

## **A Comparative Study of Language Movements in Taiwan and Ireland**

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### **Abstract**

*The movement to promote Taiwanese language has been in existence for many years, but despite this the language is still struggling for survival. Taiwanese literature is still almost invisible in Taiwan, and although Taiwanese language education was introduced seven years ago it has not so far succeeded in revitalizing the language. By contrast, the Irish Gaelic language revitalization movement has proved a success. This paper considers what the Taiwanese language revitalization movement can learn from the Irish, by comparing the political contexts in each location, the native literature movements, the language policies, and the language movements. In particular, it considers the significance of the principal institutional supports which have been put in place to foster Irish since the establishment of the Gaelic League in 1893 and the foundation of the Irish Free State in 1922. These range from cultural gatherings, print and broadcast media to education and law. The Taiwanese language movement needs to emulate its successful Irish counterpart, and draw attention to Gaelic Revitalization in ways that show their similarities.*

### **Fort Zeelandia**

——For the first Taiwanese national hero, Guo Huay

Zeelandia: when transliterated from	In the fort the structures are high
Dutch	To cover the sky
Means to shield from the heat	And all of the sights
To block it outside the fort	From inside the fort
Lock it in the never-ending stretch of	Outside, a prosperous land
Brightness	Inside, brimming silos
As if a million poisonous roses	Living in the fort are ever-hungry
Bloom on the Jianan Plains	Red haired wolves
On the backs of old water buffalos	So outside the fort are

Ever-hungry water buffalos  
Because for the colonized  
There is nothing but the thorny sun

To comfort them  
Nothing but tired buffalos  
To cry with  
Only the empty silo at home  
To tell of each  
Exploited harvest  
(Oh! The luscious plains  
Each grain of rice shakes her head)  
'Huayi' means the remembrance of  
the motherland  
The motherland is a religion  
A religion that allows no heresy  
The god of the Taiwanese  
Huayi believed as his fellow people  
That God will come  
And deliver them from the mouths  
of the red-haired wolves  
They waited and waited  
Persevered and persevered  
Until one day they know that God  
has abandoned them  
That their own fate

Rests in their own hands  
The moon shines on the ides of  
August  
Equally  
On the happy Zeelandia  
And the saddened plains  
On the face of each Taiwanese  
Oh the gods  
May you guide the spirits of those  
who died by the wolves  
May you light up the path of those  
who suffer  
We need a road  
To the battlefield of revolution  
Those we climb over our heads  
We will overthrow them  
Anything we can grasp  
Will become our weapons

All the years of desperation  
Turned into the tension on our  
bows

We shot out arrows of fury  
The celebrating red-haired wolves  
suddenly

Ran for their lives  
Blood splattered on them  
Their red fur became more crimson  
Wolves became demons  
Demons increased in number  
Wolves became less and less  
The victory was imminent  
Hope was almost born  
Huayi never would have guessed  
Someone, out of fear and weakness,  
Leaked their plans  
Unthinkably  
That someone was his own blood  
brother  
Out of nowhere  
Like a tidal wave  
Packs of red-haired wolves charged in  
Bared their sharpened fangs  
Lashed at the lives of our brothers  
Took away the glow of hope  
Huayi was killed on the road

Taking nothing but an eternal hatred  
(Oh! The luscious plains  
Each gust of wind sighs)  
But – the blood of the Taiwanese  
will not be shed in vain  
It seeps into the soil  
Nourishes the land  
Protects all generations to come  
One person's determination  
Became a million seeds  
Hiding under the soil of the luscious  
plains  
Waiting to break free  
Waiting to blossom

—December 1979.

## Introduction

According to Rubin (1983: 8),<sup>1</sup> many Irish scholars believe Gaelic Revitalization<sup>2</sup> to have been unsuccessful, due to the fact that the originally-intended goal of establishing Irish as the household language remained unfulfilled. However, this stated aim was not in fact the movement's real goal. The real goal was for Ireland to realize freedom, and to become an independent nation. From this perspective, Gaelic Revitalization was quite successful, although not entirely so, given that Northern Ireland remains part of the United Kingdom today. Still, even if one considers only the language movement of Northern Ireland, there are successful aspects that warrant our study.

