

# On the ‘Celticity’ of Irish Newspapers – A Research Report

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## *1. Introduction*

Of all the print-media newspapers are the most commonly used. They are not literature in the sense of *belles lettres*, but they should not be underestimated in their political, social and personal importance. No other printed product is as closely linked with everyday life as the newspapers. The day begins under their influence, and their contents mirror the events of the day with varying accuracy.

Newspapers are strongly reader-oriented. They want to inform, but they also want to instil opinions. Specific choices of information shape the content level. Specific choices of language are resorted to in order to spread opinions and viewpoints. Language creates solidarity between the producers and the consumers of newspapers and thereby supports ideologies by specifically targeted linguistic means. Other strategies are employed for the same purpose, too. Visual aspects are of great importance, such as the typographical layout, the use of pictures, drawings, colours, fonts, etc.

According to traditional views, Ireland is the place where people read more newspapers than anywhere else in the world, except perhaps for Iceland. According to more recent sources, however, Ireland only comes twenty third out of

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40 developed countries (Brady 1990: 70). The history of newspapers in Ireland began in 1649 with Oliver Cromwell and *The Irish Monthly Mercury* (Oram 1983: 21). He used the medium to spread the news about the defeat of the native forces and the victorious deeds of his army. The continuous history of newspapers in Ireland then started at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century with the *Dublin Newsletter* (1685, O'Toole 1992: xi). Cork was the first city outside the capital to publish a newspaper (1715). Soon Limerick followed (1716), then Waterford (1729) and Belfast (1737) which has one of the oldest continuously published newspapers in the world. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, newspapers had been established in all larger provincial towns.

The language of the newspapers published in Ireland, however, was English, not Irish, due to the fact that the native Irish aristocracy had been replaced under English colonial rule. English was the language of power. When newspaper production became cheaper and the papers were readily affordable to the people, the use of English was reinforced and eventually added to the decline of the Irish language. Nevertheless, the newspapers proved to be a useful tool in the promotion of Catholic Emancipation and Home Rule.

The growing popularity of TV and the Internet has led to a decline in the newspaper readership all around the world and did not stop at the Irish borders. But it is not only the general decline in readership that weakened the Irish newspaper market. It also had to compete against massive imports from neighbouring Great Britain and overseas. The imports usually belong to the 'yellow' press and they offer short and catchy news with a colourful layout.

Due to the fact that they include pages full of commercials which are an important source of revenue to the owner of the newspaper, they are cheaper than the more serious products of the upper market and more attractive to the uncritical consumer. As the yellow press lacks journalistic seriousness, this brought about demands for a state-controlled regulation of the Irish newspaper market, because the representatives of Irish newspapers feared that they would lose commercially (Kiberd 1997, Kiberd 1999, Horgan 2001). To compete with the imports, they would have to change their principles of journalistic work. They would no longer be able to "reflect the wide diversity of opinion existing in society and, of course, [to] promote and encourage the formation of opinion by providing a channel for debate, analysis, and discussion" (Rapple 1997: 69).

Ireland is a country where today the large majority of the population speaks English, albeit in an acculturated form ('Irish English,' 'Hiberno-English,' 'Anglo-Irish'),<sup>2</sup> while their 'native' language, Irish (Gaelic), is only spoken as an autochthonous community language by a very small minority of the Irish people in the Gaeltacht areas and by urban middle-class language activists. Both varieties of Irish show obvious signs as a semi-language with heavy influence from English on all linguistic levels, the urban variety being more strongly influenced

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<sup>2</sup> The different terms imply different attitudes toward the varieties of English spoken in Ireland (Tristram 1997: 17-21).

than that of the Gaeltacht (cf. Ó Béarra 2007, Ó Curnáin 2007). In spite of this, most of the people in the Republic of Ireland and also to a large degree the population of Northern Ireland identify themselves with their Irish heritage, linguistically and culturally, and place emphasis on their being different from the people on the neighbouring island, i.e. the Island of Great Britain. The political tension of this area of contact between the English language and the people's perceived Celtic heritage can be readily observed on the linguistic level in the use of language in the Irish newspapers.

