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The Call of the Wild Geese: An Ethnography of Diasporic Irish Language Revitalization in Southern and Eastern Ontario

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THE CALL OF THE WILD GEESE: AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF DIASPORIC IRISH LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION IN SOUTHERN AND EASTERN ONTARIO

Monograph

by

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Abstract

This research examines the ideological and social dynamics that govern the use of the Irish language by a network of speakers and learners in Southern and Eastern Ontario. In what follows, I investigate the invocation of powerful historical discourses and symbolic references that has resulted in the creation of a vibrant network dedicated to reviving Irish in a diasporic setting through immersion. Using Irish at language immersion events is informed by diverse factors – levels of participant fluency, the prevalence of language-specific acquisition and socialization strategies, as well as by the need of attendees to talk about their stories and identities. While the institutional goals of using Irish wherever possible is relatively straightforward, this research explores the complicated ideological landscape that informs the language choices that individuals make in their negotiation of these events in order to highlight factors that complicate the goal of language revitalization by a community in diaspora.

Keywords: Irish language, language revitalization, language ideologies, linguistic anthropology, language and ethnicity, identity, diaspora, transnationalism, *Gaeltacht Thuaisceart an Oileáin Úir, Gaeilge*, *Oireachtas Gaeilge Cheanada*

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Introduction

Since the early 1990s, some chilling projections have been circulating regarding the fate of the world's languages: multiple studies (Austin and Selkirk 2011, 1; Grenoble and Whaley 2006, 1; Hale et.al 1992; UNESCO 2003) have sounded the alarm on the rapid rate of language shift from lesser-spoken varieties to regionally or globally dominant languages. These estimates predict that at least 50 percent of the world's 6,000 to 7,000 languages will cease to be spoken at the end of the twenty-first century, if current trends continue. Although there has been some debate as to the veracity of these predictions and the extent to which scholars are able to predict trends in increasingly unstable sociolinguistic landscapes (Duchêne and Heller 2007), the drama of language endangerment and death is occurring in diverse communities all over the world, with multiple language "hotspots", or places where even entire language families are in danger of extinction, having been identified on every continent (Anderson 2011, 4-5).

In each community, the drama will play out according to the ideological landscape that informs the choices the community makes. This study is an account of a community based in Southern and Eastern Ontario, Canada who is dedicated to reviving the use of the Irish language, which is classified as endangered[1]. The title of this research makes use of a historic term used to describe generations of Irish emigrants – *wild geese*. Just as geese have a sense of where they need to go, and what to do when they get there, this study is a description of the effects of a "homing desire" (a term from Brah 1996, 16) that makes the Irish language important for some members of the Irish diaspora.

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[1]   Only 1.8% of the population of Ireland uses Irish on a daily basis outside of the school system (Central Statistics Office 2011, 27). See Appendix A for a spatial illustration of the regional distribution of frequent users of Irish in Ireland.

Genealogies of Irish Language Revitalization

The fight to preserve the Irish language is a story that starts in the latter half of the nineteenth century. After centuries of punitive measures targeting the indigenous legal, political, and social structures of Gaelic Ireland[2] by the Norman and English colonial regimes, the speaker base of the language began receding through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. *An Gorta Mór*, which is known in English as the Potato Famine of 1846-1851 is the singular event that severely ruptured rural communities that spoke the language, and scattered Irish speakers throughout the globe, delivering a strong blow to the vitality of the language. Sarah McMonagle (2012, 4) notes in her discussion of the impact of the Famine on Irish language loss that of the roughly five million people who emigrated from Ireland between 1846 and 1901, the majority were rural and poor, at a time in Ireland where there were Irish speaking communities in almost every county. The rural West of Ireland had both the highest proportion of speakers in the country, and was the most impacted by endemic migration.

As a result of this calamitous event, the immigration of Irish speakers to North America was particularly high during the nineteenth century. The political and social movements of those that left their homes took root in North America, even if the language itself did not survive for long in its new location. Organized responses to the decline of the Irish language started as early as 1876 with the formation of *The Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language* (SPIL), and almost immediately, this revitalization effort was transnational in character, with the SPIL printing copies of their instruction books in New York in 1878, "for benefit of Irish classes in America" (SPIL

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[2]   An early example of a law explicitly forbidding the use of the Irish language in Ireland is article three of the *Statutes of Kilkenny*, passed in 1366 that threatened the confiscation of land and imprisonment of any Englishman who spoke Irish.

1878, 1). Even the first magazine devoted to the Irish language, *An Gaodhal* (the Gael) was established in Brooklyn in 1881 (O'Leary 2004, 7), not in Ireland. During this political moment that birthed the revival movement, the desire to save the Irish language was strong enough in the United States to merit the founding of these two organizations. Organizing for the Irish language in Canada followed suit approximately thirty years later with the founding of the Toronto Branch of the Gaelic League in May 1906 by Dr. Douglas Hyde, a key figure in the movement to preserve Irish (Gaelic League Toronto Branch 1906, 1). Other branches were known to have existed in Canadian cities such as Ottawa, and possibly further afield.

Local branches of the Gaelic League often published essays that featured ideologically in-sync discourses on the Irish language, which were published and sent throughout the Gaelic League network. An essay from 1909 from the Toronto Branch called *The Making of the New Ireland* was published by the Gaelic League and disseminated throughout the network. Many of the early organizations were geared towards achieving political advocacy in Ireland for the Irish language, with branches of the *Gaelic League* being required to forward two-thirds of the funds raised during annual fundraising by local branches to the *Coisde Gnótha* (the central committee) for the purposes of further mobilization (Gaelic League Toronto Branch 1906, 24-26).

The use of organizational structures from Ireland such as that of the Gaelic League and its transnational character suggest a movement that was highly in-sync at the beginning of the twentieth century in Canada and the United States. The Gaelic League was prominent enough to be the subject of attention by newspaper editorialists in Canada during the early twentieth century. Although the key organizers of the Gaelic League's

Toronto branch were second and third-generation Canadians, they were depicted in Thomas Nast-style comics[3] in the *Evening Telegram* as bumbling speakers of broken English, whose loyalty to Canada would only last as long as Ireland was ruled directly by the United Kingdom's Westminster Parliament (Jenkins 2010). The Gaelic League's place in Toronto's public sphere eventually faded with the foundation of the Irish State in 1922.

Contemporary Irish Language Networks in Canada

More archival research needs to be done in order to ascertain whether there is any continuity between the current networks and those that were active in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, although some preliminary inquiries of my own indicate that most Irish language organizations in Ontario have only been in existence the last thirty years. Currently there is little in the form of collective memory, scholarly research, or explicit institutional memory of continuity regarding any relationship of the current efforts to those of the past, although there is some fragmentary knowledge of the possible existence of an Irish language organization in Toronto during the 1950s and 1960s. If more research were done on this subject, I believe that it could yield fruitful and interesting results that might be able to merge the gap of knowledge between the historical and contemporary Irish language movements in Ontario. However, my focus is on the contemporary network.

The current history of organized Irish learning efforts in Ontario can be traced to the 1980s in Toronto. From that point, a community dedicated to learning and speaking Irish has slowly grown into a multi-city network that has regular immersion events in the

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[3] Thomas Nast was an influential cartoonist known for his racist renderings of racialized minorities in the nineteenth century.

summer. In Ontario, the language network consists of at least four cities in which weekly

formal instruction takes place outside of the university system[4], including Toronto,

Mississauga, Ottawa, and Kingston. There are similar organizations in Montreal,

Quebec[5]. Presently, there are annual opportunities for immersion in Keswick in June

(organized by the Toronto group) Prevost (organized by the Ottawa group) and Kingston

Ontario (organized by the Kingston group). In addition, *Gaeltacht Thuaisceart an Oileáin*

Úir[6] (Irish speaking area of the "fresh island", referring to North America), which was

established outside of Erinsville and Tamworth, Ontario in 2007 is run by members from

the entire network, and is home to *Seachtain na Gaeilge* (Irish language week) and

Oireachtas Gaeilge Cheanada (an annual Irish-medium literary, music, and dance

competition). Since the founding of these two events at *Gaeltacht Thuaisceart an Oileáin*

Úir, a significant amount of attendance, support, and attention from those living in Ireland

and throughout the diaspora have been mobilized in support of the efforts *Gaeltacht*

Thuaisceart an Oileáin Úir.

The *Gaeltacht* is situated on a 52-acre former apple orchard, bordering the

Salmon River in Eastern Ontario, outside of the town of Tamworth. In the hills

surrounding the camp site, apple trees stand amongst wild plants that have managed to

reclaim the orchard's former terrain. This site now serves as one of the central

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[4] This network is not the only group that uses Irish in Canada. There are at least seven universities that teach Irish across the country. The universities' Irish-speaking networks and the community I describe have only limited overlap, and therefore will not be addressed in any detail in this study.

[5] Currently, there are at least three loosely affiliated Irish language networks in North America: in Ontario and the surrounding region, in New Jersey, and in Montana. Each of these networks is comprised of a number of localized centres of weekly language learning activities, and at least one centralized congregation point. There are also numerous weekly learning efforts in other parts of North America.

[6] A list of the events attended, along with the English language translations of the event names are provided in Appendix A

congregation points for enthusiasts that are from a diaspora that is truly dispersed, having long since moved out from ethnic enclaves, and who often have to travel vast distances in order to join like-minded people. The Ontario network is the focus of this study, although it will be necessary to draw in examples from other networks in order to locate the effort in Ontario within the context of what is a transnational language revitalization movement, with connections existing between the Ontario network and other efforts worldwide.

The description of the community dedicated to using Irish in Ontario needs to be weighed against the available statistics regarding the correlation between reporting an Irish ethnicity and reporting the use of the language. According to the latest census data available in Canada, there are 5,354,145 people in Canada that claimed Irish ethnic origins as of 2006[7] (Statistics Canada 2006), and there were 2,320 people that reported speaking "Gaelic languages" in 2011 (Statistics Canada 2011). This could refer to any of the three Gaelic languages: Irish, Scots, or the recently revived Manx Gaelic. While it is not possible to say how many of the respondents claiming knowledge of a "Gaelic language" speak Irish, it is clear that even at best, a fraction of one percent of the Irish diaspora living in Canada reported speaking the Irish language.

Whenever data is collected by means of census, the question of whether or not individuals would self-report is an important feature of analyzing the numbers. It is possible that individuals would not report speaking Irish if they were second language learners or if they were less than fluent. My Grandmother is one example of someone who routinely denied any knowledge of Irish, but she was able to read Irish language books to me as I was beginning to learn the language. It is clear, though, both from the census numbers and from my inquiries while conducting fieldwork that Canadian born

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[7]   At the time of publication, 2011 data was not available for the ethnic origin of respondent.

members of the Irish diaspora are unlikely to transmit any detailed knowledge of the Irish language. However, there are many Canadian-born Irish living in the diaspora who can be described as "remembering" the language, with fragmentary and partial knowledge, including individuals I interviewed during my fieldwork. The principal fact that I would like to note from these census numbers is that intergenerational transmission of the Irish language is not something that seems to be happening in significant numbers at this time in Canada. Those engaged in its revitalization in Canada are acting significantly against the trend by learning a language that was overwhelmingly not transmitted from generation to generation.

This statistically unlikely diasporic revitalization effort is also reflected in individuals' relatively atomized interest within their family or kinship networks; in all the fieldwork I did, it was an exception for individuals to arrive with family to any immersion event, although this is changing as organizers deem it a priority. This suggests that at present, foregrounding the Irish language as an important element of an Irish identity does not regularly occur on the level of the family unit in the diaspora, and that there is a significant variability in how individuals choose to live out their identities. This is the case for my family. Nobody in my family or extended family has ever attended an Irish immersion event during the past three years of my attendance, and opinions range from active interest to active disdain for such activities. While the participation of multiple family members is not unheard of, it is uncommon.

Individuals who foreground the Irish language as an important part of their identity will have varying exposure to others in their daily lives who construct their identities in a similar fashion. Some individuals in Canada and the United States have the

opportunity to meet weekly in their cities in order to learn and speak the language. For others, they may only get the chance when they attend immersion events.

Regardless of the opportunities available in participants' place of residence, immersion events are central convergences for Irish language learners, serving as gathering points for diverse groups and individuals who otherwise have limited face-to-face contact during the rest of the year. Thus it serves as one of the best opportunities for both individuals and the collective Irish language network and circuit to affirm, contest, shape, and discuss ideas about what they are doing. The Irish language revitalization initiatives that are taking place in Ontario offer a glimpse into what revitalization looks like for a population that has seized upon certain ways of thinking about their language that prompts them to speak it again. This group lives away from the linguistic homeland and their population has gone through some of the most advanced language shift as it pertains to intergenerational transmission.

Field Sites and Methodology

I have been involved in the Irish language network in Ontario since 2008, when I initiated Irish language lessons through the Irish Cultural Society at my university. I started attending the immersion events in 2010, so by the time I started this research I was already a member of the network with a basic proficiency in Irish. I conducted my fieldwork from April to August 2012, and it took me throughout Southern and Eastern Ontario. In April, I attended an Irish language weekend in Kingston. In June, I attended one in Keswick, Ontario. In July, the 2nd annual *Oireachtas Gaeilge Cheanada* took place at *Gaeltacht Thuaisceart an Oileán Úir,* followed by the week-long *Seachtain na Gaeilge* in August. By the end of my fieldwork in August 2012, I had enough proficiency in Irish

to translate the Irish language interviews. All of the translations below are my own.

During my fieldwork, I recorded thirteen semi-structured interviews, recorded intermediate classroom proceedings at one of the immersion events and wrote approximately thirty-five pages of field notes, which inform the analysis in this thesis. The data was collected through participant observation at these events. I was both a researcher and a participant in the language learning activities, which meant I continually had to strive to find time between classes and workshops for interviewing and recording field notes. These events for the most part follow a schedule that starts at 7:30 in the morning and ends at around 11:00, so many of the interviewees were simply those who were willing to take time away from the scheduled activities and talk to me, although I did also choose to interview people based on some information they had previously provided me through informal conversation. The data that I collected was guided in large part by the small windows of time that I had where people were free and willing to sit down for an interview, as was the writing of my field notes. I would often write brief notes about the day and then fill them in when I was returning to my home city on the train at the end of an immersion event.

It was a busy period for me, as there was a substantial amount of travelling involved in attending these events. At many points during my research, I would find myself in Toronto's Union Station, either waiting for a connection or disembarking. The station began to represent a liminal space through which I had to pass in order to congregate with my fellow Irish enthusiasts. Travelling is a theme common to all attendees that frequent some or all of these hubs. In order to congregate with those who speak Irish (and want to speak it with you), one must travel, whether it is to your weekly

class, or to the annual immersion events that are spread throughout the network. Thus,

my research is characteristic of what Marcus (1995) describes as a "multi-sited"

ethnography. Indeed, the Irish learning and speaking community is a mobile one that

makes use of multiple locations for language learning.

<div align="center">Theoretical Approaches</div>

Considerations for Diasporic Revitalization

The use of the Irish language in Ontario is an example of an engagement with an

endangered language variety that is best investigated by taking a descriptive approach

that focuses on the ideological engagements of the community in question, instead of

emphasizing an evaluative approach that measures indicators of "health" for a target

language. One of the foundational examples of the evaluative type, and language

revitalization in general, is Joshua Fishman's (1991) Graded Intergenerational Disruption

Scale (GIDS), which is designed to assess the relative health of an endangered language.

When discussing the eight stages of his GIDS scale (which includes extra-familial efforts

to preserve and enshrine languages within the daily lives of the target population, through

media use, development of teaching materials, school systems, etc), Fishman warns that

all other efforts and stages "are merely buying time in the short run until a sound basis for

long run intergenerational transmission can be established" (161), locating

intergenerational transmission, and the family, as the epicenter of an indispensable

complex that involves the home, family, and neighbourhood. He emphasizes that the

family is "…an unexpendable bulwark of [reversing language shift]". . . "*One cannot*

jump across or dispense with stage 6" (Italics in original. 1991, 94-95). The emphasis

was on this locus of transmission, and it was deemed to be a feature that was necessary to

revitalization. Fishman continues this thought later in his book by saying that languages that focus on other loci of transmission "do not correspond to an outside nor to an appreciable inside social reality [and are] generally only meagerly or marginally mastered at best" (Fishman 1991, 363) with learners' proficiency in the target heritage language reaching a plateau at the time of the individual's sporadic immersion or instruction in the language, and tapering off afterwards.

In other words, the type of language use that was the primary target of the GIDS, as well as some of the more recent evaluative frameworks for endangered languages, such as the UN's *Evaluative Factors for Language Vitality* (UNESCO 2003) was one that was transmitted from generation to generation, or at least should ideally be. While evaluative frameworks are extremely important due to their ability to provide insights into language communities that have been transmitting the language from generation to generation, they are not an appropriate focus in situations where communities engaged in an endangered language variety are overwhelmingly L2 speakers of the language. It could also result in an unfairly negative evaluation of what is in actual fact a meaningful engagement in the use of an endangered language by a community, because of the fixation on evaluative frameworks and "expert rhetoric" (for a discussion, see Hill 2002). However, an emphasis on intergenerational transmission or evaluative frameworks may become more important as the communities, such as the Irish learners in Ontario, continue to grow and expand their aims. Some of the other elements of these evaluative frameworks also emphasize ties with educational, governmental, media, and work-related sectors that are not necessarily achievable by communities that are living away from their geographical heartland (Fishman 1991, 395), and require a descriptive approach.

For many communities in diaspora, the question is not how to retain an eroding societal linguistic *status quo*, or how to engender communities of practice that mimic tightly-bound speech communities, as many groups no longer live in ethnic enclaves that would enable this to occur. The level of language shift for these populations may be far more advanced than those in the linguistic homeland of the language, which require separate considerations. Instead of returning things to "how things were", language revitalization efforts of diaspora groups require flexibility and hybridity, transforming their daily lives and seizing upon discourses that legitimate their actions. Revitalization efforts that happen in diaspora, or outside of the territory where the language is most spoken, requires a re-mapping of how the language can play an important part in the lives of a target population, and this will require unique forms of organizing around what form that will take. For example, Irish language enthusiasts in North America almost invariably live their working lives through English or French, so diasporic revitalization also begs the question of how much, where, and to whom, the language could be spoken, as a goal. The use of Irish in Ontario represents a significant mobilization of resources and engagement with an endangered language, but it does not necessarily conform to intergenerational transmission at this time. This research will attempt to elucidate what this engagement looks like to its practitioners.