Taiwanese nationalists have enthusiasm for discussions relating to Ireland, particularly those that relate to literary and cultural areas. The fact that English settlers in Ireland continue to write and speak in English has often been used to rationalize how the Taiwanese continue to speak and write in Mandarin, even as far as to assert that eliminating Chinese ways is both unnecessary and impossible.<sup>3</sup> However, Gaelic Revitalization was one of the key factors in facilitating Irish independence, and one of its core tenets was, in the words of a speech at the Irish National Literary Society in Dublin in 1892, 'The Necessity for De-Anglicizing Ireland'.

Taiwan needs to further understand Gaelic Revitalization, and to see what can be learnt from the Irish.

## Political, Language Census and Structure

*Gaeilge* is considered to be a form Gaelic, in modern days represented by three main languages: the modern Irish, the Scottish Gaelic, and Manx (collectively known as Q-Celtic<sup>4</sup>). According to Ahlqvist (1993), the Irish language ceased to be commonly used as a mean of communication among all economic classes by around 1600, and by 1851 there were 32,000 Irish speakers out of a population of about 6.5 million.<sup>5</sup> The Gaelic League was formed in 1893 to revitalize the language, and by 1926 the number of Irish speakers had risen to more than 500,000, about a sixth of the total population of the Irish Free State. In 1981, 1 million of the 3.2 million citizens of the Republic of Ireland spoke Irish (Ahlqvist 1993: 10), and a recent census has shown that a third of the current population of 3.9 million speaks the language.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Rubin uses the term 'language planning'.

<sup>2</sup> 'Ireland' in this paper refers to both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

<sup>3</sup> This is the view of prominent Taiwanese political and cultural activists such as Lim Lo-Tsui and Li Bin-Long.

<sup>4</sup> Q-Celtic or Goidelic, which includes Welsh and Breton, is different from P-Celtic or Brythonic, which includes Cornish (Hale 2001: 299).

<sup>5</sup> According to Máirtín Ó Murchú (1985: 2), fewer than 12.66 per cent of children under ten in Ireland could speak Gaelic at the time he was writing.

<sup>6</sup> In 1990, only 10,000 people were native speakers of Gaelic (Ahlqvist 1993, quoting Hindley 1990: 251).

In Northern Ireland, 131,974 individuals speak Irish out of a population of 1.6 million.<sup>7</sup> This is approximately 8.8 per cent of the population; 78.1 per cent of the Irish-speaking group are under the age of 44, and 59.9 per cent of Irish speakers can read and write Irish. This shows the success of the Gaelic Revitalization in the North.

### **Gaelic Revitalization**

#### *The Language Movement of the Republic of Ireland*

Ever since the beginning of Irish nationalism, the revitalization of the Irish language has been emphasized. Douglas Hyde, later the first president of the Republic of Ireland (1937–1945), joined W.B. Yeats and others in 1892 to create the Irish Literary Society, which was where he delivered his manifesto 'The Necessity of De-Anglicizing Ireland'. Hyde explained the importance of language to culture, stating that 'I wish to show you that in Anglicizing ourselves wholesale we have thrown away with a light heart the best claim which we have upon the world's recognition of us as a separate nationality' (Daly 1974).

The following year, Hyde established the Gaelic League. It declared itself to be a non-political, non-partisan organization, with the goals of protecting and revitalizing the Irish language, literature, music, dance, and recreation, and of encouraging Irish arts. It welcomed anyone who was interested in Irish culture, and especially unionists. To many people's surprise, the movement soon successfully spread throughout Ireland, each branch attracting between 50 and 300 members from across all social classes and ages. The League's most important task was the teaching of the Irish language; wealthier members who owned houses used their spare rooms for classes and meetings, while others used public halls or school classrooms (Coffey 1938: 58). Support for unionism weakened.

#### *Northern Ireland's Language Revitalization Movement*

In Northern Ireland, the Irish language was virtually extinct as a native language by the 1950s. In the following decade, however, eleven families decided that they wanted an environment in which their children could be raised to speak Irish. Their goal seemed difficult: they lived in an English-language city, and they themselves had learnt Irish only in their adolescence. At economic cost to themselves, they came together to form a Gaeltacht community. This community not only survived the pressure of an English-language environment; they had a decisive influence on their neighbourhood, creating a dual-language neighbourhood. The Shaw's Road Community further stimulated other Northern Ireland businesses, particularly relating to the media and education.

