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# **EMERGING TARGET VARIETIES OF IRISH AS A RESULT OF IRISH LANGUAGE PLANNING**

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## 1. CURRENT STATUS OF IRISH

Current census data indicate that in Ireland, 1.66 million people claim an ability to speak Irish, the national language and first official language of Ireland (English is the other), while just over 72,000 report speaking Irish on a daily basis outside the education system (Central Statistics Office 2007). Meanwhile, State-led language planning for Irish focuses to varying degrees on acquisition planning, corpus planning and status planning. Acquisition planning increasingly relies on the education system within and beyond Irish-speaking communities, but also includes initiatives to support intergenerational transmission in the home. Standardization in many ways defines official planning at the level of corpus, while a substantial body of literature is simultaneously being developed. Romaine (2008: 22) suggests that status planning for Irish has followed the Canadian example in electing to pass legislation to advance the position of the language. This has involved passing the Official Languages Act (2003), which provides a statutory framework for the delivery of State services through the Irish language. This led to the establishment in 2004 of *Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga* (Office of the Language Commissioner) which monitors the implementation of the Official Languages Act. Furthermore, Irish was officially recognised as the 23<sup>rd</sup> official working language of the EU on January 1<sup>st</sup> 2007, a step which would not have been possible were Irish not the first official language of Ireland. The Placenames Order (Ceantair Ghaeltachta) came into legal effect in 2005 and is also part of this

legislative process. It legislates for the inclusion of only the Irish language versions of placenames on street and road signs in the Gaeltacht, but has been a contentious issue. The government has also recently published a 20 year strategic plan for Irish.

## 2. THE GAELTACHT

In accordance with national language ideology following the foundation of the State, geographical areas known as Gaeltacht areas, were identified in which it was considered that Irish was spoken as a community language. Areas currently recognised as Gaeltacht areas are shaded in Figure 1 below and were initially identified as specific areas for language planning from which national language revival could be achieved. It was envisioned that by strengthening Irish in areas where the language was already spoken that it could be expanded to the rest of the country, which was by then mainly English-speaking. Rather than reversing the shift in shrinking Irish-speaking communities, the frontiers of Irish-speaking areas continue to retreat. The Gaeltacht is officially recognised as an area where Irish is one of the community languages. Just under half of those reported in the census as daily Irish-speakers reside in the Gaeltacht; the rest residing outside of these traditional Irish-speaking communities. Unshaded areas in Figure 1 are not recognised as areas where Irish is spoken as a community language. Revitalization of Irish in these areas is primarily addressed by the provision of Irish-medium education and the study of Irish as a subject in primary and post-primary education. This is significant given the nature of Irish language planning, as shall be explained below.



Figure 1. Map of Ireland with Gaeltacht areas shaded (the placenames, in the region of Munster, are the only ones studied)

### 3. STANDARDIZATION OF IRISH

The standardization of Irish represents a fundamental dichotomy and is indicative of the difficulties that have resulted from treating some aspects of language planning in Irish as a universal concern regardless of the array of contexts in which it functions (Ó Murchadha 2011). Towards the end of the nineteenth century, at the beginning of the twentieth century and following the foundation of the State in 1922, the standardization of Irish was to the fore. This was the period which coincided with the foundation of the Society for the Preservation of the Irish language in 1876, The Gaelic Union in 1880, and the Gaelic League in 1893 and during which the revival of Irish began to muster support. Central to revival efforts at this time was the promotion of Irish through education and the development of a body of modern literature, two activities for which written norms were desirable.

Classical Irish is the rigid standard variety for Irish which was prominent during the period of Early Modern Irish from the twelfth to the end of the seventeenth century and is exemplified in the writing of Seathrún Céitinn, the poet, historian and Catholic priest. This standard gradually came into disuse following English colonisation of Ireland after 1600 and occurred due to the fleeing abroad, or the dispossession of lands, of much of the Irish aristocracy who provided patronage to the literati of the time. In the absence of an agreed codified variety of Modern Irish many writers and educators reverted to the existing standard of Classical Irish as a norm for writing at this time. This standard variety, it is argued, was archaic and artificial when written in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Ó Baoill 1988: 111) and as a variety of Irish that provided general continuity with all writing in Irish stretching back as far as 1200 it had become quite removed from the Irish heard in everyday speech (Mac Mathúna 2008: 79-80).

