RESEARCH ARTICLE

The efficacy of unitary and polynomic models of codification in minority language contexts: Ideological, pragmatic and pedagogical issues in the codification of Irish

Although traditional, unitary models of language standardisation have been prominent in minority languages, it is contended that this approach reproduces dominant language hierarchies and hegemonies, diminishes linguistic diversity and marginalises speakers who do not conform to prestige models. The polynomic model has been described as an alternative that is possibly more efficacious in minority language maintenance, revitalisation and revival. Focusing on the codification of written Irish, this article assesses the efficacy of unitary and polynomic models of codification. The Irish context offers a rich locus for the study of these issues, owing to the long-standing presence there of conflicting ideologies of uniformity and plurality with regard to codification of the written variety. These conflicting orientations are manifest in the development of the 1958 unitary written standard, in a recent review of this standard for writing, and in the rejection of this review in favour of a more unitary model. The article demonstrates that many ideological, pragmatic, pedagogical and political obstacles inhibit the effectiveness of standardisation efforts in minority language situations, whether efforts are based on unitary or polynomic principles.

Introduction

At a non-ideological level, traditional models of language standardisation have, generally, treated the standardisation process as an entirely pragmatic enterprise. Standardisation has been approached as a linguistic process of variation reduction (Deumert and Vandenbussche 2003, 2). Inherent in this process are the concepts of invariance and uniformity in language structure and the imposition of uniformity where variation exists (Milroy 2001a, 531). The homogenisation of linguistic structures is frequently posited as desirable, if not necessary, in the achievement of functional efficiency among users of a language. Standardisation may thus be considered by the public as a valuable and a necessary process, as it is perceived as facilitating fluid written and/or spoken communication between diverse speakers of a language (Kerswill 2006, 8). Stemming from nineteenth-century European nationalism, where one language is equated with one people and one territory, uniformity and invariance in language structure are still considered important symbolic manifestations of national or group identity (Deumert and Vandenbussche 2003, 10; Haugen 1966, 928); the needs of the group may call for a uniform language to act as a badge or symbol of group identity (Lodge 1993, 23). Standardisation is not only a reflection of group identity, it is also used as a means of reinforcing a separate ethnic or national identity (Oakes 2001, 50). The unity and uniformity of the group may thus be imagined through the uniformity of the standard variety. The ontology of the standard is further strengthened by a steadfast folk linguistic belief in the existence of, and in the inherent logic and

correctness of, unitary linguistic forms that are consequently perceived as more acceptable and standard (Janicki 2011; Preston 1996a, 1996b). Standard language is often also imagined as a neutral variety, unconnected to any particular group of speakers and capable of expressing the interests of everyone (Frekko 2009, 71), a view that masks the ideological nature of standardisation (Sebba 2007). The presence of these folk linguistic ideologies facilitates processes of standardisation because unitary approaches to language codification confirm non-linguists' conceptualisations of the nature of language.

Ideologies of this nature are found in minority contexts just as they are in dominant languages. Codification processes in minority language revivalist communities often mirror conventional dominant language approaches to standardisation. Minority language users often similarly covet unitary norms to attend to the perceived need for functional efficiency in the language. The unitary standard can further satisfy ideological leanings related to subjective group identity and to folk beliefs in the inherent correctness of unitary linguistic norms. Importantly, unitary norms are perceived as fulfilling important status functions. This is particularly applicable to cases where minority language users seek to create an efficient modern language to function in the same higher domains and registers as dominant languages. Standard language ideology and the formal codification of the written variety ordinarily induce, or at least contribute to or perpetuate, the denigration of language varieties and of speakers that do not conform to the standardised variety. Where internal linguistic variation exists in minoritised languages, the selection of unitary 'standard' forms and the implicit rejection of 'non-standard' forms may contribute to feelings of marginalisation for some 'non-standard' speakers of minority languages.

The polynomic model for language codification has been suggested as an alternative to traditional models that have been perceived as reproducing dominant language ideologies and hierarchies, ultimately reducing linguistic diversity and impeding the vitality of minority languages (Blackwood 2011). The polynomic model aims to treat linguistic variation as an intrinsic good and seeks to identify the social and cultural conditions in which linguistic diversity is maintained or reduced (Jaffe 2008). Occitan has since the second half of the twentieth century been developed as a pluricentric language that recognises and promotes regional variation in speech and in writing. Priest (2008, 140) posits that Occitan users identify their spoken and written language alike with a specific geographical area so that the language is sub-divided in a way that facilitates many Occitan identities. Polynomie is similarly prominent in Corsican where the founding ideology of the model proposes "a democratic definition of Corsican in which linguistic unity is based on social consensus rather than linguistic homogeneity" (Jaffe 1999, 29). Within polynomie, the subjective unity of the linguistic community relies not on unitary norms, but on 1) personal mastery of the local variety and the identification of local codes as target varieties; 2) the identification of the parallel mastery of other users and their orientation to their own local norms; and 3) the imagination of group unity through linguistic diversity (Jaffe 2003, 518).

In overtly promoting variance and plurality, polynomie stands in contrast to conventional methods of codification and paradigms of linguistic valorisation. Promoting a non-hierarchical linguistic ideology is also a further means of marking the minoritised language community as linguistically, socially and culturally distinct from the dominant language group that, at least implicitly, embraces hierarchical cultural models of both language and society. Plurinormatism functions in that capacity in addition to speakers' membership of a community that already challenges dominant culture through the values that they ascribe to minority language practices.

