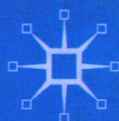


Language and Conflict in Northern Ireland and Canada

A Silent War

Janet Muller

Polygrave Studies in Minority Languages and Communities
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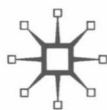


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Abbreviations

ByI /WLB	Bwrdd Yr Iaith / Welsh Language Board
B&BC	Bilingualism and Biculturalism Commission (Canada)
BBC (NI)	British Broadcasting Company (Northern Ireland)
CAJ	Committee on the Administration of Justice
CCG / ILBF	Ciste Craoltóireachta Gaeilge / Irish Language Broadcast Fund
CCEA	Council for Curriculum Examination and Assessment
CCMS	Council for Catholic Maintained Schools
CCR	Community Relations Council
CCRF / CCDL	The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms / La Charte canadienne des droits et libertés
CFL / CLF	The Charter for the French Language / La Charte de la langue française
CnaGta	Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (The Council for Irish Medium Education)
CNnaG	Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge
COL / CLO	The Commissioner of Official Languages / Commissaire aux langues officielles
COMEX	Committee of Experts (on the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages)
CR	Conflict Resolution
DCAL	Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (NI)
DCMS	Department for Culture, Media and Sport (UK)
DENI	Department of Education (NI)
DETI	Department of Enterprise, Training and Investment (NI)
DES	Department for Education and Skills (UK)
DUP	Democratic Unionist Party
ECRML	European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages
EME	English Medium Education
FCFA	Fédération des communautés francophones et acadiennes
FIE	French Immersion Education
GOLI	Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICIG	Interdepartmental Charter Implementation Group
IME	Irish Medium Education
InaG	Iontaobhas na Gaelscolaíochta (The Irish Medium Education Trust)
LLO / OLA	Loi sur les langues officielles / Official Languages Act (Canada)

LPP	Language Policy and Planning
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NI	Northern Ireland
NIO	Northern Ireland Office
NISRA	Northern Ireland Statistics and Research
NoI	North of Ireland
OQLF	Office québécoise de la langue française
Q / C	Quebec / Canada
RGE / DFA	Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha / Department of Foreign Affairs (RoI)
RGPTG / DCRGA	Roinn Gnóthaí Pobail, Tuaithe agus Gaeltachta / the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (RoI)
RML	Regional or Minority Language
ROC	Rest of Canada
RoI	Republic of Ireland
SACHR	Standing Advisory Committee on Human Rights
SDLP	Social Democratic and Labour Party
SF	Sinn Féin
UUP	Ulster Unionist Party

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My family came to mind often whilst I was writing the book, especially my mother (1917–1999) and my brother Chris (1948–2003).

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Janet Muller
30 September 2009

Abstract

The theme of this book is the impact of conflict and conflict resolution (CR) on language policy and planning (LPP) in Northern Ireland and in Quebec / Canada. The primary focus is the Irish language in the North from the 1998 Good Friday Agreement (GFA) to the present (with brief references to LPP in the Republic of Ireland). LPP in respect of the Northern conflict has been neglected in both sociolinguistic and CR analysis. The book seeks to address this gap and also to place both CR and LPP in the Nol in an international context, drawing on Quebec / Canada as a mirror, through an examination of developments in relations since the 1995 referendum on Quebec secession.

Chapter 1 examines LPP formulation in the CR approaches to deep-rooted, ethno-linguistic conflicts of hegemonic (or dominant) powers. It studies the interplay in the North of Ireland and in Quebec / Canada of domestic and international law, the principle of self-determination, language protection and definitions of minority / majority rights and briefly establishes the historical background to current LPP and CR.

