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New speakers of Irish: shifting boundaries across time and space

Abstract: While traditional Irish-speaking communities continue to decline, the number of second-language speakers outside of the Gaeltacht has increased. Of the more than one and half million speakers of Irish just over 66,000 now live in one of the officially designated Gaeltacht areas. While "new speakers" can be seen to play an important role in the future of the language, this role is sometimes undermined by discourses which idealise the notion of the traditional Gaeltacht speaker. Such discourses can be used to deny them "authenticity" as "real" or "legitimate" speakers, sometimes leading to struggles over language ownership. Concerns about linguistic purity are often voiced in both academic and public discourse, with the more hybridized forms of Irish developed amongst "new speakers" often criticised. This article looks at the extent to which such discourses are being internalised by new speakers of Irish and whether or not they are constructing an identity as a distinct social and linguistic group based on what it means to be an Irish speaker in the twenty first century.

Keywords: new speakers, Irish, language ideologies, authenticity

1 Introduction

Since political independence, the Irish state's policy on the Irish language has consisted of two interlinked components: the maintenance of Irish as the "native" language of the Gaeltacht (core Irish-speaking districts) and its revival elsewhere in Ireland (Ó Riagáin 1997). These policies have had mixed levels of success. While traditional Irish-speaking communities continue to decline (Ó Giollagáin et al. 2007), there has been a steady increase in the number of new speakers

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outside of the Gaeltacht who acquired the language at school as an academic subject. Such acquisition was in line with language policies since 1922 which made the teaching of Irish obligatory. In a small, but growing number of cases, new profiles of speakers are also emerging from *Gaelscoileanna* [immersion schooling in Irish]. Of the more than 1.7 million speakers of Irish (approximately 41 per cent of the population) returned in the most recent Census (2011), 77,185 (1.8 per cent) define themselves as daily speakers outside of the education system[1] and 110,642 (2.6 per cent) as weekly speakers. Significantly, about three-quarters of all daily speakers of Irish outside of education (59,230 people) live outside the Gaeltacht (Central Statistics Office 2012: 40–41).

By the broadest definition, most people in the Republic of Ireland[2] who have gone through the Irish education system have been exposed to the language and could be defined as new speakers. However, in this article we define the term more specifically to include those individuals who acquired the language outside of the home and who report that they use Irish with fluency, regularity and commitment. This draws loosely on the concepts of Catalan language *converts* (Woolard 2011: 622) and *neofalantes* of Galician (O'Rourke and Ramallo [2011: 153], 2013, this issue) used to describe first-language Spanish speakers who become predominant and sometimes exclusive users of Catalan and Galician respectively. The decision by Catalan and Galician new speakers to adopt monolingual practices in the minority language is facilitated by the linguistic proximity with their contact language, Spanish, something which is more difficult between linguistically distant languages such as Irish and English (O'Rourke 2011a).

Given that most frequent speakers of Irish outside the education system are not based in the Gaeltacht and therefore unlikely to be traditional native speakers, new speakers can be seen to play an important role in the future of the language. However, this role is sometimes undermined by ethnocultural discourses about the Irish language which tend to idealise the notion of the traditional Gaeltacht speaker (Tovey et al. 1988). Concerns about linguistic purity are also voiced in both academic and public discourse, with the more hybridised forms of Irish developed amongst new speakers often criticised (Walsh 2007).

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1 The census of the Republic of Ireland distinguishes between speakers of Irish within and outside the education system. This is due to the fact that Irish is a core subject at primary and secondary level and many people returned as "speakers" are in fact students studying it at school (Walsh 2012: 28–29).

2 This article discusses new speakers in the Republic of Ireland only. In Northern Ireland, no traditional Gaeltacht communities remain so the speech community is overwhelmingly dominated by new speakers (Walsh 2012: 36–39). Data collection for this project is ongoing and it is intended to analyse new speakers of Irish in Northern Ireland at a later stage.

Such discourses can in turn be used to deny new speakers authenticity as "real" or legitimate speakers and lead to certain struggles over language ownership (O'Rourke 2011b).

In this article, we examine the language ideologies of new speakers of Irish and explore how they position themselves as Irish speakers in the 21st century. Our analysis is based on a qualitative study of a corpus of narrative life-histories. The issues of identity and ideology examined in this article are part of the complex and changing relationships between language and place for minority languages such as Irish in a globalised world. In the next sections we examine the notions of language, place, authenticity and boundaries and look at how they shape discourses about the Irish language in the 21st century.

2 Theoretical framework – language, authenticity, place and boundaries

In general, to be considered authentic, a speech variety needs to be, as Woolard (2008: 304) suggests, "'from somewhere' in speakers' consciousness, making its meaning profoundly local". This search for authenticity and its link to place and territory forms part of what Makoni and Pennycook (2007) describe as being tied up with the "metadiscursive regimes" used to describe languages more generally, firmly locating them in Western linguistic and cultural suppositions in which the notions of linguistic territorialisation are embedded. The link to physical place and the idea of "where you come from" are also inherent in definitions of the native speaker (Rampton 1995), definitions which although problematised in linguistics and its related strands (see, for example, Doerr 2009; Davies 2003; Rampton 1990), continue to circulate. Along with place, authenticity is also linked to time and nostalgia for the past. This re-assembling of the past, as Bucholtz (2003) highlights, is a residue of Romanticism where rural peasant populations, supposedly untouched by urbanity, often came to be valorised as authentic sources of cultural and linguistic knowledge.