### **Comparison with the Taiwanese Language Movement**

Although the beginning of Gaelic Revitalization can be identified as the founding of the Gaelic League in 1893, the beginning of the Taiwanese language movement is

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<sup>7</sup> According to the 2001 census, the exact figure was 1,685,267.

more difficult to pinpoint. We could consider the movement to have begun in 1930, although at this time it was limited to written texts and did not encourage language revitalization, Taiwanese education, or change in language policies. As will be discussed below, it was a 'Taiwanese literary movement' rather than a 'Taiwanese language movement', and it was brought to an end in 1937, when the Japanese banned all Chinese language. Its goals were far from those of the Gaelic League, which promoted both language and cultural identity.

In the 1970s, several writers expressed their determination to write in Taiwanese, but there were no organizations or community until the 1990s, when several groups were established

- 1991: The Sweet Potato Poetry Club;
- 1992: The Taiwanese Writing Forum;
- 1992: The Association for Taiwanese Language and Literature;
- 1995: The Association for Promoting Taiwanese;
- 2001: The Association for Taiwanese Romanization.

Some of these organizations emphasize literature or linguistics, while others emphasize language. However, even though the movement is no longer a competition among individuals to showcase their own ideas of orthography, the movement is now a competition among organizations. Each has its own system of *pinyin*, creating inconvenience and stymying the overall progression of the language movement. By contrast, because the Irish language movement began with a charismatic leader and transliteration has long since been standardized, the Irish have had the advantage of organizations unifying quickly. Consequently, even though their first few years did not see vast growth, they quickly saw breakthroughs.

However, in March 2004 World United Formosans for Independence was established, combining the resources of organizations in support of the Taiwanese language movement both on Taiwan and worldwide. This organization is the only one that approximates with the Gaelic League. Due to the youth of this organization, it remains to be seen whether its efforts on behalf language revitalization will match those of the Gaelic League.

## Language Movements

### *The Literary Movement in Ireland*

The Gaelic League was first established with two goals: revitalizing the Irish language into a daily language and publishing new Irish literature. The leader of the Gaelic League, Douglas Hyde, already used Irish to compose poems, plays, and publish folklore; Hyde and the movement were fervently supported by his good friend W.B. Yeats, and Yeats even predicted that the future would consider their time to be the time of Hyde. This prediction was completely accurate; Hyde later became the father of Ireland, influencing Ireland even today.

Yeats's own poetry is full of Irish myths and legends, and, as Hyde suggested, these were absorbed by his readers. However, although he encouraged friends both to learn and to use Irish, he did not himself understand Irish, and his own

writing was in English (and was thus 'Anglo-Irish'). He was deeply conflicted over language, observing that 'Gaelic is my native language but it is not my mother tongue', and asking, 'Can we not build a national tradition, a national literature which shall be none the less Irish in spirit from being English in language?'

Ireland's most celebrated poet at the present time, Seamus Heaney, was born in 1939, the year of Yeats's death. He declined to be classified as an 'English poet' when his work was chosen for the *Oxford Anthology of English Poetry*.

#### *Comparison to Taiwan's Literary Movement*

As noted above, the first wave of the Taiwanese language movement was as a literary movement. This *Ue-bun* movement is widely considered to have begun in 1930, when Ng Si-Hui published his essay 'Why Not Promote Cultural Literature?' in a newspaper, *Ngoo-jin*. This essay instigated the first historical Taiwanese cultural-literary war. However, references to using the mother tongue in literature pre-date 1930. For example, in 1922 Chhoa Poe-Hoe published 'To Spread the Use of Taiwanese Language and Culture', suggesting the use of Roman letters, or *Peh-Oe-Ji* (POJ), for Taiwanese orthography (Lim 2006: 26). In 1924, Lian Un-Khing published 'Taiwanese Language of the Future',<sup>8</sup> while in 1926, Lua Ho published 'Comparison of New and Old Literature in Taiwanese-Japanese Newspapers'.<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile, Lua Jin-Sing published a Taiwanese novel in 1924, entitled *Mother's Tears*, and this was followed Tenn Khe-Phuan's *Out of Dead Line* the year following. 1925 also saw Chhoa Poe-Hoe publish a collection of Taiwanese essays, *Chap-Hang Koan Kian*. Li Khin-Huann suggests that the Taiwanese language movement can be traced back to as early as 1916, when Rev. Thomas Barclay published a Taiwanese Bible written in POJ, since this influenced the usage of Taiwanese. Some people even suggest that the movement goes back to Barclay's *Taiwan Church News*,<sup>10</sup> which began in 1885 and which was the earliest newspaper written in Taiwanese.

