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Foreign Language Learning and Ireland's *Languages Connect* Strategy

Reflections following a symposium organised
by the National University of Ireland with
University College Cork



Ollscoil na hÉireann
National University of Ireland

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Editor Patricia Maguire



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FOREWORD

Since its establishment in 1908, the National University of Ireland has placed particular value on language learning, regarding exposure to languages other than the mother tongue as an essential element in the general education of those aspiring to enter the university. In this NUI followed a long-established tradition dating back to the medieval universities where Latin was the common language. Early in its history, Irish was introduced as an essential subject for NUI matriculation and remains so today. Over time the University's matriculation policy on languages has adapted to changing conditions and in particular, with the increased emphasis on science and technology, the languages requirement for students entering degree programmes in science and engineering has been reduced. However, the University remains convinced of the importance of language learning and its benefits both for the individual and for society as a whole in educational and cultural terms but also more pragmatically in purely economic terms. It makes sense for Ireland as a nation and for the universities in particular to place renewed emphasis on the learning of languages.

When the government launched *Languages Connect: Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017-2026*, the University engaged quickly with Language and Literature departments and schools across the NUI federation. From these discussions, the idea quickly emerged of a one-day symposium which would bring together expert speakers from a range of perspectives, including an employer view, to explore the opportunities and challenges that the new strategy sets out for higher education.

We are grateful to our friends and colleagues in UCC, notably Dr Martin Howard in the School of Languages, Literatures and Cultures, for collaborating so effectively with us on the programme and speakers for the day and for generously hosting the event on campus at UCC in November 2018. We were not disappointed with the enthusiasm generated by the speakers and the participants and the quality of the discussion.

NUI is pleased to publish this collection of reflections from the symposium speakers. The tenor of the contributions makes it clear that the realisation of this ambitious national strategy will require full and active engagement from the universities and from higher education in general. The institutions have the potential to achieve a great deal together, and in partnership with the government, schools and other stakeholders. NUI is committed to playing its part in supporting our member institutions and the sector more widely. We will continue to focus attention on an issue that is an increasingly important one for higher education and for Irish society as a whole.

Dr Maurice Manning
Chancellor, National University of Ireland

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1. The role of the National University of Ireland in Language Learning and Language Research and Scholarship

Dr Attracta Halpin,
Registrar, National University of Ireland

The National University of Ireland has a long and proud history of valuing the study of languages and of supporting and rewarding language learning and language-related scholarship and research. From early in the establishment of the University, students entering NUI institutions have been required to present Irish as one of their subjects for admission and until relatively recently the University required all students in addition to present a third language. It is therefore true to say that the concept of mother tongue + 2, which Ireland signed up to as far back as 2002, and which is now a target set by the EU Commission for achievement by 2025, was in practice across NUI for quite a long time. Sadly, we have gone backwards in recent years.

Over time, NUI's language entry requirements have come under pressure for various reasons. The expansion of student numbers, the increasing diversity of the student body, the widening participation imperative and the drive to encourage more students into the STEM subjects have all contributed towards a situation where the University's language requirements on entry have been considerably diluted. The result is that students entering degree programmes across the sciences and engineering are no longer required to present a language other than English and Irish. Irish remains a general requirement across the universities and colleges of the National University of Ireland, though that policy too can be contentious. There remains a requirement for students entering degrees in the Arts and Humanities, Law, Medicine and Commerce to present a language other than English and Irish so in all, I suggest that it is reasonable to claim that the National University of Ireland and its associated universities and colleges have stronger language requirements for entry than other Irish universities and higher education institutions.

While undoubtedly the teaching of languages in schools has been greatly supported by NUI's requirements, some may consider that focusing on language requirements is a rather negative way of viewing language learning. On the positive side of the balance sheet, I would point to the fact that NUI's constituent universities: UCC, UCD, NUI Galway and Maynooth University, provide Irish society with the majority of its language graduates and accordingly of teachers of languages at second level. HEA statistics (2017) indicate that three quarters of those graduating with undergraduate qualifications in languages across all Universities, Colleges and Institutes of Technology come from NUI institutions: in 2017, the numbers were 422 from a total of 573 (73.6%).¹

The NUI universities have also been positively supporting languages by broadening the range of languages available on their campuses. They are increasing their efforts to provide elective opportunities for students to study a language and to have access to a range of levels and credit volumes of language learning, irrespective of their chosen undergraduate degree subjects. This reflects the growing evidence – for example in the National Employers Survey of 2015 – of the educational, social, personal and economic value to students of learning languages to varying degrees of proficiency.

NUI itself also promotes languages through the NUI Awards programme (scholarships, fellowships and prizes) and through relevant events held in NUI itself at 49 Merrion Square and across the campuses of the NUI universities. Competitive² awards from undergraduate to post-doctoral level are made across the range of languages studied in the NUI universities, including most recently in Chinese, which is now studied in three

1 HEA graduate statistics (2017) for undergraduate qualifications, listed under ISCED codes 0231 (Languages Acquisition) and 0230 (Languages not further defined or classified elsewhere). See: <https://hea.ie/statistics-archive/>

2 Details of NUI's awards programme may found at: www.nui.ie/awards

of the four NUI universities. We collaborate with the French, and more recently the Spanish, Embassies in rewarding proficiency in those languages. In the period 2012-2018, almost 200 students from first year to post-doctoral level in the NUI universities will have received awards for studying languages and we hope to expand this further during the NUI Strategic Plan period, 2018-22. In terms of events, an enthusiastic audience, including significant participation from the diplomatic corps based in Dublin, attended a special NUI event on European Day of Languages on 26th September 2018.

NUI is confident of its good credentials when it comes to encouraging the study of languages. For that reason we greatly welcome the Government's renewed commitment to developing foreign languages in education, as reflected in *Languages Connect: Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017-2026*. We fully endorse the vision it contains of 'a society where the ability to learn and use at least one foreign language is taken for granted, because of its inherent value for individuals, society and the economy'.

We are also enthusiastic about some of the key targets set, including those of particular relevance to higher education and notably the following:

- Increasing the proportion of the higher education cohort studying a foreign language
- Increasing participation in the Erasmus+ programme
- Doubling the number of teachers participating in mobility programmes
- Improving learner attitudes to foreign language learning and highlighting the benefits of learning a foreign language
- Adopting the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) for use by education institutions and by employers
- Promoting and encouraging work placements requiring the use of foreign languages.

We know, however, that while setting targets for change brings new dynamism, it can pose significant challenges for those responsible for their implementation and achievement.

Languages Connect was published in December 2017. Since then, Government has taken forward an initiative relating to the supply of language teachers for second-level schools. For some years past alarm bells have been ringing drawing attention to teacher shortages. While in general the numbers of applicants for admission to the Postgraduate Masters in Education (PME) – the main qualification for entry to the teaching profession at the second-level – have been falling, the drop has been experienced most sharply in those subjects now considered to be a priority. As well as the STEM subjects, these also now include languages, specifically Irish, German, French, Italian and Spanish. In March 2018, the Minister for Education and Skills announced, following consultation with the universities, that additional places on the PME would be provided for graduates in those subjects. The closing date for application to the PME was extended and efforts were made to promote second-level teaching as a career. The campaign was at best moderately successful and resulted in a slight increase in 2018 in the numbers of language graduates admitted to the programme across all centres and a further increase in 2019. Of greater significance has been the change introduced by the NUI universities in the way applications for admission are processed. Previously this was done on a blanket basis, with decisions on admission based purely on CAO points scored. From 2018, the system administered by the

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Postgraduate Applications Centre (PAC) is more nuanced and includes quotas of places for each teaching subject. This will go some way towards addressing the issue of teacher supply but in my view, at a time of near full employment, with increasing student numbers forecast at second level, and plans to expand the range of languages taught in schools, further action is needed to enhance the attractiveness of the teaching profession, to be sure that we will have sufficient qualified teachers to enable the country to achieve the ambitious targets that have been set for language learning.

In summary then, NUI as a university has always valued languages and language learning and through its matriculation requirements, has consistently supported the position of languages in second-level education. The concept of mother tongue plus 2, an EU target for 2025, was in practice in NUI until relatively recently. However, because of other pressures, NUI's language requirements, while still the strongest across Irish higher education, have been diluted in recent years. On the positive side, in terms of undergraduate qualifications, NUI universities continue to provide roughly 75% of the country's language graduates. Through its awards programme, NUI promotes the range of languages studied in its universities, with over 200 student awards made since 2012. We hope to expand our language awards in future years. NUI collaborates notably with the French and Spanish Embassies and engages in other language-promoting activities. We welcome Languages Connect: Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017-2026 and are enthusiastic about its targets. The supply of language teachers for second level remains a concern. The Minister for Education's initiative in creating additional places for languages on the Professional Masters in Education programme while welcome has had limited success. The change introduced by the NUI universities to the system of admission to the PME will go some way towards increasing the supply of language teachers but if the ambitious targets of the government's languages strategy are to be achieved more needs to be done to make the teaching profession attractive to language graduates.

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2. *Languages Connect*: What Does Ireland's First Government Strategy for Foreign-Languages-In-Education mean for Irish Universities?

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1. Background and context

The most cursory of reviews of the linguistic profile of Ireland reveals that a foreign-languages-in-education strategy was sorely needed. On the one hand, Ireland enjoys a rich tradition of bilingualism with both English and Irish taught within the education system. However, since the discontinuation of the *Modern Languages in Primary Schools Initiative* in December 2011, after fourteen years in existence, there has been no mainstream provision of foreign language education in either the pre-school or primary school sectors.

The uptake of languages in secondary schools is strong. However, it is limited to a small range of languages, in particular French which accounts for more than half of students taking a language at second level. The other languages are German, Italian and Spanish in the junior cycle, with the addition of Arabic, Japanese and Russian in the senior cycle. A foreign language is not compulsory for the Leaving Certificate with approximately 30% of school leavers completing their education without a foreign language in their final qualification and 10% completing the junior cycle without a qualification in a foreign language (Department of Education and Skills (DES) 2017a, 17).

It is in the Higher Education sector that deficiencies within the Irish education system in relation to foreign languages become particularly apparent. While approximately 70% of school leavers have a Leaving Certificate qualification in a foreign language, only four percent of university students (*Languages Connect* references some 9,000 students in 2012/13), are engaged in the study of a foreign language at third level, either as part of a specialist language degree, combined with another discipline or as an accredited element of another programme (DES 2017a, 31). The Strategy notes that approximately 6,000 of these students are in universities and 3,000 in Institutes of Technology.

It is therefore unsurprising that foreign language capacity among the Irish population is below the EU average. For example, survey data gathered by EU institutions between 2016 and 2018 indicates that approximately 20% of Irish adults report that they can conduct a conversation in a foreign language compared with an EU average of approximately 35% (Eurostat, 2018). In addition, successive reports and studies from both industry and academia indicate that a lack of foreign language capacity in Ireland is impacting negatively on the country's social, cultural and economic development. Examples of the former include the report of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, *Key Skills for Enterprise to Trade Internationally* (Forfás, 2012); *The National Employer Survey* (Higher Education Authority (HEA), Solas, and Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) (2015) and *Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025* (DES, 2016) to name but a few of the most relevant and recent. Academic studies reaching similar conclusions regarding the value of foreign language learning in social, cultural and psychological contexts are also numerous and include Bruen, 2013; Cook, 2016; Fielding, 2016; Kirwan, 2016 and Okal, 2014).

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2. *Languages Connect: Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017-26 – proposals, possibilities and challenges*

Against this backdrop, the Department of Education and Skills launched an extensive public consultation process in 2014. A number of publications informed this approach. These included *Languages in the Post-Primary Curriculum* (Little, 2003), *Language Education Policy Profile Ireland* (Department of Education and Science, and the Council of Europe, 2008), the *National Language Strategy* (Royal Irish Academy, 2011) and the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* (Hunt, 2011). The output from this process was *Languages Connect: Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017-2026* and its associated *Implementation Plan*. The strategy's stated mission is:

'...that Ireland's education system will promote a society where the ability to learn and use at least one foreign language is taken for granted, because of its inherent value for individuals, society and the economy'. (DES, 2017a, 7).

Languages Connect sets out an ambitious range of objectives and targets intended to assist the Irish education system in achieving this aim. These relate to all areas of the education system from pre-school to lifelong learning. They centre on the following four overarching Goals (DES, 2017a, 8):

1. Improve language proficiency by creating a more engaging language learning environment
2. Diversify and increase the uptake of languages learned and cultivate the languages of the new Irish
3. Increase awareness of the importance of language learning to encourage the wider use of foreign languages
4. Enhance employer engagement in the development and use of trade languages

A particular strength of the strategy is that it recognises the importance of understanding and harnessing the '*complex interdependencies*' (DES, 2017a, 8) that exist between the different elements of the education system in particular primary, secondary and third level. The strategy acknowledges the 'push and pull' factors that exist, with each sector dependent on the other for the success of proposed measures, and the education sectors dependent in turn on the success of broader measures relating to awareness raising and a change in mind-set in relation to languages among the wider public.

