To invest or not to invest?

Sin í an cheist:

Participation in online Irish language chat rooms to facilitate Irish immersion primary school pupils' negotiation of Irish-medium identities.

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Contents

Abstract

This in-depth study examines the Irish language experiences and perspectives of primary school pupils in immersion education in Ireland. Irish language chat rooms were created and an explicit focus was placed on authentic and dynamic peer interactions. Pupils from three Irish language immersion primary schools interacted online once per week, for a forty minute session, over a six week period. The paper cites observational, interview, focus group and diary entry evidence that reveal pupils' negotiation of Irish language and identity before, during and after this six week period. Drawing on sociocultural views of learning, identity and participation, pupils' perceptions and choices in relation to Irish language use are analysed.

Although the vast majority of the pupils who participated in the study recognised Irish language as a significant part of their identities, social constructs and language ideologies make Irish language use and learning a site of struggle in their lives. Pupils' perceptions of how Irish will be received and valued by members of society and their peer groups influence their investment in the language. The dominant language ideology that privileges English in peer group settings mediates their language choices in the immersion setting.

The current study sought to help pupils find a way to establish the legitimacy of the Irish language in peer settings, transforming Irish capital into peer cultural capital. The chat room interactions provided a space and an opportunity to push the boundaries for Irish-medium identities, enabling pupils to construct Irish-medium identities that go beyond those related to the school. The paper highlights the pupils' agency in relation to the ideology as they negotiated a space for Irish language in the chat room context. As witnessed through the changing forms of participation of many of the pupils involved in the study, pedagogical practices within the immersion classroom can potentially reshape figured worlds, transform

identities and enhance pupils' agency. The paper argues for an increased emphasis in pedagogical methods and content on the multiple, changing identities and lived experiences of pupils in the Irish language classroom.

Introduction

In a previous study I examined the language choices of pupils in an Irish-immersion primary school ('Gaelscoil'). It was very clear from their responses that Irish language learning is key to present and future learning, and to accessing otherwise inaccessible physical, symbolic, and cultural spaces. The pupils' construction of Irish language use and learning is associated with constructions related to economic and academic possibilities. Irish language is also a source of cultural identity and national pride. However, most of the pupils had never used Irish while interacting with classmates outside the school, most of them had never used Irish in a text message or on Facebook. It became clear on probing these language choices that they could not negotiate a place for Irish language in their fast-paced technological worlds or in their youth culture. They associate Irish with school policy and pedagogy.

Language ideology mediates language choices made by youth, as they negotiate the relevance of their heritage language in their world. Although Irish is the home language for many young people in Gaeltacht communities, for example, its use is seldom expanded from the home and educational context to day-to-day interactions with peers. My own experience growing up in a Gaeltacht area mirrors that which is discussed in research studies. English is the dominant language and so dominates popular and youth culture. Irish language is perceived of as the language spoken by adults in the community, figures of authority and academia. Youths often cannot jointly conceive of Irish as progressive or as an inherent aspect of youth culture. Language choices in peer interactions set peers apart from one world and associates them with another.

Language choices are based on pupils' assessment of the contexts in which their language will be received and valued by others. Language ideology, language competency and individual agency shape decisions about what language they should use. Irish can be conceived of as a problem or a resource, given the context, time, interaction and individual pupil's agency. At times Irish language empowers pupils, enhancing their agency. However,

one thing is apparent; pupils often need some way to establish the legitimacy of the Irish language in peer settings. They need to feel that they can author themselves successfully as a pre-teen through Irish before they will invest in its use in peer settings. In order to help pupils to negotiate a place for Irish language in their peer interactions we must first consider how to expand their concept of Irish language and identity.

Researchers and educators in immersion settings worldwide have reported on pupils' lack of accuracy when producing L2. Traditional theories of second language learning based on cognitive development alone, do not provide an holistic explanation for this phenomenon. Immersion pupils, educators and researchers often indicate the lack of opportunity to use the second language in real, communicative situations outside the school as the main drawback of immersion education. Immersion students' incomplete command of the second language could be partly attributed to the lack of second language environments. The second language is often a school phenomenon. Pupils' potential is somewhat thwarted by lack of opportunities to produce the second language in the target community or with native speakers. The Irish setting has a dearth of opportunity for immersion pupils to actively and purposefully use the Irish language. In many areas across the country Irish language networks do not exist outside of the school. Very often the only proficient speaker immersion pupils will be in regular contact with is their class teacher. The nature of student-teacher relationships restricts these opportunities for communication, as interaction is often limited to classroom discourse.

Opportunities to use L2 are occasions to be exposed to the language, process L2 output and increase fluency and accuracy, fine-tuning learners' L2 ability. Motivation to use L2 and invest in L2-medium identities determine the type and range of experiences a pupil might have in hearing and using the target language. Desired membership in Irish-medium communities mediates pupils' learning of Irish. In rising to the challenge of fossilisation in

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immersion settings, educators must consider the quality and variety of pupils' opportunities to use their second language. Therefore, notions of identity, investment, agency, linguistic capital and cultural capital are all relevant to the discussion of language fossilisation. In light of this, the current study seeks to engage Irish immersion education pupils in authentic Irish-medium online interaction with peers.

Literature Review

Language Ideology

Pupils' investment in second language use and learning is socially mediated by language ideology. Language ideology is defined as the 'beliefs and attitudes shared by individuals regarding the use of particular language in both oral and written form in context of power struggles among different groups' (Martínez-Roldán and Malavé 2004). Language ideology is embedded in social conflicts over power (Volk and Angelova 2007). Hence, processes of social interaction are integral to the discussion of language ideology. It is through language that pupils' language ideology becomes clear, decisions they make about when to speak, which language to speak and how to speak in any given setting is mediated by their language ideology. Dominant language ideology serves as a mediating tool that shapes linguistic practices. Pupils' negotiation of language use depends on their understanding, beliefs and assumptions about the relationship between language and social life (Guardado 2010). Pupils do not merely copy language ideology; instead they actively appropriate aspects of ideology to their language choices and negotiations in complex ways (Volk and Angelova 2007).

An important consideration in terms of pupils' perceptions of Irish language use is how Irish language learning and use is constructed within the school and in society at large. Embedded social beliefs about the Irish language can have a powerful influence on immersion pupils' linguistic choices. Due to the hegemonic position of the dominant language in a diglossic society, it can become the only language that signifies 'progress' and may become associated with modernity and advancement (May 1999). In the Irish setting, English is positioned in a place of privilege, with higher status in the modern world than Irish. Lee (2009) shows 'how native youth negotiate mixed messages such as the necessity of indigenous languages for cultural continuity and a belief in the superiority of English for success in American society.' Dominant society tends to associate English with a modern world, while relegating heritage languages to a traditional and nostalgic position.

> The language and culture of the dominant group comes to be viewed as the only vehicle of modernity and progress, and the only medium of 'national' identity. Alternatively, other cultural and language affiliations are viewed pejoratively as merely 'ethnic' and relatedly, as regressive and premodern.

<div align="right">(Lee 2009)</div>

It is important not to interpret this privileging of English as natural; it is 'socially constructed and driven by unequal power relations' (Volk and Angelova 2007). When we reduce language choices to natural our understanding is being mediated by an ideology that privileges English and English speakers (Gal 1998, Woolard 1998). The privileging of English language in peer interactions could be to the detriment of Irish language competence (Moll 2004, Olmedo 2005). Peer interactions are genuine learning contexts that can be integral to any multilingual analysis (Volk and Angelova 2007).

Learning and Participation

Opportunities to use a second language are occasions for learning. Swain and Lapkin (2002) argue that the production of language pushes learners to process language more deeply. Swain (2000) advocates more opportunities for second language learners to engage in verbal production ('pushed output'); in doing so, learners co-construct linguistic knowledge. Swain and Johnson (1997) discovered that outside the school walls immersion pupils in Canada tend not to use French any more than non-immersion pupils. When pupils are given such opportunities their language skills (grammar, syntax and communication of meaning) may be considerably enhanced (Housen and Baetens Beardsmore 1987, Baetens Beardsmore and Swain 1985). Wesche and MacFarlane (1995) found that if immersion programmes created such opportunities learners would be more likely to use the second language for social purposes once their schooling was over. Baetens Beardsmore and Swain (1985) compared French L2 medium programmes in Canada with programmes in Brussels to reveal the impact

of exposure to the target language outside the classroom. The pupils in Brussels achieved a level of L2 French proficiency equivalent to that of the Canadian pupils in half the time. Collaborative dialogues are contexts where language use and language learning occur simultaneously. Language use, then, mediates social activity and cognitive activity. Swain and Lapkin (1998) interpret dialogue as both a form of communication and a cognitive tool. The language related episodes they studied provide evidence of language as an occasion for L2 learning.

> Through collaborative dialogue of this sort, learners added to their own L2 knowledge and extended that of their peers. Learners provided for each other the support needed to outperform their competence and, in the process, develop their interlanguage.
>
> (Swain and Lapkin 1998)

Grin et al. (2000) point out the three essential measures needed for successful language learning: the capacity to use a given language; the opportunity to use it; and the desire to use it. The last two are particularly relevant when considering how to promote and improve the use of the Irish language in 'Gaelscoileanna' (Irish-medium primary schools).

The notion of learning as participation has generated considerable momentum over the past number of decades. Swain and Deters (2007) define learning in terms of the participation metaphor, the 'process of becoming an active, full member of a community of practice'. Ellis (2005) also recognizes the value of participation in communities of practice; he outlines opportunities to interact in the L2 as one of the ten principles of language instruction. Social interaction is a primary source of learning, 'the matrix in which acquisition takes place' (Ellis 2005). When pupils interact in their second language they are working collaboratively to construct new linguistic resources. Language and interaction serve as a form of mediation (Lantolf 2000). Language acquisition is built on language use. Lave and Wenger (1991) conceive of learning as legitimate peripheral participation in communities of

practice; becoming a full participant in a sociocultural practice, which may entail the negotiation of ways of being a person in that context.

> Peripheral participation is about being located in the social world. Changing locations and perspectives are part of actors' learning trajectories, developing identities, and forms of membership.

> (Lave and Wenger 1991)

Learning is an evolving form of membership. It involves the construction and reconstruction of identities. Thus, 'learning transforms who we are and what we can do, it is an experience of identity' (Pavlenko and Norton 2007), a process of becoming, or avoiding becoming a certain person, rather than a simple accumulation of skills and knowledge. With new forms of participation comes a transformed identity (Pavlenko and Norton 2007). Identity is pivotal to participation in communities of practice and to learning.

Block (2007a) frames identity work in terms of individual participation in communities of practice. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992) define community of practice as 'an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavour'. We build identities in relation to the communities of practice in which we participate. One goal of second language teaching is that a learner becomes an active member of a community of practice (Lantolf and Thorne 2006a). Participation, and indeed non-participation, in communities of practice are reflective of who we are or who we want to be. Students who do not invest in second language learning may be doing so as a form of resistance. Block (2007a) refers to the 'conflictive nature of identity work'. Some identities can clash with others.

> Negotiation of identities can be conflictual as learners move across the boundaries of different communities.

> (Swain and Deters 2007)

In order for Irish to become a desirable and acceptable means of communication amongst peers, pupils need to feel that using it can enhance their sense of agency, their capacity to act. They need to feel they can author themselves through use of the Irish language. Pupils need to feel empowered by the language rather than constrained. Irish-medium identities that are not conflictual to pupils' other identities need to be available to pupils; Irish-medium identities that are affirming to their preadolescent identity work.

Language learning and language use, like all human action, takes place within social fields; in the micro moments of social interaction in communities of practice (Norton 2000). Legitimate participation can never be assumed as it is always related to issues of power. Norton (2000) defines power as 'socially constructed relations among individuals, institutions and communities through which symbolic and material resources in a society are produced, distributed and validated'. Relations of power, within and outside the language classroom, shape learning opportunities; they enable or constrain the range of identities that are available to language learners in their various communities.

Block (2007b) describes the notion of cultural capital as resources such as behavioural patterns and educational artifacts possessed by individuals that can be translated into economic advantage. The value of any cultural capital is variable across social fields and markets, use of second language in one interaction can lead to acceptance, while the use of the same language in a different context can lead to marginalisation. Language learners are sensitive to this and will assess interactions and make language choices depending on the perceived advantages or risks it may hold in terms of cultural capital and identity. When learners invest in language learning and language use they hope to gain resources (symbolic and material) which enhance their cultural capital, their identity and their desires for the future (Ushioda and Dornyei 2009).

Learning, then, implies becoming a different person with respect to the possibilities enabled by the activities, systems, functions, understandings and relations amongst people involved in the process (Lave and Wenger 1991). Being an active participant is an empowering position; however such positions may not be available to all pupils in a language learning context. Access to learning, then, is never guaranteed (Hall 2008). Classrooms can be disempowering places for many language learning pupils. The reality is that our classrooms are built on networks of unequal power relations. Changing the dynamics of teaching and learning in the classroom can create moments of inclusion. Handing over to pupils the task of knowledge production positions pupils as experts in knowledge production. It can foster inclusion for pupils who may customarily be perceived as resistant or less academically skilled (Benjamin et al. 2003). The educators' role then becomes to promote participation. When educators create opportunities for language use they are offering language learners opportunities for negotiating form, content and meaning. When new learning experiences are offered in different learning environments we are opening up our practices to pupils who may be excluded regularly in the traditional, didactic, teacher lead classroom.

Language & Identity

Traditional theories of second language teaching and learning focus on cognitive development, with little or no emphasis on social context or identity. Sociocultural theory has developed momentum over the past two decades. It sees 'meaning and understandings constructed not in individual heads, but as between humans engaged in specific situated social interactions' (Hawkins 2004). A sociocultural perspective on second language learning recognizes that 'L2 learning is a highly complex and socially situated process that is dynamic

and involves the negotiation of access, participation, and above all, identity.' (Swain and Deters 2007). Researchers and educators have begun to open up their practices to this notion of language learning. Sociocultural theorists argue that the human mind is always mediated. Language, a process of human mental functioning, is organized by cultural artifacts, activities and concepts. It is, at once, socially mediated and a process of social mediation. We create a sense of ourselves in discourse. We are constantly constructing and reconstructing identities when we talk. 'To speak is to create oneself' (Swain and Deters 2007). Individuals position themselves and are positioned by others through language. We negotiate a sense of who we are through language. Weedon (1997) views identities as 'precarious, contradictory and in process, constantly reconstituted in discourse each time we think or speak'.

> When language learners speak, they are not only exchanging information with target language speakers but they are constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world.

> (Norton Peirce 1995)

Language is 'the most pervasive and powerful cultural artifact that humans possess to mediate their connection to the world, to each other and to themselves' (Lantolf and Thorne 2006b). Language is a primary vehicle through which we express our values and beliefs, work that is essential to the construction and reconstruction of identities.

Ushioda (2009) claims that much of the traditional research on language learning perceives motivation as individual learner difference; a pre-existing, stable, independent variable located outside the individual. Characterising language learners as motivated or unmotivated is problematic as it depersonalises learners. Positivists implemented a simple cause - effect model, a linear approach to explain how a student might think and feel about language learning. Ushioda (2009) argues that a person-in-context relational view of motivation, self and identity do far greater justice to the complexity and idiosyncrasy of a person's motivational response to particular events and experiences in their life. We must

look beyond the pupils simply as language learners and consider each pupil as a unique self-reflective intentional agent, with particular social identities, located in particular cultural and historical contexts (Ushioda 2009). Norton Peirce's (1995) notion of investment helps to reconceptualise traditional perceptions of motivation, while also extending understandings of language learning and identity. 'The notion of investment conceives of the language learner, not as ahistorical and unidimentional, but as having a complex social history and multiple desires' (Norton Pierce 1995). This reconceptualisation also takes account of the fact dialogue is more than simply exchange of information, it is a vehicle through which language learners engage in identity work, forming and reforming a sense of themselves through language. 'Thus an investment in the target language is also an investment in a learner's own social identity, an identity which is constantly changing across time and space' (Norton Peirce 1995). Learner's investment in second language learning and their desire to use it is mediated by social and historical factors (Norton 2000). Like identity, it does not remain static across space and time, but is constantly being reconstructed by pupils in moment by moment interactions. Neither identity nor investment can be separated from the context of the social interaction in which it occurs. An individual's decisions can be guided by certain 'constraints and affordances that make certain actions probable, others possible, and yet others impossible' (Lantolf and Thorne 2006a).

Investment in second language learning and use, in any given time or space, will depend largely on whether or not it is identity affirming for the learner. Changes in learners' investment in second language can be explained by their changing perceptions of the language and how it relates to their on-going identity work. Adolescence is typically a time when learners struggle to redefine themselves in the world, a time when important identity work takes place. Educators and researchers must consider adolescents' investment in second language 'in relation to their multiple, changing and contradictory identities' as investment in

second language learning is an investment in a learner's own social identity (Norton Peirce 1995). Second language experiences need to be identity affirming for the pupils. Otherwise, pupils may not invest in certain learner identities. Pupils may not invest in certain learner identities because they are disruptive to other identity work. When pupils do not invest in learning there is an opportunity cost. All learning, including language learning, needs to be identity affirming so that pupils will invest in it.

