Beyond the immersion revolution: Meeting ongoing challenges

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Scoil na Síceolaíochta UCD

Signpost

1. *Remember*
2. *Reflect*
3. *Re-imagine*

1. **Remember:** Roots of immersion & diversity of programs
2. **Reflect on Current Challenges**
   - Diversity of language needs
   - Teacher beliefs and attitudes
3. **Re-imagine immersion in the future**
   - Promoting parental involvement
   - Promoting language use beyond the immersion gates

Immersion models - diversity

May (2015, 2013); Montrul (2015); Nissilä & Björklund (2014); Tedick (2014):

Minority, Indigenous, Autochthonous, Heritage

"Heritage Languages that are *National Minority Languages:* **Irish in Ireland, Welsh in Wales, Basque in Spain & France, Catalan in Catalonia, Frisian in Netherlands and Germany"**

Montrul (2015:15)

- *State/official support in school systems*
- *Often with mixed classes of*
  - *L1 minority language speakers – maintenance, and*
  - *L2 learners – immersion.*
- **"Research conducted in one immersion context informs teachers and researchers in others"**
  (Palmer, Ballinger & Peter (2014:225)

Heritage languages in (some) other contexts

Nissila & Bjorklund, 2014; Darquennes, 2013; Gorter & Cenoz, 2011; Valdes, 1997, Delgado-Larocco 1998, Potowski, 2004, Palmer, 2009; DePalme, 2010; Palmer, Ballinge & Peter, 2014; Zalbide & Cenoz, 2008

Irish (*Gaeilge*) as a threatened language

Officially designated Irish speaking areas - Gaeltachtaí

State policy: teaching of Irish as L2 and maintenance of Irish as L1 in Gaeltacht

+

Obligatory subject for all from school entry to completion...
Census 2011: 41% 'speak Irish' BUT only 2% speak it daily outside school

Attenuation, Convergence & Shift among young L1 Irish speakers: Nic Fhlannchadha & Hickey 2016; Pétervary et al. 2014; Ó Giollagáin et al. 2007; Ó Giollagain, 2014

Growth of Irish-medium schools
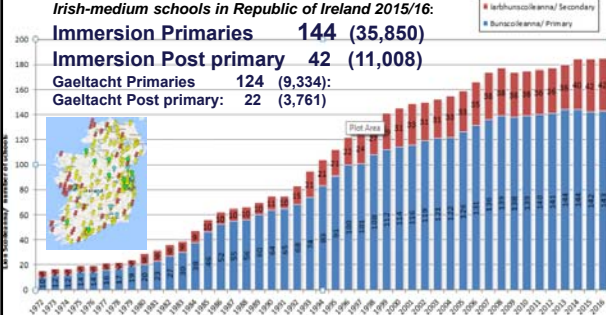
Fás ar an nGaelscolaíocht sna 26 Contae Iasmuigh den Ghaeltacht
The Growth of Irish-medium Schools in the 26 Counties outside the Gaeltacht
1972-2016

Irish-medium schools in Republic of Ireland 2015/16:

Immersion Primaries   144   (35,850)
Immersion Post primary   42   (11,008)
Gaeltacht Primaries   124   (9,334):
Gaeltacht Post primary: 22   (3,761)

Preschool immersion
Naíonraí & Cylchoedd
- Irish- & Welsh-medium preschools
Age: 3-5 years, c3 hours per day

Aim: High-quality early years education,

Immersion for L2 learners, L1 maintenance for

Minority language children

May include children from
- Irish/Welsh-dominant homes
- Irish/Welsh-English homes
- English-only homes

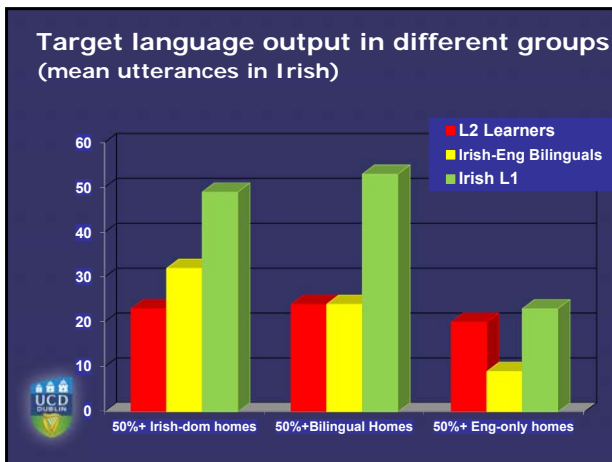## Signpost

Reflecting on Current Challenges
➢ Diversity of language needs
➢ Teacher beliefs and teacher education