The use of *three* languages could actually form the object of linguistic research in Irish newspaper usage, i.e. Standard International (newspaper) English, Irish English, the language of shift and long-term linguistic accommodation in Ireland,<sup>3</sup> and Irish (Gaelic), the heritage language of Ireland. While both contemporary Irish English and Irish (Gaelic) have been reasonably well researched in their *spoken* realisations,<sup>4</sup> their *written* realisations have been neglected outside of studies of the literary language. I am not aware of any study of their use in Irish newspapers. But the readers of this paper may perhaps teach me otherwise and I would be very grateful for possible references.

From the angle of the sociology of language, I think it would be particularly interesting to discover how far the Irish language was and still is instrumentalised in Irish newspapers, that is, to what extent it was and still is intentionally utilised as a tool to construct and maintain a specifically Irish identity. How consciously do Irish journalists make use of this tool? And how conscious are the journalists of the 'Celticity' of Irish (Gaelic) words, terms and entire articles in the context of the English of an Irish newspaper?

Moreover, newspaper language is tied to the different types of texts it consists of. This means that the articles within one and the same issue of a newspaper differ in their use of style and linguistic register depending on the specific communicative needs they satisfy. These purposes may be geared towards providing information ('facts'). They may be of a persuasive nature serving the promotion of opinion. They may be instructive or they may serve entertainment and contact inducing purposes.<sup>5</sup>

Beside the political and ideological orientation of a paper and the specific requirements of the various types of articles, research into the use of the Irish lan-

<sup>3</sup> Spoken Irish English differs considerably from Standard English, especially on the segmental and suprasegmental levels of phonology and in its morpho-syntax. In the age of English as an international language and through school-teaching, it lost most of its specifically Irish English lexis of former centuries, much of which was historically due to *bottom-up* transfer from Irish, but also retained some of the Early Modern English lexis of the English and Scottish settlers during the plantation periods (16c. and 17c.). Cf. Bliss (1979), Joyce (1991), Hickey (2002, 2005).

<sup>4</sup> See for instance Filppula (1999), Hickey (2002); O'Rahilly (1976 [1932]), Wagner (1958-1969), MacCongáil & Wagner (1983), Ó Dochartaigh (1987), Wigger (2004), etc.

<sup>5</sup> One is, of course, reminded here of the old rhetorical triad of speaker intensions of the *docēre*, *delectare* and *movēre*, as well as of the traditional rhetorical genres of *expositio*, *descriptio*, *narratio* and *persuasio*.

guage in the newspaper context also needs to take into consideration which audience is targeted. National papers compete with regional and professional ones and are likely to differ in their use of the language. A further aspect which makes the study of Irish newspapers particularly interesting is the political division of the Island of Ireland. Northern Ireland, or more specifically the six counties of the historical Province of Ulster, belongs to the *United Kingdom (of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)*. Since languages and their use are invariably moulded by the political circumstances they are subjected to, it would be a rewarding task to investigate how far the use of Irish differs in Northern and Southern Irish newspapers.

## 2. *The Potsdam Newspaper Database – An unfinished Case Study*

In December 1995, I went into a newsagent's in the city centre of Galway and bought all Irish newspapers which were for sale. I was further provided with the same newspapers at regular intervals until April 1996. During this period, Dr. Meidhbhín Ní Úrdail also provided me with newspapers from the Cork area. Altogether the following newspapers formed the basis of the data retrieval:

### *Nation-wide Newspapers*

1. The Irish Times (published in Ireland)
2. The Irish Independent (published in Ireland)
3. The Examiner (published in Ireland)
4. The Sunday Tribune (published in Ireland)
  