Swain and Deters (2007) highlight the importance of learner's agency in shaping their own learning and participation. Human agency is defined by Lantolf and Thorne (2006a) as 'the mediated capacity to act'. Pupils' agency is shaped by their individual histories as well as their varied social, economic and cultural capital. Each pupil has acquired an internalised framework, 'a habitual way of understanding the world and a predisposition to act in certain ways' (Lamb 2009). This internalized framework 'makes some possibilities inconceivable, others improbable, and a limited range acceptable' (Reay 2004). Agency is also enabled or constrained externally 'by the framework of opportunities and constraints the person finds him/herself in' (Lamb 2009). Learners are never free agents in a neutral environment. Human intentionality is shaped by social structures; structures can facilitate or constrain our agency. Pupils, while seeking to realise individual intentions, goals and needs, must constantly contend with the social contexts in which they interact. Agency must always negotiate the properties of social structure. Over time it is enabled and/or constrained by cultural and institutional factors, while at any given moment it is shaped by contextual and interactional factors. Learners' investment in second language learning is thus the dynamic interplay of relations between human agency and social structure at any given moment (Sealey and Carter 2004). Educators and researchers should 'focus on the agency of the individual person as thinking, feeling human being, with an identity, a personality, a unique history and background, a person with goals, motives and intentions' and 'on the interaction between this

self-reflective intentional agent, and the fluid and complex system of social relations, activities, experiences and multiple micro- and macro- contexts in which the person is embedded, moves, and is inherently part of' (Lamb 2009).

Implications for Irish Language Teaching and Learning

The challenge that lies ahead now is finding ways to assist pupils in developing their Irish language skills without forcing them to assume the social risks associated with breaking the sociocultural norms of their linguistic community (Goldstein 2003). The second language teacher needs to help learners to claim the right to speak outside the classroom as well as trying to establish the willingness to do so. First, we must recognise the conflicting socialisation agenda the pupils face and help them to find ways in dealing with it. In order to understand why pupils choose to invest or not to invest in Irish language use and Irish language learning we need to examine the multiple communities in which they participate on a day to day, moment to moment basis and understand how language choice is linked to access to these communities. 'Learning to work effectively with students who have strong affiliations in more than one community is critical to good teaching' (Goldstein 2003).

There are ways in which we can help pupils to reimagine Irish and refashion their relationship to it. Our methodologies and pedagogical practices can seek to engage language learners, encouraging them to develop and express their own identities through Irish (Ushioda 2009). We can incorporate their lived experiences and social identities into the formal language curriculum, allowing them to construct Irish-medium identities that are not conflictual to their preadolescent identity work. We can afford them possibilities of enhancing their agency through Irish in various contexts; contexts which are relevant to their peer culture.

Information technology-mediated communication has potential in this regard. The ability to link pupils through computer-mediated communication opens up a variety of possibilities to tackle many of the issues with which second language educators are faced. It provides schools with cost effective access to a world of collaborative second language situations, which are not readily available in the classroom. The obvious advantage is that pupils can be put in direct communicative contact with other pupils. Such opportunities are offering pupils authentic, interactive learning experiences within the classroom. Through computer-mediated communication second language pupils have increased opportunities to develop second language through social interaction, as well as the possibilities of constructing second language identities that 'go beyond those related to their institutional status as language learners and allow them to engage with important issues in their lives' (Block 2007b). Second language learning through computer-mediated interaction with peers can also provide pupils with ownership of tasks, creating more inclusive learning environments. Many language educators have embraced the use of chat as an effective communication tool among pupils. Real-time internet communication tools, such as chat rooms, 'have become key technologies which make possible the implementation of social constructivist pedagogies' (Thorne 1999).

An article by Birch and Poyatos Matos (1999) outlines an ICT arrangement between a French immersion school in Canada, two French immersion schools in Australia, two schools in France and French-speaking schools in New Caledonia and Tahiti. The schools interacted by means of ICT, especially e-mail and online chat. In this case ICT had the capacity to provide immersion leaners with direct access to native speakers, which in turn helped widen their sociolinguistic range, a consistent problem area in immersion language teaching and learning.

Many second language researchers have commented on the resemblance between computer-mediated communication and oral conversational exchange. The speed of chat encourages pupils to write short spontaneous messages, much like the types of exchanges common in oral conversation (Godwin-Jones 2003). Beauvois (1998) found that pupils who interacted through Interchange groups achieved significantly better marks on their oral exams than the control groups. A major goal of second language teaching is developing pupils' conversational ability, so possible connections between written real-time conferencing and the development of oral second language proficiency make such online interaction highly advantageous in the second language classroom.

Learning through interaction alone tends to lead to fossilisation; attention to form is essential in promoting accuracy and stretching language ability. Oral language communicative tasks traditionally have had the draw-back of being quick-paced, so attending to form issues can bring the process to a halt. Computer-mediated communication (CMC) promotes participation while also promoting and developing accuracy. 'The opportunities to freeze a single frame and focus attention on it are greatly expanded by CMC' (Warschauer 1997). Pupils' contributions online are validated as their input becomes the basis for epistemic activities. It also provides pupils with an extended amount of time to notice structure in incoming messages, while also providing them with increased planning time to write their messages and the opportunity for reflection in the midst of interaction. Warschauer (1999) reports that participation in chat room discussions gives pupils increased amounts of language input. They see not only one or two sentences written by the teacher but dozens of comments made by other pupils and by the teacher. Computer-mediated communication can potentially provide language educators with a tool which can improve many elements of pupils' language output. Greater control of discourse management and increased morphological complexity (Chun 1994), production of form-focused modifications to turns

(Pellettieri 2000), improvements in argumentation and linguistic accuracy (Kern 1995) and the development of writing (Sullivan and Pratt 1996) are some of the many benefits researchers have reported in their studies.

Mark Warscheaur (1999) describes computer-assisted language revitalization in the Hawaiian education system. The history of Ka'olelo Hawai'i, the native Hawaiian language, runs many parallels with the history of the Irish language. Warschauer participated in a series of Hawaiian language classes in the University of Hawai'i. The classes involved participation in Daedalus Interchange chat rooms with classmates. At the beginning of each chat session the teacher posted questions or topics for the class to discuss, during the session she read messages students had posted, helped students with problems, as well as post sporadic messages in the chat rooms. Pupils' in Warschauer's study used dictionaries, each other, the teacher and previous messages when writing their own messages. There was also the added benefit for the teacher, who used transcripts of students' messages to analyze pupils' linguistic development. Warshauer (1999) noted that pupils in the Hawaiian language classes appeared to be more highly motivated during their Daedalus Interchange sessions, posting messages right up until the last minute and groaning with disappointment when the class was finished.

One of the most enticing benefits of chat for language learners is the positive impact on student participation. Warschauer (1999) found that Daedalus sessions encouraged high degrees of student - student interaction. 'The increased interaction was also very democratic, extending to even the shyest students.' The chat room became a place where students worked collaboratively to socially construct knowledge. Students produce more language, submit more turns at talk, and participate at high levels in electronic conferencing sessions. The social dynamics of computer-mediated communication lent itself to favourable learning conditions for pupils. 'CMC results in communication that is more equal in participation than

face-to-face discussion, with those who are traditionally shut out of discussions benefitting most from the increased participation' (Warschauer 1997). The virtual setting proved to be a low-stress environment compared to seizing the floor and speaking in a whole class. The worry of how to pronounce words was omitted, and students had the opportunity to check messages before posting them (Warschauer 1997). Sullivan and Pratt (1996) also discovered the democratic benefits of online chat; 100% of the students in an ESL study participated in electronic discourse and only 50% in face-to-face discussion. The students in Kern's (1995) study produced between twice and three times more turns, and more total number of sentences and words, when they were interacting via InterChange when compared to the large-class oral discussion on the same topic. Warschauer (1999) suggests the increase in pupil participation may be due to the fact that social context clues (race, gender, accent, status) and nonverbal cues (such as frowning and hesitating) are reduced in virtual environments, as well as the fact that individuals can contribute in their own time and can check messages before posting.

Online communication provides us with a new array of links to learners. With the development of new links to other L2 speakers come the emergence of new social relationships, and the development of existing social relationships. From a sociocultural perspective, such links create new communities of practice; the educational value of such communities lies in the potential for collaborative learning. A goal for second language learning is desired membership in second language communities. During extended periods of online interactions with the same group of students can develop a sense of themselves as part of a language community. Projects can be organized to assist learners in seeing themselves as part of a community of speakers of the target language (Warschauer 1999). Hence, computer-mediated learning has the potential to affect learners' sense of identity. Block (2007a) notes chat room participation as 'one area in particular where the prospects for identity work are

very promising'. Block (2007a) gives an interesting account of a study carried out with two young Hong Kong Chinese immigrants living in California where the students were able 'to develop new English-mediated identities through their participation in chat room exchanges'. These students drew on resources related to their Chinese history and their English mediated American present.

Using ICT could enhance second language learning and second language medium identities. A huge issue within the Irish immersion setting is the lack of opportunities pupils have to actively engage with other Irish language speakers outside the school. Participation in Irish-medium online chat rooms could be used to increase pupils' opportunities to use the immersion language for interactions among their own age-group, marking their pre-adolescent identities and enhancing their Irish-medium identities. Such a venture could afford students the opportunity to develop new subject positions in Irish and allow them to engage through Irish with important issues in their lives. Irish immersion educators could use computer-mediated communication to bring Irish speaking pupils together into larger virtual communities through chat room participation. Participation in online chat rooms could also help to increase pupils' desire to use the language and enhance individuals' sense of agency.

Another important objective of second language educators in supporting computer-mediated communication is to instil in pupils the notion of their second language as a vibrant, living form of communication. In Hawaii, like in Ireland, the heritage language can often carry the burden of being perceived as a conservative language of the past. Such languages need to be constructed as languages for the present and the future if they are to compete with dominant language ideologies. 'Language revitalisation is not about bringing a language back, it's about bringing it forward' (Hornberger 1997). Computer-mediated communication through heritage languages exposes pupils to the notion of the language as progressive rather

than merely nostalgic. Immersing children in progressive notions of Irish language use will help pupils to reimagine Irish language ownership, investment and empowerment.

In Irish immersion education Irish language expression becomes loaded with the value of human meanings and intentions. The use value of the language in immersion settings goes far beyond the exchange value or dry code existence associated with traditional pedagogy alone. However, there is a need to further develop our conceptualisation of Irish language and identity if we expect pupils to invest in and expand their Irish-medium identities. Irish language must be constructed progressively in school policy and practices before pupils can conceive of it as such. We must consider ways in which our classrooms can help pupils to reimagine Irish language and their relationship to it. Dyson (2003) recommends we open up the curriculum 'to the pleasures and challenges of children's everyday lives and to the multimedia of the emerging and everchanging textual scene'. The language curriculum must make space for and productively engage pupils' social and symbolic resources (Dyson 2003). Pupils make sense of themselves through their experiences in various youth communicative practices. They come to school with a sense of agency towards youth culture. Instead of distancing ourselves from youth culture, schools and educators can situate themselves in the very practices, passions and identifications that pupils value. In doing so, we construct points of connection between home and school life, 'placing social practices and identities they have come to live at home in dialogue with new ones constructed in school' (Hicks 2001). Allowing the practices of youth culture to permeate the Irish language curriculum could help pupils to make Irish language more meaningful to their lives by infusing it with familiar frames of reference and by using it to mediate cultural knowledge. Many of the pupils I work with are already invested in their sense of being Irish, and ability to use the Irish language is an essential feature of this identity. Technology could be used to further tap into this process. Interacting through Irish with peers in online chat rooms,

discussing issues that are relevant to their preadolescent identities provides opportunities to support and challenge learners' identity work. It gives pupils opportunities to construct Irish language in a progressive rather than a conservative sense, while also developing their own Irish-mediated identities.

Data Collection

Research Methodology

A paradigm can be described as a pattern of thought, a way of looking at the world. Research paradigms in education are based on certain ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions; assumptions that help to form and steer a researcher's understandings and ways of doing things. The earliest paradigms used in educational research were the positivist paradigm and the postpositivist paradigm. Positivists view the nature of reality in a scientific manner; they believe that 'discoveries about the reality of the world can be expressed as factual statements' (Bassey 1996). Positivists hold the belief that there exists only one truth and that the role of the research is to uncover it. Researchers working within the positivist paradigm would not consider themselves as significant variables in the study. Postpositivists, on the other hand, believe that a reality can exist, but due to human limitations this reality exists 'within a certain realm of probability' (Mertens 2005). Scientific methods were used rigorously by positivists; postpositivists recognized that many of these methods were unsuitable for studies in educational settings and so modified them. Postpositivist research mostly consists of quantitative methods of data collection.

The constructivist paradigm views the nature of reality as multiple and socially constructed (Mertens 2005). Constructivist researchers do not accept 'the idea of there being a reality 'out there' which exists irrespective of people, for reality is a construct of the human mind' (Mertens 2005). Therefore, the goal of a constructivist researcher is not to uncover one reality, but to understand and describe their subjects and their multiple social constructions of meaning and knowledge (Bassey 1996). This paradigm emphasizes that a researcher's work cannot be viewed independently of the researcher, because in asking questions and observing they may change the situation which they are researching. Researchers working within the constructivist paradigm also believe that the interactive link between themselves and the participants means that neither can be viewed independently of the other. For these reasons,

constructivist researchers recognise themselves as potential variables in their study (Bassey 1996).

The transformative paradigm works towards improving the phenomena of the subjects' surroundings (Bassey 1996). Although multiple realities are recognised in the transformative paradigm it differs from the constructivist paradigm in that it seeks to address issues of bias related to social, political, cultural, ethnic, gender and disability status. Constructions of reality can be shaped unjustly due to such biases, transformative research works towards eliminating such factors in its outcomes. In the transformative paradigm it is hoped that the interactive relationship between the researcher and the participants, and the research itself, will empower participants who are typically on the margin. Qualitative methods are applied with care and rigor to avoid results which are sexist, racial, political, or otherwise biased (Mertens 2005).

The present research comes under the constructivist paradigm. I believe that knowledge and realities are socially constructed and that I, the researcher, as a human being with values interacting with participants throughout the study will shape the situation I am researching. The data collection methods I used are constructivist in nature, in that they are personal and involve interaction between the participants and researcher, and among the participants themselves. Interviews, field notes and focus groups conducted throughout the study provided an understanding of the meaning participants were attributing to their changing experiences. One of the perceived weaknesses of the constructivist paradigm is the lack of objectivity such research can offer. It is my belief that we can never know if our views of reality match it because what we come to see depends upon what we are looking for and what we are looking for depends upon our framework. We build our truth of the world on our understanding of it, both are most definitely our own. This does not mean we should dismiss forms of inquiry that need to be interpreted by a researcher. Constructivist

researchers should recognise and accept the interactive nature of research, while bearing in mind that their interpretation, in reasonable and realistic terms, is 'belief, supported by good reasons' (Eisner 1992). My own values and experiences structured the project in various complex ways. Undoubtedly, my background as an Irish-speaker from the Gaeltacht area, as a teacher working in Irish-medium education and as personal advocate of Irish language revitalisation has strong influences on my interactions and interpretations. Nor can I make a claim of objectivity in this study on the basis of personal distance from the pupils involved. I did, however, use multiple qualitative methods to support the validity of the study. Throughout the research I engaged in the constant review of the evolution of ideas, self-checked at every stage of inquiry, reflected on why particular decisions were made, why certain questions were asked and other were not asked, and sought the interpretation of all participating teachers and a critical friend. The perspectives of a variety of people were collected, which lead to 'juxtaposition of conflicting ideas, forcing reconsideration of previous positions' (Mertens 2005). In this manner, theory building became an active process. There was a constant cycle of reviewing hypothesis and theories in light of new data.

The constructivist nature of the study meant that many of the research questions were developed and evolved as the project unfolded. The central research questions of the project are as follows

Does participation in the chat room affect pupils' investment in Irish? How?

Does it give them opportunities to negotiate / stretch their Irish-medium identities? How?

Does participation in Irish-medium chat rooms assist pupils in seeing themselves as part of a new community of Irish speakers? How?

Research Methods

Six chat rooms were set up on the school's website (see Appendix A for instructions on accessing the chat rooms). The pages with the chat rooms were password protected and the passwords were changed after each session; in that way pupils could only log in to the chat rooms during supervised sessions in the school. Once a week, for six weeks, sixth class pupils from three Irish-medium schools interacted in the chat rooms. For the first three chat sessions all three schools participated in each session; however the large number of pupils involved was affecting the quality of interaction in the chat rooms, therefore it was agreed that for the remaining three sessions two alternating schools would participate each week. There were six different chat rooms with five to eight pupils participating in each room. The chat sessions began in the second week of March and ran until the Easter holidays in April. Each session was forty minutes long.

The pupils choose the names for the chat rooms and the topics of conversation for all sessions. Initially one topic of discussion was proposed for each session, however following the first session it was agreed that each session thereafter would be divided into two twenty minute periods, with pupils being assigned to a different chat room for each period. The topic of discussion was changed for the second period of the chat session. Pupils chose music, sport, pastimes, secondary school, television, film, fashion, technology, career paths and special occasions as topics for discussion. In order to enhance the quality of interaction in the chat rooms teachers intervened by writing questions to stimulate thinking and writing, as well as posting comments that praised and encouraged pupils. Teachers were provided with transcripts of the chat room sessions after each session which could be used to focus pupils' attention to different elements of meaning and form. The Board of Management, school principal, sixth class teachers and sixth class parents had all been informed of the details outlined above and had given their consent.