"need for research on sub-groups within content-based instruction in order to prepare teachers and support best practice." Tedick & Wesely (2014)

(Fortune & Genesee, 2014; Lindholm-Leary & Genesee, 2014; Alanis, 2000; Arnau & Vila 2013; Thomas et al 2014; Hickey, Lewis & Baker, 2015; de Jong 2014);

Target language output in different groups
(mean utterances in Irish)

Legend:
- L2 Learners
- Irish-Eng Bilinguals
- Irish L1

Categories: 50%+ Irish-dom homes, 50%+Bilingual Homes, 50%+ Eng-only homes

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Eoin (4;3) Irish L1 speaker in Irish-dominant group

Eoin: Tá dhá row déanta agamsa — I have two rows done

Mise ag déanamh dhá row — I'm doing two rows

Tá níos mó déanta agamsa — I've got more done

Féach *ar mise (=ormsa) — Look *at me

Orla: Eoin, can I play with you?

Can I play with you? Can I?

Eoin: You xxx (=do?) the same

L1 Irish Child in Irish-dominant group

Eoin I'll be finished before you Orla

Look Orla, I got four

Look at me, look what I have!

Put them in there

Liam: Féach *mise Look *me (=féach ormsa)
Eoin Agus féach ar *mise And look *at me
Eoin I'll be finished before you (singing)

That's where you play with this game

You have to play with this game

Seán 4;7 (L1 Irish child) talking to group

Seán: All girls go out! *[in painting corner]*

I'm in the girls one *[putting on apron]*

T: **HAH?!** *[Displeasure/Disagreement]*

Seán: Seo *cailíní ceann. *[pointing to apron]*

This is *girls (pl) one

T: Ní hea - mar a chéile iad ar fad!

No, they are all the same!

The elephant in the room?

Ciara **I want one of them** *(looking at display of shells)*
T: 'Bhfuil tusa ag iarraidh ceann? Are you looking for one?
Tú ag iarraidh <u>muirín</u>, b'ea? You want - the scallop is it?
Ciara **Will you give me that nother shell?**
T 'Tá mise ag iarraidh ....-?'...............muirín [**Models** scallop]
Ciara **Will you give me that *nother* shell?** [loudly]
T <u>Muirín</u> Scallop (pointing)
Ciara **Will you give me that nother shell?** (Pause)
I didn't say please!
T Tá mise ag iarraidh *na sceana mara* x 2 *(modeling)*
 I want the razor clams x 2
Ciara **Give me that nother shell PLEASE!**
T Tá mise ag iarraidh na sceana mara
 I want the razor clams
Ciara **I said – I SAID please'** (plaintively to child beside her)
GIMME SOME! [taking other child's]

Reflecting on diversity of linguistic needs: Teacher beliefs

"When it comes to classroom practice, teachers are the ultimate decision makers; everything they do is filtered through their prior experiences and knowledge, in addition to their beliefs, attitudes and perceptions"
Lyster and Tedick (2014:218)

"[Teacher] Beliefs can influence pedagogical practices, and teachers may accept new approaches and teaching strategies to a more or less extent according to their beliefs."
Arocena Egaña, Cenoz and Gorter (2015)

Slapac & Dorner 2013; Coady, Harper & de Jong 2015; Cammarata & Tedick 2012; Ó Ceallaigh, 2016;

Teacher beliefs about L1 minority speakers in *Gaeltacht naíonraí*

There's no need to give special time to native speakers.

I do not think it would be right to put native speakers together. In my opinion the beginners have greater need of attention.

I do not think it is desirable to give special time to native speakers. The English speakers are in need of more time and attention.

I don't like to make distinctions between children.

Other viewpoints

Native Irish speakers are losing out in the mix.

I use the Irish speakers as models to put my point across to the other children...The other children hear the native Irish speakers using the language naturally. I mix all the children during the day, but at lunchtime I put the Irish speakers together on their own.

Welsh L1 Children's Needs not addressed

L1 speakers need more enrichment

I have a particular concern for Welsh families who send their children to Cylchoedd in all honesty….they are possibly picking up English instead of extending their Welsh vocabulary...I think it's tragic. (T2:15)

...Because [in] the Welsh-medium system the balance wasn't right ...unless there's a balance - it's not going to work. (T2:116)

They are not being stretched in my view. (T5:18)

Some effects

The reading corner and the storybooks for the Welsh children - a lot of the books are very sort of simple really. They could **benefit from more challenging books and story time**. (T5:19)

They're not able to have, you know, story time to extend and enrich their vocabulary and they're going back to simple little 'Spot' books that they've done when they were eighteen months old and I just think this isn't right. (T2:17)

