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Language teaching and learning in Ireland: 2012–2021

Marie-Thérèse Batardière[1], Sarah Berthaud[2], Bronagh Ćatibušić[3] and Colin J. Flynn[4*]

[1]University of Limerick, Limerick, Ireland, [2]Atlantic Technological University, Galway, Ireland, [3]Trinity College Dublin, Dublin, Ireland and [4]Dublin City University, Dublin, Ireland
*Corresponding author. Email: colin.flynn@dcu.ie

Abstract

The language teaching landscape in Ireland has changed considerably over the last 30 years as a result of substantial and sustained inward migration into the country during this period. These social and demographic developments have added to the country's already bilingual context and created a much more varied multilingual landscape than had existed in previous decades. They have also impacted various aspects of language teaching policy, provision and methods for both indigenous and foreign languages. This article reviews research on language teaching and learning in Ireland published during the period 2012–2021. We discuss relevant work disseminated primarily in peer-reviewed journals (national and international), as well as in books, commissioned reports and chapters in edited volumes. The research and policy documents presented concern the teaching and learning of Irish, English and Modern Foreign Languages as second and/or additional languages across all levels of education. They address language teacher training contexts as well. We believe that this review of research demonstrates the extent to which recent inquiries in these domains have advanced knowledge and practice in the Irish context, and have also informed the international research community more generally.

1. Introduction

1.1 A rationale

The language teaching landscape in Ireland has changed significantly over the last 30 years owing to a substantial and sustained inward migration into the country during this period. These social and demographic developments, a strikingly recent phenomenon in Ireland in comparison with our European neighbours, have created a much more varied multilingual landscape and have impacted various aspects of language teaching policy, provision and methods for both indigenous and foreign languages (Gallagher, 2021).

This article reviews research on language teaching and learning in Ireland published during the period 2012–2021. It focuses on research relating to the Republic of Ireland and does not incorporate research conducted solely within the jurisdiction of Northern Ireland. This includes research on the teaching and learning of Irish and English, the official languages of the State, and Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) as second and/or additional languages.

It is important to note that, under the Irish Sign Language Act (Government of Ireland, 2017), the 'State recognises the right of Irish Sign Language users to use Irish Sign Language [ISL] as their native language'. We acknowledge the growing body of research conducted on ISL in recent years; however, it is beyond the scope of this review to include the significant work in this area. For a comprehensive discussion, the reader is directed to a special issue of *TEANGA, the Journal of the Irish Association for Applied Linguistics* on ISL (Leeson & Murtagh, 2020).

We base our discussion primarily on research published in peer-reviewed journals (national and international), and in a smaller number of books, commissioned reports and chapters in edited volumes. In a couple of exceptional cases, where we believe it was warranted owing to a dearth of

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research on the subject or because very important findings were produced, we refer to unpublished research appearing in doctoral theses.

By way of context, we feel it important to acknowledge the fact that much of this research originated in a number of research centres and associations – for example, the Irish Association for Applied Linguistics (IRAAL); the Centre for Language and Communication Studies at Trinity College Dublin; the Centre for Applied Language Studies at the University of Limerick; and the recently created Centre for Applied Language and Multilingualism at the National University of Ireland Galway. These bodies have played a vital role in the organisation of conferences, workshops and seminars, and the supervision of postgraduate research, as well as the dissemination of research findings to the wider public and to other researchers in Ireland (e.g., IRAAL is linked to the creation in 1979 of its own academic journal *TEANGA*, which has been an important peer-reviewed journal for language research in Ireland ever since). The remainder of this introductory section will provide short overviews of the educational contexts for Irish, English as an additional language (EAL) and MFLs, and the key features underpinning the need for the review of literature presented in the following sections.

1.2 The Irish language

Irish is the first official language of Ireland and an official language of the European Union. Since 1972 there has been a national Irish-language radio station (Raidió na Gaeltachta) and since 1994 a national Irish-language television station (TG4). Ireland has had a bilingual education system since the founding of the State in 1922. Subsequent census data show two significant trends: (1) The number of Irish speakers in the Gaeltacht (State-designated Irish-speaking regions) has declined continuously, and (2) The number of Irish speakers outside the Gaeltacht has increased (see Flynn, 2020; Ó hÉallaithe, 2004). Throughout this period, Irish has remained a compulsory curricular subject in primary and secondary education. Since there are a limited number of exemptions granted, nearly all pupils learn Irish for approximately 13 years at school. However, the overall learning outcomes have been considered to be quite disappointing, particularly in recent decades (see Harris et al., 2006).

