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Language policy and language governance: a case-study of Irish language legislation

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Abstract In this paper, it is argued that the existing conceptual framework of 'language policy' should be expanded to include perspectives from the emerging field of 'language governance', as the latter pays attention to the multi-faceted internal and external contexts in which institutions and organisations seek to develop language policy. The paper begins by reviewing contributions from the field of governance and assesses how these can expand the scope of language policy, particularly when conducting case-studies of individual organisations. It then sketches the current demographic and macro-policy context of the Irish language. The paper concludes with a case-study of statutory language schemes ratified under the Official Languages Act 2003, legislation which promotes the use of the Irish language for official purposes. The discussion reveals conflicting language beliefs between the legislation itself and the language schemes of individual organisations, in this case public bodies. Therefore, the expansion of the conceptual framework to include governance facilitates a broader analysis of tensions around language policy both within and between different levels of public administration.

Keywords Irish language · Language legislation · Language ideology · Language governance · Language policy

Introduction

This paper seeks to expand the conceptual framework of 'language policy' to include perspectives from the field of 'language governance'. It is argued that language policy is influenced by a multi-faceted, multilayered process

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of governance, which is distinct from government, but that existing LP models do not pay adequate attention to this. Language governance is emerging as a conceptual framework to explain the multitiered nature of language policy. Williams (2007) and Loughlin and Williams (2007) have argued that the state of languages is influenced by the interaction of local, regional, national and international actors, each seeking to achieve its own form of governance. In this paper, perspectives from language governance are combined with elements of the existing language policy approach. This extended approach is then applied to Ireland's Official Languages Act 2003, legislation which promotes the use of the Irish language for official purposes, and illustrates the usefulness of including a governance approach in analysing language policy.

Theoretical framework

Many terms have been used in the literature to describe ways in which attempts are made to influence or change language behaviour and/or attitudes: language policy, language management, language planning, language engineering, language governance, language normalisation,[1] language revitalisation, language revival,[2] language reclamation,[3] language reawakening.[4] 'Language policy' and 'language planning' are among the most commonly employed terms in English and have greater currency in predominantly English-speaking states or entities. They are often used interchangeably, with some authors referring to 'language policy and planning' (Hornberger 2006: 24; Canagarajah 2006: 153; see also Kaplan and Baldauf 2005 and Baldauf and Kaplan 2006). Others have acknowledged the overlap between planning and policy but have argued for a clearer distinction between the terms on the basis that they embody very different philosophical approaches to language:

> [W]hile language planning refers to control, it does not leave anything to the individual to decide, as the governing body decides not just what the person will know but also how he or she will arrive there … Language policy attempts to be less interventionist and to refer mostly to principles with regard to language use … With the increase of less interventionist approaches, the role of planning is subsiding and policy is becoming the bona fide. Yet, it

[1] Linguistic normalisation (*normalització lingüística*) is the term used in relation to Catalan, reflecting the relative strength of that language compared to other minoritised languages (see, for instance, Strubell 2000).

[2] Contemporary theoretical and conceptual research distinguishes between 'revival' and 'revitalisation' of languages. 'Revival' is understood to refer to efforts to reintroduce languages which are no longer spoken at all. 'Revitalisation' is taken to refer to efforts to support languages which have been minoritised (Grenoble and Whaley 2006: 13).

[3] The Australian aboriginal language, Kaurna, which is not known to have been spoken by any community since the nineteenth century, is undergoing a 'language reclamation' programme, despite a lack of sound recordings and speakers (Grenoble and Whaley 2006: 64).

[4] The term 'language reawakening' has been used in connection with Miami-Peoria, a native language of Oklahoma (Leonard 2008).

> should be noted that the boundaries between planning and policy are far from clear (Shohamy 2006: 49).

Shohamy also distinguishes between *explicit* and *implicit* language policies. In some contexts, she argues, language policy is stated explicitly through policy documents or legislation while in others language policy is not stated explicitly 'but can be derived implicitly through examining a variety of de facto practices' (50). She cites the ongoing debate about the status of English in the US as an example: although English is not legally the official language, clearly it is the dominant language. This distinction has also been made by Schiffman:

> I think it is important to view language policy as not only the explicit, written, overt, de jure, official and "top-down" decision-making about language, but also the implicit, unwritten, covert, de facto, grass-roots, and unofficial ideas and assumptions, which can influence the outcomes of policy-making just as emphatically and definitively as the more explicit decisions (2006: 112).

Spolsky has taken the distinction further. In contrast to language planning, he posits a three-dimensional model of language policy comprising *language practices* (what we may also refer to as the ecology of language), *language beliefs* (or ideology about language(s)) and *language management* (agency, similar to the original meaning of language planning) (2004: 5). Beliefs about language are sometimes based on myths, subjective positions without factual basis. Popular public discourse on language is replete with such myths (Bauer and Trudgill 1998; Ó hIfearnáin 2006).

