The Irish language and the media

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Changes in Irish language media reflect changes in the wider national project. Throughout the world language has been one of the defining characteristics of nations used by nationalists of various shades to justify their cultural, economic and political projects. The media have been an important tool in those projects. In Ireland, since the nineteenth century, the Irish language has been used to validate the Irish nation and justify an Irish nation-state. There are identifiable phases of the national project, in the context of which the landscape of Irish language media can be understood, from the more explicit national project in the early years of the State, through the liberalising and minority-rights phase in the second half of the century to the more individualistic phase of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

In the early years of the State there was little or no choice of radio stations. The amount of Irish on radio gradually increased as the reach of the broadcasts spread from the regions around Dublin and Cork across the country. The broadcasts in Irish were aimed at the whole population. In the middle of the century the national project faltered and was liberalised. The decrease in the amount of Irish on radio (and television) was opposed in the context of community minority rights (from which Raidió na Gaeltachta emerged). In recent years there have been interesting developments in terms of providing radio and television programmes for individuals rather than for the nation or minority community. This can be seen, not only in the emergence of new Irish-language radio and television stations, but also in developments on existing channels.

1   Introduction

Newcomers to Ireland flicking through the channels on their television or radio could be excused for believing that Irish would be commonly heard on the street, but they are likely to walk the highways and byways of Ireland for a long time in search of the spoken language. Unbeknownst to them, however, among all the conversations going on around them, there is usually an Irish speaker within a stone's throw. Perhaps one in six people in the Republic of Ireland can converse in Irish. This is more than half a million people of varying levels of fluency – a reasonable audience for Irish language media. The audience, of course, need not be limited to the linguistic group, but can incorporate the whole nation. Examining the connection between the Irish language and nation gives insights into why one in six people can converse in Irish, why there are Irish language media and why it is more than of niche interest.

Irish language media is the focus of this chapter – primarily media of the spoken word, such as radio and television – understood within the concepts of nation and ideology. This chapter is structured chronologically according to what appear to be different ideological periods over the past century, focusing in more depth on the more recent periods.

2   Conceptual context

There are two aspects to the conceptual context for this chapter. The first is the nation. In this chapter 'nation' is not a synonym for state (see Connor 1978), but rather nation is understood culturally. Putting it simply, Gellner (1983: 47) referred to the nation as 'a culture in need of a political roof'. From another perspective, a nation is a group of people who share something in common, who consider themselves a nation and have or want their own state attached to territory or land. This definition provides four elements: culture; national consciousness (without which there can be no more than the seed of a nation planted by intellectuals); state (existing, regional, or longed-for – the political roof for the culture à la Gellner); and land (usually a specific territory, parts of which are invested with national import (such as historic sites), but sometimes it is a desire for some place to make a homeland). The national consciousness usually arises as a result of a political argument or political project. This is where language enters the scene as evidence that there is an existing unique nation, *qua* culture, in need of a political roof – Gellner (1983: 45) called it 'the nationalist principle of *cuius regio, eius lingua*'.

The second aspect of the conceptual context is ideology. In this chapter ideology is not a synonym for ideas, but rather has a wider element and critical dimension. Ideology is viewed here as 'ways of acting, thinking and feeling' (to borrow Durkheim's phrase – Durkheim 1938 [1895]: 2) which (adding a critical dimension from Thompson 1994: 135) intersect with positions of power. What this means is that national ways of acting, thinking and feeling form structures which are advantageous to some members of the nation (even if there is limited, or no, awareness of that advantage).

Drawing on this concept of ideology the main part of this chapter will involve a focus on Irish language media in four time periods based on ideological (rather than linguistic) phases, concluding with a suggestion that we are now entering a cosmopolitan phase. First there will be a discussion of the situation in the period up to the 1920s; the following section will deal with the 1920s to 1950s; then the period from the 1950s to the 1980s; and, finally, the period from the 1980s to the present. The rationale for structuring the chapter in this way is to provide a context and a more analytical insight into the situation of the Irish language and of Irish language media today.

National languages (particularly languages in the media) have played an important role in allowing people to imagine the wider community of speakers to which they belong. Anderson (1991) called this the imagined community. In the context of the first national movements of the American and French Revolutions in the late eighteenth century and the wars of independence in Latin America in the nineteenth century there is a strong element of civic republicanism. In this context language was approached rather pragmatically – a *lingua franca* was required for all citizens to communicate. Taking the French Revolution as an example, initially the focus on civic culture allowed for a diversity of languages. Bell points out that the National Assembly voted in 1790 to translate its laws into various regional tongues (Bell 2003: 173) and in 1792 the Minister of Justice set up an office to translate laws and decrees into German, Italian, Catalan, Basque, and Breton (Bell 2003: 72). This situation did not last long, and by 1794 there was a clear agenda to eradicate linguistic diversity, see Bell's (2003: 171-177) discussion of the

'Politicization of the language'. Although this was a civic form of nationalism, the consequences paralleled ethnic nationalism. Bemoaning the results, Bell wrote: 'I would argue that the cultural uniformity advocated by most Republicans, from Gregoire onwards, has caused a real degree of French cultural impoverishment' (Bell 2003: 21).

