Beyond the immersion revolution: Meeting ongoing challenges

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Signpost

1. Remember
2. Reflect
3. Re-imagine

1. Remember: Roots of immersion & diversity of programs
2. Reflect on Current Challenges
   - Diversity of language needs
   - Teacher beliefs and attitudes
3. Re-imagine immersion in the future
   - Promoting parental involvement
   - Promoting language use beyond the immersion gates

Immersion models - diversity


Minority, Indigenous, Autochthonous, Heritage

“Heritage Languages that are National Minority Languages: Irish in Ireland, Welsh in Wales, Basque in Spain & France, Catalan in Catalonia, Frisian in Netherlands and Germany”

Montrul (2015:15)

- State/official support in school systems
- Often with mixed classes of
  - L1 minority language speakers – maintenance, and
  - L2 learners – immersion.

“Research conducted in one immersion context informs teachers and researchers in others”

(Palmer, Ballinger & Peter (2014:225)

Heritage languages in (some) other contexts


Irish (Gaeilge) as a threatened language

State policy: teaching of Irish as L2 and maintenance of Irish as L1 in Gaeltacht

Obligatory subject for all from school entry to completion...

Census 2011: 41% ’speak Irish’

BUT only 2% speak it daily outside school


Growth of Irish-medium schools

Irish-medium schools in Republic of Ireland 2015/16:

Immersion Primaries 144 (35,850)
Immersion Post primary 42 (11,008)
Gaeltacht Primaries 124 (9,334)
Gaeltacht Post primary: 22 (3,761)
Preschool immersion
Naíonraí & Cylchoedd
- Irish- & Welsh-medium preschools
Age: 3-5 years, c.3 hours per day
Aim: High-quality early years education, Immersion for L2 learners, L1 maintenance for Minority language children
May include children from
• Irish/Welsh-dominant homes
• Irish/Welsh-English homes
• English-only homes

Signpost
Reflecting on Current Challenges
➢ Diversity of language needs
➢ Teacher beliefs and teacher education

“need for research on sub-groups within content-based instruction in order to prepare teachers and support best practice.” Tedick & Wesely (2014)

Target language output in different groups
(mean utterances in Irish)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>L2 Learners</th>
<th>Irish-Eng Bilinguals</th>
<th>Irish L1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50%+ Irish-dom homes</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50%+ Bilingual Homes</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50%+ Eng-only homes</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>40</td>
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</tbody>
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Eoin (4;3) Irish L1 speaker in Irish-dominant group

Eoin: Tá dhá row déanta agamsa I have two rows done
Mise ag déanamh dhá row I’m doing two rows
Tá níos mó déanta agamsa I’ve got more done
Féach *ar mise (=ormsa) Look *at me

Orla: Eoin, can I play with you?
Can I play with you? Can I?
Eoin: You xxx (=do?) the same

L1 Irish Child in Irish-dominant group

Eoin: I’ll be finished before you Orla
Orla: Look Orla, I got four
Eoin: Look at me, look what I have!
Orla: Put them in there

Liam: Féach *mise Look *me (=féach ormsa)
Eoin: Agus féach ar *mise And look *at me
Eoin: I’ll be finished before you (singing)
That’s where you play with this game
You have to play with this game

Seán 4;7 (L1 Irish child) talking to group

Seán: All girls go out! [in painting corner]
I’m in the girls one [putting on apron]
T: HAH?! [Displeasure/Disagreement]
Seán: Seo *callíní ceann. [pointing to apron]
This is *girls (pl) one
T: Ní hea - mar a chéile iad ar fad!
No, they are all the same!
The elephant in the room?

Ciara (looking at display of shells)

T: Bhfuil tusa ag iarraidh ceann? Are you looking for one?

Tú ag iarraidh muirín, b'ea? You want - the scallop is it?

Ciara

Will you give me that other one?

T: Tá mise ag iarraidh na sceana mara x 2 (modeling)

I want the razor clams x 2

Ciara

Will you give me that other shell?

Muirín (pointing)

Ciara (loudly)

Will you give me that other shell?

Muirín

Scallop

Ciara (taking other child’s)

Will you give me that other shell? (Pause)

I didn’t say please!

T: Tá mise ag iarraidh na sceana mara...I want the razor clams

Ciara

I said - LOUDLY (plaintively to child beside her)

I SAID PLEASE! [taking other child’s]

Reflecting on diversity of linguistic needs: Teacher beliefs

“When it comes to classroom practice, teachers are the ultimate decision makers; everything they do is filtered through their prior experiences and knowledge, in addition to their beliefs, attitudes and perceptions.”

Lyster and Tedick (2014:218)

“[Teacher] Beliefs can influence pedagogical practices, and teachers may accept new approaches and teaching strategies to a more or less extent according to their beliefs.”

Arocena Egaña, Cenoz and Gorter (2015); Slapac & Dorner 2013; Coady, Harper & de Jong 2015; Cammarata & Tedick 2012; O Ceallaigh, 2016;

Teacher beliefs about L1 minority speakers in Gaeltacht naíonraí

There’s no need to give special time to native speakers.

I do not think it would be right to put native speakers together. In my opinion the beginners have greater need of attention.

I don’t like to make distinctions between children.

I use the Irish speakers as models to put my point across to the other children...The other children hear the native Irish speakers using the language naturally. I mix all the children during the day, but at lunchtime I put the Irish speakers together on their own.