In a later work, Spolsky attempted to elaborate a more detailed model of language management, the third prong of his 2004 model. He described the relationship between language policy and language management as follows: 'the goal of a theory of language policy is to account for the choices made by individual speakers on the basis of rule-governed patterns recognized by the speech community (or communities) of which they are members. Some of these choices are the result of *management*, reflecting conscious and explicit efforts by language managers to control the choices' (2009: 1, emphasis in original). The term 'language management' is preferred by Spolsky to 'planning' although the meanings are similar. He examines language management from the perspective of ten different domains (see Figure 1) and considers how pressure from one domain may influence decisions taken in another. The concept of management has also been used in some of the literature from French-speaking Canada. Matthieu LeBlanc, writing about New Brunswick, uses *l'aménagement linguistique* (2003) and Grin, writing about Canada but from a Swiss perspective, refers to *la gestion linguistique* (2005: 39).

Although language planning has been accused of promoting monolingualism in favour of large languages (Ricento 2006: 12–15), it has also been used widely to propose interventions in favour of minority languages throughout the world (e.g., Fishman 2000). However, despite its widespread currency in the English-speaking world, language planning is somewhat tainted with historical associations of being control-oriented and 'top-down' in nature. The three-pronged model of language policy proposed by Spolsky (2004) is more multifaceted and multilayered and pays

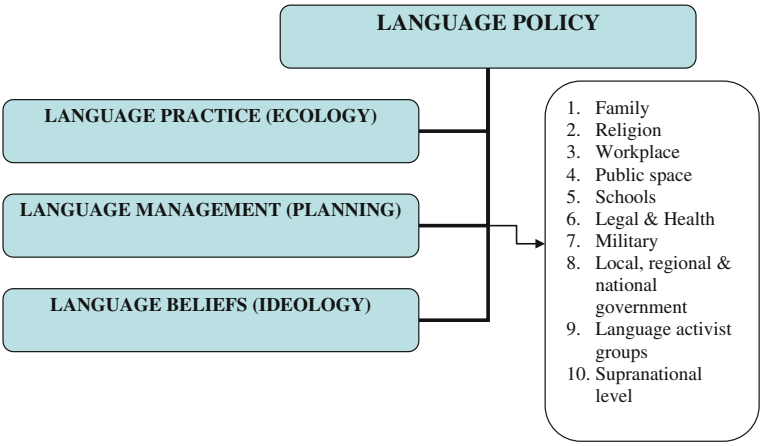

Fig. 1 Intersection of language policy and management approaches (based on Spolsky 2004, 2009)

attention both to government language initiatives and beliefs or attitudes about them. Rather than examining high-level organised management alone (the government-led planning), a consideration of both the ecology (the actual use of languages) and the ideology (the things that people believe about languages) can enrich our understandings of why people make the linguistic choices they make. This critical, analytical language policy framework is less interventionist and didactic than theories and models of language planning which may commit themselves specifically to strengthening minoritised languages (Fishman 2000).

A further level of conceptual complexity is added to this framework by drawing on the emerging approach of language governance, the intersection of public policy, public administration, political science and language. The concept of governance was pioneered in the field of management and has become gradually more generalised in the social sciences. In a multi-authored volume, *Language and Governance*, Loughlin and Williams outline some of the key philosophies of the approach:

> The main thrust of the argument of governance theorists is that, as society becomes more complex and differentiated, the traditional method of governing from above – government – becomes more difficult. This leads to governance, understood as steering rather than directing, which it is claimed supplements or at times even replaces government. Governance is allegedly more bottom-up than top-down and involves a partnership between government and non-governmental elements of civil society (2007: 59–60).

In terms of language, governance is a complex, multifaceted concept. It occurs in the context of globalisation, operates at several levels (local, regional, national, supranational) and involves a myriad of organisations (national, regional and local government, state agencies, transnational corporations, non-governmental organisations, international bodies of governance). However, despite globalisation, national government retains a key role as a strategic site to suture together the

various infrastructures of governance (Williams 2007: 18–20; Loughlin and Williams 2007: 57–103). In other words, governance is about much more than government. It involves new concepts of civil society, social capital, political empowerment and participatory democracy. It necessitates a switch from vertical to horizontal forms of government. New actors, such as domestic interest groups and transnational organisations are increasingly influential and there are key questions about the ways in which various language groups are represented differently. Governance also involves a shift in concern for the manner in which different groups of citizens interact with government (Williams 2007: 13).

'Governance' is widely used in Canadian political discourse and there is considerable expertise in *gouvernance linguistique* ('language governance') in relation to French, particularly at the University of Ottawa. Based on such expertise, a five-year research network (*ARUC: Les savoirs de la gouvernance communautaire*) was launched in 2009. Following earlier work, ARUC examines community governance among French-speaking linguistic minorities in New Brunswick and Ontario, drawing together academics and practitioners in community and voluntary organisations (Université d'Ottawa 2012). Recent publications include an examination of innovative governance of French-speaking minorities (Normand 2011) and an analysis of the governance of minorities in New Brunswick (Forgues and St-Onge 2011). Earlier conceptual work focused on governance and linguistic minorities (Cardinal et al. 2005), minority governance and women (Cardinal and Cox 2005) and governance of the Francophone minority in Ontario (Cardinal and Juillet 2002). During a discussion of the conceptual framework at the inaugural 2009 meeting of ARUC, project leader Prof. Linda Cardinal stated that language governance refers specifically to co-operation between various actors, sharing of power and resources and the absence of hierarchies. Language planning was described as *un terme qui vient de l'anglais* ('a term which comes from English'), highlighting the preference for different terms and concepts in a French-speaking environment.