Instead of evaluative frameworks that fixate on intergenerational transmission, the Ontario Irish language would benefit more from an in-depth look at "non-traditional" loci of language transmission, such as centres of learning outside of the household (Rinehart 2011), the internet, or preschools (Warschauer 1998), and an analysis of how the ideological terrain makes their engagement with their language meaningful.

In short, I am arguing that a descriptive approach to language revitalization should include groups of L2 learners of an endangered language, because these communities represent an engagement with an endangered language that results in its greater use. Further, these communities are often emergent and unpredictable in their practice, in the sense that the language may indeed become transmitted intergenerationally on a community-wide basis at some point. From the estimates of an individual that is attempting to raise his children in Irish, there are already twelve or thirteen families in North America connected to this community that are making the attempt (Interview with Roibéard, 06-03-2012). Either way, I believe that if a community is engaging in an endangered language variety and speaking it, that it deserves the attention and analytical tools that are made available under the banner of revitalization literature.

Language Ideologies

One of the primary descriptive tools I employ in this study is the concept of "language ideologies". The earliest and one of the most frequently cited definitions of language ideologies is by Michael Silverstein, who defines them as "sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use" (Silverstein 1979, 193). While this definition covers most of what I intend to describe, I also caution that the "articulation" of these ideologies might be much more indirect than this quote implies, in the sense that implicit ideologies may be evidenced by individuals' language use or behaviour. For example, many individuals at Irish language immersion events might agree that they should speak Irish at events, and that it is good to use the language, but they may spend a considerable amount of time speaking English, which is contradictory to their articulated desires. Analysing this

contradiction in detail can reveal commonly held notions about what types of language use are acceptable at immersion events, which can help elucidate what exactly it is that complicates the goal of speaking Irish.

These complications can be elucidated in an ethnographic approach that analyses the real-time behaviours of individuals, and compares them to articulated or institutionalized ideologies that are geared towards an overt support for the Irish language. The ethnographic approach in this study allows for an analysis of how language revitalization happens on the ground, and what dynamics are at play during these events. Thus, the ethnographic approach requires a move beyond the assumptions that are often associated with keywords like "immersion" and "revitalization", towards a close look at how people conduct themselves in settings where the parameters are quite different from their everyday lives. In this study, I attempt to "map" the sites of various language ideologies by looking at the language and discursive choices that individuals make during Irish language immersion events, and by analysing the tools that attendees are using to navigate the heterogeneous ideological landscape that is created when individual and institutional priorities converge. Mapping the heterogeneity of language ideologies will help immersion planners to understand the specific challenges related to this particular immersion effort, and ideally would assist in the creation of contextually appropriate pedagogy.

In addition to outlining where these heterogeneous language ideologies are coming from, I also provide some contextual analysis of their genealogies. Positive language ideologies that favoured the use of Irish paved the way for what is now referred to as the "Gaelic Revival" (O'Leary 2004). The political moment in nineteenth century

Ireland saw a demand for self-government, and the Irish language was seen by Irish

language organizers to be proof of the Irish people's status as a distinct people, with some

of the movement's most famous proponents influenced by the language philosophies and

ideologies of JG Herder, thought that a group's language was an essential feature of their

nationhood (Briggs and Bauman 2000; Ó Laoire 2013, 66). When paired with a severe

drop in the use of Irish in the latter part of the century, Irish became a highly symbolic

and valuable language to many in Ireland and abroad. The events organized at the

Gaeltacht that I describe above are the descendants of events that began during the

original Gaelic Revival in the nineteenth century.

 "Halfie" Anthropology

Another central theoretical tenet of my work is constant reflexivity and a critical

reflection on how I am related to the community with whom I am working. One of the

places in which Irish is learned on a weekly basis – an Irish senior's society that is located

in Toronto, is where the revitalization effort intersects with my personal story. My

Grandmother emigrated from Ireland to Canada in 1948 along with her husband; she

frequented this senior's club on a regular basis, and her pictures line the scrapbook that is

on the far wall as you enter the main room. For a woman who was known for her stern,

steely attitude, it was clear by the smiles on her face in almost every picture that she

enjoyed the time she spent there. I used to visit her there as a child, and as I grew older,

my interest in Irish brought me back from time to time, and into contact with people who

remember her well.

In the sense that I am "from" the community that I am studying, I am a "halfie"

anthropologist, providing insights into my own community, as well as for my own

community. In the words of Lila Abu Lughod (1991), halfie anthropologists are

> . . . called to account by educated members of those communities. More importantly, not just because they position themselves with reference to two communities but because when they present the Other they are presenting themselves, they speak with a complex awareness of, and investment in, reception. Both halfie and feminist anthropologists are forced to confront squarely the politics and ethics of their representation (469).

Abu Lughod notes that not only do halfie anthropologists have interests that are motivated from the academy, they also occupy a position by virtue of their place in their community that lends to a complex analysis that is helped by an intimate understanding of the milieu in which their fieldwork is conducted. Since a young age, I have been exposed to ideological positions on the Irish language, whether it be from stories handed down from my paternal Great Aunts of their parents discussing contemporary political questions in the Irish language around the hearth at the family's home in the early nineteen hundreds, or if it was my maternal Grandmother who would silence a full room at family gatherings by reciting, *verbatim*, early speeches and poems from Douglas Hyde in the Irish language. As a member of the Irish community living in Canada, I am equally motivated by the desire to keep our language living in whatever way that fits our diasporic condition.

Being a part of the Irish community has also caused me to question the way in which I will be describing the activities of our community. Many language revitalization theorists whose work I have found most useful have tended to focus on some of the negative influences on efforts to preserve indigenous languages by isolating and describing some of the negative ideological influences or practices that are at odds with the goals of the revitalization program (King 2000; Meek 2007; 2011; Rinehart 2011). While I believe these approaches to be central to untangling the complicated work of

assessing how groups undertaking language revitalization need to navigate the tough ideological terrain that is so hostile to endangered languages, I feel that it is my duty as a member of the Irish diaspora to focus on existing strategies in our community and maximize their potential through an approach called *asset mapping* (Kramer et. al 2012). Asset mapping frames the realization of any institutional or individual goal as something that can be achieved by maximizing the existing dynamics at play. It also posits that the community already possesses what is needed in order to realize their objectives.

Concretely speaking, I firmly believe that the Irish language community that is centered *Gaeltacht Thuaisceart an Oileán Úir* possesses all of the skills and resources they need in order to return the Irish language to a more prominent place in the Irish diaspora – and have already been doing so before I arrived. In the chapters that follow, I attempt to outline some of the specifics of what is happening at immersion camps. While still making use of some of the analytical concepts above, I do so in a humble attempt to tease out the further success of this movement.

Theorizing Diaspora

Another theoretical concept underlying my research is based in the body of literature concerned with the word *diaspora*. The term comes from Greek, with *dia-* referring to a dispersal, and -*spora* referring to spores, or seeds (Zgusta 2001). The metaphor is useful in helping visualize the movement of ethnic groups: seeds are scattered to the wind, and they take up residence in various terrains. Some find fertile soil, while others have to contend with harsher terrain in order to thrive. The result is a highly diverse set of descendants from the original source point who have adapted contextually to the environment in which they find themselves.

The academic debate that has sought to pin down a definition of what a diaspora is has moved from narrow interpretations that bestow the name onto a few ethnic populations (Safran 1991) to descriptive approaches that focus on the traits of hybridity and heterogeneity. In this study I follow the words of Boyarin and Boyarin (1993), who state that "[d]iasporic cultural identity teaches us that cultures are not pre-served by being protected from "mixing" but probably can only continue to exist as a product of such mixing." (721). This "mixing" is an inevitable part of being in diaspora, and a description of the hybrid and heterogeneous nature of the diaspora will be central to my analysis, because it helps explain the vast diversity in the experiences of the Irish diaspora in relation to its language, as well as the ideological motivations of the enthusiastic Irish language network participants. An anti-essentialist framework that focuses on mixing and heterogeneity also leaves room for individuals who are not ethnically Irish and are attracted to diasporic initiatives, which was an unexpected and significant finding during my fieldwork.

Through the collective activities of remembering in new places, rapid interchanges from homeland to host countries and back, and most importantly, through individuals identifying and affiliating with these networks, members of a diaspora make meaning out of cultural memories and experience in a way that is contested, heterogeneous, unstable, and ever-changing (Hua 2005). Thus, the existence of diasporas is a matter of acts: both creating meaning out of collective memories and experiences, as well as shaping the meanings of these associations in the present. In a paper that describes the place of memory in the diaspora, Anh Hua describes the existence of a diaspora as an action-based process:

> . . .[T]o avoid social amnesia about their collective histories, diasporic people attempt to revive, recreate, and invent their artistic, linguistic, economic, religious, cultural, and political practices and productions. Thus, diasporic culture involves socioeconomic, political, and cultural transnational exchange between the separated populations of the diaspora. (Hua 2005, 193)

"Reviving, recreating, and inventing" together through exchange are the important acts to the existence of diaspora. Although I do not necessarily agree with her perceived motive that explains why people congregate in diasporas, I find the focus useful in the way that it underscores the intersubjective and performative nature of diasporic meaning-making through mobilizing memory.

When individuals or groups mobilize stories that point to a collective history, it is hardly ever a straightforward and uncontested process. Hua points to the ways in which these notions of history and what they mean for the present can be gendered, class divided, and can differ by an individual's positionality in the territorial homeland, their position in their "host" society, as well as how they are exposed to ideological landscapes and perspectives that are mobilized to understand their collective history (Hua 2005, 199-202)[8]. For Irish learners in diaspora, many individuals are drawn towards Irish immersion events because of their investment in cultural discourses that foreground the importance of the Irish language (Sullivan 2010, 2012), which is a very specific interpretation of Irish ethnicity that is not uniformly shared or pursued, especially in the diaspora, as many of its members are not exposed to some of the prominent discourses that promote the language. Thus, attending Irish immersion events offers an opportune moment to discuss these topics with like-minded people.

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[8]   I describe this process in greater detail in chapter 1

The Global Picture

In addition to the statistics on language loss that I describe at the beginning of this study, there is another set of predictions that suggest the likelihood of increased similar diasporic revitalization initiatives in the future. The UN estimates a general increase in urbanization globally, with a 53% increase in urbanization rates for Asia, 20% for Africa, 10% for Latin America, 9% for Europe, and 6% for North America by 2050 (United Nations 2011, 11).

To take Canada as a specific example, statistics that estimate the amount of Canada's First Nations living in cities jumped from a 50% in 1996 to 54% in 2006 (Statistics Canada, 2006a), although only one in four speak a First Nations language as their first language (Patrick 2007). For a country that has estimates of between 50 and 88 endangered languages, some of the revitalization efforts might come from the ever-increasing urban Aboriginal population in the future. This, however, will depend entirely upon the way that communities decide to respond to the significance of both urbanization and language shift. It will be interesting to see if some of the characteristics of the revitalization process for Irish in Canada might be analogous to what happens in other urban or diasporic revitalization efforts, such as a turn away from the "family-neighbourhood-home" complex, the need to travel to gain the cultural and linguistic knowledge that enthusiasts desire, and the need for practitioners to "make space" for what is important to them wherever they find themselves (e.g., Wilson and Peters 2005).

Summary of Chapters

Through studying this effort, I gain insight into the following sets of questions that are relevant to global statistics regarding language loss: What happens when

individuals who have mostly spoken a dominant language their whole lives get together for the purposes of revitalization through immersion? How do people find ways of expressing themselves during immersion settings, and what is it that people find important to say? How do individuals make the Irish language relevant in their lives, when they spend the majority of their daily lives speaking a dominant language?

In pursuit of these considerations, this research is divided into three chapters. The first chapter examines the re-fashioning of historical discourses and titles that have been historically significant to the Irish language revitalization efforts of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Ireland. I examine how these discourses can index powerful histories while simultaneously allowing for flexibility and hybridity that is befitting of the diasporic experience of the community engaged in this effort. Chapter two examines the invocation of an Irish identity or connection, and the role it plays in legitimizing North American born Irish diaspora members' emergent sense of identity, in which the Irish language plays an important role. I also explore the fashion in which these invocations are carried out, and the impact that they have on the institutional prerogative to speak Irish. In chapter three, I examine the heterogeneity in language socialization strategies during immersion events. I also highlight the emergent ways in which Irish immersion attendees are providing language immersion for themselves, and the challenges associated with endangered language immersion, such as the use of metalinguistic learning strategies that are reflective of the language's subordinate status in relation to English. I conclude by discussing how some of the concerns relevant to the Irish language revitalization effort in Ontario might point to a broader set of concerns that are relevant to other revitalization efforts that are taking place in diaspora.

Chapter 1

Communities of Practice, and the Creation of a Diasporic *Gael* [9]Identity

Communities dedicated to endangered languages are often motivated by the symbolic and cultural capital the language affords its speakers, even if the sociolinguistic landscapes they live in feature little of their language (Ahlers 2006, 15; King 2000, 173). For communities seeking to undertake revitalization efforts in diaspora, their endangered language is made relevant to them by means of a perspectival exposure to a mixture of various state, group, and individual ideologies regarding the importance of their language. In order to bolster their efforts, diasporic revitalization initiatives may synchronize the use of key terms and that are historically potent, or are linked to contemporary revitalization efforts in the linguistic homeland.

In this chapter, I discuss the functional utility provided by the synchronized use of key event names such as *Gaeltacht, Oireachtas,* and *Seachtain na Gaeilge*[10] which invoke important histories and values to many who undertake language revitalization in Ireland, and to those in the diaspora over time. Their use serves as a powerful referent to Irish language enthusiasts in Ireland, which thus facilitates the flow of linguistic resources from diaspora to homeland, and suggests a common sense of engagement for those who approve of their use. I also describe how Irish immersion events in Ontario are highly syncretic and hybridized in a way that is reflective of its location in diaspora. Canadian songs are translated into Irish; poetry and short stories are composed in way

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[9]   A *Gael* refers to a Gaelic speaking individual, whether Irish or Scottish.

[10]   These names refer to an Irish speaking district, an Irish language performing arts festival, and a week-long Irish language festival, respectively.

that reflects the experience of the Irish living in Canada. At these events, participants foreground the diasporic *Gael* as one of many options in the expression of an Irish identity abroad. Over time, and due to the success and attention that these events and similar Irish language efforts are receiving, a diasporic identity that emphasizes the Irish language has become a more visible option for members of the Irish diaspora in general.

<div align="center">Synchronicity and the Syncretic Discourses of Traditionalism</div>

In order to understand this dual syncretism and traditionalism that is characteristic of the use of *Gaeltacht, Seachtain na Gaeilge,* and *Oireachtas*, I turn to Appadurai's (1990) discussion of what happens to terms, ideas, and ideologies as they travel, through the concept of ideological landscapes or "ideoscapes". Appadurai uses the suffix *-scape*

> to indicate that these are not objectively given relations which look the same from every angle of vision, but rather that they are deeply perspectival constructs, inflected by historical, linguistic, and political situatedness of different sorts of actors: nations-states, multinationals, diasporic communities, as well as subnational groupings and movements. . . indeed, the individual actor is the last locus of this perspectival set of landscapes, for these landscapes are eventually navigated by agents who both experience and constitute larger formations, in part by their own sense of what these landscapes offer. These landscapes thus, are the building blocks of what, extending Benedict Anderson, I would like to call 'imagined worlds', that is, the multiple worlds which are constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups spread around the globe (1990, 296-297)

For the purposes of this discussion, there are two important points: First, the perspectival nature of one's orientation to ideologies is both the product of many actors, on both micro and macro scales. Second, Appadurai notes that the individual is the "last locus of the perspectival set of landscapes", suggesting that in order to understand how ideologies are circulated and harnessed, we need to scrutinize the role of collective actors at the supra-individual level. This point will be addressed in the next section.

To illustrate the first point, Appadurai analyzes the discourses of the European Enlightenment to describe how ideas take root in contextually contingent ways. The "master-narrative of Enlightenment" has, over time and space, broken down into a "diaspora of keywords", whose internal consistency has been loosened by its travels, and now provides a "loosely structured synopticon of politics" (1990, 298-299), while at the same time requiring a very specific set of contextual conventions when they are mobilized, the details of which depend on the audience's configuration to the ideological landscape being called upon by the use of the terms in question. Appadurai uses the example of the employment of the term "democracy", or "rights" in places with radically different historical trajectories and histories of state formation, which have "organized their political cultures around different "keywords" (1990, 298.) The term "democracy" can be invoked to justify contradictory practices if they are used in places where the political culture has been organized in a highly specific way around what that term means in that location. In most invocations of "democracy" and "rights", however, the terms are concepts that require respect and adherence to its ideals. Thus, Appadurai's visualization of circulating ideologies into "scapes" helps us understand why the re-configuration and contextualizing of imported ideologies, even if they are connected to transnational movements, are a necessary element to their success as they travel and take root elsewhere.

The Diaspora of Keywords

This chapter focuses on three terms that have formed a diaspora of keywords, invoking some of their original meanings while adapting to their new contexts: *Seachtain na Gaeilge, Oireachtas Gaeilge,* and *Gaeltacht*. Each name has a particular trajectory in

Ireland, and each of them has been mobilized in support of Irish learning and speaking initiatives in Ontario, conveying contextually contingent meanings for those who employ them. I discuss each of them in turn below by first providing their historical trajectories and then continuing with a discussion of how they have materialized in Ontario within the last decade.

