

Language educators' regard for variation in late modernity: Perceptions of linguistic variation in minority contexts

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This article investigates language educators' regard for linguistic variation in a minority language context. It argues that teachers function as language norm authorities who may influence the linguistic practices and ideologies of students, and that this role takes on added significance in minority language contexts where access to the target language may be limited. Data are presented from a study on the linguistic ideologies of Irish language educators – 'new speakers' who acquired the language mainly through the education system. Participants' ideologies on variation in modern spoken Irish were explored using semi-structured interviews incorporating a speaker evaluation design. Although participants value traditional dialectal varieties of Irish, in line with established hierarchies, ideological frameworks are contested so that new ways of using Irish are beginning to gain overt acceptance. The results reveal the manner in which hierarchies of language variation in the Irish language are in flux in our contemporary late-modern period.

Dírítear san alt seo ar aird oideachasóirí teanga ar an éagsúlacht teangeolaíochta i gcomhthéacs mionteanga. Máítear gur údaráis ar noirm teanga iad múinteoirí a mbíonn tionchar acu ar chleachtais agus ar idé-eolaíochtaí foghlaimoírí. Áitítear go mbaineann tábhacht faoi leith le ról múinteoirí i gcomhthéacsanna mionteangacha, ceal deiseanna cumarsáide sa mhionteanga. Cuirtear sonraí i láthair ó thaighde ar idé-eolaíochtaí teanga múinteoirí Gaeilge, nuachainteoirí a shealbhaigh an teanga tríd an gcóras oideachais. Cíoradh idé-eolaíochtaí na n-oideachasóirí ar éagsúlacht teanga na Gaeilge labhartha in agallaimh leathstruchtúrtha a raibh measúnú cainteoirí san áireamh iontu. Bíodh is go molann rannpháirtithe canúintí traidisiúnta na Gaeilge, faoi mar a dhéantar san idé-eolaíocht sheanbhunaithe, ceistítear an múnla sin chomh maith céanna agus chítear go bhfuil aitheantas á fháil de réir a chéile ag saghsanna Gaeilge úra. Tugann na torthaí léargas ar idé-eolaíochtaí na rannpháirtithe agus léiríonn siad guagacht ordlathais ar éagsúlacht teanga na Gaeilge sa nua-aoiseacht dhéanach. [Irish]

KEYWORDS: Language ideology, authority, authenticity, educators, Irish

INTRODUCTION

Subjective reactions to variation have been fundamental to sociolinguistics since the earliest days of the field. Research in majority and minority contexts has investigated how social actors engage with linguistic variation. This work reveals how sociocultural and socio-political arrangements are structured into language evaluative frameworks and illustrates the currency that different languages and varieties have in various settings. Regardless of whether the focus has been on majority or minority contexts, educators as a unique cohort have not received the same level of attention as other groups in the perceptual research. This is surprising since teachers are widely identified as influential sociolinguistic actors who contribute to shaping the linguistic practices and ideologies of others (e.g. Ammon 2015; Cameron 2012; Hornberger and King 1996). In performing their classroom role, teachers routinely engage with students' linguistic production. In doing so, they mould linguistic practices. In addition, the assigned role as language norm authorities (Ammon 2015) means that teachers also influence students' regard for variation. This is especially true of language educators, who are often the primary source of linguistic and ideological input in the target language.

This article builds on existing perceptual research with educators. By focusing on teachers in a minority setting, it adds to the range of environments in which teacher perceptions of variation have been investigated, and contributes to broadening the literature on subjective responses to variation in minority contexts. The article begins with a review of themes emerging from previous perceptual research, focusing especially on work with teachers and in minority environments. Data are presented from an empirical project with pre-service teachers of Irish where informants participated in semi-structured interviews incorporating a speaker evaluation experiment (SEE). The paper concludes with a discussion of what the results reveal about the sociolinguistic circumstances of Irish (and other minority languages) in the late modern era, and considers the implications that teacher ideologies on linguistic variation have for classroom practices, and for prevailing ideologies into the future.

LANGUAGE REGARD RESEARCH

Investigations of non-linguists' perceptions of variation are grouped using the term *language regard* (Preston 2018). Studies of regard consistently show that non-linguists routinely process variation and react to it (Niedzielski and Preston 2000). Social actors are demonstrated to possess at least a latent awareness of variation across and within languages. Prevailing evaluations of variation do not pass below the radar of non-linguists either (Eckert 2012). Research shows that non-linguists recognise that linguistic practices

are indexically linked with social identities and modes of behaviour (Eckert and Labov 2017; Woolard 2016). This paper takes a language ideologies perspective on perceptions of variation. This approach assumes that beliefs about the value of sociolinguistic features, styles and practices are structured into understandings of how society works (Coupland and Bishop 2007).

Language ideologies feature prominently in investigations of perceptions of variation in minority contexts (e.g. Jaffe 2015; chapters in Lane, Costa and De Korne 2018). As in many majority contexts, a standard language ideology (SLI) (e.g. Milroy and Milroy 2012) is often prominent in minority settings. Within SLI, social actors perceive certain practices to be inherently correct, logical, authoritative and legitimate, with other varieties identified as incorrect, illogical, unauthoritative and illegitimate (Lippi-Green 2012; Milroy and Milroy 2012; Mugglestone 2003). Conceptualising variation in this fashion is a strategy through which individuals make sense of sociolinguistic environments. It allows social actors to understand their position, and those of others, within the social order and to negotiate various sociolinguistic contexts. An abundant literature exists, for instance, describing how speakers (consciously or subconsciously) tailor linguistic production depending on context (Bell 1999; Coupland 2007; Eckert 2000). Other authors go a step further and claim that variation and change are underpinned by subjective, socio-psychological factors (Kammacher, Stæhr and Jørgensen 2011; Kristiansen 2014). Speakers are thus said to set aside or restrict habits they feel bad about and adopt ways of speaking that they see positively (Kristiansen, Garrett and Coupland 2005). Thus, attitudinal and behavioural data illustrate that non-linguists are at least subconsciously aware of variation, that they react to it and that their awareness of variation potentially influences production. While these ideologies are perpetuated by language users, they are also reflexively negotiated so that they are fluid rather than fixed (Coupland and Kristiansen 2011). This fluidity applies particularly within the social arrangements of late modernity and globalisation. These labels are understood here to denote the structure of contemporary society, especially in middle- and high-income environments. They refer to the physical infrastructure of the period (modes of communication, geographical and virtual mobility), but also to the social, economic, political and cultural systems that are increasingly interwoven on a global scale (Giddens 2002).