According to the 2016 census figures from the Central Statistics Office (CSO), the most recent at the time of writing, 1.76 million people claim knowledge of the Irish language (CSO, 2017b). Of these, only 4.2% said that they use it daily outside the education system, while 6.3% of that group report they speak it weekly. The remaining 62.1% speak it less often or never. Conversely, 31.7% of those who know Irish speak it daily within the education system. Low as these figures are, the situation is worse when we consider that the total number of daily speakers of Irish outside the education system is only 1.7% of the entire population. In terms of the Gaeltacht, the population in these regions is 96,090, of which 66% have the ability to speak Irish, but only 21.4% of them speak it daily.

In this review, we will limit our discussion, as far as possible, to research on Irish that is primarily on the education end of the sociolinguistic-educational research continuum. In doing so, we will highlight research conducted on Irish language teaching and learning in mainstream primary education, immersion education, higher education (HE) and adult learning contexts. (There is generally very little research on learning Irish at second level, and none that was published during the period covered in this article.) First, we consider research concerned with language teaching methods. As Irish is taught primarily as a second language (L2), and contact with the language is almost exclusively via the classroom instruction, methodological choices and innovations potentially play an important role in realising the aims of national language and education policy. Next, we look at research on the related topic of literacy development in L2 learners of Irish, specifically that related to reading in Irish and learning of Irish orthography. The discussion then considers studies on teaching and learning Irish in immersion education. Finally, we turn our attention to research on older learners; language teacher education at third level and adult learners of Irish outside mainstream education.

Some of the Irish-language research reviewed in this article has been published in Irish, so it may not be accessible to all readers. However, besides our summaries here, many of the articles and books have English abstracts on their publishers' websites that readers may find useful.

1.3 English as an additional language

Ireland has experienced significant inward migration since the 1990s. The results of the 2016 census show that over 17% of people resident in Ireland were born abroad, including migrants from 180 countries (CSO, 2017a).

In this review, we focus on research into the teaching and learning of English as a second or additional language in Ireland across educational sectors. Firstly, we look at issues faced by children from migrant backgrounds learning EAL at primary and secondary level, exploring research into classroom-based approaches to support their English language acquisition. We consider the limited provision of EAL support in Irish schools and highlight studies focusing on the diverse needs of EAL learners, including those who come from refugee backgrounds or who have additional learning needs. Research pointing to the need for greater focus on EAL teaching in teacher education is then discussed. We also look at emerging research involving students in HE who are learning English for academic purposes (EAP). In addition, we discuss studies focusing on English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) with regard to adult migrants, including refugees and people seeking asylum in Ireland, considering both formal and informal learning environments.

1.4 Modern foreign languages

Our discussion of MFL teaching and learning in Ireland takes as its starting point the fact that the linguistic diversity discussed above has not been acknowledged, let alone harnessed in foreign language education until recently.

At primary level in Ireland, the Modern Languages in Primary School Initiative (MLPSI) was introduced in September 1998 and provided state-funding until 2012 for the teaching of French, Spanish, German or Italian to fifth- and sixth-class pupils (i.e., the last two years of primary school) for 1.5 h a week in 545 schools nationally (DES & Kildare Education Centre, 2012; European Education Culture Executive Agency et al., 2017). There was no renewal of state-funding for the teaching of MFL until the introduction of the language sampler module in 2021. At secondary level, there has been a strong uptake of foreign languages, led predominantly by French followed by German, Italian and Spanish, with the addition of further languages in recent years. Nonetheless, a significant number of students – 13% – do not study any foreign language for the Junior Cycle (JC), a state examination usually taken after three years at secondary level. As for the Leaving Certificate (LC), a state examination usually taken after 5–6 years at secondary school, the number of students not enrolled in any MFL classes reaches about 30%, notwithstanding the fact that a foreign language is neither compulsory for the LC, nor necessary to meet the matriculation requirement for most HE institutions (DES, 2017a). At higher/Post-LC level, only 4% of undergraduates study a foreign language; either as part of a specialist language degree, in a joint discipline, as an element of another programme (e.g., business), or as an elective module (DES, 2017a).

We will provide an account of research and development in relation to the teaching and learning of MFLs in mainstream education (primary, secondary, and higher and adult education) and to a lesser extent, of heritage/home languages in extra-curricular instructional programmes. Owing to its non-compulsory position and a general lack of recognition of the need for research in this area, possibly compounded by stringent regulations associated with conducting research with under-age participants, very few studies explore MFL teaching and learning during compulsory or extra-curricular secondary education. Those studies that have been conducted have examined language policy, secondary school students and/or pre-service language teachers. The vast majority of the MFL research in Ireland published between 2012–2021 concerns teaching and learning in higher level education settings, and thus mostly young adults. It is worth noting that no research was published during the period studied here on MFL adult education in the private sector (e.g., in Alliance Française) or in state-run further education, despite their active presence, or on MFL third-age teaching and learning.