The Gaeltacht

The origin of the term *Gaeltacht* in its current sense stems from a 1926 legal designation of districts in Ireland that were more than 25 percent Irish-speaking by *Comisiún na Gaeltachta*, a commission which had come into existence in 1921 (Hindley 1991, 66)*.* Over time, a small number of official additions were made to the list of *Gaeltachtaí* in Ireland, including in County Meath, which formed after Irish speakers from the West of Ireland had been relocated and given plots of land in the east (McMonagle 2012, 409). The Meath *Gaeltacht* represents an intergenerationally contiguous body of speakers as well as an officially sanctioned *Gaeltacht*, even though it was not part of the original set of *Gaeltachtaí.* In addition, some communities around the periphery of the existing boundaries became part of the *Gaeltacht* areas in the twentieth century. The term *Gaeltacht* has also become partially deterritorialized on the island of Ireland, with "neo-*Gaeltachtaí*" emerging in West Belfast, in Dublin, and Clare Island, although none of these have been officially bestowed *Gaeltacht* status.

Since the formation of the *Gaeltacht* boundaries, the areas that were legally designated as such have served as a symbolic, legally delineated space that contains a wealth of cultural and linguistic treasure, which has been safeguarded for the entire Irish nation by those who call the area home (Lele 2009, 106; Ó Giolláin 2000, 3). These

romanticized notions are also discussed by Thomas Sullivan when he describes his

experience in the *Gaeltacht,* in which he spent time discussing with fellow travelers how

a quiet local pub on *Inis Mór*, (which is a *Gaeltacht* island) fulfilled "the romanticized

notions [he] had of western Ireland, quiet and local, with nothing but Irish spoken"

(Sullivan 2010, 24-25). Whether or not these notions correspond to a veritable

sociolinguistic reality is another question altogether. Either way, these romanticized

notions of the *Gaeltacht* are still strong in the minds of many, regardless of whether or

not they have a high proportion of native Irish speakers within their boundaries.

These geographical areas are marked in a number of ways, principally the

changing of road signs from primarily English to Irish only. While there is no longer any

strong correlation between the exclusive use of Irish and the delineation of these

boundaries, the geographical designation has long held a potent position within the

national imaginary (Quigley 2010, 383), aided by widely consumed state-sponsored

national broadcasting in radio, television, and online formats that often feature people

from the *Gaeltacht* areas singing, dancing, or speaking in Irish (Hale 2001, 299).

Thus, to establish a *Gaeltacht* in Canada has meant that the highly symbolic

and meaningful associations of the *Gaeltacht* are potentially at the service of the

Canadian diasporic effort. For someone acquainted with *Gaeltacht Thuaisceart an

Oileáin Úir,* the *Gaeltacht* can refer to either a place in Ireland, or it can refer to a

gathering point for Irish language speakers and learners in the Ontario region. In

contrast to the Irish equivalent, the Canadian *Gaeltacht* is a meeting place for a

community in a diaspora that is truly dispersed, whose members no longer live in

ethnic neighbourhoods and therefore needs a dedicated space set aside to meet for

singing, dancing, and playing music (McMonagle 2012a ,412). One is populated; the other is not. One is in Ireland; the other is not. Both, however, can be expected to contain Irish speakers, suggesting a common master-term within which a multitude of overlapping experiences can be described. In contrast to the Irish *Gaeltacht,* the Canadian equivalent does not have a permanent community living inside its boundaries. This is natural, considering the truly dispersed nature of the Irish diaspora in Canada. Thus, both employments of the term imply a place where the language is spoken, although there are clear differences in how the physical landscape is inhabited. Thus, instead of an inhabited area that is seen as the historical keeper of Irish culture, the Canadian *Gaeltacht* is a co-constructed space that individuals need to travel to in order to imbue it with this type of significance.

Oireachtas

The *Oireachtas* has a similar prominence in the life of Irish speakers in Ireland interested in arts performed in the language. Starting in 1897 at the height of the original Gaelic Revival, it has been a focal point for the performing arts through the Irish language. It has served as a venue to showcase talents through the medium of Irish, and has held annual competitions every year since its foundation, except for a brief hiatus in the 1920s and 30s while the newly independent Irish State went through its turbulent formation. Especially during the early stages of the Gaelic Revival, it was one of the only venues that provided prestige and attention to the then-waning cultural performance in Irish, and thus was instrumental in preserving their importance in Ireland at that time. One of the judges for the Canadian *Oireachtas*, a woman from an Irish *Gaeltacht*, remarked to the Canadian organizers that at a certain time, this was one of the only

cultural institutions that afforded prestige to the ways that Irish speakers sang and danced

(Fieldnotes, 07-06-2012). The *Oireachtas* was instrumental in bringing the traditional

ways of singing and dancing called *sean-nós* (literally, old style) to the fore in the

twentieth century, and was the principal institution to develop and codify rules for

competitions (Ó Laoire 2013). For those who are familiar with the *Oireachtas*, it carries

an immensely important history in the preservation of Irish speaking performing arts.

 At the second annual Canadian *Oireachtas* in 2012, similar syncretic forces

were at play, that simulatenously invoked a sense of importance and tradition for

the event, while featuring contextually relevant performances. There was a

significant presence of cultural performances that also had both local roots and

were distinctively "Irish" – Canadian born dancers brought the "Ottawa Valley Step

Dancing" style, which is related to the *sean-nós* tradition and has survived in

Canada as a distinct style of the dance, which is still known for both its wide

repertoire and for its successful transmission from generation to generation in the

area (discussed in Trew 2009, 146-152). Thus, *sean-nós* refers to both the dancing

styles that are known in Ireland, as well as to similar styles that are distinct to the

Ottawa Valley region, once again providing a range of definitions that can be

invoked under the use of the term.

 The *Oireachtas* is also the site of more current innovations that suggest

broadening of the use of the language by some speakers to encompass verbal and

written performing arts using Irish. Because the festival showcases both traditional

performance arts as well as current talent, there were also performance pieces that

were made with the *Oireachtas* in mind. My personal favourite was a creative Irish

translation of a song about the tall-tale exploits of an Ottawa Valley lumberjack, composed by Canadian music icon Stompin' Tom Connors, called "Big Joe Mufferaw", done to the style of a *liubín* – which is a musical conversational dialogue, which is usually of comedic content. One of the festival's organizers, alongside an attendee from the United States performed the *liubín* by breaking the lyrics into segments and alternating who sang it, modifying the lyrics to include Irish references. It was Canadian song, modified to fit a traditional Irish genre.

A second example of this expansion of cultural production which reflects the context in which the language is being used is that of a recently produced full-length Irish language novel named *Na Donnalaigh Duabha* (the Black Donnellys) that was used as a script for a play at the *Oireachtas* on the opening night of the festival. The full-length novel chronicles the true story of a family that emigrated from Ireland to Lucan, Ontario, and who were murdered by a gang of local men in an attempt to maintain control over transit services linking Lucan to London, the nearest city. None of the men responsible for the murders were ever convicted. The story is both a reference to a particular point in Canadian history that was relatively difficult for Irish migrants, as well as a significant "re-telling" of an event that has been taboo to discuss in the Lucan area until very recently. The full-length novel is a significant marker in the canon of Irish language cultural production, which features Canada as the primary setting. For the purposes of this discussion, it is important to note that much of the content at the *Oireachtas* dealt with the Canadian landscape, while still adhering to the principles of traditionalism and performance in the Irish language. In this sense, the venue also fulfills its original

aim, which is to spur the production of materials in the Irish language for the

purposes of performance and showcasing them at the events.

Seachtain na Gaeilge (SnaG)

Last, *Seachtain na Gaeilge* (week of Irish, henceforth SnaG) refers to an

organized effort to use the Irish language for a week that started in 1902 by the Gaelic

League in Ireland (Seachtain na Gaeilge 2013). Currently, SnaG is a non-profit

organization that runs a two-week long festival in rotating parts of Ireland, and it also

encourages institutions to organize events under its banner, as well as to register any local

initiatives taking place in and around the time with the organization. The festival runs

throughout the entire month of March of every year and it features a large range of

activities that are conducted through Irish, some of which is classroom learning, but is

mainly geared towards participants' enjoyment of using the language. Currently it is one

of many large-scale efforts in Ireland that are dedicated to language revitalization through

the use of spoken Irish that enjoys high levels of visibility and participation. Events take

place in many parts of the world, including in North America and in the United Kingdom.

SnaG in Canada, which started in 2004 by a dedicated group of individuals mostly from

Kingston and Ottawa, Ontario, has been able to benefit from the use of promotional

materials, such as stickers, pamphlets, and other related resources due to the use of the

same name.

Communities of Practice as a Site of Ideological Heterogeneity

Returning to Appadurai's second point that I outlined above – that the individual

is in a sense, the last "locus of a perspectival set of landscapes", I now turn to concepts of

collective action and agentive choice. Irish speakers and learners in North America were able to operationalize historic discourses by forming a community of practice. Communities of practice are defined as "a collection of people who engage on an ongoing basis in some common endeavour. . . emerging in response to common interest or position, and play an important role in forming their members' participation in, and orientation to, the world around them" (Eckert 2006, 1). Over time, a community of practice "provides opportunities for joint-sense making, and it deepens participants' shared knowledge and sense of predictability" (Eckert 2006, 2). The activities of the community of practice solidify into concrete belief structures, ideologies, and networks, and the concept is a useful way to understand how organizations and institutions can form in a seemingly spontaneous manner.

This, however, doesn't suggest that each member thinks the same way about their participation – communities of practice are often syncretic enough for symbolic acts to speak to their participants in a variety of ways, so long as a relative degree of interest or uniformity around the central symbols are maintained. Eckert illustrates this point in one of her studies by explaining that a group of youths whose community of practice formed around an imagery of a skull and crossbones were concerned with images of death – except for one, who thought that it had to do with pirates (2000, 38-39). The skull and crossbones symbol was a sign of group membership in this case, a group which did not require an explicit and shared understanding of what it signified. Rather, adhering to *wearing* the symbol itself was enough to claim membership. Here, the "synopticon of politics" is relevant on yet another level – communities of practice are formed by individuals who have diverse perspectives and positions vis-à-vis the ideological

landscape that pertains to that which draws them together. In most cases, the elements that are most important to cohesion tend not to emphasize potentially contradictory or contentious views. However, there are moments, such as the one described above, where this heterogeneity becomes explicit.

An example that illustrates this point took place one Friday evening during the 2012 SnaG. The camp had finished eating dinner, and as per the custom of the camp, we had all gathered in order to take part in a central activity as the evening drew to a close. We had just finished a re-enactment of an Irish wake, an interactive play that had the whole group laughing. One of the organizers started talking to the group about the place of the language and how it "was not a hobby" for the group, and that it meant something much more. A friend and interviewee who I had spent considerable time with asked if I wanted to sneak out and visit the Salmon River bank to relax and take some time away. I agreed. As we were walking, she confided that she was in a state of disagreement with what the organizer had just said. She said "no, it *is* a hobby for me", and proceeded to explain exactly why that was (Fieldnotes, 08-28-2012). Explicit ideological clashes of this type, however, are very rare at events like SnaG. The reason is that an explicit push for ideological unity doesn't usually take place on such a level. Instead, a respect for the priorities of the community of practice – speaking Irish, participating in the performing arts to the best of your ability and knowledge, and to work together to continue to grow the community is enough to participate, although these topics do feature prominently at immersion events (which I explore in the next chapter). The space is ideologically heterogeneous enough for this to rarely come up as a conflicting set of perspectives, and this same individual can play traditional Irish instruments as a hobby at the event, while

invoking others' sense of how the instrument is deeply connected to their ethnic identity without any active conflict stemming from these radically different ideas of its significance.

Thus, while the use of Irish, and the historical event names I describe above could signal a preferred form of ethnicity for North American born individuals in diaspora and an Irish born person living in Ireland alike, what this means in relation to their respective societies can be very different – for the diasporic subject, they may find ways of explaining what they do in relation to the discourses of multiculturalism or localized language ideologies. At one Irish immersion event, I interviewed Marcas from the Maritimes. When I asked him why he was learning Irish, he replied: "My Mom's Acadian and so is my Dad, but I have one line of Irish. So My Dad's Dad's Dad. . . But growing up Acadian, and it is the same thing for French Canadians, you realize how important language is for your culture" (Interview with Marcas, 06-02-202). This individual explicitly mentioned that his reason for being there intersects with language ideologies that circulate in Acadian and French Canadian societies, but its expression can be congruent with that of others at the event.

An Irish-born individual might find congruence with state ideologies that promote the use of the language. Some attendees, who have spent the majority of their lives in Ireland with an intimate understanding of what these terms connote there, sit with the likes of a fifth-generation French-Canadian with an Irish surname that is motivated by a Canadian sense of identity politics which embraces multiculturalism and linguistic nationalism. At surface level, the discourses are very similar, but they come from very different places. Irish language events are places where these similarities are bridged and

discussed, and over time, collective discourses begin to take shape that are locally

relevant. These individuals are also joined by others, such as the one for whom it was a

hobby. Thus, the diaspora of keywords of the Irish language revitalization network – in

Canada or in Ireland - are syncretic in nature. They invoke a diverse set of values under

the same terminologies, while for the most part allowing for widely varying reasons for

the learning of Irish to co-exist unproblematically at the same event.

<p align="center">Collaboration and Consecration</p>

The use of the keywords I describe above also facilitated co-operation between

the diaspora's efforts and those geared towards preserving Irish in Ireland. This has

resulted in the validation of the invocation of these terms, as well as provided material

and linguistic resources in order to bolster its success. The establishment of the *Gaeltacht*

was attended by the Irish Minister for Gaeltacht Affairs, Éamon Ó Cuív in 2007, who

officially designated the site as a *Gaeltacht*, thus conferring a certain degree of legitimacy

to the project that has been historically important for revitalization initiatives in Ireland.

The Irish government also provided a road sign that, in Ireland, is used to mark the

boundary between Irish-speaking Ireland and the "rest". This sign provokes powerful

associations in the imaginary of those familiar with their use in Ireland, as it marks the

liminal point in the entrance into an area that has been consecrated as Irish speaking. In

terms of particular connections, the Canadian *Gaeltacht* and a *Gaeltacht* in County Mayo

in the West of Ireland have built some strong connections over the past five years, as

well, with a significant flow of people going back and forth every year.

Similarly, those responsible for the administration and judging of performances at

the Irish *Oireachtas Gaeilge* regularly attend the Canadian *Oireachtas*. They judge

competitions, participate in the general festivities, and offer extremely important words of encouragement to organizers, competitors, fluent speakers, and beginners alike. Similar arrangements exist for SnaG, such as the use of promotional materials and stickers from the parent event in Ireland and the participation of fluent teachers from Ireland, although there is an increasing number of skilled Canadian-born teachers who are filling this role.

The connections described above, as well as the work of the Ontario organizers have resulted in the gradual growth in prominence of the efforts in Canada, by way of publicity and regular announcements being made in other cultural intuitions and publications the Irish diaspora make use of in Ontario. A recent event that reflects this prominence is the bestowal of the *Global Gaeilge* award three times in a row to Canadian Irish language organizers in recognition for the quality of engagement with the Irish language outside of Ireland. This award is given by the principal Irish language body in Ireland, *Foras na Gaeilge*, and is prestigious in the Irish-speaking world. The Ontario network's efforts also have been receiving enough attention to draw in native and fluent speakers who have recently emigrated from Ireland and have them teach classes. The discourses are successful and speak to enough people to establish a viable community of practice and to draw individuals in who have recently immigrated to Canada from Ireland.

<div align="center">Discussion</div>

The question of collaboration between diaspora and homeland may be informed in part by who lays claim to traditional discourses, events, and images. Irish language learning efforts by the diaspora have been characterized, both in the past and in recent events, by collaboration between the linguistic homeland of the language and those living

abroad. Revitalization efforts that do not have such a degree of collaboration between diaspora and homeland would either have to rely on constant immigration to stymie the loss of native speakers or to maintain intergenerational transmission of the language[11]. Alternatively, pedagogical resources could become the locus of transmission and acquisition, as is the case for severely threatened languages. Regardless of the approach taken, the flow of linguistic and other resources from diaspora to homeland and *vice versa* makes the finite resources of an endangered language increasingly mobile. This suggests that there is some importance in attending to the details of how such co-operation might be fostered and maintained.

Within the diaspora itself, the re-fashioning of these historic event names that are described above is largely supported. However, it is not completely without contention. McMonagle (2012, 419) noted that amongst survey participants in the Irish diaspora who were asked "what are your opinions on the establishment of a Gaeltacht in Canada", 63% answered positive, 22.9% tentative, 7.6% negative, and 5.9% didn't respond. Similarly, there is some criticism that because the community engaged in this endeavor is primarily urban-based, the efforts should be concentrated in an urban place, instead of rural areas that are difficult to access for some (Fieldnotes, 06-20-2012).

On a cross-institutional level, there was some discussion at an organizing meeting for the *Oireachtas* about whether or not using that term to describe the Irish diaspora's cultural activities was an appropriate endeavour. At least one judge, a native Irish speaker, had some apprehensions about using the term *Oireachtas* because it was

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[11]   As an aside, the transfer of linguistic and cultural knowledge is not a one-way journey from homeland to diaspora, however. As mentioned previously, a canon of songs, pedagogical, and other resources are slowly building in diaspora as a result of the increased interest and acquisition of the language. These songs and stories can be enjoyed by those living in the linguistic homeland, as well.

"sacred" and it was "all they had" at one point, meaning that there was little else that afforded Irish speakers prestige for their cultural activities, and therefore might only be appropriate for the institution in Ireland, although it was made clear that this was the opinion of an individual that was otherwise supportive of the endeavour (Fieldnotes 07-06-2012). Similarly, some individuals who are not well-acquainted with the language movement in Canada have asked me how many people live at the *Gaeltacht*, implying the expectation that, as in Ireland, the *Gaeltachtaí* are permanently inhabited year round.

These positions imply an emphasis on the original contexts in which the terms had been fashioned, carried by a desire to hallow their genesis by not applying the terms in other situations. This criticism is not without merit, and it deserves attention as well as acknowledgment, although here I simply want to point out that if a certain group lays claim to a traditional discourse, practice, event, or language, trouble may arise out of the attempts by a community of practice in a diaspora to do the same, and it could lead to mutually exclusive efforts to revitalize a language. The consequence could be that linguistic resources are not shared between groups to the extent that they could be, and points to the need for ideological clarification (a concept discussed in Daunhauer and Dauenhauer 1998, 62) between parallel efforts, although this is not an easy feat to achieve, considering the heterogeneity in attendees' understanding of why they are there.