Qualitative methods were used over a period of four months. Information was gathered primarily from pupils in sixth class in Scoil Mhuire, the school I work in as a primary school teacher. Scoil Mhuire is an Irish-medium school with over two hundred pupils. It is situated on the outskirts of Irish town with a population in excess of 17,000. All nineteen pupils in sixth class are Irish born and come from a range of socio-economic backgrounds. One striking fact about this class is twenty per cent of the pupils are dyslexic; a figure that is twice as high as the national average. Multiple methods were used to gather data. Analysis and interpretation of data helped to determine the processes of negotiation the pupils were engaged in publicly and privately and to investigate how pupils were jointly constructing the Irish language.

Following each chat room session the transcripts of pupils' online chat (Appendix B) were analysed. These transcripts generated valuable forms of data; they shed light on how pupils authored themselves amongst their peers. Pupils' diaries were also used throughout the project. The pupils in Scoil Mhuire wrote into these diaries twice a week for the duration of the project; questions in Irish inside the front cover of the diary helped to focus their diary writing (Appendix C). The diary entries were used to establish what pupils thought, felt and did in response to different language learning situations, especially the chat room sessions. The diaries served as an 'expression of experience' (Norton 2000) throughout the project.

Focus group sessions were organized with the sixth class pupils in Scoil Mhuire a few weeks before the project started, a second set when they were half way through and again when the project was complete. The focus group sessions provided time and space for pupils to express their opinions of the project and make suggestions for improvements, a factor that strengthened their ownership of the project and helped me to develop an empowering relationship with pupils. The sessions were also used as an opportunity to test hypotheses and to clarify/rectify my interpretations of pupils' diary entries. During focus group sessions

pupils talked explicitly about issues regarding their identities (particularly Irish-medium identities), and the role Irish language has in their identity work.

Permission was sought and granted from some of the parents of sixth class pupils in Scoil Mhuire to interview their children at various stages of the project in relation to their experiences and opinions of second language use and learning in the chat rooms. I interviewed three pupils individually before the project had begun, again soon after it had commenced and finally when the project was complete. I decided to carry out a number of interviews over an extended period in order to document how pupils' experiences and perceptions were changing over time. Due to the nature of the research, the interview and focus group questions developed and evolved over time (Appendix D).

Comments from interviews, focus group sessions, chat room transcripts and diary entries are presented in this paper exactly as they were said or written by pupils; spellings and grammar remain unaltered. All the data collected was Irish medium, in the data analysis section all extracts are presented in their original form (Irish language) and then followed with the English language translation.

The voice of the pupils constituted a significant part of the data; however it was not an end in itself. The negotiation of identities is a highly complex process and many of its elements can become tacit knowledge. During all stages of the project I kept a reflective journal where I made field notes from communications I had with teachers and pupils, and observations I had made during interviews, chat room participation and focus group sessions, including contextual factors and human elements, such as gestures and emotions. Inside the front cover of the journal I kept a list of questions to focus my observations (Appendix E). I also worked closely with the sixth class teacher in Scoil Mhuire as well as communicating regularly with the sixth class teachers from the other two schools. Throughout the project we

discussed practical and pedagogic considerations, as well as personal and professional expectations and goals. Valuable feedback and insights were also gleaned from the teacher questionnaire filled in once the project was completed (Appendix F).

Ethical Issues

The first ethical issue to be considered was related to Internet usage and participation in online chat rooms. Scoil Mhuire's Acceptable Use Policy (Appendix G) outlines guidelines for pupils' participation in chat rooms, issues regarding anonymity, confidentiality, parental consent and type of discourse, are all outlined in this policy. Each pupil and their parents were made aware of its details and signed a form in agreement of its rules before the commencement of the project. The teachers involved in the project were also reminded of the details of the policy.

In order to help pupils gain ownership of the project they were invited to outline acceptable rules of participation, pick the topics for discussion and asked to provide feedback throughout which shaped the development of the project. This helped pupils to jointly construct the chat rooms as a space where they could exercise their agency among peers. Of course, this at times created personal and professional dilemmas. Participating teachers and I questioned the nature of the discourse and asked 'what is being learned?' It forced us to open up our practices to new subject matter and re-evaluate what is valuable in education. When challenges arose the responsibility I had to the pupils and to each of the schools involved became quite salient. This project represents a pioneering and innovative effort in the use of ICT in the Gaelscoil context. This meant that there was much to learn along the way. Setting up the six chat rooms to very certain specifications was a time-consuming enterprise. The project was constantly developing; feedback from pupils and teachers and the analysis of chat

room transcripts each week provided valuable insights into ways in which pupils' participation could be enhanced, stretching their language output. Constructing and co-ordinating the project was labour intensive and challenging but the potential it had for enhancing pupils' participation in Irish language learning and use was significant. It opened up very exciting possibilities every week. The improvements from week to week in the chat room interactions motivated the pupils and the teachers to further invest in its success.

Limitations

The project had a number of limitations; the first of those involved the limited access I had to the sixth class pupils as a teacher of another class. This meant that observations of the pupils in Scoil Mhuire were limited to chat room sessions, focus group sessions, interviews and occasions such as lunch time on the school yard. The sixth class teacher in Scoil Mhuire proved to be a highly valuable asset throughout the project. Her observations often helped to clarify interpretations and extend understandings.

Time constraints and other pragmatic considerations dictated that only pupils from Scoil Mhuire participated in the focus group and interview sessions. Data were collected from pupils in other schools through their chat room interactions and the questionnaires filled in by teachers in the schools, however as the data will later reveal an extended form of investigation into the perceptions and experiences of the pupils from the other two schools would have further enhanced the findings.

Another limitation of the study is that only Irish-immersion schools were involved. Initially one of the three schools involved was to be a Gaeltacht school, a school situated in an Irish speaking community, so as to put pupils in the immersion setting into direct contact with pupils from the target language community. However, technical issues arose for the

school in the Gaeltacht which meant they could not participate in the project. The short time frame also proved to be a limitation of the study, as it took time for the pupils to become accustomed to the chat room environment and for a mature level of discussion to develop in the chat room.

Data Analysis

In the data analysis section the processes of language acculturation that unfolded in the initial stages of the project are initially highlighted. Findings in relation to pupils' levels of participation and investment in the Irish language chat room are then discussed, drawing on a sociocultural view of learning as increased participation in communities of practice. The benefits of giving peer culture an exchange value and of changing typical interactional patterns in the Irish language classroom is then discussed. The cases of three individual pupils who participated in the project are then in focus and their perspectives, agency, linguistic capital and cultural capital are explored as they negotiate the conflicting socialisation agenda with which they were faced in the chat room context. It is then considered whether or not the language chat room developed into an Irish language community of practice. Finally, the ways in which pupils exercised their agency in relation to the dilemmas and tensions they faced in the chat room context are discussed.

The Chat Room Space as a Social Plane

It was very clear from the outset that the Irish language chat room was an internet-mediated social plane that many of the pupils were unpractised in. Week one saw pupils hurrying to post their comments online which resulted in an element of information overload. Pupils quickly discovered the emoticons function, and used them relentlessly throughout session one. Some pupils were clearly more practised in the conventions of online communities than others. Through participation in social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, they had undergone language acculturation processes (Thorne 2000). For example, some pupils corrected spelling mistakes they had made in previous comments by using an asterisk followed by the correct spelling in their next comment. Others displayed their understanding of the use of capital letters as shouting.

POP: IS BREA LIOM E

Anrealt: Stop ag screadadh

POP: NIL ME

Translation

POP: I LOVE IT

Anrealt: Stop shouting

POP: I'M NOT

(Extract from session one)

In session two, pupils took on board the recommendations made following session one, for example, use of higher order questioning and responding to questions in a way that stimulated the discussion. There was a significant improvement in the quality of interaction in session two, as pupils became more focused on their efforts to communicate effectively with each other. Even at this early stage in the project pupils were praising each other and offering each other support within the chat room environment. As the project unfolded pupils developed understandings of appropriate activity within the chat room space. Through their interaction they were becoming more accustomed to the rules and conventions of the digital community, learning how to become proficient users of the space.

Participation

From the very beginning of the project high levels of pupil participation were evident. Throughout each chat room session there was a continuous popping sound, which indicated new comments posted, from each of the nineteen laptops in the room. Under normal classroom circumstances this sound would have been quite irritating, however in this setting it became a clear marker of pupils' participation. The average amount of turns per pupil per session was high, amongst Scoil Mhuire pupils the average amount of turns in each session

was 49.8. Such a high level of pupil participation is one of the greatest benefits of using a chat room space, as pupil participation is fundamental to their learning and identity. Extensive language output means increased occasions for learning; as pupils interacted they were co-constructing linguistic knowledge. Pupils used language to mediate cognitive activity and social activity. Drawing on Swain and Deter's (2001) metaphor of learning as the process of becoming active, full members of a community of practice, we can view pupils' interactions in the chat rooms as events of learning and identity work. As pupils were becoming active members of the chat room they were learning and negotiating ways of being a person in a new context (Lave and Wenger 1991). Dialogue was the vehicle through which pupils were engaging in identity work, forming and reforming a sense of themselves through language. Pupils' moving towards full participation in this sociocultural practice was an experience of learning and identity; it was transforming who they are and what they can do. With new forms of participation comes a transformed identity (Pavlenko and Norton 2009). In the case of Irish immersion education, pupils' participation in Irish language activities is instrumental to their learning and in their becoming competent members of the classroom and school community. These processes of identity that pupils were negotiating through their participation in the chat room are later highlighted in the investigation of three individual pupils' experiences.

A number of factors help to explain the high levels of pupil participation. Firstly, participation in the chat room discussion warrants the pupils post comments on the chat room board throughout the session. Unlike the classroom setting, passive listening in the online environment equates nonattendance to the discussion. Pupils cannot rely on pragmatics to communicate with others in chat room environments. During the chat sessions, when a pupil fell silent for more than a minute another pupil often asked were they still present. Chat room interaction is not limited to the turn-taking rules that apply to conventional classroom

practice, resulting in greater opportunity for pupils' language output. This may 'push learners to experiment more with language, testing emerging hypotheses about the meaning of lexical terms and the application of syntactical patterns not yet mastered' (Payne & Whitney 2002). Following the final chat room session, I discussed with the pupils in Scoil Mhuire the similarities and differences between the chat room lessons and other Irish language lessons. One girl summed up her experience when she said

Deirim níos mó sa seoma comhrá.

Translation

I say more in the chat room.

(Extract from discussion with Scoil Mhuire pupils following session six)

Many of the other pupils nodded in agreement. When asked to explain why this was the case it emerged that, for some, it was the fact that the chat room lessons were open discussions.

Tá tú i gcomhrá, níl tú just ag freagairt ceisteanna.

Translation

You're in a conversation; you're not just answering questions.

(Extract from discussion with Scoil Mhuire pupils following session six)

Pupils' heightened motivation could also explain their increased levels of participation. Undoubtedly one of the most enticing factors of the project, for many pupils, was the opportunity to use the school's laptops for the first time. The observations and feedback collected throughout the study cannot be analysed without considering how much this 'novelty factor' was at play in pupils' responses to the project.

High levels of pupil participation can also be attributed to the ease in contributing to the chat room discussion in comparison to the classroom setting. Typically shy pupils often choose not to contribute to classroom interactions to protect them from humiliation. One such pupil in sixth class in Scoil Mhuire made the following comment during a class discussion immediately after session three.

Is maith liom a bheith ag scríobh ar an ríomhaire mar má chuireann tú do lámh suas bíonn tú saghas afraid go ndéarfaidh tú an rud mícheart.

Translation

I like writing on the computer because if you put up your hand you're sort of afraid that you'll say the wrong thing.

(Extract from discussion with Scoil Mhuire pupils following session three)

The chat room lessons managed to bring this pupil in from the periphery, providing equal platform space to the more vocally confident pupils. Pupils' agency can often be constrained by local social structures, including the organization of the learning space. The online environment created a sense of freedom for pupils. It created a different social space for learning, changing the activity of communicating and opening up a range of possibilities that are not available in traditional classroom settings (Thorne 1999). Becoming an active participant is an empowering position; however such positions are not available to all pupils in a language context. Classrooms are built on networks of unequal power relations; access to learning, then, is never guaranteed (Hall 2008). When the interactional dynamics and pedagogical content in the language classroom were shifted moments of inclusion were created. Pupils who traditionally struggle to participate in the Irish language classroom were positioned as experts in knowledge production.

The chat room discussions were authentic interactions where learners jointly constructed meaning with peers. There was evidence throughout the chat room project that pupils were learning from each other.

Líreachánbándearg: Cad is spreagúil? goa

Learpholl123: Cad a bhfuil spreagúil?

Notamarbh: spreagúil is ea exciting ☺

Líreachaindearg: oh maith agat

Translation

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Líreachánbándearg: What is 'spreagúil'? lol

Learpholl123: What is 'spreagúil'?

Notamarbh: spreagúil is exciting ☺

Líreachaindearg: oh thanks

<div align="right">(Extract from session two)</div>

Such activities grant learners access to positions of expert as well as offering them valued membership to the group. On other occasions, pupils were strategically scaffolding one another's learning.

Ticead: Cén áit a imríonn sibhse?

Lireachan299: back cad mialar sibhsa?

Ticead: imrím sna cúlaithe freisin

Translation

Ticead: Where do you play?

Lireachan299: *back* what about you?   *uses English word*

Ticead: I play in the 'cúlaithe' (backs) as well   *uses Irish word*

<div align="right">(Extract from session two)</div>

These interactions with peers were opportunities where linguistic knowledge was co-constructed. They facilitated pupils' language learning while at the same time offering them opportunities to see themselves as part of a new community of Irish speakers.

Lived Experience

The aim of this project was to create a space where pupils could author themselves through the Irish language in a peer group setting. In order to achieve this it was necessary to build the project on important aspects of the pre-teen world. Using a chat room space provided an environment that mirrored the fast paced technological world that many of these pre-teens interact in daily. Pupils were also given the space for agentive action in choosing the names for the chat rooms and their own usernames and the topics for discussion. The usernames

they chose spoke volumes about how they wished to present themselves and be received by others in the chat room space. Some of the usernames conjured images of 'girlyness', names with words like lollypop, star, pink, lovely, sweet. Many of the boys also chose a username which conjured up images of masculinity. One boy chose the username Mak12, referring to the popular razor blade, while others chose usernames with references to sports stars.

After the final chat room session pupils were asked to consider when writing in their diaries whether or not the project had offered them an opportunity to talk about things that are important to them. Fifteen of the seventeen pupils who wrote in their diaries that day said they had discussed important elements of their lives while interacting in the chat rooms. During the focus group sessions pupils spoke about their experiences in the chat rooms. One girl said she felt that the chat room space offered a better opportunity for learning than other Irish lessons. I asked her why she felt it was easier than other Irish lessons.

> Bíonn deich gceist sa leabhar Gaeilge agus tá sé an rud céanna like 'fear an phoist'.
>
> Translation
>
> There are ten questions in the Irish book and it's the same thing, like 'the postman'.

Another girl commented.

> Uaireanta ní maith leat a bheith ag foghlaim faoi fear an phoist, like ansin bhíomar ag caint mar gheall ar Converse, faisean, iPads, teicneolaíocht. Ní bheidh iPad sa leabhar 'Tar Liom'.
>
> Translation
>
> Sometimes you don't like learning about 'the postman', like there we were talking about Converse, fashion, iPads, technology. You won't find iPads in 'Tar Liom'.

The fleeting nature of youth culture makes it difficult for schools (and the educational printing press) to keep curriculum resources up-to-date with the lived experiences of the pupils. As a result, Irish language curriculum content and methodologies can be disconnected from the reality of pupils' lived experiences. Language teachers should borrow from a range of resources so as to afford pupils the opportunity to make connections between their lived

experiences and their language learning. Teachers must have realistic expectations of textbooks and realise that relying solely on them can mean missing out on the value pupils can gain from a wide ranging language curriculum. Course materials, such as textbooks, should be supplemented with authentic materials and tasks that relate to their peer culture. The value of doing so is reflected in the experiences of the pupils who interacted in the chat room environment. In giving pupils the power to choose what they would discuss in the chat rooms, their lived experiences became the curriculum content in the classroom. It also gave certain pupils a rare opportunity to demonstrate their expertise during school lessons. In bringing elements of youth culture into Irish language lessons certain pupils were positioned in expert roles, pupils who would rarely experience the benefits of such positions during Irish language lessons.

Teachers and pupils worked together in between chat room sessions to provide pupils with words and phrases they would need to express themselves during chat room interaction. This process became an important element of the project; it gave pupils and teachers the opportunity to jointly construct Irish language progressively. At certain stages of the project it became clear that the Irish language itself needed to be developed to facilitate discussions. For example, the participating teachers and pupils had difficulty at times finding Irish translations for words the pupils intended to use during chat room sessions. In such circumstances the teachers and pupils worked together in composing a new Irish word, for example 'touch screen' was translated by sixth class in Scoil Mhuire to 'scáileán láimhe'. An important consideration in terms of pupils' perceptions of Irish language use is how Irish language learning and use is constructed within the school and in society at large. On occasions such as this, pupils could begin to perceive Irish as a language that signifies progress and modernity, rather than a dry code used in classroom discussions about the postman. Irish became a language that was value laden with expression in a peer setting.

Participation in the project was providing pupils with opportunities to negotiate and stretch their Irish-medium identities. One of the research questions posed at the outset was how the project could offer pupils an opportunity to negotiate or stretch their Irish-medium identities. The types of interactions pupils had in the chat rooms gave them an opportunity to use the Irish language in new ways, to refashion their relationship to the language. Through using the Irish language in new and more pre-teen ways pupils could begin to push the boundaries on their Irish-medium identities.