In a world where mobility and global flows are blurring the notion of language as fixed and monolithic, notions of authenticity and legitimacy have been problematised (Coupland et al. 2005; Coupland 2003; Heller 2003). Social and geographical mobility can prompt shifts away from the traditional view of language as bounded and unitary and towards one which embraces hybridity, multiplicity and fluidity (Woolard and Frekko 2013; Pujolar 2007; Duchêne and Heller 2007). When a minority language is relocated into new spaces, transformations in its use and in the forms of language used often occur (Woolard and Frekko 2013).

These transformations prompt us to explore key issues which have emerged in the current theoretical debate about the period of "second modernity" described in Sørensen and Christiansen (2012), including shifting boundaries across time and space and changing ideologies about linguistic authenticity and ownership. However, as Woolard (1998) points out, such shifts are not always clear-cut and speakers often struggle between on the one hand naturalising claims to authenticity based on origins and ancestral identities, and on the other, an attempt to cultivate coherence based on a "both-and" model of being rather than an either-or model.

In this article, we posit a spectrum of language ideologies ranging from essentialism to social constructionism. By linguistic essentialism, we mean the idea of language as fixed and bounded, as a code rather than practice and as naturally given or taken for granted.[3] This is contrasted with social constructionism which emphasises "the idea that society is actively and creatively produced by human beings" and that "the world [is] made or invented – rather than merely given or taken for granted" (Marshall 1998: 609; see also Giddens 2001: 98). Giddens' notion of "social reflexivity" is in line with this position and pertinent to new speakers of minority languages. It refers to the fact "that we have constantly to think about, or reflect upon, the circumstances in which we live our lives. When societies were more geared to custom and tradition, people could follow established ways of doing things in a more unreflective fashion" (Giddens 2001: 650). As our data will reveal, becoming a new speaker is also deeply reflexive and relies on innovative and creative linguistic choices which were far less readily available to earlier generations of Irish speakers.

3 Irish language: questions of authenticity, boundaries and place

The historical idealisation of the native speaker of Irish as a linguistic and cultural model can be understood in the context of historical, academic and literary discourses which have tended to idealise and reify the notion of a traditional Gaeltacht native speaker. This is illustrated by the considerable attention to traditional Irish dialectology in the decades following the foundation of the state (see,

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3 All terminology is potentially contentious, including "essentialism". An alternative used in Irish Studies to convey a similar meaning is "originary". We thank Professor Joseph Lennon of Villanova University for his comments on this question.

for instance, Ó Cuív 1947; Wagner 1981 [1958]) and the central role granted to auto-biographies of native speakers (for instance, the extensive library from the Great Blasket Island in Co. Kerry; see O'Leary [2004]). These ideologies have been deeply engrained in an explicit policy of language maintenance within Gaeltacht areas and of monolingualism in Irish (Ó hIfearnáin 2010). The institutionalisation of clearly-defined linguistic boundaries promoted a discourse of bounded ethno-cultural space. Many of these boundaries were artificial, and did not take into consideration the fluidity created by social and geographical mobility (Walsh et al. 2005; Ní Bhrádaigh et al. 2007).

The importance of the Gaeltacht in Irish people's consciousness as a reposi-tory for the language has been evident in responses to consecutive attitudinal surveys on Irish. Almost two-thirds of people in the Republic of Ireland are of the opinion that if the Gaeltacht dies out, Irish will die out also (Ó Riagáin 1997: 176). On other levels, however, the link between Irish and the Gaeltacht also helped shape the indexical link between traditional Irish speakers and rurality and back-wardness. Despite generally positive support for Irish, almost half the population are of the opinion that "Most people view all things associated with Irish as old fashioned" (Ó Riagáin 1997: 176).

A policy of maintaining the linguistic balance in small, isolated rural pockets ravaged by emigration and socio-economic deprivation proved an enormous challenge to the new Irish state. This was however counteracted by a steady in-crease in the number of second-language or new speakers of Irish outside of the Gaeltacht who acquired the language at school. While in national rhetoric Irish has tended to be seen as static, fixed and as something that needed to be main-tained intact and unchanged (Ó Tuathaigh 2011: 83–4), the spatial practices of the language have changed. New types of relations and hierarchies have been created in new language environments. New domains of language use have emerged and the language is being transformed in new spaces.

As Pádraig Ó Riagáin (2007) points out, bilingualism in Ireland always had a territorial dimension but the linguistic distinctions between the Gaeltacht and the rest of the country are now diminishing. In this context, Dónall Ó Riagáin (2011) suggests that the concept of the *Nua-Ghaeltacht* [New Gaeltacht] offers the potential of a growing, dynamic, nationwide linguistic community (see also Walsh 2012: 402). The 2012 Gaeltacht Act grants some recognition to the changing shape and distribution of Irish speakers, providing the first significant piece of legislation in which the concept of Gaeltacht is broadened to explicitly include these new profiles of Irish speakers. For the first time since the establishment of the Irish state, reference is made in legislation to the concept of "an Irish language network" which may be designated by the Minister as "a specified com-munity" (Section 11 [1]). This is based on a recommendation contained in the

Irish government's recent *20 Year Strategy for the Irish Language* (Government of Ireland 2010: 24).