Alongside real-world changes accompanying the transition of 'Western' society to our current state of late modernity and globalisation, significant shifts are described in how social actors construct identity (Bauman 2000; Beck 1992; Lash 2002). Within contemporary conditions of the political economy, many authors posit that identity is subject to a process of individualisation. Although individualism does not reign (Bauman 2000), identity is thought to be in a constant state of flux and social actors are seen as

more agentive, more freely deciding for themselves what is right and wrong, rather than strictly adhering to socially agreed norms. The shifting nexus between self and society in late modernity and globalisation is partly negotiated through language. This is manifested in practices, but also in ideologies, particularly in evaluations of variation. Among the attested results for language is the emergence of alternative ideological structures where processes of demotisation (Coupland and Kristiansen 2011; Deumert and Mabandla 2018) and democratisation/destandardisation (Fairclough 2001) are described. Within demotisation, SLI and the notion of best language variety remain intact. However, language hierarchies are re-ordered, with previously denigrated practices displacing formerly valorised norms and occupying prestige positions. Alternatively, destandardisation sees the erosion of SLI and its replacement by more democratic frameworks characterised by value levelling where diverse varieties are gradually accepted.

New ways of evaluating variation are described in many settings. Demotisation is attested in Denmark, where modern Copenhagen speech is gaining traction as a prestige variety among younger speakers, although conservative Copenhagen speech previously dominated (Kristiansen 2003). In the U.K., it is claimed that destandardisation is underway with previously stigmatised varieties moving into spaces formerly reserved for 'standard' English (Coupland 2007). In major global languages like English, research suggests that the value of traditional low prestige varieties is being reconsidered as the profile of language user changes (Chan 2015, 2016, 2017; Jenkins 2005). In minority settings, ideologies on variation are similarly renegotiated as communities engage with variation that emerges during shift and revitalisation (e.g. Gal 2018; O'Rourke and Walsh 2015). The social arrangements that characterise late modernity and globalisation interact with language and provide opportunities for renegotiating linguistic ideologies. Thesesocio-politicalconditionsareinthebackgroundoflanguageideologiesin the contemporary period. They are fundamental to explicating ideologies on variation, including the linguistic ideologies of teachers.

EDUCATORS' LINGUISTIC IDEOLOGIES

Teachers are not immune to the propensity to notice language variation and to react to it. Existing research demonstrates that educators in a variety of sociolinguistic settings recognise and evaluate variation in different ways. Teachers are shown to associate different practices with an array of characteristics and identities and to hold some varieties to be more 'standard', legitimate and authoritative than others (e.g. Wagner 2008, 2009). In turn, teachers' ideologies are shown to interact with aspects of their professional practice in interesting ways.

Studies of social psychological aspects of language in education demonstrate how teachers' ideologies influence evaluations and expectations for learners

(e.g. Seligman, Tucker and Lambert 1972). Evaluations and expectations of students practising ‘nonstandard’ varieties of English are lower than those for ‘standard’ English speakers (Choy and Dodd 1976; Haig and Oliver 2003). Similarly, middle socioeconomic status children are rated and ranked more positively than lower socioeconomic status children in educators’ reactions to speech samples, and white children are rated and ranked more positively than black children (Granger et al. 1977).

A significant proportion of research on language instructors’ reactions to variation comes from literature on world Englishes. Applied linguists and sociolinguists have investigated how teachers evaluate so-called native and non-native English. Recent work provides insights into teachers’ engagement with variation and the fashion in which it is reflexively negotiated under the conditions of late modernity and globalisation. Unsurprisingly, much research confirms that teachers of English in various international contexts subscribe to SLI and rate ‘native’ English more favourably than ‘non-native’ speech (e.g. Coskun 2011; He and Li 2009; Sifakis and Sougari 2005). In Litzenberg’s (2013) study of U.S. TESOL teachers’ evaluation of varieties of English, participants rate ‘native’ speech more favourably for status and solidarity compared to ‘non-native’ speech. Other studies likewise show how language educators recognise and sometimes subscribe to the prestige of ‘native’ speech and recognise it as learners’ ultimate target (e.g. Coskun 2011; Dalton-Puffer, Kaltenboeck and Smit 1997; He and Li 2009; Jenkins 2005; Sifakis and Sougari 2005; Timmis 2002). Despite teachers’ alignment with SLI in some contexts, a complex, nuanced picture emerges from data in studies of world Englishes. In a small qualitative study by Jenkins (2005), language educators hold ‘standard’ English in high esteem. However, participants also consider ‘non-native’ speech to carry significance for users as it is iconic of local identities and allegiances. This caveat to the prestige of ‘native’ English is also revealed in studies in China (He and Li 2009) and Greece (Sifakis and Sougari 2005). A potential mismatch exists between ‘best’ language varieties and practices that can represent a learner or ‘non-native’ speaker identity. In another study of 600 participants across 45 countries (Timmis 2002), English teachers are revealed as more accepting of ‘non-native’ pronunciation than their student counterparts. Chan (2015, 2016, 2017) reports similar findings for Hong Kong English, where teachers are more positive about local English than university students and professionals. Furthermore, Murray (2003) finds ‘native’ speaker teachers of English are more receptive to ‘non-standard’ English grammar and Euro-English features than ‘non-native’ teachers.