Having considered all of the many proposed actions within *Languages Connect*, this paper selects five stated target outcomes that are likely to significantly impact the teaching and learning of foreign languages in Irish Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The paper describes each of the five target outcomes in turn, considers the scope for positive action they imply and discusses potential associated challenges. Table 1, below, sets out the selected five target outcomes from *Languages Connect*:

TABLE 1 SELECTED TARGET OUTCOMES FROM LANGUAGES CONNECT STRATEGY

| Languages Connect Target Outcomes | |
|--|---|
| 1 | Increase numbers studying a foreign language at third level, in any capacity |
| 2 | Mandate independent, external certification of language teacher competency |
| 3 | Increase student mobility by 50%, via Erasmus+ |
| 4 | Incentivise the study of languages for Leaving Certificate using CAO bonus points |
| 5 | University publication of institutional language strategies |

2.1 Increase numbers studying a foreign language at third level, in any capacity

The Strategy provides a target outcome for the proportion of students in Higher Education studying a language ‘in any capacity’ (DES, 2017a, 19) to increase from 4% to 20% by 2026 (DES, 2017a, 33).

TABLE 2 NUMBERS STUDYING LANGUAGES AS PART OF THEIR DEGREE

| | Baseline 2016 | Mid-term target 2022 | End target 2026 |
|---|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Percentage of students studying courses with a language component in HE | 4% (2012/13) | 10% | 20% |

The call for an increase in the numbers studying foreign languages in Higher Education is particularly welcome in light of the previously described linguistic profile of Ireland. The target outcome is, nonetheless, dramatic. The reference to study ‘in any capacity’ means that all of the following categories are relevant:

1. Those studying specialist language degrees
2. Those studying language alongside another discipline with both given equal or near equal weighting
3. Those studying a foreign language as part of an Institution Wide Language Program (IWLP) or equivalent in parallel with their primary degree, and
4. Those studying a foreign language in a more informal setting which is not for credit.

Notwithstanding, the phrase ‘courses with a language component’ (Table 2) suggests that categories 1-3, above, are likely to dominate. The balance between these different forms of language study is not specified within the plan and remains at the discretion of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

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On the positive side, if the actions proposed in *Languages Connect* relating to pre-school, primary and secondary level are successful, and the proposed awareness raising campaign among the wider public achieves its objectives, HEIs should see an increase in the level of demand for foreign languages at third level. Such an increase in demand would facilitate universities to increase the numbers of places available on specialist language degrees and on degrees where language is a core component alongside another discipline, without seeing a drop in the standard of applicants (as might be reflected, for example, in Central Applications Office (CAO) points for university entry). An increase in demand would strengthen the case for expanding such programmes as well as for the development of new programmes in foreign languages. New programmes would be characterised by a diversification of the languages on offer as called for by the strategy, as well as by a diversification of the other disciplines with which these languages are combined.

However, if the actions proposed for second level are not taken or do not have the desired outcomes, there may not be an increase in demand to study languages at university. If there is no increase in demand and universities are, nonetheless, required to increase the number of students studying languages to 20% of the student body, they may come under pressure to drop standards, as reflected for example in the CAO cut-off points for degree programmes, in order to increase numbers. In other words, an oversupply of places on degree programmes featuring languages could lead to a fall in the CAO points required for these degrees. Such an approach could result in students on foreign language degrees reaching lower levels of proficiency on average over the course of their programme than is currently the case. A possible impact of this would be failure on the part of some language graduates to reach the standards laid out for registration as foreign language teachers by the Teaching Council (see section 2.2) despite completion of a programme in which a foreign language is a core component. It could also result in higher failure rates on foreign language degrees, an outcome that would hinder attempts to counter the perception that languages are difficult (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2015, 34-35). In other words, increasing the proportion of students studying foreign languages at third level without negatively impacting the proficiency levels achieved on average by these students is dependent on an increase in demand for places on foreign language degree programmes.

Institution Wide Language Programmes (IWLPs), as they are known, are less dependent on demand for places for degrees on which language represents a core component. IWLPs represent a means of introducing a relatively small foreign language element to an institution's portfolio of programs in other disciplines. Organisationally, they can stand alone outside of a language department. Alternatively they can be integrated into language schools and departments and administered alongside specialist language degrees. Students on IWLPs take a limited number of credits – sometimes as few as five – in a foreign language, in addition to or as an option on their discipline-specific programme of study. IWLPs have many benefits as well as bringing with them their own complexities. Funding models vary: some are funded by requiring students to pay fees in addition to their primary degree programmes. The Cambridge University Language Programme (CULP)³ is an example of this model, offering Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Modern Greek, Persian, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Swahili and Turkish to Cambridge University students and staff as well as to the general public. Other IWLPs are funded by HEIs themselves. This brings us back to the observation made by *Languages Connect* that the achievement of its goals will require time,

3 <http://www.langcen.cam.ac.uk/1c/culp/culp-index.html>

commitment and additional resources (DES, 2017, 12). The resourcing and administration of IWLPs can be challenging. However, a successful IWLP can bring many benefits, exposing a broad range of students to the study of foreign language and often increasing the uptake of ERASMUS and other study abroad placements, a further objective of the strategy discussed in section 2.3, below. While students registered on IWLPs may not attain the language proficiency levels equivalent to specialist language students, the development of intercultural competencies, cognitive flexibility and other transferable skills associated with language learning, can be substantial. These are beneficial to employers and to society as a whole (Bruen and Sherry, 2007; Dlaska, 2000; González-Becerra, 2017). Additionally, an IWLP can be conceptualised as a stand-alone set of language modules open to all, or as a tailored set of modules developed in close collaboration with another degree programme. While both approaches are used internationally, experience and research into best practice would appear to indicate that the latter has a greater chance of long-term success particularly in relation to the achievement of relatively higher levels of proficiency albeit with heavier resource implications (Saarinen and Taalas, 2017).

Finally, good use of informal language learning settings can also be extremely supportive of linguistic and intercultural learning. Examples include learning spaces in which students from diverse linguistic backgrounds are encouraged to socialise and interact during semi-structured activities and events. The challenge here is to avoid an impression that they are an ‘easy option’ in terms of achieving government targets with a minimum of resourcing and support.

To conclude, while not an either/or situation, specialist language degrees and degrees on which languages are a core component are particularly reliant on student demand for their success. The success of IWLPs and informal language learning, on the other hand, depends to a greater extent on adequate funding and organisational excellence on the part of the HEI.

2.2 External Certification of Language Teachers’ language proficiency

This proposal involves the setting and independent certification of minimum levels of language proficiency for student entry both to Professional Masters in Education (PME) programmes and to the teaching profession. Table 3, below, replicates the Actions put forward in *Languages Connect* (DES, 2017a, 8).

TABLE 3 MINIMUM PROFICIENCY REQUIREMENTS FOR ENTRY TO PME PROGRAMMES AND TO THE TEACHING PROFESSION

| Action | Timescale | Lead |
|---|-----------|------------------|
| Minimum CEFR level for entry to post-primary PME programmes | Q3 2018 | Teaching Council |
| For registration with the Teaching Council, language teachers to be required to provide, in addition to their university degree, independent evidence of competence at minimum of CEFR level B2.2 in all five language skills | Q4 2020 | Teaching Council |

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Of note are the differences in timescale and the fact that the minimum proficiency level required for entry to post-primary PME courses does not appear to require independent certification. This proposal provides scope for positive action on the part of HEIs, to ensure that undergraduates reach the required proficiency levels, at present a B2.2 in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages or CEFR (Council of Europe 2001) in all five language skills, that is: listening, reading, spoken production, spoken interaction and writing. This is an ambitious requirement particularly in relation to the productive skills which include writing, spoken production and spoken interaction. However, its achievement supports the argument frequently put forward by HEI foreign language education departments for improved lecturer-student ratios, increased contact hours and enhanced infrastructure to support blended foreign language learning. An appropriate and well-designed independent proficiency examination could also, by means of the well documented assessment backwash effect (see, for example, Paker, 2013; Watkins, Dahlin and Ekholm, 2005), have a constructive influence on the design of third level language curricula.

Additional minimum proficiency level requirements may also pose challenges, including the potential creation of additional barriers to entry to PME courses and for teacher registration. This may lead to reduced demand for places in foreign languages at third level, countering many of the other objectives contained within *Languages Connect*. In particular, the requirement to attain B2.2 (CEFR) in all five language skills in order to register as a teacher could introduce uncertainty and anxiety at a late stage in a graduate’s education path.

2.3 Increase student mobility and its impact

There is a strong focus within *Languages Connect* on outward mobility from Ireland and its impact. This concerns both an increase in the numbers studying and working abroad through a foreign language and an increase in the proficiency levels they obtain. Included in the broader goal is an increase in the numbers studying abroad, even where they do not do so through the medium of a foreign language. Table 4 replicates the key targets from *Languages Connect* (DES, 2017a, 25).

TABLE 4 MOBILITY INCREASES AND LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY IMPACT

| | Baseline 2016 | 2022 | 2026 |
|--|--------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Participation in Erasmus+ in HE and other study and work placements abroad | 3, 314 | 4,400 | 5,400 |
| Improvements in returning CEFR levels of Erasmus students | 63% at level B2 or above | 68% | 75% |

The Strategy recommends several measures to increase the impact of time spent abroad on language proficiency levels. Many of these align with best practice and with what university language departments already do, in parallel with mainstream activities. Some of these are primarily intended to encourage more students to study/work abroad, and many of them specifically to study/work abroad through the target language.

They include:

1. Awareness raising exercises, on the value of the languages being studied
2. Engagement between pre- and post-Erasmus students
3. Promotion of immersion experiences by students while studying or working abroad
4. Provision of more information in various formats on ERASMUS+ for potential ERASMUS+ students
5. Acknowledgement in students' degree of the time spent abroad and
6. Exploration of the possibility of school or work placements abroad in the context of the new concurrent teaching degrees

Other suggested measures are intended to support increases in foreign language proficiency among those studying abroad through a target foreign language, such as:

1. Increased use of ICT and media tools to enable feedback from sending institutions
2. Collection and dissemination of best practice examples for the use of ICT supports to enhance and support mobility periods abroad

Many university language departments are already engaging in at least some these activities, albeit often in a somewhat ad-hoc and unsupported manner, therefore the strategy recommendations provide scope for enhanced support and mainstreaming within HEIs. There is also scope to look in more depth at ways of assisting students to develop their proficiency while abroad, an area touched upon but covered in less depth in the strategy.

Potential challenges faced by language education departments in relation to the above measures concern the often overlooked administrative load and logistical challenges associated with the organisation of study and work abroad for students. There is also a danger that in the context of institutional Internationalisation Plans, for example, HEIs may focus on study or work abroad which does not involve the use of the target language. Increasing the numbers of students studying or working abroad through the medium of English, for example, should not be understood as achieving the goals of *Languages Connect* in this regard.

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2.4 Incentivise the study of languages for the Leaving Certificate

This concerns the possible introduction of bonus points for foreign languages in the Leaving Certificate, in a manner which may share similarities with the current system where bonus points are awarded for higher level mathematics. This is not an entirely new proposal. Table 5 replicates the proposed Action in *Languages Connect* (DES, 2017a, 10).

TABLE 5 PROPOSAL FOR BONUS POINTS FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN THE LEAVING CERTIFICATE

| Action | Timeline | Lead |
|--|----------|---|
| Update on the consideration by HEIs of the provision of bonus points in foreign-language related higher-level Leaving Certificate subjects | Q4 2019 | DES (in collaboration with the <i>Transitions Reform Steering Group</i>), HEIs |

It is possible that this proposal, if implemented, would encourage the study of foreign languages at higher level for the final School Leaving Certificate. Evidence for this view lies in the documented attitude among some pupils and their parents that it is difficult both to study foreign languages and to score well in languages examinations (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment 2015, 34-35).

The proposal is nonetheless complex. A key question is whether the bonus points would only be awarded to students who have applied to degree programmes in which the foreign language in question is a core element (O'Brien, 2018). *Languages Connect* outlines that 'the issue of providing bonus points in Higher Level Leaving Certificate foreign language subjects in cases where students apply for higher education courses in language-related areas' will be explored by the Transitions Reform Steering Group, in collaboration with the DES (DES, 2017a, 10). If, however, this approach were to be adopted for foreign languages, it would result in two different systems of CAO bonus points operating simultaneously, one where bonus points are awarded in higher level mathematics to students regardless of their desired third level option; the second with a more tailored system for foreign language bonus points. Thus, a careful working out of this proposal will be necessary.

2.5 Develop University Language Policies

This relates to a requirement that HEIs have institutional language strategies and policies in place.

Languages Connect (10) emphasises that the development and implementation of these strategies and policies, alongside the other objectives outlined in the strategy, should be monitored through a process of 'strategic dialogue' within the *Higher Education Systems Performance Framework 2018-2020* (DES, 2017a, 33). This framework outlines key Government objectives in relation to higher education as well as how institutions are to be assessed against these objectives during this period. It has been designed to enable the HEA to monitor the performance of universities in specific areas. As part of this process, universities engage in dialogue with the HEA to negotiate *Performance Compacts* which contain agreed targets. The degree to which HEIs meet their targets is used to inform government decision making and allocate funding to and within the Higher Education sector.

As well as specifying that HEIs should have language policies, *Languages Connect* indicates (Implementation Plan, 17-18) that sectoral guidelines should be agreed to guide the development of university language policies. There is considerable scope here for language departments to take the lead in the development of such guidelines in line with international best practice in and research into language policy development (see for example Bruen, 2004, 2013; Chambers, 2004; Mačianskienė, 2011; Tollefson 2008). In addition, Tollefson (2008, 3) clarifies further that language policies created by educational institutions are:

...statements of goals and means for achieving them that constitute guidelines or rules shaping language structure, language use, and language acquisition within educational institutions (Tollefson, 2008, 3).