Combining Spolsky's work with the perspectives of governance facilitates greater understanding of the sheer complexity of the concept of language policy in modern society. Taking Spolsky's three-pronged model of language practices, language beliefs and language management (2004, 2009), and examining each prong in the case of the ten domains he analyses, yields thirty different possible investigations of language policy (see Figure 1 above). Adding questions of governance creates an even more complex mix. Every linguistic choice made by individual speakers is conditioned by innumerable pressures brought by a myriad of organisations, each potentially influencing language practices, language beliefs and language management itself.

In short, we need an expanded concept of language policy to include language governance. This wider and more dynamic conceptual framework facilitates an examination of the inter-relationships between language practices, language beliefs and language management, and recognises that language policy is influenced by a multi-faceted, multilayered process of governance, as distinct from government (see Figure 2). It is not proposed to elevate language governance to the same level as language policy but rather to broaden the scope of language policy to include

governance. Just as language policy will be enhanced by paying greater attention to questions of governance, specifically the interaction of actors and institutions, it is argued that language governance in turn will benefit from closer integration with language policy. This is particularly so in the case of language beliefs, as these are powerful influences on the institutional actors participating in governance, although they have not featured strongly in the governance debate to date. The Irish case illustrates how language beliefs contained in the statutory policy documents of public bodies can apparently contradict the overt language policy aims.

Overview of Irish language

The demography of the Irish language and government policy towards it since independence in 1922 has been discussed at length (e.g., Ó Murchú 1985; Ó Riagáin 1997; Hindley 1990, Nic Pháidín and Ó Cearnaigh 2008; Ó Murchú 2008; Walsh 2011). According to the Census of 2006, 40.8 per cent of the population of the Republic of Ireland, or almost 1.7 million people returned themselves as capable of speaking Irish. This relatively high percentage is linked to the fact that Irish is a core school subject at primary and secondary level (ages 4–18). However, only 72,148 people, or 1.8 per cent of the population, reported that they spoke Irish daily outside the education system (Central Statistics Office 2007: Tables 6, 35 and 36). Levels of knowledge and use of Irish in the Gaeltacht, the geographically-defined historical Irish speaking community, are much higher than the national figures but Irish continues to decline as the community language of the Gaeltacht (Ó Giollagáin et al. 2007: 27).

The initial stated aims of 'revival' or 're-gaelicisation', themselves arguably unattainable given the methods chosen, have shifted since the 1960s to a softer and vaguer policy of bilingualism. Following a thirty-year campaign in favour of public services in Irish for Irish speakers, the Official Languages Act was signed into law in July 2003, 81 years after Irish was granted constitutional recognition as both the

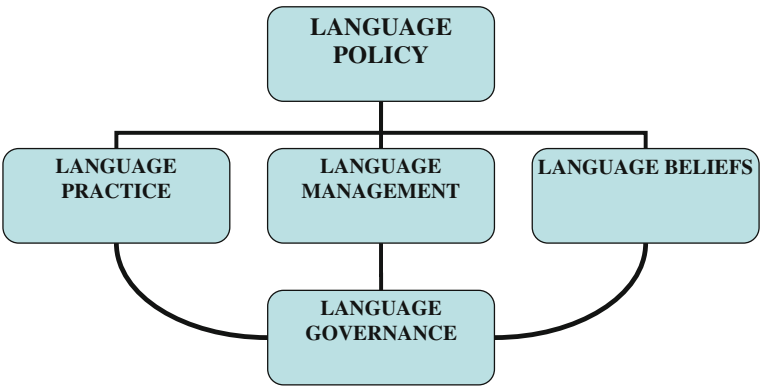

Fig. 2 Extended language policy approach including language governance

national language, and an official language. About 650 public bodies are covered by the legislation, whose obligations can be divided into three categories:

1. Direct obligations (covering mainly written material, for instance annual reports, correspondence with the public, information distributed to the public) (Sections 9 (2), 9 (3), 10);
2. Obligations based on regulations made by the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs[5] (relating to signage, stationery, advertisements and oral announcements) (Section 9 (1));
3. Obligations based on language schemes (Section 11).

This paper concentrates on the language schemes, as they are the mechanism by which most public services are to be provided in Irish. A language scheme is essentially a statutory internal language plan drawn up by the public body outlining how it will augment its services in Irish over an agreed timeframe (Walsh and McLeod 2008: 27). Each public body agrees its scheme with the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs but implementation and compliance is monitored by the office of the language commissioner (An Coimisinéir Teanga), an independent body separate from government. A scheme lasts for 3 years, and is then replaced by a successor scheme.