The complexity of teachers’ ideologies on language variation is evident beyond world Englishes also. In Sweden, principals and teacher educators are found to differentiate between the varieties of Swedish practised by teachers from different ‘foreign’ backgrounds (Boyd 2003). Results from label-ranking tasks and SEEs in Denmark reveal that primary school teachers and personnel managers (grouped as ‘gatekeepers’) adhere closely to established discourses

on conservative, local and modern Danish (Kristiansen 2003). In contrast, attitudinal studies of varieties of English in Wales finds teachers make unexpectedly little use of class and status dimensions in their evaluations (Williams, Garrett and Coupland 1996). They also rate 'South West Wales English' as a contender to 'Standard British English' for the title of 'Standard Welsh English', contrary to received prestige hierarchies in the U.K. (Coupland, Williams and Garrett 1994; Garrett, Coupland and Williams 1995, 1999). Research on African American English (AAE) in the U.S. (Blake and Cutler 2003) shows that a majority of teachers studied view AAE positively, consider it to have its own grammatical structure and disagree that 'standard' English is the best form of English. Dutch teachers stress the importance of 'standard' Dutch; however, they are concerned that the overuse of the variety potentially damages relationships with learners (Delarue 2013; Delarue and Lybaert 2016). Even code-switching, often considered deviant, is evaluated positively by teachers in Kuwait when responding to Kuwaiti-English code-switching (Akbar 2007).

Thus, while teachers can function as language norm authorities (Ammon 2015), as linguistic gatekeepers (Garrett, Coupland and Williams 1999), and as mediators of elite discourses on variation (Kristiansen 2003), they are not a homogeneous, purist, conservative cohort of standard language agents (Cameron 2012). As with non-linguists generally, teachers' ideologies on variation develop through social experiences. Importantly, the lived experience of teachers includes professional engagement with language norms. Educators, and especially language teachers, are intimately familiar with the intricacies of language norms through classroom experiences. While their sociocultural knowledge of status and prestige may result in teachers placing stock in 'standard' norms, it is possible that less rigid conceptualisations of variation result from managing variation and competence in classrooms (Dalton-Puffer, Kaltenboeck and Smit 1997; Kumaravadivelu 1994; Murray 2003; Timmis 2002). This experience, allied with the possibility that fluctuating social conditions are inducing a re-assessment of language ideologies (i.e. demotisation, destandardisation/democratisation), suggests that teachers' ideologies may be particularly susceptible to renegotiation. Nevertheless, it is worth bearing in mind that evaluations of linguistic variation in any language are dependent upon context and on prevailing social, cultural and educational models, as demonstrated in the next section on ideologies on variation in minority languages.

IDEOLOGIES IN MINORITY LANGUAGES

The restoration of language and society to pre-shift conditions is among the hallmarks of language revitalisation (Bentahila and Davies 1993; Ó Murchadha et al. 2018; Romaine 2006). In terms of the valorisation of variation in minority languages, revivalists are often shown to overtly pine for

imagined or attested pre-shift linguistic practices (e.g. Hornsby 2017; Jaffe 2015). Therefore, the varieties of traditional users of minority languages, especially those perceived as unaffected by language contact, are often afforded a high prestige status and are enregistered (Agha 2007) as authentic, legitimate, authoritative varieties. This ideology contrasts with hierarchies in languages with a strong SLI where users converge on a homogeneous ideal, often related to class, race and educational correlates. In situations of shift and revitalisation, however, innovative forms of variation emerge as a matter of course among younger ‘native speakers’ of the language (e.g. Stanford and Preston 2009). Linguistic innovation is also reported among so-called new speakers (e.g. Nance 2015). ‘New speaker’ is used here to describe social actors who use and claim ownership of a language that is not typically perceived as belonging to them, or to ‘people like them’ (Ó Murchadha et al. 2018: 4). It describes individuals with little or no home or community exposure to a language but who instead acquire it through immersion or bilingual education, revitalisation projects or as adult learners (O’Rourke, Pujolar and Ramallo 2015: 1). Importantly, new speakers frequently practise innovative language forms.

Innovative forms of variation in minority languages, especially those perceived to result from contact and shift, are frequently stigmatised and indexed as performance deviations from competence rather than as alternative competencies (in Niedzielski and Preston’s 2000 terms). While there is evidence that ideologies on new language varieties are undergoing renegotiation in minority languages (Gal 2018), ideologies that overtly denigrate innovative varieties are described in research in many minority contexts, including Basque (Urla 2012), Breton (Hornsby 2017), Corsican (Jaffe 2015), Giernesiei (Sallabank and Marquis 2018) and Welsh (Robert 2009). This is in some ways similar to the context of world Englishes, where practices that do not conform to the conventions of prestige varieties are sometimes overtly downgraded. The case of the Irish language serves as an illustrative example of valorisation frameworks in minority settings.

