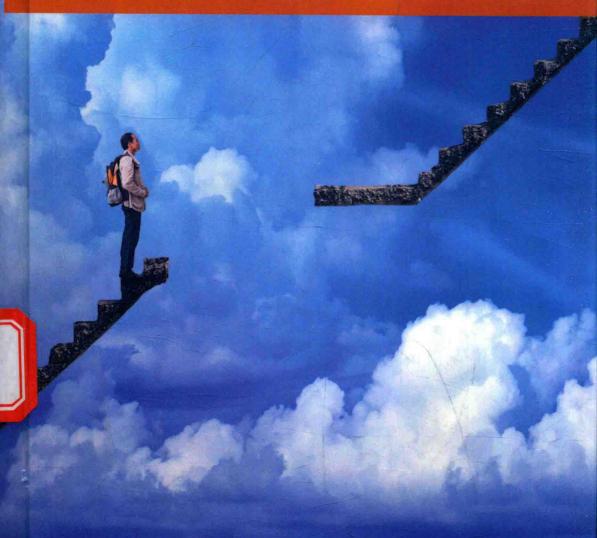# Outside-in, Inside-out: Iconicity in Language and Literature

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Michael Bradley et al.

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Notice

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Preface

Outside-in, inside-out, Iconicity in Language and Literature, we discuss about iconicity in language and literature. Iconicity in language and literature provides the evidence for the pervasive presence of iconicity as a cognitive process in all forms of verbal communication. Iconicity, i.e. form miming meaning and/or form miming form, is an inherently interdisciplinary phenomenon, involving linguistic and textual aspects and linking them to visual and acoustic features. First chapter evaluates the attempts to revitalize the indigenous language of Ireland. Second chapter aims to evaluate alignment quality between VCM and other terminologies using different measures of inter-alignment agreement before integration in EHR. In third chapter, we focus on iconicity in English and Spanish and its relation to lexical category and age of acquisition. The aim of fourth chapter is to discuss the contribution of a lexical data-base, the BAWL, to the study of affective and aesthetic processes in reading. Fifth chapter provides a new theoretical perspective on three central areas of language study—language evolution, language learning and language processing—based on insights derived from the study of language, spoken or signed, as a system of face-to-face communication. A study on human mandible and the origins of speech have been proposed in sixth chapter. Seventh chapter demonstrates the possibility to derive a precise metric system for semantics of human experiences objectively from data collected without using human subjects. Last chapter examines the origins of language, as treated within evolutionary anthropology, under the light offered by a biolinguistic approach.

Contents

Chapter 1

IS IT POSSIBLE TO REVITALIZE A DYING LANGUAGE? AN EXAMINATION OF ATTEMPTS TO HALT THE DECLINE OF IRISH

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ABSTRACT

This paper evaluates the attempts to revitalize the indigenous language of Ireland. It examines how the number of native Irish speakers declined under British rule, and how this trend continued even after independence, when Irish was declared the country's official language. Successive Irish governments have used two main strategies to reverse language shift. The first was to protect the small Irish speaking areas in the west of the country, the Gaeltacht. The second was to rely on schools elsewhere to produce new generations of fluent Irish speakers. By the 1970s it was apparent that neither policy was working. However since then, somewhat improbably, an increasing number of people have begun to use Irish, both inside and outside the Gaeltacht. This paper examines whether this revival constitutes reverse language shift. In particular, it asks to what extent Irish is now being passed on as a mother tongue to a new generation of children.

INTRODUCTION

Research suggests that half of the world's languages will become extinct before the end of this century (Crystal, 1997). With so many tongues facing language shift, what hope is there for reviving languages which are already moribund? For at least one linguist, "there is no unequivocal answer to this question" (Tsunoda, 2006). For another, Joshua Fishman (Fishman, 1991), Reverse Language Shift (RLS) is only possible if the endangered minority language is once again passed on to children as their mother tongue. Very often minority languages disappear from countries where the powerful speak a different language. This is not the case in Ireland. Not only have governments (since independence in 1921) not been hostile to Irish, they have vowed to revitalize it. As such, Ireland provides a fascinating case study of what is possible when it comes to language maintenance in apparently favorable circumstances.