A further key document capable of informing the development of institutional language policies is a position statement published by the European Confederation of Language Centres in Higher Education (Cercles, 2011). This document is presented in the form of guidelines for HEIs. It considers such core issues as why a HEI should have a language policy, the issues a policy should address and the ways in which a language policy should be developed. In particular, the document stresses that a HEI language policy should address issues at all levels of the organisation, including senior management, faculty leadership and programme development within schools/departments, and that it should be owned by the university as a whole rather than by a language school/department or centre. The importance of the publication and accessibility of an institution's language policy is also emphasised. Of particular significance in the context of this paper is the acceptance that an institutional language policy should be aligned both with the internal strategic goals of the institution and the goals relating to Ireland's linguistic profile (see Bruen, 2013), as expressed in *Languages Connect*. Best practice would also indicate that it should be an evolving document subject to change and review and should relate to all forms of language provision within an institution.

Designing language policies in Irish HEIs will be a challenging process given common misconceptions around what a language policy is and who should take ownership of it. There can be a reductive tendency within universities to equate a language policy with an internationalisation policy and often solely with practical issues associated with the recruitment of non-EU students and the delivery of language classes on campus.

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3. Commitment and Resources

This paper has selected five key objectives or targeted outcomes within *Languages Connect*, explored some of the scope for positive action that they engender and discussed potential challenges associated with each.

In a Section entitled, Commitment and Resources, *Languages Connect* (18-19) acknowledges that:

Implementation of this Strategy will require active engagement from stakeholders across the education and training sector, across government departments and agencies, cultural organisations, employers and the media. Most importantly, it will require the commitment and motivation of education leaders and teachers as well as learners, their parents and employers.

The following section describes three university-level initiatives implemented by one Irish HEI which are potentially capable of contributing to the achievement of some of the core goals of *Languages Connect*:

3.1 Sample Initiatives in an Irish higher Education Institution

Introduction of an optional, certified year-abroad on undergraduate programmes

The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at this university has added an optional year abroad to its offering of all undergraduate programmes. Students are not obliged to take up the offer, but all are offered the opportunity to do so. A range of destinations have been selected. Some offer the opportunity to study an appropriate discipline through the target foreign language, where students already have an adequate level of proficiency in that language to engage with the programme. Others allow students to study a discipline related to their undergraduate degree through English in the destination country.

In order to acknowledge the learning outcomes from the year abroad, the word 'International' has been added after the students' award title on their official degree parchment. This addition to the students' award title acts both as an incentive to engage with the year of study abroad and an indicator to employers and others that graduates have successfully completed such a year and developed their disciplinary, intercultural and, in some cases, their linguistic competencies.

Development of a Bachelor of Education with Languages [Irish plus French/German/Spanish for entry 2019]

This refers to the development of a new undergraduate initial teacher education degree with languages. At present, the proposed languages are Irish, and one of French, German and Spanish. During the programme, the students will study education and language modules. They will also complete three school placements in secondary schools, one semester in France, Germany or Spain in the second semester of the third year of the programme, and/or a stay in a Gaeltacht region. An additional element of the proposed new degree programme is the introduction of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) modules. The language pedagogy modules for German, French, Spanish and Irish will be delivered and assessed through the target language. Students will engage with these modules during the first semester of the third year of the programme. The second semester will be spent in Germany, France or Spain where the students will study a combination of education and language pedagogy modules through the target language. They will complete their fourth and final year in Ireland. As such, the programme leads the way in the achievement of

several key targets within *Languages Connect*, that is, the introduction of CLIL delivery as well as study and work placements abroad. In relation to second level, it is also designed to address the shortage of language teachers in schools, a further central objective in *Languages Connect*. If the external certification of language teachers in advance of registration with the Teaching Council is introduced, it will also apply to graduates of this programme. This means that the development of high (exit level B2.2 in all skills within the CEFR) levels of proficiency in both languages will be essential over the course of the four-year programme.

Incorporation of targets from Languages Connect into University Strategic Plans

This university's recently published Strategic Plan includes elements of *Languages Connect*. In its Internationalisation Strategy, the university makes the following commitment:

- A [...] Language strategy will be adopted which will include:
 - (i) A framework by which the university can address the objectives of the Irish Government's 2017-2026 Foreign Languages Strategy.
 - (ii) A plan to broaden inter-cultural and language offerings, both formal and informal, to [...] staff, students and our external community.

This commitment will require the development and implementation of a university languages Strategy whose goals are aligned with those of *Languages Connect*.

These three initiatives represent ways in which one Irish university has responded to the types of challenge laid down by *Languages Connect*. There will be parallels in other Irish HEIs. Emanating primarily from within university departments and faculties, the initiatives outlined above are dependent on the support of many of the other stakeholders identified in the strategy, i.e. '...stakeholders across the education and training sector, across government departments and agencies, cultural organisations, employers and the media ... education leaders and teachers as well as learners, their parents and employers ...' (DES, 2017a, 18-19) for their success.

4. Concluding Remarks

The publication of *Languages Connect* in 2017 was an extremely welcome development. As discussed in this paper, the national strategy represents the outcome of extensive and genuine collaboration between those involved in foreign language education in Ireland, in business and enterprise, and with policy-makers including the Department of Education and Skills.

Given their input into the development of the strategy, university language departments and schools are largely supportive of the goals and targets articulated in the strategy. The significant 'time, resources and commitment' required to implement many of the goals (DES, 2017a, 12, 18-19) may be less universally popular or may pose more challenges at the implementation stages. Indeed, there should be debate around the need to increase the discipline-weighting given to languages by the as part of the Higher Education Authority Recurrent Grant Allocation Model (HEA, 2017). Nonetheless, in the spirit of the collaborative origins of the strategy, it is essential that universities take ownership of and work to support and achieve the objectives laid out in *Languages Connect*. Within HEIs, it is likely that the impetus for many supporting

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initiatives will come at least initially from language schools and departments. The primary challenge will be in securing adequate resources for these.

The fact that *Languages Connect* is part of the Higher Education Authority *Systems Performance Framework 2018-2020* (Section 2.5) suggests that it may have a greater impact than previous, more aspirational strategies and reports such as that published by the Department of Education and Skills in collaboration with the Council of Europe in 2008 and the Royal Irish Academy's report in 2011. As a result of the process of strategic dialogue underpinning the *Systems Performance Framework*, Senior Management within HEIs should develop an awareness of the targets set by *Languages Connect*, and of the need to meet at least some of those in order to secure performance-related government funding. Initiatives proposed by language departments such as those outlined in the previous section may, as a result, have a greater chance of support and success.

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3. On the Opportunities and Challenges of Implementation: Connecting with *Languages Connect* in Higher Education

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A stark representation of the lowly status of language acquisition can be gauged in a commercial recently aired nationally on the radio. While the benefits for business of an unlimited mobile broadband deal are being vaunted, a woman can be heard speaking Spanish at quite a rapid rate in the background. Because of the deal, the network operator informs us, the user need not fear getting cut off from this voluble overseas contact. But then the punch-line of sorts: all that now remains for the user to do is to figure out, through Google Translate or some similar online tool, what on earth is being said on the other end. As facile as the humour might be, it underscores the absurdity occasioned in this country by a yawning languages deficit. While the operator puts itself forward as an enabler of communication, the connection it provides in this instance tellingly exposes a language barrier that will require urgent remedying – but, as suggested here, through additional use of ‘smart’ technology instantly deployed rather than long-term investment in language learning.

Such a scenario serves as a reminder of what the *Languages Connect* strategy sets out to combat, not least through what it calls ‘a significant change of mindset about foreign language learning’ (p. 12). *Languages Connect* presents itself in the twofold form of a strategy document covering the period 2017-2026 and an implementation plan applicable to the first half of that period. I would like to focus on the implications of the process of strategy implementation in the higher education sector and, more precisely, on how implementation relates to the work and values of modern languages disciplines in a university setting.

To recap, the strategy singles out higher education institutions and their prospective students as ‘a particularly important target audience’ (p. 34). It aims ‘to support 20% of the higher education cohort studying a foreign language, in some capacity, by 2026’ (p. 31), in effect, a quintupling of the estimated figure for 2012-13. The increase in uptake is to be accompanied by an extended range of languages on offer. The strategy also seeks to increase the number of participants in the Erasmus+ programme by at least 50%. Another goal is to improve the supply of qualified teachers of languages, with a minimum level of language proficiency required for registration with the Teaching Council. These are bold and far-reaching aspirations whose transformative impetus is most welcome on many levels, from personal development and employability to global citizenship and economic competitiveness. Moreover, although the strategy does not exclude lower levels of proficiency or ‘partial’ competence, it wisely highlights for graduates, in line with employer expectations, the desirability of the ‘Independent User’ standard as defined by the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). All language learners, whatever the target level of competence, are to be supported by the quality of the teaching they receive and by the alignment of their courses with clearly defined CEFR outcomes.

Such is the government’s strategic vision for higher education, but what of its implementation? How are its ambitious projections to be translated into concrete actions – and this within a higher education sector made up of very different institutions, with their own particular academic structures and modes of governance? Obviously, a key principle for successful implementation is cooperation. In this regard, one of the real strengths of the strategy is that it draws closely on the public consultation process that preceded it and is shaped in no small part by the views of stakeholders that responded across a variety of sectors to the government’s call. Indeed, it is only through ongoing dialogue with all interested institutions and bodies that a unity of purpose can hold sway into the future and help stimulate shared initiatives capable of embedding the strategy at local and national level within the overall achievement deadline of 10 years. The symposium to which this paper contributed in November 2018 was held under the auspices of the National University of Ireland (NUI) and hosted by the UCC School of Languages, Literatures and Cultures, with the important representation

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of third-level institutions beyond the NUI federation. The symposium clearly manifested and furthered that crucial spirit of collaboration and exchange that we, as part of a relatively small island, must seek to cultivate in the face of competitive pressures and race for market share within the sector.

A major driving force for sustained and heightened cooperation is, in principle, the FLAG, the Foreign Languages Advisory Group set up by the Department of Education and Skills, whose mission is 'to bring together key stakeholders to provide advice from a range of perspectives in order to support the implementation of *Languages Connect*.' However, what has been disconcertingly apparent from the inception of the Group is that there is no serving member from a third-level modern languages department or school. Such a glaring omission is difficult to comprehend, given the stated aim of inclusiveness of representation and an approach to implementation informed by multiple perspectives. Thus, it is not at all clear how modern languages disciplines, indisputably a major stakeholder relative to the strategy, and a ready and significant participant in the initial consultation process, are to negotiate this lack of connection. Certainly, perusal of the minutes of meetings of the Group to date yields very little substantive content around the higher education goals of the strategy referenced previously.

Beyond cooperation, another crucial principle for effective implementation is, of course, funding. Scant reference to funding is made in either the strategy or the implementation document. In the former, we are told that additional funding of €2 million will be provided in 2018 to support implementation of *all* the actions contained in the strategy, with the Post-Primary Languages Initiative being singled out for consideration in this respect. Such a modest sum must be viewed against the backdrop of a chronically underfunded higher education sector. In October 2018, the 'Save Our Spark' campaign was launched by the Irish Universities Association (IUA), following a government budget that failed to address radically reduced state funding of higher education and ongoing inaction since the publication of the Cassells Report over more than two years previously, a report that set out the need for urgent funding reform 'to create the kind of engaged, small-group, high-trust, high-expectation teaching and learning necessary for the next phase of Ireland's economic, social and cultural development' (p. 7). The language of the Cassells Report is entirely consonant with the mission of *Languages Connect*, but the fact that the recommendations of one Government-appointed expert group have effectively been ignored to date calls into question the weight and efficacy of those to emerge from this other Government-appointed expert group, the FLAG – and all the more so because it is evident that the former must be carefully heeded and spur on appropriate investment before the latter can bring about any meaningful change in a woefully underfinanced third-level system. That flagrant contradiction, if left to fester any longer, is in real danger of undermining faith in the implementation of the strategy, as is already apparent in the public arena. In his recent article in the *Irish Times* concerning Ireland's membership of La Francophonie (3rd November 2018), Ruadhán Mac Cormaic observes: '[The State] pledges fealty to the ideal of plurilingualism while parking the issue in an under-funded education system and taking comfort in illusions and clichés – Beckett switched to French! City-breaks in Berlin! Scandi noir! – that merely underline how superficial most engagement with the rest of Europe really is'. In his letter responding to the article (6th November 2018), Michael Cronin warns in turn of 'cynicism and indifference' that are likely to be the principal attitudes to an ambitious government language strategy starved of resources.

So what does the implementation of *Languages Connect* actually mean when we consider the gross neglect of state investment in higher education? At the outset, it should be noted that, while one of the primary aims of the strategy is to increase from 4% to 20% the proportion of students studying a language in some capacity as part of their degree, Higher Education Authority (HEA) statistics reveal that there has been no serious deterioration of the established base of students engaged in language learning – and this in marked contrast to the UK which has suffered dwindling student enrolments, closure of language departments and a serious decrease in the number of universities offering language degrees. If we take as a basis for our analysis the number of graduates specialising in languages at BA, MA and PhD level across all HEA-funded institutions, the figure for 2016 was 470, the figure for 2013 was 475.⁴ Indeed, the main challenge has come from elsewhere: like other higher education disciplines, modern languages have had to face swathing cuts to the government funding of the sector and endure downward trends in resource provision that place forward planning on a precarious basis from year to year. Financial pressures and the crisis management models they spawn and normalise have impacted directly on the mode of delivery of language programmes, and they continue to drive these programmes in a direction that is fundamentally incompatible with the strategic government focus on language and intercultural competence outcomes in higher education.