5. The Irish World (published in the UK, available in the UK and the Republic)
6. The Irish Sun (published in the UK, available in the UK and the Republic)
7. The Irish Post (published in the UK, available in the UK and the Republic)

### *Regional Newspapers (all published in the Irish Republic)*

1. The Cork Examiner
2. The Corkman
3. The Kerryman
4. The Limerick Leader
5. The Clare Champion
6. The Connacht Tribune
7. The Galway Advertiser
8. The Roscommon Herald
9. The Kilkenny People
10. The Leinster Leader

*Professional Newspapers*

1. Irish Farmer's Journal
2. Farm Examiner
3. The Sunday Business Post

These papers only form a small segment of the Irish newspaper market.<sup>6</sup> In sociolinguistic terms, the sample is neither a totally random sample, nor a pure judgment sample. It is centred on the customers of the Galway newsagent and, as far as its readership is concerned, it is fairly homogeneous, as one would be able to assume that all the readers of these newspapers at one particular period in time were able to understand the papers they bought. In a way, they form a loose network in the sense of network sociolinguistics. The Cork papers are somewhat anomalous, as they do not fit the idea of the network. But at the time, I thought I should avail myself of Dr. Ní Úrdail's kind offer to provide me with these papers.

As unfortunately, the Potsdam newspaper project came to an end in 2006 and is consequently unfinished, the results of our research achieved until then can therefore only document tendencies and cannot present hardcore statistical data involving all Irish newspapers which formed the data base.

The data retrieval was carried out in two ways. First of all as a take-home assignment, I asked successive generations of students from my undergraduate courses (Gm. 'Proseminare') at the University of Potsdam on 'The Languages of Ireland' to highlight all the words in the newspapers which they did not understand. These we discussed in class and divided into three groups, a) Irish words, names, expressions and articles written in Irish, b) Irish English words and expressions, c) English words and expressions they were unfamiliar with because of their deficiencies as 'English as a Second Language' (ESL) learners. Among the many words which they did not know, the Irish words, expressions and articles loomed large, as the phonotactics immediately characterised them as being non-English.

In the meantime, Meinolf Bunsmann, a Potsdam PhD student, devised an electronic database using the Microsoft *Access* program, into which the Irish language findings were entered. He structured this *Access* database according to the following categories:

1. name of paper<sup>7</sup>
2. type of paper<sup>8</sup>
3. date of paper

<sup>6</sup> Cf. <<http://irishnewspaperarchives.com>> (accessed 16-07-07).  
<<http://www.world-newspapers.com/ireland.html>> (accessed 16-07-07).  
<<http://www.wrx.zen.co.uk/ireland.htm>> (accessed 16-07-07), etc.

<sup>7</sup> See the above list of Irish newspapers subjected to analysis.

<sup>8</sup> Subcategories: National, Regional, Local, Professional.

4. page number
5. type of article/text-type<sup>9</sup>
6. Irish entry<sup>10</sup>
7. correct/incorrect use of the acute accent (*síneadh fada*)
8. correct/incorrect marking of the gender of the Irish words
9. semantic domain<sup>11</sup>
10. context of the Irish entry<sup>12</sup>
11. comments.<sup>13</sup>

Unfortunately, Meinolf Bunsmann never finished his PhD project. He was poached away from a very promising academic career by Hessischer Rundfunk, a regional German TV and Radio Station, where he now works as a successful journalist and is responsible for the Station's cultural programs. His data files, however, continued to be filled with Irish entries. To date, about half of the entire corpus of newspapers has been processed.

Over the years, however, the extant entries served as the starting point for a number of Potsdam semester papers and for Sandra Kaufhold's 2004 research paper for her Brandenburg State Board Examination. These papers analysed specific segments of the data files, either a number of newspapers issued at a specific date, or national newspapers only, or specific types of articles/text-types, or selected newspapers over the entire period, etc. In the following, I will give a short outline of the tendencies that were suggested by these research papers.