Contemporary spoken Irish comprises the traditional dialectal speech of the Gaeltacht (where Irish remains a community language), as well as the post-traditional speech of younger Gaeltacht speakers. In addition, it includes the post-traditional variety of Irish practised by many new speakers of Irish outside the Gaeltacht. Many habitual users of Irish reside outside the Gaeltacht, having developed proficiency through schooling, either in Irish immersion education or in English-medium education where Irish is a core, compulsory subject. A new speaker variety of Irish has subsequently emerged and is referred to here as post-Gaeltacht speech. Various aspects of language policy and lay perceptions of variation reveal that the three traditional dialectal varieties of the Gaeltacht (Munster, Connacht and Ulster) are overtly attributed a prestige status in a non-differentiated manner (Ó Murchadha 2016; Ó Murchadha and ÓhIfearnáin 2018). Furthermore, some learners are shown to covet Gaeltacht

norms and see them as a target for their own speech (Flynn forthcoming). Despite the prestige of traditional varieties, post-traditional speech, characterised by innovation in all areas of language, is increasingly attested both among younger speakers in the Gaeltacht (Ó Curnáin 2007; Péterváry et al. 2014) and among post-Gaeltacht speakers of Irish (Nic Fhlannchadha and Hickey 2017; Ó Duibhir 2009). These innovations are described in the

literature, but also emerge in folk-linguistic talk about language. They are described here using the etic, analytic labels 'Gaeltacht youth speech' and 'post-Gaeltacht speech' to distinguish them from 'traditional Gaeltacht speech'.

While younger Gaeltacht speakers retain many salient traditional dialectal features, innovation is diffusing to the extent that the speech of younger people in each of the Gaeltacht communities is perceived, by linguists and non-linguists, as distinct to that of older speakers. Unlike their Gaeltacht counterparts, post-Gaeltacht new speakers of Irish do not live in areas where Irish is a community language. Consequently, their practices are generally not anchored in the traditional norms of the Gaeltacht, but rather in the Irish encountered in school, in broadcast and print media and in networks of new speakers of Irish. The presence of post-traditional practices speaks to their instrumental and symbolic utility, allowing speakers to communicate effectively while also embodying a post-traditional new speaker identity. In addition to the 'covert prestige' of post-traditional practices evident in patterns of language usage (e.g. Eckert 2000; Kristiansen 2014; Labov 2001), perceptual studies with teenagers in the Gaeltacht have shown that post-traditional speech is also associated with desirable characteristics (Ó Murchadha 2013; Ó Murchadha and Ó hÍfearnáin 2018). This point is addressed again in the discussion and conclusion.

PARTICIPANTS

Teachers are often important actors in defining and perpetuating language models. Through their profession they engage with students' language and have the opportunity to influence practices and ideologies. As education is often a mainstay of revitalisation efforts, the varieties that educators value merit attention. Importantly in the context of the present paper, teacher ideologies can elucidate elements of the language evaluative dynamics of Irish in late modernity and globalisation. The participants in this research were 23 pre-service teachers of Irish recruited through purposive sampling in tertiary educational institutions in Ireland. In line with the ratio of female to male teachers in secondary teaching in Ireland, most of the participants (65%) were women. All participants were raised outside the traditional Irish-speaking communities of the Gaeltacht and most reported developing proficiency in Irish through schooling. In fact, participants were targeted who had developed language competency beyond the traditional avenue of intergenerational transmission in Gaeltacht homes. In this sense, participants are classified as

new speakers of Irish. In terms of proficiency, all of the participants had completed an undergraduate degree that included Irish (language and literature) before proceeding to postgraduate initial teacher education. In addition to degree specifications, the Teaching Council in Ireland at the time of data collection required teachers of Irish to achieve level B2.2 on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. The participants had a level of proficiency across the four skills that allowed them to negotiate their academic and professional lives in Irish and that allowed them to engage with the monolingual research instruments. Furthermore, almost all participants (96%) reported regularly using the language beyond their professional lives.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Data were gathered using individual semi-structured interviews, including a speaker evaluation experiment (SEE). The interviews were conducted in Irish by the authors and lasted 35–45 minutes on average. The interview comprised two phases. Firstly, participants were asked to describe the type of Irish that they themselves practise and aspire to. Secondly, informants took part in the SEE. This article focuses on data from the SEE, specifically responses to questions pertaining to where the speakers are from, the legitimacy of the varieties, whether participants like the varieties and would like to emulate them, and whether the survival of the varieties is important. In a departure from traditional quantitative SEE designs that seek responses on scales (e.g. Bishop, Coupland and Garrett 2005; Coupland and Bishop 2007; Giles 1970), participants in this study listened to four speech samples and offered free responses to the same set of open questions from the interviewer about each sample. Prior to completing the evaluations, participants were advised that they would be presented with speech samples and that they would be asked questions about the different varieties of Irish presented. The samples were selected from the archives of the Irish-medium radio station *RTE Raidió na Gaeltachta* and represented four distinct varieties – traditional Gaeltacht speech from Munster, from Connacht and from Ulster, and a post-Gaeltacht new speaker variety common among users who develop proficiency mainly through schooling outside the Gaeltacht. In order to avoid inter-gender bias in evaluations across samples, only male voices were included in the SEE.¹ To control for possible order effects, the sequence in which the speech samples were presented was altered once more than 50 per cent of the interviews had been completed.

Samples were selected on linguistic grounds, based on descriptions in the literature, and were checked by both authors for alignment. The traditional Gaeltacht samples were distinguished from the post-Gaeltacht new speaker variety mainly on the basis of attested phonological differences. In the traditional dialectal varieties, traditional distinctions between ‘broad’ and ‘slender’ consonant sounds (corresponding to palatalised and non-palatalised

consonants) were maintained, as were traditional productions of consonant sounds that have no equivalent in Irish English. The post-Gaeltacht new speaker sample was represented by a speaker from Dublin and did not display traditional distinctions between broad and slender consonant sounds and did not display traditional phonological variants where traditional sounds in Irish have no equivalent in Irish English. The traditional Munster Gaeltacht speech sample featured a speaker from the Corca Dhuibhne Gaeltacht area and displayed characteristic local synthetic verbal structures and traditional lexical stress shift away from the initial syllable in certain circumstances. The Connacht variety featured a speaker from the Connemara Gaeltacht area whose speech featured lengthening of short vowels before *nm* as well as characteristic initial lexical stress and lexical items. The Ulster variety was represented by a speaker from the North West Donegal Gaeltacht area. The sample was distinguishable through vowel shortening in initial syllables, through *g* devoicing and through some distinctly local lexical items.