During the revival period, a movement backed by the influential writer, an tAthair Peadar Ó Laoghaire, gained momentum, and favoured the formation of a new standard variety for writing in Irish based on the contemporary speech of Modern Irish. Significantly, the movement for *caint na ndaoine*, the speech of the people, ultimately prevailed in the debate on a standard norm for Irish in which two opposing norms were proposed, a standard norm based on Classical Irish and a standard norm based on *caint na ndaoine*. Selecting Classical Irish as the norm for writing in Irish, on the other hand, may well have served to alienate native speakers of Irish and those who had become proficient in Irish through learning (Ó Baoill 1988: 111).

Following its foundation in 1922, the Irish State assumed responsibility for compiling the Standard and assigned this role to a group of scholars who subsequently failed to agree on fundamental aspects of standardization. Crucially, the task then became that of Rannóg an Aistriúcháin, the translation section of the houses of parliament, whose primary role involved the translation of state documents and legislative materials from English to Irish and whose foremost desire therefore centred on achieving internal consistency of the language.

The standardization process consisted of almost half a century of preparation and it was during a thirteen year phase in the 1940s and 1950s that the products of this process entered the public domain. Orthography was initially in focus in 1945 when shortened, simplified spellings were outlined in *Litriú na Gaeilge: An Caighdeán Oifigiúil*, Spelling of Irish: The Official Standard, followed in 1947 by a more comprehensive version, *Litriú na Gaeilge: Lámhleabhar an Chaighdeáin Oifigiúil*, Spelling of

Irish: The Handbook of the Official Standard. These publications introduced spellings which favoured a stressed vowel in place of internal unvoiced consonantal groupings.

Grammar was the subject of the next stage in the standardization process and began with the publication, in 1953, of *Gramadach na Gaeilge: Caighdeán Rannóg an Aistriúcháin*, Grammar of Irish: The Standard of the Translation Division. Suggestions and recommendations in relation to the contents of this publication were received from native speakers from all Gaeltacht areas; from teachers and from others who had expert knowledge of the language. This advice guided the compilation of the definitive version of the Standard, *Gramadach na Gaeilge agus Litriú na Gaeilge: An Caighdeán Oifigiúil*, Grammar of Irish and Spelling of Irish: The Official Standard, which was published in 1958.

In striving to create a unitary written variety based on the non-uniform dialectal speech of all the Gaeltacht areas, a variety was created that is not consistent with any of the Gaeltacht dialects (Ó Laoire 1997: 19). This can be compared with its contemporary, *euskara bauta*, the unified form of Basque, which is based on literary varieties and was not the spoken language of anybody at the time of its selection as a standard written variety (Haulde & Zuazo 2007: 151). Thus, while the founding principle of the standard acknowledges dialectal speech as the cornerstone on which it is based, the standardization process has resulted in the creation of a prestige variety for writing which has a central role in the education system but which is quite different from the language which is heard in everyday speech (Ó Béarra 2009: 270). The potential of the Standard as a guide for teachers and for learners is recognised in the introduction (Rannóg an Aistriúcháin 1958: viii), but it is not clear that the authors realized the gravity of their task, and that their decisions on standard varieties for their own translation requirements would ultimately influence the form of Irish used in all written domains (Williams 2006: 2). This has been the case, however, and a standard variety devised to serve the needs of the translation division has for more than half a century served as the definitive standard for writing in Irish, and is, importantly, the variety promoted through the education system. Gaeltacht pupils from an Irish-speaking background, therefore, encounter at school a unitary written variety that is perceived to be quite different from their own speech. Questions of authenticity, authority and prestige consequently arise and may in fact contribute in a significant manner to the decline of the dialects (Ó hÍfearnáin and Ó Murchadha 2011; Ó hÍfearnáin 2008: 124).

The Standard has recently been reviewed. It is hoped that the revised version will soon be published so as to eliminate some anomalies and irregularities. Periods of public consultation on the Standard suggest that the revised version goes one step further in seeking to reconcile the official written variety with the dialectal varieties of the language that are inherently different. This may be achieved by overtly recognising alternative dialectal forms as legitimate.