Anderson argued that these first national movements were new in the sense that they were concerned with making a new people, rather than with the genealogy of the nation or the historical people. We find that in 1792 at the National Convention in Paris Jean-Paul Rabaut de Saint-Etienne argued that 'we must make the French a new people' (Bell 2003: 21). This is often referred to as the civic dimension of nations and nationalism. Although this dimension continued as a theme in later national movements – for example Massimo d'Azeglio argued in 1861 that 'We have made Italy. Now we have to make Italians.' – the second generation of nationalist movements in Europe in 1815-50, according to Anderson (1991: 194-195), approached the nation as an 'awakening from sleep'. This was the ethnic dimension, the argument being that the nation is not new, rather it existed before and now needs to be awakened. This also explained instances in which intellectuals could not speak the national language – because awakening the nation also involved awakening the national language.

Languages in print, according to Anderson (1991: 44-45), laid the bases for national consciousness for a number of reasons. First, it provided a single 'field of communication', which allowed an individual to imagine being part of a nation. Initially, this involved novels and newspapers, but later it included radio and, even later, television. Second, the fixing of language in text slowed the rapid linguistic changes of an oral community. Over centuries the language maintained sufficient fixity to be understood and this lent the language and, by association, the nation an air of antiquity. The putative antiquity supported the argument that there was a nation in the past which could be awakened from sleep. Third, Anderson (1991: 45) argued that the print-language was the language of power. This explained the importance of 'breaking firmly into print – and radio' (and television) for a language of 'subordinate status'.

3   The nationalist ideology

The construction of the Irish nation went through three phases from the late eighteenth century to the late nineteenth century, beginning with a mythical antiquarianism, followed by a more rigorous academic antiquarianism (see Hutchinson 2001), in which the Irish nation would be English-speaking and British in civic and political life, with an Irish flavour to provide distinctiveness. Finally, beginning in the mid to late nineteenth century there was a nationalist phase. In the late nineteenth century and during the twentieth century Irish nationalism was a project of awakening the Irish nation – awakening its culture in terms of sports, dancing, language, etc. Sometimes cultural elements were more than asleep and required an amount of invention. As a result of this nationalist project written output in Irish increased from the late nineteenth century (see Delap 2007: 23-35), but there were no media of the spoken word until the 1920s. The only event which could be called a broadcast was a Morse Code message sent from the GPO

(General Post Office in Dublin) during the Easter Rising of 1916 to any and all who could receive it (Gorham 1967: 2).

The main ideological thrust during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century was nationalist – it was a political project in cultural clothing – the focus was on the political independence, justified by an Irish nation in contrast with an imagined 'other' of Englishness and Britishness. The Irish language played an important role in this project. By the late nineteenth century the number of Irish speakers had been declining for several centuries. It survived mainly in the remotest districts of the western seaboard. Congested as many of these areas were, they were hit hard by famine and emigration. Although this patchwork region of Irish speakers was idealised in nationalistic poetry, plays and paintings, this did little to preserve the language in these areas. Instead, the language was promoted as a second language in the rest of the island. There were Irish-language promoters who cycled the countryside to offer classes; there was the gradual introduction of Irish into the education system (initially as an extra-curricular subject) and even the Irish-language requirement for entry into any of the colleges of the National University of Ireland (National Universities of Ireland Act 1908) – a requirement still in force today. All of this was about constructing an Irish nation to go with an independent state. The project was not complete at independence, but set the scene for the manner in which the new State would deal with the nation, including the Irish language and Irish language media.

4. The protectionist ideology

The ideology of this period was nationally-oriented and relatively authoritarian. Its main focus was cultural and top-down, in which the State (and other social forces) attempted to forge a nation by imposing its ideology on the people. Following the turmoil of the war of independence and the civil war in Ireland, an important objective for the new State was to unite the people. According to Gellner (1983) nationalism plays an important role in the homogenization of society. He argued that industrial society requires homogenization and that this is provided by nationalism. A key criticism of Gellner's argument is that there are examples of nationalism in the absence of an industrial society. Without Northern Ireland (or Britain) the twenty-six counties of the new State was clearly an agricultural society (with more than half the working population employed in the agricultural sector). Nationalism, however, can function as a tool of homogenization for the state even in an agricultural society.

A key tool available to the State – building on the pre-independence nationalist project – was the education system. A new tool that became available to the State from the 1920s was radio. In both cases the focus of the ideology of the time was on the masses – to use the education system and radio as linguistic tools of a nationalist policy. The emphasis was on the uniqueness of the Irish nation, and on emphasising and further establishing its unique cultural characteristics (such as the Irish language). Both the attitude of uniqueness and the emphasis on culture were manifest to some extent even in the economic and political policies which were pursued from the 1930s to the 1950s.