1978 saw the second wave of the cultural-literary war in Taiwan, and the genre of 'Taiwanese literature' was established. However, mainstream literature continued to be written in the colonial language of Mandarin, which was imposed by the KMT from 1949 onwards. It was not until 1991 that the *Sweet Potato Poetry Quarterly* became the first publication of an organization created to promote Taiwanese, and this folded after seven issues. In 1996, *Tai-Bun Bong-Bo* was established, and there is also a sister magazine, called *Tai-Bun Thong-Sin*. *Tai-Bun Bong-Bo* is published monthly, at eight pages per issue, and as of summer 2011 176 issues have been published. Two more initiatives were established in 2001. In January, several mother-tongue literary organizations joined in an alliance to form the 'New Taiwan Native Society', publishing *Taiwanese E-Literary Arts*. This lasted for just five issues, although the *Hai-ang Taiwanese Literary Magazine*, which was established the following month, was more successful and has so far published 115 monthly issues. Taiwanese publications have all either had a small

<sup>8</sup> Published in *Taiwan Bin Paper*, 2, 20–21.

<sup>9</sup> Published in *Taiwan Bin Paper*, 89.

<sup>10</sup> The original publisher was the Taiwan Hu-siann Church Press, now known as the Taiwan Church Press.

circulation or short lifespan, and it is arguable whether they have had any noticeable influence on the mainstream of Taiwanese literature, which is written in Mandarin.

In Ireland, literature written in the colonial language does not always dare to call itself Irish literature, but often uses the term 'Anglo-Irish literature'. Writers of Anglo-Irish literature are highly respectful of writers who use Irish, as seen in Yeats' attitude towards Hyde. This isn't the case in Taiwan, though. Mandarin remains the mainstream literary language, and writers of Taiwanese literature do not receive respect from Mandarin writers.

### **Language Policy and Mother-Tongue Education**

In the Republic of Ireland, the national language is Irish, and it is also the official first language. English is the official second language.

In 1995, the United Kingdom and the Irish government signed the 'New Framework for Agreement', in which both agreed to cooperate on four basic principles, including: to reach agreement between the self-governed and the governed; to reach ways that are democratic and peaceful; to ensure and respect the rights and opinions of both cultures; to facilitate 'equal and respectful treatment'. In 1998, these principles were ratified by the Northern Ireland Peace Treaty, which stated that

All participants recognise the importance of respect, understanding and tolerance in relation to linguistic diversity, including in Northern Ireland, the Irish language, Ulster-Scots and the languages of the various ethnic communities, all of which are part of the cultural wealth of the island of Ireland.

In 2001 the British government agreed to adopt the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, allowing positive action to promote the widespread use of the Irish language. The Irish language was categorized under Part III of the Charter, which gives extensive application to areas such as educational, judicial, and administrative systems, as well as to social services, the media, and cultural organizations. It also promotes positive measures, such as economic and societal and international exchange (Articles 8–14) (Si 2002: 214). The Charter encouraged public speaking and writing in Irish, expanded measures to protect and develop the language, instructed the Department of Education to place an emphasis on teaching the Irish language, and called for funding for Irish film and television productions (Si 2002: 212–213). In all elementary and middle schools, Irish is a compulsory subject. Some schools even use it as the language of education. Irish is also a mandatory subject when testing for admissions to some public universities.

