusion: Toolkit.* Dublin & Armagh.

Irish News. 1989. "Celebrations as Mawhinney axes Irish proposals". *Irish News*, 22 March 1989.

Lee, Jeff, David Buckland and Glenis Shaw.1998. *The Invisible Child.* London: CILT.

McKendry, Eugene. 1981. "Múineadh na Gaeilge i mBunscoileanna an Tuaiscirt", *Teagasc na Gaeilge*, 2: 65-71.

McKendry, Eugene. 2007. "Minority-Language Education in a Situation of Conflict: Irish in English-Medium Schools in Northern Ireland", *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 10(4): 394-409.

Niessen, Jan and Thomas Huddleston. 2009. *Handbook on integration for policy-makers and practitioners*. Brussels: European Commission.

Nikolov, Marianne. 1999. "Why do you learn English? Because the teacher is short. A study of Hungarian children's foreign language learning motivation". *Language Teaching Research,* 3(1): 33-56.

Northern Ireland Curriculum. n.d. Who am I? Local and Global Citizenship Unit. This is who I am. Available at: http://www.nicurriculum.org.uk/connected_learning/thematic_units/personal_underst anding/citizenship.asp (accessed 23 November 2016).

Northern Ireland Curriculum Council (NICC). 1989. *Cultural Heritage: A Cross-Curricular Theme – Consultation Paper*. Belfast: NICC.

Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). 2012 *Census 2011. Key Statistics for Northern Ireland.* Available at: http://www.nisra.gov.uk/Census/key_report_2011.pdf. (accessed 23 November 2016).

Nuffield Foundation. 2000. *Languages: The Next Generation. The final report and recommendations of the Nuffield languages inquiry.* London: The Nuffield Foundation.

Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM). 2005a *'A Shared Future' The Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland.* Belfast: OFMDFM.

OFMDFM. 2005b. *A Racial Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland 2005-2010.* Belfast: OFMDFM.

OFMDFM. 2006. *A Shared Future: First Triennial Action Plan 2006-09*. Belfast: Community Relations Unit OFMDFM

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). 2006. *Where Immigrant Students Succeed - A Comparative Review of Performance and Engagement in PISA 2003*. Available at: http://www.oecd.org/edu/school/programmeforinternationalstudentassessmentpisa/whereimmigrantstudentssucceed-acomparativereviewofperformanceandengagementinpisa2003.htm (Accessed 23 November 2016)

Polish Educational and Cultural Association (n.d.) http://peca-ni.org/home/ (accessed 23 November 2016).

Primary Modern Languages Programme (PMLP) Available at: http://seelb.org.uk/index.php/schools/curriculum/primary-modern-languages-programme (accessed 23 November 2016).

Russell, Raymond. 2016. *International Migration in Northern Ireland: an Update*. Belfast: Research and Information Service, Northern Ireland Assembly. Available at: http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/raise/publications/2016-2021/2016/general/3916.pdf (Accessed 7 July 2017)

Speak to the Future: The Campaign for Languages. 14 August 2014. *What is happening to languages at A-level?* Available at: http://www.speaktothefuture.org/what-is-happening-to-languages-at-a-level/ (accessed 7 July 2017)

Tonkin, Humphrey. 2003.'The search for a global linguistic strategy' in Jacques Maurais and Michael A. Morris (eds.) *Languages in a Globalizing World*. Cambridge: Cambridge Press, 319-333.

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Northern Ireland GCSE Modern Language Entries 1988
Table 2: The Ten Top languages spoken by Newcomer pupils 2016/17