The instability of the early 1920s in Ireland meant that radio arrived rather later than in other European countries. Nonetheless, as radio was considered an important tool in establishing the Irish nation a White Paper on broadcasting was prepared within months of the end of the civil war. The Postmaster-General argued that a radio station was vital in the effort of setting the nation on its feet and that if Irish people could hear only British broadcasts it would have a negative effect on the restoration of the Irish language. He went on to argue that, although the people want to be entertained, cultural progress is more important than entertainment. (Watson 2003: 14)

Although the protectionist trend of this ideological era was evident in efforts to establish the Irish nation, the ideology did not reach its peak until the 1930s and 1940s. During the 1920s there were some threads of a more liberal and minority approach which came later, but these were normally threads of arguments that tended to be on the losing side in the outcomes. During the debate of the 1926 Wireless Telegraphy Bill the Postmaster General explained to the Dáil (30 November 1926) that there would be a channel for the Gaeltacht. There was also some discussion of financial matters, such as Conor Hogan's statement in the Dáil (7 Decemeber 1926) that

> The Minister for Posts and Telegraphs stated that he was going to erect a wireless station for the Gaeltacht. I confess that I have the feeling that if the Government could give bread to the people there it would be better than giving them a wireless station. We have no information; no figures have been put before us as to what the charge will be on the taxpayer. I do not think it is right that, at present, any money, even one penny, should be expended in respect of this service, which places an additional burden on the taxpayer.

Furthermore, the possibility of a private commercial radio station was considered. Nonetheless, the government decided that the new station should be run from the Department of Posts and Telegraphs, which kept this nation-building tool within the control of the State. The first radio station in Ireland was 2RN from 1926 (Pine 2002; Watson 2003: 16-19).

During this era radio listeners were an indistinguishable mass on whom the State could impose the type of programming it deemed best for the nation. Technical limitations – the lack of power of the transmitters – meant that radio was restricted to the regions around Dublin (and for a time Cork, with 6CK) until Radio Éireann (RÉ) began in the mid-1930s. Linguistic limitations – the lack of fluent Irish speakers – meant that the State could not fully implement the linguistic element of its national project on radio. By the 1940s, however, the amount of Irish on RÉ reached a peak of ten per cent of total broadcasting time (Watson 1996: 52).

The disparity between native Irish speakers (from the Gaeltacht)[1] and the secondary bilinguals (Gaeilgeoirí)[2] was reinforced by policy during this era – a distinction which is not widely appreciated and has continued to increase to the present day. The state policy of actively promoting Irish – even imposing it – is

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[1] Irish-speaking communities mainly in the west.
[2] Literally Irish speakers, but usually refers to Irish speakers from outside the Gaeltacht.

clear in the education system and radio. This was a policy to increase the number of Gaeilgeoirí and has been relatively successful in creating Irish speakers through the education system. On the other hand a policy of preservation (and restoration) could have facilitated the survival of Irish in the Gaeltacht. The policy, however, seemed to be closer to preservation through neglect and seclusion.

Although the amount of Irish on radio increased during the 1930s and 1940s aimed at the nation as a whole, the Gaeltacht was considered only occasionally. In the early 1930s the possibility of providing county committees with access to radio raised the possibility that the Galway committee could be the first step toward a separate Irish language radio channel – this channel did not materialise for another four decades. On another occasion, because of the lack of radio ownership in the Gaeltacht, the possibility of providing free radios was considered. The conclusion, however, was that radio might undermine linguistic policy by spreading the English language; after all, the most popular programmes on radio were in English and the people in the Gaeltacht would tune in to listen to them. These are just two examples of how the preservation of Irish in the Gaeltacht was pursued through isolation or even neglect or inactivity. On the other hand, the promotion of Irish as a second language is clear in Éamon de Valera's[3] suggestion that instead of reading the news alternatively in the three main dialects of Irish, the news should be read in a version of the language which would best be understood by English speakers. This suggestion was not acted on (Watson 2003).

During this era the ideological approach was primarily cultural and supportive of the national project. This meant protecting the nation from outside influences and reinforcing its distinctiveness, its cultural elements – 'symbol, myth, memory, value and tradition' (Smith 2009: 25). This is the defence of a symbolic boundary; the cultural elements are of more symbolic than practical importance. This helps to explain the contradictions of the language policy and of people's attitude to Irish – it is not necessary to create an Irish-speaking nation, all that is required is that Irish be understood to exist, that somebody speaks it. This is sufficient for the symbolic purposes of the nation. The evidence of the existing language was (and is) in school, on the radio and in the Gaeltacht. The danger inherent in this is that the symbol is expected to represent a reality (or at least the possibility of a reality).

By the 1950s the failures of the national project became more apparent. This was clear not only in the cultural aspects, but also in the political and economic aspects of the national project – the island was still partitioned and the economic situation was dire. In that context there was a shift from a more protectionist to a more liberal ideology, which influenced the situation culturally, politically and economically. In practice this meant a more market-oriented approach. In the context of radio this was evident in a change from deciding what listeners needed to ascertaining what listeners wanted. In the early and mid-1950s a number of listener surveys were conducted. The results for Irish-language programmes (except news) were so low that zero per cent was within the margin of error. These figures were never made publicly available (see Watson 2003: 33-35 for details).