Here are some elements that need to remain to the fore in terms of discipline profile in a third-level research and teaching environment. Language learning is a laboratory subject. It is resource intensive. It requires small group teaching. Under the HEA Price Group Weightings, it is currently classified as Fieldwork (that is, a subject with an element of laboratory, studio or fieldwork), with an FTE weighting of 1.3, a weighting which itself has been diluted as a result of the reduction of state funding and its partial replacement by a fixed student contribution. The ‘content’ modules that explore the literature(s) and culture(s) pertaining to the target language extend and deepen proficiency as they advance linguistic immersion, enhancing cultural understanding and negotiation of cultural difference through complex encounters with language in different periods, settings and formats. Budgetary constraints have relentlessly chipped away at the integrity of this profile, in the name of so-called efficiencies, the race for student FTE capture (preferably non-EU) and, absurdly, in a time of skeletal performance, the generation of annual fiscal surpluses at unit level. Implementation of the strategy must be accompanied by disciplinary reinvigoration. Otherwise, in the wake of non-replacement of retired staff, reduced teaching contact hours, gradual erosion of small group teaching, contracting curricular content and module options, and the relentless pressure to do more with less, modern languages as research-led disciplines will not perform as catalysts of much needed change in a country that still struggles to meet the growing need to communicate with the rest of the world in languages other than English.

Nevertheless, this is irrefutably a moment of opportunity. *Languages Connect* as a vision and a strategy has provided all language teachers and researchers with a springboard for action. It has put languages back on the educational map and set out a rationale and goals that should allow language disciplines to strengthen their visibility and deepen their roles in higher education institutions. In other words, there can be no turning back, however bumpy the ride. Furthermore, it would not only be imprudent but terribly short-sighted to view *Languages Connect* as a stand-alone strategy on which the future of our disciplines hinges. We, our pool of expertise as modern languages researchers and teachers, need in our own right to draw leverage from the strategy to effect change within our own institutions. Before any national language policy or strategy

4 The figure for 2017, published since this paper was given, is 439, thus pointing to a decline of about 7.5%.

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had been formulated by the Department of Education and Skills, the Royal Irish Academy report published in August 2011, entitled *National Languages Strategy*, had already pointed the way by recommending, crucially, that 'modern languages be treated as a priority subject at third level' (p. 12) and that 'each institution of higher education be formally requested to produce an internal policy on languages where such a policy is not already in place' (p. 12). UCD does not have an internal languages policy, but work is currently under way in that regard. What seems incontrovertible is that, without *Languages Connect* and the impetus it provides at national level across all educational sectors, it would be extremely difficult to work towards a languages policy at institutional level, one necessarily tailored to the particular identity, over-arching academic strategy and internal structures of the institution, connecting modern languages with the broader fabric and governance of its academic home. Let us hope, indeed, that our work in this respect has only just begun and that cooperation rather than competition between higher education institutions will allow us to further it all the more effectively, never losing sight of that 'engaged, small-group, high-trust, high-expectation teaching and learning' vital to the fruition of any higher education languages policy.

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4. Foreign Language Motivation in a Globalised World: the Case of Languages Other Than English (LOTEs)

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1. Introduction

Of the many individual factors that may underpin foreign language learning (e.g. learner attitudes, aptitude, personality, gender, age), the one that has perhaps received the most attention in second language acquisition (SLA) research is motivation. If we are to encourage the uptake and successful learning of foreign languages, it is crucial that we understand what motivates foreign language learners in the first place. As the *Languages Connect* strategy document explains, one of the major challenges facing Ireland in this respect is the potentially demotivating effect of English having become the global lingua franca of our times.

The global dominance of English and its status as a lingua franca gives rise to the mistaken belief that 'English is enough', and can result in complacency and a lack of motivation to learn other languages. (Department of Education and Skills, 2017, 17)

Ireland is not alone in this respect. As reported in Oakes (2013), a House of Lords report from 2012 noted the inability of many UK students to take advantage of European mobility schemes on account of poor language skills, which was attributed to what it termed an underlying 'monoglot culture' (House of Lords 2012, 5). This 'monoglot culture' is evidenced by a Eurobarometer survey from 2006, which found that amongst the then 25 EU member states, Ireland and the UK had the greatest number of citizens who were incapable of holding a conversation in a foreign language (66% and 62% respectively), compared with countries like France and Germany where the same figures were 49% and 33% respectively (Eurobarometer, 2006). A recent report by the British Council (2017) also highlights how Brexit has given renewed urgency to overcome the monoglot culture for the sake of British industry, which will find itself in increasing need of speakers of Spanish, Mandarin Chinese, French, German, Italian, and even Dutch.

Following a brief overview of the main theories of motivation as discussed in the SLA literature, this paper presents some initial results from a study recently undertaken on motivation amongst university learners of French (Howard and Oakes, forthcoming). The overall aim is to provide a more detailed understanding of motivation for learning languages other than English (LOTEs), with a view to being better placed to think about how to motivate more students to invest in learning them in today's globalised world.

2. Theories of motivation

The development of second language motivation as a field of study owes much to social psychology and to two Canadian social psychologists in particular. Interested in what motivated Anglophone Canadians to learn French, Robert Gardner and Wallace Lambert drew parallels with the social identification process involved in the acquisition of one's first language (L1), to emphasise the role played by social context and social interactions in the successful acquisition also of a second language (L2) (e.g. Gardner and Lambert 1959, 1972). They theorised the notion of integrative motivation, according to which individuals are driven to learn a second language as a result of a desire to interact with and even become similar to members of the relevant target-language community. This contrasted with instrumental motivation, which accounted for more utilitarian reasons for wanting to gain proficiency in the L2; so as to increase one's chances of getting a job or to earn a higher salary, for example.

Gardner and Lambert's pioneering work became the dominant theoretical paradigm in second language motivation research for at least three decades. In time, however, it was increasingly challenged. Some claimed that it represented a 'false dichotomy', in so far as some motivations could not be classified as exclusively integrative or instrumental. Others considered the particular notion of integrative motivation too broad, stressing the need to distinguish between strong and weak forms, the latter reflecting an interest in language and culture as opposed to a genuine desire to become like native speakers of the second language.

The 1990s witnessed a renewed interest in cognitive accounts of motivation, more micro-approaches which emphasised the influence of mental processes in L2 motivation. Together with her colleagues, another Canadian psychologist, Kimberly Noels, applied so-called self-determination theory to the field of L2 motivation (e.g. Noels, 2001; Noels et al., 2000). Focusing on the extent to which individual behaviour in language learning is self-motivated, they proposed a continuum from *intrinsic* motivation, through *extrinsic* motivation to *amotivation*.

While intrinsic motivation derives from the inherent pleasure associated with language learning (for example to satisfy one's curiosity or thirst for knowledge, for intellectual stimulation, or to have a sense of accomplishment), extrinsic motivation concerns reasons external to the enjoyment of the activity itself, such as meeting parental expectations, wanting to avoid feelings of embarrassment caused by failure, perceiving a language as useful, or wanting to be educated. The model did not seek to replace so much as to complement the social psychological approaches of the first wave of L2 motivation research.

As time went by, the notion of integrative motivation was increasingly problematised, especially on account of its claimed unsuitability to the learning of international languages, in particular English. In a study of attitudes among Asian learners of English, Willard Shaw (1983, 24) observed that 'they are not learning English so that they can change themselves and become more like native speakers'. In Indonesia, Martin Lamb (2004, 3) also noted how, 'as English loses its association with particular Anglophone cultures and is instead identified with the powerful forces of globalization, the desire to 'integrate' loses its explanatory power in many EFL contexts'.

In a series of landmark studies amongst final-year primary school students in Hungary, Zoltan Dörnyei and his colleagues developed this critique further, extending it to the learning of five foreign languages: German, French, Italian and Russian, in addition to English (Dörnyei, Csizér and Németh, 2006). Of all of the constructs they examined, they found integrative motivation to be the principal motivating factor. However, this was considered to make no theoretical sense in so far as there was nothing into which the young participants could meaningfully integrate, since they had only limited contact with target-language visitors to Hungary. Dörnyei and his colleagues thus proposed that integrative motivation be reconceptualised on the grounds that it 'not so much related to any actual, or metaphorical, *integration* into an L2 community as to some more basic *identification* process within the individual's *self-concept*' (Dörnyei and Csizér, 2002, 453).

It was in this context that Dörnyei developed a new theory to account for second language motivation: the L2 motivational self-system (L2MSS) (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009). Drawing on 'possible selves' theory (Markus and Nurius, 1986), the L2MSS considers individuals' imagined future conceptions of themselves with regard to competence in the second language. Of the different possible second-language selves is the ideal L2 self, the one we would like to become. This is contrasted with the ought-to L2 self, 'which concerns the [L2] attributes that one believes one ought to possess to meet expectations and to avoid possible negative

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outcomes' (Dörnyei, 2009, 29), such as failure on a test or disappointing one's parents. The third component of Dörnyei's model is the L2 learning experience, which relates to the learning environment, for example the impact of the teacher, the curriculum, the peer group, or the experience of success. A basic hypothesis of the model is that 'if proficiency in the target language is part and parcel of one's ideal or ought-to self, this will serve as a powerful motivating factor to learn the language because of a psychological desire to reduce the discrepancy between our current and possible future selves' (Ushioda and Dörnyei, 2009, 4).

3. Research questions and methods

While most of the research to date that has sought to test or apply the L2MSS has done so with regard to English, the study reported on here focused on French, a language which is arguably still associated closely with the particular cultures of its L1 speakers. Focusing on the broad range of motivational constructs theorised in the literature, the study sought to address the following questions specifically:

1. What motivates university learners of French in today's globalised world?
2. How do their motivations differ as an effect of English, considered from the following two angles?
 - a) the macro perspective, i.e. as a function of the status enjoyed by English in four different countries: in the UK, where it has L1 status; in Ireland, where its L1 status is shared with Irish; in Sweden, where it has L2 status; and in Poland, where it remains very much a foreign language (FL)
 - b) the micro perspective, i.e. whether English is the learner's L1.

The study made use of a direct method of inquiry in the form of a questionnaire, which comprised a series of randomly ordered items designed to investigate the relevance of seven motivational constructs: a strong form of integrative motivation, a weak form of integrative motivation, instrumental motivation, intrinsic motivation, the ideal L2 self, the ought-to L2 self, and desire for language proficiency, the latter added as a form of control measure for the L2 competence one wants to gain in the future, but without reference to the self (see Howard and Oakes, forthcoming, for the wording of individual items in the questionnaire). Responses were elicited on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (disagree completely) to 5 (agree completely). Factor analysis was used to confirm the motivational constructs theorised. While intrinsic motivation was not found to have discriminant validity, resulting in a decision to remove the relevant items from the study, the scores for the other items were subsequently conflated so as to create a scale for each of the six remaining constructs.

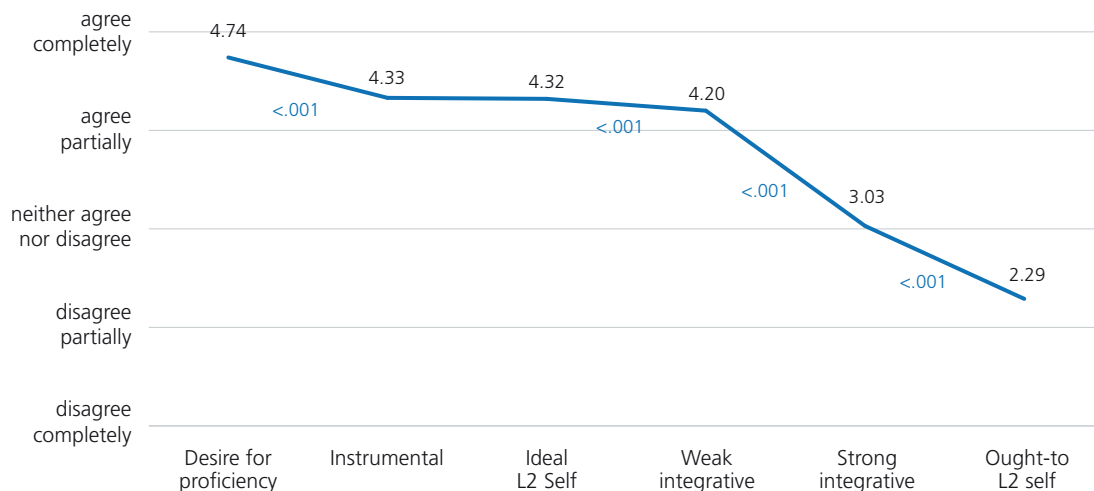
Once native speakers were removed, the data set comprised a total of 527 university learners of French, aged between 17 and 35, the latter used as a cut-off age (mean = 20.7 years). As expected, a greater proportion of the respondents were female (75.5% compared to 23.1% male). Table 1 gives a breakdown of participants by the main variables of interest: country and L1.