### *3. Tendencies Suggested by the Preliminary Research Results*

All Irish newspapers analysed availed themselves of the possibility to demonstrate their 'Celticity' during the period under investigation. This was the time when the 'Celtic Tiger' economy of the Irish Republic was in full action. Pride in being Irish presumably boosted the use of Irish for the sake of tokenism, because within one generation, after its entry into the EU in 1973, Ireland had turned from one of the poorest countries of Europe into one of the wealthiest. Interestingly, there was no great difference between the national and regional

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<sup>9</sup> Subcategories: Leader, Feature, Irish News, Irish Politics, International News, Local News, Local Politics, Law, Business, Health, Travel, Sports, Entertainment, Social Issues, Agriculture/Farm News, Heritage, Armed Forces, Job Market, Advertisement, TV, Radio, Weather Forecast, Obituary Notices.

<sup>10</sup> Subcategories: Irish words, phrases/sayings/proverbs and reference to entire article.

<sup>11</sup> Subcategories: Government Institutions, Government Authorities, Political Parties, Paramilitary Groups, Firm/Company Names, Brand Names, Project Names, Place Names, Other Domains, Grammar: Common Noun, Verb, Adverb.

<sup>12</sup> Quotation of the Irish entry in its immediate English context.

<sup>13</sup> Any observations of potential relevance.

newspapers in their use of 'token Irish'. The overall difference consisted in only about 20% more use of Irish in the regional papers than in the national ones.

The overall number of token entries into the data base counts ca. 13,800 *tokens* so far, ca 6,000 for the nation-wide newspapers and 7,800 for the regional ones. The professional newspapers have not yet been dealt with and I have not yet counted the number of *types* of the Irish entries into the data base – their total would of course be much lower, as the large majority of the entries is highly repetitive. What I will present now, is a qualitative data interpretation of the findings of the student papers I talked about and of the research result of Sandra Kaufhold's thesis (2004).

Of the seven *national* newspapers analysed, *The Irish Times* made by far the most use of Irish, i.e. roughly between 200 and 300 tokens per issue and, in addition to that, it also featured about three columns in the Irish language. *The Irish Independent*, *The Examiner* and the *Sunday Tribune* usually counted below 200 entries and featured one to two Irish language columns. Of the papers printed in England, the *Irish Post* on average showed just less than 200 entries, which I think is quite a lot for an English paper, and the *Irish World* less than half of that. At the bottom of the scale, *The Irish Sun* on average only scored between 20 and 30 entries per issue. It was also the only paper that did not include articles in Irish. This, of course, did not come as a surprise, as *The Irish Sun* is a mere copy of the British publication. It is not interested in developing a specifically Irish profile. If that had been the objective, *The Irish Sun* would probably have included a more extensive use of Irish words.

Of the *regional* papers analysed, *The Kerryman* scored highest with about 300 or more entries, plus three Irish language columns. Next came *The Clare Champion* with a little more than 200 entries on average, *The Roscommon Herald* with about 200 entries and *The Connacht Tribune* with just under 200 entries. In contrast to these western papers, *The Leinster Leader* and *The Kilkenny People* only scored between 100 and 150 entries. This (South) West-to-East cline perhaps reflects the East-to-West movement of the loss of Irish as a community language over the past 200 years.

Of the regional papers analysed, the lowest score was found in the *Galway Advertiser* with less than 100 findings on average. The *Galway Advertiser* was a local newspaper in the City of Galway, situated in (West) Connacht. Its low score of Irish words probably reflects the urban character of this paper as opposed to the more vital use of the Irish language in everyday communication in the more rural parts of the West of the country and/or the greater passive knowledge of Irish there. On the other hand, all of the regional papers analysed featured two to three Irish language columns per issue. The paper with the highest number of contributions in Irish was the *Connacht Tribune* with up to ten (*sic!*) Irish features per issue. The only paper without any Irish language column was *The Leinster Leader*.