### **Language Policies of Northern Ireland**

Currently, the Northern Irish Executive and Assembly has several departments relating to language policies. These include: the newly established Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL); the Linguistic Diversity Branch, established in 1999, which is responsible for implementing the European Charter for Regional or



Minority Languages; the Office of the First Minister/Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM), which is concerned with methods for promoting peace and equality among different ethnic groups; the Department of Education, under which is a council responsible for handling class grades and curricula involving Irish language; and the Council of Ethnic Relations, established in 1990, and its Cultural Diversity Programme, responsible for sponsoring related community activities. In addition, in accordance with the Northern Ireland Peace Treaty, 1999 saw the establishment of the North/South Language Body, directing responsibility for the Council of North/South Department Heads, under which two departments are set up. These are the Irish Language Department and Northern Ireland Language Department, both of which are responsible for promoting their respective languages, encouraging both public and private writing and speaking, and providing funds, suggestions, support, and research for their parent agencies (Si 2002: 214–215).

### **Comparing Taiwanese Language Policies, Mother-Tongue Education**

Taiwan's language policy has always been to maintain the colonial language as the 'national language'; during the Japanese occupation this was Japanese, and after the war, this was Mandarin. The colonial language has always been privileged, and the mother tongue oppressed. This situation did not improve until the era of Li Teng-Hui, and even then the improvement was small; although the mother tongue was no longer oppressed, it was still neglected. The national language policy that continues to privilege Mandarin was not eliminated. However, in 2000 the Democratic Progressive Party came to power; the DPP was localist, and in 2001 it began to implement mother-tongue education programs. Mother-tongue education was mandatory during the six years of elementary school, and subsequently available as an elective for three years in middle school. However, it was a weekly course of only forty minutes. The Mandarin policy remained.

In comparison with the political situation of the Irish, the DPP's advocacy of Taiwanese independence takes similar form to that of the Irish Free State in 1921; even though independence was not declared, for most purposes the country was *de facto* independent. During this time, the government of the Irish Free State supported the ideology of language revitalization. Hence, once the DPP came into power it implemented policies in accordance with their language ideologies. However, although the leader of the DPP was sympathetic to the mother tongue, he did not pursue mother-tongue education with enthusiasm, leading to a state of stagnation in this area even after four years of DPP government.

### **Factors that Contributed to the Success of Irish**

Many factors contributed to the success of Gaelic Revitalization, and six major elements are outlined below. If the Taiwanese language movement wants to succeed, then it must consider carefully, learn diligently, and readjust the ways by which the movement approaches various situations.



### *1. Healthy Literary Tradition, Standardized Writing System*

Ireland has long had a healthy literary tradition and a standardized writing system; hence, even though the language was dying, the mother-tongue revitalization movement had tradition as a foundation from the start. This is not the case with the Taiwanese language movement, which instead emphasized writing systems. Authors invented their own words and writing systems and used idiosyncratic grammar; the result was that many people cannot read Taiwanese, and hence do not support the movement. The process of standardizing the Taiwanese writing system must be sped up.

### *2. The Direction of the Language Movement was Correct*

The Gaelic League established the direction of their revitalization movement from the start, aiming to restore their mother tongue to everyday use. With this theme in mind, they established branches throughout Ireland, opening classes to teach the mother tongue. The League did not place any emphasis on political factors, and as an apolitical, cultural movement was able to attract many supporters. As they became more familiar with the Irish mother tongue, culture, and history, they became increasingly sympathetic to the idea of independence. The Taiwanese language movement, by contrast, was overtly political from the beginning, and became categorized as a 'Taiwanese independence' movement in an era that looked unfavourably upon that name. This is another factor that may have contributed to the movement's ill start.

### *3. The Irish Independence Movement was Led by Language Revitalization Supporters*

The majority of the Irish independence movement's leaders were advocates of language revitalization. The Gaelic League's leader, Douglas Hyde, was a professor of Irish language as well as a writer and poet in the mother tongue. Because of his leadership, the Gaelic League went on to become an important organization within the independence movement. For this reason, Hyde was elected to be the first president of Ireland following independence. In the Taiwanese language movement, even though many linguists and writers are active participants in the independence movement, there has not been a situation where language movement activists have led the Taiwanese independence movement. Meanwhile, political leaders of the Taiwanese independence movement lack consciousness of the language movement, especially the current DPP leaders.