2. Learning and teaching Irish as a second or additional language

2.1 Introductory remarks

The landscape of Irish language research over the last nine years has followed a number of trends found in L2 learning and teaching research more generally. This is important since there is a tendency in minority language research to emphasise the differences between less widely-spoken languages and their more widely-used counterparts (e.g., English, French, Spanish). Clearly, the socio-political and sociolinguistic contexts of minority languages are different from majority languages, and this will normally have a complicating impact on the educational contexts of the former. Nevertheless, there is more research now highlighting the similarities between the two contexts (minority and majority), particularly in the context of teaching and learning (e.g., Flynn, 2020; Harris, 2010; Murphy & Flynn, 2013). For example, Harris (2010) has shown this to be true in the context of attitude-motivation in learning Irish and foreign languages among Irish primary school children.

Like many other language contexts, most of the Irish language research relevant to a review of this type can be divided roughly into two main categories: sociolinguistic and educational. However, in Ireland there is a fair amount of 'bleed' from one category into the other. This is because the type of societal bilingualism found in Ireland has been mainly the result of state-driven language policy, a policy that was almost entirely implemented via the education system. Prior to independence, Irish was not a (core) subject in schools. When the national school system was established in 1831 under British rule, the language did not feature in the curriculum. While Irish was included in the latter half of the nineteenth century, first as an extra-curricular subject and then as an optional exam subject, the language was by then already in steep decline in most of the country. During this period, the Gaelic revival movement, led by Conradh na Gaeilge (The Gaelic League), successfully campaigned to introduce Irish in national schools, though it was not taught in a systematic way and was not a compulsory subject. Notably, however, at that time Conradh na Gaeilge was already running an extensive programme for teaching Irish to adult learners.

The now privileged status of Irish as a core subject in the national curriculum came about with the founding of the State in 1922. Since that time, and particularly since the 1970s, the continued decline of the Gaeltacht community, the heartland of the Irish-speaking community located mainly along the western coast, has thrust the burden of Irish-language maintenance even more onto English-medium schools, which make up approximately 90% of schools in Ireland. The implication of this has been that the L2 learners of Irish make up the vast majority of those who claim competence in the language (see the 2016 census figures (CSO, 2017b) discussed above).

A key aspect of this story is the decline in standards of achievement in Irish within the mainstream education system. The primary source of evidence for this comes from systematic research spanning roughly a 30-year period, which demonstrated a drastic decline in the percentage of pupils attaining mastery of curricular objectives from the mid-1980s onwards (Harris et al., 2006). Coupled with this is the steady increase in provision of Irish-medium education starting in the 1970s. There are now 286 all-Irish primary schools in Ireland (this figure includes Northern Ireland), 180 of which are outside the Gaeltacht. There are also 78 all-Irish secondary schools, of which 28 are in the Gaeltacht. The non-Gaeltacht Irish-medium schools are immersion education schools where the majority of pupils speak English at home and in the community where they live. Irish language achievement in these all-Irish schools, however, tends to be considerably higher than in either English-medium or Gaeltacht schools (Harris & Cummins, 2013; Harris et al., 2006).

There is a general feeling among many teachers, parents and members of the public that school-children are disengaged from the Irish language. An important study by Devitt et al. (2018) provides analysis of primary schoolchildren's attitudes to the language in the context of national policy. They examined social, cultural, cognitive and organisational factors that may account for a pronounced dis-engagement from Irish vis-à-vis general engagement with schooling. This study was conducted using data from the nine-year-old child cohort of the national longitudinal study of children, the Growing Up in Ireland (GUI) survey. They found that 'excess disengagement' with Irish (a stronger negative

attitude towards Irish when compared to other school subjects) is not related to socio-economic or ethnic factors, or to factors related to teacher profile, training, self-efficacy, style, or to school ethos. Rather, children with less exposure to spoken Irish in school or at home are more likely to show excess disengagement with the language. In addition, literacy activity, special education needs (SEN) and school patronage were also found to be related to excess disengagement.

The Gaeltacht and its role in language maintenance and revitalisation has been at the centre of much writing on language policy in Ireland. However, recent research on the state of the language in these heartland regions reveals that the language there is still in decline (see e.g., Ó Giollagáin & Charlton, 2015; Péterváry et al., 2014). This decline, caused by a multitude of factors, set the stage for new policy work for Irish-medium education in the Gaeltacht. *The policy on Gaeltacht education: 2017–2022* (DES, 2016a) 'sets out how the education system will contribute to supporting and promoting the future use of Irish as a living indigenous language in the Gaeltacht' (p. 6). The heart of the document presents seven 'support pillars': Strengthening the structure of educational provision; Improving the quality of teaching through Irish; Building the capacity of school leaders and school management; Improving the curriculum for Irish; Improving language resources and supports; Strengthening early-years' educational provision; and Building awareness, communicating with and supporting parents. The pillars, according to the policy document, reflect the key themes that were identified during a review of Gaeltacht education by the Department, which was carried out in consultation with critical stakeholders for the delivery of Irish-medium education in Gaeltacht schools. The Policy also aims to help fulfil the ambition of the Government's *20-year strategy for the Irish language 2010–2030* (Rialtas na hÉireann, 2010) to maintain and extend the use of Irish as a spoken language.