In the ranking list of the semantic domains, Government and Politics scored highest both in the national and the regional papers. Here the most frequently

quoted Irish word was *Sinn Féin*, a party name. This accumulation of entries for *Sinn Féin* (abbreviated as *SF*) showed how dependent the types of entries are on the current agenda of politics. In 1995/6, the Northern Ireland peace process and the Mitchell Report<sup>14</sup> were big issues. The second place was held by a further party, *Fianna Fáil* (abbreviated as *FF*), followed by the title of *Taoiseach* (Irish for Prime Minister), then came *TD* (abbreviation of *Teachta Dála*, Irish for member of Parliament) and *Dáil* (*Dáil Éireann*, Irish Parliament). *Fine Gael* (*FG*), another Irish political party, *Seanad* (Senate) and the Governmental Departments, Boards, Councils and Services were also entered in Irish: *An Post*, *An Bord Bia*, *An Bord Bainne*, *An Bord Pleanála*, *Bord Fáilte*, *Bord Gáis*, *Bord Slainte an Iarthair*, *FÁS* (acronym for *Foras Áiseanna Saothair* ‘Irish National Training and Employment Authority’), etc. The high score of *An Post* (Irish Postal Service) is easily explained by the newspapers reporting on a strike of *An Post* employees who demanded better working conditions. This again shows how daily events influence the scores of the analysis.

As I cannot discuss the entries in any great details here, I will limit myself to a comparative score ranking of the semantic domains in the national and regional newspapers and then comment on some of the more spectacular findings in the regional newspapers. It will be noted that, for practical reasons, the domains in this list differ slightly from the domains in the *Access* data base, as the students found it more convenient to form their own domains for their research papers and to add other domains during their actual research.

<i>national newspapers</i>	<i>regional newspapers</i>
Government and Politics	Government and Politics
Media (RTÉ, Setanta Sports Channel, etc.)	Law and order
Law and Order	Sports
Sports	Leisure and Entertainment
Leisure and Entertainment	Education
Groups and Organisations	Economy
Companies	Groups and Organisations
Economy	Companies
Education	Media
Health	Religion
Religion	Mythology
Mythology	Health
Placenames	Placenames
Sayings, Mottos, Phrases	Saying, Mottoes, Phrases
Other	Other

<sup>14</sup> Cf. George J. Mitchell Papers, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections & Archives, Bowdoin College Library: <<http://library.bowdoin.edu/arch/mitchell/faid/7/>> (accessed 15-07-07).



The domain of *Law and Order* requires a special comment. Crimes, as well as accidents and spectacular occurrences need the intervention of the police. So their mention plays a major role both in the national and the regional papers. The type of the lexical entries, however, only consists of four items. The official term for the Irish police forces is *Garda Síochána (na hÉireann)* ("Guard of the Peace of Ireland"). The national, as well as the regional papers tend to avoid the full title and to make ample use of its short form *Garda* instead. The term *garda* is ambiguous; it means both the 'police' as the collective police force and an individual 'policeman.' A 'police woman' is a *ban-gharda*. The plural of *garda* is *gardaí*. Both in the national and the regional papers, the accent is often omitted, the added <i> being a sufficient marker of pluralisation. In spite of the fact that the domain of *Law and Order* only counts four terms for the Irish police force, the terms *garda* and *gardaí* score the highest incidents of all Irish lexemes in the entire investigation. I think it is remarkable that the Government of Ireland provided a term for their police forces which differs from that of most western European countries and that this term is in Irish. Because of the high incidence of this term, this is, I think, the clearest lexical statement of the Irish society's desire of a separate identity construction.