In terms of the theoretical framework, the schemes are a good example of language governance. Because they emerged from a process of consultation between government and Irish language civil society following a long campaign by language activists (each draft scheme must take account of submissions from members of the public), the schemes reflect the institutional interaction associated with the governance approach. They also reflect Spolsky's three-pronged LP model. Firstly, the system of schemes is an integral part of the national legislation for Irish, arguably the highest and most formal aspect of language management. Secondly, each scheme illustrates the language management favoured by individual public bodies and their internal beliefs about Irish and English. As well as representing overt language policy in favour of Irish, the schemes may also be read as an illustration of covert language policy because what they exclude is arguably more interesting than what they include.

Methodological approach

This study uses an expanded language policy approach to analyse the language beliefs contained in selected Irish language schemes made under the Official Languages Act. Language beliefs have been chosen because they have not featured strongly to date in the governance debate yet they exert powerful influences on the institutional actors participating in governance. The beliefs contained in specific government policies, in this case statutory language schemes, are useful analytical tools to identify conflicts in language policy and governance. The schemes represent sites of contestation between the institutional actors participating in Irish language

[5] This was the title of the Department from 2002 to 2010.

governance: on the one hand, Irish language activists seeking a more central role for Irish in the work of public bodies and, on the other hand, overwhelmingly monolingual English-speaking public bodies who resist, to varying extents, the implementation of measures to enhance Irish language services.

The Official Languages Act is a relatively new piece of legislation. Although passed in 2003, it was not fully in place until 2008, when the then Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs signed the regulations contained in a statutory instrument pursuant to the Act. Large-scale field work on the implementation of the Act and on its influence on provision of and demand for services in Irish has yet to be conducted. Before doing so, it is necessary to examine closely the terms of the Act itself and in particular the contents of the language schemes, as they are the main mechanism for service delivery. In this paper, the schemes published by public bodies in 2007 have been examined in a case-study. 29 schemes were agreed with the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs during that year, covering a total of 60 public bodies (some schemes cover more than one local authority operating within the same geographical area). This is the highest number of schemes agreed in any year since the Act became law. Further schemes were agreed and published since 2008 but because of the large amount of material (several thousand pages of text, hundreds of thousands of words) only one year has been chosen as a case-study. Schemes published between 2004 and 2006 have already been analysed in Walsh and McLeod 2008.

All of the schemes cover various aspects of the public services offered: written and oral communication with the public; websites; publications; Irish language classes for staff; organisation of offices and meetings in the Gaeltacht; training and recruitment; implementation; internal monitoring and publicising of the scheme. A detailed analysis of every aspect of the schemes cannot be undertaken in a short paper such as this. Instead, the main characteristics of the schemes will be discussed in the light of the theoretical framework of expanded language policy. The primary concern in examining the schemes relates to language beliefs, and also to explicit and implicit policy, which itself provides an insight into what people really believe about language.

Analysis of language schemes

An analysis of the 2007 schemes has identified conflicting language beliefs and an overarching ideology in relation to the Irish language in public services. Some of the beliefs are implicit or covert: they can be inferred from what the texts include and what they leave out. Others are explicit and overt. Further empirical research based on interviews or surveys with officials of the public bodies would be required to flesh out these conclusions.

A distinction is made in the analysis between belief and ideology. Silverstein's classic definition of language ideology was the 'set of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use' (1979: 193). In a recent volume about Native American language ideologies, Field and Kroskrity do not distinguish between 'belief' and 'ideology',

describing ideologies as '*beliefs and feelings about language and discourse* that are possessed by speakers and their speech communities' (2009: 4, emphasis in original). They argue that language ideologies are most usefully conceived of as multiple, reflecting the plurality of social divisions within socio-cultural groups (2009: 6; O'Rourke 2011). Drawing on Silverstein's definition, this paper takes 'language ideologies' to be more organised and pervasive than beliefs. An ideology is an overarching background force which informs a belief and is closely linked to it but may not be recognised as such by the person holding the belief.

The following sections examine the often conflicting beliefs about Irish and English which are either explicit or implicit in the 2007 schemes. These beliefs relate to the delivery of services in Irish, the demand for services in Irish, the correct use of Irish in services and the questions of the Gaeltacht and language rights. The final section identifies an overarching ideology in relation to Irish which is dominant but implicit in the schemes.

Beliefs related to the delivery of services in Irish

The first set of beliefs relates to the delivery of services in Irish, itself a key aspect of the internal governance of the public body. The belief that teaching Irish to English-speaking employees is the most appropriate way to provide bilingual services is widespread and explicit in most of the schemes. The commitments made are minimalist, sometime in the extreme, reflecting the nature of the legislation, the role of Irish in the body's governance and, arguably, the sociolinguistic position of Irish in Irish life. The Minister had by 2007 already prioritised those bodies serving identifiable geographical Irish speaking communities, and the analysis of 2004–2006 illustrated that many such schemes contained relatively substantive commitments to Irish (Walsh and McLeod 2008: 30–31). However, it would seem that most of the bodies whose schemes were published in 2007 had priorities other than Irish. This is not entirely the fault of the bodies themselves: the statutory guidelines drawn up by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs are not very demanding and key issues in relation to bilingual service provision are not mentioned (DCRGA 2004). For the most part, the 2007 commitments are limited to written communication and any commitments made in relation to oral communication are extremely weak. The question of recruitment is almost entirely absent, and the rare references to recruitment of Irish-speaking employees are couched in very vague terms (e.g. Department of Transport, p. 28).[6] Much emphasis is placed on Irish language courses as a training strategy, rather than on recruitment of Irish speakers (e.g. An Bord Pleanála, pp. 14–15; Central Statistics Office, p. 20; Cork City Council, Section 4.3: Co. Clare Local Authorities, pp. 11, 16; Co. Louth Local Authorities, Chapter 4 and Section 1.10).[7] This would appear to reflect the

[6] For the English text of all schemes, see http://www.coimisineir.ie.