TABLE 1 PARTICIPANTS

| | | <i>n</i> | % |
|---------|--|----------|------|
| Country | English L1 status | 301 | 57.1 |
| | UK | 123 | 23.3 |
| | Ireland | 178 | 33.8 |
| | English not L1 status (L2 or FL) | 226 | 42.9 |
| L1 | Sweden | 101 | 19.2 |
| | Poland | 125 | 23.7 |
| L1 | English only | 224 | 42.5 |
| | other (including in addition to English) | 293 | 55.6 |

4. Results

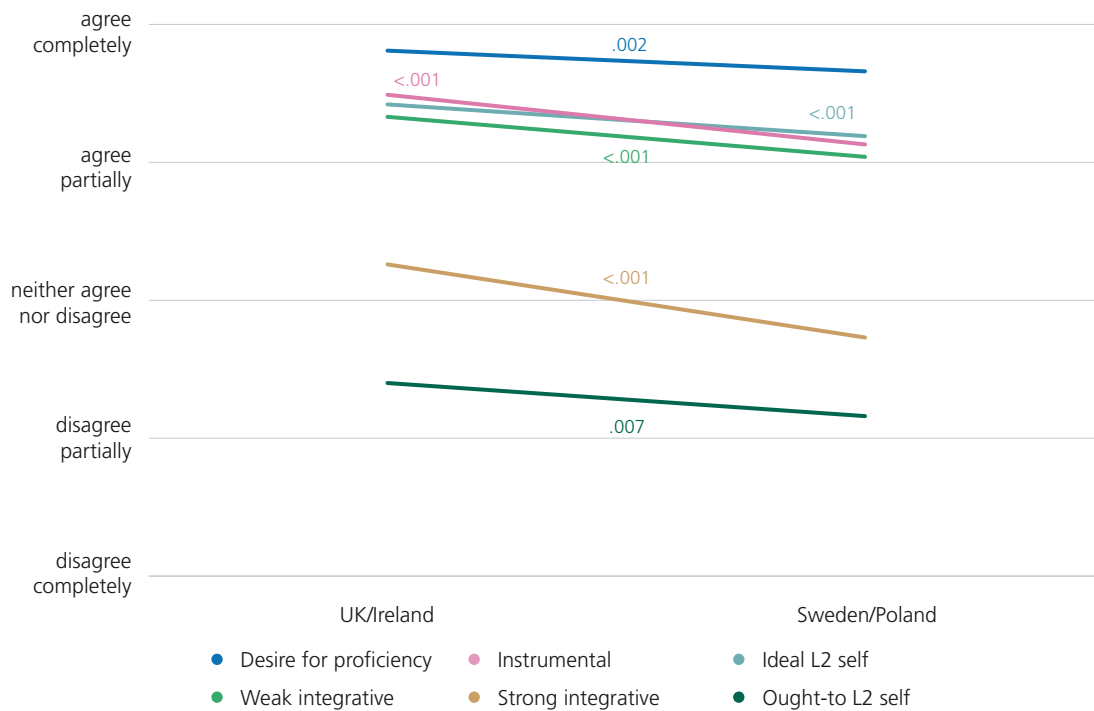
As seen in Figure 1, significant differences were observed between all of the constructs, other than between instrumental motivation and the ideal L2 self. The most important source of motivation was deemed to be desire for proficiency. As hypothesised, a weaker form of integrative motivation proved more important than a more traditional stronger form. The notion of the ought-to L2 self was not rated highly, which was to be expected, since the participants were not school children, but more autonomous university students who presumably had made a specific choice to study French.

FIGURE 1 SCORES FOR MOTIVATIONAL CONSTRUCTS

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Considering the results by country, first of all grouping the countries according to whether English has L1 status or not (see Figure 2), there was a significant drop in motivation amongst the learners of French in the two countries where English does not have L1 status, contrary to what may have been expected. In other words, the learners of French in the UK and Ireland were in fact not less but more motivated to learn French. They even agreed that a strong form of integrative motivation was important, unlike their counterparts in Sweden and Poland.

FIGURE 2 RESULTS BY COUNTRY (GROUPED)



Looking more closely at the results by country individually (see Figure 3), only one significant difference between the participants in the UK and Ireland was observed, namely for the ought-to L2 self. More significant differences were observed between Sweden and Poland, although the pattern is not always the same, rising in some cases, but falling in others.

FIGURE 3 RESULTS BY COUNTRY (INDIVIDUAL)

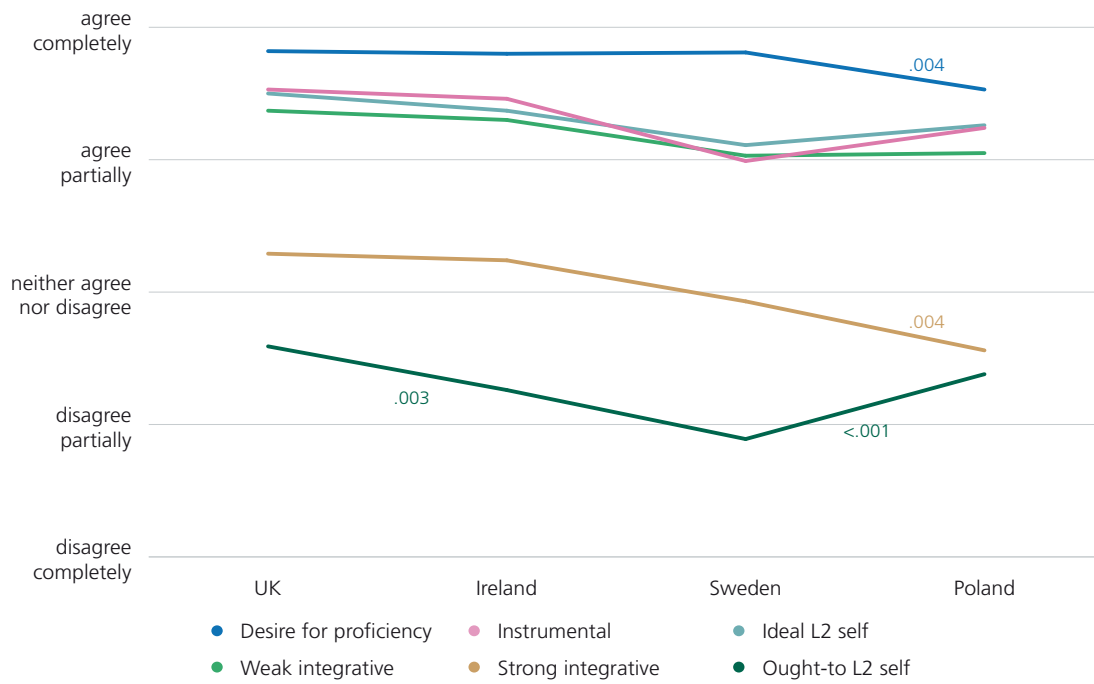
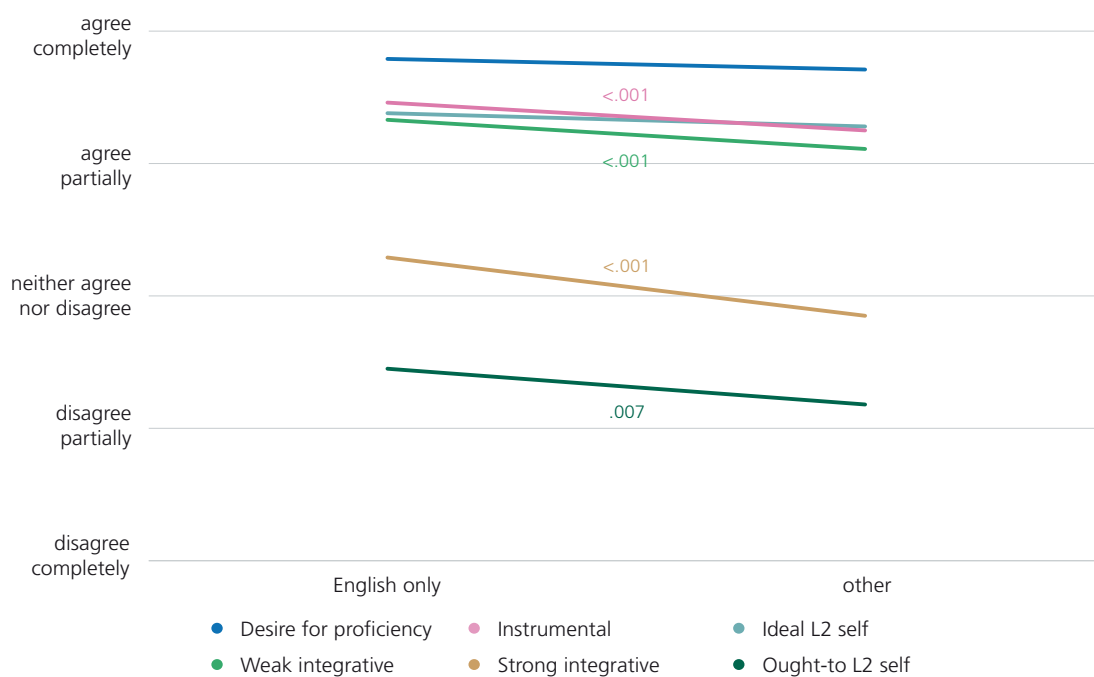


FIGURE 4 RESULTS BY L1



4. Foreign Language Motivation in a Globalised World: the Case of Languages Other Than English (LOTEs)

Finally, looking at the results by L1 (see Figure 4), a similar pattern emerges. Whereas one may have expected those learners with English as their sole L1 to be less motivated, due to the 'English is enough' mentality, the reverse is actually observed, at least with regard to four of the constructs examined.

To summarise the findings, the motivations to learn French are first and foremost of an instrumental nature, as reflected in the high scores for desire for proficiency, instrumental motivation and the ideal L2 self. This is not to say that integrative reasons were not also an important secondary source of motivation, the participants in the UK and Ireland even deeming a strong form of integrative motivation to be of some importance. Perhaps most importantly, the participants in the UK and Ireland were found to be more motivated than those in Sweden and Poland, while those who had English as their sole L1 were also in general more motivated. In short, there is evidence to suggest that English did not so much have a demotivating as a motivating effect. So why might this be so and what are the implications for policy?

5. Implications

It is important to remember that the study did not focus on a setting in which learners were compelled to study a language, such as at school level where the study of a foreign language may be obligatory. Rather, the participants were university learners, who had made a conscious choice to study French. In that sense, it was to be expected that they were quite highly motivated. Nonetheless, the fact this was the case for all of the participants means that this factor cannot account for the higher levels of motivation observed in the UK and Ireland specifically. Rather, it seems likely that we have a particular rejection of the 'English is enough' mentality amongst the UK and Irish participants. As unexpected as it may seem, this finding is supported by other studies. In another study of motivation amongst university learners of French and Spanish in the UK which also elicited qualitative data (Oakes, 2013), respondents made comments such as the following:

- 'Sometimes I feel embarrassed to be English as we are notorious for being reluctant to learn other languages'.
- 'I don't want to be seen as an ignorant British person who can only speak English'.
- 'It's embarrassing so many British people can only speak one language'.

Others have also noted a 'rebellious' attitude amongst foreign language learners in non-compulsory settings in the UK (Lanvers, 2016, 2017). The quotes here clearly suggest that learners assign value to the ability to use a foreign language, in spite of the 'English is enough' mentality.

A key question therefore for both policy-makers and practitioners is how to facilitate such learning. On this count, the study here provides some detail of the learners' motivational profiles, and thereby contributes to our understanding of their motivational orientations, where both instrumental and integrative factors are at play. At a pedagogic level, such a finding points to the need to ensure that one dimension is not seen as supplementary but rather as complementary to the other, and that both are harnessed in creative ways within the classroom.

Creative opportunities are also called for to ensure that a wider range of students have the opportunity to engage in language learning within their programmes. Given that Ireland's *Languages Connect* strategy looks to higher education institutions to fulfil some of its aims, it is timely that institutions consider the opportunities

available through but also beyond existing 'languages for all' programmes. In this regard, the instrumental factors highlighted here call for opportunities to develop proficiency throughout students' programmes of study to the levels that they seek in the languages they perceive as being of instrumental value for their futures.

To end this paper on a positive note, there is perhaps some cause for optimism, in so far as it may be possible to draw on the 'English is enough' mentality as a source of motivation, as paradoxical as this may seem. The challenge is of course to find ways to trigger a similar desire to overcome their English monolingualism amongst a broader public, including in settings where language learning is compulsory.

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5. *Languages Connect*: Addressing a Missing Experiential Dimension

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Languages Connect: Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017-2026 (henceforth *Languages Connect*) has been eagerly anticipated by individuals involved in foreign language teaching and learning at all levels of Ireland's education system, and with its publication in December 2017 much positivity has been expressed about the direction of the strategy and its very ambitious goals. Since its publication, practitioners and researchers across the system have analysed the strategy and identified several areas in need of urgent address, some of which can be seen to fall under what may be termed the 'experiential dimension'.

While the consultation process underlying the development of the strategy was certainly broad and far reaching, there remain some key areas where further discussion and refinement is required if the strategy is to have any chance of achieving its highly ambitious and noble aims. I will outline briefly three priority areas where the strategy requires refinement in terms of harnessing the value of experiences within the system: integration of third-level representation of language practitioners and researchers into the 'Foreign Language Advisory Group (FLAG)', current pressures on the third-level language provision, and current configuration of post-primary teacher-training programmes.

Languages Connect is for all intents and purposes a national language policy, where language policy is understood in its broadest theoretical sense as 'the set of positions, principles and decisions reflecting that community's relationships to its verbal repertoire and communicative potential' (Bugarski 1992, p. 18). Language policy is thus viewed as a set of guiding principles on desired language behaviour within a jurisdiction, open to multiple interpretations by those affected by and involved in it. Herein lies the first area in which the strategy requires further refinement in an area of key importance.