A word on *Education* is perhaps appropriate here, as well. Education plays a very important role in Ireland and much attention was allotted to it in the past decades. That Education scores higher in the regional papers is obvious, as the catchment area of a school and college usually covers just a few parishes. Many schools are named after Irish saints (*Coláiste Chiaráin, Coláiste Cholmcille, Coláiste Éinde; Scoil Dara, Scoil Fhursa, Scoil Mhicil Naofa, Scoil Naomh Eirc*, etc.), but undoubtedly by far the most popular name for schools in the Republic is *Scoil Mhuire* ("Mary's School"), at least according to our data base. Notices for the *Gaelscoilenna* and other schools with an emphasis on education as *Gaeilge* tended to be in Irish, or both in Irish and English.

A final word on Irish sayings, mottoes and phrases. Most of them occur in connection with the domain of Religion and here in the obituary notices. Here we find blessings like

- Ar dheis Dé go bhfuil a anam dílis (*sic!*).
- Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam.
- Ar dhéis Dé go raibh a anam Mháire (*sic!*).
- A dheis Dé go raibh sé.
- Déanaimid comhbhrón lena mhuintir agus go dtuga Dia suaimhneas siorraí da anam.
- I measg na Naomh go raibh sé.
- Solas na bhFlaithis duit a Bhrid (*sic!*) agus ar dheis Dé go raibh tú.
- Solas na bhFlaithis Dí.
- Ar Shlí na Firinne (go raibh sí), etc.

Occasionally, we also find isolated phrases like *cúpla focal, focail eile as Gaeilge, dilis d'ár nOidhreacht, meanmna agus misneach*, etc. or English idioms containing Irish lexis, such as *to have a great 'grá' for smth.* Other sayings

occur interspersed both in the regional and the national papers, such as the following phrases and blessings:

*Níl aon tinteán mar do thinteán féin. Bail ó dhia oraibh agus fáilte abhaile!*

“There is no fireside like your own fireside. The blessing of God on you and welcome home.” (The Connacht Tribune, The Irish Post)<sup>15</sup>

Céad Míle Fáilte!

Fáilte Abhaile!, etc.

#### 4. Conclusions

How are we to interpret these findings?

I understand them to present an interesting case of reverse *sesquilingualism*. Sesquilingualism is a technical term for a special case of bilingualism and can be translated as the “mastery of one-and-a-half languages” (Pilch 1976: 152, Gm. “Anderthalbsprachigkeit”). Sesquilingualism occurs “when all members of a given society speak the inferior language, but some of its members speak the prestige language, usually in a more or less imperfect manner as a ‘foreign language’” (id.: 152). This implies that in sesquilingual situations “a certain number of the population has studied the second language but has retained only a marginal and superficial knowledge” (Thogmartin 1984: 447).

The typical sesquilingual situation in continental Europe is that of a native speaker of German, French, Romanian or of any other European language who believes that his or her native language is inferior to English, the language of global prestige, and who therefore intersperses his or her speech with bits and pieces from the prestige language. Most of such borrowings are correct, but many are merely imagined loanwords from English or rather ‘pseudo-borrowings,’ devised by speakers who believe they borrowed the correct term from the prestige language. In fact, however, they invented the pseudo-English terms themselves and by various means of popularisation these eventually become part of the sesquilingual lexicon. German examples are, for instance, the term ‘handy’ for ‘cell(-phone)’ or ‘mobile (phone),’ ‘beamer’ for ‘data projector,’ ‘SMS’ for ‘text message’ or ‘sets’ for ‘place-mats.’ Both the real borrowings from English and the pseudo-borrowings vary considerably across the European languages (cf. Görlach 2002).

Ireland’s sesquilingual situation is unique in Europe.<sup>16</sup> Article 8 of the Irish Constitution (*Bunreacht na hÉireann*) of 1937 states that Irish is the first official

<sup>15</sup> On the problem of correct and incorrect Irish quotes, see Mac Mathúna (2006: 124).