Grouping in Foundation Phase

But....the best leaders would be able to group the children and try and.... target them that way ...but more informally than having a set group that would be together all the time. (T5:15)

Estyn have made recommendations [*to take Welsh L1 children together for stories*] for some cylchoedd. (T5:21)

Input, Simplification and Error

"**Teacher-student interaction holds much potential for promoting language development through questioning and feedback techniques**" Lyster & Tedick (2014:215)

Some aspects of input noted in Naíonraí & Cylchoedd:
- Prevalence of Imperatives (often simplified) over comment
- Closed-class questions over open-ended questions
- Focus on basic terms (e.g. colour & number) despite evidence of L1 speakers' need for more complex terms
- **Simplifications (i.e. errors) of features of the language:** Omission of Initial mutations (e.g. in vocatives), Case-marking in Genitive or Plural marking on adjectives
- Very frequent use of 'Hah!' "Now!" "Right!" limited, no elaboration

Little corrective feedback in input

Corrective Feedback (e.g Lyster & Ranta(1997); Long (1996); usually as Recasts

Response to feedback that prompts self-repair

(Thomas, Appolloni & Lewis, 2013; Lee & Lyster (2016); Lyster & Tedick (2014)); Lyster & Mori, 2006; Palmer et al. 2014)

Feedback → Self-Repair

Implications

Reflection on classrooms as Communities, social structures

- **Awareness-Raising:** "*What can teachers do to promote equity in the classroom?*" (Palmer et al. 2014:227)
  ⇒ Balancing of needs of L1 speakers with needs of L2 learners - in class & society
  ⇒ Urgent action to support & promote language USE among L1 peers (Thomas & Roberts 2011; Zalbide, 2013, Cenoz, 2009)
- **Intervention:** To address needs of minority L1 children – **enrichment** (Ní Dhiorbháin 2016; Mac Donnacha et al 2005; Ní Sheaghda, 2010) & **normalisation of use with peers**
- **Explicit consideration** in teacher training to address diverse linguistic needs: differentiation, language objectives, flexible grouping: Genesee & Fortune, 2014; Hernández 2015; Ó Ceallaigh 2016; Ní Longaigh 2016; Ó Duibhir, Ní Dhiorbháin & Cosgrove, 2016;

  True child-centredness:
  -> how can we best address diverse language needs?

Re-imagining immersion

FINAL FRONTIER

➤ Promoting parental involvement

Parents as Lobbyists: Central role in setting up schools e.g. Gibson & Roy **(2015)**

CANADIAN PARENTS FOR FRENCH
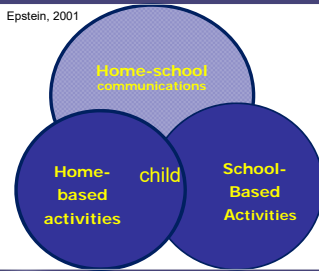
Parents offer another frontier in terms of home-school partnerships

Parkes & Tenley (2011)
Peter (2014)
Schwartz & Palviainen (2016)
Whiting & Feinauer (2011)
Harris & Ó Laoire (2006)
Weseley & Baig (2012)
Wesely (2016)
Kavanagh & Hickey (2013)
Kavanagh (2014)

Role of Parents

Parent involvement encompasses

Epstein, 2001

Home-school communications

Home-based activities — child — School-Based Activities

Parents become involved if:

a) they **feel an obligation to be involved** as a co-educator of their child

b) **feel they have the skills or knowledge** for successful involvement &

c) they **receive invitations,** opportunities or demands for involvement from their child and their child's school

Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1995)

Kavanagh (2014)
Survey data from 563 parents + in-depth interviews with *Parents, Teachers & Children*

Choice of Immersion FIQ scores

Reasons for choosing immersion (Kavanagh & Hickey, 2013, 2009; Kavanagh, 2014, 2013)

- Language and Cultural issues were the central factors for 57% of sample
- General Educational Benefits (bilingualism, general reputation, teacher commitment) were central factors for 32% of parents surveyed
- Remainder based their decision on accessibility and local factors.

⇒ **Only half primarily motivated by Irish language/culture**

Family Involvement Questionnaire (FIQ) (Fantuzzo et al. 2000)

FIQ scores and Parents' Target Language Proficiency

Parents with HIGH Irish proficiency had significantly higher

- School-Based Involvement overall than Low AND Moderate proficiency parents
- Particularly in Involvement in Decision making (membership of School's Board of Management, PTA, sub-committees)

Parents: School-Based Involvement

To be honest with you, I'm one of ...[those] parents who just drop them at the school. And it's an awful lot to do with confidence, 'cause straight away you're looking at this different language - and it freezes you out straight away. You're afraid to go to the school.... I think it's more that parents…don't want other people to think they're stupid, dumb. To be honest, that's the way I felt.