In this case however, the use of *Gaeltacht, Oireachtas,* and SnaG all enjoy enough support in the diaspora to maintain a community of speakers, and from the linguistic homeland to supply teachers, judges, financial resources, attention, and awards. The existence of a counter-narrative or concerns about the use of certain terminologies however points to a tension that is relevant to all diasporic revitalization efforts.

Conclusion

The community of practice that runs and attends the events at *Gaeltacht Thuaisceart an Oileáin Úir* exemplifies how powerful discourses can be channeled for the purposes of revitalization away from the linguistic heartland of a language. The community of practice has come together by seizing historically relevant discourses and event names, which invoke values for those familiar with them while at the same synchronizing the terminologies that the disaporic community of practice uses to describe what they are doing. Over time, this has provided individuals in the Irish diaspora with an option to become an L2 Irish speaker or learner that uses the same key-terms as their counterparts in the homeland, which allows for the foregrounding in the diasporic *Gael* as a possible identity for Irish people in diaspora.

The diaspora's use of these terms show that highly significant terms can be re-fashioned away from their original contexts, while still providing a reference to important historical discourses and values. It also shows that individuals can engage meaningfully with these discourses and keywords with vastly divergent notions of what they mean.

If agency is the socioculturally mediated capacity to act (Ahearn 2001), then the Irish diaspora has been cultivating the option to speak Irish for individuals in diaspora through this community of practice, as becoming a member of the community is simultaneously an act of creating the community itself. The re-establishment of a vibrant community of practice amongst the diaspora serves as an example of how community organization around the goal of reviving the use of a language can help to re-define what it means to be a member of an ethnic community living away from its original homeland, even if speakers are scarce, relative to the ethnic population.

Chapter 2

Invoking Irishness: Language Ideologies and Claiming a Gaelic Identity

This chapter examines the sites of language ideologies that circulate in Irish immersion events in order to locate how, and by whom, the institutional prerogative to speak Irish is affected. Each of the events I attended in 2012 had either an explicit written reference to Irish being the language of immersion, or an announcement at the beginning that laid out the expectation to speak the language. For example, a phrase that is included on many of the Irish immersion event pamphlets in Ontario states that "the only requirement is a desire to learn and a willingness to speak Irish at all times to the best of one's ability". Despite this guideline, individuals are sometimes drawn to speaking English, especially when discussing their Irish heritage. This chapter raises the question of how individuals can engage in collective meaning-making through the invocation of their stories that connect them, while abiding by the institutional prerogative to speak Irish, even when Irish immersion events often contain large numbers of intermediate and new speakers that are not yet able to share their stories in the target language.

Some of the more common definitions of language ideology are used in reference to discursively articulated thoughts about language that affect language use (such as Silverstein 1979, 193; see Woolard and Schieffelin 1994 for a detailed discussion). While this is useful to categorize the requirement that was stated by camp organizers to use as much Irish as possible as an explicitly stated language ideology, I also investigate language choices, code-switching, and adjacency pairs that are ratified by interlocutors during conversations at immersion events that point to the acceptability of the use of English, as opposed to discursively expressed ideas about how language should be used.

Here I follow Mertz' (1989) description of language ideology as an interpretive filter that directs interactions with languages in ways that correlate to their ideological influences.

In order to underscore the heterogeneity of language ideologies that are influencing participants' language choices, I analyze the strategies that attendees use to discuss a set of topics that are concerned with various aspects of an Irish identity, because it is one of the most common subjects of conversation at all immersion events I attended, and it comes from diverse actors – beginners, fluent speakers, and camp organizers all engage in this type of talk.

Engaging in talk about one's Irish ethnicity takes diverse forms at immersion events, whether through recounting the name and birthplace of an Irish ancestor, a townland[12], or a narrative of arrival. It is a highly productive discursive act, which fulfils multiple functions: it allows for attendees to learn about each other by comparing stories of origin while contributing to the emergent group discourses that are reflective of their experiences and the value they place in the Irish language. It also serves as a tacit explanation for one's presence at events, and as a major gateway through which discussions of the Irish language and culture are expressed, re-enforced, and validated. Sullivan also describes this process as one of repairing, or mending a dislocation caused by being in diaspora (2010, 186-188), which helps explain its diversity of forms but also its importance to the identity of the group. It can also be described as a process of recontextualization (cf. Briggs and Bauman 1990) of important narratives of origin, which are then imbued with meaning within the collective. In many of the interviews I conducted and general conversations I have had throughout my fieldwork, questions that

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[12]   Townlands are rural place names that are used for navigation and are the smallest administrative unit in Ireland.

interrogated the reason the interviewee was learning the language would often trigger an explanation of family ancestry, signalling a strong explanatory function. This was also noted by Sullivan (2012, 3). At one event he attended in the United States, he noted that "nearly everyone had a notion that they possessed an Irish ancestry – a genetic link – and they felt that the language was the ultimate symbol of what constituted for them an 'authentic' and 'traditional Irish ancestry'" (2012, 3).

Speech Genres

In this section, I will describe a theoretical approach that allows for an understanding of how the same content – invoking an Irish identity – can take multiple forms. The term *genre* can be used as a classificatory tool that helps to systematize this diversity by accounting for variation in form. In other words, talking about one's Irish ethnicity at these events takes a range of forms, or genres, but they are all concerned with the same subject matter. This method of analysis ultimately derives from the innovations on speech act theory, and namely M.M Bakhtin's ([1909] 2006) analysis of how speech is organized into genres, which orients the speaker to producing utterances in particular fashions, while at the same time orienting interlocutors to receiving utterances in particular sets of ways. Thus, I may talk about my family history in the form of a narrative, song, or through references to particular places. The common thread, however, is that I am still talking about my family history.

 These genres are not rigid however, as there is an amount of agency involved in their manipulation. Thus, the concept of genre is also useful for its ability to provide an understanding of interplay between structural determination and innovation. Bakhtin notes that in what he calls particular "spheres" of communication, there are "relatively

stable types" of utterances (98). In other words, the concept of genre can account for both the innovative and conventional. Briggs and Bauman (1994) note the classificatory potential of using the term genre, but they also point to its capacity to organize discourse in conversation, while providing room for flexibility and speaker innovation: "The invocation of genre thus provides a textual model for creating cohesion and coherence, for producing and interpreting particular sorts of features and their formal and functional relations all the way from particular poetic lines to the global structure of the narrative" (1994, 17). In terms of its organizational potential in verbal interaction, genre provides a structure as well as a means for the interlocutor to parse, make sense of, and respond to the speaker. It provides the interlocutor a sense of how to interpret, respond to, and interact with what is being said. These genres, according to Briggs and Bauman (1992) carry indexical connections which can be related to political economies, ideological and social connections, as well as ethnicity (17-18), a connection that I wish to make between the diversity of genres that are employed to invoke an Irish identity and the political economy that it is connected to at these events.

While I will attempt to elaborate on some of the commonalities across some of the diverse ways in which people invoke their Irishness, I do not wish to over-emphasize the value of *a priori* classification, the shortfalls of which are noted by Briggs and Bauman (1994, 164). Rather, the concern of this chapter is the relative prominence of this type of invocation in Irish immersion across a wide variety of genres, which marks it as important. Further, I explore the impact that they bear on the institutional goals of immersion.

The Ethnographic Examples

Diereadh Seachtaine Lán-Gaeilge Keswick, June 2012

Diereadh Seachtaine Lán-Gaeilge (Weekend of "full of Irish") took place in

Keswick, at the beginning of June 2012 on the shores of Lake Simcoe. It was organized

by a Toronto-based Irish language organization called *Ciorcail Chomrá Thoronto*

(Conversation Circle, Toronto), at an idyllic, early twentieth century convent that is now

used as a retreat for Catholic Church clergy. All events that weekend took place in one

large central building, including language classes, workshops, late-night music sessions,

and meals. Individuals travelled from various places in Ontario and the United States in

order to both attend and teach classes, of which there were three levels:

bunleibhéal,(beginner), *meánleibhéal*, (intermediate), and *ardleibhéal* (advanced).

Throughout the weekend, attendance ranged from thirty-five to fifty people, with the

advanced class having an average of eight, the middle class an average of eight, and the

beginner's class having an average of twelve, and the rest helping to organize or engaging

in other activities outside of the classroom, such as cooking, intake of new arrivals, music

and workshop organizing. During an interview at the end of the event, a teacher for the

advanced class estimated that there were three people whose abilities in Irish allowed for

a general conversational ability in his class, although there were at least three other fluent

speakers helping with event organizing that could not attend the classes, bringing the

rough estimate for fluent attendees to at least six out of an approximate fifty attendees.

There were also a large proportion of self-identified intermediate speakers at the event.

The first example I provide below [13] is from my first significant interaction at the

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[13]   All participant names in this study have been anonymized.

immersion weekend in Keswick, which took place immediately after I put down my belongings in the room I would be staying in. It occurred with a fluent speaker whom I had not met in earnest prior to this event. The excerpt below is a description based from my field notes (from 06-01-2012)[14]

> As soon as I finished unpacking in the sun room upstairs, I walked down the old creaky stairs and into the dining area where the first few that have showed up were congregating. I said *Día dhuit,* (hello) to a man I had met once previously, who had travelled from the United States to attend the weekend. I could tell by virtue of his accent that he was from the area in which my Grandmother was born in the West of Ireland. I turn and ask him, "*An bhfuil aithne agat Ballygar, nó Creevroe, I nGallimh?"* (Do you know where Ballygar or Creevroe is, in Galway?) He thought for a second, "*Ballygar, Ballygar... Hm..."* He didn't know off the top of his head, so we continued a short exchange of name places and local markers to hone in on the location. Eventually I produced my mobile phone and brought the location up on a map. "*Seo Ballygar. Tá sé in aice leis Ros Comáin*" (here's Ballygar. It's close to Roscommon). Feeling like I had exhausted my repertoire in relation to the subject at hand, I decided to finish the conversation and walk away, despite my wanting to continue conversing about a great number of topics. I wanted to talk about my relatives who live there, and what they are like. I wanted to talk about how the road had not yet been paved in the nearby area that my mother's Aunt and Uncle live when I had last visited, but my conversation was completely limited to the basics. We did have conversations about these topics later, but in English, when peoples' efforts regarding the stringent use of Irish had begun to wane, and when we wanted to socialize free from the constraints of using Irish.

This exchange can be categorized as what I will call "stranger talk", defined by Clifford (1997, 22) as "specific kinds of discourse used with outsiders", although I choose to describe exactly the inverse, whereby the interlocutor and I are exchanging a set of information that was an important part of "placing" each other, in relation to our geographical orientations in Ireland. I knew he was from the West of Ireland, and I knew that my Grandmother was, as well. The question was, did he know where she was from, and did I have knowledge of where he was from?

This genre that I am calling "stranger talk" is a process of trying to find commonalities are an important part of talk between strangers, but it takes on additional

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[14] This excerpt is an elaboration of my field notes that I wrote after the event was over. Some portions of my field notes for these immersion events needed to be brief because of the intensive schedules of the events, which were modeled on "total immersion", all day long. As a result, I often completed recollections of important events on the train when I was returning to my home.

important dimensions in this setting. We both established that he is from a place in Ireland that my family is close to, and I was immediately able to tell by virtue of his accent. The first thing that I felt I needed to do was to set up a common understanding that we were both connected to that area in some sort of way, which would aid in building some sort of affinity for each other. It would also open the door to future conversations about the area, if either of us had wished to pursue topics about it.

Stranger talk at immersion events can open the door to what I referred to earlier as diasporic meaning-making, which can aid in the building of general Irish language knowledge. When asking him, *"An bhfuil aithne agat ar Creevroe"*, (do you know where Creevroe is?) I was using the anglicised equivalent of the Irish language place name, *Craoibh Rúadh,* which means red bush. I also used the anglicised variant of the nearby town, which is Ballygar. Ballygar has a number of competing translations, the most common of the two being *Béal Athá Gártha* (meaning mouth of the ford of the shouting), and *Bhaile Gharr* (short village) (Galway County Library, 2013). If the interlocutor's knowledge of the area extended to the knowledge of the Irish language place names, he would have been able to provide me with the appropriate original equivalents, which would have been an exercise in "meaning making", and reconciling my fragmentary understanding of my family's origins with the knowledge contained by someone else. Otherwise, I have been confined to archival research to figure out what exactly the original names of these Irish places were, leaving me with a deterritorialized and somewhat alienated form of knowledge that derives from archival research, and not commonly (or uncommonly) held knowledge stemming from inhabitants who live there. Exchanging information about where my family was from presented me with an

opportunity to shape my understanding of the locality into one that was enhanced by another perspective of someone who lived nearby.

In this case, however, I cut the conversation short. Having just arrived, I was enthusiastic in my desire to speak Irish, and I was ready to jump into the event using all the Irish I had. However, neither the interlocutor nor myself attempted to extend the conversation by using some type of meta-linguistic strategy that would have helped me as a non-fluent speaker continue on to another range of topics that may have been outside of my ability. I was faced with a choice to either continue talking about the shared knowledge of the area in Irish (with varying results); try to do so in English, and continue to express myself freely; change the subject and continue on in Irish, but with a simpler subject matter; or walk away. In the end, I chose to complete the exchange as best I could in the Irish language, and then terminate the conversation as my effort to speak in Irish while continuing on with the theme was in severe jeopardy. Here, we see that if non-fluent speakers reach a gap in their knowledge and they are not ready to use strategies to overcome it, they are left with few options other than to switch to English or to terminate the conversation.

Another example of individuals discussing minute geographical details as a form of stranger talk took place while sitting at the breakfast table at the immersion event in Keswick. I found myself sitting in between two sets of conversations as I stared out onto the lake, somewhat deep in thought and still trying to fully awaken. To my left, there were two individuals who were from Dublin, one of whom was a beginner and the other who as an advanced speaker. To my right, there were two fluent speakers who were from the West of Ireland, in adjacent counties, which are one of the principal geographical

units in the country. I was sitting in the middle. Both sets of individuals were talking

about local roads that they were both familiar with, at opposite sides of the table, and in

English (Fieldnotes, 06-02-2012). One Dubliner was explaining to the other just where

exactly in the city he was born. The exercise was one of orienting someone's story of

origin to their geographical knowledge of the city, in order to place them meaningfully.

For those to my right, one individual who had been living in the United States for some

years had been discussing the difference in quality of the roads between the time that he

left, and the time of his last visit, naming particular roads that were close to the largest

town in the region. Functionally speaking, the individual with a more recent knowledge

of the roads was filling the interlocutor in as to their current state. Both conversations

were occurring in English, with bits of Irish used sporadically on both sides. Similar to

my conversation with Roibéard above, anglicised placenames were used, especially with

the Dublin pair. I cannot necessarily speculate on why the English language was being

used, especially for the two fluent speakers. However, two points are of note. One, the

same exchange was occurring between the two sets of conversations and the one I had

previously. Second, the two sets of conversations I just described were occurring in

English in the main area, both by fluent and non-fluent speakers of the language. This

would indicate there is a language ideology underlying the use of English at immersion

events whereby participants deem it permissible, under some circumstances, even if the

discussants are fluent speakers.

   This process of collective meaning-making took a diversity of forms in Keswick.

While walking around the event, in between my first and second interviews, I could

overhear a man who lives in the Toronto area engaging in a narrative that weighed the

relevance of certain dishes his family habitually cooked against those of a set of interlocutors, who in turn contextualized his narrative and framed it according to their experience as both persons born in Ireland and those (like the speaker) who were of Irish descent. The man was discussing how his mother, who was from Ireland, would boil almost everything they ate. This was a common experience that was a source of mutual contextualization and bonding. Indeed, there are narratives regarding methods of cooking that are now seen as tasteless even in my own family, that are linked to group narratives of rural impoverishment of the West of Ireland during the early and mid-twentieth century. This topic was pursued at great interest and at great lengths, and the particular conversation I mentioned was conducted entirely in the English language, by beginners. I would guess that based on my perception of the man's fluency who was telling the story that it would have been difficult for him to share this meaningful information in Irish, and to have it understood by his interlocutors, although I cannot say for sure.

These examples above show two genres that are based on the exchange of information. One is stranger talk which consists of adjacency pairs and which opens the door to more detailed conversations about shared topics of interest, exemplified in my conversation with Roibéard and the two sets of conversations occurring at the breakfast table. The second is that of narrative, evidenced by the story told about food. Both demonstrate that discussions take place at Irish immersion events, whether in English or Irish that are instrumental to both individual and group identity formation. Individuals prioritize making a meaningful connection over trying to use the Irish language in some situations where the language compromises their ability to engage in this topic. There are a number of factors that may influence an attendee's language choice, including

interlocutor proficiency, the ability to translate names and concepts, as well as a number of other of factors, but underlying all of this is a suggestion that at certain times, attendees produce, and ratify English-language conversations.

Gaeltacht Diereadh Seachtaine, *Kingston – April 2012*

I now turn to another immersion event in order to demonstrate the breadth of what I am attempting to describe. The April language immersion weekend in Kingston was the first immersion weekend which kicked off a whole series of immersion and cultural events all across the province and country. I conducted five interviews at this event, four of which were recorded, and all except one was conducted at least partially in Irish. Conversation with Máire

At the end of the first night, I sat down in a hallway beside the ongoing *céilí* (dance event) for an interview with a woman who grew up in the same area as my Grandfather. It turned out that she had known many now-deceased members of my family, which was of great interest to me. We began the conversation in Irish, but the attempt to speak in Irish only lasted as far as the description of my research, which was not something I was able to do with any ease. After fumbling around with words like *agallamh* (interview), and *taidghe* (research), trying to fit them into sentences, she asked me, "Can't we just do it in English"? We certainly could, and did. I surmise that this request to speak English points to a possible discomfort or dissatisfaction at the idea of continuing in a manner that belaboured the conversation, as well as a possible permissiveness to speak English for the purposes of my research.