<sup>16</sup> It might be objected that the language situation in the Basque country, in Catalonia, Galicia and perhaps elsewhere in Europe is comparable to the Irish one. Like Irish, Basque, Catalan and Galician have been subject to intensive 20c ‘normalisation’ movements by middle

language and English the second official language. The 2006 Statement on the Irish language amended this to a specific policy of bilingualism:

Is í aidhm pholasaí an Rialtais i leith na Gaeilge ná úsáid agus eolas ar an nGaeilge a mhéadú mar theanga phobail ar bhonn céimiúil.

Is aidhm ar leith de chuid an Rialtais í a chinntiú go bhfuil an oiread saoránach agus is féidir **dátheangach** i nGaeilge agus i mBéarla.

The objective of Government policy in relation to Irish is to increase on an incremental basis the use and knowledge of Irish as a community language.

Specifically, the Government aim is to ensure that as many citizens as possible are **bilingual** in both Irish and English.<sup>17</sup>

If sesquilingualism is a special form of bilingualism, then the 2006 Statement obviously sanctions the status quo of the actual uses of the two national languages of Ireland. De facto, most Irish people use English both as their community language and also as the language of public affairs. De jure, however, most Irish people would agree that Irish is their 'real' native language and that they ought to speak it, in spite of the fact that they do not do so or that they cannot really speak it.

Ireland's sesquilingual situation is thus the *inverse* of the 'normal' European situation, where English is the prestige language and the native language the language of lower prestige. In Ireland, English as the language of actual use is less prestigious than Irish,<sup>18</sup> the language of national aspirations. This unique situation was already founded in the Irish Constitution, where it was laid down that a number of Irish language terms were to be used in official English usage. Among these figured the terms *Éire* for the state and *Taoiseach* for the prime minister. Other terms like *Oireachtas*, *Dáil Éireann* and *Seanad Éireann* were already used in the Constitution of the Irish Free State (1922).

Eighty years of compulsory school teaching firmly anchored the Irish language in Irish life, not as a language of everyday use in the home and in public, but as a language of national prestige, as a language of higher learning and culture, as a heritage language, as a language of the schools. Accordingly, until recently, the teaching methods were those of teaching the ancient languages of prestige, Latin and Greek, where grammar and the study of exemplary literature formed the staple diet of the pupils. These methods trained a *recognition* knowledge, not an actual *use* knowledge. These methods, however, imparted to the

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class revivalists. Like Irish, these languages have been material in the creation of regionalised 'national' identities. Neither Basque, nor Catalan, nor Galician, however, are official EU languages, as Irish has been since the beginning of 2007.

<sup>17</sup> Bold face in the original.

<sup>18</sup> Irish English in particular is held in low esteem, as shown for instance by the scarcity of native studies of it, the lack of grammar books, style guides, etc. And there is only one dictionary of Irish English, Dolan (2004), beside a few glossaries. Cf. Tristram (2003). By contrast, see Bonin (2003) for the recent change of esteem of Australian English in Australia.

pupils the values of Irish culture and thereby created a strong sense of identity, if only through common suffering of the Irish classes.

Reverse sesquilingualism in Ireland guaranteed that, after 80 years of school teaching and various public language policies, all Irish people have a basic understanding of the Irish language, an understanding that is, I take it, reflected by the readership of the newspapers I bought in Galway in 1995/6 and that Dr. Meidhbhín Ní Úrdail provided me with from Cork. If the readers had not been able to make sense of the tokenism of Irish in the newspapers, then the presence of Irish in them would be redundant or gratuitous. I do not think, however, that the presence of Irish in the papers was redundant or gratuitous, because it served the underpinning of an Irish identity ostensibly different from other English-speaking peoples in Europe and elsewhere (cf. Tristram 2001).

On a more localised level, the Irish tokenism also served emotional purposes as evidenced, for instance, by the use of Irish names for sports teams and clubs, for names on the gate of private houses, for B&B advertisements, for the names of schools, for the blessings in the obituary notices, etc. It would have certainly been rewarding to have carried out readership tests in order to learn how much of the Irish in the papers the readers actually understood or how they understood the individual terms and phrases. It would also have been interesting to investigate who actually read the Irish columns both in the national and the regional newspapers.