#### 4. IRISH IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

The education system was, at an early stage, identified as a key area for the language planning of Irish. Compulsory Irish in the education system was a key strategy in revival efforts and had its genesis not only in the pre-independence ideology of cultural nationalism (Kelly 2002), but also in the notion that the restoration, through the education system, of Irish as a vernacular of the population was an important, if not a necessary step in the rejuvenation of a nation and its population (Ó Conchubhair 2009).

Irish today remains a core subject for primary and for post-primary education in Ireland and is a required subject for entry into the National University of Ireland. In addition, pre-schooling, primary schooling and post-primary schooling are provided in English-medium schools and in Irish medium-schools. Irish medium-schools are found in officially recognised Gaeltacht communities where Irish is one of the community languages, but where pupils may or may not speak Irish at home. They are also found in towns and in cities throughout the country where Irish is not a community language, but where some pupils may speak Irish at home.

The working languages and the medium of instruction for all subjects, while representing a very significant difference, remain the only distinctions between Irish and English-medium schools at the level of language. No distinction is made between schools —English-medium, Irish-medium, in the Gaeltacht or outside— in terms of the syllabus offered for Irish as a subject. Rather, Irish as a subject is offered at three levels (Foundation Level, Ordinary Level and Higher Level) regardless of the school attended or the sociolinguistic profile of the pupil. A capable student in an English-medium school, not using Irish outside the classroom context, is accordingly offered the same Irish syllabus as a pupil in an Irish-medium school for whom Irish

is the home language and is also one of the community languages. The difficulties surrounding such an approach have been further compounded in recent times with the introduction of a revised senior cycle post-primary curriculum which redistributes the weighting of marks for the components of the syllabus. This redistribution doubles the weighting awarded for the oral and aural components of the course to 50 per cent while the literature and poetry content and weighting are reduced to just over 16 per cent (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment 2008). While welcomed by many, these amendments might be considered as the simplification of an already unchallenging syllabus and exam, especially considering that a pupil speaking Irish as an everyday language may achieve up to half of their only post-primary school final assessment in Irish for listening to and speaking a language they use each day. This again results from a tendency to treat some elements of Irish language planning as a universal concern, and is again evident in initial teacher training where teaching in an Irish immersion setting is not specifically addressed and where teacher training for Irish as a subject at post-primary is somewhat inadequate (Ní Ghallachóir 2008: 197).

## 5. IRISH IN THE HOME

The revitalization and maintenance of Irish relies heavily on the education system, and much of the increase in daily speakers reported in recent census data is attributable to school-based proficiency (Ní Ghallachóir 2008: 191). This reliance on education is as evident in Gaeltacht areas as it is in non-Gaeltacht areas. Dependence on schooling outside the Gaeltacht, particularly on Irish-medium schooling, is understandable as Irish is in most cases neither the home language nor the community language. The prominence of education as a primary agency for language maintenance and revitalization in the Gaeltacht is somewhat more intricate and is not without its challenges. It can be understood in its interaction with initiatives intended to encourage intergenerational transmission in the home. The importance of intergenerational transmission of Irish in the home is acknowledged in the form of Scéim Labhairt na Gaeilge (the Irish-speaking scheme).

In addition to census data, figures from Scéim Labhairt na Gaeilge are used to gauge the current state of Irish in the Gaeltacht and have been considered when categorizing Gaeltacht areas according to the robustness of the language. Under this

scheme, which is administered by the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs, households residing in the Gaeltacht with children aged five years or older who attend primary and/or secondary school, may apply for a grant. The household must satisfy the Department inspector that Irish is their normal spoken language in order to be awarded a full grant of €260 for the current school year. Additionally, the Department may award a 50 per cent grant to households who do not achieve the desired standard for the full grant, should the Department consider the household capable of achieving the appropriate standard within a period of three years. Worth noting is that the scheme applies only to households in the Gaeltacht and not to those beyond.

The nature of the scheme is such that it is supposed to provide incentives to parents to speak only Irish to their children. These come not merely in the form of a financial incentive, but also a broader incentive in that the overall results of the scheme for each Gaeltacht area are used as an instrument in assessing the use of Irish in the home. Some may oppose the idea of providing remuneration for speaking Irish, but where households consider their language practices such that they would qualify for the full grant, they tend to apply. Results from the 2009/10 school year show that in total 2,326 households were awarded a full grant, while 449 households were awarded a reduced grant (Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs 2011). The number of households awarded the full grant has changed little in recent years, although fewer households have been awarded the reduced grant.