The aim of the Irish language section of this book (Chapters 2–8) is to contribute to the visibility of the Irish language in the North within the field of sociolinguistics, and help to dispel misconceptions as to its specific circumstances in the current climate. Chapter 2 gives a thumb-nail sketch of the current state of the language through demographic information and a brief examination of Irish in education. Chapter 3 describes LPP prior to the 1990s and the importance of the Irish language in political negotiations leading to the Good Friday Agreement (1998). The ratification and implementation of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages is detailed in Chapter 4, drawing on UK, Committee of Experts and NGO reports over three monitoring cycles. Irish language broadcasting provision, legislation and funding is discussed in Chapter 5. Irish speaking community proposals for an Irish Language Act and the commitment by the British government in the St Andrews Agreement (2006) to enact legislation is detailed in Chapter 6, followed by an account of the treatment of the Irish language in the devolved institutions established in 2007 to the present. This chapter also examines two government consultations on the proposed legislation, drawing on submissions to the first consultation from Irish language NGOs and statutory organizations. In Chapters 7 and 8, the submissions of the NI political parties to the first consultation and those of key English-language NGOs and public bodies are discussed. An examination of a sample 20 per cent of individual replies to the consultation is also presented.

Chapter 9 contains a brief analysis of LPP and CR in Quebec and Canada since the 1995 referendum on Quebec secession. There is an examination of current federal and Quebec LPP and interviews with key figures in LPP.

The findings of the book are that the practice of CR by hegemonic states tends to reinforce its own dominant position, and that these goals influence the formulation of LPP. Domestic and international law can be double-edged swords, although effective legislation can be central in transforming the position of minoritised languages. Achieving and maintaining progressive LPP requires great reserves of determination and energy on the part of minoritised language communities who must also protect their independence within the political sphere.

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Introduction

Being a long-term resident of the North of Ireland (NoI), I have acquired a particular interest in how conflict, conflict resolution (CR) and language policy and planning (LPP) are interlinked. My professional work¹ in LPP has provided me with direct experience of the results of CR on a minoritised language community, and an interest in how competing demands from different sections of society interact with historical colonial interests, hegemonic power and particularist regimes, with minority and human rights concerns, with international law and best international practice. As for many concerned with LPP, the combination of personal and professional experience has drawn my attention to Canada, to the historic and contemporary tensions around the competing linguistic and political groupings in Quebec and the rest of Canada (ROC). In Chapter 1, there is a discussion of the similarities as well as the differences in the situations of NoI and Quebec / Canada (Q / C). The two situations provide a useful contextual framework to examine how conflict, CR and LPP intermesh. In the last chapter of the book, I shall examine both Canadian federal and Quebec LPP from the most recent Quebec referendum on secession in 1995 to the present.

The aim of the Irish language section of this book (Chapters 2–8) is to contribute to the visibility of the Irish language in NoI within the field of sociolinguistics, and help to dispel misconceptions as to its specific circumstances in the current climate. This in turn may help to inform future study on the most beneficial approaches to the development of the Irish language throughout the island of Ireland. Although the Irish language is the indigenous language of Ireland, since partition in the 1920s, its development (some might say under-development) has been subject to two different sets of LPP, one British and one Irish. I shall make reference to the current impact of these two approaches throughout the book. LPP in the North has been neglected in much of the sociolinguistic study of Irish, which tend to focus to a significant degree on the language in the South. Those contemporary works which deal with the Irish language in the North contain valuable

material relevant to the current context but do not have CR as the specific framework for their analysis.