Once we had cleared the question of using Irish out of the way, we began discussing what was really important to me. She recalled that her father often talked

about my family and what they were doing, when she was a young girl. We continued the conversation, at a more rapid and easier rate, in English. We talked about how her father knew my great-great uncle. We talked about the demographics of the area in which she and my Grandfather grew up, and what life was like at that time. We talked about certain topics that would evade a meaningful conversation for me if we had attempted to speak Irish, and I would not have understood to the same degree of depth what she was telling me if we had been speaking Irish. I was so greatly interested in her perspective on both the general area and people in my family with whom I had no familiarity that the prerogative to speak Irish was far from my mind at the time. Trying to obtain this valuable information in Irish would have made the type of meaning I was trying to extract from the conversation prohibitive. This type of information concerning long dead family members of mine is extremely scarce and held by only a select few, and I was determined to get as much of it as I could, as I could not bear the idea of finishing the conversation without having gleaned as much information as possible about long-gone members of my family. Once again, this example shows that for me, the priority to share and glean information about my family was paramount, and the institutional prerogative was minimized at this time. So far, I have described a confluence of priorities at immersion events, some of prompt the use of English, which at the end results in a negative impact on the institutional prerogative of speaking Irish.

Fluent Speaker Strategies

Now I will contrast the above examples with strategies that helped maintain the use of Irish when exchanging details about family origin, in order to demonstrate that there is a diversity of ways in which this type of conversational objective gets achieved.

Conversation with Tomás

During the same evening that I interviewed Máire, I sat down with Tomás for an interview. He has been a learner for approximately twenty years and teaches Irish in the United States. With this interviewee, the bar was set high, as he encouraged the use of Irish throughout the interview. One of the first questions I asked him was (in imperfect Irish) "why are you learning Irish" (*Cén fáth go bhfuil tú ag foghlaim Gaeilge?*)? His is a good example of what such narratives look like when mobilized by fluent speakers, and the way that fluent speakers can try to carry less fluent interlocutors through a conversation if they are having trouble:

Excerpt 1[15]

Interview with Tomás

1.   Tomás   *Nuair a bhí mé óg, bhí mé in Éirinn réasúnta go minic le mó clán,*
[When I was young, I was in Ireland with my family fairly often]

2.   *agus níl is agam go raibh Gaeilge aon. Y'know, uh, huaigh mé faoi (?) rud*
[and I didn't know that there was Irish there. You know, I saw]

3.   *scriobh ar an bóthar, ach ní chur mé ceist, nil mé ag smaoineamh ar.*
[things written on the roads, but I didn't ask about it. I didn't think about it.]

4.   *Um, agus honaich mé rud . . . (?) seandeanai ag caint as Gaeilge*
[I heard (?) some older people speaking in Irish]

5.   *. . . Is dócha tar éis manscoill fuair mé builleog sa phost ceann a haon,*
[. . . I believe it was after secondary school, I got a leaflet in the mail]

6.   *ceann a haon, "Learn the Irish language". Duirt mé,*
[I saw a course named "Learn the Irish language", and I said]

7.   *"There's an Irish language?" Cén fath nach bhfuil is agam go bhfuil rud*
["There's an Irish language?" Why didn't I know that?]

8.   *ag an mar sin? Cean mé bhi sium agam, agus in mo huraim, bhi mise*
[I found this interesting, and in my opinion]

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15   Transcription conventions are as follows:
-   Italics mark segments of utterances in the Irish language
-   Square brackets underneath italicized portions contain English translations
-   Colons indicate vowel length

9.   *Eireannach. Rugai mo mhathair in Eirainn, so cén fath nach bhfuil is agam?*
        [I was Irish; my father is from Ireland, so how did I not know?]

10.   *So, clari mé leis an rang . . . So like, ní raibh is agam faoi.*
        [So I registered for the course. . . So like, I didn't know about it.]

11.   *So scriobh mé ansin, agus sin nios fiche bilain ó shin, timpeall.*
        [So I registered, and that was twenty years ago, approximately.]

12.   *dúla mé go máll, ar dus, agus chuala mé faoi diereadh sechtaine, agus dúirt mé,*
        [I started slow, and I heard about the Irish language weekend, and I asked,]

13.   *"Cén fath a bhuil mé ag fohlaim Gaeilge? Why would I want to speak it?*
        [why am I learning Irish? Why would I want to speak it?"]

14.   *So bhi mé ann diereadh seachtaine í New York.*
        [So I went to the weekend in New York.]

15.   *Bhi mé imni orm, bhi mé abhairseach faoi.*
        [I was excited. I was suspicious about it.]

16. JG *Mise freisin. Cád is abhairseach?*
        [Me too. What is *abhairseach?*]

17. Tomás Like, suspicious, or doubtful *faoi.*
        [Like suspicious, or doubtful about it]

18. JG *B'fhéidir is féidir liom* repeat just so I make sure I understood.
        [Maybe I just can…]

19.   *So, ní fadó fadó, ach fiche bilian ó shin, bhí tú,* and my verbs won't be
        [So not a long time ago, but twenty years ago, you…]

20.   right here, *but bhí tú ag dul go Seachtain na Gaeilge*?
        [You went to an Irish language week?]

21. Tomás Yep . *Ar dus, chuaigh mé go rang, úrsa seachtain*, once a week.
        [At first, I went to a a class, once a week.]

In response to my question that asked why he was learning Irish, Tomás replies

with a narrative that recounted both his connection to Ireland, and his subsequent

discovery of the language, as well as his subsequent bewilderment that he, as an

Irish person, didn't know about it. Here we see that recounting one's ethnicity can

serve as a primary explanation for one's presence at Irish language events.

This excerpt also shows how language ideologies are co-ratified by the

negotiation of strategies in an interactive fashion between participants. Throughout

this conversation there were a number of strategies employed myself and my interlocutor to keep the conversation going in Irish, and they were implicitly ratified by both participants by virtue of the conversation carrying on. On the part of the speaker, he would often say something in Irish and repeat it in English if it were a particularly complex segment, such as in lines 12-14.

Although I cannot say for certain whether or not the nature of vocabulary selection was an explicit strategy on his part, Tomás also employed core vocabulary that would be mostly understood by someone who was an intermediate speaker. Last, Tomás and I employed a set of code-switches throughout the interview (see lines 18 and 21 for two examples) in order to keep the conversation going without interfering with the flow of what was being said, and there was no interruption in the conversation as a result. When my comprehension began to fade, he would switch into English until a concept was readily understood, such as on line 13, in order to maintain a level of comprehension through the mostly Irish language conversation.

This interview, as well as my subsequent interactions with this individual contained a number of mutually engaged strategies which allowed for both the narrative and conversation to continue as well. In the passages preceding and following this particular narrative, we also employed significant back-chanelling geared towards checking comprehension (line 18). I had also re-iterated parts of the conversation to Tomás, in order to double check that I had been following correctly, which was an acceptable strategy in the sense that it did not overtake the conversation. There are also several instances of interruptions on my part to ask for

the meaning of particular words. On line 16 and 17, I interrupt by asking, *Cád is brille abhairseach?* (What does *abhairseach* mean?) to which I received a prompt reply in English, followed by a resumption narrative in Irish by Tomás.

In short, over the course of his narrative that explained why he was learning Irish, Tomás and I employed a large range of conversational strategies in order to keep the medium of Irish going – code switching, back-channeling, clarification questions, as well as a tacit acceptance of these strategies as both acceptable and comfortable. Tomás and I both implicitly accepted each other's strategies to keep the conversation as much in Irish as my fluency would permit. It shows that between us, we both held language ideologies that supported the type of language use that we can employ to work through his narrative.

Whereas the previous conversation with Roibéard was cut short in an effort to avoid speaking English, this conversation entailed a dialogue about the conversation which allowed both comprehension on my part and for the conversation to continue in the Irish language. This partly depends on the willingness of individuals to employ these types of strategies, and fluent speakers' willingness to accommodate their co-participant's level of fluency.

Oireachtas Gaeilge Cheanada

At the *Oireachtas Gaeilge Cheanada*, I had another conversation with one of the principal organizers of the Irish *Oireachtas* in Irish that shows how topics of conversation can be tailored according to participant fluency. During the course of the whole weekend, I essentially avoided the contingent that had flown from Ireland (all of whom were fluent Irish speakers) so that I did not have to enter into a compromising situation with the

language. On the very last day, I finally mustered up the courage to have a conversation

with the group, as we were all sitting at breakfast and saying our goodbyes. The

following is an excerpt from my field notes written immediately after the encounter:

> In the morning I went down to breakfast and the Ireland judges were all sitting there, I guess waiting for people to come down from their rooms. I ate breakfast beside them because initially an organizer was talking to them about business, but then I felt shy, not wanting to speak English to them. I finished my breakfast about half a meter away from them, very awkwardly, but I decided I couldn't leave without speaking to them. I finished my breakfast, poured another coffee, and began: and said "*An feidir liom suigh síos anseo*?" (can I sit here?) which is probably a Frankenstein, pidginized amalgamation of a bunch of sentences, including imperative verbs, but he said *cinnte* (sure). We discussed where I live, (London *Beag,* which means small London) and he asked me *"an bhfuil sé go deas?"*(is it nice there?) I said *tá* [yes] and then we followed with a conversation about what I do. I think it started with "*cén post átá agat*?" (what do you do?) and I said "is *mhic leann mé"*, (I'm a student) and then I tried to translate language revitalization of diaspora groups as " *pleanála teanga don groupaí díasporacht"*..... then I said it in English and we carried on in English from there... At the end I asked them also in Irish "*an rud eile agat a deanamh today?"* (do you have anything else to do today?) and the director folded his hands together and pretended to sleep. So he was really helping along my ability to understand. They all seemed to be experts in this way. (Fieldnotes, 07-09-2012)

This excerpt shows a number of strategies that are helpful in continuing a

conversation in Irish. The most salient is that the entire range of subjects discussed

in the conversation entailed topics that employed core vocabulary. In contrast to the

above examples, discussing ideas about language, identity, and family narratives,

the organizer I was talking to asked me questions like where I live, and if it's nice

there. These are among the first things that I learned in beginner Irish classes. A

second notable strategy employed was the use of non-verbal communication at the

end of our conversation, as an alternative to using English. By the time I asked him

"*an rud eile agat a deanamh today?"* there had already been a significant

breakdown in my linguistic abilities when I attempted to explain what my research

was about. It was already apparent that I wasn't a fluent speaker of the language by

that point, so instead of using future tense verbs to explain what he was going to do,

he folded his hands together and pretended he was sleeping. Individuals that are fluent and native speakers of Irish are far outnumbered by L2 speakers and learners, so it is likely that many fluent speakers are forced to come up with a number of strategies in order to continue Irish conversations, especially in the North American context. I explore this in some detail in the last chapter of this thesis.

Institutional Language Ideologies: SnaG

So far, I have discussed how attendees at Irish immersion events co-construct conversations that either abide by, or contravene the institutional prerogative to speak Irish. These examples point to mutually accepted language ideologies that are co-constructed in conversation and ratified, that then shape the way that each language is used in conversation, when carrying out the collectively important task of discussing one's origins. Another fruitful area to investigate language ideologies that are favourable to institutional goals of Irish immersion is in the institutional or "official" talk of the organizers, when they are speaking to participants and running workshops. Institutionally sanctioned workshops and events that take place between Irish classes during immersion events are almost always conducted in Irish. Many are cultural activities, such as singing, dancing, and Gaelic sports.

As an example, one of the central organizers of the August week-long immersion camp at *Gaeltacht Thuaisceart an Oileáin Úir* gave a presentation which sought to introduce workshop participants to the Mohawk people and the current state of the Mohawk language through a comparative analysis of the historical processes which had caused language shift in both communities. This presentation was designed to acquaint participants with an understanding of this group of people before visiting their language

revitalization programmes on a reserve which was near the camp. A broad overview was given that sought to use the Irish experience with British imperialism and colonialism to provide a basis for understanding the history of the Mohawk people. Portraits of Joseph Brandt[16] were juxtaposed with portraits of fifteenth-century Irish warrior chieftains, and comments were made as to the similarity both in terms of their dress, their political attitudes, and their language loss. This workshop was geared towards interpreting the collective experience of language loss, and it was done in Irish. In general, workshops conducted by organizers occur in either Irish only, or in Irish followed by English for the benefit of interlocutors.

There were a few notable strategies during the organizers' talk that enabled the interaction to occur in Irish primarily. First, a sentence would be said in Irish, and then in English, but it was not always an exact translation of what was being said. This approach tasks learners with the need to listen closely, lest they miss some information that was provided only in Irish, while at the same time supplementing learners' comprehension with English explanations afterwards. Second, sheets were handed out that had information about what we were going to do the next day, accompanied by Mohawk language stories that were both translated into Irish, as well as English. This practice is often done when resources and time permit for the workshops. In 2009, participants went on a field trip through the thousand islands on a boat, and the tour was given in Irish, with a script which had English translations beside it. In 2010, the camp went on a trolley tour of Kingston, and one of the organizers gave the whole tour in Irish. Again, participants were given a script that had English translations beside it. This process of translation

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[16]   Joseph Brandt was a Mohawk leader who was influential both politically and militarily in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

requires a significant amount of time and resources, but it remains one way in which learners with limited proficiency and comprehension can still be immersed in an Irish language environment without it coming at a cost to their ability to understand what is happening. Although it is time consuming, this is how most of the workshops are prepared. It also re-affirms the place of Irish as the primary language of the camp, while still giving attendees a written route through which the comprehension of the activity or event can take place.

The ethnographic examples I provided in the last section point to highly individualized and heterogeneous language ideologies, as well as conversational strategies, in Irish immersion camps. In my examples of conversations with Roibéard and Tomás, as well as institutional talk, I show that there are significant strategies present in the repertoires of fluent and intermediate speakers to continue in Irish, as well as some reluctance or lack of engagement with the strategies in favour of continuing in English.

I frequently encountered emotional turmoil on the part of non-fluent attendees when talking about their inability to express themselves. Many individuals whom I interviewed during the course of my fieldwork expressed high levels of discomfort and frustration at this process and of not being able to understand what was being said. The most common response when interviewees were asked about this process was that they felt like they were babies, unable to express themselves in Irish. In an interview with Áine, who I had met during my first Irish language immersion experience in August 2010, she confided to me that she felt profoundly frustrated when confronted with not being able to express herself. In response to my question asking her what her goals with Irish were, she said "I'm not fluent enough at the moment. That's one of the frustrations,

actually . . . It's very painful. It's very painful. It feels like you become a baby, almost".

Similarly, Thomas Sullivan describes these feelings as prevalent throughout his entire

research period, saying that it was the feelings of "dislocation and insecurity that came to

define his research" (2010, 26; 51). I too can vouch for this experience; my research was

also filled with moments where I would have rather disappeared than showcase what I

had felt to be my inadequacy in the task at hand, due to my lack of fluency. It seems that

the strategies I described through which Irish language conversations were aided are not

seen as a readily accessible remedy to these overwhelming and common feelings of

beginners and intermediate speakers.

<div align="center">The Importance of Having a Connection</div>

Seosamh – narrative innovation, SnaG, August 2012

Discussions about one's Irish background or ethnicity can also be seen in

individuals' experiences that cannot readily produce this type of information when it is

elicited. At SnaG, the week-long immersion event in August, one of the participants from

the United States sat down for an interview with me on the sixth day. We sat high on a

grassy hill overlooking the whole camp, where we could see the camp participants going

about their activities. He was a beginner who had not attended immersion events and was

new to the group, and he had mentioned to me (in English) that his great-great

Grandmother was born in a particular county in Ireland where I have family members.

Upon initiating some information exchange on the subject, he acknowledged that he was

not certain if this was the case. In the following excerpt, he describes the reason that he

decided to consolidate the narratives he had about his possible Irish origins into a

succinct package, and the pressure he felt to have a story.

Excerpt 2: From interview with Seosamh

1.   JG: Did you have any Irish connections at all?

2.   Seosamh   Yeah. Um, well, so my great grandmo- uh, let's see,

3.   my *séan seán mhaithair. De Brún is anim dí,*
                     [My great great Grandmother. De Brún is her name]

4.   So my great grandmother, last name De Brún

5.   huge name in County Mayo, so that's - that's the connection, basically.

6.   JG   So you have one great grandmother from Ireland?

7.   Seosamh   Well, the truth of the matter is that her last name is De Brún, so I feel like -
8.   I don't know. I'm sure I could go back and I could find who was on the boat.
9.   She was actually born in the United States.
10.   When people ask "well, what is your connection?" In hindsight it was silly to feel this
11.   way, but I felt like I needed a connection, otherwise I'm just a guy who thinks this is
12.   cool, and in my mind, that was uncool.
13.   I mean, you know, that's kind of like - You know, it's like - "you're not actually -?"
14.   I would say - I would say I'm as Irish as anyone whose family has been in the South
                     East United States for more than five generations, basically.
15.   You know, after - everyone – in the dark we're all the same...
16.   I guess just because that gave me a concrete answer, other than "Well, uh"
17.   I mean it was a more specific answer than "well, like, I'm an American mutt."
18.   Yes there's Irish because they settled in, you know, in an Irish area, but uh -
19.   Clearly everybody's welcome. If my great grandmother -
20.   whether or not my great grandmother was born in the South or um, you know,
21.   or Galway Bay, there's not an issue of... Everyone's welcome, period.
22.   Um, but I don't know, it's just I don't know, I guess it became sort of a short-hand for
23.   "hey, here's my *scéal beág*. Here's my short little story. Here's my connection.
24.   Nod. Wink. I'm in the club. Let's get down to learning the language, you know?

There are two elements I wish to highlight by quoting Seosamh's explanation of why he

consolidated his narrative. First, there are adjacency pairs in this excerpt, which was the

method by which I was gaining information, specifically asking about particular sorts of

family connections to Ireland. This is clearly a central feature of interviewing, and this is

partially why I used it here. However, you can see this strategy used in the first

ethnographic example I provide, where I was engaging in "stranger talk" with the

individual who was from the same county as my Grandmother. To be clear, adjacency

pairs are an important feature of interviewing, so I cannot separate some of these

examples from the generic influences of interviewing. However, the existence of adjacency pairs here and in prior examples point to the co-constructed nature of this process, regardless of the language through which it occurs.