In essence, the scheme represents a bilingual language policy designed to allow children to become capable Irish and English speakers. The principle underlying this policy is that children, in order to become adept at speaking Irish and English, should speak Irish only in the home and also receive their education in Irish. Such an approach provides for maximum exposure to the minoritized language while competence in English is developed through interactions outside the home where English is the 'H' variety and Irish the 'L' variety in a diglossic society. This, however, is not explicitly acknowledged and is instead cloaked as a monolingual policy for Irish only.

Importantly, the scheme has not been entirely successful in this regard as an understanding of its founding principle is not entirely evident among much of the Gaeltacht population, who strive for their children to become competent bilinguals. In promoting monolingual practice in the home without reference to ability in English, state language policy might in fact be seen as an approach disregarding the role



of English. This concern is in turn addressed by some, many strong Irish speakers among them, by speaking English to children in the home setting as they perceive that English is not adequately addressed at school due to the dominance of Irish there (Ó hIfearnáin 2006: 23). Ó hIfearnáin (2006: 17) argues that the approach which sees Scéim Labhairt na Gaeilge masqueraded as a scheme to promote monolingual Irish practice is at odds with the ideology of the speech community who desire bilingualism and who are in turn concerned about children's ability in English which they feel might suffer if not addressed at school or in the home.

Such an approach is based on a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of bilingualism in a minoritized language context, but might in fact be a reaction to official policy which is thought to only promote monolingual ability in Irish. Speaking English at home is, therefore, in some cases, a strategy by parents to raise competent bilingual children. While this strategy is not conducive to achieving this goal, it is rooted in community language policy which desires bilingualism. In failing to unequivocally acknowledge the development of competence in English, state policy seeking to support the use of Irish in the home may actually contribute to attrition in intergenerational transmission of Irish in the home.

Furthermore, that the Scéim Labhairt na Gaeilge inspectors assess the language ability of applicants at school rather than in the home, serves to further strengthen in some quarters the belief that proficiency in Irish is the concern of the education system alone and that it is best addressed in that context.

This is evident in results from questionnaire-based data gathered with teenagers in early 2010 in the five Gaeltacht area of Munster shown in Figure 1. In addition to a number of other tasks, the 262 participants completed a background questionnaire which included questions in relation to the language they spoke with their parents/guardians and with siblings. Table 1 outlines the responses.

	Irish Only	Mostly Irish	Half and Half	Mostly English	English Only
With Father*	7.8	8.2	16.3	28.2	39.2
With Mother*	6.1	9.8	18.7	31.3	33.7
With Siblings	4.1	5.0	24.4	29.3	37.2

Table 1. Language spoken in the home (%)

\*0.4% spoke a language other than Irish or English with parents

The results clearly show that there is a strong, expected leaning towards the use of English in the home. More importantly, however, they indicate that while many of the participants are in fact speaking some Irish with parents and with siblings, very few speak Irish only with them. Parents, although able to speak Irish at least some of the time, have only in a small number of cases chosen to speak Irish only, or mostly Irish with their children. This suggests that language planning at an official level has not been successful in encouraging parents who have at least some ability in Irish that they ought to speak Irish only in the home in order for their children to become skilled bilinguals. The capacity of Scéim Labhairt na Gaeilge in its current guise to provide an incentive to parents who have not previously decided to speak Irish in the home to do so, is at best questionable. The scheme is currently suspended with a view to establishing a revised scheme, although no definite plans have been announced for a replacement initiative.

## 6. THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE PLANNING INITIATIVES IN ESTABLISHING TARGET VARIETIES

The standardization of Irish, the use of the education system as a medium for Irish language revitalization and strategies to promote the use of Irish as the language of the home in the Gaeltacht, each in their own way contradict the overt overall aim of language planning in Ireland. Each of these factors and the interaction between them, in turn also influence the variety of Irish that develops among those who choose to speak Irish in the Gaeltacht and beyond. Spoken varieties of Irish have been categorized as traditional Gaeltacht speech, Gaeltacht youth speech and non-Gaeltacht speech, each with their own identifying features, summarized below (Ó hÍfearnáin and Ó Murchadha 2011; Ó Murchadha 2011).