### *4. The Movement's Employment of Many Language Discourses*

According to O'Reilly (1999: 148), the Irish language movement utilized many strategies of language discourse: cultural discourses, ethnic language discourses, minority language discourses, and endangered language discourses. These strategies were used in stages as well as concurrently, strategically selecting when they were to be used and so reaching optimal effect. If only the ethnic language discourse is strongly and repeatedly emphasized, such as is the case with the

Taiwanese language movement, then the result may not be the desired goal. The movement in Taiwan stresses that if one fails to speak Taiwanese, then one is not Taiwanese.

#### *5. Knowing How To Utilize International Movements To Promote Minority Ethnic Groups' Mother Tongues*

In the European Union, Northern Ireland took advantage of the sympathy and protection which the European Union promotes for minority ethnic languages to put pressure on the United Kingdom to great effect (Si 2002: 216). In 2001, UNESCO, on International Mother Language Day, declared a list of endangered languages, including all of Taiwan's minority mother tongues, and not counting Mandarin. The Taiwanese language movement should also use this type of international attention to promote Taiwan's minority ethnic mother languages.

#### *6. Establishing a Reward System*

Gaelic Revitalization gave the reward of a gold or silver ring to those who passed the mother-tongue exams. This is considered a great honour, and one who wears such a ring is recognized as one who knows their mother tongue. One also must pass the mother-tongue exam to enter public universities, so this can also be a type of reward. The Taiwanese language movement should also start establishing similar reward systems.

### **Appraisal of the Contemporary Position of Irish in the Republic of Ireland**

The promoters of the Irish language revival did not realize that the race they were running in was a marathon, not a sprint, and by the 1960s they were out of breath and disheartened. Official Ireland continued to pay lip-service to the aspirations of the language movement but no longer really believed in it. This became clear when the government did not seek to have Irish – the first language of the State according to the 1937 constitution – accorded full official working status, when the country joined what was then known as the Common Market in 1973. It was content to have Irish designated an official 'treaty' language with only a small number of core symbolic documents being translated into Irish. At a more popular level, this crisis of confidence was paralleled by the fact that the number of schools teaching through the medium of Irish outside the Gaeltacht collapsed to just a handful at both first and second level by 1973. In retrospect, the 1970s can be seen as a watershed, a time of regrouping, when those favouring the language revival laid the foundations for the current, reasonably successful, position of Irish. The earlier policy of trying to engage the entire population simultaneously in language acquisition, use, and shift had been only partially successful. From now on, interested groups focussed their efforts on promoting and supporting initiatives which were directly linked to increased use of Irish. These efforts were often, but not always, actively supported by the state, and tacitly supported by the wider community.

The past decade has seen many advances in institutional underpinning of Irish. The Official Languages Act (2003) sets out the general parameters for the public

use of Irish, e.g. in written notices and public address announcements, in the obligation on public-funded bodies to provide an Irish version of their annual reports, and in the adoption of incremental language promotion plans. Influenced by the Canadian experience, this act also established a language commissioner, *An Coimisinéir* (the Commissioner), with an office, *Oifig Choimisinéir na dTeangacha Oifigiúla* (Office of the Official Languages' Commissioner). January 2007 saw the coming into operation of changes to the EU Treaty which made Irish an official and working language of the European Union, albeit introduced on a phased step-by-step basis, *inter alia* to allow for capacity-building among translators and interpreters, editors and copy-editors, and legal and other administrators, etc. This work has been outlined and contextualized by Dr Regina Uí Chollatáin in her paper 'From Tracts to Twitter' (2009), particularly in relation to *Lárionad de Bhaldraithe do Léann na Gaeilge, UCD* (The UCD de Bhaldraithe Centre for Irish Language Scholarship), of which she is the founding Director. Proceeding from these positive developments, the Government approved a 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language on 30 November 2010. The Strategy was launched by An Taoiseach (Prime Minister) on 21 December 2010. As it was supported by all the main political parties, it is expected that it will be implemented over the coming years. The Government's Strategy as set out in this document is organized around:

- increasing the knowledge of Irish;
- creating opportunities for the use of Irish;
- fostering positive attitudes towards its use.