Kenneth

Kenneth is a twelve year old boy in sixth class in Scoil Mhuire. He lives at home with both parents and two brothers. Throughout his primary school years Kenneth's social and emotional development was an area of concern for his family and the school community. He often struggled to express himself, which would lead to angry outbursts. Sixth class has been a defining time for Kenneth. He has matured considerably and many of the worrying factors that had defined his participation in school life have become a thing of the past.

When Kenneth's name was picked as one of the three pupils who would be interviewed as part of the project he seemed very pleased. His class teacher noted his level of enthusiasm and the significant investment he had in the project. He attempted from the very first session to regulate the chat rooms as Irish language spaces, asking pupil who had posted comments in English not to do so again. He became a gatekeeper of the chat room in which he participated. Kenneth's monitoring of the chat rooms went beyond encouraging other pupils to use Irish. On a number of occasions throughout the chat room sessions he informed others that emoticons were not to be used excessively.

Tá cead smileys ach ná úsáid iad go minic.

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Translation:

Smileys are allowed but don't use them too often.

<div align="right">(Extract from session three)</div>

During interviews and while writing in his diary of language use Kenneth expressed his frustration at the disruption some pupils had caused to the Irish language discussion. Equally, when the chat room interaction was at its best Kenneth was elated. Kenneth's move towards full participation in the practices of the chat room involved an increasing sense of identity as a master practitioner (Lave and Wenger 1991). His developing forms of membership and increased investment can be explained by his changing perceptions of the language and how it relates to his on-going identity work. He became a leader in the chat room he was logged into; he steered the conversation productively through his use of questions and encouraging responses. When another pupil in the chat room was not involved in the discussion he posted questions directly at them in order to get them involved. In the final session Kenneth (DeireannanRock) ensured the quality of the discussion by keeping pupils on topic.

Tayls12: an maith le aon duine a bheith in a bainisteoir?

DeireannanRock: Tayls12 níl miad ag caint faoi postanna anois

Tayls12: o

DeireannanRock: tá tú ceart go lóir

Translation

Tayls12: would anybody like to be a manager?

DeireannanRock: Tayls12 we're not discussing jobs now

Tayls12: o

DeireannanRock: you're OK

<div align="right">(Extract from session six)</div>

From the time Kenneth was chosen as an interviewee he began to develop a sense of himself as an important part of the chat room community and a deep sense of the value of

pupils' participation to the community (Lave and Wenger 1991). Kenneth often referred to the fact that through the chat rooms he found new people who could understand him when he spoke Irish. Many of the pupils in Scoil Mhuire shared this sentiment. For most of the participants, this was the first time that they had interacted with people from outside the school through Irish. In his diary after session one Kenneth wrote

Bhraith mé ar fheabhas, bhí daoine eile ábalta mé a thuiscint.

Translation

I felt great, other people were able to understand me.

(Extract from Kenneth's diary entry following session one)

Kenneth's forms of participation in classroom learning were developed as a result of his participation in the chat rooms. His teacher noted that his investment in classroom learning had increased and believed that it was a direct result of his participation in the project. His invested participation in the project had impacted positively on his learning trajectory. Kenneth's teacher commented on his progress during a discussion we had about the project.

D'fhás sé ann féin nuair a chuir tú ceist air páirt a ghlacadh sna hagallaimh.

Translation

He grew in himself when you asked him to participate in the interviews.

Traditional classroom lessons were not a place where Kenneth could typically position himself as expert. He struggled to author himself under more conventional educational settings. Comments made by Kenneth during an interview suggest that the chat rooms offered him the space to author himself in Irish, as there was less focus placed on form when compared to the traditional classroom.

B'fhearr liom an ceacht Gaeilge sa seomra comhrá ná sa seomra ranga mar níl mé ró-mhaith ag an aimsir fháistineach.

Má dhéanann tú dearmad ní bheidh aon duine á cheartú

Translation

I prefer the Irish lesson in the chat rooms to the classroom because I'm not too good at the future tense.

If you make a mistake nobody will be correcting it.

<div align="right">(Extracts from interview two)</div>

The chat room environment offered him the time and privacy to investigate words with which he was unfamiliar.

Uaireanta deireann siad siúd rud éigin nach bhfuil a fhios agat agus is féidir liom é a fháilt san fhoclóir.

Translation

Sometimes they say something you don't know and I can find it in the dictionary.

<div align="right">(Extract from interview two with Kenneth)</div>

This new Irish language environment held fresh possibilities for Kenneth as a place where he could be 'expert' or 'master practitioner'. He seemed to be taking advantage of chat room interactions as opportunities to recreate himself, to try on new identities (Pavlenko 2001). During the last interview, Kenneth said the main difference between the chat room and the classroom, as he saw it, was the fact that you could say anything because other pupils did not know who you were. When I asked pupils in Scoil Mhuire to compare and contrast the chat room lessons with classroom lessons many of them pupils spoke about the chat rooms as open, yet safe environments. Pavlenko (2001) discusses the merits of written texts as safe spaces for pupils to 'try on' new multilingual voices or identities. The chat rooms seemed to offer pupils, especially Kenneth, a safe environment in which to try on new Irish-mediated identities.

I held focus group sessions and interviews with pupils a few weeks prior to the commencement of the project. Once the project was complete I held focus groups and interviews again, putting the same questions to the pupils as I had months earlier. Kenneth

was one of the pupils whose attitude towards and perception of the Irish language shifted the most over the course of the project. Through participation in this emergent Irish language digital community of practice Kenneth's forms of participation and identity changed. During both sets of interviews and focus groups I asked Kenneth to consider the following scenario: You are at the cinema/a match with friends from the class when one of them starts to speak in Irish, what would you think or say in this situation? Weeks before the chat room project began Kenneth's response was the following

Suí síos agus stad

Translation

Sit down and stop

His response following the completion of the six week chat room project was

Labharfainn Gaeilge ar ais leo mar beidh sé cúl mar ní thuigfeadh daoine eile.

Translation

I would speak Irish in response because it would be cool because other people would not understand.

There was also a change in Kenneth's response to the use of Irish language when texting friends and when posting comments on Facebook. Before the project began Kenneth said he had never sent a text in Irish but he had posted a comment in Irish on Facebook twice. When asked again once the project was complete Kenneth said he sometimes sends texts in Irish and writes a lot of comments in Irish on Facebook for the 'craic'.

Scríobh mé a lán rudaí as Gaeilge don craic ar Facebook

Translation

I wrote lots of things in Irish for the craic on Facebook.

One of the aims of the study was to investigate how chat room participation can influence pupils' investment in Irish. Kenneth's experiences highlight the positive ways in which classroom practices and activities can affect pupils' investment in learning. His

participation in the chat room interactions enhanced his investment in Irish language use by offering him a space to author himself successfully in Irish. Free from the pressures he associates with more conventional Irish language lessons Kenneth could occupy new subject positions in Irish, recreating himself as 'knowledge expert', 'group leader' and 'Irish speaker'.

Shannon

Shannon is a twelve year old girl in sixth class Scoil Mhuire. She lives at home with her parents and older brother. In school, Shannon is considered by her classmates and the school staff as a bright and popular girl, she is well liked by members of the school community. She manages very well in school to negotiate the world of popular pre-teen and the policies the school has in place; both are important to her. She brought her negotiation skills with her to the chat room environment, where she continued to meet the expectations of teachers and peers simultaneously; expectations about how she should behave and contribute to the Irish language digital environment.

Identity work can never be complete; while interacting in the chat rooms, and during interviews and focus groups, she was continuously constructing and reconstructing herself moment by moment. Language is a mediated means, it was used by all pupils to perform and shape identity work. As they interacted in the chat room sessions they spoke about props and pivotal media to extend their identities (Hall 2008). Ownership of pre-teen appropriate media helped pupils to construct themselves successfully in the peer group. Pupils spoke about the amount of songs they had on music devices, as well as their mobile phones, laptops, games consoles and games, fashion accessories and sports kits.

One of the topics of discussion in session four was technology. In every chat room during that session social networking sites came into the conversation. Bebo seemed to be considered old news; although it did enter the discussion in two chat rooms, no pupil claimed membership of this social networking site. Membership of Facebook, on the other hand, was almost a given, most pupils said they were signed up and rated the site highly. In the following extract pupils use Facebook to position themselves successfully in the pre-teen world.

> Gaeilge: is brea liom facebook ta me andúileach!!
>
> Anon4796: mise fresin is breá liom facebook!!!!!
>
> Translation
>
> Gaeilge: I love facebook I'm an addict !!
>
> Anon4796: me too I love facebook!!!!!

<div align="right">(Extract from session four)</div>

Pupils used their extended knowledge of the Facebook world to author themselves as pre-teens. Shannon (PancogLeSiorup) was very knowledgeable in the world of Facebook; she seemed to have downloaded all the right games and even accessed the world of Facebook on the newest and trendiest device on the market, the iPad.

> PancogLeSiorup: is maith liom an ipad mar gheobhaidh tu cluiche a fhail agus gheobhaigh tu dul ar facebook
>
> Anon4238: ta samsung diva agam an chean corcra
>
> PancogLeSiorup: An maith le aon duine facebook
>
> cappalldearg123: is breá liom Facebook
>
> neymar123: ta se go maith nach bhfuil
>
> PancogLeSiorup: Teim ar facebook chun caint go dti mo chara agus chun cluiche a imirt
>
> neymar123: sea
>
> cappalldearg123: tá Facebook go hiontach
>
> DarrenShanfean: Tá "BackYard Monsters" ar fheabhas ar facebook ☺

neymar123: an feidir leat chat ar facebook ar an ipad

Anon4238: bhi me ar facebook do 3 bhlian

Translation

PancogLeSiorup: I like the ipad because you can get games and you can go on facebook

Anon4238: I have a samsung diva a purple one

PancogLeSiorup: Does anyone like facebook

cappalldearg123: I love Facebook

neymar123: it's good isn't it

PancogLeSiorup: I go on facebook to talk to friends and to play games

neymar123: yeah

cappalldearg123: Facebook is great

DarrenShanfean: "BackYard Monsters" on facebook is excellent ☺

neymar123: can you chat on facebook on the ipad

Anon4238: I'm on facebook with three years

(Extract from session four)

During one session, when pupils were discussing technology, many students went beyond simply claiming ownership of digital devices. They displayed their knowledge and expertise in using these devices, commenting on the level they had achieved in certain games.

neymar123: an maith le aon duine angry birds ar an ipod

Anon4238: ta me ar leibheal 25

Translation

neymar123: does anyone like angry birds on the ipod

Anon4238: I'm on level 25

(Extract from session four)

The language associated with the world of technology was important. In the chat rooms pupils exchanged opinions on the quality of graphics. The fast paced nature of the world of technology lead to an anticipation and awareness amongst pupils that further

developments were always on the horizon, the latest game or console was often referred to as 'the best so far this year'. Shannon was up-to-date with the newest digital device and the arrival of the next updated version of consoles and games, a factor which seemed to be an important characteristic of pre-teen life. Shannon was equally as up-to-date with the world of fashion. She knew about the newest lines of clothing that had arrived in shops popular to youth culture.

PancogLeSiorup: Is bra liom "New Look" ta range nua rudai "Floral" acu ☺

Translation

PancogLeSiorup: I love "New Look" they have a new range of "Floral" things ☺

Many of the other pupils aligned themselves with her preferences of clothes and jewellery; cardigans, dolly pumps, gladiator sandals and Pandora charm bracelets. She even offered them advice on the best place to find such items.

Throughout the six sessions in the chat room teachers were gaining insights into how pupils negotiate identities in peer culture. Pupils used their knowledge of certain tools and devices to construct themselves successfully in the world of pre-teenagers. They claimed membership in the pre-teen world through use of key language, and through their access to, ownership of and expertise in the key media of the figured world. Pupils constructed themselves as pre-teens by referring to experiences they had had, like attendance at pop concerts, meeting pop stars and walking the catwalk at fashion shows. Pupils were authoring themselves through Irish in an online environment. Shannon had an impressive repertoire of experiences which she drew on; she had been to an X Factor Live show, plus a Miley Cyrus concert and a JLS concert. She had travelled widely, and used these experiences to extend her pre-teen identity. She spoke about annual ski trips and an upcoming shopping holiday in London, as well as a holiday to film studios in America. She extended her identity as a well-travelled pupil by mentioning the abbreviated names of places like New York and Los Angeles.

Bhí mise i NY agus bhí sé an-mhaith.

Ar chuaigh aon duine go dtí LA, tá sé an-mhaith.

Translation

I was in NY and it was very good.

Did anyone go to LA, it's very good.

<div align="right">(Extracts from session three)</div>

Identity is won or lost through participation with others, and so Shannon's identities are jointly constructed. The positions she could occupy in the digital environment were dependent on those around her. Shannon often spoke about her love of the performing arts; she loved dancing, acting, singing. Other pupils often validated her choices through agreement and praise.

Aisteoir112: Ba mhaith liom bheith aisteoir ar an West End.

CailiniINOTACHx: oh go hailinn x ba mhAITH LIOMM BHEITH GRUAGAIRE NÓ MUINTEOIR !! ..X

CailiniINOTACHx: bron orm faoi na caps x

Aisteoir112: Ta mo mham gruagaire agus bionn me ag obair sa siopa sa samhradh

CailiniINOTACHx: kool xx ba mhaith liom bheith tusaa xx !! ☺

Translation

Aisteoir112: I'd like to be an actor on the West End.

CailiniINOTACHx: oh lovely x I would like TO BE A HAIRDRESSER OR A TEACHER !!..X

CailiniINOTACHx: sorry about the caps x

Aisteoir112: My mam's a hairdresser and I work in the shop in the summer

CailiniINOTACHx: kool xx I'd like to be you xx !! ☺

Pupils legitimated her identity work by aligning themselves with her stances and opinions, and laughing appreciatively at her comments. In doing so, her identity work was being facilitated by those around her.

Aisteoir112: Agor oíche samhana gleas mé suas mar Lady Gaga

rugbaibo12: hhaha

AnLaochCeilteach: goa gléas mise suas mar matador

Translation

Aisteoir112: For Halloween I dressed up as Lady Gaga

rugbaibo12: hhaha

AnLaochCeilteach: lol I dressed up as matador

Shannon frequently managed to position herself favourably in the chat room interactions; even her choice of Easter egg gained her peer approval.

Aisteoir112: Fuair me ubh caisce agus ta se Lilly O Brian

BroBro: ní fuair mé aon ubh cáisce fós ☹

Anon3396: ca ata lily o brein

BroBro: ah ba brea liom é sin ••

Aisteoir112: Ta Lilly O Brian seaclaide

AnLaochCeilteach: ná mise ach i rith na laethanta saoir beidh me sa leaba ag féachaint ar D.V.D ag ithe na uibh cháiscigh

Aisteoir112: Agus fuair me ubh caisce Feraro Roche

AnLaochCeilteach: á is breá liom feraro roche

BroBro: ah aisteoir ba bhrea liom bheith ag do theach ar domhnach casca goa ☺

Aisteoir112: Sea ta feraro roche go haillin

Anon2547: CÚL

Translation

Aisteoir112: I got an Easter egg and it's Lily O'Brien's

BroBro: I didn't get any Easter egg yet ☹

Anon3396: who's lily o brien

BroBro: ah I'd love that ☺

Aisteoir112: Lily O'Brien is chocolate

Aisteoir112: And I got a Feraro Roche egg

AnLaochCeilteach: ah I love feraro roche

BroBro: ah aisteoir I'd love to be in your house Easter Sunday lol ☺

Aisteoir112: Yeah feraro roche is lovely

Anon2547: COOL

(Extract from session six)

Shannon experienced much success in the chat room setting. She used tools to pull off a popular pre-teen identity, tools that helped her to legitimate her status as a popular girl. She was often granted the status she sought. Shannon, in turn, legitimated the identity work of others in similar ways; she did not attempt to position others unfavourably in order to assert her own status. In speaking extensively about particular topics, Shannon discursively positioned herself in the popular pre-teen world. She affiliated herself with the key media of youth culture and aligned herself with certain important topics, people and opinions. I noticed during interviews and focus groups that Shannon code switched Irish words for English words quite a lot when speaking Irish, for example 'like', 'actually', 'anyway', 'oh yeah', 'just', 'really' and 'so'. This allowed her to use the important language style of youth culture while at the same time adhering to school rules, a habit adopted by many young speakers of Irish (Hickey 2009).

Throughout the chat room discussions participants were positioning themselves and others through language. There is no evidence in the chat room transcripts of Shannon being positioned awkwardly by other pupils. However, other pupils did experience being positioned as non-popular by others. Their identities were constructed linguistically by others, positioning them as having deficiencies or difficulties, in an attempt to further legitimate their own popularity (Hall 2008).

AnLaochCeilteach: An bhfuil seinnteoir dlúthdhiosca agat?

58

Skittles: iPod?

Translation

AnLaochCeilteach: Do you have a CD player?

Skittles: iPod?