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[3] Head of Government for most of the 1930s-1950s and Head of State from the late 1950s to the early 1970s.

5.   The liberal ideology

The ideology of this period was group- and market-oriented. The main focus was economic, and more reactive to group interests than in the previous ideology. With the lack of progress on cultural objectives such as 'restoring' the Irish language, political issues such as the northern question, and economic issues such as employment and emigration, it became apparent by the 1950s that the national project had stalled, if not failed, there was a shift toward a more liberal, market-oriented ideology. This ideology was reinforced by economic and social liberalisation from the 1950s onwards influenced in part by the Programmes for Economic Expansion from the late 1950s and the 1960s, the arrival of television in 1962, and by Ireland joining the European Economic Community in 1973. In this context the State's focus on cultural aspects waned, and, in the balance between the symbol and practice of the Irish language, there was a swing away from practice to symbol in terms of the vision for the whole nation. This meant that although Irish was an important symbol for the nation, it was not necessary to make everyone speak it. In fact, it was not even necessary to make anyone speak Irish or listen to it, except schoolchildren; and, even then, the Irish-language schools shifted increasingly from state to voluntary initiative through this and the following eras. The use of radio and television to promote the linguistic policy of the State, although explicit in legislation, was no longer central in practice. This resulted in a reduction in the amount of programming in Irish and a shift in emphasis from broadcasting at everyone to broadcasting for a potential audience.

As well as the ideological shift in Ireland beginning in the 1950s, there was also a technological shift as the State considered the introduction of television. The view of the cultural power of radio, was applied to television by the President of Ireland, Éamon de Valera, in his speech on the occasion of the first RTÉ television broadcast on 31 December 1961, in which he said

> I must admit that sometimes when I think of television and radio and their immense power, I feel somewhat afraid. Like atomic energy it can be used for incalculable good but it can also do irreparable harm. Never before was there in the hands of men an instrument so powerful to influence the thoughts and actions of the multitude.

The ownership and control of television (and radio) in the form of a semi-autonomous authority (established in the RTÉ Authority Act, 1960), part publicly funded (by license fees levied on households with a television) and part commercially funded (by selling advertising time), reflected the new ideology in which the State no longer used the media directly as a tool of linguistic policy. Nonetheless, the 1960 Act did place certain obligations on RTÉ as regards the Irish language, such as Article 17: 'In performing its functions, the Authority shall bear constantly in mind the national aims of restoring the Irish language and preserving and developing the national culture and shall endeavour to promote the attainment of these aims'. These obligations, however, were in conflict with the new liberal market-oriented ideology in which viewership ratings were valued. The result was that barely two and half per cent of television airtime was in Irish.

Although an Irish-language television channel was not established until 1996, there were frequent suggestions from the 1950s onwards. In the late 1950s the Irish-language organization Gael Linn offered to run television in Ireland on a commercial basis (see www.gael-linn.ie and Seanad Debates 20 January 1960). In 1963 Conradh na Gaeilge passed a motion and sent a letter to Government requesting the establishment of a television channel in Irish on the edge of the Gaeltacht (Watson 2003: 77). Doolan et al. (1969), who had been working in RTÉ, suggested having a Gaeltacht television channel. Much of the focus of such suggestions was the lack of a television service for Irish speakers, particularly the Gaeltacht community. This was mainly in opposition to the continuation of the earlier nationalist and protectionist ideologies. In the 1960s the policy in RTÉ was to include as much Irish as possible across a range of programmes. This policy was called the 'diffusion policy' (disparagingly dubbed the 'confusion policy' by a number of RTÉ staff). The objective was to expose as large an audience as possible to a few phrases in Irish.

In the context of this dearth of programming in Irish there were reactions from Irish-language and Gaeltacht organisations. In terms of the Irish-language organisations, the continuing problem was the lack of progress in achieving the 'national aims of restoring the Irish language' (mentioned in the 1960 Act, above) and a shift in emphasis away from that project. The most relevant demand here was for an increase in the amount of airtime devoted to Irish. The Gaeltacht organisations, however, managed to tap into the liberal ideology, by framing their demands as a minority rights issue in the form of Gluaiseacht Ceart Sibhialta na Gaeltachta (the Gaeltacht Civil Rights Movement). This paralleled the civil rights movements in Northern Ireland and in the United States. The main argument was that the Gaeltacht had been neglected. One of the key successes of this movement was the establishment of a Gaeltacht radio channel (within RTÉ) called Raidió na Gaeltachta (RnaG), which began broadcasting in April 1972, but it also focused the State's attention on the Gaeltacht, which led to an industrialisation policy, amongst other things, for the Gaeltacht during the 1970s. The industrialisation policy was successful insofar as the population of the Gaeltacht did not decline during the 1970s, but its success was tarnished by the declining number (and percentage) of Irish speakers within the Gaeltacht.