Traditional Gaeltacht speech is not a uniform variety, but consists of the primary dialects of Modern Irish (Donegal Irish, Connacht Irish and Munster Irish) that conform with the common underlying forms of all Gaeltacht varieties (Ó Siadhail 1989) yet at the same time display specifically local variation. Traditional Gaeltacht speech is conservative local dialectal speech which is prevalent among speakers born before 1960.

Gaeltacht youth speech names as its overt target the traditional speech of the Gaeltacht area in question and varies by Gaeltacht area. It is rapidly moving away from the local variety to one that is influenced by English, by the Irish of the broadcast media, by the Irish at school and by non-Gaeltacht revivalist speech. These differences are most conspicuous at the level of phonology, lexicon, grammar and syntax. Characteristics of Gaeltacht youth speech are common among young Gaeltacht speakers.

While many Irish speakers outside the Gaeltacht align themselves with a particular regional dialect to produce areal koines based on traditional Gaeltacht speech (Ó Dochartaigh 2000: 22), it is widely accepted that a variety operating independently of native speaker norms has emerged among revival speakers. Non-Gaeltacht speech is not necessarily confined to a specific age cohort. A defining trait of non-Gaeltacht speech is the influence of English on phonology, syntax and prosody and it is also notable that a Gaeltacht variety does not appear to function as a target variety.

## 7. THE ROLE OF STANDARDIZATION IN ESTABLISHING TARGET VARIETIES

Standard Irish presents a prestige variety to students. Although based on the speech of all Gaeltacht areas, the standard variety is perceived as a variety that diverges from everyday speech. As noted elsewhere (Dorian 1987: 59), teaching a prestige variety to a Gaeltacht community who speak their own local variety, only serves to highlight how different their own speech actually is. This may in turn lead to questions of authenticity and authority in relation to varieties of the language (Hornsby 2005; 2010; King 2001: 95; Ó hIfearnáin & Ó Murchadha 2011). The inception of the standard variety, its proliferation through the education system and its association with non-Gaeltacht speakers, has coincided with a shift in the Gaeltacht away from the traditional Gaeltacht vernacular towards what is described above as Gaeltacht youth speech which is closer to non-Gaeltacht speech and is, accordingly, perceived as more standard (Ó Murchadha 2011). This is in part a consequence of the promotion of the standard as a prestige form (Ó hIfearnáin 2008).

## 8. THE ROLE OF INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION IN THE HOME IN ESTABLISHING TARGET VARIETIES

Contrary to its objectives, language planning that aims to influence the home language in the Gaeltacht has in some cases led parents with proficiency in Irish to speak English in the home in the understanding that the attention paid to Irish at school and English in the home will allow children to become competent bilinguals. This is important as the home is one of the few settings where youths might encounter the traditional Gaeltacht vernacular, given the dominance of the standard variety in education. The decision to speak English as a home language limits the contact that pupils have with the traditional vernacular. The capacity of traditional Gaeltacht speech to function as a target spoken variety is, therefore, greatly reduced. Other varieties subsequently occupy these roles, namely the varieties encountered at school and in the broadcast media.

## 9. THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN ESTABLISHING TARGET VARIETIES

As an institution central to the revitalization and maintenance of Irish, the education system has enormous potential in establishing target varieties for Irish regardless of the background of the pupil. The ubiquity of the standard variety throughout primary, post-primary and tertiary education, and across all school types, serves to establish it as a prestige variety and strengthens the belief that varieties other than Gaeltacht speech compete for such a position. Some teachers in the Gaeltacht endeavour to incorporate the traditional local variety in their teaching. This, however, becomes challenging where teachers are not from the local area and are unfamiliar with the traditional local vernacular and when exemplar texts and materials to support such a pedagogical approach are lacking. Moreover, the post-primary syllabus for Irish as a subject, in which the specific educational requirements of Irish-medium pupils in the Gaeltacht and outside the Gaeltacht and pupils in English-medium schools are treated as equivalent, reinforces the conviction that Irish speakers should strive for solidarity through sameness rather than through the maintenance of diversity.