(Extract from session two)

AnLaochCeilteach: tá guthán agam agaus tá alán arántí ar

AnLaochCeilteach: níl mar níl aon ipod agamsa

Anon8785: ni churim aran ar mo fon poca mar ta mo ipod agam

Translation

AnLaochCeilteach: I have a phone and there are lots of songs on it

AnLaochCeilteach: because I don't have an ipod

Anon8785: I don't put songs on my phone because I have an ipod

(Extract from session four)

The answers Shannon gave during the interviews and focus group session previous to the chat room project taking place did not differ in any considerable regard to the answers she gave in interviews and focus groups once the project was complete. I asked her before the project began and again after the project was finished whether she spoke Irish with classmates outside of school, sent a text messages in Irish or posted an Irish language comment on Facebook. There was no shift in her responses over the months. She was unaware of how her language choices were mediated by language ideology. She claimed that it was just easier to use English all the time outside of school. In the third interview I probed Shannon further to investigate her perceptions of Irish language use. I asked her would she ever consider, having now participated in an online Irish social network, posting a comment in Irish on Facebook. She immediately blushed and looked at me in disbelief. When she realised that I was serious she said

Uaireanta cuireann daoine ach níl a fhios agam an gcuirfidh mé.

Translation

Sometimes people do but I don't know if I will.

Not ruling it out entirely was a strategy for Shannon to avoid presenting a potentially unfavourable response. I would suspect, however, that the probability of Shannon posting an Irish language comment on Facebook is unlikely. Irish language was for school activities. The chat room environment was a safe place to use Irish because the project was a school activity and all participants were in Irish-medium education. A social networking site, on the other hand, is a space she shares with peers who do not attend an Irish-medium school. Posting comments in Irish in such a space would be risky business.

Shannon's teacher said that over the six week period she had heard Shannon use Irish increasingly when socialising with friends at lunchtime. Previous to this, she said she would rarely hear Shannon's voice on such occasions, presumably because Shannon was speaking in a low volume in English. When we consider Shannon's data in terms of the research questions outlined previously, we can determine that Shannon's participation in the project affected her investment in Irish and Irish-medium identity. However, these findings are confined to the school environment. Although Shannon was very successful in authoring herself in Irish in the school setting she could still not negotiate a space for Irish language in her life outside the school. Therefore, this project fell short of helping Shannon to negotiate the conflicting socialisation agenda she faces when considering Irish language use in peer settings outside of the school. More was needed, in terms of the project itself, and in terms of classroom and school practices over the duration of her primary school years, to facilitate her Irish-medium identity work and investment in Irish language use in settings outside of the school.

Fiona

The third pupil interviewed at various stages throughout the project was Fiona. She is a twelve year old pupil in sixth class at Scoil Mhuire. She lives at home with her parents and younger sister. In school, Fiona is perceived as a 'good girl'. During interviews and focus group sessions she often spoke about loving her school and the teachers. She places high value on learning and on the school policies and practices. For Fiona, Irish represented an important element of school life, and access to higher education and career possibilities. While interacting in the chat room session Fiona brought her 'good girl' behaviour with her. She used her Irish copy and dictionary consistently to check for correct spellings and structure, and to post questions suggested by the teacher in class. As a result, her language output was of a higher standard than most other pupils. She wrote down new words and spellings other pupils had posted. She went to great lengths to improve and sustain the quality of the interaction. She never posted monosyllabic responses or relied solely on emoticons to express her meanings. She posted higher order questions and answered other pupils' questions with enthusiasm. Her responses made sense and seemed very mature. She was courteous at all times with other pupils in the chat rooms. In session three, some pupils in the same chat room as Fiona were off topic and disrupting the quality of the interaction by posting lines of letters that made no sense. Fiona posted the following

> An féidir linn caint faoi an meánscoil le do thoil?
>
> Translation
>
> Can we talk about secondary school please?
>
> (Extract from session three)

When I asked Fiona afterwards about her experiences during that session she told me

Bhí daoine ag scríobh línte litreacha ach níor stop sé sin mé ag foghlaim, fós lean mé ar aghaidh ag labhairt Gaeilge.

Translation

People were writing lines of letters but that didn't stop me learning, I still continued to speak Irish.

(Extract from conversation with Fiona following session three)

Fiona had constructed the project as an opportunity for her to learn and she exercised her agency during chat room session in a way that was very empowering to her learning.

During one point in the first interview I asked Fiona whether she spoke Irish outside of school, to which she responded that she sometimes plays 'teachers' at home and uses Irish. When asked why she had never used Irish with classmates outside of school and she said that she would be 'embarrassed and nervous' because 'people will stare at me'. Interestingly, the structures in place in the school and rules applying to the project seemed to increase Fiona's sense of agency. Even though speaking Irish outside of the school was too risky for her, she seemed quite happy to abide diligently by the Irish language rule in the chat rooms, even when some pupils made that very difficult.

During the final interview, Fiona said participation in the project had given her opportunities to use Irish in new ways; she said she had never spoken about one of her favourite subjects, fashion, in Irish previous to this. This girl had spent almost eight years in an Irish language setting and never used the language to talk about one of the things she loves most. Fiona had constructed Irish language as the language of the classroom, a language used to discuss academic matters. By incorporating elements of her lived experiences outside of school to the Irish language curriculum the project could offer Fiona new insights into the ways Irish language can be used to express herself.

There was a slight indication in the data that Fiona is beginning to see the possibilities for extending her Irish-medium identity beyond 'Irish speaking school girl'. Before the

project took place Fiona said she would never send a text in Irish or use Irish outside of school with classmates. When asked what she would think or say if a classmate used Irish when a group of them were at the cinema together she said

> Bheinn ag smaoineamh 'cén fáth go bhfuil tú ag labhairt as Gaeilge, nílimid ar scoil?'
>
> Translation
>
> I would think 'why are you speaking Irish, we're not in school?'

When the project was complete I asked her would she use Irish again like this, and she said she might send texts in Irish. When I asked her how she would respond to a classmate using Irish outside of school she said

> B'fhéidir tosnóidh mise ag gáire agus labhróidh mé léi ansin as Gaeilge.
>
> Translation
>
> I might start laughing and then I will speak Irish to her.

There is a small glimmer of hope here, in that the 'embarrassment and nerves' Fiona had associated with speaking Irish outside of school have been replaced by a new possibility. There is hope for the expansion to other domains of usage. The findings in relation to Fiona's experiences indicate that chat room participation through Irish with peers can help pupils to stretch their Irish-medium identities. When Fiona had an opportunity to use Irish in new ways with a different community of Irish speakers she began to stretch her perception of the language beyond academic matters. More conventional Irish language teaching practices do not provide pupils with enough opportunities to do so. Therefore, immersion educators need to consciously seek opportunities for pupils to stretch their second language identities.

Community of Practice

After such a short period of time it is hard to equate the Irish language chat rooms with a community of practice, however it did develop characteristics of an emergent community of

practice and perhaps over an extended period this could have developed further. Duff (2002) outlines a shared significant dimension of experience as an essential criterion for community. In the Irish language chat rooms, that shared dimension was related to the ways in which members used the Irish language. Although pupils in the chat rooms did not have face-to-face contact certain rules for communication emerged and became codified as the project unfolded. Pupils' membership in the chat rooms involved learning how to use the Irish language in new and more pre-teen appropriate ways. Abbreviating Irish words became a shared practice within the chat rooms. Pupils used omd for 'ó mo Dhia' (oh my God), goa for 'gáire ós ard' (laugh out loud), grma for 'go raibh maith agat' (thank you), as well as new Irish translations for English words, 'cool' became 'cúl'. Although not synonymous with traditional Irish language education, using Irish in such a way meant that they were extending their communicative competence. In focus group sessions conducted with pupils from Scoil Mhuire, I asked pupils had they used Irish in any new or different way during the project. Fifteen of the seventeen pupils said they had; four of these referred to the abbreviations, three mentioned new Irish words they had never used before, while three other pupils spoke about using Irish to talk about subjects they had never spoke about before in Irish.

Language serves a function in establishing group identity (Saville-Troike 2003). These pupils had created a new variety of Irish language that could be used effectively to communicate with peers. In doing so, they helped to promote a feeling in the chat rooms of all being on 'the same linguistic wave length' (Saville-Troike 2003). Irish language had a new role as a marker of desired group identity; it helped pupils to develop a form of group solidarity. In interviews and focus groups with Scoil Mhuire pupils we discussed pupil participation in the chat room session. Pupils perceived those who used Irish language to interact with others as participants to the group, while pupils who chose not to use Irish to communicate with others were perceived as not taking part. The chat rooms' participants

were perceived as a community of Irish speakers. In answering the third research question, then, it can be said that the Irish language chat rooms provided pupils with membership in a new community of Irish speakers. Pupils' use of Irish language in the chat room space mediated their development as members of the digital community. As pupils were moving towards full participation in the chat room their investment was increasing and their sense of identity as part of the community was also developing.

Participants, through chat room interaction, were claiming membership in emergent internet-mediated community of practice of Irish. Becoming competent members of an Irish language chat room has significant implications in terms of pupils' learning and identity. The social interaction was organized in such a way as to create possibilities for pupils to express themselves and share their multiliterate identity (Dagenais et al. 2006). When pupils contributed to the Irish language chat room they were revealing and developing 'aspects of their identities, abilities and interests, in addition to their linguistic and content-area knowledge' (Duff 2002). Evolving membership in the Irish language chat room was also a process through which pupils could give meaning to Irish language practices. Pupils' learned, through their participation, that Irish could be used to successfully author themselves amongst peers outside the school. The naturalistic peer environments became contexts for the privileging of Irish.

Negotiating Identities

The experiences of Kenneth, Shannon and Fiona in the Irish language chat rooms reveal identity as a site of struggle and tension; identities are multiple and can often be in conflict. As pupils engaged in the chat room discussions they were doing so according to the frames of reference associated with the figured world of pre-teenagers. The dilemma for many pupils

was finding ways to inhibit two figured worlds successfully at the same time; the figured world of Irish-speaker and the figured world of pre-teenager.

> Figured worlds are historical and social phenomena into which individuals enter or are recruited and which are then reproduced and developed through the practices of their participation.

(Hall 2008)

Pupils needed to make difficult decisions related to their language use, decisions which reflect the identities in which they wish to invest. Thus, there is the space for pupils to exercise agency with respect to their social positions, investments, desires and their access to resources and practices.

Many pupils successfully negotiated both figured worlds. Rather than choosing between one figured world and the other, they adopted elements of the pre-teen world and rehearsed them through Irish language in the chat rooms. They found ways to negotiate both figured worlds; they exercised their agency in a way that was empowering to their Irish-medium identity and Irish language learning. In doing so, they avoided the opportunity cost associated with choosing between two figured worlds. They co-constructed strategies other than those envisioned by the participating teachers that made it possible for them to preserve Irish language as the medium of communication while at the same time authoring themselves as successful pre-teenagers. There were many moments when pupils negotiated new ways to use Irish, moments of resourcefulness that illustrated their agency in relation to language ideology. These pupils were beginning to use Irish to develop peer social capital; it was becoming a legitimate resource for communication amongst peers. At times, pupils' agency was enhanced across many social fields. Chat room participation shaped pupils' agency in complex ways. Kenneth was empowered in his Irish language use in settings that went beyond the school walls. He seemed happy to invest in Irish language use in peer group settings outside the school having participated in the project. Shannon's agency, on the other hand, did not appear to be enhanced to the same degree. Although she was willing to

negotiate a space for Irish language among friends within the school setting she did not seem to be willing to negotiate a space for Irish language beyond this.

Speaking to sixth class pupils in Scoil Mhuire directly after session one, already, their investment in the chat room as an Irish-medium space was very clear, they expressed a desire to preserve and maintain the chat rooms as an Irish-medium space. Language choices in the chat rooms were mediated by competing ideologies, one of them being the ideology of the program. The ideology of the program, more often than not, seemed to be the dominant ideology for most Scoil Mhuire pupils; they asked pupils who used English not to do so again and they complained in their diaries about the behaviour of those who were resisting the program ideology. These pupils were more influenced by an ideology legitimating Irish as cultural capital. From the first session they had invested in the chat room space as an Irish language environment. Along with their class teacher, they had jointly constructed the experience as a valuable opportunity for them to use Irish amongst peers, a social framework of possibilities for them to use their second language.

As the project progressed the multiple processes of negotiation in which pupils were engaged became more transparent. The first two sessions had been very productive; any disruptions to the discussions were minimal and could be attributed to pupils' lack of experience in an Irish language chat room. However, in session three the discussion in four chat rooms broke down because of the disruption caused by some pupils. Lines of meaningless letters, English language comments and endless emoticons were posted, taking over the chat room space. The other pupils struggled to get the conversation back on track and encouraged their peers to do the same. Tensions mounted and pupils were left feeling very annoyed and frustrated. It had clearly tainted their enjoyment, and the levels of pupil participation.

Níor bhraith mé ró-shásta. Bhí daoine ag cur síos focail agus pictiúirí amaideacha.

Bhí cúpla daoine ag measáil, níor thaitin sé liom an uair seo.

Ní raibh sé ró-mhaith an uair seo mar bhí daoine nach raibh really ag caint.

Translation

I didn't feel too happy. People were putting up silly words and pictures.

A couple of people were messing, I didn't enjoy it this time.

It wasn't too good this time because there were people who weren't really talking.

(Extract from pupils' diaries following session three)

The actions of pupils who chose not to participate fully in the chat rooms must be understood in terms of the investments they have. The motivation of pupils to participate in Irish language interactions in the chat room was mediated by other investments, investments that are connected to on-going identity work and desires for the future (Norton 2000). Many of the pupils who participated in the study had become very successful in the figured world of popular pre-teenager. Being a popular pre-teen has become central and dominant to their displays of self; this identity work is never complete because identity is never guaranteed (Hall 2008). In their peer world there exists an ideology toward which they choose to become socialised. Irish language use with peers did not conform to the sociolinguistic behaviours of their peer group. Using Irish in a peer setting they believed would mean losing integral threads of what it means to be a pre-teen. Therefore, they exercised their agency by participating to the extent that was worthwhile and by participating in certain ways. In their noncompliance with the Irish language rule pupils were marking themselves out as belonging to the figured world of popular pre-teens. They attempted to construct Irish language use as an activity that was inconsistent with being a popular pre-teen, as a conservative means of communication, a language associated with academia and authority.

AnLaochCeilteach: ar faca tú cúl le harnandez bhi se sin cúl den scoth nach raibh?

Bday: AnLaochCeilteach an bhfuil tusa muinteoir? Tá tú ag caint mar tá tú ceann :/

Translation

AnLaochCeilteach: did you see harnandez's goal, it was an excellent goal wasn't it?

Bday: AnLaochCeilteach are you a teacher? You're talking like you are one :/

In the world of pre-teens, then, displaying competence in the Irish language was a marker of distinction, marginalising individuals from popular youth culture. When other pupils tried to encourage them to use Irish they used words like 'blah' and 'shup', which they perceived as displays of strength and competence in the pre-teen world.

Although my role was not to discipline pupils participating in the project it was felt at this point, that for the remaining three sessions interacting in ways that were unproductive would lead to consequences, this was also ensuring that the project remained in line with the school's Acceptable Use Policy (Appendix G). Pupils were informed that anyone who deliberately disrupted the interaction in the chat rooms in the following sessions would have comments deleted, and if they continued they would be banned from participating for the remainder of the session. These actions did help to minimise the disruptions to pupils' interactions. Even though this type of behaviour was an obstacle to the discussion during the chat sessions it did illuminate processes of identity negotiation that pupils were engaging in throughout the project.

Conflicting identities is one factor that can explain pupils' behaviour in this instance. The fact that data were gathered in person from only one of the three participating schools could have also contributed to the breakdown. Pupils in Scoil Mhuire were highly invested in the project because they were involved in focus group sessions and interviews throughout. This may have increased their level of ownership and responsibility of the chat rooms, as well as giving them a sense of the levels of teacher monitoring that were in place. Perhaps if pupils from the other school had been involved to the same degree the breakdown in session three could have been avoided, or if not the data collected may have pointed more clearly to the reasons the pupils were exercising their agency in a way that was unproductive to the Irish

language environment. Levels of teacher scaffolding before, during and after the chat sessions or the ways in which Irish language is constructed in the schools could also explain the varied levels of investment pupils had in the Irish language chat rooms. In the teacher questionnaires, I asked the participating teachers their opinions on why some pupils had difficulty following the chat room rules during the sessions. One teacher believed it may have been because of pupils' lack of social skills, another teacher felt that pupils who were disruptive to the Irish language interactions were trying to make an impression in front of their peers, while the third teacher said that teacher guidance was key to the success of the chat room.

Although the chat room environment did give rise to negative behaviour, the pupils who engaged in such behaviour were in the minority. This feature was more than counterbalanced by the enhanced creative language use of the majority of the participants. The diary entries of Scoil Mhuire pupils highlight the value of authentic and dynamic interaction with peers.

> D'éirigh ar fheabhas liom. Bhraith mé thar barr. Bhí a lán daoine ann agus d'fhreagair siad mé thar n-ais nuair a chur mé ceist orthu.
>
> Translation
>
> I got on great. I felt extraordinary. There were a lot of people there and they answered me back when I asked them a question.
>
> (Extract from diary following session one)
>
> Is breá liom a bheith ag caint le daoine sa seomra comhrá. Tá sé ar fheabhas. Is breá liom é. Bhí sé spreagúil. Bhí gach duine deas le chéile and bhí siad greannmhar freisin. Tá an ceacht Gaeilge sin ar fheabhas. Ba choir dúinn dean é gach lá!
>
> Translation
>
> I love talking to people in the chat room. It's great. I love it.

It was exciting. Everyone was nice to one another and they were funny as well. This Irish lesson is great. We should do it every day!