Interviews were transcribed by research assistants and transcripts were checked for accuracy by the authors prior to conducting a thematic analysis. A coding framework was developed based on a randomly selected sample of 20 per cent of the corpus and, following confirmation of the applicability of this framework to the rest of the corpus, the remaining data were coded. The coding was then crosschecked for accuracy. The themes that emerged from the thematic analysis were: *language and space*; *authenticity*; *correctness and authority*; and *future trajectories*. Themes are discussed in turn, with a focus on what the responses of new speaker teachers of Irish reveal about ideologies on variation in minority languages in the era of late modernity and globalisation. Interview excerpts have been translated (by the authors) into English from the original Irish.

RESULTS

Language and space

Participants identified the geographical provenance of speakers with a high level of success. In relation to the traditional Gaeltacht speech samples, this was especially the case for the Ulster and Connacht varieties, which were correctly identified by 96 and 87 per cent of participants, respectively. Somewhat surprisingly, the Munster variety was not identified as widely by the participants; a smaller majority (61%) correctly identified the geographical background of the speaker. Participants' responses to the post-Gaeltacht new speaker variety are arguably the most noteworthy. As described above, this variety was represented by a speaker from Dublin who practised post-traditional, post-Gaeltacht variation. While it is notable that almost all participants (96%) identified this speaker as not being from the Gaeltacht, the consensus that emerges regarding the speaker's profile is striking. The great

majority of responses (96%) identify the speaker as practising a distinct variety used by new speakers who have learned Irish through education:

Extract 1

‘That person is probably an Irish learner. I don’t think he has natural Irish. I think he has Irish as a second language.. .rather than having used it since he was two’ (P11).

Interestingly, the post-traditional variety of Irish presented is not only identified as a variety practised among new speakers, but it is also seen as having geographical roots in Dublin, among a perceived network of habitual language users:

Extract 2

‘I’d say he’s from Dublin. It’s easier for me because everyone around me speaks Irish like that’ (P22).

The participants, who are classified as new speakers, include themselves among the pool of users of Irish who practise a post-Gaeltacht variety; they see their own practices reflected back to them in the post-Gaeltacht speech sample and they compare it to the way they themselves speak. The results speak to a perceptual dialectology of Irish in which the language is located in the traditional communities of the Gaeltacht, but also among new speaker communities in Dublin (and perhaps elsewhere). These communities of speakers practise a distinct variety and the informants participate in them. In line with previous observations in Ireland and elsewhere, the Irish language is seen to occupy new spaces. In addition, the results here illustrate that Irish is establishing roots in new areas so that post-traditional language practices are now developing ties to specific places. Newly formed links to place in turn provide post-traditional speech practices with a degree of authenticity, although this is still a contested authenticity.

Authenticity

It is frequently illustrated that authenticity is significant in the evaluation of linguistic performance (Bucholtz 2003; Eckert 2003; Woolard 2016). In Irish, as in many minority settings, a legitimating ideology of authenticity is evident. The value of language is located in its representation of specific communities and in sounding natural and authentic in a way that celebrates marked local forms (Woolard 2016). Unsurprisingly, and in line with previous research (Gal 2018; O’Rourke and Walsh 2015), the perceived authenticity of the varieties of Irish presented in the SEE is revealed as important in educators’ responses to queries relating to whether they liked the way speakers in the SEE spoke. As expected, the traditional Gaeltacht varieties fared best as the participants reported liking them most, with the post-Gaeltacht variety appealing least to

participants. It is worth bearing in mind that participants were not themselves traditional Gaeltacht language users, but rather compared themselves to the new speaker variety in the SEE. Nonetheless, the pattern of evaluation that emerges in the data mirrors received models of prestige in Irish where traditional speech is valorised and varieties that deviate from that norm are denigrated (Ó Murchadha 2016). Traditional Connacht Gaeltacht Irish emerges as the variety that participants like most, with all participants indicating that they have an affinity for this variety. In line with research with learners of Irish by Flynn (forthcoming), the vast majority (96%) of informants responded positively to the traditional Munster Gaeltacht speech sample, while a much smaller majority of participants (70%) reported liking the traditional variety from the Ulster Gaeltacht. This finding is consistent with a common perception of Ulster Gaeltacht Irish as a distinct variety that is different to other spoken varieties and to the standard written norm. Consequently, Ulster Irish is sometimes perceived as difficult to comprehend for learners and users of other varieties of Irish (Flynn forthcoming).

Descriptions of the traditional Gaeltacht speech varieties reveal that they are perceived as natural, marked and authentic representations of specific 'native' communities and that they carry important cultural and historical value. Participants explain that these varieties appeal to them on that basis:

Extract 3

'There's rhythm in the speech. It's easy to see that that person has Irish as a first language and to see the culture he carries in his dialect' (P11).

The phonology of traditional Gaeltacht speech is furthermore seen as melodious and pleasant by participants, revealing the importance of accent and prosody in achieving authority through authenticity:

Extract 4

'His Irish is nice and musical, more sing-songy, like a song, I'd say' (P22).