Focusing on Haugen's (1966) categories of selection and codification in the standardisation of the written variety of Irish as a case study, this article seeks to assess some of the merits and demerits of unitary and pluralist approaches to codification in minority languages. The Irish situation, in which both a unitary and a plurinormative model have been separately outlined for writing, is fecund for the investigation of these alternative approaches. The article reflects briefly on the evolution of codified written norms for Irish to the end of the nineteenth century. Codification efforts in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries that were based on unitary and pluralist principles are then outlined. Finally, an assessment of the potential of both models in minority language maintenance, revitalisation and revival is provided.

Contention around selection

Although the Irish language has a long literary history based on strongly codified unitary norms for writing, the use of Irish as a written medium, as well as adherence to the standard of Classical Irish, went into rapid, continuous decline especially from the seventeenth century onwards (Ó Dochartaigh 2000). The preceding Classical period for Irish, from the twelfth to the seventeenth century, is generally attested as the formative period of the modern spoken dialects of Irish – the Ulster dialect in the north, the Connacht dialect in the west and the Munster dialect in the south. Following the demise of the structures of patronage that sustained the literary caste and buttressed Classical Irish, the less prolific literary production in the post-Classical period gradually moved away from the written koiné of Classical Irish towards a written medium that more closely resembles the three contemporary regional dialects of Irish that are believed to have emerged by that time (Ó Dochartaigh 2000).

The post-Classical period also corresponds with a dramatic transformation in the status of Irish as a spoken medium for the majority of the population. Monolingualism in Irish was gradually displaced in favour of monolingualism in English in most parts of the country. By the turn of the twentieth century, the Irish language had become the language of a geographically and socially marginalised population of small, non-contiguous, rural communities. In the lead up to this period, a renewed interest in the Irish language emerged as part of a broader project of cultural nationalism. An increase in literary production in Irish and the formal teaching of the language featured prominently in what became known as the Gaelic Revival. Written norms were desired for both of these endeavours.

Sufficiently robust regional norms for writing in Irish had not emerged following the decline of Classical Irish, however.

It was widely accepted during the twentieth-century Revival period that written norms for Irish should be agreed. The broad consensus on this point, however, did not extend to the standardisation process itself, as contention surfaced around the model on which to base the new variety for writing – the uniform standard written variety of Classical Irish or a new written model based on the non-uniform speech of the three main dialects. After much debate, this dispute was more or less resolved with a victory for advocates of the pluralist, so-called 'speech of the people' model – a decision that can be attributed as much to Romanticism, realism, and the influence of Darwinism on the social sciences as it can to pragmatic considerations (Ó Conchubhair 2009). This triumph harbingered a departure from the received correctness of unitary written standards for Irish to be replaced by the valorisation of the linguistic variation that comprised modern Irish. The speech of the people ideology has since permeated all debates around the standardisation of Irish to the present day, as is evident in the founding ideology of the 1958 unitary written standard.

The 1958 unitary standard

Despite the resolution arrived at by revivalists, it was more than half a century before the result of the formal codification of the Irish language by the State was brought into the public domain. The major work on compiling the standard was carried out under great time constraints in 1957 prior to the standard's publication the following year. In reality, however, it was the culmination of more than five decades of debate around codification. The first official and published complete standard for writing in Irish, *Gramadach na Gaeilge agus Litriú na Gaeilge: An Caighdeán Oifigiúil* [The Grammar of Irish and the Spelling of Irish: The Official Standard], was the work of Rannóg an Aistriúcháin, the translation division of the houses of parliament. This is noteworthy considering that the primary responsibility of the Translation Division – the statutory translation of legislative texts – is likely to have inclined the authors towards the creation of a standard written variety that would prove expedient in achieving legally sound translations within the division. The pragmatic pursuit of the level of internal consistency required by the authors in their own work suggested a need for uniformity in the structure of the division's new standard written variety.

This prerequisite undoubtedly conflicted with the long-accepted ideology on the intrinsic value of the linguistic variation evident in the modern spoken language. It also appears incongruent with the authors' own orientations in this regard. In the introduction to the standard's handbook, the authors of the standard provide a window into their stance on the prestige of the spoken regional dialects. It is professed, for instance, that all of the rules and forms identified in the written standard correspond with those practised in some part of the remaining Irish-speaking communities – known collectively as the Gaeltacht (Rannóg an Aistriúcháin 1958, viii). Rooting the standard written variety in the Gaeltacht evinces a discursive strategy that establishes the notion of linguistic unity across the

community of Irish users. Dialectal differences are erased, but the Gaeltacht, despite its diverse speech varieties, is simultaneously afforded recognition as the source of traditional and authentic linguistic practices. In the first of four primary rules by which the standard was constructed, it is declared that the authors aimed, so far as possible, 1) not to accept any form or rule that does not stand in 'good authority' in the living speech of the Gaeltacht (Rannóg an Aistriúcháin 1958, viii). The aspiration for a uniform standard written variety inevitably required the authors to select some grammatical forms from a particular Gaeltacht dialect ahead of alternatives found in other Gaeltacht areas, however. Although the motivation behind particular choices is not always clear in the standard, the second, third and fourth rules presented by the authors provide some insight. These rules sought 2) to select those forms most commonly used in the Gaeltacht, 3) to give due recognition to the history and literature of the language and 4) to provide regularity and simplicity (Rannóg an Aistriúcháin 1958, viii).