Native Irish speakers are losing out in the mix.

I have a particular concern for Welsh families who send their children to Cylchoedd in all honesty...they are possibly picking up English instead of extending their Welsh vocabulary...I think it’s tragic.

They are not being stretched in my view.

L1 speakers need more enrichment

...Because [in] the Welsh-medium system the balance wasn’t right...unless there’s a balance - it’s not going to work.

The reading corner and the storybooks for the Welsh children - a lot of the books are very sort of simple really. They could benefit from more challenging books and story time.

They’re not able to have, you know, story time to extend and enrich their vocabulary and they’re going back to simple little ‘Spot’ books that they’ve done when they were eighteen months old and I just think this isn’t right.

Welsh L1 Children’s Needs not addressed

Some effects

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Grouping in Foundation Phase

But...the best leaders would be able to group the children and try and... target them that way ...but more informally than having a set group that would be together all the time. (T5:15)

Estyn have made recommendations [to take Welsh L1 children together for stories] for some cylchoedd. (T5:21)

Input, Simplification and Error

“Teacher-student interaction holds much potential for promoting language development through questioning and feedback techniques” Lyster & Tedick (2014:215)

Some aspects of input noted in Naíonraí & Cylchoedd:
• Prevalence of imperatives (often simplified) over comment
• Closed-class questions over open-ended questions
• Focus on basic terms (e.g. colour & number) despite evidence of L1 speakers’ need for more complex terms
• Simplications (i.e. errors) of features of the language:
  Omission of Initial mutations (e.g. in vocatives), Case-marking in Genitive or Plural marking on adjectives
• Very frequent use of “Hah!” “Now!” “Right!” limited, no elaboration

Little corrective feedback in input

Corrective Feedback (e.g Lyster & Ranta (1997); Long (1996); usually as Recasts

Response to feedback that prompts self-repair

Feedback → Self-Repair

Implications

Reflection on classrooms as Communities, social structures

• Awareness-Raising: “What can teachers do to promote equity in the classroom?” (Palmer et al. 2014:227)
  ⇒ Balancing of needs of L1 speakers with needs of L2 learners - in class & society
  ⇒ Urgent action to support & promote language USE among L1 peers (Thomas & Roberts 2011; Zeltner, 2015, Cress, 2009)

• Intervention: To address needs of minority L1 children – enrichment (e.g. Dikobarta 2016; Mac Dhonnacha et al 2005; Ni Bhuaigh, 2010) & normalisation of use with peers


True child-centredness:
⇒ how can we best address diverse language needs?

Re-imagining immersion

➢ Promoting parental involvement

Parents as Lobbyists: Central role in setting up schools e.g. Gibson & Roy (2015)

Parents offer another frontier in terms of home-school partnerships
Parkas & Tenkey (2011)
Peter (2014)
Schwarz & Pahlavan (2016)
Wright & McNeice (2015)
Hartis & O Lacon (2006)
Wissel & Salj (2012)
Wissel (2015)
Kavanagh & Hickey (2013)
Kavanagh (2014)

Role of Parents

Parent involvement encompasses

Parents become involved if:
a) they feel an obligation to be involved as a co-educator of their child
b) feel they have the skills or knowledge for successful involvement &
c) they receive invitations, opportunities or demands for involvement from their child and their child’s school

Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1995)
Kavanagh (2014)

Survey data from 563 parents
+ in-depth interviews with Parents, Teachers & Children
Teachers: Shift in definition of parental involvement

Parental involvement would [in the past] have been more... about getting involved in fundraising. And getting involved in activities in the school. But... nowadays it’s slightly changing in that, parental involvement now, I suppose, I think more of how they can help with the children and help with their learning... The way the new Reports are [official template for end-of-year school reports to parents], there’s a section, you know, that sort of [shows] how the parents can help and all and get involved, so I suppose it’s kind of, you know, my idea of what it [PI] means is changing. (AP)
Re-imagining immersion in the future

Target Language use beyond the immersion classroom

and language and identity

Reification of the TL instead of use

Immersion in Ireland, Wales, Scotland, Brittany, Isle of Man -> low social use of Celtic languages (Will, 2012; Ó Duthú (2009); Ó Cualalghaigh, Leavy & Hourigan (2016).

Echoed in research from Basque country (Zalbide & Cenoz 2008).

Smith-Christmas (2016): Is Irish really for talking?

- children may not see non-school use as possible OR desirable.
- Tendency of adults to reify the language & make children ‘perform’

“Through their framings of Gaelic as a performance and a ‘lesson’ they [adults] normalise...that the one [only] place the children will speak Gaelic is in the classroom context” (p.10)

Re-imagin: Expanding the model

Currently

- Majority of schools teach Irish as a single subject
- Expertise in immersion could promote expansion of CLIL.

“Not every school can be a Gaelscoil. However, CLIL could be used immediately as a type of bridge between teaching Irish as a single subject, and full immersion”

Ó Laoire (2016: 128)

Re-imagining and moving forward...

Begin again where frosts and tests were hard.
Find yourself or founder. Here, imagine
A spirit moves, John Harvard walks the yard,
The books stand open and the gates unbarred.

Seamus Heaney Villanelle for an Anniversary

Go raibh maith agaibh!

References

In attached document
Hickey Plenary


References


Cenoz, J. (2015). Content-based instruction and content and language integrated learning: the same or different? Language, Culture and Curriculum, 28(1), 8-24


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