The post-Gaeltacht variety of Irish receives the least positive response, with a smaller majority (61%) reporting a fondness for this type of speech. In elaborating, the pre-service teachers called frequently on discourses of authenticity in order to support their positions on traditional and post-Gaeltacht varieties. The post-Gaeltacht variety was seen as an acceptable variety of Irish, but also as one that lacked authenticity, an artificial type of speech linked to the standard written variety and a non-native, second-language user:

Extract 5

'It's clear that Irish isn't his first language and that he learned Irish at school. Just because of his accent you know that Irish isn't his first language' (P5).

Extract 6

‘I suppose that person is an Irish language learner. I don’t think that he has natural Irish, but that he has Irish as a second language’ (P11).

While the post-traditional speaker was seen to practise good, correct Irish in one sense, participants also felt that something was missing. In contrast to the samples of traditional speech in the SEE, the post-traditional speaker was seen not to possess the authentic, marked nuances of the language, i.e. the richness of pronunciation, and the right accent:

Extract 7

‘He’s not as fluent as the other people, maybe. And maybe the pronunciation, the pronunciation isn’t as rich’ (P1),

Extract 8

‘He didn’t have the dialects, he didn’t have the accent and his pronunciation of the words was a little odd’ (P16).

Therefore, despite the mostly positive response to the post-Gaeltacht new speaker sample and the authenticity associated with it through its link to specific places, the authenticity of the variety is not fully established compared to traditional Gaeltacht speech. The variety is subsequently not judged as favourably as traditional Gaeltacht speech. Ideologies of authenticity are a central concern in establishing authority in Irish, and this is related to the varieties of Irish that participants in this study like. These ideologies are also multidimensional, however, and it seems that post-Gaeltacht new speaker Irish does, to an extent, appeal to the new speaker teacher participants in this study. This new speaker variety of Irish is perceived as possessing a degree of authenticity through its indexing of particular places and identities (as elaborated in the section ‘Future trajectories’ below and as illustrated in extracts 19–23). However, as post-Gaeltacht speech is not seen as sounding totally natural and authentic, and as its marked forms are not celebrated to the same extent as Gaeltacht practices, it is argued here that the variety possesses an inchoate or incipient authenticity.

Correctness and authority

Ideologies of correctness and authority are also important in evaluations of variation (Lippi-Green 2012). As users converge on sets of abstract, at times opaque, rules for what counts as proper language, certain features, forms and practices become recognised as legitimate and acceptable. In many settings, this is manifested in SLI, characterised by a belief in the inherent correctness of a monolithic standard variety. In other settings, a pluricentric or polynomic model of valorisation prevails (Ó Murchadha 2016), and authority is located in

perceived ethnolinguistic authenticity. Such is the case with the evaluation of linguistic variation in the Irish language, where a pluricentric model of valorisation exists. Conceptualisations of correctness and authority in Irish are often based on the imagined linguistic practices of distinct spaces and times (O'Rourke and Walsh 2015), namely the various Gaeltacht areas at a time when the vernacular is unaffected by language shift, or is seen to be unaffected. This is the case in the results from the teachers' responses to the traditional varieties presented in the SEE.

While some participants questioned their authority, as new speakers, to adjudicate on correctness and authority in Irish, a clear hierarchisation of varieties emerges. Participants recognise the parallel competence and mastery of the traditional Gaeltacht speakers presented in the samples and reveal that they find each of the Gaeltacht varieties correct and authoritative. All participants find the Connacht variety both correct and authoritative, with the vast majority indicating the same for the Ulster (96%) and Munster (91%) samples:

Extract 9

'It is [correct and authoritative]. It is correct. He has good Irish. If he were speaking to me I'd be concerned speaking back to him. I would sort of look at him and say "Oh, you have good Irish." I wouldn't want to make any mistake' (P13).

It becomes clear in the data from the traditional Gaeltacht samples that participants' models of language correctness and authority are ideologically rooted in the native speaker ideal, where prestige status is achieved through authenticity and the circumstances of birth and upbringing (Cook 2015). Thus, correctness and authority in language are geographically located in the Gaeltacht, as a distinct time and space:

Extract 10

'I think that it is [correct and authoritative], because I think, the thing that I've learned is that all Irish that has to do with a [traditional] dialect has authority and there's no primary dialect. Any native speaker of Irish, you are entitled to use your Irish' (P17).

Biographically, it is the Gaeltacht 'native speakers' who are perceived as the purveyors of correct and authoritative language use as it is they who practise 'natural', 'correct' Irish:

Extract 11

'It is [correct and authoritative]. It's correct. That Irish is very natural. You couldn't really say that it's not correct and accurate if it's the first language that we're talking about. Like, it's clear that that person grew up speaking Irish from when they were young. You can hear that in his speech, and can we say to that person that it's not correct Irish?' (P11).

This trend is striking throughout the data. While grammatical accuracy is alluded to in the discourse on traditional Gaeltacht speech, the concept remains an abstract representation. Participants see accuracy, as well as authority, as existing in a specific time and space and as emerging as a matter of course from perceived authenticity. Accuracy and authority emanate from the sociolinguistic biographies of language users, rather than from concrete grammatical rules. A loosely defined accuracy is therefore evident in the samples. Along with the euphonious character of the traditional speech varieties, it evinces their inherent correctness and authority:

Extract 12

‘Again, I think it is correct and authoritative, because he has extremely natural and accurate Irish for the most part. I wasn’t able to identify any error. It was nice, natural. There was a lot of richness, the sounds, the pronunciation, things like that’ (P16).