In Chapters 2–8, I shall focus on how CR has influenced British government LPP in NoI within the most recent decade of the NI peace process. The 1998 Good Friday Agreement (GFA) contains significant references to the Irish language, but although CR in the North has been widely commented nationally and internationally to date, paradoxically few accounts analyse in any significant degree the importance of LPP within the process. Many contemporary texts offering political analysis tend to refer only peripherally, if at all, to the Irish language. The relative demographic weakness of the Irish speaking community in the North, and its marginalised position within the collective psyche and within legislative, social and policy frameworks are of course contributory factors in this. However, the neglect of LPP within policy analysis belies its central importance to the North's community of Irish speakers (10.4 per cent of the overall population or 167,000 people²) and to the much larger percentage of people who support and hold the language in esteem. It would also appear to seriously underestimate the fact that, as I shall show in Chapters 3, 5 and 6, the Irish language has featured continuously in negotiations prior to both the GFA and the 2006 St Andrews' Agreement (SAA). In addition, in the period between 1998 and 2008 the Irish language has been shown to have enormous symbolic and political importance to the British government and to both nationalist and unionist political parties in the NoI. This suggests that its positioning as an issue of minimal or minority interest within mainstream commentary is a false one that ignores or misinterprets the reality of British government interest in ethnic and linguistic relations in the colonial context in this part of the world. Of course, a detailed comparison of the centrality of the issue within CR for successive Irish governments is a worthwhile subject for study, but for reasons of space, it is one which this book cannot undertake in depth, although I shall allude to it in different sections of the book.

Chapter 1 examines definitions of conflict and the theory and practice of conflict resolution (CR). In addition, it addresses the common threads in Q / C and Irish historic experience, the impact of domestic and international legislation and the lack of clarity in relation to the principle of self-determination and the effect this has had on LPP up to the 1995 referendum on secession in the case of Quebec and the 1998 GFA in the case of the NoI. This will set the scene for further discussion on Q / C in the final chapter. In Chapter 2, I shall briefly cite NoI demographic information from official sources including the 2001 Census in order to create a statistical profile of the Irish language, Ulster Scots and ethnic minority communities in the NoI. I shall also present some information on the growth of Irish Medium Education (IME) in the North and note current education policy trends. In Chapter 3, I shall first identify the LPP context and relationship of the Irish speaking community with the State in the period prior to the CR

arrangements of 1998. Following this, I shall examine published and leaked accounts of the Irish language within the CR negotiations leading up to the GFA, and briefly assess the structure for devolved institutions established under the GFA.

Chapter 4 examines the UK implementation of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML) in respect of Irish, and in Chapter 5 I shall detail Irish language broadcasting provision. Chapter 6 looks at the emergence since the GFA of a consensus among Irish speakers, spearheaded and developed by POBAL, the umbrella non-governmental organisation (NGO) that effective legislation in the North is a key LPP issue. I shall then examine the British government commitment in the SAA to enact Irish language legislation, its consultation process on the issue and the resulting impacts, from May 2007 to late 2009, of the re-establishment of the NI devolved institutions on LPP. In the final section of this chapter, I analyse the responses of Irish language NGOs and state bodies to the first governmental consultation on the proposal to enact Irish language legislation. I shall argue that the actions of the British government in exacerbating division and undermining the position of the Irish language during the political negotiations of 2006–7, shines a light on its own role and practice within CR in the North. Chapters 7 and 8 gives further in-depth analysis of a sample of responses to the consultation process, initially from the North's political parties, then from key NGOs and public bodies and finally from a random sample of individual respondents. Chapter 9 contains an analysis, albeit in abbreviated form, of the interaction between LPP and CR in Q / C, focussing on approaches and attitudes since the 1995 referendum on Quebec secession. I examine current federal and Quebec LPP initiatives and interview key players within language policy.

Translations, language versions and endnotes

Throughout the book, where quotations are given, they are carried in the main text in the language in which they were made. The translation then follows, with a note as to whether the translation is my own or from some other source. In Chapters 2–8, where submissions or documents by Irish speakers or Irish language organisations have been made in English, I have not translated. Where Irish speaking respondents comment on their reasons for writing in English, I reflect this. In some cases, public or government bodies have translated Irish language submissions into English where publishing summaries or when making them available to the public. Where this has been the case, I have used the English language version.

In the case of books or documents produced bilingually in Q / C or the NoI, I have opted wherever practicable to use the French or Irish language version first in my text, with translation following. I have decided upon this