Visitors to Ireland coming through Dublin airport and driving into the city centre can scarcely fail to notice that Irish is all around. Irish appears alongside English on airport signage, place-names in Irish are seen above English versions on the motorway, Dublin's street names are bilingual, every car registration plate bears the name of a county in Irish only, the universities have bilingual signage, and the bus lanes have '*Lána Bus*' ('Bus Lane') painted on them in Irish only. Irish is an official language, and it in fact makes things official – if your car is clamped, the document fixed to your wind-screen wiper will be very much in Irish as well as in English. But visitors won't hear much Irish. If they travel on the Luas light-rail and train systems, they will hear pre-recorded announcements in Irish as well as English. Visitors may encounter Irish-medium TV and radio and hear Irish being spoken on air as they check out the various stations on the remote controls in their hotel rooms. But they won't hear much conversation in Irish; why not?

The simple answer is because relatively few people speak Irish at home or socially. That is certainly true, as demonstrated by census statistics concerning Irish use. But there are other reasons, less obvious ones, such as social norms which create barriers. Conventionally, Irish is spoken by people who know each other, and who know that their interlocutors are competent in Irish and prefer to use the language. However, if three people speaking Irish together in a group are joined by a fourth person who has English only, the three Irish-speakers will switch to English. They will not want to exclude the English-speaker, and it is considered impolite to do so. It is scarcely ever done. This is because in Ireland there are not really two different language communities, as there are in Canada, or multiple

language groups as there are in Belgium, Spain, and Switzerland. There is no great divide between English-speakers and Irish-speakers. All Irish people speak English and a considerable number, over 40 per cent, are to some extent bilingual, on a spectrum from complete fluency in Irish to those having just a few words, known as the *cúpla focal* ('a few words'). Irish tends to be spoken in more formal situations, in school, in the media, and at meetings, which are more predictable and easier for learners to handle. Informal situations in the home or in noisy pubs at closing time do not lend themselves to accommodating learners or strangers. But the English–Irish spectrum is being extended. On her visit to Ireland in 2011, Queen Elizabeth of England spoke a few words of Irish at a dinner in her honour: '*A Uachtaráin agus a chaired*' ('President and friends'). A few days later, the US President, Barack Obama, urged on an enthusiastic crowd in Dublin city centre with the slogan '*Is féidir linn*', an Irish version of his catch-cry 'Yes we can'. In other words, the *cúpla focal* is going global, finding its place within Anglicized Western culture in general.

But there are certainly other, more home-grown, positive indicators of the progress that Irish has made, perhaps none more so than the success of the television channel TG4, which broadcasts primarily, but by no means exclusively, in Irish. If we fast-forward from Douglas Hyde's experiences of around 1890, when native speakers of Irish were ashamed to speak the language, to 2011, we can see an amazing difference. In the latest general election held in the Republic of Ireland in February 2011, we find that for the first time ever it was possible for there to be a party leaders' debate in Irish. The three leaders of the main political parties participated in an hour-long discussion. All three had learned Irish mainly through the educational system, and they all acquitted themselves well in their second language. This event created quite a public stir and the broadcast on TG4 attracted over 400,000 viewers.

It can be argued plausibly that the current globalizing phenomenon of English as a second language and the consequent reduction in the domains of activity and use available to many, if not most, of the world's other languages, big and small, means that the situation of Irish is no longer as singular as it once seemed. Indeed, the unfolding Irish, European, and global linguistic scenarios have the potential to create in the twenty-first century a more or less stable Irish-English bilingualism which was not envisaged when English began to replace Irish as a community language 300 years ago.

## Conclusion

Aside from languages brought by recent immigrant, languages found in Ireland are Gaelic, Northern Ireland Scots, and English. In contrast, there are 14 languages in Taiwan. This high number creates complications; because the Holo-speaking subgroup of the Taiwanese language population was stronger, they were often stereotyped as 'Holo chauvinists', a contradiction that those opposed to the Taiwanese language movement and supporters of unification both use against the movement. However, this should not be an excuse for the movement's progress to stagnate. The Taiwanese language movement needs to emulate its successful Irish counterpart, and draw attention to Gaelic Revitalization in ways that show

their similarities. In this way, differences between the two movements cannot be used as a reason to oppose the Taiwanese language movement.

The nature of the Taiwanese language movement is close to that of the Gaelic Revitalization of the Gaelic League, although the Taiwanese language movement is young still. We hope our course will be like that of the Gaelic Revitalization, and that in 27 years, we will see the same fruit of success as was seen by Gaelic Revitalization.

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