Each of these guidelines is open to charges of ambiguity and inconsistency. The authors, for example, do not clarify whether "most commonly used in the Gaeltacht" refers to the features used by the greatest number of speakers, or the features most shared across all dialectal varieties (Ó hIfearnáin 2008). Similarly, the forms most commonly used in the Gaeltacht, however interpreted, are not necessarily those with the strongest standing in the history and literature of the language, nor do they necessarily provide the most consistent and simple forms. The parameters were sufficiently equivocal to allow broad scope for manoeuvre. Accordingly, the selection of any feature, form or structure can be justified with reference to one of the guidelines, although it may directly contradict another.

Williams (2006) has asserted that it was the principle of regularity and simplicity that was most influential in the standardisation process. The guidelines allowed the authors to select forms and structures from the regional dialects to create a uniform standard written variety. The result of this selection process is a hotchpotch unitary standard that does not always reflect local and regional pronunciations in its orthography, and that does not include some verbal conjugations and patterns of grammatical structure found in some of the dialects. The 1958 written standard, therefore, contains elements and structures from all of the Gaeltacht dialects, but does not directly correspond with any one of the regional spoken varieties on which it is based. The resultant unitary written norm is a highly functional tool for official writing in Irish. It has without doubt facilitated the Translation Division's work. It has seen the Irish language function effectively for more than half a century in Ireland as a modern codified language in official, higher domains and registers, and, more recently, it has facilitated the use of Irish as an official working language of the European Union. This stands in contrast to the centuries prior to the foundation of the State during which Irish was largely absent from these spheres. It also stands in contrast to the pre-standard period during which the lack of a unified code for writing in Irish was considered an impediment to its effective participation in the mechanics of the nascent state.

The strengths of the uniform standard also became its major weakness. Questions remain about its efficacy outside official, higher domains and registers. As an instrument specifically developed for internal use within the Translation Division, it has been argued that the standard was, and is, an esoteric variety whose design cannot cater for all of the linguistic exigencies that lie beyond its original remit (Ó Ruairc 1999). For instance, it does not outline alternative written varieties based on prestige regional or local Gaeltacht spoken norms and it thereby implicitly precludes dialectal writing. Agreement on the standard with the Department of Education was significant as it ensured a central position for the official unitary written variety through schooling (Ó hIfearnáin and Ó Murchadha 2011). The standard then quickly became recognised as *the* authoritative standard for writing in all domains and registers (Mac Lochlainn 2010), a purpose for which it was never really designed. Users of Irish, however varied their linguistic competence and however diverse their spoken norms or regional affiliations, are all likely to have encountered the same norm for writing in their formal study of Irish in education (where Irish is a core subject) – the Translation Division's official unitary standard.

Since its inception in 1958, professional users of the language and the general public have pointed to the need for a review of the standard (e.g. Ó Béarra 2007; Ó Ruairc 1999; Williams 2006). Justifications for a review have pointed to disparities between the standard written variety and the prestige spoken dialects of the Gaeltacht, but also to issues pertaining to grammatical clarity on certain technical questions and to inconsistencies within the standard's vade mecum, which includes the Translation Division's standard handbook as well as *Graiméar Gaeilge na mBráithre Críostaí* [The Christian Brothers' Grammar] and Ó Dónaill's *Foclóir Gaeilge-Béarla* [Irish-English Dictionary]. In October 2008, the Irish government gave official recognition to the perceived need for a review of the standard written variety. In March 2010 it was announced that this review would commence and would be completed by June 2011. It is evident from the result of this review that the previously unresolved issues around uniformity and plurality in the standardisation of Irish again came to the fore during the official review process.

A pluricentric review of a unitary standard

The 2010-2011 review contrasted to the process that led to the creation of the 1958 standard in notable ways. Rather than being the internal work of Rannóg an Aistriúcháin, the review was prepared by an invited committee consisting of many of the primary stakeholders in the standardisation of Irish. Selected journalists, broadcasters, pedagogues (including academics with linguistic expertise), representatives from the terminology committee, the editor of the New English-Irish Dictionary as well as representation from the Translation Division were invited to sit on the committee. Significantly, Rannóg an Aistriúcháin declined this invitation, a point which will be addressed later. A key feature of the review process was the engagement of the committee with the public through formal periods of consultation. Individuals and groups were afforded an opportunity to submit their

views on the approach to the process and on specific recommendations on grammatical structures. This strategy is a common feature of public review procedures in Ireland.

A bottom-up approach was adopted by the review committee. Alternative ideologies on the nature of language and group identity and on the essence of written varieties can be gleaned from the structure of the review and are evident in the discourse surrounding the process. An introductory essay to the reviewed written variety, for example, includes many references to the authors' conceptualisation of the revised standard written variety as an instrument owned by the entire population of Irish users. The author of the essay, Dónall Ó Baoill (2011), writes: "Nuair a thuigfeas daoine gur leo go léir an Caighdeán..." [Once people understand that they all own the Standard...], "...aistritheoirí, scríbhneoirí, múinteoirí, foghlaimeoirí, craoltóirí, scoláirí agus pobal na Gaeilge ar fud an domhain..." [...translators, writers, teachers, learners, broadcasters, students and the Irish language community worldwide...]. The authors proclaim that the reviewed written variety aimed to codify the written language for the entire gamut of linguistic functions.