The spread of Irish outside of traditional Irish-speaking strongholds and into spaces previously dominated by English, we would suggest, unsettles the traditional ideology of sociolinguistic authenticity. In the remainder of this article we examine the degree to which this unsettling occurs amongst new speakers of Irish.

4 Analysis of new speakers' ideologies

In our study we draw on in-depth narrative interviews with 54 new speakers. Given that this is a qualitative study, we followed the logic of theoretical as opposed to statistical sampling. We aimed to interview as wide a cross-section of new speakers as possible, including both males and females and a diverse range of ages, professions, class and locations in Ireland (rural/urban). One initial criterion for selection for these speakers was reported bilingual practice by the individual and a language background divergent from the traditional native speaker model which we took to mean someone brought up through Irish by native Irish-speaking parents in the Gaeltacht. Interviewees' backgrounds ranged from no connection with the Gaeltacht, to a heritage link through a current family member or ancestor to attendance at *Gaelscoileanna*.

Our analysis of the data showed that the participants in the study displayed a full spectrum of ideologies. This ranged from strongly essentialist to one which reflected a move away from a view of language as bounded and fixed to a more social constructionist position. Especially amongst older speakers in the study, there was a tendency to place high value on the maintenance of the Gaeltacht and using a Gaeltacht speech as a model. However, even amongst younger participants where there was a distancing from the Gaeltacht model, the ideal of the Gaeltacht speaker still remained. Across the entire sample, there was a strong sense that participants had become or were becoming speakers of Irish, often through considerable effort. They also considered themselves part of a distinct group placed between traditional Gaeltacht speakers and weaker learners either unable or unwilling to speak Irish. There was support for the view that new speakers had an important role to play in the future of Irish.

In the remainder of the article we draw on five life-narrative histories from within this sample, representing the ideological spectrum from essentialism to social constructionism.

4.1 "The native speakers are all dead"

Liam, a fifty year old policeman from a non-Gaeltacht rural part of the country, shows an essentialist discourse in which the ideal of the Gaeltacht native speaker comes across very strongly. After leaving school he joined the army and spent a period abroad during which his sense of Irishness was reinforced, prompting him to revive his school knowledge of Irish. Liam is highly critical of language mixing and looks to the past for linguistic purity and authenticity. He is of the opinion in fact that there are no real native speakers left. They are all dead, he says. The language ideologies underlying Liam's narrative point to what Pennycook (2010: 140) describes as a vision of the local as static, traditional and immobile as opposed to dynamic, about movement and fluid. Through his idealisation of the past, Liam fails to recognise the changing linguistic practices that continue to take place amongst Gaeltacht speakers and within their communities. There is a clear reification of the Gaeltacht where the language is seen to have survived in its purest and most uncontaminated form, built around the nostalgia for the past and a mythification of the native speaker. Liam's preservationist rhetoric represents what Pennycook (2010: 105) describes as an exoticising and romanticising view of local people locked in time, drawing on what Cameron (2007) refers to the exoticising strain in preservationist discourse. This rhetoric, Pennycook suggests, runs the risk of overlooking the actual language practices and language ideologies of local populations. Indeed the exoticising rhetoric of the Gaeltacht and its speakers is something which the local community has frequently rejected, not as Watson (1989: 44) suggests, willing to be the "conscience of the nation".

Nonetheless, Liam recognises the emergence of new profiles of speakers outside of these areas and identifies new speakers within his local area who he categorises as "good" speakers. However, these speakers are "good" in their own right, implying that they are not as "real" as a Gaeltacht native speaker, thus making them exempt from the purity and authenticity which he expects the Gaeltacht native speaker to maintain:

> *Taobh istigh den Ghaeltacht ba cheart Gaeilge stairiúil a bheith ag gach cainteoir ó dhúchas gan iompú ar an mBéarla / sin an riail ach níl siad ann* you know? / *nuair a bhímse ag éisteacht le Raidió na Gaeltachta anois ní bhímse ag éisteacht le Raidió na Gaeltachta anois le bliain anuas ach ní minic a chloiseann tú cainteoir ó dhúchas fíorchainteoir ó dhúchas mar níl siad ann níos mó tá siad ar fad san uaigh faoin am seo* you know? *Ach taobh amuigh den Ghaeltacht* yeah *is dóigh liom cainteoir maith agus leithéidí [Áine] ansin* yeah *agus [Mícheál] / an raibh tú ag caint le [Mícheál]?*
>
> 'Inside the Gaeltacht all native speakers should have historical Irish with no changing to English / that's the rule but they are no longer there you know? / when I listen to *Raidió na Gaeltachta* [Gaeltacht radio service] now I haven't listened to it for the past year but you'd

rarely hear a native speaker a real native speaker because they no longer exist they are all dead at this stage you know? But outside of the Gaeltacht yeah I suppose a good speaker [would be] the likes of [Áine] over there or [Mícheál] / were you talking to [Mícheál]?'