FLAG is charged with monitoring and overseeing the implementation of the policy. According to policy documentation, the group is comprised of 'relevant stakeholders' and includes representation from the areas of curriculum development and monitoring, employers, school management, government departments, the Higher Education Authority, students and professional teacher organisations, to name but a few. The composition of such a group is in line with best practice of language policy formulation and implementation as it incorporates 'the consumers of policy, who use or resist the languages dictated to them from the top down, [and] have something to say from the bottom up...[who] need to be heard and incorporated in the formulation of policy...[as] such an effort may lead to a more valid type of language policy' (Shohamy 2009, p. 188).

Most notably within the higher education context however, there is a clear absence of representation from any of the country's university-level language departments/schools. These units play a central role in the system, not only in their daily practices which contribute greatly to producing ever more important foreign language graduates for industry and graduates to enter the country's postgraduate teacher-training programme, but also by actively engaging in scholarly research and discourse on pertinent areas including second language acquisition, language policy and planning, and language pedagogy. Their exclusion from FLAG renders their voices and perspectives as practitioners and researchers mute which has serious implications for the efficacy of the policy. Given this impactful deficit in the composition of FLAG, the group should be reviewed and expanded as a matter of urgency to include representation of third-level practitioners and researchers, for which there is precedent in *Languages Connect*: 'The membership of the Group will be reviewed during the lifecycle of the implementation of the Strategy to ensure continued relevance and additional members may be co-opted onto the Group as the need arises' (Department of Education, 2017b, 2).

5. *Languages Connect*: Addressing a Missing Experiential Dimension

The current foreign language provision at higher education level in Ireland is characterised by challenges and competing pressures. Principal amongst them is the significant pressure already exerted on the staffing levels needed to deliver on current demands for certain languages at different levels. Many language departments and schools throughout the Irish higher education system are experiencing growing demand for provision across levels (post-Leaving Certificate and *ab initio*) in the core student cohort, and indeed in additional student cohorts within Institution-Wide Language Provisions (IWLPs). In the area of *ab initio* language provision, there are already considerable challenges in the recruitment of suitably qualified and experienced practitioners to meet levels of student demand, and to provide the contact hours necessary to facilitate students' linguistic development. There is significant experiential evidence from discussions within professional modern foreign language (MFL) networks nationwide to suggest that Schools/Departments of Modern Languages are finding it increasingly difficult to find suitably qualified and experienced practitioners. For years, many managers of foreign language units have resorted to exhausting personal and professional networks to source individuals capable of delivering on foreign language teaching at higher education level. This in itself is fraught with challenges and difficulties such as sufficient pay levels to attract suitable individuals, continuity of staff from one academic year to the next, restrictions set by universities on the maximum number of hours that can be allocated to occasional staff members, inability to provide sufficient cover for illness staff members, and so on. Anecdotal evidence from multiple higher education contexts suggests that the situation has become so precarious in some units that undergraduate and postgraduate native speaker students on Erasmus exchanges within the institutions are being used in a desperate bid to plug the recruitment gaps and to meet the demand from students already pursuing foreign language learning.

Languages Connect states that approximately only 4% of all university students currently pursue foreign language learning in some capacity at university level, and aims to increase this to 20% within the next 7 years (Department of Education, 2017a, 31). In this context, clearly the recruitment issue already reaching crisis levels will need immediate attention in the form of additional funding to language departments/schools to source and recruit qualified and experienced staff, and to provide incumbent higher education language educators with opportunities for continuous professional development (CPD), in order to develop an even more rigorous and quality foreign language provision at university level.

Finally, while *Languages Connect* makes important recommendations in a number of areas, an area remaining unaddressed is the current arrangements within Professional Masters in Education (PME) programmes with regard to target language exposure. Arguably, it stands to reason that the structure and content of PME programmes have far-reaching impact on language teaching within secondary level in Ireland given the PME's key gatekeeper function for accredited status within the system. The minutes of the FLAG meeting on 22nd May 2018 outline a very welcome development in the form of undergraduate language programmes with an explicit teaching orientation being developed at some higher education institutions; no reference is made in the document, however, to current practices within PME programmes. From analysing the publicly available programme information published on institutional websites and correspondence with current trainee teachers on PME programmes throughout Ireland, it has been found that students enrolled on all but one PME accredited in Irish higher education have no institutionalised exposure to the target language which they are training to teach. Students spend 3-4 years at undergraduate level working intensively on their language proficiency for entry to PME programmes. Once admitted onto such programmes, students have no institutionalised exposure to the foreign language during their training which flies in the face of best practice derived from empirical studies in second language acquisition where continuity of exposure and consistent

use of the target language are key to ensuring that linguistic stagnation, or worse yet regression, do not occur. Furthermore, the position of the Department of Education and Skills, and its Inspectorate (the division of the Department of Education and Skills responsible for the evaluation of primary and post-primary schools and centres for education) is that the target language should be used 'where possible' (Inspectorate 2019, p. 9). The phrase 'where possible' is arguably viewed by those working on the ground as closer to 'as much as possible', given that target-language usage within the classroom is listed foremost in almost all published inspection reports, highlighting, for good and for bad, the importance attributed to the practice by the Inspectorate. Riordan (2015) also notes that teacher trainers have come to interpret Inspectorate guidelines on target-language use as an 'aim of 100% target language use', so that the trainers 'would expect the students [trainee teachers] to teach in L2 so using the target language in the classroom' (p. 171). In light of such, it is extremely paradoxical that trainee teachers are not given the opportunity to maintain their linguistic proficiency by means of exposure to their foreign languages during their training but are then expected to adopt a target-language teaching approach in their role as accredited teachers. To address this anomaly, Schools/Departments of Education within higher education institutions should seek to harness and build on synergies that often already exist with Schools/Departments of Modern Languages where there is a genuine interest in, and passion for supporting foreign languages across the entire education system. Such Schools/Departments could make an important contribution to evaluating (for example, on teacher placement) and maintaining trainee teachers' linguistic proficiency within their PME programmes, and thus improve quality overall. Most language departments/school also have researchers in situ who actively pursue research and publish in the fields of language pedagogy and second language acquisition, creating scope for implementing a content and language integrated learning (CLIL) approach to language pedagogy on PME programmes, CLIL is an approach advocated in *Languages Connect* for potential implementation at post-primary level by teachers.

This discussion has sought to highlight reasons why language policy development and implementation must recognise the central importance of the experiential dimension within the current secondary and tertiary systems. If *Languages Connect* successfully takes account of and harnesses the value of experience throughout its lifecycle, it will undoubtedly make a significant and lasting contribution to the Irish education system, and the society it serves.

5. *Languages Connect:* Addressing a Missing Experiential Dimension

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6. Learning French Through Irish: the Impact of Bilingualism on the Acquisition of French as a Third Language (L3)

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1. Introduction

This article explores linguistic progression of third level learners of French as a third language (L3) through the medium of a second language (L2). Over 20% of all students of French studying for a Bachelor of Arts degree at in NUI Galway study French language through the medium of Irish for the duration of their undergraduate career. This involves all aspects of the programme including oral expression, grammar lectures, and translation both from and into French. These students have the same teacher throughout the three years and their class group remains largely unchanged until they finish their degree.

The advantages and disadvantages of bilingualism have been widely discussed, with research showing both the positive and negative impact of bilingualism on language acquisition (Keshavarz and Astaneh, 2004). This study will examine the academic results of bilingual students, hereafter known as the *Fraincis trí Ghaeilge* cohort, who are learning an L3 (French) and compare the results to the larger group of students of French, i.e. those not operating through the medium of the Irish language, hereafter referred to as the *mainstream* cohort. The results show that bilingual students' academic results are stronger and that their linguistic progression in the L3 is more consistent when compared with their mainstream counterparts.

In this article, I will consider a number of issues relating to teaching French through Irish. I will firstly briefly explain how *Fraincis trí Ghaeilge*, as it is called, is taught in comparison with mainstream French. I will then critically analyse the results obtained by students through Irish in comparison with those of their peers who are taught through English. To this end, I will compare and contrast results obtained by students in all three years over a fifteen-year period and trace progression among both groups. The theory of language acquisition, specifically acquisition of a third language, will be used to underpin my argument with regard to the learning of French through the medium of Irish.

2. Which students decide to take *Fraincis trí Ghaeilge*?

Many subjects are taught through the medium of Irish at NUI Galway. The Irish language plays a central role in the university's strategic plan for the future and as such, the university is committed to the provision of education through Irish and to the development of a bilingual campus. Among subjects taught through Irish are Mathematics, History, Geography, Economics and French.

Fraincis trí Ghaeilge is taught at NUI Galway to students taking a BA degree; it is an option offered to students in First Year which continues in Second and Final Years. *Fraincis trí Ghaeilge* involves the teaching of all elements of the French Language programme through Irish. It has the same curriculum as mainstream French, as such it plays a similar role to that of Gaelscoileanna in the primary and secondary education system in Ireland.

The types of students who decide to study *Fraincis trí Ghaeilge* can be divided into three categories. The first constitutes the group made up of native speakers of the Irish language. As NUI Galway is situated on the periphery of the Connemara Gaeltacht, it attracts a large number of native Irish speakers. These students will, for the most part, have had their schooling through the medium of Irish, hence the decision to choose *Fraincis trí Ghaeilge* seems like a logical one. This is equally true for the second group of students

6. Learning French Through Irish: the Impact of Bilingualism on the Acquisition of French as a Third Language (L3)

as this group incorporates students who have carried out some part of their pre-tertiary schooling through the medium of Irish having attended a Gaelscoil at primary or secondary level or both. It is estimated that 70% of students who decide to study a subject through Irish come from one of the first two groups. The third group consists of students, who, while they have not had any formal teaching through Irish before, make the decision to study *Fraincis trí Ghaeilge* because they claim to have more than a passing interest in the language itself. Many of these students study Irish at third level but this is not always the case. Each year, a small percentage of students study *Fraincis trí Ghaeilge* right through to the final year of their degree, while their second degree subject is not Irish. I will elaborate further on the make-up of these groups later in this article when I scrutinise the exam results received by each groups of students.

As stated in the Introduction, slightly over 20% of students of French choose to study *Fraincis trí Ghaeilge* throughout their undergraduate career. This amounts to between twenty-five and thirty students out of a total group of 120 students in First Year, while in Second and Final Years the numbers vary from twelve to fifteen students out of a total group of fifty students. While in First Year the group size may actually be larger than the groups who study through English, in Second and Final Years the *Fraincis trí Ghaeilge* groups are smaller than those delivered through English. The *Fraincis trí Ghaeilge* groups, particularly in the latter stages of the degree process, benefit from a smaller group size and hence students have more time afforded to them by the teacher.

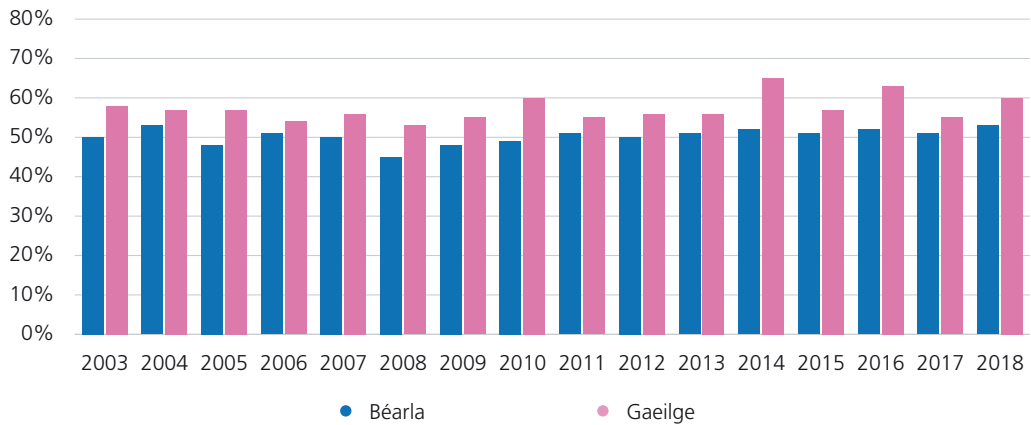
3. Comparison of student scores

In this section, I will examine the results achieved by *Fraincis trí Ghaeilge* students in comparison to their mainstream counterparts. The scores shown are an aggregate, calculated on results obtained in continuous assessment, the end-of-year oral examination and the end-of-year written language exam. Two different sets of results are produced. The first set is a direct comparison of the results achieved by both groups of students. The results collected are divided into three academic years and *Fraincis trí Ghaeilge* results are displayed alongside mainstream French results in order to highlight any divergences. The second set of results sets aside native speakers of Irish as a separate group from other *Fraincis trí Ghaeilge* students. The reasons for this will be discussed in the next section.

There are a number of factors to be taken into account with the figures produced. Examiner subjectivity is, of course, an issue with all results. However, all written language exams were double-marked which to an extent makes results more reliable. All students have the opportunity to carry out all exams either through Irish or through English. The figures produced in the following graphs reflect scores obtained by students who have studied French either through English or through Irish. The figures do not indicate whether these students decided to sit the exam through Irish or through English.

Firstly, taking First Year BA results, scores were collated from 2003 until 2018, giving fifteen years of results which can be examined. The number of students in First Year generally ranges from one hundred to one hundred and twenty in mainstream French and twenty-five to thirty in *Fraincis trí Ghaeilge*. The first point of note is that average scores for mainstream French have remained largely consistent over the fifteen-year period. The scores obtained range from a low of 45% obtained in 2008 to a high of 53% obtained in 2004 and 2018. *Fraincis trí Ghaeilge* students consistently outscore their mainstream counterparts. On no occasion do the scores in *Fraincis trí Ghaeilge* dip below that achieved in mainstream French.