While the discourse of the introduction and the apparent egalitarian approach to the review of the standard could be considered as mere rhetoric and optics in an inherently hegemonic process, the result of the review is mostly consistent with the ideology revealed in the authors' stated approach. In keeping with traditionally dominant discourses and ideologies on language and group identity (Oakes 2001), the new standard written variety for Irish is still imagined as a unifying focal point for motley users of the language. Within Gal and Irvine's (1995) taxonomy of language ideological processes (which include the related semiotic processes of *iconisation*, *erasure* and *fractal recursivity*), the Irish language as a unit, as well as the pluricentric codified written variety, are iconised as the authentic and legitimate cultural vehicle of a distinct people. Frekko (2009) has pointed out in the Catalan context that this iconisation process requires the erasure of the linguistic diversity that comprises the minoritised language. Contrary to conventional standard language ideology, however, imagined unity through the codified variety in the pluricentric model for Irish is not predicated on the erasure of internal social and linguistic differences that exist within the ethnoculture of habitual users of Irish that includes 'native' and 'new' speaker populations. Local dialectal norms are therefore not necessarily superseded a priori by unitary standard norms. Instead, the review outlines both a 'dialect-neutral' standard to be used for translating legislation, and beyond that domain if desired by users, as well as three alternative, dialectal patterns in certain areas of grammar based on the regional speech of the Gaeltacht Irish-speaking communities. From this perspective, the identification of internal social and linguistic divisions within the ethnoculture of habitual users of the language through fractal recursivity does not stand in direct opposition to iconisation processes. Iconisation in the polynomic framework is in fact largely reliant on the identification of fractals within the community and is not, in theory, predicated on erasure.

While the 1958 standard primarily sought to create an instrument for the internal use of the Translation Division, it was the intention of the authors of the 2010 review that the revised standard

would serve myriad functions. In practice, the review results in grammatical changes to the 1958 unitary standard so that a new 'dialect-neutral' model, designed for legislation and containing elements from all three main dialects, addresses certain technical questions and grammatical inconsistencies with *Foclóir Gaeilge-Béarla* [Irish-English Dictionary] and *Graiméar Gaeilge na mBráithre Críostaí* [The Christian Brothers' Irish Grammar]. Additionally, the bounded regional models outlined for dialectal writing in Irish include regional patterns that had not been previously included in the written standard. For instance, both the analytic and synthetic verbal forms found in the Gaeltacht dialects are outlined for writers who align their spoken Irish with different regional models that are defined and named. *Rith mé* and *ritheas* [I ran], for example, are described as alternative verbal forms for Connacht/Ulster and Munster dialectal writing respectively. The 1958 rules regarding lenition or eclipses as grammatical initial mutations in the dative case are also extended to all instances of the dative case in keeping with dialectal patterns of inflection. In reality, this results in four alternative patterns for grammatical initial mutation in the dative case including the 'dialect-neutral' model and the three separate regional Gaeltacht models that outline guidelines for dialectal writing. The dialect-neutral pattern is the same as the 1958 pattern while separate, alternative Ulster, Connacht and Munster patterns are also described. In the 'dialect-neutral' model, the authors further address previous inconsistencies in the standard in relation to the use of the nominative case in place of the genitive, in relation to the copula and also with reference to the system of numbers and counting.

While, on the one hand, the plurinormative model designed by the committee demonstrates a pragmatic and an ideological shift away from uniformity, hierarchies remain. The roots of the written variety are still located in the linguistic practices of the Gaeltacht, particularly traditional Gaeltacht practices. Regional written models based on linguistic features shared across the local Gaeltacht speech varieties of Ulster, Connacht and Munster are provided for dialectal writing, but do not always reflect traditional local variation. Although some emerging post-traditional features are included in the new models and others feature in an appendix with a view to their potential future inclusion in the written variety, the status within the written variety of post-traditional speech practices in the Gaeltacht and of new speakers beyond the Gaeltacht is not elucidated. The status of post-traditional variation, together with the identification of the four individual models in the new written variety as distinct and separate entities, reveals a familiar essentialist stance in minority languages where language is a bounded entity, in this case four bounded entities that are each linked to a distinct people or to a particular sphere of activity.

It can be noted here that although the 1958 standard has been the prescribed written variety for official usage, including education, some users, some individual pedagogues and institutions among them, have long embraced the polynomic model in their own work and practices. Comhar Naíonraí na Gaeltachta, the authority responsible for preschool education through Irish in the Gaeltacht, for example, explicitly recognise the local Gaeltacht vernacular as the target variety for

Gaeltacht preschools (Comhar Naíonraí na Gaeltachta 2012). Cases where limited dialectal variation is already incorporated in the mainly unitary 1958 standard variety are further outlined in many grammar handbooks and Irish language subject textbooks. In the absence of an official and a coherently defined pluricentric model, however, institutions and individual teachers bear the responsibility for the development of resources to facilitate this model and the responsibility for its implementation. Even where individual teachers are equipped with the expertise to implement the polynomic model, this becomes challenging as students advance though the education system and experience inconsistency in the models adopted by particular institutions or teachers. Such inconsistency may foster uncertainty in relation to the status, applicability and acceptability of alternative target language varieties that are promoted through schooling i.e. the standard written variety or the traditional local Gaeltacht variety.

The reviewed standard aimed to tackle some of these issues. It also traverses unitary approaches to language standardisation. Those traditional approaches have tended to seek uniformity and consistency in language structure and to imagine the unity of the community through the uniform standard variety (Lippi-Green 1997; Milroy 2001a; Milroy and Milroy 1999). From another perspective, the result of the review represents a merging of the practicalities of the creation of a written variety with the long-established speech of the people ideology that valorised the non-uniform speech of the remaining traditional Irish-speaking populations in the Gaeltacht. It is an attempt, in part, to reify the speech of people ideology and to incorporate it in the new written variety. Uniformity and plurality in the standard variety are therefore not oppositional constructs, but can in theory coexist as parallel realities. The reviewed standard for writing in Irish is therefore situated within the already described polynomic or pluricentric approach to language codification. It can also be understood in the context of the successes and failures of the 1958 standard and of the unitary approach to minority language standardisation more generally. The success of the 1958 standard as a highly effective uniform standard variety for official writing in Irish is thus not overlooked by the authors. The two-pronged approach to the review addresses inconsistencies in the 1958 standard and includes an amended standard for writing in official domains and registers as part of the new plurinormative model. The increasing fluidity of social structures and institutions and the mosaic negotiation of identity in the deconstructive age of late modernity (see Beck 2000; Giddens 2002) have led to a loosening of prescriptivism around language variation (Coupland 2009) and arguably provide a more hospitable environment for a pluricentric norm for writing.