[7] There is very poor consistency in the presentation of the schemes. Some contain page numbering, and others do not. Therefore, sometimes it is necessary to refer to 'Section 4.1' etc. instead of a page number.

belief that, as all Irish people know Irish anyway from school, a small number of hours will suffice to bring them up to a level where they can provide services in Irish. This is a very good example of a language myth not based on fact: the evidence from Canada and the Basque Country is that several thousand hours of intensive tuition, and long periods of immersion education in areas where the target languages are spoken, are required for any serious progress to be made towards achieving high levels of bilingualism (Walsh and McLeod 2008: 30).

Some of the schemes also contain a conflicting belief that the recruitment of Irish speakers is the most appropriate way to provide bilingual services, a more effective approach to language governance within the public body in question. This is very much a minority belief but is explicit when present (Galway City Vocational Education Committee, p. 20; Co. Clare Local Authorities, p. 15).[8]

Beliefs related to the demand for services in Irish

Demand for services is linked intimately to their provision and the manner in which services in Irish are made available to the public is a key aspect of language policy. The belief that there is little or no demand from the public for services in Irish is widespread and fairly explicit in the schemes. There is a long-standing tradition among Irish speakers, particularly in the Gaeltacht, of using English to access official services because of the belief (usually justified) that they will not be available in Irish, or available at an inferior standard or after long delays (Walsh and McLeod 2008: 32). Many of the public bodies refer to poor demand, while neglecting to mention that they have provided virtually no services in Irish before now. International experience would suggest that demand should be stimulated among the minority community. However, the 2007 schemes contain only sparse references to stimulation of demand (for instance Co. Clare Local Authorities (p. 13), North Tipperary Local Authorities (p. 5) and County Louth Local Authorities (Section 1.2)). More often than not, it is inferred that Irish language services will not be offered actively and provided only when demanded (Central Statistics Office, p. 11; Department of Social and Family Affairs, Section 1.4; Department of Transport, p. 9). Sometimes, the only commitment is to serve the existing low level of demand (Legal Aid Board, p. 6; Institute of Public Administration, p. 8).

There is also some evidence of a conflicting belief that 'active offer' is important for the delivery of services in Irish. The system of active offer, by which service providers take clear, definite measures to advertise their bilingual services, is a key component of Canadian language governance. The aim of such active offer is to ensure that the public being served will feel more comfortable in their language of choice. This model could be appropriate for Ireland, given the dynamic discussed above (Walsh and McLeod 2008: 34). There are only limited examples of active offer in the 2007 schemes, but the belief is explicit when present. Such a

[8] Vocational education committees (VECs) are local education bodies responsible for administering some secondary schools and most adult education in Ireland.

commitment is made by City of Dublin VEC (p. 18). The Central Statistics Office, which is responsible for gathering national statistical data, guarantees that it will use Irish speaking enumerators for the Census in Gaeltacht areas (p. 17).

Beliefs related to the correct usage of Irish in services

Another aspect of language governance is the correct usage of the target language itself in official publications, signage and recorded or live oral services. The belief that the correct use of Irish in translation and signage etc. is not important is fairly widespread but implicit. This is unsurprising because no public body could be expected to state unambiguously that it was not concerned with the linguistic standard of their services, even in a minoritised language such as Irish. The schemes are usually published bilingually, or have separate Irish and English versions. An examination of both versions to ascertain if there were substantial linguistic differences between them revealed that there were serious problems with the standard of Irish in six of the 29 schemes, about a fifth. The worst offenders were North Tipperary Local Authorities, the Western Development Commission, Cork City VEC, the Department of Transport, the Department of Social and Family Affairs and the Institute of Public Administration. In these cases, the Irish text often reads like a poor translation and is difficult to understand. Typographical and grammatical errors and poor style and phrasing are common. In the case of Cork City VEC, many of the laudable and strong commitments to Irish language services would be incomprehensible to a fluent and literate Irish speaker. North Tipperary Local Authorities omits the autonomous form of the verb, a key marker of a high, official register in Irish. County Louth Local Authorities uses an unofficial regional version of the name of the county (Lúghaí) although the standard version (Lú) would be expected in an official document. Although the government has set up a system of accredited translators for Irish (Foras na Gaeilge 2006), it seems that some public bodies went elsewhere to meet their translation requirements. This raises the possibility of poor management of the translation industry.