RnaG has worked well as a community radio station, which has reinforced a sense of shared community across the scattered region of the Gaeltacht. It has also been of linguistic interest as the daily exposure to the various dialects has improved their mutual intelligibility. Furthermore, à la Anderson, it gave a minority linguistic community access to an important medium of communication. Since 2005, in order to attract youthful listeners, RnaG has permitted the broadcasting of songs with lyrics in English.

Within the liberal ideology the shift away from obligation and national practice was also manifest in the removal of a number of obligatory linguistic elements of policy, such as the requirement to pass Irish in the Leaving Certificate and the Irish language requirement for recruits to the Civil Service (removed in 1973 and 1974, respectively) (see Watson and Nic Ghiolla Phádraig 2011: 447). Despite this ideological shift, threads of the national project continued in policy and in public perception, so that although the tension remained between the importance of the Irish language as symbol and practice, the market-oriented perspective meant

that there was a swing from efforts to bring about practice at the national level to encouragement or tolerance of practice at the group level. This was also evident in the State's withdrawal of whole-hearted support for, and active promotion of, Irish-language education, which resulted in the declining number of Irish-language schools in the early part of this era, but was followed by an exponential growth of such schools from a civil society initiative since about 1970 (see Watson 2007: 367 for a graph of the number of new Irish language schools up to 2005).

With the more market- and group-focused approach of this ideological period there was more interest in public opinion, ratings, and the like. This was achieved in the media through regular listener surveys, but also continuously through the television rating systems, which provided RTÉ with valuable insight into the size and demographic profile of audiences for their programmes. There were also surveys to gain further insight into issues such as support for the Irish language generally and Irish-language media specifically. For example, in March 1977 RTÉ appointed an Advisory Committee on Irish Language Broadcasting. This committee claimed that a large majority of the population agreed with the use of Irish on television and radio. Although their report was not published, their proposals were summarised a decade later in the *Report to the Ministers for the Gaeltacht and Communications* (Working Group on Irish Language Television Broadcasting 1987: vii-viii). Another example is a survey commissioned by the Broadcasting Commission of Ireland (BCI) in which they claimed that seventy-nine per cent of the population agree with the statement that 'Irish language radio programmings should be promoted fully by the Government' (BCI 2004: 8).

The continuing support for the Irish language stems from its symbolic importance for the nation, but this was not manifest in audience figures for Irish-language programmes. Although programmes in Irish could be justified on the basis of the importance of the Irish language as a national symbol, as had been the case in the previous period, the market-oriented element of the liberal ideology was in tension with it. Nonetheless, the liberal ideology contained an element of minority rights which helped to justify providing a service for Irish speakers. Programmes for learners of Irish continued to be broadcast, but there was also an emphasis on providing Irish speakers with a range of programmes in Irish and even a separate radio station for the Gaeltacht (RnaG).

In 1978 RTÉ established a second television channel. The initial demand had been to transmit BBC across the country because those near the border or the east coast could already receive British channels using a large aerial. The decision taken was to have an RTÉ2 rather a BBC. Irish-language organisations expressed the fear that programmes in Irish would be broadcast on RTÉ2 and that this channel would have lower ratings. In terms of the earlier national ideology this would further hinder the promotion of Irish as a national language, and from the perspective of the liberal ideology it could strengthen the market-oriented dimension of the ideology against the group-rights dimension.

In the 1980s the State and RTÉ came under further pressure to improve its Irish language service, particularly on television.

6.   The neoliberal ideology

The ideological shift in this period was from liberal to neoliberal, with a further move from the cultural aspects of the national ideology deeper into the economic dimension. This ideology was more market-oriented with a focus on individual rights more than on group rights. With respect to the Irish language there was a shift toward the linguistic rights of the individual. Nonetheless, threads of the national and liberal ideologies continue, which means that the Irish language still appears to have a privileged position and group rights have not been abandoned. It was in this context that a national Irish-language television channel and a Dublin-based radio station were established.

The availability of the Gaeltacht radio channel cast in stark contrast the dearth of programming in Irish on television, which barely amounted to two per cent of the broadcasting time in any average week from the 1960s to the 1980s, and consisted, for example, of a brief daily news bulletin (a more detailed version of which could have been watched earlier in English), a brief weekly children's programme, and a weekly half-hour current affairs programme (see Watson 2003: 80 for this example from one week in 1985, and page 97 for an improved selection in 1995 – still accounting for only two per cent of total broadcast time on RTÉ1 and 2). Throughout the 1970s Irish language and Gaeltacht organisations, as well as individuals, demanded an increase in the amount of Irish on RTÉ television. During the 1980s programmes in Irish were gradually transferred from RTÉ1 to RTÉ2 without any substantial increase in the percentage of programming in Irish. This led to a gradual shift in the focus of demands from more Irish-language programmes on RTÉ television to demands for a separate Irish-language television channel.