The elephant (not) in the room

As already mentioned, Rannóg an Aistriúcháin [the Translation Division] declined to participate in the official review of the standard variety for writing in Irish. They are conspicuous by their absence. The division's decision not to take part in the review has been regarded in some quarters as a peremptory promulgation on the ownership of the standard and ultimate responsibility for its

codification. Significantly, a change of government took place in Ireland in March 2011 – a few months prior to the review committee's final meeting and at a time when the publication of the committee's plurinormative model for writing seemed imminent. Exemplifying how political arrangements can affect language standardisation, the newly-formed government elected not to publish the reviewed model, but, instead, to entrust it to the Translation Division. The government then enacted legislation granting future responsibility for the codification of written Irish to the Translation Division who had already begun their own internal review of the 1958 standard in parallel to the review conducted by the committee. This decision indicates a political desire to assert authority in the area of language codification. Diverging from the model developed during the previous administration is thus more a reflection of a political appetite to assume responsibility than it is a statement on political ideological leanings regarding unitary and pluricentric models for writing. In July 2012, Rannóg an Aistriúcháin published the result of this review as *An Caighdeán Oifigiúil, Caighdeán Athbhreithnithe* [The Official Standard, A Revised Standard]. This revised standard is now the official model employed by the division in their own work of translating official and legislative texts.

The division's revised standard suffers from something of an identity crisis as it falls between two ideological stools of uniformity and plurality. It is neither a rigid unitary model nor a fully polynomic model. In addition to outlining written norms for use in official writing, the authors outline alternative structures alongside the official standard forms. In a comprehensive review of this publication, written in Irish, Mac Lochlainn (2012) argues that the division's new standard represents a rewriting rather than a review and outlines what he considers weaknesses both in terms of content and the format in which the content is presented. Some of the rules outlined, he says, result in a more a complex system. He contends that the distinction between the lenition of initial consonants of nouns in adjectival genitive structures e.g. *saoire bhreoiteachta* [sick leave] in contrast to the non-lenition of the initial consonants of nouns in relative genitive structures e.g. *scéim teanga* [language scheme] is nebulous, and does not lend itself well to teaching and learning. Mac Lochlainn further states that some revisions prohibit the use of 'correct', 'native' forms. Focusing on the generalisation of a rule regarding the use of the nominative case in place of the genitive in certain old-established phrases such as *ag fágáil slán ag daoine* [bidding farewell to people], Mac Lochlainn (2012) argues that the revised rule prohibits structures that apply the genitive case e.g. *ag tabhairt cúnaimh do* [giving help to].

More pertinent to the present discussion is the lack of direction and context for usage in instances where more than one norm is outlined. In some cases, alternative norms are outlined and it is clearly indicated which forms should be used for official writing and which have been provided for non-official writing only. The threshold between official and non-official writing is not defined, however. Furthermore, direction regarding alternative structures and their status in official and non-official writing is not universally provided. Mac Lochlainn (2012) contends that there is an inherent

tension in the Translation Division's revised standard between the prescriptive task of outlining rigid norms for official writing and the descriptive task of outlining written norms for non-official writing. The inclusion of alternative forms and structures whose status is not definitively defined means that the Translation Division's revision does not succeed in providing an unequivocal unitary standard for writing in official domains and registers. While the inclusion of alternative forms in certain constructs is an implicit recognition of plurinormatism, the model's malleability does not extend to all traditional dialectal forms or to post-traditional forms that are spreading in the Gaeltacht communities and among new speakers of Irish beyond the Gaeltacht.

There has been a notable reluctance among users of Irish outside Rannóg an Aistriúcháin to implement the division's revised standard. *An Gúm*, the publishing arm of the all-island language agency Foras na Gaeilge who publish books and materials for education, and The New English-Irish Dictionary, also based within Foras na Gaeilge, have aligned with the 2011 model outlined by the review committee. Universities in the National University of Ireland have maintained the 1958 standard as a model. This is perhaps because of dissatisfaction with Rannóg an Aistriúcháin's revised standard, but perhaps in larger part due to the ephemeral nature of a model for writing that the authors intend to review three years after its initial publication. Although the plurinormative model designed by the review committee has been added to the style sheet of the State publisher, *An Gúm,* and although it is the model with which the New English-Irish Dictionary is aligned, the reluctance of, for instance, universities in the National University of Ireland, to implement this model is indicative of the way in which the uncertainty surrounding the entire review process has effected inaction on the part of institutions and individuals who, for now, forgo the task of mastering what may prove a transitory written model. Despite the development of two new models for writing in Irish that were funded by the State, the 1958 standard maintains currency in a prominent institution.