Naíonraí Gaeltachta, the pre-schools in the Gaeltacht, through their recently developed language policy, offer an alternative to the centrally mandated approach

of primary and post-primary education and instead explicitly recognize the local variety as the language of interaction (Comhar Naíonraí na Gaeltachta 2008: 6; Mhic Mhathúna & Mac Con Iomaire 2009: 83). This is a significant departure from State language planning, but the success of such a policy in maintaining the traditional local variety is utterly dependent on its implementation, as well as the extent to which the traditional vernacular is supported in the home, in the community and in later education.

## 10. EDUCATION IN THE GAELTACHT

Owing to a decision by some parents not to speak Irish at home and other parents not having Irish, Gaeltacht schools consist of a blend of pupils, some of whom speak only Irish at home, others who speak no Irish at home and another group somewhere in the middle who speak at least some Irish at home. Such a mixed cohort of pupils has implications for the variety of Irish that emerges. It has been noted that «non-traditional peer groups tend to exert an influence of lowest common denominator on the members so that the most extreme instances of reduction or non-traditional usage become prominent; in contrast with norm-enforcement within traditional vernacular» (Ó Curnáin 2007: 59). Combining pupils who speak Irish in the home with pupils who do not, in an educational setting without providing a coherent local target variety leads to the emergence of a variety described above as Gaeltacht youth speech. Gaeltacht youth speech moves further from traditional Gaeltacht speech and becomes the variety of Irish prevalent among younger Gaeltacht speakers. The dynamics of the Gaeltacht dictate that new target varieties emerge among young Gaeltacht speakers because the current structures do not adequately support the maintenance of the traditional Gaeltacht varieties.

## 11. EDUCATION OUTSIDE THE GAELTACHT

The growth of Irish-medium education outside the Gaeltacht in recent times has been an important step in expanding the use of Irish beyond the traditional stronghold of the Gaeltacht. It has contributed to the vitality of Irish as a spoken language.

These speakers outside the Gaeltacht, however, converse almost exclusively with other non-Gaeltacht speakers of the language, interaction with the Gaeltacht community being peripheral to their social and economic needs and interests (Mac Mathúna 2008: 87). The result has been the emergence of what is described above as non-Gaeltacht speech. Although some of the more extreme instances of English permeation of Irish have been considered as emerging prestige varieties (Nic Pháidín 2003: 125) many of these may be duly dismissed as common learner errors. Non-Gaeltacht speech does, however, exert increasing influence over what is deemed authoritative. Through its presence in the broadcast media and its prominence in Irish-medium education outside the Gaeltacht, non-Gaeltacht speech provides an alternative target variety for speakers, perhaps even for young Gaeltacht speakers. It has been deemed more standard than traditional Gaeltacht varieties by the present cohort of participants (Ó Murchadha 2011) and will undoubtedly be an important variety given the ambitious target of 250,000 daily speakers outlined in a recent government twenty year plan for Irish (see Government of Ireland 2010).

## 12. CONCLUSION

The emergence of Gaeltacht youth speech and non-Gaeltacht speech and the shift away from the traditional vernaculars of the Gaeltacht can be explained in the context of language planning. The standardization of Irish, Irish in the education system and initiatives aimed at promoting Irish in the home each in their own manner impact the variety of Irish that is prevalent among Irish speakers. Intergenerational transmission of Irish in the home is not of itself sufficiently robust to maintain the traditional speech of the Gaeltacht. The position of the standard variety throughout the education system, the language backgrounds of pupils in Gaeltacht schools and the emergence of non-Gaeltacht speech through Irish-medium education outside the Gaeltacht, give rise to alternative target varieties for all speakers of Irish and challenge the former dominance of traditional Gaeltacht speech in this regard.

The sustainability of these non-traditional varieties which have emerged from the interaction between various aspects of language planning remains to be seen. While the education system has contributed to the revitalization of Irish, the home remains crucial in language maintenance because «neither the community nor the

school can satisfactorily replace the home as an agency of language reproduction at least when the Irish-speaking community is so small» (Ó Riagáin 1997: 282). Revival-cum-maintenance ideology which sees Irish as an add-on for English speakers, not as an alternative or substitute (Mac Mathúna 2008: 78), has proved important in developing ability in Irish. While it has been argued that Irish currently represents a metamorphosis from the language of an impoverished and geographically remote population into a modern second language of a privileged urban elite (Romaine 2008: 19), intergenerational transmission in the home, in the Gaeltacht and outside the Gaeltacht, must be central in Irish revitalization that aims to maintain Irish as a community language.

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