He admits to having a mixture of dialects in his own way of speaking Irish but identifies his Irish as "*blas nádúrtha de chuid Contae (ainm na háite)*" 'a natural accent of County (name of place)', which lost its Gaeltacht status in 1956. Liam has made a concerted effort to ensure that his Irish is anchored in a local way of speaking and has undergone a "*dianstaidéar*" 'intensive study' of the dialects of the area. This justifies the claim that his Irish reflects "*gnáthchaint na Gaeltachta*" 'everyday Gaeltacht speech', thus making it more real and authentic. This he believes gives his Irish a richness and points out that "*is dóigh liom féin go bhfuil saibhreas cainte le cloisteáil i mo chuid cainte féin*" 'I think that there is richness to be heard in my own speech' compared with other Irish speakers whose Irish he criticises for moving too close to English. Here again he displays a strongly essentialist ideology and a desire for authenticity wishing to keep the language free from English influences:

> ... *tá siad ag dul i dtreo an Bhéarla // ní labhraíonn siad go nádúrtha níos mó agus tá siad ag déanamh praiseach den rud ar fad* ...
> '... they are going in the direction of English // they don't speak naturally anymore and they are making a mess of the whole thing ...'

4.2 "Get rid of the big stick"

Deirdre, a 29 year old postgraduate student of Irish follows a somewhat similar pattern to Liam in that her role model draws on the ideal of the traditional Gaeltacht speaker. However, she distances herself more from an essentialist discourse in her calls for greater tolerance on the part of native speakers and recognition of her own qualities as a real Irish speaker, to an extent reflecting Woolard's "both-and" model (Woolard 1998). Throughout her life, she maintained regular contact with Gaeltacht speakers, attending Irish language summer colleges when she was younger and visits to the area to learn from "*cainteoirí breátha*" 'fine speakers'. For her, being a fine speaker is linked to that physical space and to an older generation of speakers which she laments is dying out. Like Liam she expresses her disappointment that the quality of Irish has deteriorated and English has become more dominant:

em d'fhanas nuair le seanabhean [in áit A] uair amháin agus eh thug sise ana-spreagadh dom dúirt sí go raibh ana-Ghaelainn agam em agus bhí mé istigh i gcónaí ag comhrá [léi] agus eh is dócha go raibh sise ar cheann des na cainteoirí is breátha dar casadh orm ach ansan blianta ina dhiaidh san chuas thar n-ais agus bhí meascán de Bhéarla agus Gaelainn sa tigh cé ná raibh sé ná raibh Béarla (()) aici [...] in aon chor em ach tháinig athrú ar an áit faoi mar a tháinig athrú ar you know chuas go [áit B] agus mé trí déag nó rud éigin mar sin agus d'fhanas le clann ansan em ach anois is dócha go bhfuil Gaelainn nach mór imithe as [áit B].
'em I stayed when with an old woman [in place A] once and eh she gave me great encouragement she said that I had great Irish em and I was always inside talking [to her] and eh I suppose that she was one of the finest speakers I met but then years after that I went back and there was a mixture of English and Irish in the house even though it wasn't she didn't have English (()) [...] at all em but the place changed just as the you know changed I went to [place B] when I was thirteen or something like that and I stayed with a family there em but now I suppose that Irish is nearly gone from [place B].'

While on the one hand, Deirdre expresses concern at the decline of Irish in the Gaeltacht, on the other, she is optimistic that "good" speakers are emerging elsewhere. She positions herself in that group of new speakers and argues that people like her will be vital to the future of Irish:

tá ana-chuid cainteoirí breátha em á chruthú gach aon lá lasmuigh den nGaeltacht agus is dócha gur cheart dúinn em an tionchar atá acusan ar an nGaelainn a aithint chomh maith.
'there are many fine speakers em being created every day outside the Gaeltacht and I suppose that we should em recognise the influence that they have on Irish as well.'

At the same time she is careful to identify who is and who isn't included in this group of "good" speakers. Deirdre expresses disdain for the Irish spoken by *Gaelscoil* students for example and comments that teachers in these schools are not amongst the "best" speakers:

ní thaitníonn sí liom i ndáiríre ach em agus [...] tá aithne agam ar mhúinteoirí Gaelscoile agus ní dóigh liom go bhfuilid ar cheann des na cainteoirí Gaelainne is fearr.
'really I don't like it but em and [...] I know *Gaelscoil* teachers and I don't think that they're the best Irish speakers.'

Studies of the spoken and written language used by *Gaelscoil* pupils often reveal hybridised forms of Irish (Nic Pháidín 2003; Walsh 2007; Ó Duibhir 2009) which do not share the common core of all Gaeltacht Irish varieties (Ó hIfearnáin and Ó Murchadha 2011). Such Irish, often pejoratively labelled *Gaelscoilis* (literally, Gaelscoil-language), has been criticised as deficient in a variety of sources ranging from contemporary fiction (for example Ó Conghaile 1999: 115) to scholarly studies of new forms of Irish (Ní Chaisil 2000: 51). Distancing herself from those perceived as "not the best speakers", Deirdre wants recognition for the

efforts she and others like her have made to attain a higher level of fluency and accuracy than other Irish language learners.