A central provision of the Act, and a key demand of Irish language activists for decades, is that public bodies will respond in Irish to correspondence in Irish (Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge 1998). In light of the poor quality of translation, it would appear that some schemes were written in English first and then translated poorly into Irish. This raises the possibility that the Department responsible for Irish language policy, including the Official Languages Act, was corresponding in English with public bodies when schemes were being prepared. If this is the case, it is another interesting example of covert language ideology and language management in direct opposition to the overt policy, ironically within the very government department responsible for formulating policy. The authorities could claim that such an approach speeds up the process of agreeing schemes, which may indeed be the case. However, what is more problematic is agreeing schemes which are less than entirely comprehensible or accessible to the audience at which they are targeted. One of the serious weaknesses of the system of language schemes is that an Irish speaker could not be expected to have read each scheme from beginning to end

before doing business with a public body; the average person does not have the time for such an additional inconvenience. Rendering the schemes unclear or incomprehensible does nothing to encourage the uptake of services in Irish. It creates the impression that the public body does not care about Irish—in Spolsky's terms, that it believes Irish to be of little value—the likely result being that the bilingual Irish speaker will use English instead.

Two bodies show greater awareness of the sensitivities surrounding the correct use of written Irish, in this case on official signage. This is a rare belief but explicit when present in the schemes. Galway City VEC (p. 21) and one of the local authorities in Dublin, Dún-Laoghaire-Rathdown Council (p. 13) pledge that their public signage will be accurate.

Generally, there are similarities between this belief and the belief about language rights and possibly the belief about the importance of the Gaeltacht, which is discussed in the next section.

Beliefs related to the Gaeltacht and language rights

A few of the schemes contain references to the Gaeltacht, reflecting the fact that some of the bodies are located close to a Gaeltacht area. A small number of schemes contain the implicit belief that proximity to the Gaeltacht has implications for the language management of the public body, not only internally but also externally given the greater presence of Irish as a community language. Some public bodies prioritise the development of Irish language services in their Gaeltacht offices, for instance the Department of Social and Family Affairs (Section 4.7) and County Cork Local Authorities (p. 10). In the case of County Cork, such a commitment was not surprising as there are two Gaeltacht areas in that county. In one of the stronger schemes, Galway City VEC commits to reviewing recruitment policy regarding those services directed towards the Gaeltacht. It is no doubt significant that Galway is the most strongly Irish-speaking city in Ireland and that the Chief Executive Officer of the Galway VEC was the former CEO of the national language planning body, Foras na Gaeilge. The scheme of An Bord Pleanála (the planning appeals board) also shows awareness of the body's statutory responsibility to Irish in the Gaeltacht (for instance, pp. 3–4 and 6–7) and there is a section on serving the Gaeltacht in the scheme of County Cork Local Authorities (pp. 10–11).

Another minority belief, usually more implicit than explicit, is that the Gaeltacht is largely irrelevant to the public body's work even though it may serve a Gaeltacht area. Some of the few bodies whose operations cover the Gaeltacht show little understanding of the implications of their location for language governance. The commitments of Letterkenny Institute of Technology (a third-level college in County Donegal) are very weak, despite the fact that they are located near to one of the largest Gaeltacht areas in the country and have a considerable Irish-speaking student base (p. 26). Similarly, there are no meaningful commitments to serving the large number of primary Irish speakers in the areas covered by the Western Development Commission, a body promoting the socio-economic development of the west, where most of the country's Gaeltacht areas are located.

Another related belief is that providing services in Irish is an important aspect of the public body's work, based on linguistic rights. This is a minority belief, but explicit when it is present. Some of the bodies in this category have appointed, or pledged to appoint Irish Language Officers, apparently influenced by a language rights discourse (Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council, p. 13; Roscommon County Council, p. 6; County Clare Local Authorities, p. 17; County Cork Local Authorities, p. 8; Cork City Council, Section 3.2.1.; Central Statistics Office, p. 15). This action may be a more concrete illustration of a pro-Irish ideology than statements in the schemes themselves. Sometimes, the schemes indicate strong awareness of Irish language matters (Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Council, p. 4; Co. Louth Local Authorities, Section 3.1; Property Registration Authority, p. 8; Cork City Council, Section 3.3). The commitments of the VECs are fairly ambitious. For instance, the Dublin City VEC had already established an Irish Language Support Unit (p. 10) before the scheme was agreed.

Overarching ideology of 'the few words (will do)'

The ideology of 'the few words (will do)' is a factor of some significance in Irish language policy, due to the dominance of learners over fluent speakers, the long history of official language promotion and the emotional attachment of Irish people to the notion of a 'native language', even though most of them do not speak it. A Europe-wide survey of languages found that 14% of Irish people described Irish as their native language, in sharp contradiction of the official national data (Eurobarometer 2001: Section 1.1). This ideology is dominant but implicit in the schemes and exercises a strong influence on language governance both internally and externally. As described above, there is a large gap between the total of Irish 'speakers' (1.7 million or 40.8% of the population) and those who speak it every day outside the education system (72,148 or 1.8%). Although the number of competent Irish speakers is higher than just 2%, the majority of those who return themselves as 'speakers' have only passive or limited ability in Irish. The same demographic applies to the public bodies as to the rest of the population: there are far more civil servants with limited Irish than with high levels of ability, and the schemes reflect that reality. In Irish, the expression 'cúpla focal' (literally, 'a few words') is widely used by Irish 'speakers' who do not know that much Irish at all but who, to varying degrees, consider themselves part of the larger Irish speaking community. The words 'will do' are added to the title because of a widespread if largely undocumented belief in Ireland that a minimal level of Irish suffices in all circumstances, even when supposedly providing public services to fluent Irish speakers. Although there can be an emphasis on symbolic or tokenistic displays in the case of many minoritised languages in western Europe, the Irish situation is at the far end of that spectrum due to almost a century of official promotion at national level and relatively high passive knowledge of the language among the population. This dynamic raises fundamental questions about the nature and scope of the endangerment in the Irish situation, when a fairly large percentage of the population already knows (a bit of) the threatened language and thinks that such limited knowledge will suffice to provide public