Ar an iomlán bhí an rud go léir go hiontach, shíl mé go raibh sé rud ar fheabhas.

Bhí craic maith ann.

Bhí sé an lá deireanach den spórt breá seo. Bhí sé slí ar fheabhas chun críochnú an tionscnamh.

Bhraith mé go maith ach nuair a chríochnaigh sé bhí mé brónach mar bhí sé an uair deireanach agus ní bheimid ag caint leo arís.

Bhí an rud go léir go h-iontach. Is ceacht Gaeilge spraoi é agus is dóigh liom go bhfuil Gaeilge cainte níos fearr agam anois. D'fhoghlaim mé a lán focail nua freisin. Bhí an rud go léir ar fheabhas agus is dóigh liom bheidh sé rud maith le déanamh le rang a cúig an bhliain seo chugainn.

Translation

Through and through the whole thing was great, I thought it was a brilliant thing.

It was good craic.

Today was the last day of this great sport. It was a great way to finish the project.

I felt good but when it finished I was sad because it was the last time and we won't be talking to them again.

The whole thing was great. It's a fun Irish lesson and I think I have better spoken Irish now. I learnt lots of new words as well. The whole thing was brilliant and I think it would be a good thing to do with fifth class next year.

When asked what they enjoyed most about the project ten of the seventeen pupils in Scoil Mhuire commented on the opportunity to interact with people from outside the school. When asked if the school should run the same project with sixth class next year, all pupils agreed that it should happen again next year. When asked to elaborate, the words 'spraoi', 'craic',

'spórt' and 'spreagúil' (fun and excitement) were mentioned again and again. Their responses spoke volumes about the value they place on engagement with others.

Focus group sessions were organised with Scoil Mhuire pupils prior to the commencement of the project and the same questions were put to the pupils again in a focus group sessions after the project was complete. Pupils were asked on both occasions whether had they ever posted an Irish language comment on Facebook. The number of pupils who had never posted an Irish language comment on Facebook decreased from seven pupils to four pupils, the number of pupils who had posted an Irish language comment only once had shifted from four pupils to three pupils and the number of pupils who had posted an Irish language comment more than once had increased from two pupils to six. The remaining four pupils were not Facebook members. In other words, there was a general shift in the amount of pupils who had used Irish on the social networking site. Pupils were also asked during these focus group sessions whether or not they had ever sent a text in Irish. In the first set of focus group sessions only three pupils said they had; in the second set of focus group sessions ten pupils had sent an Irish language text. These finding indicate that over the course of the six chat room sessions many of the Scoil Mhuire pupils began to stretch their Irish-medium identities, change their perceptions of how the language should be used and invest in its use in settings outside of the school setting.

Conclusion

This concluding section points firstly to possible avenues for future research and areas for development in the study. The implications of the project's findings for general second language teaching and learning are then explored, with a particular focus on the challenges and opportunities recent technological advances can offer language teachers in their classrooms. Finally, the paper is then summarised briefly.

Future Research

An intriguing subject for further research in this area could be the effect of increasing the variety of contexts to practise second language in immersion education on pupils' recurring linguistic errors. The research could focus on the errors that have become characteristic of the Irish language used by immersion education learners, and work towards bringing pupils beyond these fossilised levels through explicit instruction before and after online interactions, for example. The fact that immersion pupils worldwide tend to reach a plateau at a certain stage of their L2 development needs to be further understood in terms of sociocultural views of learning. Learners' sustained investment in language learning stems mainly from the sense that successful learning will enhance aspects of their identity. Therefore, identity, investment, agency, linguistic capital and cultural capital are concepts which need to be linked to the discussion of language fossilisation.

Recommendations for Future Studies in this Area

There is much to be learned from the limitations of this study. In conducting a similar project in the future there are a number of factors which ought to be addressed and developed. The participation of a school from the Gaeltacht area is one development which could enhance

future directions of the project, putting pupils in direct contact with pupils who live in the target language community could help to widen their sociolinguistic range, as well as develop proficiency in peer interactions. Another factor that could help to develop the project further is extending the time frame; that way interactions could develop into discussions where learners explicitly focus on language. An extended period of time would also allow the project to develop into areas which would include collaborative project work. For example, pupils with similar interests could meet in the same chat room during chat sessions to discuss what they would like to focus their work on, assign tasks to each individual and decide how they would like to present their work. Collaborative projects could be shared on school websites or presented in a face to face manner when the classes meet; a factor which could help to focus pupils' attention on form as their language would be presented to an audience beyond the classroom.

A limitation of the current study, which came to light during the data analysis phase, was the fact that data were collected mainly from pupils in just one of the immersion schools. This was due to the time and commitment constraints associated with being a teacher-researcher. I think that collecting further data from pupils in the other two immersion schools would have helped to shed light on why the pupils from different schools reacted differently to the Irish language chat room settings. The ways in which Irish language is constructed within the various schools could have been investigated as a possible explanation.

Throughout this project I avoided focusing too much attention on pupils' linguistic errors during or after chat room interaction, in case it jeopardised the space as a safe environment to express themselves in Irish. All teachers involved were, however, provided with transcripts of each chat session. In co-ordinating a similar project in the future, a certain focus will be on developing further strategies to assist pupils and teachers with issues of

form, for example marking errors in chat room transcripts for teachers, to outline pupils' linguistic needs.

Implications of the Study for Language Teaching and Learning

One of the most important findings of the study is in relation to pupils' agency. Pupils' agency is more than an inbuilt framework they bring with them to school. It is constructed and developed through participation in activity and therefore is shaped by school practices and the implicit and explicit discourses produced at institutional and state levels (Lantolf and Thorne 2006). Pupils' agency in turn shapes their learning and participation. This opens up possibilities for educational intervention.

As witnessed through the changing forms of participation of many of the pupils involved in the study, pedagogical practices within the immersion classroom can potentially reshape figured worlds and transform identities. The project created conditions that increased pupils' investment and willingness to communicate in Irish, as well as helping them claim the right to speak Irish outside the school. Language practices and social structures in place in immersion schools can enable pupils to use Irish language successfully amongst peers; helping them to negotiate ways to use it amongst their peers without the fear of losing integral threads of who they are and who they want to be. The arrangement of resources and practices within the classroom and the school can assist pupils in constructing and reconstructing Irish-medium identities. An aspiration for learning in an immersion settings should be 'not only to further a subjects developing expertise at the level of communicative performance, but also to support continued development as a person' (Lantolf and Thorne 2006a).

The findings of this project point to the strengths in handing 'knowledge expert' status to pupils, using technologically advanced practices in the classroom and pupil

participation in authentic interactions with peers. The use of Irish language under these conditions helped pupils to find new ways of using the language, changing their perspectives and helping them to construct the language progressively. Participation in Irish language chat rooms extended the positions pupils could occupy when they spoke Irish. School and classroom practices are fundamental to empowering pupils in their Irish language use. Irish language educators must situate pedagogy in the very practices, passions and identifications that pupils value, so as to construct points of connection between Irish language and their lived experiences. Educators must make Irish language meaningful to pupils' lives by infusing it with familiar frames of reference and by using it to mediate cultural knowledge. Irish language teachers need to consider whether or not their curriculum content allows pupils to engage through Irish with important issues in their lives.

Reading, writing and oral language exercises should be opportunities for pupils to express themselves through the Irish language. Textbooks and course material need to be supplemented by authentic materials, such as the new Irish language monthly magazine, 'Aoibhneas'. Curriculum content could be derived from pupils' contributions in Irish language chat rooms, for example, making their opinions, desires and perceptions the basis for epistemic activities. In doing so, we are validating peer culture in the Irish language setting and validating Irish language as an acceptable form of communication among peers. The use of modern Irish language music could also be considered. Popular artists record Irish language versions of their music for a compilation CD each year for Seachtain na Gaeilge (official Irish language week). These songs could become part of the music curriculum, along with the much valued and more traditional Irish language songs.

Written texts serve as a safe place for pupils to try on multilingual identities; however writing does not need to be confined to pen and paper exercises. The current study reveals the benefits of embracing the textual scene of youth culture. Making technology-mediated

communication part of classroom life can help pupils to bridge the gap between their second language and youth culture. Chat room participation is only one area where there are considerable possibilities for language teaching and learning. There are a range of other challenging and multifaceted learning tasks involving collaborative activity online, for example shared student publications like research investigation, Wiki sites and online newsletters. Service learning projects in conjunction with local organizations is another option. Online collaborative activities, like all learning tasks, should be experiential and goal-orientated. The use of email and text messages in Irish could also be an interesting possibility for schools wishing to establish technology-mediated communication networks between classes in the same school or between classes in different schools. Basic classroom practices could also benefit from the use of technology. The sixth class pupils in Scoil Mhuire email the class teacher their homework. A school facebook page or a message board on the school website where pupils or classes post comments would create opportunities for pupils to express themselves through Irish and share their multilingual identities outside of the school walls, as their contributions could be viewed by a wider audience than the chat room space allowed. These practices would also help to extend the Irish language digital communities of practice.

The schools and teachers involved in this project were actively responding to the challenges and possibilities of their communities. Computers were used as a tool for language learning and identity construction. As pupils interacted in the chat room space they were also learning timely and relevant computer and communication skills. The past number of decades has seen a vast shift in human practices as a result of digital and technological advances. Educational institutions should reflect these changes in pedagogical practices, engaging learners in experiences that expand their functioning with respect to the valuable human practices of their time. Pupils today are being socialised in a way that is vastly different from

the generation that came before them. Communication is technologically mediated. Thus, the traditional generation gap that commonly exists between pupils and their teachers, between youth culture and conventional educational practices, has been exacerbated. This gap presents possibilities and challenges for language teachers (Thorne and Payne 2005). Arguably the biggest challenge for many educators willing to invest in online language learning environments will be challenges to their roles as teachers, as they may need to push the boundaries for teacher identities beyond conventional constructs. The selective and productive use of chat rooms holds the potential to transform Irish language teaching and learning, and the roles typically engaged in by language educators and their pupils.

Technology is a highly valuable asset in the second language classroom. However, we must bear in mind that computers do not directly mediate learning (Murray 2007). Technology cannot become an end in itself, as second language educators 'we should concern ourselves less with the design of technologies of transmission and more with how learners are required to think in completing different tasks' (Murray 2007). In seeking to benefit from technology in our classroom pedagogies, we must consider not only local infrastructure and technical support; teacher training and continued professional development in the area of online learning are vital components. Online communication between pupils, for example, requires careful scaffolding and planning. Language educators need to know why and how online interaction can be utilised productively in the language classroom. The financial cost of such measures is quite small when compared to the possible benefits it would bring to pupils' linguistic, cultural and cognitive development, as well as the maintenance of Irish-speaking communities.

The findings of this study highlight how naturalistic peer environments can be used as contexts for the privileging of Irish language and for learning the language. When pupils felt they could use Irish successfully amongst their peers, Irish capital became peer capital. As

Irish language educators we must consider the typical interactional practices of our classrooms. As witnessed in this study, group discussions which are teacher-scaffolded, rather than teacher-led, can change the dynamics of pupil discourse and participation in classroom activities, effecting their learning and identity work. The classroom should offer pupils extensive opportunities for such interactions. The school yard is also an area where there is considerable potential for pupils' Irish language use among peers. Programs that reward and encourage pupils to interact on the school yard through Irish, as well as a curriculum that facilitates their participation in Irish language games and interaction through providing vernacular input, are essential if we expect pupils to invest in Irish language use on the school yard.

Irish language teachers should reflect on how our choices as language teachers affect pupils' perceptions and investments in the language. Curriculum content, and school and classroom practices that incorporate the diverse histories, investments and identities of the pupils (Pavlenko and Norton 2007) are measures that can shape pupils' linguistic practices and facilitate Irish-medium identity work. These influence the ways in which Irish language is constructed within the school and can impact positively on pupils' Irish medium identity and learning trajectories.

Summary

At the beginning of this study it was very clear that although Irish language was certainly a large part of pupils' identities, they were struggling with how to learn and use their language and maintain it in a world that often makes such choices difficult (Lee 2009). The stimulus for this project came in the form of helping Irish language pupils to negotiate the conflicting socialisation agenda they face when considering Irish language use in peer settings. Irish

immersion pupils find it difficult to invest in Irish language use in peer settings. Their opportunities to develop Irish language skills are constrained because of the social risks associated with breaking the sociocultural norms of the peer community. Language is socially mediated. Pupils' language choices were enabled or constrained by their assessment of the social field in which the interaction was taking place. Irish, the immersion language, was viewed as the 'institutional public learned in school', used for student - teacher talk about academic business (Tarone and Swain 1995). Pupils' perception of how it would be received and valued by members of society and their peer groups deterred them from using it in other contexts, outside the classroom. They did not feel that they could author themselves successfully as a pre-teen through Irish and so did not invest in its use in peer settings. There is no simple solution to encourage pupils to use Irish language as 'L2 learning is a highly complex and socially situated process that is dynamic and involves the negotiation of access, participation, and above all, identity' (Swain and Deters 2007).

The current study sought to help pupils find a way to establish the legitimacy of the Irish language in peer settings, transforming Irish capital into peer cultural capital. Pupils' investments and identities influence the positions they take up in the language classroom and the relationship they establish with the school and its teachers. In light of this, the multiple and changing investments, identities and lived experiences of the pupils were made integral to the project. The Irish language chat rooms were created and an explicit focus was placed on authentic and dynamic interaction with peers. The chat room interactions provided a space and an opportunity for pupils to actively author themselves amongst peers through the Irish language. It became a platform for pupils to express themselves in terms of their successes and to gain peer approval through Irish. In doing so, pupils began to push the boundaries for Irish-medium identities; enabling them to construct Irish-medium identities that go beyond those related to the school. This new Irish language practice gave them a reason to invest in

Irish language use in settings other than the traditional language classroom, making Irish language learning and use identity affirming to them as pre-teenagers. In participating in the project, teachers and pupils could jointly construct Irish language socially, materially and linguistically in new ways.

Many pupils proved to be resourceful in their attempts to make the Irish language chat room a space where they could be successful pre-teens. They jointly negotiated fresh ways to use Irish in the online environment; the virtual space became their own, a space where they felt ownership of, rather than obligation to, the Irish language. It gave them a sense of the language as modern and progressive, characteristics that are important components of youth culture. When pupils spoke about their experiences using Irish in the chat rooms it was clear that Irish language learning in this context with peers was enhancing their sense of agency, through the project they were beginning to reimagine the language and refashion their relationship to it.

The chat room interactions were occasions during which participants developed membership in an emerging online Irish language community. Through their increased participation pupils were learning. The online interactions were occasions to process language output and develop communicative competence. The process of language socialisation that mediated pupils' participation in the online Irish language practice facilitated their developing language competence. MacIntyre et al. (1998) argue that the ultimate goal for second language teaching should be 'to engender in language students the willingness to seek out communication opportunities and the willingness actually to communicate in them'. Participation in the Irish language chat rooms enhanced pupils' capacity and desire for participation in Irish-medium communities. It was evident that many of the pupils who participated in the chat room interaction had increased levels of investment in Irish language use. As a result these pupils may be more willing to seek out opportunities

to use Irish in other contexts outside the school setting, increasing their opportunities to learn and develop their level of Irish language. Motivation to use Irish language ultimately affects the selection of communicative experiences the learner allows himself or herself to engage in (Segalowitz et al 2009). And, occasions to be exposed to the language are opportunities to develop language competency. Pupils' desired membership in Irish-medium communities mediates their learning of Irish. There were also moments, throughout the project, that illustrate pupils' increased investment in Irish-medium identities. The experiences they had in the chat rooms are also the very events through which they were learning and transforming themselves, actively stretching and developing Irish language identities. Immersion education can empower pupils with linguistic resources, when immersion educators foster in pupils a willingness to express themselves in their second language we are further enhancing human possibility, offering our pupils many ways to grow, to live and to be.

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Appendix

Appendix A - Instructions on Accessing Chat Rooms

➢ Scoil Gharbháin website   www.scoilgharbhain.org

➢ Click on the 'Seomra Comhrá' button on the bottom left-hand side.

There are six chat rooms in total (Scoil, Fuinneog, Bosca Lóin, Féile, Sobal, Gaeil).

When you click on one of these options the following will appear…

       Log in:

       Password:

➢ Click in the 'log in' box and type the name of the chat room, for example scoil, fuinneog, bosca loin, feile, sobal, gaeil. Do not use capital letters or accents on the letters.

➢ Click in the 'password' box and type 46146 (every chat room has the same password)

➢ The 'Múinteoir' page is available for teachers to monitor interactions in all six chat rooms at the same time; teachers are also free to participate in any of the chat rooms from this page.

       To access the 'Múinteoir' page…

- Click on 'Seomra Comhrá', then click on 'Múinteoir'
- In the 'log in' box type the word 'muinteoir' (without the accent on the vowel)
- Click in the 'password' box and type 789

➢ To post a comment in the chat room…

- Click in the 'Add a comment' box

- Type your comment

- When you have finished typing click on 'Set your name'

- A window will open with three options

- Click in the box with option 2 'with a temporary name'

- Type your username in this box

- Click on 'Go'

- Your username and comment will be added to the chat room

- A message will appear 'Do you want an email when someone responds?'

- Click 'Cancel'

To type any following comments in the same chat room

➢ Click in the 'Add a comment' box

➢ Type your message and press 'Enter'

When the session has ended close the website to log out

➢ Suíomh idirlín Scoil Gharbháin   www.scoilgharbhain.org

➢ Brúigh an cnaipe 'Seomra Comhrá' thíos ar an taobh clé.