From 1980 onwards a group calling themselves Coiste ar son Teilifís Gaeltachta (a committee for Gaeltacht television) and later Meitheal Oibre Theilifís na Gaeltachta (Teilifís na Gaeltachta cooperative) tried to replicate the campaign which had led to the establishment of RnaG. Arguing that the lack of Irish-language media was hampering the inter-generational transmission of the language in the Gaeltacht, one of the members, Donncha Ó hÉallaithe (1997) argued:

> chonaic muid an dream a bhí faoi mhíbhuntáiste ná seo iad pobal na Gaeltachta a raibh an cultúr áitiúil cineál préamhaithe go huile agus go hiomlán i nGaeilge go leanúnach leis na céadta bliain agus go raibh sé ag teacht chuig an bpointe nach raibh ag éirí leis an bpobal sin an teanga a chur go dti an chéad glún eile mar *just* bhí paistí ag diúltú. Bhí *reaction* uafásach ó pháistí sna hochtóidí in aghaidh na Gaeilge, *just* bhíodar ag diúltú — chomh luath agus a d'fhoghlaimidís Béarla dhiúltóidís Gaeilge a labhairt.
>
> [we saw that the group which was disadvantaged was the Gaeltacht community whose local culture was kind of rooted totally and completely in the Irish language continuously for hundreds of years and that it was reaching the point when that community was not succeeding in passing on the language to the next generation because children just were refusing. There was a terrible reaction from children in the eighties against the Irish language, they were just refusing – as soon as they would learn English they'd refuse to speak Irish.]

Following a failed television broadcast attempt in 1980, the group managed to broadcast live and pre-recorded material within a Gaeltacht area of County Galway in November 1987 and again in December 1988. In the years soon after this the Gaeltacht group became part of a wider national television campaign, FNT (Feachtas Náisiúnta Teilifíse). Although within this campaign the issue of whether it would be a Gaeltacht or national television channel was rather obscure, even the title suggested that the focus was not on a community television channel. The campaign continued for a number of years with a fortuitous coincidence of timing with the appointment of Michael D. Higgins (current President of Ireland) as the Minister with responsibility for both the Gaeltacht and broadcasting (1992-7), whose electoral constituency was West Galway, and who had been preceded at the end of the previous government by Máire Geoghegan-Quinn (1992), from the same constituency, who had laid the groundwork in the Department of Communications.

The new Irish-language channel began broadcasting in 1996 under the name Teilifís na Gaeilge (TnaG), but was relaunched as TG4 three years later. Initially, although with some autonomy, the channel came within the remit of the RTÉ Authority; following the Broadcasting Act of 2001, however, TG4 was enabled to go its own way. Born in the era of the neoliberal ideology, TG4 is a child of the period, as is evident in some of the points made by Pádhraic Ó Ciardha. As adviser to both Ministers (mentioned above) and subsequently as Information Officer and current Deputy Executive Officer of TG4 Ó Ciardha has played an important role in the direction which the channel has taken. Before the channel began broadcasting Ó Ciardha (1996) made a number of points which appear to place the channel within the earlier ideologies, but are really threads more clearly woven into the current neoliberal ideology. Echoing the national ideology, he argued that it was a national channel for the Irish public as a whole and not a minority or community channel focusing only on serving Irish speakers, but it just happened that the channel would broadcast in Irish (with subtitles). His point that the new channel would have to attract a large audience, or a smaller audience with a large expendable income, resonated with the market-oriented approach of the liberal ideology. However, these threads weave together within the neoliberal ideology in which limited resources and an obligation to commission programmes meant that, more than RTÉ, the new channel, and especially the independent producers, would be subject to market forces. Furthermore, Ó Ciardha (1996) claimed that the channel would not be an instrument of the Government's language policy – however, in recent years the channel has pledged to support the Government in reviving the language ('Tacú leis an Rialtas chun an Ghaeilge a athbheochan trí oibriú go dlúth leis ar chur i bhfeidhm na Straitéise 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge (2010-2030)' [support the government in order to revive Irish though working closely with the government in order to implement the 20-Year Stategy for Irish (2010-2030)] TG4 2012: 6).

TG4 has managed the tensions between the different ideological demands. In a recent annual report there is a pledge to serve the culture of the whole island, of the Gaeltacht community and Irish-speaking families and even to provide an Irish-language service around the world ('A chinntiú go bhfreagraíonn ár gcuid cláracha do chultúr phobal oileán na hÉireann agus do chultúr phobal na Gaeltachta ach go háirithe. Cinnteoimid freisin go bhfreagraíonn an tseirbhís do riachtanais na bpobal Gaeltachta agus na dteaghlach arb í an Ghaeilge a dteanga laethúil. … Seirbhís Ghaeilge a sholáthar ar fud an domhain lenár seirbhísí gréasáin agus