Discussion

In the absence of an accepted unitary norm for spoken Irish and with the absence of diverse local and regional written norms based on the de facto target spoken models of the Gaeltacht dialects, a disunion between the prestige written variety of 1958 and the prestige traditional spoken varieties has been noted (Williams 2006). In a minoritised language community, equivocal target norms may breed uncertainty in relation to the spoken and written targets that speakers ought to aspire to. Incongruities between written and spoken targets for users may, on the one hand, lead to the burgeoning of mixed, hybrid linguistic forms among the ethnoculture of speakers that continue to use the language habitually. Such practices are attested among younger speakers in the Gaeltacht (see Ó Curnáin 2007; Péterváry et al. 2014) and among many new speakers outside the Gaeltacht (see Maguire 1991; Ó Duibhir 2008). In the context of folk linguistic ideologies that pine for prescriptivism and simultaneously attribute prestige to the traditional Gaeltacht speech varieties, incoherence in the target variety as well as post-traditional speech practices diffusing in the Gaeltacht and outside the Gaeltacht

can compound linguistic insecurities of some minority language users, or potential users. In respect of minority language vitality, perceived failure of the minority language to meet the rigours of the ideological conceptualisation of cogent languages consisting of lucid target varieties can potentially be a catalyst for language shift (Ó hIfearnáin 2008: 126-7), a point elaborated upon later.

The authors of the 1958 standard written variety for Irish seemed at least somewhat cognizant of the potential of the standard to recalibrate what counted as target varieties for Irish. The authors realised that the standard which they had developed especially for internal use may also be used as a guide by teachers and by other users of the language (Rannóg an Aistriúcháin 1958, viii). As an addendum to the rules concerning selection criteria, it is stated by the authors that although in some circumstances certain forms are preferred to others, this does not diminish the validity of 'other correct forms', nor does it prohibit their usage (Rannóg an Aistriúcháin 1958, viii). However much the authors may have wished to reconcile the new written variety with the continued vitality of the local and regional speech models, the two have not existed in total harmony (Ó hIfearnáin 2008; Ó hIfearnáin and Ó Murchadha 2011).

On the one hand, ideological questions pertaining to the authority, authenticity and prestige of the official codified written norm and of local Gaeltacht speech norms arise from the duality in target language varieties for Irish. As noted by Dorian (1987, 59), teaching a standardised variety of a language to a minoritised community who identify with their own discrete, local norms can lead to speaker insecurity and to the belief that the local variety is somehow strange and peripheral. Conversely, the implementation of a norm for writing that is perceived as inauthentic and nonrepresentative of prestige local Gaeltacht speech practices may result in the disenfranchisement from the written norm of those in the Gaeltacht who feel they cannot relate to, or invest in, a standard variety perceived to be distinct from the local spoken variety that they value highly. Thus, both models may lack sufficient levels of ideological support from social actors in the Gaeltacht to motivate users to dedicate the requisite effort to achieve mastery in the target language varieties. In late modern society, where the social, economic and geographical arrangements that previously sustained Irish as a community language have been largely eroded, this level of mastery is rarely achieved by users of Irish in the Gaeltacht without personal investment in the enhancement of linguistic competence in the language. Perceived incoherence in the target language varieties and the efforts required to master a prestige spoken Gaeltacht model, in addition to the standard written variety, are likely to give rise to at least an implicit questioning as to the credibility of Irish. Despite the heavy institutionalisation of Irish, or perhaps as a result of it, the language 'loses face' alongside the seemingly more lucid target varieties for other languages. Standard and traditional dialectal forms and features can be 'correct' and 'acceptable' in the standard variety yet can be simultaneously inconsistent with traditional linguistic practices of the Gaeltacht, and vice versa. If social actors feel estranged from these models or contend that the recognised target language varieties for Irish do not

merit the investment required for mastery, these linguistic ideologies could accelerate the language shift from Irish to English in the Irish-speaking communities.

Quite apart from important ideological issues of prestige, authority and authenticity, the pragmatic and pedagogical issue of having to attend to two different codes for written and spoken models arises. The importance of the education system in Irish language management, and the requirement to develop written competence in Irish in education, means that written models for Irish warrant attention in discussions of linguistic change in spoken Irish. Post-traditional variation proliferates in the traditional Gaeltacht communities as the standard written variety is promoted as the official model for writing. Meanwhile, there is no evidence to suggest that this strategy has led to the widespread achievement of mastery of the standard written variety either as a written model or as a morphosyntactic model for speech among users of Irish. The wide variation attested in the morphosyntax of spoken Irish points to the challenge of sustaining either the traditional local dialectal norms or standard written norms as an achievable target model for spoken Irish either through education or through language use in the broader community. The diffusion of post-traditional linguistic structures and features among the ethnoculture of habitual Irish-speakers nationally (see Ó Curnáin 2007; Maguire 1991) and instances of 'non-standard' and non-traditional features in the writing of Irish-medium students (Walsh 2007) are, in part, attributable to incoherent, demanding target varieties that are not easily mastered, particularly in a minority language situation. Ó hIfearnáin (2006, 2008) has argued that the promotion of the standard written variety as a prestige form in Irish, especially in education, is partly responsible for the well-documented decline in the distinctiveness of the traditional local dialects and for the more pressing language shift from Irish to English in the Gaeltacht Irish-speaking communities. However, innovative linguistic practices among habitual users of Irish in the Gaeltacht and beyond are indicative of dynamic identificational processes. Post-traditional language practices signal stances and alignments of speakers because linguistic variation is a device used in the negotiation of identity in late modern society. Post-traditional linguistic forms and features implicitly challenge the ideologies guiding models of codification that promote the linguistic approximation to prestige Gaeltacht spoken norms or to a unitary written model.