➢ Tá 6 seomra comhrá ann ar fad (Scoil, Fuinneog, Bosca Lóin, Féile, Sobal, Gaeil).

➢ Nuair a bhrúnn tú ar ceann de na cnaipí seo tiocfaidh fuinneog in airde le seo

Login:

Password:

➢ Cliceáil sa bhosca 'login' agus scríobh isteach pé ainm atá ar an seomra comhrá. Mar shampla scoil, fuinneog, gaeil, bosca loin, sobal, (ná cuir aon cheannlitir nó fada ann)

➢ Cliceáil sa bhosca 'password' agus cuir isteach 46146 (pasfhocal céanna do gach leathanach seachas 'Múinteoir')

➢ Is do na múinteoirí amháin atá an leathanach 'Múinteoir'. Ar an leathanach seo tá an 6 seomra comhrá le feiscint agus is féidir leis na múinteoirí páirt a ghlacadh in aon seomra comhrá ón leathanach seo.

Le dul ar an leathanach 'Múinteoir'…

- Cliceáil ar 'Seomra Comhrá', ansin ar 'Múinteoir'.
- Sa bhosca 'login' scríobh isteach 'muinteoir' (ná cuir aon ceannlitir nó fada ann)
- Cliceáil sa bhosca 'password' agus cuir isteach 789

Seo a dhéanann na daltaí chun nóta tráchta (comment) a chuir sa seomra comhrá…

➢ Cliceáil sa bhosca bán 'Add a comment'

➢ Clóscríobh do nóta tráchta

- Nuair atá do nóta scríofa cliceáil ar 'Set your name' thíos sa chúinne ar dheis

- Tiocfaidh fuinneog in airde le trí rogha air

- Cliceáil sa bhosca le rogha 2 ('with a temporary name')

- Clóscríobh do ainm úsáideora sa bhosca seo

- Cliceáil 'Go' ar dheis

- Rachaidh d'ainm úsáideora agus do nóta tráchta isteach sa seomra comhrá

- Tiocfaidh bolgáin aníos le 'Do you want an email when someone responds?'

- Cliceáil 'Cancel'

Le nótaí tráchta eile a chuir sa seomra tráchta

- Cliceáil sa bhosca bán 'Add a comment'

- Clóscríobh do nóta tráchta agus brúigh an cnaipe 'Enter'

Nuair atá an seisiún críochnaithe ní gá ach an suíomh idirlíon a dhúnadh chun logáil amach as.

Appendix B - A Sample of Chat Room Transcripts

'Scoil' chat room - Session 4 (first and second period)

madrarua: an bhfuil aon duine anseo

riomhaire: Dia duit

madrarua: conas atá tú

OMD: conas a tá tu ••

riomhaire: go maith tusa

madrarua: ar fheabhas

riomhaire: níl me go maith tá me go hiontach

OMD: mise có maith

madrarua: agus mé féin

OMD: an maith libh riomhaire

riomhaire: an bhfuil iphone ag aon duinne

OMD: mise

madrarua: tá ipod touch agam

OMD: ta me ach ag magadh ni l iphone agam

madrarua: agus is bréa é

riomhaire: tá iphone agamsa

OMD: whhhooooo

CailiniAlain: Dia Guit ••

OMD: hiii

riomhaire: dia is muire duit

CailiniAlain: An /bhfuil iphone ag aon duinne ?

madrarua: tá `samsung ping` agam

riomhaire: meise is brea l.iom e

OMD: ta mp3 player agamsa

CailiniAlain: an bhfuil ta lg agamsa !! ••

OMD: woooo

madrarua: nil ceann agam

CailiniAlain: Koool Ta Ipod Agam !!

madrarua: mise freisan

OMD: nil agam

riomhaire: an bhfuil aon duinne ar facebook

OMD: ta mise

madrarua: níl mé

riomhaire: tá meise

CailiniAlain: Ta Riomhaire gluine agam !! ••

CailiniAlain: Ta Mise Ar Facebook is brea liomm ee !! ••

OMD: ta riomhaire ghluin agumsa freisin

riomhaire: dha ceann agamsa

OMD: ta 3 ceann agam

madrarua: ta nach mór gach duine ar é (facebook)

CailiniAlain: taa 6 ceann agam !! ••

madrarua: conas

riomhaire: an bhfuil aon duinne ar (BEBO)

OMD: nil mise

CailiniAlain: Sea Ta !!!   •• Nil Me are bebo nil maa liom e :/

CailiniAlain: :/

madrarua: mise freisen

riomhaire: is brea liopm (facebook)

OMD: mise freisin

madrarua: ní maith liom é

CailiniAlain: Sea Ta facebook ar fheabhas !! •• x

OMD: an maith libh fóne poca

riomhaire: an bhfuil fone poca ag aon duinne

madrarua: is bréa liom e

CailiniAlain: an bhfuil sibh ar msn ? •• x

CailiniAlain: Taa fon poca agamsa ••

OMD: tá mé

madrarua: cén ceann

OMD: níl agumsa •• ach ba mhaith liom fón póca

CailiniAlain: ta LG Agamsa •• Cad faoi tu ?? x

riomhaire: an maith le aon duinne cun obair i colacht tecnolioch

madrarua: samsung ping

OMD: ta lg ag mo chaire

CailiniAlain: Goo Halain Ta LG Touch Ag Moo Cairde

riomhaire: ta lg ag mo cara freisin

OMD: ní maith liom obair i colacht tech ....

riomhaire: ta iphone agamsa

OMD: an maith le aon duine sims

CailiniAlain: OMD An Bhfuill tttaa tu ana ta leatt !! :

CailiniAlain: •• (An Duine Leis An IPhonne) ••

riomhaire: an bhfuil cead ag sibh fome poca a tabhairt ar scoil

OMD: •• nil cead

madrarua: cé anseo a bhfuil le 02

OMD: nil mé

CailiniAlain: Sea Ach Caithfidh Muid é a thabhairt don muinteoir •• x

riomhaire: nil cead again

OMD: slan

CailiniAlain: ta mo cairde le o2

OMD: níl me ag dul

madrarua: mar tá nach mór gach duine ar Vodafone

CailiniAlain: cen fathhh ?? ••

riomhaire: ta me fein le 3

madrarua: táim le 02

OMD: an bhfuil tú sin suimuil

CailiniAlain: cúl

madrarua: maith agut

CailiniAlain: ceart go leoir ••

riomhaire: omd ce ata tusa le

OMD: •• an bhfuil scálán ag aon duine i an seomra ranga

riomhaire: 3 is brea liom e ach taim ar bill pay

CailiniAlain: aahhhhh ceart go leoir   :p

riomhaire: ta scaileain again

madrarua: duine elie le 02 agur an chéad uair

riomhaire: i gach seomra

CailiniAlain: cad a ta scailan ?

OMD: projecter]

riomhaire: is brea liom youtube

CailiniAlain: ahhhhh ta (interactive bord ban againn i gach seomra)!!

riomhaire: ya sin e

madrarua: tá siad ar fheabhas

CailiniAlain: seaaa ta   ••

riomhaire: nach bhfuil siad ta siad go hiontach

OMD: sin go maith

CailiniAlain: seaa taa •• xx

OMD: is maith liom an wii xx

madrarua: is bréa liom é

CailiniAlain: ••

OMD: mise freisin

OMD: an wii

riomhaire: is maith liom psp

OMD: an bhfuil cean agut psp

riomhaire: no nil ta cean ag m'uncail

madrarua: is bréa liom na eitelán ar an wii

Anon9441: is breá liom an idirlíon   ••   an maith le aon duine eile an idirlion ?

OMD: is maith liom an idirlion ••

OMD: fashion

Riomhaire: faisean

Anon9441: slán gach duine caithfidh muid bogg anois

madrarua: slán

riomhaire: slain

OMD: ssssssssssssslllllllán

stanly: dia duit gach duine

riomhaire: dia duit

muinteoir: Faisean anois

madrarua: dia smuire gut

OMD: hiii stanly ••

OMD: an maith leat fashion

riomhaire: aqn bhfuil fainne clusa ag aon duinne

madrarua: níl agam

OMD: tá fainne clusa agam

riomhaire: ta agamsa

billybobjoe: dia duit gach duine

OMD: hiii bbj

madrarua: conas atá tu

riomhaire: dia is muire duit

OMD: ta mé go maith

billybobjoe: o is brea liom an ainm sin xxxx

riomhaire: ta meis go hiontach

madrarua: bhí mé ag caint le bbj

OMD: mo ainm

billybobjoe: an raibh aon duine i seo faisean bhi me

riomhaire: ni tha mo anim

madrarua: uair amháin bhí mé sa só

riomhaire: ni raibh ta me ro-alainn goa

OMD: bhi mé ach ni caithin mé ach eadai ratha

OMD: cantberrys

madrarua: is bréa liom timber land

riomhaire: is brea liom cantaberry agus addidas

cailinculxxx: bhi me i faisean soe cupla seachtain ago bhi me an duine is oige

madrarua: déanann siad gach píosa eadaí

OMD: cad e sin

madrarua: timberland

OMD: oww an band

madrarua: no brand eadaí

sonas: Cad is dóigh libh de cótaí fionnaidh?

cailinculxxx: is brea liom addidas

OMD: 4 mise addidas

riomhaire: cathin mo cara timberland broga an steachainne seo caith an cainn leat MADRAUA

OMD: cadé

billybob: dia duit

madrarua: conas atá tu

OMD: an bhfuil geansaí péile no aon geansaí eile ag aon duine

riomhaire: is brea liom (NEW LOOK)

OMD: ní maith liom new look ••

billybob: snap

riomhaire: sea mar cathin tu cantaberrys

OMD: cad é snap

billybob: nil se ro maith

billybob: new look

OMD: an maith leat do éadaí scoile

riomhaire: snap is sea burn

riomhaire: ni maith liom

madrarua: is dóigh liom go mise agus billybob am téin buachaillí

OMD: is maith liom

riomhaire: ta siad ceart go leoir

madrarua: cad

riomhaire: ta 10 tatú ag mo dhaid

billybob: o mo dhia 10!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

OMD: an maith le aon duine fainne srón áil ••

riomhaire: ta 7 ag mo mhaim

madrarua: beidh é sin painfull

riomhaire: tatú

OMD: tá 7 fáinne srón ag do mham •• (aghaigh O)

riomhaire: no tatú

billybob: •• 7 chinn

riomhaire: ya tatú

OMD: tá 1 tattooo ag mo mham agus 2 ag mo dhad

billybob: nil aon tatu ag mo mham no daid

riomhaire: ta a fioas agam

OMD: aww nach bhfuil

OMD: sin k

riomhaire: OMD cen saghas tatu a bhfuil ag do mam

billybob: 0

OMD: nil cead agam ra ••

riomhaire: cen fagha

OMD: mar......

billybob: ta siad ....

riomhaire: ••   ya ta me ag mesial

billybob: cad

OMD: ta peilachán aici

OMD: •• na deir le aon duine

riomhaire: cen ait

madraruaaris: tá mé tar nas

OMD: nil mé ag rá

madraruaaris: slán omd

billybob: dia duit ta me duine elie ag caint anois

riomhaire: slan omd

billybob: ooo cen fa?

madraruaaris: dia guit billy bob a 2

riomhaire: ta si imitha

billybob: conas ata sibh??????

madraruaaris: go maith

riomhaire: go maith

riomhaire: ta me saghas tinn

billybob: sin go maith cun clusint

madraruaaris: an maith libh cloig analog

billybob: cad iad sin??????

riomhaire: ar dein sibh bhfuir coneartu

madraruaaris: cloig leis na lámha

billybob: nil fois cad fusa

riomhaire: sea rinneamar

riomhaire: dha mhi o sin

madraruaaris: rinneimid ár ceann

billybob: cul an raibh se go maith??????

riomhaire: slan beidh me ag caint libh

billybob: slan xxxx

madraruaaris: slán gach duine ••

madraruaaris: wahhhhhhhhhhhh

billybob: beidh muid ana bronach slan xxxx   ••

billybob: slan

'Bosca Lóin' chat room - Session 6 (second period)

Muinteoir3: Tréimhse 2 anois - Gairmeacha Beatha

siimmssiiee: conas ata tú??

ANphenom619: dia guit tá failte romhat conas atá tú

Aisteoir112: Cen post a maith libh???

CailiniINOTACHx: go maith agus tu feinn ??...x

Aisteoir112: Ba mhaith liom bheith i mo aisteoir no Eolai mara

ANphenom619: cuul cad ina bhfuil eolai mara

CailiniINOTACHx: baa mhaith liomm bheth i moo mhuinteoir bunscoil !! :D//x

siimmssiiee: ba mhaith liom mheith i mo banaltra •• cad a mhaith leat bheith??

ANphenom619: GOA

Aisteoir112: Ta eolai mara "Marine Biologist"

siimmssiiee: cad a bhaith leat bheith??

Aisteoir112: Ba mhaith liom bheith aisteoir ar an West End.

Aisteoir112: Freisin

CailiniINOTACHx: ohh o hailinn x ba mhAITH LIOMM BHEITH GRUAGAIRE NÓ MUINTE OIR !! ..X

CailiniINOTACHx: bronorm faoii na capss x

ANphenom619: ba mhaith liom bheith i mo iomrascálaí

Aisteoir112: Ta mo mham gruagaire agus bionn me ag obair sa siopa sa samhradh

CailiniINOTACHx: kool xx ba mhaithh liomm bheith tusaa xx !! ••

siimmssiiee: támo mham ag obair

siimmssiiee: i siopa brón orm ••

ANphenom619: GOA

ANphenom619: ••

siimmssiiee: dhá noimead :)X

CailiniINOTACHx: sea caert goo loiir x

Aisteoir112: Ach be mhaith liom dull go dti an Afric chun na daoine a cabhru

CailiniINOTACHx: aww sinn goo hailinn x

siimmssiiee: tá mkise arois ••

Aisteoir112: Sea ta me chun dull le mo chara ribh dull go dti colaiste

ANphenom619: BA mhaith le mo chara bheith ceoiltóir tá sé ar fheabhas agus deireann sé beidh sé a canadh le rhianna

Aisteoir112: Sin go maith,ba mhaith liom canadh ar an West End ••

Aisteoir112: An maith le aon duine eile bheidh ag canadh ar an staitse

Anon5738: Cadd?

ANphenom619: cad a maith leat bheith nuar a beidh tú fásta suas

ANphenom619: ba bhaith liom bheith iomrascálaí

Anon5738: muinteoir no gruagadaire cad faoi tu ??.x

ANphenom619: iomrascálaí

Aisteoir112: Ta alain rudai a maith liom bheith ach is doigh liom ag canadh no a bheith eolai mara!!!!!!

siimmssiiee: SLÁÁÁÁÁÁN ní beith mied ag caint libh ar seo arís •• bhí t-am hiontach agam beidir bhuailimd t-am eile SLÁÁN ••

Anon5738: slann caithfidh muid dull xxxx

ANphenom619: sea ba mhaith liom bheith iomrascáilaí

Aisteoir112: Slan na daine ata ag dul,ni beidh me ag bualadh libh sa seomra aris.........SLAN

ANphenom619: sláááánnnn •• ní fheicann me sibh arís ••

ANphenom619: beidir fheicfidh me iad

Aisteoir112: O chaithfidh me dull,SLAN SLAN SLAN,BHI SE GO DEAS

Aisteoir112: ••

'Fuinneog' chat room – Session 6 (second period)

mancain123: dia duit

ainmhithe23: heeeeyyy dia duit!

madrarua: bhí fire drill

ainmhithe23: ni raibh !!!

ainmhithe23: ???

madraruadearge: cad a maith leat mheith nuair ata tu nios sinne

madrarua: bhí

lireachain123: DIA GUIT

ainmhithe23: dia duit

ainmhithe23: níl a fhois agam ...:(

mancain123: sea

ainmhithe23: ••

lireachain123: dia guit

madraruadearge: ba mhauith liomsa bheith treadlkath

madraruadearge: treadliath

ainmhithe23: ba maith liom obair le wspca

drldeotin: gabh mo leat sceail bhi dril deotain again

fidelmamalaspraoi: dia dhaoibh

ainmhithe23: dia guit

fidelmamalaspraoi: conas ata gach einne

lireachain123: go maith

ainmhithe23: ceart go leoir

drldeotin: ar maith leath beidh i do ghruagaire

ainmhithe23: ni maith ba maith liom obair le an wspca

madraruadearge: go maith

lireachain123: ya mise

fidelmamalaspraoi: nil a is agam cad a mhaith liom a bheith beidir muinteoir bunscoil mar beidh leantha fada agat

ainmhithe23: sea

lireachain123: ya níl mé ro chinnta ta mé fois á sminamh

drldeotin: ba maith liomsa beith i mo ghruagaire

Anon7527: seaaaaaaaxxxx

lireachain123: omd mise friesin

lireachain123: xxx

Muinteoir5: Abairtí le bhur dtoil

Anon0832: sea

lireachain123: cad a maith leat beith

madraruadearge: an mhaith le aon duine a bheith ag obair le anmhithe

Anon5126: ba mhaith liom a bheith ag imirt rugbai le muimhain agus le eire

Anon7527: tá mise chun obair le an pound no wspca nil a faois agam fós .... ••

lireachain123: ya níl mé ro chinnta

Anon7527: ta me !!

madraruadearge: is brea liom anmhaithe ta 3 madra agam agus ean agus hamster agus 6 iasc ••

drldeotin: an bhfuil sibh ag smaoineamh ar pá

Anon7527: ta 23 aimhithe gam..

lireachain123: ya is BREA liom anmhaithe co maith ••

Anon0967: cul slan gach einne xoxoxoxo xcxxxx

madraruadearge: ni maith fadh pa ba ceart go volintírin tu chun cabhraigh le anmhaithe :0

Anon7700: sea bíom ag obair volinteer le gabhair agus ta mo uncle dog warden is breá lim anmhithe ••

Anon7700: ••

lireachain123: ya tá siad comh cute

Anon5126: an mhaith le an daoine rugbai

madraruadearge: ba ceart go bhfuil se sin spargúil :0

lireachain123: ya tá sé ar fheabhas

Anon7700: ni maith linn rug bai ta broon orm

madraruadearge: no mise

Anon5126: slan

madraruadearge: slán ••

lireachain123: cén faith an bhuil sibh ag dul

madraruadearge: sea

lireachain123: tán3 nomint faga

madraruadearge: awww ba bhaith liomsa fan ag cain libhse

lireachain123: bron orm 3 noimead faica

cailinnalainn: slan gach dune:(don tám dearanach ••

cailinnalainn: slann

lireachain123: slannnn •• bhí sé go HOINTACH ag cint libh sa seomra slannn ••

madraruadearge: slaaan beidir go mbuailfaidh muid la amhain •• tamuid an bronach
sláááááááááán •• ••

madraruadearge: an maith le aon duine a bheith ina eolaí mara

lireachain123: ya beidier slan ••

lireachain123: slan

'Scoil' chat room – Session 6 (second period)

MCRfean: Dia gibh ••

cappaldearg123: dia daoibh gach duine

MCRfean: Bhí druil dóiteán againn xD

cappaldearg123: dia diut ••   ••   ••

pancog: Caith tú orm, bhí druil dóiteán again

MCRfean: Bhí an bonnán go ard ••

pancog: Cautheamar caint faoi postanna

blaoscfaoitine: dia ghuit

pancog: Cén post a mhaith leat dhéannamh?