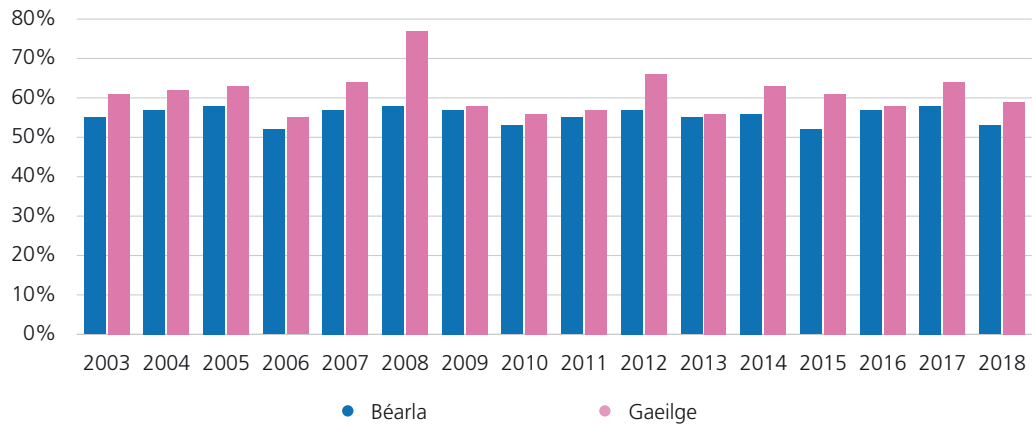
GRAPH 1 MAINSTREAM AND *FRAINICIS TRÍ GHAEILGE* – FIRST YEAR BA



Second Year BA figures are based on cohorts that are significantly smaller than those in First Year. Graph 2 shows the results obtained by 2BA mainstream and *Fraincis trí Ghaeilge* students. Once again, the *Fraincis trí Ghaeilge* students outscore mainstream students. However, due to the smaller numbers involved, especially in the *Fraincis trí Ghaeilge* class, the consistency that was apparent in 1BA is no longer visible. Mainstream 2BA results range from a low of 52% in 2006 and 2015 to a high of 58% in 2005, 2008 and 2017. *Fraincis trí Ghaeilge* percentage averages fluctuate much more, with scores ranging from a low of 55% to a high of 77%. Looking more closely at these figures, it becomes apparent that 2008 was an exceptional year for the *Fraincis trí Ghaeilge* class. When this anomalous year is taken out of the reckoning, the peak score obtained is 66% in 2012, which fits the trend of *Fraincis trí Ghaeilge* outscoring mainstream French students by a small margin.

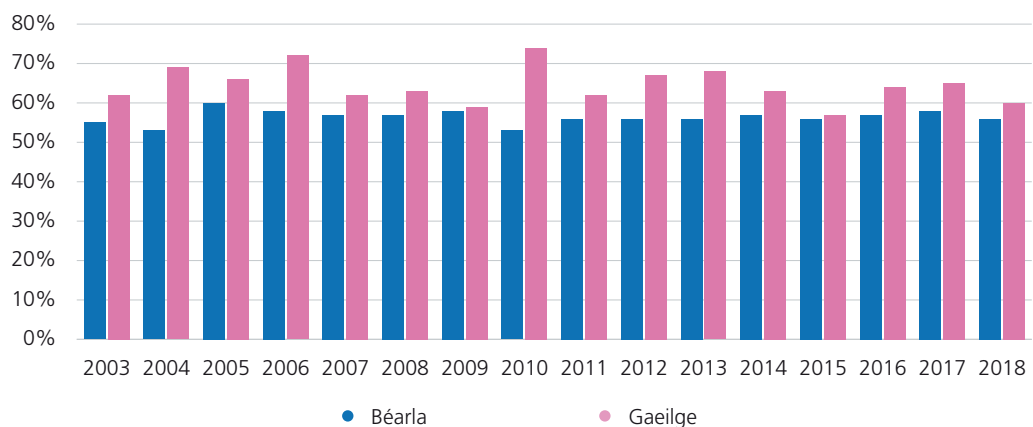
6. Learning French Through Irish: the Impact of Bilingualism on the Acquisition of French as a Third Language (L3)

GRAPH 2 MAINSTREAM AND *FRANCIS TRÍ GHAEILGE* – SECOND YEAR BA



Final Year averages follow a similar pattern to those in 2BA, as student numbers remain the same in both years. Graph 3 shows that mainstream French students are, again, outscored by their *Francis trí Ghaeilge* counterparts with scores ranging from 53% to 60%. *Francis trí Ghaeilge* students' scores range from 59% to 74%. There is one set of very high scores in the *Francis trí Ghaeilge* group, achieved in 2010, which is the same group that achieved the high scores two years previously in the 2BA group. If this group is discounted, it gives a high of 72% in 2006 for the *Francis trí Ghaeilge* group.

GRAPH 3 MAINSTREAM AND *FRANCIS TRÍ GHAEILGE* – FINAL YEAR BA



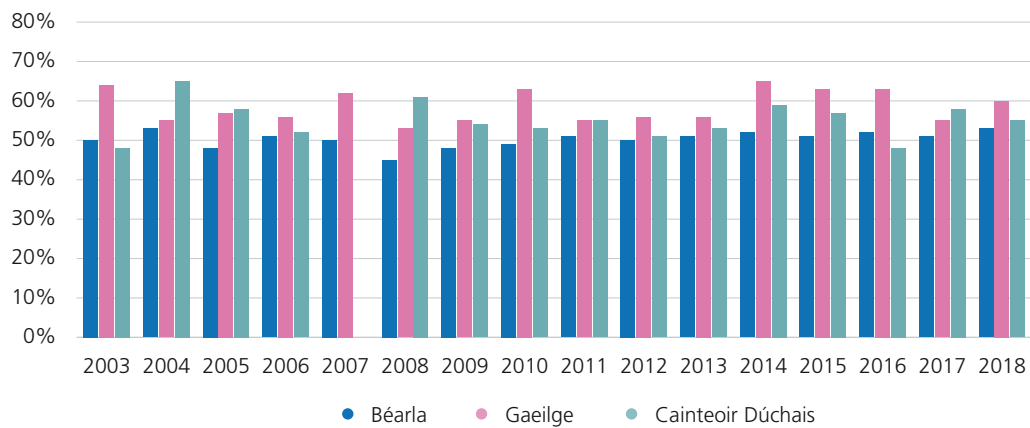
4. Irish Native Speaker L3 ability

The second set of figures to be examined is that in which I extracted the results of native Irish speakers from the *Fraincis trí Ghaeilge* group in order to compare the results obtained between three groups: the mainstream class, the *Fraincis trí Ghaeilge* students and the native speakers of Irish. A number of studies suggest that bilinguals are relatively better at learning a new language than monolinguals (Cummins, 1991; Cenoz, 2000). However, Ellis posits that acquiring two languages from birth is different to acquiring a second language later in life (Kroll, 2005). Native Irish speakers are bilingual as they generally speak both Irish and English from birth and have thus experienced bilingual first language acquisition. This is to be differentiated from second language acquisition (SLA) which has occurred with non-native Irish speakers. Keshavarz and Astaneh (2004) contend that bilingual students who learn L1 and L2 both academically and orally progress better in the acquisition of an L3 than bilinguals who learn their L1 only orally. The following graphs were examined with a view to establishing whether there are differences in the language-learning ability of these two groups, both of which study *Fraincis trí Ghaeilge* but only one of which is proficient in Irish as a native speaker.

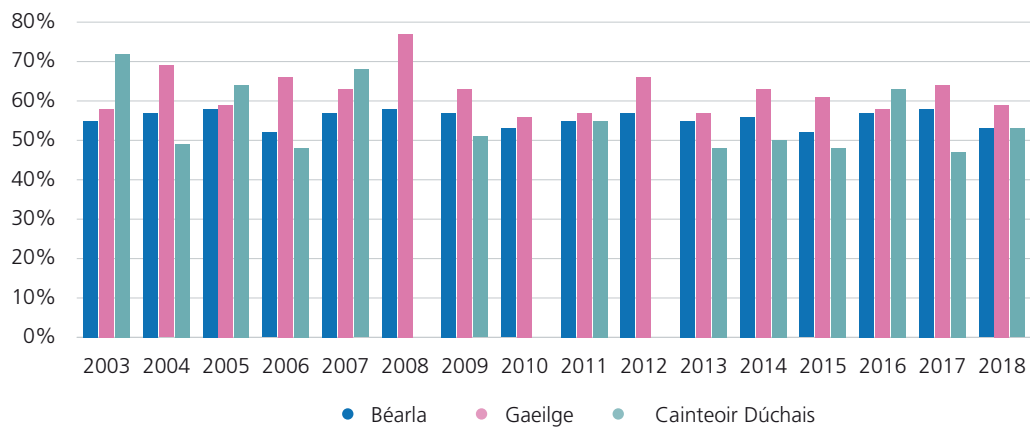
This survey deals with relatively small numbers of students (Graphs 4-6). There are some cohorts in which there were no native Irish speakers studying French. While for 1BA students there are four years within which the native Irish speakers outscore both mainstream and the other *Fraincis trí Ghaeilge* students, there are also eleven years in which the native speakers obtain a lower score than the other *Fraincis trí Ghaeilge* counterparts and, on two occasions, a lower score than the mainstream students. This trend continues in 2BA, where the native Irish speakers outscore both the other groups on four occasions while in eight other years they score less well than the two other groups. In the Final Year of either a three- or four-year Bachelor of Arts undergraduate degree programme depending on whether the students have spent a year abroad, the native speakers outscore both groups on three occasions, they score less than mainstream students on four occasions and less than *Fraincis trí Ghaeilge* students on ten occasions. These figures would suggest that native Irish speakers do less well than other non-native students of *Fraincis trí Ghaeilge*. These findings are consistent with Cenoz's (2000) and Thomas' (1988) argument, which posits that students who have received instruction in a second language and/or are literate in the language are more proficient in the acquisition of a third language.

6. Learning French Through Irish: the Impact of Bilingualism on the Acquisition of French as a Third Language (L3)

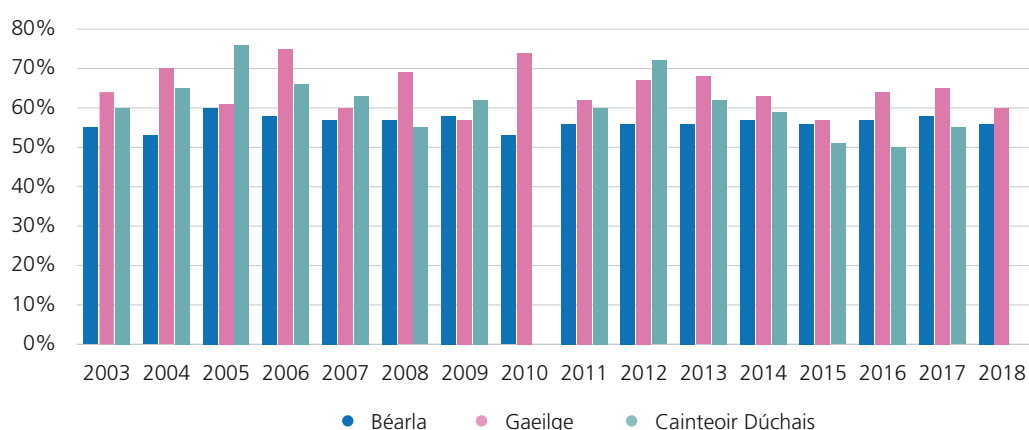
GRAPH 4 MAINSTREAM, *FRAINICIS TRÍ GHAEILGE* AND NATIVE IRISH BILINGUAL STUDENTS – FIRST YEAR BA



GRAPH 5 MAINSTREAM, *FRAINICIS TRÍ GHAEILGE* AND NATIVE IRISH BILINGUAL STUDENTS – SECOND YEAR BA



GRAPH 6 MAINSTREAM, *FRAIN CIS TRÍ GHAEILGE* AND NATIVE IRISH BILINGUAL STUDENTS – FINAL YEAR BA



5. Conclusions

Fraincis trí Ghaeilge students remain a relatively small percentage of the overall cohort of NUI Galway students taking French. While the figures reveal better results for these students, it is difficult to ascertain why this is the case. These students do not necessarily take the examinations through Irish and hence are examined by a range of different examiners, yet their results are consistently above average. These results suggest that bilingual students perform better than monolingual students. This supports previous studies which have shown that bilingual students achieve better academic grades in language acquisition, as already mentioned. The results also show that students who have learned L1 and L2 both orally and academically achieve better exam scores than students who have learned their L1 in an oral context only.

In the context of language acquisition in Ireland, it can be argued that not enough is made of the fact that a large majority of students learn a European language not as an L2 but as an L3. Third level students have, for the most part, spent thirteen years learning Irish to differing levels. This small-scale study has shown that students who actively engage in language acquisition through different languages would appear to be better equipped for learning a third language. Further study on the impact of the learning of Irish at primary and secondary level should be carried out to gain additional insights into its positive impact in L3 acquisition.

6. Learning French Through Irish: the Impact of Bilingualism on the Acquisition of French as a Third Language (L3)

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7. Joining up Language Learning: a Cautionary, but Salutory Tale

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If the Irish Government's *Languages Connect* strategy is to be welcomed wholeheartedly, this is largely because of the informed ambition of its vision and implementation plan. What is particularly heartening is not just the clear aim to increase and diversify the languages learned at all levels of the Irish education system, but also the push towards universality and rapidity of access and the commitment to clear and measurable implementation targets. In the paper delivered at the timely symposium organised by NUI in November 2018 to examine the implications of *Languages Connect* for Third-Level Education, my reflections centred on this question of ambition.