Seinnteora' [affirming that our programmes address the culture of the people of the island of Ireland and in particular the culture of the people of the Irish-speaking regions. We also affirm that the service addresses the needs of the people of the Irish-speaking regions and of the households in which Irish is the daily language. ... to provide an Irish service throughout the world via its internet and player services] (TG4 2012: 6)). At the same time, TG4 is expected to compete for ratings. This was an issue that caused some discussion even before the channel came on air. There were fears, which echoed the protectionist ideology, that the Irish language would be ghettoised on a separate channel. There were also critics reflecting a more neoliberal ideology claiming that viewership figures for Irish-language programmes were too low to justify the expenditure (see Fitzgibbon 1993: 2). This was similar to the arguments in relation to Irish-language radio broadcasts in the 1950s. Nonetheless, within a few years TG4 had become the channel in Ireland with the eighth largest viewership, with more than half a million people watching the channel on a daily basis (TG4 2012: 11-12). Although catering for minority interests, such as Gaeltacht culture, can restrict the potential audience, TG4 has been able to attract a wider audience which includes people with limited or no Irish, by broadcasting programmes in English and by providing subtitles in English for programmes in Irish

There have been significant changes with regard to Irish-language media over the past twenty years. The most significant was TG4 discussed above. There was also another development in the form of a small independent Irish-language radio station in Dublin, called Raidió na Life (RnaL), which began broadcasting in 1993. This station was established by Comharchumann Raidió Átha Cliath Teoranta [Dublin Radio Cooperative Limited] (CRÁCT) and most of its staff work on a voluntary basis. The core audience for this station is the Irish-speaking community in the Dublin region. Despite the use of the word 'community', the vast majority of Irish-speakers in Dublin do not form an Irish-speaking community. In recent years there have been more Gaeltacht and Belfast voices on RnaL. The station also broadcasts programmes in other languages such as Spanish and Polish.

As well as that, there is a small amount of broadcasting on independent radio stations throughout the island, which receive a licence from the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (formerly the BCI) south of the border and Ofcom in Northern Ireland, where programmes in Irish (television and radio) have been broadcast on BBC as well as on some independent stations, such as Iúr FM [Newry FM] – a community radio station based in Newry, which broadcast a considerable amount in Irish (between ten and twenty per cent of the time); Féile FM [Festival FM] – based in Belfast which broadcast for several weeks each year; and Raidió Fáilte [Welcome Radio] – also based in Belfast and broadcasts completely in Irish.

Turning the radio dial on an average evening in Dublin a listener now has available a range of programmes in Irish on RTÉ Radio 1, RnaG, RnaL, as well as on many other independent English-language radio stations, many of whom present popular music charts programmes in Irish. In fact, often searching for programmes in Irish on the dedicated Irish-language radio stations RnaL and RnaG in the evening the sounds emanating from both stations are thumping club tracks without lyrics. Since the arrival of TG4 and RnaL, and RnaG's efforts to attract a younger listenership in the evening, the Irish language seems to have acquired a certain cachet.

As schools, rather than families, continue to produce the majority of the half a million Irish speakers, the Irish-speaking community is quite small with a mere thirty per cent of Irish speakers having the opportunity to speak Irish on a daily basis. The question on the census about frequency of use allows us to calculate that only fifteen per cent of Irish speakers speak Irish on a daily basis (outside the education system) and an equal percentage speaks Irish on a weekly basis. (see Watson and Nic Ghiolla Phádraig 2011: 439; Hickey 2011: 11-14; and Watson and Nic Ghiolla Phádraig 2009). For the majority of Irish speakers the programmes in Irish on radio and television are their only regular exposure to the language and opportunity to imagine an Irish-speaking community. Increasing individualization under the neoliberal ideology reflects the reality for the majority of Irish speakers today, for whom speaking Irish is an individual choice, exercised when opportunity and will coincide. For the vast majority of Irish speakers, the Irish language is not the everyday language of communication, it is often an effort of will when opportunities arise, opportunities that are fragmented across the media, across civil society and across networks of friends and family. The existence of these atomised Irish speakers and their fragmented opportunities to speak Irish are in no small part thanks to ideological support for the language evident in state efforts and public support for the Irish language. So long as state support through the education system is the primary foundation on which the intergenerational transmission of the Irish language depends the survival of the language will remain in the precarious position of relying on its continued ideological importance.

7. A cosmopolitan ideology?

In each ideological phase there is evidence of many different ways of acting, thinking and feeling, but they cohere into particular structures in each phase and are more likely to result in particular kinds of outcomes in one ideological phase than another. This results in benefits for particular individuals and groups who have (and acquire) particular characteristics and can take advantage of those structures (see Watson and Nic Ghiolla Phádraig (2011) for a discussion of the middle class advantage associated with the Irish language).