These data stand in contrast to responses to post-traditional speech in the SEE. The responses to the post-traditional sample reveal that the primary attitudinal dichotomy in the evaluation of varieties of Irish in this study lies between the evaluation of the traditional Gaeltacht varieties and the post-traditional, post-Gaeltacht variety. Only a minority of participants (48%) believe the new speaker variety of Irish presented in the speech sample to be both correct and authoritative. While this finding is not entirely surprising, a number of noteworthy trends emerge in the responses to the post-traditional variety in the SEE compared to the responses to the traditional varieties. Notable among these is the distinction made by the participants between correctness and authority, the features of language used by participants when evaluating production and the linguistic models against which participants measure the samples. Firstly, participants consider correctness and authority in language to be mutually exclusive constructs when evaluating the post-Gaeltacht sample. For these teachers, correctness with respect to the post-traditional variety of Irish is related to the conventions of the standard written variety, rather than being located in a particular space or time or emanating from a speaker’s upbringing. Participants can meet the criteria for ‘correct Irish’ through alignment with standard written grammar. While correctness in this sense is a prerequisite for a variety to be considered authoritative, it is insufficient in and of itself:

Extract 13

‘Yeah, it’s good Irish, but still there’s something missing, maybe’ (P9).

For the majority of participants who felt that the post-traditional variety was not correct and authoritative, traditional phonological and prosodic features

are revealed as important considerations in evaluating variation alongside perceived grammatical accuracy. These participants consider that correct *and* authoritative speech requires alignment with Gaeltacht and/or standard written language conventions in both pronunciation and grammar:

Extract 14

'I think that it is correct. It is, because he's speaking Irish well, but I don't think that he has authority' (P17).

In the absence of traditional phonological production, the speech variety cannot be considered correct *and* authoritative, because authority is predicated on authenticity and 'correctness' alone is insufficient:

Extract 15

'Just regarding pronunciation, I'd say it's not right because.. I think.. it doesn't matter what place you're from or what dialect you have, letters have particular sounds in Irish and if you don't, you know, have those sounds it's not right' (P16).

These trends were not evident to the same extent in the data on the traditional speakers, where correctness and authority are assumed based on the speakers' upbringing. Again, while post-Gaeltacht speech is seen as correct and acceptable, it is not yet perceived to be on a par with Gaeltacht speech when it comes to authority.

Future trajectories

In contrast to the data above, the post-traditional variety is on a par with the traditional Gaeltacht dialects in assessments of language varieties seen as important into the future. Here, participants do not distinguish between traditional and post-traditional varieties to anywhere near the same extent shown above. All participants feel it is important that the Connacht variety be used into the future, while almost all participants believe that it is important that the Ulster (83%), Munster (96%) and post-traditional (96%) varieties endure as spoken varieties. While participants consider each variety as important, their justifications noticeably vary whether responding to traditional or post-traditional samples. The future importance of Gaeltacht speech lies partly in perceived inherent correctness of 'real' native speech:

Extract 16

'Yeah, I think that it is [important that this variety be spoken into the future] because that's the real Irish language.. it's from the Gaeltacht, I think, and that's where you'll find the real Irish language' (P17).

This echoes results above in relation to correctness, authority and authenticity in language. At the same time, traditional Gaeltacht speech is important from a cultural and historical perspective:

Extract 17

‘It’s extremely important [that this variety be used in the future] from the point of view of heritage and culture, the country’s culture. It’s important. It’s really important’ (P16).

Extract 18

‘Again, it’s really important that this variety be around forever because a thousand years ago everybody probably spoke that way – like the Munster dialect, the Ulster dialect – and we have to still have them in a hundred years, two hundred years’ (P11).

For participants, the traditional varieties index a particular, and desirable, way of being. As well as deriving correctness, authority and authenticity from a connection to a particular time and space, these features of traditional speech are also emblematic of that time and space. When responding to the traditional speech samples, the teachers involved in this study feel that this is something worth preserving.

Nonetheless, participants feel that it is important that the post-traditional variety endures. Chief among the justifications for this is what is seen as the indexical value of post-traditional speech in Irish. Similar to research with teachers elsewhere (e.g. Chan 2015, 2016, 2017; Jenkins 2005), participants in this study feel that the features of the post-traditional variety in the SEE hold identificational relevance. They allow new speakers to participate in the revitalisation enterprise without fundamentally altering their own place identity:

Extract 19

‘Well, it is important because if you’re from Dublin you’re not looking to imitate a Gaeltacht accent. You’re just looking to have your own identity. “I’m going to speak in my own accent and I don’t mind about other accents”, maybe’ (P18).

Extract 20

‘It’s important, in my opinion, that type of Irish. Well, yeah, [it’s important] that people speak Irish who are not just from the Gaeltacht and who don’t have a Gaeltacht background, that there are people from Dublin who are able to express themselves in Irish. I think that that’s important as well’ (P16).

As new speaker teachers of Irish, participants are of the view that it is inappropriate for all users of Irish to emulate Gaeltacht practices. It is expressed

that non-Gaeltacht users of Irish who align their speech practices with traditional norms may be perceived as jettisoning the identity indexed by the variety of English that they practise, and appropriating Gaeltacht norms in a way that is disingenuous:

Extract 21

'I don't understand that [people aligning with Gaeltacht norms]. Use your own accent and your own vocabulary. And it's important that there is different Irish used in Wexford, in a way, as well, in comparison to Cork because they have different English. So, it's important people have local varieties of Irish and they're not just imitating people in Donegal or Galway [Gaeltacht areas], in my opinion, anyway' (P14).

Extract 22

'As I say, I'm not trying to change my dialect. I'm a person, and I don't have to be, I don't have to be like a person from Gaoth Dobhair [in Ulster Gaeltacht area], or Connemara [in Connacht Gaeltacht area], or any place like that' (P21).