Seosamh also knew how to play along with this type of exchange, as he recognized the appropriate form of response for this question and he learned to formulate a reply that was acceptable for those who were asking, so that, in his words, "Nod. Wink. I'm in the club". Starting on line 21, Seosamh explains that while there is no explicit requirement of Irish ancestry, he felt that it would be much easier to synthesize his knowledge of where his connection might lie into a consolidated story that matches the requirements of this topic that comes up so often. This way, he was able to provide satisfactory information that was elicited when asked of his Irish connection. It is clear that for this new participant to the immersion circuit as well as for others who had repeatedly asked him to explain his ancestry, this topic factored in as one of the main features of conversation among individuals who were getting to know him. Those asking such questions were placing him in relation to their understanding of individuals and why they attend. Without his invocation of an explicit Irish connection, Seosamh would not have been able to participate in the same way; he felt it would be "uncool" (line 11).

It is important to remember that Seosamh was an absolute beginner at the time of his arrival to the camp, with an extremely limited amount of time spent learning the language many years prior while doing a semester abroad in Dublin during his college years. His ability to provide his narrative of connection in Irish is structurally limited by his capacity in Irish. In the interview, he did make an attempt, which was interspersed with Irish and English on line 2: "So my great grandmo- uh, let's see, my *séan seán*

mhaithair mhaithair? Mhaithair. De Brun is anim dí, so my great grandmother, last name De Brun, huge name in County Mayo, so that's - that's the connection, basically." While he is able to indicate he is speaking about his great-great Grandmother, he is able to provide a limited amount of information in Irish, and the utterance had to be supplemented by English. This is about the best one could expect from a newcomer such as Seosamh when asked about his family connection. There is room for interlocutor assistance – and I did partially assist in the pronunciation of *mhathair*, but his capacity to produce utterances when asked to provide information is otherwise limited. It is clear that even beginners are asked this question repeatedly at immersion events, at a time where they may not be able to formulate the appropriate response in Irish, even on a simple level. Seosamh was close, but only after five days of intensive immersion during which people constantly asked him the question.

Non-Irish Participants

During the course of my research I found that there are a significant number of individuals at Irish language immersion events who are of ethnic origins other than of an Irish ancestry, which begs the question of how they are interacting with the group priorities of sharing stories of origin. Although I cannot provide an exact statistical breakdown of all the participants present at any one immersion event, I can say that five out of thirteen interviewees made it clear to me that they did not possess any Irish ancestry, which is a significant number that I did not expect.[17] I discuss their motivations

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[17]   In her discussion of the survey she sent throughout the Irish community via the internet, Sarah McMonagle (2012:413) states the prevalence of individuals who do not readily identify as Irish participating in Irish immersion events. 30.5% of respondents stated they had "other reasons" or "no response" to the question "what reasons do you have for learning Irish in Canada?", although this does not preclude respondees from having Irish ancestry.

for learning Irish below in terms of the language ideologies they express.

When I asked each of these individuals why they were learning the language, Granuaile and Sheenagh indicated that they were simply intrigued by the sound of the language, and that prompted them to try and learn it. Oisin started because he had to cut down on the amount of university clubs he was attending due to time constraints and chose to remain with the Celtic club. Aonghus, an individual of Scottish heritage simply found Irish language classes to be the closest resource available to learning Scots Gaelic[18]. Donnacha was interested in what he deemed to be "original Indo-European languages", all of which he was interested in learning about, his interest in the "original Europeans". None of these individuals are connected to their language learning efforts through an Irish ethnicity. With the exception of Donnacha, whose primary interest was discussing with people, in English, topics of interest to him which concerned the Irish language, the other participants had relatively simple answers that explained *why* they were learning Irish. Their answers did not intersect significantly with the types of answers members of the Irish diaspora gave, except when discussing the perceived "ancientness" or poetic qualities of the language (Interview with Séamus and Sorcha, 04-28-2012).

The others listed (Aonghus, Granuaile, Sheenagh, and Oisin) were also among the most fluent speakers of the language in any given event that they had attended. Whereas Sheenagh had been learning Irish for approximately fifteen years, Granuaile and Oisin

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[18] The question of the relationship between Scots and Irish Gaelic is one that complicates the relationship between language and ethnicity. Scots and Irish Gaelic have a degree of mutual intelligibility that makes it clear enough that the two are related. Indeed it is through these languages that one can be drawn to see the historical commonalities between the two populations. For this reason, I exclude this individual from this analysis, although he is not ethnically Irish

had only begun their efforts to learn the language within the year prior to the interviews I conducted with them[19]. Both of those individuals were already in the intermediate-advanced category of fluency, which is an uncharacteristically fast rate of learning for the Irish learning and speaking community as a whole. Grouped together, these individuals represent a section of the Irish learning community that has acquired the language at an extremely fast rate.

While it may be too much of an absolutist claim to try and ascribe any correlation between rate of acquisition and cultural and social connections to Ireland and the Irish diaspora, non-Irish individuals may not participate in the re-inscription of collective meaning to personal narratives regarding Irish ethnicity and language in the same way. If non-Irish individuals are not overtly concerned with this process or unable to participate, it leaves space for other considerations. While they may be able to participate superficially in the conversations that occur of this nature, they are not making the same types of connections in the matrices of meaning that have been grown over time by members of the Irish diaspora.

However, this does not preclude non-Irish individuals from possessing language ideologies that permit English at these events. Donnacha, who had much more of a historical and linguistic interest in the Irish language than a desire to speak it, spent much of his time talking about his ideas relating to the language with others. I often passed him during the times in between classes and events and overheard him talking about the perceived ancientness of the Irish language and how it related to the migration of the Celts and original Indo-Europeans. In fact, this individual was one of only three who had

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[19] One of these individuals had also won the "learner of the year award" from *Oireachtas Gaeilge Cheanada*, which is an award given to only one individual throughout the entire network.

taken part in the Irish immersion events that used to occur in Toronto in the 1980s and early 1990s. The point here, however, is that this major pull factor to express one's self in English regarding this particular range of topics is not available to non-Irish participants, nor is the wide matrix of meaning, which spans the entire lifetimes (and the lifetimes of their perceived ancestors), present as a backdrop with which the activities at immersion weekends are understood.

I am suggesting here that it is precisely the way that the Irish language indexes a host of complex associations that create an ideological landscape for members of the Irish diaspora that might require them to engage in these topics of conversation in addition to the goal of language acquisition. In contrast, the range of conversational priorities for those who are not ethnically related to the language reveals the possibility of a less complicated terrain through which they must navigate on the path to language acquisition.

Conclusion

This chapter attempts to uncover the ideologically complicated terrain an event described as "immersion" can consist of, especially with endangered languages. Relatively straightforward language ideologies and conversational strategies are at play in a number of places: conversations between fluent or functional speakers are likely to occur in Irish if interlocutors who lack proficiency in Irish are not tilting the balance towards English. Institutional talk from organizers, as well as workshops, and the media used during Irish immersion events are all very likely to occur in Irish. If individuals with less fluency are willing to engage with strategies such as back-channelling, code switching, requests for explanations, as well as periodic hiccups in the flow of a

conversation, the use of Irish can continue. This all occurs against a backdrop of other priorities that prompt the use of English.

There are, however, wider sociolinguistic parameters to consider during immersion events which may affect which language is spoken. The proportion of fluent speakers to non-fluent speakers, as well as the strategies that fluent speakers employ with interlocutors with less fluency is one important consideration. Fluent speakers' choices regarding where they spend their time and who they talk to during immersion events can also tip the balance towards English or Irish.

It might be beneficial to further investigate the deployment of strategies of fluent speakers who assist less fluent speakers in achieving their conversational goals without reverting into English. To be sure, all fluent speakers in the Irish immersion camps have at least some strategies they employ when talking to less fluent speakers; it is a necessity to have these types of skills in events where a large proportion of the people present are less fluent than the fluent speakers. In an earlier section I discussed a number of strategies that Tomás mobilized in order to help my comprehension along. Having more explicit guidelines regarding the placement of fluent speakers during mealtimes might allow for linguistic resources to be spread in such a way that they are not condensed into certain areas, but the question once again arises as to whether or not individuals would be willing to allow for this degree of control to be exerted over the choices they would otherwise make themselves. Fluent speakers, just as any other participants, have their own personal goals and attitudes towards the degree to which they can, or desire to, assist non-fluent speakers in achieving their conversational objectives. To quote Roibéard, the teacher from Galway, in an interview I conducted at the very end of the weekend in Keswick,

when nearly everyone had left:

> "Conversation is exhausting on the brain. Any conversation. Even a conversation between two native speakers of the same language... And it's not just their ability, it's their attitude. Once you sort out where you stand with that person, then you decide whether you want to keep a conversation with that person or not. I actually found myself in conversations here where I thought once or twice "this is not doing me any good, and it's not doing the person any good. I'm going to leave this table". Then [I] just silently leave and go someplace else (Interview with Roibéard, 06-03-2012)

It is clear that each person is motivated by a range of strategies and responses that guide their linguistic choices when they attend Irish immersion events, whether it is the non-fluent speaker who must make the connections between what they are learning in the classroom and the fragmentary influence the Irish language has had on their life experiences, or if it is the fluent speaker who grows tired and uncomfortable with non-fluent individuals' progress in a conversation. Indeed, there are times at immersion events where fluent speakers cluster together in order to converse at a level that would be impossible with beginners, because they want to improve their abilities. The degree to which more stringent or explicit frameworks for maintaining the use of the Irish language during Irish immersion events would be beneficial or detrimental is an open-ended question, and it is not my intent to answer this question in this chapter. However, at the end of my interview with Seosamh, he indicated some reservation towards the idea, saying "It'd be a very quiet, frustrating week. Um, you know, unless we want to talk about - Everyone in the beginner class with me, we'd all be Buddhists, because we'd be in the present tense" (Interview, 08-28-2012). At present, it is clear that even beginners are able to enjoy themselves with the existing framework, although there is a significant amount of anxiety which stems from a lack of ability to converse and maintain a conversation. It is unclear whether or not increased prescriptivism would be useful.

When the vast majority of those with Irish descent have spent their lives establishing bonds with others with the same background in the English language, one can see how this tendency is something that regularly affects the linguistic hegemony in immersion events if strategies are not followed in order to facilitate and direct non-fluent speakers. In immersion events where there are high proportions of beginner and intermediate speakers, this necessary process of foregrounding the Irish language as an important marker of identity simultaneously acts as a source of group cohesion while it poses a direct threat to the goal of Irish through the Irish language. This often results in a hegemonic influence of the English language during Irish immersion events, as Irish attendees draw upon the matrices of meaning that they have acquired through their lifetimes spent in English[20].

In other words, the tools by which this identity of North American *Gael* is established needs to be re-learned, and reconfigured, and translated into the Irish language by collectively making sense of individual experiences, and ideally, through Irish. In the words of Meek (2011, 48), this entails "the intentional socialization of new language speakers . . . grammatically, interactionally, materially, politically, and so forth. It is also a process involving both continuity and change, maintaining (consistently or not) various elements, practices, or interpretations while transforming others".

Efforts to speak Irish by non-fluent speakers while engaging in this type of talk will limit or deny individuals from engaging in complex conversations until they reach certain level of proficiency in Irish, unless we make the strategies that will enable them to do so explicit. On the part of the learners, there must be a partial acceptance of these constraints as well as a deployment of strategies in order to remain speaking Irish. Their

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[20]   There were individuals who attended the Kingston events whose first language was French.

stories can survive translation, but it is a process that will take time and careful consideration on the part of organizers, teachers, and learners alike.

Paradoxically, the attachment that Irish individuals have to their language is simultaneously a factor that may require a transgression of the group goal of using Irish, but it is also the very core process at work which allows the collective group to create, contest, and re-formulate narratives which can support and celebrate the existence of the North American *Gael*. This process is one of gradual identity-building collective meaning-making. Regardless of what language this process occurs in, it is essential to the very existence and building of Irish immersion activities in North America, and the identities that are celebrated by individuals who devote so much time and energy into the efforts to once again speak their ancestral language, and will remain an important part of the process, regardless of the language in which it occurs.

Chapter 3

Re-thinking Immersion: Pedagogy and Language Socialization during Irish Language Events in Ontario

Language revitalization efforts whose immersion environments are populated with L2 speakers face increased difficulty in ensuring that their classroom and immersion programs provide a necessary environment for language socialization practices that lead to successful acquisition (Hinton 2011, 310). Contrary to dominant language courses that prepare a learner for an eventual enculturation into an environment dominated by first language speakers of the target language, many groups attempting to revitalize their languages do not have this privilege, and thus must rely on the same set of linguistic resources and individuals for both efforts. As such, planners of endangered and heritage languages need to contend with the powerful influence of socialization practices and language hierarchies that inform the use of the language, inside and outside of the classroom. Revitalization efforts are often informed by the same language hierarchies that threaten the target language by confining it to specific patterns of use, formulation, or domains, and always in relation to the dominant language.

In this chapter I describe the impact of one type of metalinguistic talk called "languaging", which is defined by Swain (2006, 98) as when ". . . learners [are] operating on linguistic data and coming to an understanding of previously less well understood material". In other words, languaging is a problem-solving discussion about a gap in grammatical knowledge, ideally resulting in the mediation of the problem and a greater understanding of the language (Fogle 2012, 105). As a metalinguistic exercise, languaging can occur in either the target language or the learner's dominant one.

At many Irish language immersion events the proportion of attendees at the beginner and intermediate level outweigh the proportion of advanced, fluent, or native speakers, which may cause learners to prefer or require to perform metalinguistic talk about Irish in English. My findings echo Sarah McMonagle's (2012, 413) internet survey of the Irish language community indicating that 68.7%, or 81 respondents were either at a basic or intermediate level, and 25.4%, or 30 respondents had an advanced, fluent, or native competency. These numbers reflect an emergent movement, and a longitudinal analysis of how learners are improving over time would be a better measurement of success. This breakdown points to one moment in time for this revitalization effort.

Intermediate and beginner level participants engage in languaging in English in immersion settings, which points to a tension between the learning strategies of attendees and the tenets of language immersion. Whereas "languaging" in Irish would promote the use of the language as a means to acquisition, thereby preserving institutional goals and providing a stronger immersion setting, languaging in English provides learners the opportunity to acquire information about Irish without compromising intelligibility or smoothness of interaction while reflecting the status of Irish as secondary to the matrix language, English. This is described as a process of "framing" in Meek and Messing's discussion of the shunting of Kaska and Nahuatl/Mexicano into the recesses of the classroom in settings which are designed to assist in the revitalization of these languages (Meek 2007, 2). The authors employ the terms "matrix language" and "framed language" to refer to the often inextricable entanglement of the target language in the surrounding dominant socio-cultural context, both in written texts, as well as during interactions in the classroom that are geared towards the acquisition of the target language:

> Both written and oral RLS [reversing language shift] practices and materials in an endangered language are almost invariably embedded in or framed by materials from the unmarked language, which then functions as a "matrix" (Myers-Scotton, 1998) for the endangered language. Such framing sends an unspoken message about the inferior and marked status of the endangered language that is so powerful that it can override and reverse almost any amount of overt support for it (Meek 2007, 2).

Whether in written text or verbal interaction, the matrix language surrounds, contextualizes, or provides the main basis of understanding, whereas the framed language only fulfills a partial communicative function within the overall communicative event, either by fulfilling the objective of a learning exercise or by way of its partial use in code switches. This, in turn, re-enforces the place of the target language as secondary. An account of this framing process can help determine how particular attempts and strategies to revitalize a language can interact with these power relations, and thus is useful in an analysis of real-time data that chronicles interactions at revitalization events. Using the concept of framed/matrix languages in the analysis of language socialization strategies in the Irish immersion events of North America allows for an investigation of the way in which these strategies have an impact on the position of Irish.

I analyze the effects of language choice when languaging is occurring as a matter of framing. The preference for languaging in English at Irish immersion events reflects what Barbra Meek (2011, 50) refers to as the ultimate challenge of language revitalization programs, which is the restoration of not only grammatical knowledge and the restoration of a language as a medium of communication, but the "indexical orders that link a grammar to a complex of meaning emergent through a world of experience". This suggests a need for a pedagogical focus on how to provide beginner and intermediate speakers with the basic tools with which to engage in metalinguistic talk in

Irish, and a re-alignment of how learners see the language. Instead of being an object to be acquired, Irish needs to be re-positioned as the language through which acquisition can take place. In what follows, I will outline the characteristics of two acquisition strategies of eliciting information about Irish, and show how they either contribute to the further framing of Irish or towards an environment that emphasizes immersion through use of Irish. All took place at immersion events during my fieldwork.

Examples

Example One: Classroom Activity in Keswick

The following excerpt is from a classroom activity that took place during *Diereadh Seachtaine Lán-Gaeilge* (Irish language weekend) in Keswick, Ontario in early June 2012. The classroom is settling into the second lesson of the day, and they are collaboratively tackling an exercise that is prompted by the teacher. General conversation took place in English before this excerpt, regarding the state of the exercises, as well as a discussion about the drive to the event from a nearby city. In this conversation are four individuals, P1-P4 who have anywhere from two and a half to ten years of Irish learning experience; P5 is an Irish-born learner who is re-acquainting himself with the language, I am P6, and the teacher is a native speaker. There are also other individuals present in the room that did not speak during this excerpt.

Excerpt 3

Classroom Interaction at the *Diereadh Seachtaine Lán-Gaeilge,* Keswick

1	Teacher:	You would've said it in from Toronto last night. She said "you're
2		slo:ow". It wasn't her fault though, traffic was awful.
3	P1:	Oh yeah. *Bhí sé dtram.*

[it was slow]

4	Teacher:	And the language out of her, you wouldn't have heard it out of
5		a sailor. Well you probably would have, they have really bad language.