In the year Ireland became independent Eamonn de Valera, (who would later become Prime Minister and then President) grandiloquently declared, "Ireland with its language and without its freedom is preferable to Ireland with its freedom and without its language" (Edwards, 2010). From the outset, however, there existed a gap between political rhetoric and policy in the new state. The task of reversing centuries of language shift was left almost entirely to the public education system — a policy which, it can be said after almost a century, has clearly failed. So much so that linguist Joshua Fishman coined the term "Irelandization" as an example of how not to achieve Reverse Language Shift (Fishman, 1991). And yet there are still encouraging signs for this Gaelic language. Census results indicate that the numbers of Irish speakers in the western Gaeltacht are holding up (2011 Census) while there has been a boom in the number of private Irish medium schools, or Gaelscoileanna, across the rest of the country (Gaelscoileanna, 2014). This paper will chart the course of language shift in Ireland and examine the various efforts to halt and even reverse that shift.

HOW ENGLISH FIRST DISPLACED IRISH

It is perhaps best to first look at the causes of language shift in Ireland, to get an idea of the magnitude of the task which has faced Irish

lawmakers over the past century. As folklore would have it, English was foisted on the unwilling Irish by an aggressive imperialistic Britain from the Middle Ages onwards. Kearns described how "repressive British penal codes that outlawed the use of the vernacular caused it to ebb away at an ever increasing rate during the 17th century" (Kearns, 1974). The Catholic Church, Daniel O Connell and the famine were all ascribed a role in the language's demise. Undoubtedly, colonization was the central reason for language shift (Edwards, 2010) but the manner in which it occurred was more subtle than popular belief would suggest. The acquiescence of the population in the spread of English was probably a more salient factor than any government decree. There is more than a little truth in the anti-Irish diatribe of English journalist Sydney Brooks at the turn of the last century, when he complained that the Irish "have tried to cast upon the broad British doorstep the responsibility for the decay of Gaelic... It is impossible to stamp out a language when the people are determined to keep alive" (Brooks, 1908).

English was first introduced into Ireland, along with French, as early as 1169 by Anglo-Norman invaders. Neither language, however, gained a foothold at that time and the new settlers were rapidly Gaelicised (Hindley, 1990). That the 1336 Statutes of Kilkenny (which forbade settlers from using Irish) were felt necessary, is a measure of how few people spoke English. In fact, English was seldom used outside the Pale (the small area around Dublin) for the next four hundred years. Irish's linguistic hegemony was finally undone by the plantations of the 16th and 17th centuries, when migrants from the North of England and the Scottish lowlands, defended by Crown troops, were settled on confiscated land in Ireland. Increasingly, those who controlled the economic and political power throughout the island spoke English. Whatever few opportunities there were for advancement were bound up with knowledge of English which, "was seen as the language of commerce, the path to prosperity" (Durkacz quoted by Edwards, 2010). By 1800 the majority of the population still spoke Irish (Edwards, 2010), but the Act of Union in that year (which officially joined Britain and Ireland), further strengthened the need for English and it became the language of instruction in the National School system, established in 1831. By 1851 half a million children were attending these schools. It is anachronistic to suggest that parents allowed their children to be educated in English only reluctantly. Presumably like all parents, they wanted their offspring

to be as well qualified as possible for whatever opportunities existed, be they across the sea in Britain or further afield in the New World.

Daniel O'Connell spoke in English when addressing the huge political rallies in the 1830s and 1840s. For him, there was little political gain to be had from using Irish, which had yet to acquire any nationalistic connotations. O'Connell's choice of English demonstrates how widely the language was understood. It also shows his realization that the authorities could not so easily ignore the disaffected if they shared the same language. Pragmatism of one kind or another underlay the individual choices made over time by hundreds of thousands to switch to English. It was clearly more socially prestigious than Irish, being the language of the Catholic Church, education, and the rich and powerful. Inexorably, English spread westwards from the relatively prosperous East. The mid- 18th Century potato famine consolidated its grip—of the two million people who died or emigrated, the majority came from the impoverished Irish speaking regions of Munster and Connaught. By 1881 Irish was the mother tongue of only 28.4% of the population (ibid). The writer of that year's census noted, "Within relatively a few years (sic) Irish will have taken its place among the languages that have ceased to exist" (ibid).