Participants here speak to an alternative legitimacy, identity, and perhaps even an alternative authenticity, for the post-traditional speech variety presented in the SEE. This stands in contrast to the dichotomy evident in evaluations of the authenticity of traditional and post-traditional speech varieties above. The perceived authenticity implicit in participants' responses to the future trajectories of post-traditional speech are again clearly rooted in ideologies that link language practices to specific spaces:

Extract 23

'Yeah, I think that it is important because, again, they're from Dublin and it's important that they speak like people from Dublin. That's important in my own opinion' (P22).

The perceived future importance of the post-Gaeltacht variety, as well as its function in indexing alternative identities, suggest that, for educators in this study, the evaluation of variation in Irish in our late modern age of globalisation is not a matter of straightforward, binary divisions between traditional and post-traditional speech varieties. Traditional Gaeltacht varieties retain overt prestige. However, results reveal that, although post-traditional speech is not on a par with traditional varieties, it is viewed as a legitimate variety that indexes particular places and identities.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results presented in this article are interpreted in the context of minority language dynamics in our contemporary era of late modernity and globalisation.

Transformations in ideologies are revealed in the literature as a feature of this period (Blommaert 2010; Coupland 2007; Coupland and Kristiansen 2011) and established hierarchies are destabilised (Fairclough 2001). In some instances, new models displace traditional prestige varieties through demotisation (Coupland and Kristiansen 2011). In other scenarios, ideologies of prestige in language are gradually displaced through democratisation, or destandardisation (Fairclough 2001). In such cases, a wider array of language varieties gradually become identified as acceptable (Coupland and Kristiansen 2011; Fairclough 2001). In the same way that the conditions of late modernity and globalisation have seen the worldwide emergence of new forms of major global languages like English (and new ways of evaluating these varieties), revitalisation and institutional support for minority languages result in new forms of variation. The ways in which social actors engage with new varieties in minority languages is also available for negotiation.

Traditional varieties of Irish are seen to retain overt high prestige status through the perceived authenticity, correctness and authority that emanate from their link to specific spaces and ways of being. While it is argued that the structural integrity of the ties that bind language and space are being compromised in minority languages under contemporary social conditions (O'Rourke and Walsh 2015), the data presented in this article suggest that some links between the Irish language and specific spaces remain robust, even if they are in flux. Therefore, the traditional high prestige dialectal varieties of Irish are anchored in the Gaeltacht Irish-speaking communities and they retain prestige status for this reason. Strong roots are maintained in areas perceived as traditional bastions of the language. Meanwhile, it seems that post-Gaeltacht speech is gaining recognition. As new varieties of Irish are used in spaces that have not been associated with the language for many generations, the link between language and space becomes complicated (Ó hÍfearnáin 2017; O'Rourke and Walsh 2015). For the teachers in this study, post-traditional varieties of the language are being associated with the new spaces they occupy. While post-traditional speech is not overtly considered authentic or authoritative, it is remarkable that it is ideologised as a discrete variety belonging to a particular space. The new speaker variety holds indexical value linked to that space. Therefore, the Irish language is seen to embody alternative sociolinguistic identities.

The data suggest that we are experiencing an ideological shift in the evaluation of linguistic variation in Irish under the conditions of late modernity and globalisation. A similar trend is attested in the 'covert' evaluations of teenagers in the Irish-speaking communities of the Gaeltacht (Ó Murchadha 2013). However, the shift towards a more inclusive evaluative framework appears to be less masked in the case of the new speaker teachers in the present study. Post-traditional speech has certainly not displaced the traditional Gaeltacht dialects as the overt model for language excellence. Traditional Gaeltacht varieties of Irish are still the *beau idéal* for the teachers of

Irish due to their authenticity. However, it seems that other ways of 'doing Irish' are gaining overt acceptance, even among a cohort of users of Irish who might be assumed to be linguistically conservative agents of traditional hierarchies. Similar trends are noted elsewhere in the literature on minority languages (Gal 2018) and also in research with teachers of more widely spoken languages (Litzenberg 2013).

The results in the present study can be related to the participants' profiles as new speaker teachers of Irish. Participants claim to have developed their Irish language proficiency primarily through schooling, and state that they practise a post-Gaeltacht, new speaker variety of the language. Their position as educators who are entering the profession furthermore provides them with an initial perspective on issues of classroom target varieties for minority languages like Irish. The fact that most of the participants are women should not be overlooked either. Considering participants' backgrounds as mostly female new speakers of Irish who are developing a sense of the linguistic needs of Irish language learners, it is perhaps unsurprising that a subtle contestation of native speaker, Gaeltacht norms, often associated with rural men, is evident in the data. Recognising value in post-Gaeltacht new speaker practices is also a result and a reflection of a broader relaxation of prescriptivism in language evaluative hierarchies. For Irish, this seems to involve a move towards the diversification (destandardisation/democratisation) of existing pluricentric ideologies so that post-traditional speech gains acceptance as an authentic, correct and authoritative model – an alternative linguistic competence alongside the traditional dialects of the Gaeltacht.

As the future vitality of Irish, as well as other minoritised languages, is largely dependent on institutional support, schools will likely have a formative role in terms of the linguistic practices and ideologies that prevail in the future. It is highly salient that a burgeoning recognition of post-Gaeltacht linguistic variation exists among a cohort of language norm authorities in Irish. Language teachers have enormous potential to influence minority language practices and ideologies. It seems from the results of this study that participants will expose learners to new ways of evaluating linguistic variation in Irish so that established hierarchies are destabilised in the late modern period.

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1. This may have influenced responses, especially as most participants were women. As participants only evaluated male voices, it is not envisaged that possible effects could have shaped the differentiated responses to the various male speakers in the samples.
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