The polynomic approach to codification has been outlined as a means to engage with some of the challenges posed by unitary approaches to minority language codification. From an ideological perspective, the plurinormative model allows for the imagination of unity through diversity among users of the language regardless of their orientation to alternative models (Jaffe 2003). In theory, the pluricentric model for Irish provides for the continued role of the unitary standard in official writing while also acknowledging that the unitary model does not satisfy the ideological orientations of many users towards traditional Gaeltacht models. The polynomic approach is proposed as an alternative to unitary models of standardisation that have been seen as having a marginalising effect on speakers who identify with their own traditional local norms (Blackwood 2011) so that insecurity may emerge in relation to the local norm and so that speakers may also become disenfranchised from the prestige

standard written variety. Despite the motivations underlying polynomie and the ecology of language approach to language management (e.g. Hornberger 2002), ideological, pragmatic and pedagogical issues impinge on the potential success of the model (Sallabank 2010).

Although the pluricentric model outlined for Irish is not a fully polynomic model, the efficacy of aspects of the polynomic approach for minority languages can be examined through the potential strengths and shortcomings of the reviewed written variety developed for Irish. In providing greater congruity between written and dialectal spoken targets for Irish, the pluricentric model on the one hand tackles the insecurity and disenfranchisement that traditional dialectal speakers of Irish might experience when encountering a uniform written variety distinct from local speech practices. However, given that the new models outlined for dialectal writing in Irish focus on blanket regional models rather than on specifically local patterns, the authors were left with decisions on selection in cases where local variation existed within the major regional dialects of Ulster, Connacht and Munster. Consequently, speakers are still presented with grammatical forms and features that do not always directly correspond with traditional local speech norms that have a high prestige status as spoken models (Ó Murchadha 2013). The authors acknowledge as much in their introduction and state that the forms recommended merely provide insight into the most commonly used features in each of the main regional dialects and should not be considered as a comprehensive guide for local dialectal writing (An Lár-Aonad Aistriúcháin 2011, xxviii). Nevertheless, selection may create new regional hierarchies as distinctly local linguistic features are traditionally practised across regions but are not overtly recognised in the developed pluricentric variety.

The pluricentric system for writing in Irish has been developed at a time when linguistic innovations are spreading in the spoken Irish of speakers in the Gaeltacht and the post-Gaeltacht i.e. areas outside the Gaeltacht that were once Irish-speaking, where English now dominates but where many habitual 'new speakers' of Irish are found. Gaeltacht speakers born since the 1960s increasingly diverge from the traditional local vernacular (Ó Curnáin 2007; Ó hIfearnáin and Ó Murchadha 2011). Although many speakers in the post-Gaeltacht still align themselves with a particular traditional local Gaeltacht dialect as a target variety, many habitual users of Irish in the post-Gaeltacht now seem less inclined to actively seek out a Gaeltacht dialect as a target variety and innovative post-Gaeltacht speech norms are rapidly diffusing among these new speakers of Irish (Mac Mathúna 2008; Ó hIfearnáin and Ó Murchadha 2011). The authors of the standard go some way towards accommodating some of these developments within the pluricentric model. The standard recognises 'forms that are spreading in the language' with the account of 'other accepted forms' that is provided in the appendix – post-traditional forms that merit attention but that are not deemed sufficiently robust as to merit their inclusion as complete rules in the codified variety (An Lár-Aonad Asitriúcháin 2011, xxxi). As has been noted elsewhere (e.g. Jaffe 2008), however, ideological questions remain in relation to the status of innovative, post-traditional speech practices within the pluricentric model.

The structures and arrangements of late modern society are undoubtedly placing great pressure on models aimed at the continued approximation to the traditional regional vernacular of minority language communities of practice. Sociolinguistic changes characteristic of late modernity pose a challenge to minority language management and standardisation. They raise important questions pertaining to the identification of spoken and written norms that are desirable and acceptable to the public at large and around strategies to steer the late modern vernacular and written variety towards these identified norms, if such language management is possible at all. This is especially germane in the post-Gaeltacht. As an accepted spoken standard corresponding to the 'dialect-neutral' model outlined for non-dialectal writing is not available, a linguistic lacuna exists within the polynomic model for Irish for speakers who do not identify with a Gaeltacht norm, who question the prestige status of the traditional Gaeltacht vernacular, or who wish to align a non-Gaeltacht pronunciation with the morphosyntactic patterns provided by the 'dialect-neutral' model. In the absence of a recognised spoken target variety for non-dialectal speech, post-Gaeltacht speakers who do not orient towards a Gaeltacht speech model are not anchored to an overtly recognised target spoken model that is systematically reinforced in the education system or elsewhere.

Meanwhile, in Gaeltacht areas where Irish still exists as a community language, the challenges are no less pronounced. In late modern society, young minoritised language speakers seldom have the same level of access to traditional linguistic models in the home or in the community that older speakers had (Ó hIfearnáin 2008, 126). Linguistic changes amongst most younger speakers in the Gaeltacht and the mixed linguistic backgrounds of students there mean that the peer group can have a detraditionalising impact on Gaeltacht youth speech (Hickey 2007; Ó Curnáin 2007). Users of Irish in the Gaeltacht are therefore increasingly reliant on the education system for access to the overtly recognised target spoken varieties. As the identification of, and orientation towards, local linguistic norms is a key feature of the polynomic model, the linguistic models available in the education system are significant. The promotion of traditional local norms through education is challenging, however, when teachers are not from the local area or do not align their linguistic practices with the traditional local vernacular. Furthermore, the pluricentric approach necessitates a profound passive knowledge among teachers in relation to the other bounded dialectal models outlined and to the 'dialect-neutral' model as well. These linguistic skills are not easily mastered, particularly in an education system that has long promoted the unitary standard written variety as a target and that arguably ill-prepares pedagogues for the linguistic exigencies presented by the pluricentric model. The pragmatics of providing access to the various outlined linguistic models across a range of print, broadcast and digital media, in education and elsewhere, creates further challenges for the pluricentric model. The pragmatics of printing according to pluricentric norms, for instance, may prove financially unviable. From a pedagogical and a pragmatic point of view, the pluricentric model is therefore potentially problematic in both the Gaeltacht and the post-Gaeltacht.