In Deirdre's narrative we begin to see a displacement of the link between physical place and competency. In doing so she moves towards Rampton's (1995: 341) notion of "expertise" in which there is a substituting of the idea of where she comes from with what she knows. Positioning oneself as an expert is as Rampton (1995) suggests socially constructed thus moving away from the more innate connotations of acquisition inherent in the concept of the native speaker. Deirdre constructs her identity as a "good" Irish speaker in opposition to an older generation of Gaeltacht speakers who she sees as dying out. At the same time, she constructs her identity in opposition to other profiles of new speakers which are emerging but whose Irish she sees as falling short of what she defines as a competent speaker. However, in an apparent contradiction, despite her negative view of *Gaelscoil* speakers she does not want to be pressurised to uphold that accuracy herself and calls on native speakers to be tolerant of her mistakes and not as she says "use the big stick", a reference to times past when corporal punishment was used on students who made mistakes. Such a prescripivist approach is seen in effect as stripping her of identity as an "expert" and therefore as a legitimate speaker. She talks about contributing to "the [Irish language] cause", positioning herself as a language activist who has made a particular sacrifice and sustained effort to learn Irish to a high level. This is something for which she wants recognition:

> *Caitheann tú cruinneas áirithe teangan a bheith agat gan amhras ach ba cheart go mbeadh daoine in ann em Gaelainn a labhairt agus ná beidís fé bhrú agus ná beadh* kind of you know *tabhair an bata mór amuigh má dhéanann tú botún ná beadh éinne do do cheartú ní maith liom féin é nuair a dhéanann daoine mé a cheartú* you know *táim ag snámh in aghaidh easa gach lá ar son na cúise so tóg go bog é* you know *tá mé ag déanamh mo dhícheall LF agus nuair a bhím istigh sa leabharlann agus nuair a bhímse ag iarraidh Gaelainn a labhairt agus rudaí a fáil trí Ghaelainn [...] i gcónaí ag snámh in aghaidh an easa foirmeacha a fháil trí Ghaelainn* so *má bhíonn daoine ag gearán liomsa* just *ní maith liom é déanta na fírinne ach em caithfimid an óige a mholadh agus deireadh a chur leis an mbata mór.*
> 'You have to have some sort of language accuracy of course but people should be able em to speak Irish and that they wouldn't be under pressure that they wouldn't kind of you know take out the big stick if you make a mistake that people wouldn't be correcting you I myself don't like it when people correct me you know I'm fighting an uphill battle every day for the sake of the cause so take it easy you know I'm doing my best LF and when I'm in the library and when I want to speak Irish and get things through Irish [...] always swimming against the tide getting forms in Irish so if people are complaining to me just I don't like it to be honest but em we have to praise young people and get rid of the big stick.'

Therefore although Deirdre's ideological positioning leans more towards the essentialist end of the spectrum, there are as we can see internal tensions in her

discourse. On the one hand, she idealises the traditional native speaker but on the other she argues that Irish belongs to everyone and expresses annoyance that sometimes Gaeltacht people act as if they own it: "*braithimse gur le muintir (Gaeltacht áirithe) an Ghaelainn agus* you know *níl tú maith a dhóthain chun Gaelainn a labhairt*" 'I feel that the people of (certain Gaeltacht area) own Irish and that you know you're not good enough to speak Irish'. The data from Deirdre and from other similar participants suggest that in positioning themselves as language experts, new speakers occupy a "third space" (Bhabha 1994; English 2002), located between native speakers and learners.

4.3 "Half of me is from the Gaeltacht"

Áine positions herself somewhere in the middle of the ideological spectrum. On the one hand, she claims certain ownership of Gaeltacht Irish through heritage links but feels she can't call herself a native speaker because she was not born there. Áine is from an urban context and was brought up speaking English although heard some Irish spoken by her father and extended relatives when she was younger. Her father was born and raised in the Gaeltacht and brought up speaking Irish. She works as an Irish language officer and is very involved in the promotion of Irish. Like some of the other new speakers in the study, she has an ambiguous relationship with the Gaeltacht native speaker, not least because of her heritage claim to the language through her father:

> Oh God *caithfidh mé a rá fós // go mbeadh // go mbeadh imní orm cainteoir dúchasach a rá mar ní cainteoir dúchasach mé //* so *bheadh imní orm rud éigin a chur isteach sa chead bhosca mar gheall air* you know *nach // nár as an nGaeltacht mé agus níor tógadh go huile is go hiomlán le Gaeilge mé* so *ní cainteoir dúchasach mé.*
> 'Oh God I have to say still // that I would be // I would be afraid to call myself a native speaker because I'm not a native speaker // so I would be afraid to put a tick in the first box because of that you know I'm not // not from the Gaeltacht and I wasn't brought up entirely through Irish so I'm not a native speaker.'

She describes her Irish as a mixture of different dialects which she learned from teachers at school but nevertheless lays claim to her inherited link with Gaeltacht Irish which she describes as being "*sa bhfuil*" 'in the blood':

> *ach dom féin mar gheall ar go raibh mé i mo chónaí anseo in [ainm an bhaile] bhí múinteoir na Mumhan agam* I suppose *don chuid is mó agus* then *bhí an Ghaeilge [ó cheantar áirithe] agam sa // sa bhfuil* you know.
> 'but for myself because I was living here in [name of town] I had Munster teachers I suppose for the most part and then I had the Irish [of a certain area] in // in the blood you know.'