THE GAELIC LEAGUE HIGHLIGHTS THE PLIGHT OF IRISH

It was not until the late 19th century that the imminent disappearance of Irish caused any real concern among the population at large. The Gaelic League, established under Douglas Hyde in 1892 turned language revival into a political issue. Influenced by German Romanticism, the League emphasized Ireland's unique cultural identity vis-a-vis that of England, providing the rationale for why Irish should be restored—a rationale that has remained remarkably constant ever since.

The 18th Century German philosopher Johann Herder believed that language and nationhood were inextricably bound together; one could not exist without the other. "Has a nation anything more precious than the language of it fathers?" he asked (Oakes, 2001). Drawing on such philosophy, Hyde (who in 1938 became the first president of Ireland) argued that the Irish language was central

to Irish identity while English was the language of modernization and repellent materialism. "The losing of it [Irish] is our greatest blow, and the sorest stroke that the rapid Anglicization of Ireland has inflicted upon us" (Hyde, 1892). His message evidently struck a chord and the League attracted over 50 000 members by its height in 1904. It established language classes throughout the country and persuaded the government to make Irish the language of instruction in Gaeltacht schools. It also successfully campaigned to make Irish proficiency a prerequisite for entry to the newly founded National University. In retrospect, the League's failing was that it never analyzed how native English speakers would transmit Irish to their children as a mother tongue—how Irish could make the quantum leap from being a second language to a first language—the holy grail of Reverse Language Shift.

By 1912 the Gaelic League had been overshadowed by the struggle for independence and was a spent force. When the Irish Free State (later to become the Republic of Ireland) was established in 1921, Irish politicians were for the first time apparently in a position to control the destiny of the Irish language. Despite the huge shift from Irish to English over the previous centuries, it was the former which became "the official language of Ireland." Judging by census figures alone, the gamble paid off. In 1881 just under a million people were, "able to speak Irish" and by 1911 this had declined to 553,717 (Hindley, 1990). However, a century later the numbers had more than tripled to 1,774,437 (2011 Census). During the same period the population as a whole grew from just over three million to just over four and a half million. On closer scrutiny, the achievement is less impressive. Census data not only failed to distinguish between native speakers and second language learners, it also failed to define what was meant by being "able to speak Irish". Furthermore, it failed to take account of the strong emotional attachment to Irish which led some respondents to exaggerate their proficiency. In short the census results may well have been misleading when it came to assessing the numbers of Irish speakers.

HOW IRISH GOVERNMENTS TRIED TO REVIVE IRISH

The continued existence of any language depends upon the existence of a critical mass of native speakers. Ultimately, governments can

only claim success in terms of language maintenance if they have expanded or at least halted the decline in the number of native speakers. Since independence successive Irish governments have attempted to do this in two ways—one, by trying to reintroduce Irish as the main language in the English speaking part of the country, (the Galltacht) and two, by attempting to preserve the Irish speaking Gaeltacht on the peripheral western seaboard.

Government Strategy in English Speaking Areas

Rhetoric aside, little practical effort was ever made to promote Irish in public life in the Irish state. It was never used as the language of parliament or of any government department apart from education, where it was used only occasionally (ibid). Up until 1973 Irish proficiency was a requirement for anyone applying to work in the civil service but in practice the vast majority of employees never used it (Edwards, 2010). It was a similar situation in the police, army and legal profession (Hindley, 1990). One policy instrument alone was relied on to enact the shift from English to Irish—the National School system.

The State's first government was much influenced by the advice of Fr. Timothy Corcoran of the Irish National Teacher's Association. He believed schools could restore the native language, "... even without aid from the home" (Titley, 1983). Accordingly, in the early days of the state, Irish was used as the medium of instruction in infant classes and in geography, history and singing lessons for older children. It later became the official language of instruction in every class where teachers were "competent to use it" (ibid). In practice, how much of the curriculum was taught through Irish was left up to each parish. In 1939 a record 704 schools (of around 5000) taught exclusively through Irish, while a further 50% taught partly through Irish (MacNamara, 1966). However, disenchantment set in (as primary and high school graduates realized there was no communicative need for Irish) and by 1960 the Department of Education was actively discouraging the use of Irish in infant classes. Mac Namara's study a few years later further undermined classroom bilingualism arguing that it had a deleterious effect on children's English, whilst failing to improve their Irish (Edwards, 2010). In 1970 the use of Irish in infants' classes stopped. By 2006 a government report was concluding that there had been a "substantial decline in achievement in Irish listening and