services in Irish. The ideology of 'the few words' is deeply embedded in many aspects of Irish language policy and in the 2007 language schemes.

For instance, the vast majority of the public bodies commit themselves to training the receptionists and telephonists so that they will have experience of 'basic greetings' in Irish: Westmeath Local Authorities (p. 10); Central Statistics Office (p. 16); Limerick City Council (p. 5); Co. Cork Local Authorities (p. 6); Department of Transport (p. 30). For a number of reasons, this is an interesting commitment and an example of a belief about language which is very powerful in the Irish context. Firstly, it is evidence of the limitations of teaching a minoritised language in the education system, even as a core subject, particularly in a broader English-speaking context. The implicit message from scheme after scheme is that these employees have attained only a minimal level of Irish despite spending up to fourteen years studying it at school. This should not be surprising as there are real limits to what any education system can achieve, as illustrated clearly by the Canadian experience. What is more questionable is that the state is willing to spend more money—arguably indefensible in financial terms—teaching public servants the same basic greetings that they didn't learn in the classroom. Secondly, the schemes commit only that receptionists will have 'experience' of basic greetings in Irish, or that they will be 'capable' of saying the organisation's name in Irish or will be 'familiar' with it: that is not the same as confirming that those greetings *will be used* actively or that the organisation's Irish name will be used as a matter of course each time the telephone is answered. In Canadian terms, therefore, there is virtually nothing approaching the system of 'active offer' in the 2007 schemes. Thirdly, teaching the receptionists a few phrases of Irish begs the question: what happens when a caller responds in Irish and the receptionist is unable to continue the conversation? It could be argued that the implicit belief about Irish revealed by these commitments is that Irish is a form of window dressing used in very limited quantities as a type of cultural insurance policy for the organisation, but that it has very little real functional importance in the governance of public bodies (Walsh and McLeod 2008: 30).

Regarding the actual use of Irish by staff of the public bodies, the commitments were often limited to the symbolic. For instance, County Clare Local Authorities (in the west of Ireland but not a Gaeltacht county) promise to erect signage welcoming the use of Irish, even though few members of the staff can speak it (p. 10). Therefore, who on the Council staff will speak Irish to the public, if the Irish speaking public takes up the offer? In addition to the usual commitments about 'basic greetings' in Irish, the Church of Ireland College of Education (a small teacher training college in Dublin) promises that the receptionists will use Irish with visitors (p. 7), but it is hard to imagine that the conversation would last very long if the receptionists know only the basic greetings. A similar commitment is made by County Westmeath Local Authorities (a non-Gaeltacht county in the midlands): 'All callers to public counters will be greeted with a simple bilingual greeting' (p. 11); again, the fluent Irish speaker could be forgiven for doubting the course of the conversation after that. In the scheme of North Tipperary Local Authorities (a non-Gaeltacht county in the southwest) it is promised that 'The main reception desks will display notices inviting the public to use Irish' and 'Signs saying

"Tá Beagán Gaeilge Agam" [I have a little Irish] will be procured and made available to any staff who are willing to use them' (p. 18). The scheme of County Louth Local Authorities (a non-Gaeltacht county in the northeast) refers to a telephone answering service which operates outside office hours: 'We will ensure that basic competency in Irish will be extended to the operation of this service, by the end of the Scheme' (Section 3.6). The Western Development Commission promises that an unspecified number of staff would have the 'Ability to deal comfortably through basic Irish with any member of the public' (p. 7). It does not state which precise 'public' was targeted, but it is unlikely that the large Gaeltacht communities in the counties covered by the Commission would be anxious to avail of this service, given the sociolinguistic dynamic described above. Indeed, it is significant that such a weak commitment would be contained in the scheme of a body which covers several Gaeltacht areas.

There are several references to vague efforts to promote bilingualism during public meetings, or at meetings of elected members of the local authorities. The scheme of Cork Local Authorities refers to the effort which would be made to create 'an atmosphere of bilingualism' (p. 10), an aim arguably difficult to realise given the weak methods chosen. The scheme of Limerick City Council aims to 'create and foster an atmosphere of bilingualism' (p. 7). Similarly, County Cork Local Authorities promises that '[e]fforts will be made to introduce an element of bilingualism' during meetings (p. 6). Although it is laudable that public bodies would want to give Irish any public recognition at all, there is a very large gap between these examples of 'the few words' and service in Irish for fluent Irish speakers who wish to use it with public bodies, the fundamental aim of the Official Languages Act.