While Áine feels that she is denied the qualities of nativeness because of where she comes from, she nonetheless draws on the inheritance metaphor (Rampton 1995: 341) through frequent identification of her "blood" link to the Gaeltacht as a means of justifying her Irish-speaking lineage and therefore her right to the language.

While laying a certain claim to authenticity through her heritage links with the language, she is at the same time open to language mixing and is aware that she herself draws on English when she speaks Irish which sees this as part of maintaining conversational flow:

> *Em* I suppose *agus déanaim é sin mé féin / tá mé díreach tar éis é sin a dhéanamh! (LF) Nuair a bhíonn tú i bponc ó thaobh focal de chun go mbeadh leanúnachas agat agus chun go leanfá ar aghaidh.*
> 'Em I suppose and I do it myself / I have just done it! (LF) When you are stuck for a word so that there is continuity and so that you keep going.'

She is critical of people who engage in language policing and recalls an incident where her Irish was corrected. While she associated this particular incident with a Gaeltacht speaker, she was careful to add that this was by no means meant as an attack on people from the Gaeltacht pointing out that she was "half-Gaeltacht" herself. Therefore, here again we see an authentication of herself as an Irish speaker based on her heritage links to the language:

> *... níl mé ag gearán faoi mhuintir na Gaeltachta anois // ba mhaith liom é sin a shoiléiriú // táim leath-chuid ón nGaeltacht (LF).*
> '... I am not complaining about Gaeltacht people now // I want to make that clear // half of me is from the Gaeltacht (LF).'

4.4 "I have Dublin Irish"

This next example shows a more social constructionist ideology and a more markedly obvious move away from the ideal of the Gaeltacht speaker. Joanne is from a middle class Dublin background and moved to her husband's small home-town in the west of Ireland where they now live along with their daughter who attends a *Gaelscoil* and with whom they speak Irish. She began to adopt Irish language practices when she was in her thirties when she and her husband moved to England for a year. She claimed that she came up against anti-Irish sentiments when she was living in England and she used language as a means of reaffirming her identity. She positions herself very much in opposition to the ideal of the Gaeltacht native speaker and describes her Irish as "Dublin Irish", which

her husband describes as "bad" Irish. She is not put out by these comments and highlights the effort that she is making to speak the language, warts and all:

> *Labhair é is cuma liom LF* you know *tuigim go bhfuil na fuaimeanna ana-thábhachtach ach tá sé níos tábhachtach iarracht a dhéanamh* you know // *níl mé as an Gaeltacht* you know *ní raibh mé riamh i mo chónaí ann tá Gaeilge as Baile Átha Cliath agam so sin é* you know *agus déanaim iarracht agus* you know *duine eile is mise duine eile a labhraíonn an Ghaeilge má bhíonn mé cúthaileach le haghaidh na fuaimeanna a dhéanamh a dhéanann mé ní bheidh duine é a labhairt ceapaim go bhfuil sé níos tábhachtach é a labhairt ar aon nós iarracht a dhéanamh chomh maith agus ceapaim go bhfuil feabhas ag teacht ar mo chuid Gaeilge agus na fuaimeanna em nuair a bhím ag labhairt go minic is féidir liom* you know *a chloisint* you know *na botúin a dhéanaim agus em ansin iad a cheartú.*
>
> 'Speak it I don't care LF you know I understand that the sounds are very important but it is more important to make an effort you know // I am not from the Gaeltacht you know I was never living there I have Dublin Irish so that's it you know and I make an effort and you know another person I am another person who speaks Irish if I am shy about making the sounds I make nobody would be speaking it I think it is more important to speak it at any rate to make an effort as well and I think my Irish has improved and the sounds em when I am speaking frequently I can you know hear you know the mistakes that I make and em then correct them.'

While identifying her Irish as "Dublin Irish", she nevertheless draws on the ideal of the Gaeltacht as a model for creating an Irish-speaking area in her own locality. She identified a number of people in the community who had a native speaker ancestor and described their Irish as "*sár-Ghaeilge*" 'excellent Irish'. Joanne's relationship with the Gaeltacht is minimal but she had visited it on occasions for summer courses to "improve" her Irish, thus showing recognition of the Gaeltacht and its speakers as key points of reference in her attempt to grasp the language.

These attempts were not without difficulty and Joanne talks about some of the negative experiences she had during her visits to the Gaeltacht and the perceived reluctance of some of the locals to speak to her in Irish, something which has also been identified in other studies of new speaker profiles (Kabel 2000; O'Rourke 2011b). In this excerpt below, we see a reaction to this experience which comes across as a strong demand for ownership over the language on her part and a rejection of the native Gaeltacht speaker who she sees as denying her access to the language. Being born into the language she sees as a random act of God or a fluke of nature which could just as easily have been her or anyone else. She is critical of Gaeltacht speakers for their perceived disinterest in keeping the language alive (something to which she as a new speaker is highly committed) and demands recognition for these efforts. She calls for a re-definition of the concept of Gaeltacht which would include any area where the public was actively promoting Irish and which would give new speakers like her a greater voice:

You know it's a kind of a thing of a them and us situation and they don't they're not interested in the life of the language and the language being kept going they see it as theirs and you've no right to it we're all of the same nationality and it's just you know by the grace of God that they were born where they were born and you know for anyone else who'd like to learn Irish and wasn't brought up in an Irish speaking home it's unfortunate you know // the attitude has to change but the government has to change it as well and it wouldn't do any harm to take to change the status and to give places like [name of place] and places where they make an effort to keep the language alive.