If we take a look at the Irish national census returns regarding the language question, we see

### Censuses 1861 – 2002

Year	Total number of Irish Population	Irish Speakers	Non-Irish Speakers	% of Irish Speakers
1861	4,402,111	1,077,087	3,325,024	24.5
1871	4,053,187	804,547	3,248,640	19.9
1881	3,870,020	924,781	2,945,239	23.9
1891	3,467,694	664,387	2,804,307	19.2
1901	3,221,823	619,710	2,602,113	19.2
1911	3,139,688	553,717	2,585,971	17.6
1926	2,802,452	540,802 <sup>19</sup>	2,261,650	19.3
1936	2,806,925	666,601	2,140,324	24.8
1946	2,771,657	588,725	2,182,932	21.2
1961	2,635,818	716,420	1,919,398	27.2
1971	2,787,448	789,429	1,998,019	28.3
1981	3,226,467	1,018,413	2,208,054	31.6
1986	3,353,632	1,042,701	2,310,931	31.1
1991	3,367,006	1,095,830	2,271,176	32.6

<sup>19</sup> In 1926 the category '3 years and over' was introduced.

1996	3,476,648	1,430,205 <sup>20</sup>	2,046,443	41.1
2002	3,668,157	1,570,894	2,097,263	42.8

that five years ago, 41.1% of the Irish citizens claimed to be able to speak Irish. Whatever they meant by this, the figure shows that a high percentage of the Irish citizens *believed* in their active knowledge of the Irish language. We can deduce from this that an even higher percentage had a passive knowledge of Irish at the period of investigation. We can probably assume that there was a continuum between passively understood pure tokenism, ranging from Irish as an unquestioned symbol of Otherness, to a full understanding for those readers who took the official sesquilingualism seriously and fully understood what the tokens actually meant.

A final word on Irish in the newspapers as *indices* of 'Celticity'. The question of how 'Celtic' the so-called 'Celtic Englishes' are was intensively and controversially discussed at the first Colloquium on the interface between English and the Celtic languages in 1995 (Tristram 1997: 11-17). From a purely linguistic point of view, Manfred Görlach (1977) argued that very few linguistic features of truly Celtic provenance, if at all, can be identified in the contact Englishes of the former internal colonies of England and that therefore the 'Celticity' of these contact Englishes could not be rightly claimed. In the discussion, John Harris and most forcefully Roibeárd Ó hÚrdail disagreed with Görlach on the grounds of their own perception of English in the Celtic countries as 'Celtic' influenced varieties of English, linguistically, culturally and ideologically. The issue was taken up again at the Colloquium on the *Celtic Englishes IV* of 2004, where Kirk & Kallen's paper and Séamus Mac Mathúna's response to it argued again for a broader understanding of the 'Celticity' of the 'Celtic Englishes,' hence also of the English language in Ireland. See also Kirk's & Kallen's paper "Assessing Celticity in a Corpus of Irish Standard English," where they note that they understand

Celticity not just in terms of the formal transfer of grammatical features, but as an indexical feature of language use, i.e. one in which English in Ireland is used in such a way as to point to the Irish language as a linguistic and cultural reference point. In this sense, our understanding of Celticity is not entirely grammatical, but relies as well on Pierce's notion of indexicality ... by which semiotic signs 'point' to other signs (Kirk & Kallen 2007: 270).

In this sense, I believe that the occurrence of Irish in the English language papers sold in the Republic are indexical of the 'Celticity' of Ireland both on the official level of language policy and on the personal level of the Irish readers of these newspapers. In this sense also, the 'Celticity' of Ireland was and still is an

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<sup>20</sup> Introduction of questions concerning the frequency of Irish language use (focus on spoken language).

essential factor in the construction and maintenance of the otherness of Irish self-perception and self-esteem.

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