I feel intimidated in front of teaching staff/principal due to my poor knowledge of Irish. I hated Irish at school as we had to 'rote learn' and the teachers were unsupportive. I have tried to attend Irish classes (3 years running) but I didn't seem to improve.

I have felt intimidated in the past when surrounded by confident Irish speakers, like I was not part of the group. As a result I sometimes avoid these situations.

Parents: Helping with Homework

"I just wouldn't know enough... I feel I'd just tell them the wrong thing, so I feel like I would just be better off leaving them to get on with it themselves. It gets frustrating always having to say to them, "You'll have to ask your teacher tomorrow.""

As I have very limited Irish and find it very hard to understand, I would have found it very useful to get a copy of their homework in English as I would have been able to help her a lot more instead of going to the Irish-English dictionary for every second word.

Teachers' Views: Definitions of PI

It's the obvious things, you know? It's **parents' wish** that the children be educated through the medium of Irish. Then when their children are in the school, we encourage them to be involved in the school in lots of ways, not just bringing the children to school and collecting them in the afternoon: we **meet them formally** on occasions during the school year; we have **parent-teacher meetings.** We have a **parents' committee**, and we encourage parents to become involved in that committee, and we have several **other sub-committees** to help the school in lots of ways. It might be to do with **fundraising**; it might be to do with the upkeep of the school, all that type of thing. It might be to do with some of the children's **extracurricular activities** that could do with the support of parents. (AP)

Teachers: Shift in definition of parental involvement

Parental involvement would [in the past] have been more... about getting **involved in fundraising**. And getting involved in **activities in the school**. But...**nowadays it's slightly changing** in that, parental involvement now, I suppose, I think more of *how they can help with the children and help with their learning*...The way the new Reports are [official template for end-of-year school reports to parents], there's a section, you know, that sort of [shows] how the parents can help and all and get involved, so I suppose it's kind of, you know, *my idea of what it [PI] means is changing.* (AP)

Need for variety in models of Parental Involvement in Immersion

Analysis of Parent, Teacher and Child data (Kavanagh, 2014) shows need for variety in involvement options & multiple invitations:

✓ **One model for parents with proficiency in the target language**
PLUS widening of focus from School-based to include more Homebased activities.

✓ **Alternate model for parents with low/no TL proficiency** with advice on ways they *can* make a valuable contribution to their child's education in immersion rather than focusing on their deficiency in the TL:

- Options showing school *values & seeks to increase Ps' contribution* to developing their child's L1 skills ⇒ strategies for *L1 language/literacy supportive homes*
- Recommendations of home-based opportunities for children to be exposed to TL in a relaxed/non-school-like way, e.g. homework asking parents to watch & enjoy a particular TV cartoon with younger children in TL & discuss in L1.
- Help with homework - exploration of translanguaging activities to deepen child's learning, e.g. homework assignment in history/science needing discussion with parent in L1 & write up in TL; provision of English glossaries for Maths terminology needed for homework to support Ps' engagement or suggestion that Ps use the English version of Math textbook to help with homework.

Re-imagining immersion in the future

Target Language use *beyond the immersion classroom*

BEYOND THE SCHOOL GATES

and language and identity

Reification of the TL instead of *use*

Immersion in Ireland, Wales, Scotland, Brittany, Isle of Man => low social use of Celtic languages (Will, 2012, Ó Duibhir (2009); Ó Ceallaigh, Leavy & Hourigan (2016)

Echoed in research from Basque country (Zalbide & Cenoz 2008)

Smith-Christmas (2016): Is Irish really for talking?

- children may not see non-school use as *possible OR desirable.*

Tendency of adults to reify the language & make children 'perform'

"Through their framings of Gaelic as a performance and a 'lesson' they [adults] normalise...that the one [only] place the children will speak Gaelic is in the classroom context" (p.10)

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Re-imagine: Expanding the model

Currently

❏ Majority of schools teach Irish as a single subject

❏ Expertise in immersion could promote expansion of CLIL

"Not every school can be a Gaelscoil. However, CLIL could be used immediately as a type of bridge between teaching Irish as a single subject, and full immersion"   Ó Laoire (2016: 128)

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Re-imagining and moving forward...

**Begin again where frosts and tests were hard.
Find yourself or founder. Here, imagine
A spirit moves, John Harvard walks the yard,
The books stand open and the gates unbarred.**

Seamus Heaney **Villanelle for an Anniversary**

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Co. Kerry 'The 3 sisters'

UCD DUBLIN **Go raibh maith agaibh!**
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References

In attached document

UCD DUBLIN

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