6	P2:	I was driving out of the back roads, and I realized I was doing 120 in a
7		80 on the back roads.

8	Teacher:	Well, she was doing the handbrakes down the back roads, weren't
9		you?

10	P2:	Let her do her work!

11	P1:	*Cád é coip-leabhar?*
		[What is copy-book*?*]

12	Teacher:	*Coip-leabhar* is a copy book. Don't worry so much about what it
13		means. I'm going to go through that in a minute. It's more, I want you more
14		to do the verb.

15	P1:	No yeah, I've done that.
16	Teacher:	Oh you've done that. Just checking, sorry I just wanted you to
17		focus on the thing at hand. I know some people get distracted by the
18		vocabulary and are like "what does that mean", and it doesn't matter;
19		we're working on grammar at the moment. We'll patch that in later. Are
20		we almost good to correct these? (to P6) You excepted, because I know
21		you're behind.

22	P1:	Yeah, *lean ar aghaidh*
		[literally: "go in the direction of your face"]

23	Teacher:	OK. *Chuir sé an leabhar sa mhála* translates as?
24	P1:	*Chuireann sí* – oh ok
		[she put]

25	P3:	He put the book in the bag
26	Teacher:	He puts the book in the bag, the school bag. Good, now I want
27		you to say "he puts". Change *chuir sé an leabhar* to the present tense. And
28		I'm going to start here and work this way. So we are going to go anti
29		Clockwise

30	P4:	*Chuireann sé an leabhar*

31	Teacher :	Spell it for me please

32	P4:	c-h-u-i-r-e-a-n-n

33	Teacher :	Good, did everybody get that? *Chuireann sé an leabhar sa mhalla*. Good.
34		next one. *Níor dhún sí an fhuinneog aréir*, so we're onto you.
		[Didn't she close the window yesterday]

35	P5:	Erm*, Ni dhúneann si an fhuinnean anocht*
36		[She isn't closing the window tonight]

37	Teacher *:*	*Ní*, you're spelling it this like that?

38 P5:   Yeah.

39 Teacher :   And for this one, you said?

40 P5:   *Anocht.*
                [Tonight]

41 Teacher: Good, that's a good time phrase. I'm glad you put that in. So, she
42   did not close the window, *areir*, last night. *Ni dhúneann si an*
43   *fhuinneog anocht*. She isn't closing the window tonight. It doesn't even
44   make sense in the present tense, but we'll just take that with a pinch of the
45   salt. She doesn't close the window today, or something. So *Ní dhúnean*
46   *anocht.* So we're following what happened there? Yes? Alright. Third one.
47   *Ar bhailigh sibh na céoip labhair*.
                [Did they bring the book]

48   Do you want to go, or do you want me to skip over and come back to you?

49 P6:   Well, I have a question, so *ar,* that particle there, so that is, like, past? Is
50   that the past tense question? OK, so it'd be *an,* uh,

51 Teacher: While you're thinking, I'll ask to translate that for me.
52   *Ar bhailigh sibh na céoip labhair.* Someone else.
                [Did they bring the book]

This interaction is representative of one prevalent type of acquisition strategy that

occurs in the beginner and intermediate classroom. The teacher initially sets out

teaching the nature of a particular grammatical structure (in this case verb tenses),

and then creates questions that are tackled by the group after the concept is

understood by most. This process occurs largely through the English language, and

the grammatical structures are acquired by their discussion and problem-solving

processes. The implicit goal when this type of acquisition strategy is followed is to

acquire knowledge of the language that is then produced in isolation, in order to

zero in on the grammatical structure in question (cf. line 8 : "Don't worry so much

about what they mean, I want you more to do the verb"). English is undoubtedly the

language of communication in this context, and the Irish language is that which is

to be acquired and reproduced strictly in relation to the subject at hand.

Irish shows up only in three places other than as the subject matter of the

languaging exercise. On line 2, *bhí sé dtram* is provided by an interlocutor to translate the English language utterance of the prior attendee. Next, *cád é coíp-leabhar*, on line 8 was literally an interrogation of what that particular word meant. It was given, by a number of people in the room, but the teacher then advised the person who had asked the question to focus on the exercise at hand, because verb tenses were the objective set out by the teacher. Last, *lean ar aghaidh* on line 13 translates as an encouragement to continue on, and is never used as a solicitation for further conversation between the speaker and the interlocutor. In the three examples, none of the participants' use of Irish elicits further use of the language. Where the participants tried to initiate its use, there were forces that arrested the attempt from taking off. Despite the diversity of reasons for which this happens, the consequence is the relegation of the use of conversational Irish to particles that are not woven into the discursive repertoire of those present.

The above excerpt also provides a view into the development of the norms and expectations regarding when and where the target language is used. At line 25, the teacher asks for the meaning of *leabhar sa mhála,* a participant begins to give an answer in Irish, but upon hearing her interlocutors respond in English, stops, and says "oh", and switches to English and echoes the answer given by the others. The question is open as to what exact reason the participant had to cut herself off, but she was the only one to offer any type of answer in Irish. The question was posed as "what does x mean?", with the unit in question framed by English, and also eliciting mainly English responses, except for her contribution on line 27.

Languaging in English is certainly effective in allowing individuals to

acquire knowledge of the grammatical structure of Irish, as it does not cause a lack of comprehension due to the medium. In these examples, classroom attendees are being socialized into using Irish in fairly constrained contexts - namely when asked to reproduce or modify a particular structure into another given form, or (re)produce something in a fairly hypothetical and controlled setting. In this sense, the Irish language is framed and secondary to the assumption that the English language will be the medium of conversation. This type of learner socialization – learning through the dominant language, while framing the contexts in which the language is used, and for specific reasons – is a primary practice that informs the way in which learners are oriented to the Irish language, because the immersion context is comprised of a majority of beginner and intermediate speakers who are also taught in the same fashion. In addition to framing the Irish language, this approach runs the risk of emphasizing isolated grammatical units of the language while simultaneously erasing or simplifying the social, pragmatic and indexical complexities of the language in use (Meek 2007, 5) by emphasizing task-oriented languaging through English as one of the central objectives of what is done in the classroom, as opposed to simulating or enacting speech behaviours that mirror socialization norms of Irish speakers.

Example two: Languaging in English before an Interview

Languaging in English also occurs outside of the classroom during immersion events, although a wider diversity of socialization practices and acquisition strategies are present by virtue of the type of mixing between fluent and non-fluent speakers that I describe in the previous chapter. The immersion environment allows for not only fluent

speakers and beginners to rub shoulders, but also a platform for individuals to mediate language learning according to their own devices, borrowing learning and speaking ideologies from prior experience, from their interlocutors, or innovating as they continue to navigate the immersion experience.

The excerpt below details an audio-recorded interaction with an individual that I was about to interview, who was in the intermediate class with me. Having grown up as someone who remembers his Newfoundland-born Great Grandfather speaking Irish, Brendan now lives in a community that does not have regular Irish language lessons (although he had travelled in the past to the nearest weekly learning initiative). He reported learning the language on and off for ten years, and we were mutually aware that we had some shared knowledge of Irish by virtue of being in the same classroom together. After signing one copy of the consent form required for the study, he muses over his copy of the form:

Excerpt 4
Interaction prior to interview with Breandan, Keswick

1	Brendan	Sign the blank line with an X if you do not, if I do not wish to be recorded.
2		Research participant name, is that myself?
3	JG	Yes
4	Brendan	*Mise mé fhéin, agus siognatúr*
		[My name, and signature]
5	JG	I tried to - write this thing in Irish, and
6	Brendan	- *Dáta*. Can I write it in Irish
		[Date]
7	JG	Yes
8	Brendan	What is it? *Naoí*?
		[Nine?]
9	JG	*Cén* date? Yeah, *ni, mi Meitheamh*
		[What date? Yeah, June]

10	Brendan	*Meatheamh* [June]
11	JG	Two thousand and eleven (laughs)
12	Brendain	A *dó* [Two]
13	JG	Yeah
14		Two thousand twelve, yeah, that's true.

Here, as in the other examples, Irish is present in this conversation as a framed language; its presence is not a challenge to the matrix language or to comprehensibility of the interaction. Preceding and following these fragments of Irish use is the English language. Irish serves a function other than being the sole communicative instrument of the interaction. The interaction turns into an exercise of translation, where the interviewee and I are trying to ascertain what the correct translation of the date would be, but while conducting ourselves in English. Line 7 effectively establishes this as an episode of collaborative languaging when Brendain requests collaborative assistance from me as he continues. Requests for clarification on lines 9 and 10 by the interviewee and myself respectively are done in English, or, in my case, a code-switch, with *cén* functioning as the Irish equivalent to the English wh-question "what", followed by the use of the word date, which in Irish is *dáta*. This structure closely mirrors the framing practices found in the classroom excerpts I provide above, where the Irish language is present but largely as a hypothetical puzzle to solve in order to figure out how one might hypothetically say or write something in the language.

English Language Metalinguistic Talk, in Context

Languaging in English is acceptable in the immersion setting because it encapsulates some of the central objectives of both, which is active acquisition. It also accomplishes a number of interactional goals that seem to be important in this case. First, using the Irish language in fragments allows both individuals to correlate their speech behaviours to the goals of the event, speaking Irish, in a way that does not compromise the intelligibility of the interaction due to a lack of fluency on the part of the participants. In the previous chapter, I outlined how certain communicative acts are prioritized so highly that they sometimes overtake the institutional goal of Irish immersion; the use of Irish in the fragmentary fashion outlined above may be a way to reconcile the need to communicate with the institutional goals of speaking the language. It also allows the participants to show that they "know the language", or at least parts of it, which is a marker of prestige in immersion environments, and a sign that an individual possesses valuable and sought-after knowledge. It is also a marker of authenticity and traditionalism outside of the immersion environment for those who are of Irish descent (Sullivan 2010).

The question of how best to produce speakers of an endangered language like Irish is one that entails an analysis of the types of practices that are undertaken in the immersion environment. The scenarios I outline above may encourage the acquisition of grammatical information, but they do not necessarily encourage the use of Irish as a communicative code that can be used spontaneously, as part of an ecosystem of indexical ordering that comes with the grammatical units of the language. Rather, the use of languaging in English by participants and teachers alike across these scenarios suggests a

set of socialization practices that emphasize the need to study and acquire the language. This is quite obviously functional to its users, but it needs to be accompanied by other strategies and ways of interacting with the language for it to be used. This challenge is more difficult for individuals who spend at most a few hours per week and in many cases only a few times a year, trying to use it as a communicative code at immersion events. The interviewee from the prior excerpt, for example, mentioned that he was only able to attend immersion events approximately once a year at the time of the interview.

These strategies also signify the existence of a learning and language ideology that accepts that English is the better language to learn in, which ultimately positions Irish as the framed language, to be learned through discussion in English. They are however, not the only strategy being used by intermediate users and their interlocutors. Below I describe some strategies that are used by Irish immersion attendees to use Irish, even when gaps occur in their ability to produce the desired output.

Existing Strategies at Immersion Events

While occurring in a complimentary and concurrent fashion, English mediated "languaging" stands in contrast to other strategies that can increase the amount of Irish spoken. Mediating units of information while speaking the language represents a strategy that encourages the continued use of the target language throughout the learning process instead of prioritizing learners' comprehension and ability to carry out the conversation effortlessly. Immersion settings offer emergent strategies that allow for this to take place. In this section, I turn to one important way in which the Irish language immersion setting offers the opportunity to learn and use Irish, which gradually frees the language from its status as a marginal, "framed" language within the daily lives of its learners.

Routinization

A primary strategy that aids in the mobilization of linguistic knowledge is repetition and routinization of certain activities that give language learners repeated chances to provide certain types of output, while establishing certain language socialization norms that individuals can carry into future situations (Heath 1982). Whereas Fogle (2012, 76-77) shows that these interactions can be fruitful in establishing morals and norms, the same can be said about language socialization, as the repetition introduces the participants to the same situation in which they are prompted to recall the socially encouraged methods of working through the scenario. One of the first items that participants at SnaG receive when they arrive is a package that has a list of Irish language vocabulary for camping items, food, as well as a number of other specific sets of vocabulary that might become important. Participants have the chance to mobilize this knowledge when they are going about their activities at immersion events, and the daily interaction with camp organizers that happened at key places, such as the food serving area.

One of these interactional routines regularly took place during breakfast time with one of the key organizers of SnaG and other events in Ontario. As a key organizer, she often prepared meals and made sure that everything was in place for the attendees as they woke up. As a result, she would often be one of the people to be up hours before everyone else, and would be there to help distribute breakfast to immersion camp attendees. Each morning, she would greet me with with "*Conas átá tú ar madin?*" (How are you this morning?), to which I would attempt to reply in a fashion that included an honest appraisal of how the late-night activities of the

day before had impacted my ability to function so early.

On one occasion, I had an extremely uncomfortable night, as it had rained heavily, resulting in a very wet tent and a grumpy researcher. When I awoke to the sound of a bell that indicated it was time to eat, I approached the serving area, and was asked, *"Conas átá tú ar madin?"* Remembering the vocabulary list, and some basic vocabulary that I had learnt in the classroom a few days before, I responded to her question by saying *"Bhí sé fluch, mó phuball"* (My tent was wet).

On more than one occasion, I would approach the serving area in the morning after having stayed up late into the night socializing with some of the attendees, which is something that organizers usually do not have the luxury of doing on account of how early they have to get up in order to prepare everything for the camp. Often, organizers would coyly ask the formulaic, *"Conas átá tú ar madin?"*, even if they knew that some of the attendees might not be in the brightest of spirits due to them having stayed up so late. If I felt good, I would reply honestly, *"go breá"*, (I'm great) in spite of my having stayed up late. On other occasions, a grimace was sufficient to have them understand how late I went to bed. While my responses were relatively simple, they provided me with a way to operationalize what I was learning into the means of communication at the camp.

The serving stations also presented an opportunity to acquire food-based vocabulary, as well. Those in charge of distributing a certain food item would often explain what it was in Irish. Most often, an accompanying English language translation was not required, because the food served almost always consisted of familiar items. People often sat down and commented on how much they liked the

food item, which gave an opportunity for an immediate mobilization of the vocabulary while eating. The food is of exceptional quality at these events, so attendees often talk about how much they are enjoying what they are eating, and in Irish. Naming various types of food and saying whether or not you like them is another communal activity that occurs between language lessons or events that is structurally familiar to certain participants. The chance for individuals to do this took place three times a day, for a week. It allowed me, and others, to try out newly acquired phrases and terms, in a low-pressure, informal environment.

Even though the interactional routine rarely exceeded one reply, and only a few words, they gave me an easy way of trying to incorporate what I was learning in the classes at each meal, and I could expect that this situation would arise each time I went for food. These types of repetitions are not necessarily confined to specific places; greetings and conversations that carry similar structures are repeated all over the immersion setting by individuals who are familiar with their structures, as well as learners who are acquiring them. The immersion model that is used at SnaG provides the chance for routinization as well as for constant learning opportunities.

Discussion

Although this study is not longitudinal or diachronic in nature, the use of English medium languaging by the participants in the above excerpts (many of whom are long-time learners and speakers of the language) suggests that this type of strategy is one that is not simply employed until one reaches a certain level and then discards it. This is a strategy that is preferred, and perhaps necessary, for beginners who do not have the basic

ability to communicate in these settings but would like to learn, which would then prompt more fluent speakers to employ this type of strategy if demanded by their interlocutors who have a narrower range of communicative repertoires.

Further, this method is sanctioned by certain pedagogical approaches employed by teachers, such as in excerpt 3, although this may not be the preferred method of instructors. At the beginning of this immersion weekend, the instructor conducted the classes mostly in Irish, to the confusion of the class. The teacher then switched to this type of English-medium "languaging" as the primary acquisition strategy, with the occasional code switch into Irish. I have witnessed this on multiple occasions; teachers from Ireland that have been flown in to teach the class modify the manner in which they are delivering the course material, switching to English medium languaging over time due to the needs of the class. Again, this line of inquiry could be followed in greater detail by a study of speakers' acquisition rates over time, as well as a detailed study of teachers' pedagogical approaches, and how they change over time. This paper also describes only a particular set of strategies at a few immersion events; fluent speakers have a separate class and at times talk amongst themselves, where other strategies are likely employed.

Why is English medium languaging the dominant method of acquiring Irish in immersion classrooms, during interactions at immersion events, as well as in the broader Irish community? Within the diversity of repertoires possessed by learners, it is the English medium "languaging" that fits comfortably within the positionalities possessed by intermediate and beginner learners of the language. Many of the individuals, such as the interviewee in excerpt 2, only attend these immersion events approximately once per

year, and they undertake individualized learning initiatives by themselves in their home

towns. In other words, many attendees spend long stretches of time either passively

acquiring the language, or speaking it only intermittently. I draw on indexicality to

explain the types of orientations members of the Irish diaspora have to the Irish language,

because it explains the ways in which languages are imbued with meaning which is not

necessarily contained in the grammatical code itself. According to W.H. Hanks,

> [i]ndexicality is a semiotic mode in which signs stand for objects through a
> relation of actual contiguity with them... Indexical centering is a primary part
> of the interpretation of discourse because it connects the evaluative and
> semantic code with the concrete circumstances of its use. Furthermore, since
> such elements are discrete parts of discourse form, they nicely illustrate the
> embedding of speech context within the linguistic code itself. (2000, 151)

Hanks illustrates by providing an example of regional accents that simultaneously

confer a speaker's origin, in addition to the semantic information being transmitted

(1999, 1). For endangered languages, the participation in spaces that are designated

to protect and revitalize languages cause those involved to interact with the barrage

of purely indexical relations that the language carries. Indeed, in situations of

endangerment, when individuals are exposed to the use of a target language, its use

may conjure more information about the social, cultural, and political contexts in

which it is embedded than its grammatical structure, which is what individuals who

are not surrounded by Irish speakers can talk about to non-speakers when they

explain why they are engaged in learning the language.

Irish language learners in Ontario whose ancestors were speakers of the

language are motivated by a deep sense of connection to the language, as well as

implicit notions of what authentic and traditional markers of an Irish ethnicity

consists of (Sullivan 2012). Most of the individuals encountered during my own

fieldwork (as well as Sullivan's) were born in North America, and this population has experienced a near-complete language shift to English, with often only fragments of memories tied to the language retained by descendants of communities that spoke the language.