Although my analysis will touch at the start on the aim of diversification or expansion (of the number of languages learned), it will concern more especially matters of implementation. Certainly it is important to reflect on how to realise at all levels – primary, secondary and third – the following three goals: (i) increasing the number of languages learned; (ii) extending provision and take-up; (iii) improving the quality and outcomes of the language education provided. However, if these aims are to be fulfilled, it is crucial to address the three questions holistically: i.e. in relation both to each other and to all three education sectors (four, if we include pre-school). In this sense, the third-level sector will inevitably have to be part of the implementation process. For one thing, if the ambitions of *Languages Connect* with regard to the (pre)-primary and post-primary sectors are to be realised, then the associated capacity issues (i.e. the appropriate national training up of teachers/facilitators of language learning at these first two/three levels) will have to be addressed as a matter of urgency. And they must be addressed not just by the universities but by all other sectors in collaboration with the universities.

At a symposium on October 5th, 2018 organised by Hugo O'Donnell in University College Dublin (UCD) on the implications of *Languages Connect* for universities in particular, David Little (Trinity College Dublin) addressed the complex question of ECF-referenced progress in IWLPs ('Institution Wide Language Programmes') and Jocelyn Wyburd (Cambridge University) emphasised the need for institutions to safeguard their 'specialist' Language Degree programmes. The two expert speakers were categorical on the role for Third-Level in the implementation of *Languages Connect*: universities must attend *both* to the integrity of specialist Language Degree programmes, and *also* to the demand for state-of-the-art, progression-focused, university-wide language provision, including Applied Language learning. The speakers emphasised how crucial it will be that Ireland's own Third-Level sector caters both to IWLPs and to specialist Language Major (or Minor) degree programmes, as well as to Applied Language degree programmes. This means that Irish universities must have robust and comprehensive, research-informed language policies capable of delivering cohesion, diversity and support for all the language learning taking place within the institution.

The starting-point, then, of my reflection is recognition of the need in the third-level sector for maximal collaboration or connectivity in order to balance what should be not competing, but rather mutually reinforcing channels for pluri-lingual ambition. This holistic approach extends beyond catering both for IWLPs and for Language Degree Majors or Minors; it also means offering as wide a range of languages as possible in these degrees and in other language-learning contexts: 'heritage languages' and others, vernaculars and vehicular languages, ancient and modern languages, Asian and African languages, European and Non-European languages...

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However, at the very heart of the *Languages Connect* initiative lies another but no less urgent matter, namely concern with standards of attainment. If the ambition is to widen access to an expanded plurilingualism across all the various sectors and levels of the Irish education system, then a particularly critical concern must be the provision of specialist language degrees to a sufficiently high standard, involving a sufficiently broad, deep and reflective level of proficiency. Only such a guarantee of specialist capacity will secure the future of the educational investment in languages at primary, and more especially at secondary level. In other words, the ambition of *Languages Connect* must attend in a very conscious and concerted manner to *exit standards* of achievement or proficiency in specialist Language programmes at third level, which is after all, the capacity-building level that feeds back into all the others.

Since this last point might seem to be relatively abstract, even abstruse, the rest of this paper will illustrate it with a cautionary, if salutory tale drawn from recent experience. This story tells how two successive revolutions or turns in university policy affected the quotient of critical ambition informing the language learning taking place in degree programmes (in French) at Ireland's largest university, UCD. If the words of John Henry Newman's apologia for reform if not revolution can be believed, namely 'To live is to change and to be perfect is to have changed often', then University College Dublin would be a perfect university and its School of Languages would be a model of its kind.

In 2004/5, the University, henceforth identifying itself as Ireland's 'Global University' published its 10-year strategic plan entitled 'Forming Global Minds'.

Prior to its meeting with its global destiny, UCD's faculty of Arts had offered degree programmes in French, German, Spanish, Italian, Near Eastern Languages (Arabic and Hebrew), as well as, of course, Nua-Gaeilge, Old Irish and Welsh and also Latin and Greek. The global turn involved amalgamating five erstwhile separate Language Departments (but not, quite notably, the Celtic Languages or Greek/Latin) into a School of Languages, Literatures and Film and acquiring a Confucius Institute (which currently provides a Mandarin minor in International Commerce and in Law). The School lost Film Studies after the first year, Arabic after about two years and Hebrew after a further two years. Thus, although the Global Revolution might have been expected to usher in degree programmes in major world languages such as Arabic, Mandarin, Japanese or Russian in the University, this is not what happened. Furthermore, despite the reinforcement of the university's global mission beyond 2014, the last five years have seen no such moves. Although the School did initiate a Minor degree programme in Portuguese, this has no longer been staffed for some time and is not being offered at the time of writing. In fact, although one might have expected the opposite from the Global turn, there has been – with the withdrawal of once-offered degree programmes in Arabic, Hebrew and Portuguese – a net 45% *reduction* in the number of (non-applied) languages offered to degree level by UCD.

Before moving on to the impact of the second Revolution, it is important to note that, between 2005 and 2015, French Studies lost five permanent positions that happened to have been held by francophone (French native speaker) colleagues. The impact of this staffing reduction was further heightened by the reduction of language (exchange) assistants year on year from 2008/9, from five to four to three to two before climbing back up from the nadir to three in 2016/7, a position only maintained only with the greatest difficulty in 2018/9. It fell back down to two in 2019/20. The reason given for the latter cuts and for the non-replacement of permanent staff positions was budgetary.

Unsurprisingly, the un-reversed staffing reductions in French coincided with a reduction in core-language small-group teaching across all years, including the final two years of the degree, where provision was reduced from 3 weekly hours of small-group teaching to 1 weekly plenary lecture hour + 2 weekly small-group hours (1 for written language and 1 for spoken language). These changes in turn coincided within about three years with clear pressure on overall exit standards of degree-level attainment in spoken and written production in French. In other words, it became manifestly more difficult for students and staff alike to do justice to themselves and to their subject. This challenge affected more specifically:

- (i) written language production skills (grasp of basic structures of grammar/syntax/vocabulary);
- (ii) unrehearsed spoken language production (sophistication of spoken expression and fluency);
- (iii) basic phonetic awareness.

Then, in 2015, came the Cultural Revolution, when the School of Languages and Literatures was renamed the School of Languages, Cultures and Linguistics and acquired two new subjects, both quite distinct from Language subjects: Linguistics and Chinese culture. The removal of the word 'Literature' is noteworthy here, as is the addition of a different subject distinct from the discipline of 'Modern Languages', namely the human/social science of Linguistics. A less visible change was the inauguration of a one-off fixed-term appointment in the sociology of religion in China, an appointment that involved no Chinese language provision, however. This latter development underlined a view of proficiency in *culture* as somehow separable from *literacy* in the language in which a given culture is expressed. It also reinforced the shift of emphasis implicit in the removal of the word 'Literature' from the School's name. While these changes signaled the demotion of literacy and of literature, the stakes of that demotion and of the consequential de-coupling of intensive reading with high-level language learning may not have been immediately obvious.

From 2016, in the face of the staffing reductions that were not helping staff and students in their efforts to maintain the rightly very high exit standards of UCD's degrees in French, and in the wake of the new challenges to high-level literacy that were implicit in the changed emphasis of the School's identity, a number of pedagogical measures were taken by UCD French, particularly in relation to the final-year curriculum. These were all designed to secure our students' central focus on (i) precision, range, depth and fluency of written/spoken production and (ii) on close and deep reading practice. To this end, for final-year students, we (i) restored two full, consecutive weekly hours of small group teaching for written language work plus one full hour per week of spoken language work; (ii) concentrated on spoken precision through work on, and assessment by Dictation (aural comprehension, grammar, spelling...) and Reading aloud (pronunciation/intonation); (iii) found ways of maximally integrating reading and production skills. This latter re-coupling involved the following two measures: (i) the end-of-year oral assessment shifted from prepared presentations to free discussion of given topics as treated in three set literary works. Students were required to read three 20th/21st-century life narratives in French for theme-based discussion and debate in their weekly French conversation class and they were required to discuss these works in their final oral exam; (ii) written language assessment moved from 'essay-writing' to 'résumé' of non-literary prose in semester one. This latter adjustment had become necessary in any case to counter student submission of other people's work (bought from essay mills, for example) or of work that had been memorised and submitted with small adjustments in rote-learned exam essays. It is also worth noting that, in a parallel development, most 3Y/4Y courses in French Literature moved towards assessment by reading-intensive critical analysis rather than by essay-style approaches alone.

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In restoring the ratio of small-group reading classes to large-group content teaching and in making strenuous efforts to integrate core language learning into so-called content/culture courses and vice versa, the primary aim was to continue, in the face of considerable adverse pressure, to guarantee the traditionally high standards of graduate attainment in French fluency and literacy, including deep cultural literacy. From the very first year onwards, our efforts appear to have been successful. In fact, we would conclude that it is impossible to overplay the importance of critical reading proficiency for high-level language learning. The more interactive and the more critical the coupling of language learning with *linguistically embedded* cultural exposure (studying films, reading novels and so on), the more successful the high-level language learning experience. De-coupling the two is certainly a more economical approach and better enables the profitable commodification of languages and cultures via relatively inexpensive large-group 'teaching'. However, our experience has shown that prioritisation of small-group reading classes has an overwhelmingly positive effect on exit standards of linguistic command and precision in French (more numerous stellar performances, wider bands of highly creditable achievement and fewer disappointing performances).

It would be a mistake, however, to end this reflection without mentioning the critical, intellectual ambition that is simultaneously fulfilled by attending to the linguistic ambition at the heart of arts/humanities degrees in Modern Languages. For there are two further and pressing arguments against de-coupling language learning from the extensive close reading that distinguishes arts/humanities degrees. Certainly, the range of linguistic exposure (of register, lexical fields, style etc.) is necessarily widest and richest, most varied, least specialised in literary/proto-literary material. And that is the latter's value for higher-level language learning. In addition, however, the reading demanded by literature is intellectually and philosophically stretching in a manner that Susan Sontag (2007, p. 151) describes very well: 'Literature is the house of nuance and contrariness against the voices of simplification'. For Sontag, indeed, reading literature is not just cognitively, but also ethically and existentially expansive; it helps 'to extend our sympathies [...] to secure and deepen the awareness (with all its consequences) that other people, people different from us, really do exist'. And of course, reading literature in 'another' language can only expand this latter awareness exponentially. This is indeed why some critics (Apter, 2013) have suggested that much or most of that extra, salutary extension of a reader's consciousness is quite simply 'lost' when the work is read in translation, that supreme de-coupling of language and culture.

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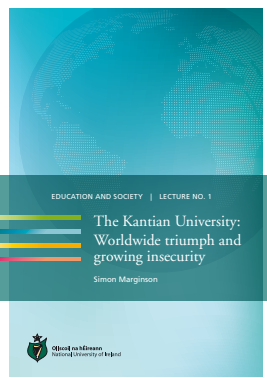
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EDUCATION AND SOCIETY: PUBLICATIONS



Aline Courtois, *The Significance of International Student Mobility in Students' Strategies at Third Level in Ireland*, Discussion Paper No. 1 (2016)



Simon Marginson, *The Kantian University: Worldwide triumph and growing insecurity*, Lecture No 1 (2019)



the 1990s, the number of people in the world who are illiterate has increased from 400 million to 600 million.

There are a number of reasons for this. One is that the population of the world is growing. Another is that the number of people who are illiterate is increasing in many of the developing countries. This is because of a number of factors, including a lack of access to education, a lack of resources, and a lack of political will.

One of the main reasons for the increase in illiteracy is the lack of access to education. In many developing countries, there are not enough schools, and the quality of education is poor. This means that many children do not go to school, and those who do often do not learn to read and write.

Another reason for the increase in illiteracy is the lack of resources. In many developing countries, there is a lack of money to invest in education. This means that there are not enough teachers, and the schools are often overcrowded. This makes it difficult for children to learn.

A third reason for the increase in illiteracy is the lack of political will. In many developing countries, the government does not prioritize education. This means that there is not enough money spent on education, and the quality of education is poor. This makes it difficult for children to learn.

There are a number of ways to reduce the number of illiterate people in the world. One way is to increase access to education. This can be done by building more schools, and by providing more resources to existing schools. This can also be done by providing more training for teachers.

Another way to reduce the number of illiterate people is to increase the quality of education. This can be done by providing more resources to schools, and by providing more training for teachers. This can also be done by providing more support for students.

Finally, it is important to have political will to invest in education. This means that the government should prioritize education, and should spend more money on it.

By taking these steps, we can reduce the number of illiterate people in the world, and we can help to create a more educated and prosperous world.

There are a number of ways to measure the number of illiterate people in the world. One way is to count the number of people who cannot read and write. This is done by conducting literacy surveys.

Another way to measure the number of illiterate people is to look at the number of people who do not go to school. This is done by looking at enrollment data.

There are a number of challenges to reducing the number of illiterate people in the world. One challenge is the lack of resources. In many developing countries, there is not enough money to invest in education.

Another challenge is the lack of political will. In many developing countries, the government does not prioritize education. This means that there is not enough money spent on education.

Despite these challenges, it is possible to reduce the number of illiterate people in the world. By taking the steps outlined above, we can help to create a more educated and prosperous world.

By taking these steps, we can reduce the number of illiterate people in the world, and we can help to create a more educated and prosperous world.



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