The ideological contexts since independence have changed from a focus on the whole nation, through a more liberal focus on minority rights, to a more neoliberal individualistic focus. The image of the audience for Irish-language media changed through the different ideological contexts from one in which the ideal was of an Irish-speaking nation and mass audience, through a segmented or niche audience of an Irish-speaking minority, to an Irish-language service for a fragmented audience which contains some Irish speakers. In these ideological adaptations there is a shift of focus from efforts to create an Irish-speaking nation, which benefitted those outside the Gaeltacht who could speak (or acquire) the language, while the Gaeltacht continued to decline economically and linguistically, and Irish-language radio programming was directed at the nation as a whole in the decades following independence. In the liberal phase the Gaeltacht was given some focus as efforts were made to counter its disadvantage, but Irish speakers outside the Gaeltacht continued to grow in number; this was the era in which Raidió na Gaeltachta was born. In the neoliberal phase there is a coincidence between the

ideology of the atomised individual and the reality for the majority of Irish speakers scattered across Ireland, as only about ten per cent of them are concentrated in the Irish-speaking communities of the Gaeltacht. Even though there is a large number of Irish speakers in Dublin, they do not live in a linguistic community and the majority of Irish speakers only occasionally coalesce into Irish-speaking groups; this is the era of Teilifís na Gaeilge.

Perhaps at this juncture we are undergoing a process of cosmopolitanization, a globalization from within (Beck and Sznaider 2006). Moving further down the road of individualization away from the minority rights perspective of multiculturalism. Beck argued that '[d]er multikulturellen Prämisse zufolge gibt es kein Individuum, sondern der Mensch ist ein reines Epiphänomen seiner Kultur' (Beck 2005: 99) [according to multicultural premises there is no individual, just the person as a mere epiphenomenon of culture]. In other words, the individual is 'das Produkt der Sprache, der Traditionen, der Überzeugungen, der Bräuche und Landschaft, innerhalb derer er (oder sie) auf die Welt kam und aufwuchs' (Beck 2005: 99) [the product of the language, the traditions, the convictions, the customs and landscape in which he (or she) came into the world and grew up]. Within a cosmopolitan ideology (if such an era is now beginning) the focus on the local or national would be in a global context of individuals who are different but equal.

To defend the equal value of all individuals would also mean to defend the linguistic diversity of humanity. This could not be done solely at the global level, but would be focused on at the local and state level. In this context individual states would play a role in defending languages that exist within its borders, most particularly its autochthonous languages, but also recent arrivals. Work done to protect, preserve and revive languages would be in the interests of humanity rather than narrow self-serving national interests. This means that the Irish language would be protected by the Irish state and by Irish citizens not because it is a language that belongs to a particular group of people, but because it belongs to humanity. The Irish state would preserve it where it is spoken and encourage it to be spoken regardless of the other cultural characteristics of individuals who speak the language. The Irish state would also encourage or at least not block the use of other languages within its borders and, similarly, the Irish language could be spoken by people in many other countries around the world. To facilitate this it would be necessary to choose a *lingua franca* to facilitate communication within the borders of each state and preferably a global *lingua franca*. The existence of a *lingua franca* would facilitate the preservation of languages because it would work against the nationalistic linguistic homogenisation of nation-states and would facilitate communication within multilingual states.

In conclusion, the dominant mode of support for the Irish language is symbolic. The world today is divided into nation-states, and an ideological belief that the nation of each nation-state has its own unique national characteristic (although most 'nation'-states contain several nations). Language is often a key national characteristic. It is not necessary for that language to be the most widely-used language, but to exist to a sufficient extent that it can remain of symbolic value in representing a unique characteristic of the nation. The Irish state is unlikely to provide much more than symbolic support for the Irish language. That the Irish language exists is sufficient. The cúpla focal [few words] can be used as a badge of

Irishness. Although nation-states continue to exist in this ever-globalising world, the legitimacy of nation-states is being undermined by that process of globalization. One of the perspectives which has been emerging in recent decades is the idea of multicultural states rather than nation-states. The predominant approach within multiculturalism appears to be mainly a tolerance of differences at the symbolic level only. Such a multicultural perspective in Ireland could provide the same level of minimal symbolic support as is being given nowadays. Both the multicultural state and the nation-state fail to treat all individual human beings with equal respect. As epiphenomena of diverse cultures, individuals are tolerated merely at the symbolic level. True respect for the individual would allow for actual real diversity. In Ireland to be Irish does not mean to speak Irish, but to have the command of a cúpla focal [few words]. Perhaps the same could be said about another major element of Irish identity – Catholicism. To be Irish means not to practise Catholicism in full, but to participate mainly in symbolic form. At least Gaelic sports appear to be fully practised. Although Cumann Lúthcleas Gael [the Gaelic Athletic Association, GAA] carries out its business in English, they have a Gaelic Language and Culture Committee in each county and continue regard it as part of their aims to support the Irish language and culture (particularly Irish dancing, music and singing) (see www.gaa.ie/about-the-gaa/cultur-agus-gaeilge).

Perhaps the mainly symbolic support of the nationalist, protectionist, liberal and neoliberal approaches will be undermined by the continuing process of globalisation. In that case a cosmopolitan approach might allow support for the Irish language to continue into what Beck et al. (2003) called the second (or reflexive) age of modernity. A cosmopolitan approach would treat all individual human beings with equal respect and would allow and facilitate them to speak any language. It would allow and facilitate, in particular, the speaking of the Irish language as part of the diverse patchwork of humanity that came into existence in this geographical location.

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