The section of the Irish diaspora which participates in a historically grounded discourse of Irishness places an emphasis on the perceived cultural and traditional value of the language, which stands in contrast with other ideologies which were responsible for language shift in the first place. Further, acquiring some Irish affords a significant amount of prestige and symbolic power associated with the very act of learning a language, and being able to transmit information about the language to non-speakers and beginners. Individuals who undertake this project are seen as bearers of true Irishness (Sullivan 2012, 14) and are seen as carriers of tradition and cultural knowledge. The everyday prestige afforded to those learners outside of the immersion event also occur within an English language milieu; communicating in Irish is secondary in this context to displaying discursive, or partial knowledge of the language, thereby indexing the speaker as someone who carries certain values, even to non-speakers. A similar process is described by Ahlers as discursive framing, which entails the "foregrounding of the metacommunicative/pragmatic function of such language use of referential function" (2006, 58), which serves to highlight the identity being invoked when the language is used, especially in situations when the interlocutor's knowledge of the language itself is limited.

Conclusion

Due to language shift, the vast majority of these individuals spend their working and family lives through the English language, indexing language ideologies that promote Irish, but through a dominant language. This is a process characteristic of languages that have undergone advanced shift relative to the population, which Hill (2002, 127) calls "hyperbolic valorization". Returning to Meek's observation about the central challenge to endangered languages[21], the crux of the challenge here is to wrestle Irish from its status as a highly indexicalized code whose function in the lives of learners has been often to signal certain values through a dominant language to one that can be used in relation to the social environment at hand. This remains a central challenge to endangered languages whose semiotic and semantic "fullness" has been compromised for its beginner and intermediate speakers. One of the challenges with this population is to move from acquisition and replication, to learning, to production and back, even though they may not be fully habituated to doing this in their daily lives outside the immersion context. The chance to routinize interactions through daily immersion has begun to provide Irish learners in Ontario with a means to free Irish from its status as subordinate. However, socialization strategies that position the language as an object to be acquired, memorized, hypothetically learned permeate immersion environments, and it needs to be intentionally challenged if there is no L1 speaker immersion environment in Ontario. It is through an attention to these occurrences and trends that we might develop pedagogy that supports the group goals of acquiring and speaking Irish, or trying one's best at all times.

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[21] According to Meek, a central challenge for endangered languages is to restore the "indexical orders that link a grammar to a complex of meaning emergent through a world of experience" (2011, 50).

Conclusion

In the previous three chapters, I have made an attempt to mobilize research on language socialization, language revitalization, and reversing language shift (RLS) to elucidate what the linguistic breakdown at Irish immersion events in Ontario looks like, and what the influences might be on learners' linguistic choices. What I have shown is an emergent community of practice that possesses immense resources, connections, and capabilities, which are in the process of being mobilized towards the goal of having a vibrant Irish speaking community in the diaspora. This is taking place occurring in a heterogeneous ideological landscape that learners bring to the immersion settings.

The Irish diaspora and its language enthusiasts are an example of the contributions groups living away from the territorial homeland of their language can make in the effort to preserve their languages. The network of Irish language enthusiasts in Ontario has been able to seize upon powerful histories through the use of names that have long histories in the fight to preserve Irish, and they have been largely supported by the people in Ireland who are still using them. The Ontario enthusiasts have re-worked these traditional discourses and made them fit their lives in diaspora, signaling an expansion of the use of Irish, thousands of miles away from its main speaker base.

I have attempted to demonstrate in chapter two that for many of the individuals that congregate for the purposes of Irish immersion, they are embarking on a journey that attempts to re-fit many of the fragmentary experiences they have had as Irish people living away from home. The act of coming together is an act of mending the dysphoria caused by the disruptions in systems of meaning and the act of moving. Further still, the act of coming together to speak Irish, for many individuals, is an act of finally making sense of what they think about the language, with a large body of others who may feel the

same way, which is something they need to travel in order to do. This creates complications for the institutional goal of Irish language immersion. Further, my fieldwork has demonstrated that there is a significant body of non-Irish learners who are motivated by sometimes similar language ideologies. I intend to explore this in greater detail at some point in the future, but it is a point that is often overlooked in language revitalization efforts. Who, other than the ethnic population is learning endangered languages? Who wants to, and why?

Another feature of the emergent nature of this network is that the acquisition strategies, pedagogical approaches, and conversational tools that individuals are employing in order to communicate at immersion events are highly heterogeneous, and they speak to the goal of Irish immersion variously. Through the establishment of routines and pedagogical approaches that are reflective of how language immersion is markedly different for an L2 learner-dominated endangered language, the gap between the institutional goals of speaking Irish and the actions of individuals can be closed. Since the set of immersion events and the network as a whole is populated by highly motivated people, I believe that this is a realistic goal to strive for.

After considering the wide variability of factors which may enable or constrain the use of Irish, a picture begins to emerge that shows Irish language immersion as a project as well as a process, with a multitude of factors affecting the linguistic landscape of the events. Instead of immersion simply existing at an event, into which one simply inserts oneself, and from which one simply benefits, attention must be paid to the ways in which individuals and groups contribute to linguistic hegemony, especially during immersion events for endangered languages. When considering the nature of a particular

immersion effort, one must pay attention to highly situational language choices in order to interrogate how language hegemony is maintained.

Even prior to the beginnings of *Gaeltacht Thuaisceart an Oileáin Úir* in 2007, the Irish language networks in Ontario have continuously been the recipients of important votes of confidence by Irish language communities in Ireland. I personally think that the future of these relationships carry extremely productive capacities, especially now that we in the diaspora and those in Ireland that are engaged with the Irish language are using the same terminologies, and increasingly, speaking the same language.

At a time where increased standardization has become a formal priority for the Irish language learning efforts in North America, attending to the particular pedagogical needs and sociolinguistic landscape of the Irish diaspora could be vital to its success. New pedagogies should ultimately be evaluated both upon the basis of successful acquisition, as well as whether or not the technique maximizes the space afforded to Irish in a L2 dominated immersion setting.

Towards a Theory of Diasporic Language Revitalization

In my study of the Irish speaking and learning network of Southern and Eastern Ontario, I have highlighted some of the salient contextual considerations that might be part of a broader set of concerns relevant to all endangered language efforts that are taking place in diaspora, or away from the location in which the language is more commonly spoken. First is the question of the maintenance and creation of spaces designed for the use of endangered languages in diaspora. The community engaged in learning Irish has made a space for their efforts in unlikely landscapes. The whole process of establishing not only a *Gaeltacht*, but places that are now known to be locations where

Irish is used, has been a matter of channeling locally available resources, discourses, and

options, while combining them to make an agentive choice reflective of the landscape.

The support of these designated spaces may also require travelling of some sort by

members of the diaspora to join those who wish to engage with their language. For those

interested in Irish, this often entails travelling within cities to reach language classes, or

travelling hundreds of kilometers to the larger immersion events.

The organic creation of these networks suggest a reconceptualization of the term

"boundary maintenance" (Fishman 1991, 85) for groups who have already gone through

advanced language shift, or who have migrated from the places where the language has a

geographically delineated speaker-base. Instead, literature on agency and language

socialization can be useful in describing the choices people can make when they want to

learn their endangered language in diaspora. A focus on the potential possibilities of a

community of practice can produce an optimistic framework for language revitalization

in diaspora, as opposed to the negative picture painted by evaluative frameworks.

A second set of topics that I have attempted to elucidate is the relative constraints

on the use of a language in a multilingual context where its users have valorized the

language because of its endangered status. What are the constraints on the acquisition and

retention of a language whose individuals are from a diaspora that uses the dominant

language in their daily lives? Endangered languages whose users are increasingly

interwoven with the dominant sociolinguistic and economic landscapes may only remain

relevant in the spaces that have been designed for them, which begs the question of what

will happen to the lexical, semantic, indexical, morphological, and phonological

complexity of these languages. The types of engagements that individuals are making

with endangered languages may often carry the term "revival" or "revitalization", but often these terms obscure what amounts to a profound transformation in the transmission, use, and structure of a language, which I believe might be accelerated in revitalization efforts that take place away from their linguistic strongholds. Many endangered languages have already gone through this via the process of standardization, and the Irish language is well into that process, with a well-established standard existing alongside regional variants. Similarly, diasporic language revitalization efforts represent a profoundly contextual engagement with endangered language varieties.

Despite the potentially pessimistic tone of the last point, the engagement with endangered languages, in whatever form, is often a profoundly meaningful one. In the case of Irish in Ontario, individuals have found communities to collectively express what is important to them in a way that represents a significant engagement with an endangered language that previously did not exist, which is, in my opinion, something to celebrate. Personally, I have moved in three years from an individual with a fragmentary knowledge of a few words of Irish inherited from my Grandparents, to an intermediate speaker who is able to conduct interviews in the Irish language, listen to songs, and read without that uncomfortable feeling that I used to have that stemmed from having no knowledge of Irish. It has been an intensely rewarding journey, and I am sure that it has been for others engaged in this network as well. The Irish language network in Ontario has seen explosive growth and the creation of a committed, motivated community. My personal hope and expectation for this community is that it will continue to grow, and expand upon the opportunities that it has given those who want to learn Irish in Ontario.

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Appendix A   List of Field Sites, Interviews, and Recordings[22]

1) 04-25-2012 to 04-28-2012: *Gaeltacht Diereadh Seachtaine* (Weekend Irish speaking area)
    i. Granuaile
    ii. Tomás
    iii. Séamus and Sorcha
    iv. Máire

2) 06-01-2012 to 06-03-2012: *Diereadh Seachtaine Lán-Gaeilge*, Keswick (Language weekend, "full of Irish")
    i. Breandan
    ii. Donnacha
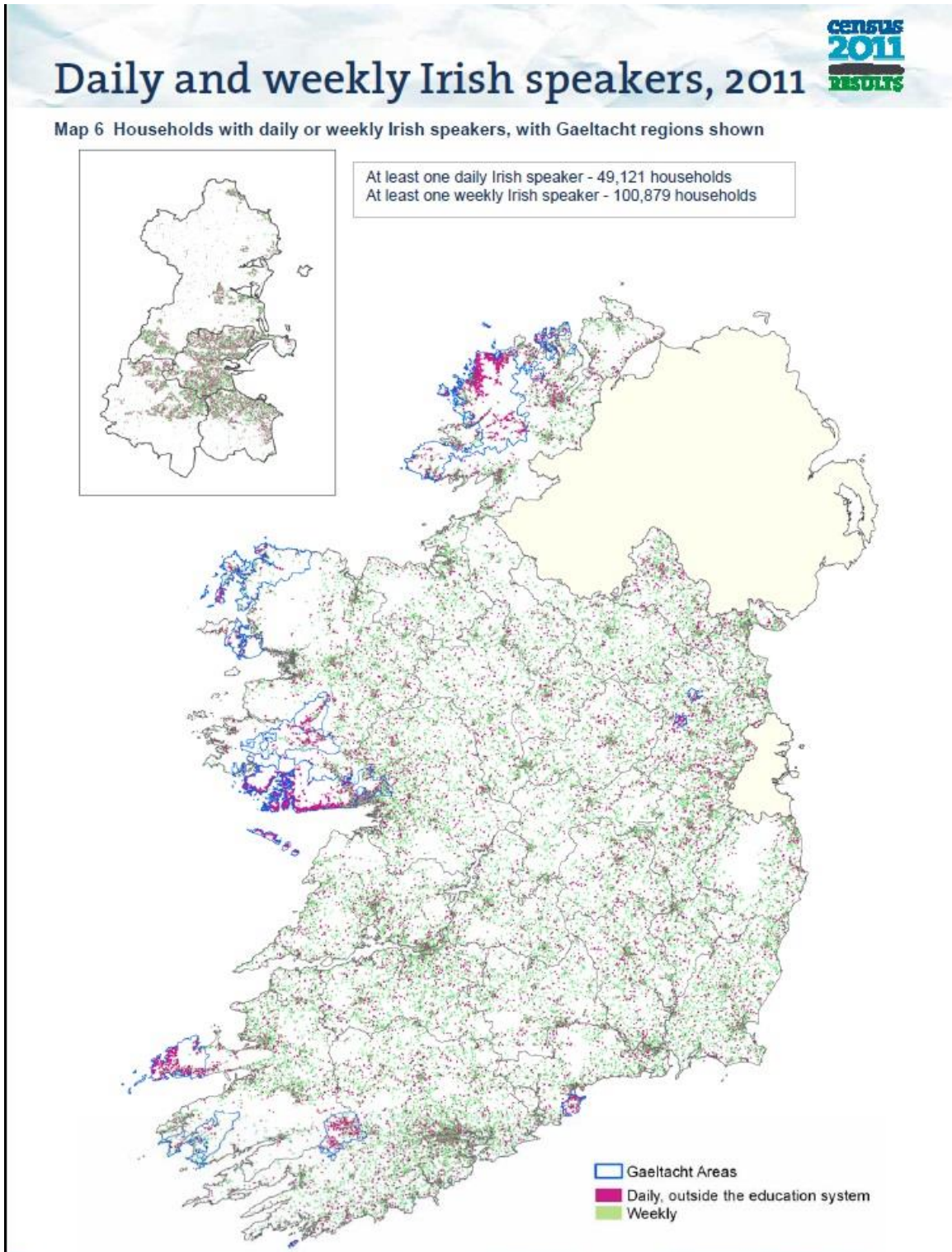   iii. Marcas
    iv. Roibéard
    v. Classroom recordings

3) 06-20-2012 CAIS conference, Ottawa
    i. Osín
    ii. Aine

4) 07-06-2012 to 07-09-2012 *An t-Oireachtas Gaeilge Cheanada, Gaeltacht Thuaisceart an Oileáin Úir* (Irish speaking area, "fresh island" [North America])
    i. Performances

5) 08-21-2012 to 08-29-2012 *Seachtain na Gaeilge, Gaeltacht Thuaisceart an Oileáin Úir*
    i. Angus
    ii. Sheenagh
    iii. Seosamh

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[22] The names of all participants have been anonymized.

Appendix B   Distribution of Daily or Weekly Irish speakers in Ireland (Central Statistics Office 2009, 29)

Daily and weekly Irish speakers, 2011

Map 6 Households with daily or weekly Irish speakers, with Gaeltacht regions shown

At least one daily Irish speaker - 49,121 households
At least one weekly Irish speaker - 100,879 households

Gaeltacht Areas
Daily, outside the education system
Weekly

Appendix C   Research Ethics Board Approval

Use of Human Participants - Ethics Approval Notice

Western

Principal Investigator: Dr. Tania Granadillo
Review Number: 18696S
Review Level: Full Board
Approved Local Adult Participants: 50
Approved Local Minor Participants: 0
Protocol Title: An ethnography of an Irish language revitalization network in North America
Department & Institution: Social Science\Anthropology, University of Western Ontario
Sponsor: Western Graduate Research Scholarship
Ontario Graduate Scholarship

Ethics Approval Date: April 05, 2012 Expiry Date: August 31, 2013

Documents Reviewed & Approved & Documents Received for Information:

Document Name	Comments	Version Date
Western University Protocol		
Letter of Information & Consent	Version 1	2012/03/29
Advertisement	Email and Phone Recruitment Script	

This is to notify you that The University of Western Ontario Research Ethics Board for Non-Medical Research Involving Human Subjects (NMREB) which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario has granted approval to the above named research study on the approval date noted above.

This approval shall remain valid until the expiry date noted above assuming timely and acceptable responses to the NMREB's periodic requests for surveillance and monitoring information.

Members of the NMREB who are named as investigators in research studies, or declare a conflict of interest, do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on, such studies when they are presented to the NMREB.

The Chair of the NMREB is Dr. Riley Hinson. The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

Ethics Officer to Contact for Further Information

Grace Kelly	Janice Sutherland
(gracekelly@uwo.ca)	(jsuther4@uwo.ca)

This is an official document. Please retain the original in your files.

The University of Western Ontario
Office of Research Ethics
Support Services Building Room 5150 • London, Ontario • CANADA - N6G 1G9
PH: 519-661-3036 • F: 519-850-2466 • ethics@uwo.ca • www.uwo.ca/research/ethics

Appendix D   CV

JONATHAN GILES

EDUCATION

2013   **Master of Arts, Anthropology**
         Specialization in Migration and Ethnic Relations (MER)
         Western University, Canada

2011   **Bachelor of Arts, Honours Anthropology**
         Western University, Canada

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

2012-2013   **Principal Researcher: The Call of the Wild Geese: An Ethnography of**
              Diasporic Irish Language Revitalization in Southern and Eastern
              Ontario Conducted research and collected data for above MA project

2009-2010   **Principal Researcher: "Intercultural Communication Project"**
              Western Heads East and Tukamwuane Women's group (TWG)
              - Investigated issues of "intercultural miscommunication"
              - Created a research programme and collected data in Mwanza, TZ
              - Circulated a report detailing the findings based on data collected

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

2011-2013   **Teaching Assistant, Western University**
              - Winter 2013: Phonetics and Phonology   (ANTH 2247B)
              - Fall   2012: Syntax and Semantics   (ANTH 2248A)
              - Winter 2012: Sociolinguistics   (ANTH 3337B)
              - Fall   2011: Syntax and Semantics   (ANTH 2248A)

PROFESSIONALIZATION EXPERIENCE
              - 2013: Certificate in University Teaching and Learning
              - 2013: Guest lecturer, Languages of Canada (LING 2185B)
              - 2012/2013: Reviewer for TOTEM: UWO Journal of Anthropology
              - 2011: Conference planner, Methods in Dialectology

PRESENTATIONS, PAPERS, AND POSTERS
              - 2013: Western Anthropology Graduate Society Conference
              - 2012: Canadian Association for Socio-Cultural Anthropology
              - 2012: Canadian Irish Studies
              - 2011: Research and Teaching of the Irish Language in North
                America: The next 20 years
              - 2009: Society for Applied Anthropology