4.5 "Creating a new paradigm"

Sharon, a 37-year-old from Dublin shows a somewhat similar position to Joanne but as we will see, moves further along the continuum towards a social constructionist discourse. Although one of Sharon's parents could speak Irish, she was raised in English but spent part of her education in a *Gaelscoil*. Sharon's own children are attending the same school but she doesn't speak Irish to them either partly due to a lack of confidence, particularly in the intimate register of language used in a domestic setting. While a fluent speaker of Irish, she diverges from the Gaeltacht norm for the most part although there is some evidence at the level of phonology and lexicon that she spent time in a particular Gaeltacht area.

Sharon has complex views about the importance of Irish. On the one hand, she expresses pride at being able to speak it. However, she compared it to skiing, suggesting that it is not of fundamental importance to her but was something which she uses from time to time, similar to someone engaging in a hobby. On the other hand, she also argued that people like her, "*mo leithéidse*" 'the likes of me' were creating a new "paradigm" in the future of the language, suggesting something more important than a hobby. Use of the term "the likes of me" creates a clear divide between her peer group who learned Irish in the *Gaelscoil* and those raised in the Gaeltacht. Like Joanne, her sense of alienation from the *Gaeltacht* is intensified by the fact that when she visited there, local people refused to speak Irish with her. Questions of language ownership are again played out here:

You know *daoine nár tógadh le teangaidh go minic bíonn siad níos tiomanta dhó* you know *mar tuigeann siad na deacrachtaí a bhaineann le teangaidh* you know *nuair atá an teangaidh agat ó dhúchais bíonn foinse agat i gcónaí agus níl foinse agam níl // níl* you know *níl pointe tosnaithe ní féidir liom níl aon / níl a fhios agam má théim go dtí an áit seo [Gaeltacht] gur féidir liom* you know *[Gaeilge a labhairt] agus fiú má théim go dtí na háiteanna sin is minic a bhí mé sa Ghaeltacht agus gur diúltaíodh Gaeilge a labhairt liom* you know *toisc nár ceann den phobal a bhí ionam agus you know so is dócha go bhfuil saghas* paradigm *nua á chruthú ag mo leithéidse* you know *go bhfuil muid ag rá bhuel níl mé sásta an rud seo a chailliúint ach níl mé chun mo chroí a bhriseadh chun é a chosaint ach oiread* you know like *tá sé agam tá mé bródúil den rud go bhfuil Gaeilge agam leanfaidh mé ar aghaidh á chur ar mo CV féin LF*

you know *ar eagla go gcruthódh sé ceangal idir mé féin agus b'fhéidir duine eicínt eile ach tá mé chun sciáil* you know *go bhfuil spéis agam sa sciáil a chur ar an CV céanna* you know *mar phointe comhrá* you know.

'You know people who weren't brought up with a language often they are more committed to it you know because they understand the difficulties associated with language you know when you have the language as a native language you always have a source and I don't have a source I don't // I don't you know have a starting point I can't I don't / I don't know if I go to this place [Gaeltacht] that I can you know [speak Irish] and even if I go to those places I was often in the Gaeltacht and they refused to speak Irish to me you know because I wasn't one of the community and you know so I suppose that the likes of me are probably creating a new paradigm you know that we are saying well I'm not happy to lose this thing but I'm not going to break my heart to protect it either you know like I have it I am proud of the fact that I have Irish I will carry on putting it on my own CV LF you know in case it might create a link between me and maybe somebody else but I am going to put skiing you know that I am interested in skiing on the same CV you know as a topic of conversation you know.'

As a teenager, Sharon was disappointed at her academic achievements in Irish even though she had been educated in a *Gaelscoil*, having performed relatively poorly in state examinations. As a result, she decided to spend time in a Gaeltacht summer college. Similar to Joanne, reinforcing the importance of the Gaeltacht as a language-learning site for people who wish to improve their Irish. She reported that her period in the Gaeltacht while at school changed her attitude to Irish and encouraged her to study it at university and to seek work in the Irish language sector. Despite her acknowledgement of the importance of the Gaeltacht for improving her Irish when she was a teenager, Sharon rejected outright the traditional ideology associated with the Gaeltacht and the native speaker and positioned herself as a part of a new group of speakers who were liberal, urban and modernising. The fact that she has to make an effort to speak Irish, "*go bhfuilim ag iarraidh*" 'that I am trying' is deemed to be important. She also describes how she decided to use the English version of her name even though she worked in the Irish language media where Irish versions would be more common. Even though this would make her stand out in an Irish language context, it may have been an attempt to avoid visibility as an Irish speaker within the general population in case she would be perceived as an extremist. Such a position would be in keeping with her view that Irish was not of fundamental importance to her. Her motivation for sticking to her English name (as opposed to adopting its Irish equivalent) is explained when she refers mockingly to an archetypal Gaeltacht figure with a traditional Irish name and traditional Irish dress, "*Seáinín Ó Sé*". The "*báinín*" is a jumper or sweater from the Aran Islands (also traditionally Irish-speaking) which was used extensively in the past to market a particularly nostalgic version of Ireland and Irishness to tourists and those of Irish descent abroad. Sharon does not want to be "*Seáinín Ó Sé*" and positions herself as a

modern Irish speaker who has broken with the past, extending the imagery to the extreme opposite of someone with pink hair. There is a very clear distancing from the Gaeltacht and a claim to ownership of Irish in an urban context. One does not have to be from the Gaeltacht to be an Irish speaker:

> *Nuair a smaoiním air* I think *an fáth go bhfuil an Ghaeilge tábhachtach dom ná go bhfuilim ag iarraidh // agus sin an fáth gur nár bhac mé le m'ainm Gaelach mar shampla nuair a thosaigh mé ag obair bhí mé ag obair mar is eol duit [i bpostanna Gaeilge] agus ag aon am le linn na postanna sin d'fhéadfainn m'ainm Gaelach a úsáid ach shocraigh mé gan é sin a dhéanamh mar bhraith mé bhí mé ag iarraidh ar bhealach em cur in iúl do dhaoine nach Seáinín Ó Sé [mé] a bhíonns ag labhairt Gaeilge* you know *go bhfuil daoine eile a bhfuil Gaeilge acu daoine a bhfuil bainteach le cúrsaí teicneolaíochta daoine a bhfuil gruaig* you know *bándearg orthu* you know *daoine nach nach* you know *mar a deireann m'fhear céile go minic* curly teeth and beards, do you know what I mean like ↑ *gur // nach iad* you know *sean*lads *i geansaí báinín a bhfuil ag labhairt Gaeilge gur rud nua-aimseartha atá ann atá baint aige leis an gcathair* you know *go bhfuil Gaeilge ag daoine uirbeach freisin agus tá Gaeilge ag daoine nach bhfuil baint ar bith acu leis an nGaeltacht.*
>
> 'When I think about it I think the reason that Irish is important to me is that I am trying // and that's why I didn't bother with my Irish name for example when I started working I was working as you know [in Irish language jobs] and at any stage during that period I could have used my Irish name but I decided not to because I felt I was trying in a way em illustrate to people that [I am] not Seáinín Ó Sé who speaks Irish you know that there are other people who speak Irish people who are linked to technology people who have pink hair you know people who aren't as my husband says curly teeth and beards / do you know what I mean like ↑ that they are // not always old lads wearing a *báinín* jumper who speak Irish that it is something modern linked to the city you know that urban people have Irish as well and that people who have no link to the Gaeltacht have Irish.'

5 Conclusion

Language is something done in a particular time and space (Pennycook 2010: 12) and as such new speakers can be seen to be "doing" language across new time-space dimensions by actively creating or constructing new linguistic identities and practices. This ranges from those speakers wishing to adhere as closely as possible to a traditional Gaeltacht variety (sometimes even a variety which has become moribund in its historical region) to speakers who are less enamoured of traditional varieties or even consciously reject them. Language practices in Irish have changed radically within one hundred years. At the turn of the 20th century such practices were dominated by native speakers and were overwhelmingly localised and bounded within a rural setting. At the turn of the 21st century it is both rural and urban, dominated by new speakers but still characterised by the presence of native speakers with evidence of convergence between traditional

and non-traditional forms (Ó Broin 2010). This is a direct result both of the state's revival policy and wider socio-political and socio-economic changes which have fundamentally changed the social structure of the Gaeltacht. Such changes can lead to disillusionment among new speakers of Irish whose linguistic desires are shattered when they discover that the Gaeltacht is not a monolingual region where only traditional Irish is spoken. Such frustration is exacerbated by decades of state language policy which appears to support such a view. For instance, public signage (place names and road signs) in the Gaeltacht is in Irish only, adding to the impression that the unsuspecting visitor is entering an English-free zone (Ó hIfearnáin 2006: 15). It can be deeply unsettling for a new speaker of Irish to discover that the sociolinguistic reality is far more complex.

The data in our study suggests that varying degrees of nostalgia for the past and a rootedness in place are shaping emerging new speaker identities. New speakers in the study have a complex and sometimes contradictory relationship both with the Gaeltacht and with native Irish speakers. Although respect for the authenticity of native Gaeltacht speech remains a powerful force in the discourses of new speakers, there is evidence of rejection of traditional ideologies around nativeness and calls for recognition of different types of speakers. There was at times a rejection of essentialist ideologies and the production instead of a social constructionist discourse where the traditional values of place, rootedness and authenticity became secondary. Here we see the emergence of new labels to describe new speaker forms such as "Dublin Irish", and on occasion, a flaunting of hybrid forms accompanied by a deliberate attempt at differentiation from the ideal of the traditional native speaker. In the case of such speakers, this is linked in part to their sociolinguistic inability to access the social world of the native speaker which they in turn voice as a demand for ownership of Irish and recognition as speakers.

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Appendix: Transcription protocol

Liam (without surname)	pseudonym
[place B]	name of place removed
LF	laughter
/	pause
//	short pause
↑	voice raised
(( ))	unclear speech
[...]	material removed
[an Ghaeilge]	material inserted
like (roman in original Irish text)	codeswitching

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