Although some bodies plan comprehensive training programmes for their staff, the commitments of most schemes are very limited indeed. For instance, the scheme of North Tipperary Local Authorities promises that '[i]nformal measures and events such as Irish tea-breaks and Irish Table Quizzes will be used to encourage a gradual increase in the amount of Irish being used by staff' (p. 18). Another illustration of considerable symbolism is to be found in the scheme of the Institute of Public Administration (the body responsible for training public servants), one of the weakest schemes to be published in 2007. Referring to its renowned diary and yearbook, which is used extensively throughout the civil service, it is stated: 'The names of organisations are already included bilingually. The days and months in the diary are in Irish and English and there is also a useful section bilingually on terms that deal with the public service. This amount of Irish in the Yearbook and Diary will be maintained and we will consider ways to increase this during the term of the scheme' (p. 8).

Although the ideology of 'the few words' (will do) is an obstacle to the efficient language management in favour of Irish within public bodies (the provision of high-quality services to fluent Irish speakers), it can be argued that it is simply an accurate reflection of the dominant national ideology in relation to Irish, as revealed by various surveys: Irish is important, but only in a limited, passive and symbolic sense (Ó Riagáin and Ó Gliasáin 1994: 9; Mac Gréil and Rhatigan 2009: 7). However, it was never the intention of Irish language activists lobbying for

language rights that the cornerstone of the legislation would reflect this ideology so clearly; they wanted unambiguous service commitments to the core Irish-speaking community rather than vague aspirations to institutionalise the symbolic use of Irish (Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge 1998). While the ideology of 'the few words' does not feature explicitly in the text of the Official Languages Act, it has been legitimised by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs through their endorsement of the schemes. This is an interesting example of how language policy, understood in Spolsky's terms, reveals many internal contradictions and conflicts. However, it is also possible that this ideological conflict could have negative consequences for Irish, by impeding the successful implementation of the government policy expressed in the legislation.

Despite these significant weaknesses, however, the 2007 schemes were among the first to be agreed with public bodies, many of which were starting from a very low threshold of Irish language service provision. The system of schemes is supposed to lead to enhanced services in Irish over time; as a scheme expires, each subsequent scheme is supposed to provide additional Irish language services (Walsh and McLeod 2008: 27). However, there has been a steady decline since 2007 in the pace at which the Department has ratified schemes. 66 of the 105 schemes had expired without being renewed by the beginning of 2012. A further 28 public bodies had been requested to prepare draft schemes but these had not yet been ratified. In the case of 10 such bodies, more than five years had elapsed since the request. The commissioner expressed concern that the system of language schemes had been seriously compromised by these delays (Ó Cuirreáin 2012, p.c.).

Following an electoral commitment, the Irish government in 2011 announced a review of the Official Languages Act (Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht 2011). Two weeks later, and before the review had commenced in any meaningful way, it announced that the functions of the commissioner were to be merged with those of the Ombudsman as part of a broader rationalisation of the public service due to Ireland's economic crisis (Department of Public Expenditure and Reform 2011: Appendix 2, p. 7). This led to uncertainty about the future of the commissioner's office and the future shape of the Act itself.

Conclusion

The Official Languages Act was a milestone in Irish language policy and governance. For the first time since the foundation of the state, public bodies are obliged to improve incrementally their service in Irish. This is not a simple process, as decades of inertia and cynicism as well as low thresholds of Irish-speaking civil servants and a suspicious (or apathetic) and disparate Irish-speaking community have created serious obstacles to the provision of services in Irish. The aim of this paper was first to expand the language policy framework to include governance and then to examine the texts of 29 language schemes in the light of that framework. In Spolsky's terms, the schemes—themselves an example of language governance—revealed a series of beliefs, often covert, about the Irish language held by the public bodies. This analysis of the texts of the 2007 language schemes has provided a

glimpse of the complexity of the extended theoretical framework of language policy and governance. By examining just one aspect of the language governance of public bodies (statutory documents governing the provision of public services), many ideological issues can be seen bubbling under the surface. One such ideological conflict with potentially serious consequences for the effectiveness of governance is the tension between the covert promotion of the ideology of 'the few words' and the provision of high-quality services in Irish to fluent speakers of the language, as discussed in this paper. Using the concept of governance has been productive here because it has illustrated that public institutions, operating within a governance framework, hold either covert or overt language beliefs which may contradict official language policy. This analysis also underlines the contradictions often at the heart of language policy and the complexity of beliefs and ideologies which may circulate within a governance framework.

This research is being conducted on the cusp of another milestone for Irish language policy. After years of campaigning by language organisations, the Irish government in 2010 published its *20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language*, a major exercise in language policy and governance (Government of Ireland 2010). If adequately resourced and properly designed, the Strategy has the potential to create, for the first time, a professional and dynamic framework for the implementation of Irish government policy on the Irish language. It remains to be seen how much of the Strategy and the Act can be salvaged from the severe cuts in public expenditure as a result of Ireland's deep recession and banking crisis. The dominance of the ideology of the 'few words' may also influence the extent to which the symbolic aspects of the Act are prioritised over the more far-reaching and costly provisions.

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