From an ideological perspective, Western cultural knowledge of right and wrong is entrenched in the folk psyche. Educational models dominant in Western society perpetuate this ideology and accustom social actors to pursuing what is 'right' and distinguishing that from what is 'wrong'. This knowledge of right and wrong also applies to language (Milroy 2001b, 621). Language users frequently identify certain linguistic behaviours and practices as 'correct' and 'acceptable' and others as 'incorrect' and 'unacceptable' (Wilton and Stegu 2011, 12). Certain linguistic practices are often accordingly considered as performance deviations from competence and not as alternative competencies (Niedzielski and Preston 2003, 22). Coupland and Kristiansen (2011, 15) have linked the prevalence of standard language ideology to the broader development of cultural and social schemes around acceptable and desirable behavioural norms that came to the fore as Western society transitioned from the medieval to the modern period, as described by Elias (2000) and Bourdieu (2010). Owing to the reliance of Irish language management on education, and owing to the long-standing dominance of the unitary standard and the educational paradigm of right and wrong in that domain, the pluricentric ideology of the speech of the people faces an ideological obstacle. This is compounded by the potential mapping onto Irish of dominant language ideologies for English where robust overt distinctions between 'correct' and 'incorrect' language use tend to prevail. Such mapping of dominant language ideologies has already been noted in the Corsican context and has resulted in the 'misrecognition' of the variation promoted in the polynomic model (Jaffe 2003). The above factors can potentially combine to reinforce the unitary standard language ideology in Irish. Such ideologies are not easily displaced (Johnson 2001). Therefore, implementing the polynomic model in minoritised contexts involves convincing social actors that what they sometimes steadfastly believe to be true about the nature of language does not apply to the minoritised language – a challenging undertaking.

In spite of its attributes and potential efficacy, a more polynomic approach to minority language codification presents many challenges to minority language maintenance, revitalisation, and revival. It provides an alternative to the implementation of the traditional model of language codification in minority language contexts and may ameliorate the position of the minoritised language in some respects. It does not represent a panacea, however, as there are many pragmatic, ideological and pedagogical obstacles that hinder its successful adoption and implementation.

Conclusion

The approach to codification is among the key issues faced in minority language maintenance, revitalisation and revival (Sallabank 2010). Where spoken variation exists in minority languages, or where a schism develops between the traditional spoken language and an existing codified variety, issues of authority, authenticity and legitimacy typically surface (Sayers 2012). Revivalist movements have traditionally afforded the often non-uniform language varieties of remaining traditional native speech communities a high prestige status based on their perceived ethnolinguistic authenticity.

Where traditional dialectal variation is valorised in minority languages, challenges are presented for the creation of a written variety because choices exist regarding the selection of norms (Jaffe 2003). Codifiers in this scenario opt for either a unitary model – based on an existing codified variety, on a particular (prestige) spoken model, or on a patchwork of the various dialects – or opt for a more polynomic model that embraces dialectal variation and incorporates the existing variation in the written variety.

Both unitary and polynomic models of codification are characterised by their own sets of strengths and shortcomings, as discussed. The efficacy of these written models for maintenance, revitalisation and revival becomes paramount, however, as literacy practices in minority languages increase due to institutionalisation. In particular, the nexus between spoken and written targets for all users of minority languages merits attention, especially when revival is predicated ever more so on educational provisions. The discussion above illustrates how spoken and written target varieties for Irish have become opaque because of incongruities across target varieties for spoken and written language excellence. The de facto target varieties for spoken Irish, the traditional Gaeltacht dialects, are not reinforced by a corresponding codified written variety. Similarly, the official unitary standard written variety is not supported by a unified standard spoken norm. Ambiguity and uncertainty have ensued with respect to the authority and legitimacy of spoken and written target varieties in Irish with the result that neither model is robustly supported as an achievable target variety across spoken and written platforms for many users. Of course, the successful adoption and implementation of either the unitary or the pluricentric model of codification is predicated on ideological, pedagogical, pragmatic and political factors. Without adequately addressing these factors, either by elucidating for users the duality currently existing in respect of target varieties for speech and for writing in Irish or by providing consistency across spoken and written targets within the unitary or the polynomic models, codification runs the risk of alienating (potential) users of the language.

Undoubtedly, codification practices and educational provisions also raise fundamental questions as to what qualifies as 'legitimate' and 'acceptable' language practice in minoritised languages. For a language like Irish that is balanced between the revitalisation/maintenance of traditional communities and the revival of the language among new speakers, these questions move beyond alternative models that are based on unitary and pluricentric principles. The proliferation of post-traditional linguistic variation in the Gaeltacht and in the post-Gaeltacht is noteworthy. It challenges models of codification, whether pluricentric or unitary, that define 'Irish' as an abstract, bounded entity (or set of entities) rooted in the practices of traditional Gaeltacht speakers. So far, however, the mainly Gaeltacht-centric codification of Irish has not fully engaged with these linguistic developments and their potential role in codification efforts.

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