MCRfean: Dia gibh •• cad a maith libh beidh?

blaoscfaoitine: níl a fhios agam fós

MCRfean: Ba maith liomsa beidh bleachtaire.

pancog: Ba mhaith liom bheith i mo stiorathóir stáitse

cappaldearg123: ba mhaith liomsa a bheith i mo treidlia ••

MCRfean: Cúl ••

cappaldearg123: mar is maith liom ainmhí

pancog: Cad ba mhaith libh bheith nuair atá sibh níos sine?

MCRfean: Sea tá siad go halan

cappaldearg123: treidlia

MCRfean: Ba maith liom beidh mar bleachtaire ••

pancog: Cad é sin?

cappaldearg123: cúl

Anon2544: ar mhaith le aon duine bheith ina bainisteoir clg

MCRfean: Detective ••

cappaldearg123: níl

MCRfean: Sea tá.

pancog: Ba mhaith liom bheith mar bhainisteoir ar Runway shoow freisin.

Anon2544: cén cean iomáint nú peil

MCRfean: Cúl ••

pancog: Ar maith le aon duine bogadh tír igcór do phost?

MCRfean: Ní maith liomsa •• tá mé sasta anseo ••

Anon2544: ní maith liom bog tír agor poist mar is breá liom éire

pancog: Ba mhaith liom bogadh go dtí Sasana

MCRfean: Cúl ••

pancog: Díreach igcór cúpla blian, bogaim tar nais go dtí éire

MCRfean: Tá Eire ar fheabhas ••

Anon2544: sea tá éire ar fheabhas

Anon4090: IS MAITH LIOM A BHEITH I MO MHUINTEOIR MEAN SCOIL MAR TA PÁ MAITH AGUS TA SOAIRE FADA •• AGOM

pancog: Tá mé féin is mo chara chun chónaí flat i Londain

MCRfean: Cúl ••

Anon2544: cén poist a bheidh agat i londain

pancog: Beidh mé aisteoir ar na stáitse nó stiurathóir stáitse

Anon4090: CÚL

Anon2544: ar fheabhas

pancog: Cad ba mhaith libhse dhéanamh?

Anon2544: níl a fhios agam fós

MCRfean: Beidh mar bleachtaire mar mo maithair bhaistí

pancog: Tá mé ag dul go dtí Coláiste drámaíochta i mBaile Atha Cliath le mo chara ••

MCRfean: Cúl •• beidh sin go maith.

Anon4357: cú ••

Anon2544: ar fheabhas beidh sé sin alán spraoi

pancog: Cad ba mhaith leatsa dhéanamh?

gruagaire: ba brea liom dul go dti colaiste UCC

MCRfean: Cúl :3

gruagaire: chuaigh mo mhamaí ann

Anon2544: cúl : cén fátg

pancog: Ba breá liom dul go dtí An Gaeity School Of Acting

MCRfean: Slán!!! Caithfidh mé dúl bhí seo ar fheabhas ••

gruagaire: slag bhi se go hiontach bualadh libh slain

MCRfean: •• ••

gruagaire: :'(

Anon2544: slán gach uile duine : bhí sé seo go hiontach ••

gruagaire: ••

pancog: Slán gach duine! Seo an uair deirnach •• Bhí sé go hiontach caint libh agus béidir mbualadh miad libh uair éigin. ••

gruagaire: slan

pancog: SLÁN!!!!!!!!!!!!!! ••   ••

Anon4357: SLÁN ••   ••

Appendix C - Questions on Front Cover of Pupils' Diaries

The following is written in Irish inside the front cover of pupils' diaries to focus their writing.

If you are writing about an occasion when you were speaking Irish to someone…

When was it? Who was there? Where were you? What happened? What were you talking about? How did you feel at the time? Why do you think you felt like this?

If you are writing about an occasion when you were speaking Irish to someone…

When was it? Who was there? Where were you? What did you have to do during the lesson? What happened? How did you feel at the time? Why do you think you felt like this?

Smaoinigh ar na ceisteanna seo is tú ag scríobh sa dialann…

Más rud é go raibh tú ag caint as Gaeilge le duine éigin…	Más rud é go raibh tú ag glacadh páirt i gceacht Gaeilge…
Cathain ar úsáid tú Gaeilge? (data, lá, am)	Cathain a tharla sé? (data, lá, am)
Cé lena raibh tú ag caint?	Cé lena raibh tú?
Cá raibh tú?	Cá raibh tú?
Cad a tharla?	Cad a bhí le déanamh mar chuid den ceacht?
Cad air a raibh sibh ag caint?	Conas ar éirigh leat?
Conas a bhraith tú ag an am?	Conas a bhraith tú ag an am sin?
Cén fáth gur bhraith tú mar sin?	Cén fáth gur bhraith tú mar sin?

Appendix D - Interview and Focus Group Questions

Have you ever used Irish online?

Have you ever used Irish in a text message?

Have you ever used Irish in conversations with classmates when outside the school?

When? Who with?

Why / why not?

What is it that makes use decide not to use Irish in communication with peers?

What do you expect to gain from the project?

During the project and after the project is complete

What did you think of that experience?

Did it remind you of any other experiences you have had?

Was it like any other Irish learning class you have had?

How is it different to other Irish lessons?

Why? Why not?

Have you ever used Irish before like that? How did it feel?

What is your opinion of the project so far? Why?

What do you enjoy about it / not enjoy about it? Why?

Can you suggest any ways to improve it?

Have you found anything to do with the project challenging?

In this context you are learning through interacting with others…do you like learning this way? Why / why not?

How is it different to learning on your own?

In this context you are using Irish to interact with other pupils online, how does that feel?

Do you think you are getting anything from it?

Would you prefer if it was in English?

What has the impact of the project been on you so far?

Has anything changed?

A few weeks ago we spoke about….do you still feel this way?

An rud dearfach nó diúltach é duitse a bheith i nGaelscoil? Cén fáth?

An cuid mór / beag duitse é a bheith mar cainteoir Gaeilge?

An dtaitníonn sé leat a bheith ag labhairt Gaeilge?

An labharann tú as Béarla nó as Gaeilge (don chuid is mó) le daltaí eile ó do rang lasmuigh den scoil? Cén fáth?

Tá tú ag an bpictiúrlann/ ag cluiche / ag dioscó le cairde ón rang nuair a thosnaíonn duine acu ag labhairt as Gaeilge. Cad a cheapfá / dhearfá?

Ar chuir tú téacs as Gaeilge riamh?

Ar chuir tú aon rud as Gaeilge riamh ar Facebook?

Cad é an uair deireanach a labhair tú Gaeilge lasmuigh den scoil? Cá raibh tú? Cé a bhí leat? Cad air a raibh sibh ag caint?

An raibh seans agat labhairt mar gheall ar rudaí atá tábhachtach duitse nuair a bhí tú ag glacadh páirt sa seomra comhrá? Cad é/Cad iad?

Cad é an rud is mó a thaitin leat mar gheall ar an seomra comhrá?

Cad é an rud is lú a thaitin leat mar gheall ar an seomra comhrá?

Cad iad na slite go bhfuil an seomra comhrá cosúil leis an seomra ranga?

Cad iad na slite go bhfuil an seomra comhrá éagsúil leis an seomra ranga?

Ar úsáid tá Gaeilge in aon slí nua nó difriúl sa seomra comhrá?

An ceart dúinn é a dhéanamh an bhliain seo chugainn? Cén fáth?

An bhfuil sé níos fusa Gaeilge a úsáid sa seomra ranga nó sa seomra comhrá? Cén fáth?

Ar bhraith tú gur spás sábhailte a bhí sa seomra comhrá is tú ag labhairt as Gaeilge?

An dóigh leat go n-úsáidfidh tú an Ghaeilge ar an ríomhaire mar sin arís?

Cén fáth, an dóigh leat, go raibh roinnt daoine nach raibh sásta Gaeilge a úsáid sna seomrí comhrá?

Ar fhoghlaim tú aon fhocail nua?

Ar scríobh tú síos aon focail nua ón seomra comhrá?

Ar úsáid tú do chóipleabhair Gaeilge is tú ag scríobh sa seomra comhrá?

Ar úsáid tú do fhoclóir Gaeilge Béarla is tú ag scríobh sa seomra comhrá?

Appendix E - Questions to Focus Observations

Does Irish language learning and use enhance pupils' sense of agency?

Can pupils author themselves through use of the Irish language? How?

Does Irish language use empower or constrain pupils in peer settings?

Are their opportunities for pupils to feel empowered through use of Irish language?

Are the Irish learner identities available in the classroom conflictual to pupils' other identities?

Does being an Irish speaker conflict with pupils' other identities?

Do pupils invest in second language learning identities? Why / why not?

Is the Irish language context identity affirming for the pupils?

Observe any turning points / breakthroughs - What happened / What changed?

1. Do you think the online Irish language chat room project is a worthwhile venture for sixth class pupils in an Irish-medium school?

2. Do you think the pupils learned anything through their participation in the project? If so, what did they learn?

3. Do you think the pupils were learning Irish through their participation in the project?

4. Do you think the project had any influence (positive or negative) on pupils' perspectives of the Irish language?

5. Did you notice any changes in pupils' levels (or an individual pupil's level) of participation in the chat room sessions?

6. Do you think the project provided the pupils with opportunities that cannot be made available to them in the classroom? If so, what opportunity / opportunities?

7. In general, do you think pupils enjoyed using Irish language to interact with pupils their own age online?

8. For those pupils who did enjoy it…why do you think this was the case?

9. For those pupils who did not enjoy it…why do you think this was the case?

10. Some pupils struggled to follow the 'Irish language rule' when they were involved in the chat sessions, why do you think this was the case?

11. Do you think pupils interacted with one another in the chat rooms as they would in their peer groups outside the school?

12. Do you think the project adhered to the Revised Irish Primary School Curriculum guidelines and recommendations?

13. Do you think the project provided pupils with any opportunities to discuss subjects that are relevant to their peer culture?

14. What challenges / problems did the project present (to you as a teacher, to certain pupils, to the class, to the school)?

15. Did you notice anything else of interest related to the project?

16. Are there any other ways that the project could incorporate the lived experiences of the pupils?

17. Are there any other ways that the project could provide pupils with further ownership and responsibility of the chat room space?

18. Do you have any further recommendations for the project?

1. An dóigh leat gur fiú do dhaltaí Rang 6 i nGaelscoileanna a bheith páirteach i dtionscadal mar seo (seomraí comhrá Gaeilge)? Cen fáth?

2. An dóigh leat gur fhoghlaim na daltaí aon rud trí páirt a ghlacadh sa tionscadal seo? Más ea, cad é?

3. An dóigh leat gur fhoghlaim na daltaí aon Ghaeilge is iad sna seomraí comhrá?

4. An dóigh leat go raibh aon tionchar (dearfach nó diúltach) ag an tionscadal ar mheon na ndaltaí ar an nGaeilge?

5. Ar thug tú aon athruithe faoi ndeara ar leibhéal rannpháirtíocht na ndaltaí (nó daltaí áirithe) le linn na seisiún comhrá?

6. Ar thug an tionscadal deis(eanna) do na daltaí nach féidir a chur ar fáil sa ghnáth seomra ranga? Más ea, cad iad?

7. Go ginearálta, ar thaitin sé leis na daltaí a bheith ag úsáid Gaeilge ar líne is iad i mbun comhrá le daltaí ar chomhaois leo féin?

8. Dóibh siúd gur thaitin sé leo…cén fáth, an dóigh leat, gur thaitin sé leo?

9. Dóibh siúd nár thaitin sé leo…cén fáth, an dóigh leat, nár thaitin sé leo?

10. Bhí deacrachtaí ag roinnt daltaí riail na Gaeilge a leanúint is iad i mbun caidrimh sna seomraí comhrá, cén fáth é seo an dóigh leat?

11. An dóigh leat gur labhar na daltaí lena chéile sa seomra comhrá mar a dhéanfaidís i suíomhanna sa phiarghrúpa lasmuigh den scoil?

12. An dóigh leat gur éirigh leis an tionscadal freastal go dílís ar Churaclam Athbhreithnithe na Bunscoile?

13. An dóigh leat gur thug an tionscadal aon deis do na daltaí ábhair atá mar chuid den phiarchultúr a phlé?

14. Cad iad na dúshláin / fadhbanna a bhí ag baint le glacadh páirt sa tionscadal (duit féin mar mhúinteoir, do dhaltaí áirithe, don rang, don scoil) ?

15. Ar thug tú aon rud eile suimiúil faoi ndeara a bhain leis an tionscadal?

16. An bhfuil aon slite eile go bhfaigheadh an tionscadal gnéithe de saol an dhalta a chur san áireamh?

17. An bhfuil aon slite eile go bhfaigheadh an tionscadal úinéireacht / freagracht breise a thabhairt do dhaltaí ar na seomraí comhrá?

18. An bhfuil aon moltaí agat don tionscadal?

Appendix G - Details from Scoil Mhuire's Acceptable Use Policy

- Internet sessions will always be supervised by a teacher.

- Filtering software and/or equivalent systems will be used in order to minimise the risk of exposure to inappropriate material.

- The school will regularly monitor pupils' Internet usage.

- Students and teachers will be provided with training in the area of Internet safety.

- Uploading and downloading of non-approved software will not be permitted.

- Virus protection software will be used and updated on a regular basis.

- Students will treat others with respect at all times and will not undertake any actions that may bring the school into disrepute.

- Students will not intentionally visit Internet sites that contain obscene, illegal, hateful or otherwise objectionable materials.

- Students will pupils report accidental accessing of inappropriate materials in accordance with school procedures.

- Students will use the Internet for educational purposes only.

- Students will never disclose or publicise personal information.

- Students will be aware that any usage, including distributing or receiving information, school-related or personal, may be monitored for unusual activity, security and/or network management reasons.

- Students will use approved class user accounts under supervision by or permission from a teacher.

- Students will not send or receive any material that is illegal, obscene, defamatory or that is intended to annoy or intimidate another person.

- Students will not reveal their own or other people's personal details, such as addresses or telephone numbers or pictures.

- Students will never arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone they only know through emails or the internet.

- Students will note that sending and receiving email attachments is subject to permission from their teacher.

- Students will only have access to chat rooms, discussion forums, messaging or other electronic communication forms that have been approved by the school.

- Chat rooms, discussion forums and other electronic communication forums will only be used for educational purposes and will always be supervised.

- Usernames will be used to avoid disclosure of identity.

- Face-to-face meetings with someone organised via Internet chat will be forbidden.

- Pupils will be given the opportunity to publish projects, artwork or school work on the World Wide Web in accordance with clear policies and approval processes regarding the content that can be loaded to the school's website

- The website will be regularly checked to ensure that there is no content that compromises the safety of pupils or staff.

- Website using facilities such as guest books, noticeboards or weblogs will be checked frequently to ensure that they do not contain personal details

- The publication of student work will be co-ordinated by a teacher.

- The school will endeavour to use digital photographs, audio or video clips focusing on group activities. Content focusing on individual students will not be published on the school website without the parental permission. Video clips may be password protected.

- Personal pupil information including home address and contact details will be omitted from school web pages.

- The school website will avoid publishing the first name and last name of individuals in a photograph.

- The school will ensure that the image files are appropriately named – will not use pupils' names in image file names or ALT tags if published on the web.

- Pupils will continue to own the copyright on any work published.