The most significant change in teaching/learning Irish at primary level in recent years was the introduction of the revised Primary Language Curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile (An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna, 2019; DES, 2019). This is, according to the document, 'an integrated curriculum that makes connections across and within languages and that seeks to support the transfer of skills between languages' (DES, 2019, p. 4). It should be noted that many of the studies reported in the following sections were conducted prior to the introduction of the new curriculum.

2.2 Studies on teaching methods

The teaching of Irish as an L2 has a long history that goes back beyond the founding of the State in 1922. Flynn (2021) outlines the history and the current state of affairs in this regard in the first book-length monograph written in Irish on the subject in almost 50 years. He traces developments in language learning theory and links between these and individual language teaching methods over the last century. In doing so, he discusses how various learning theories and corresponding methods have been adopted in the context of teaching Irish – for example, audiolingualism, communicative language teaching and content, and language integrated learning. Among the many developments discussed in the book, he demonstrates how in recent years there has been a return in language teaching research to emphasising the importance of more explicit teaching methods for fostering second language acquisition (SLA) (Flynn, 2021: Chapter 6). This work is generally conducted within the form-focused instruction paradigm (Spada, 1997). There were a series of studies published by Ní Dhiorbháin and colleagues (Ní Dhiorbháin & Ó Duibhir, 2017; Ó Duibhir et al., 2016) that explored the effectiveness of an explicit-inductive approach to grammar teaching in improving the linguistic accuracy of Grade 5 and 6 ($n = 274$) students in 12 Irish immersion classes. In this explicit-inductive approach students were guided by the teacher to discover and construct rules themselves. They were then required to explicitly state their own reformulation of the rule. Results from a pre-test, post-test, delayed post-test design showed a highly statistically significant increase in the mean achievement of pupils from pre- to post-test, with a levelling off at delayed post-test. In addition, the qualitative student feedback indicated the potential effectiveness of an explicit-inductive approach to improve student language awareness and grammatical accuracy in immersion education.

Two studies evaluated the effectiveness of precision teaching (PT) in teaching Irish as an L2 in English-medium schools. PT, originally designed within the behaviourist framework, involves teachers isolating target language skills to improve, defining them in directly observable and measurable behaviours, and designing tasks that learners can complete to improve these skills. Griffin and Murtagh (2015) reported the impact of an eight-week PT intervention on the sight vocabulary, reading fluency and reading attainment scores of a group of Irish primary school pupils. They demonstrated significant increases in pupils' sight vocabulary following an eight-week PT intervention, with a mean increment of 88.2 words from pre-testing to post-testing. Similarly, Mannion and Griffin (2018) examined the impact of a three-week PT intervention programme through Irish on a group of primary school pupils' Irish reading fluency and found a significant increase in both isolated sight word reading fluency and contextualised reading fluency following the intervention.

A classroom study by Moriarty (2017) explored the potential of pedagogic resources based on the principles of translanguaging to provide an alternative approach to teaching Irish. While translanguaging has various definitions depending on context, the term is used by Moriarty to mean learners making use of available language resources without full or perfect bilingual competence in the language learning context. The study found that the teacher and the students responded positively to the translanguaging resources, such as implementation of rap as a pedagogic resource to promote translanguaging. Importantly, the materials reportedly impacted how pupils viewed the language. Participants stated that they no longer saw it as a boring subject taught through 'old fashioned' (p. 86) methods, and that the innovative teaching method made it more fun.

A study by Ní Chróinín et al. (2016) explored the teachers' and children's experiences of a Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach to the teaching of physical education curriculum content and Irish in English-medium primary schools. Data were collected from eight educators and over 200 students via direct classroom observation, teacher interviews and written reflections, and focus groups with children. They found that the CLIL approach adopted provided an authentic environment for language learning, fostered a more positive attitude to the Irish language, allowed language to be applied in ways that enhanced the development of content-obligatory language needed to play each game, as well as informal language. In addition, the children were overwhelmingly supportive of extra physical activity and time away from desk-based learning. Yet, despite these positive effects, the researchers warn that careful attention to implementation is needed to ensure that benefits result for content learning alongside language learning. They conclude that in their own research the balance between physical education (PE) content learning and Irish language learning outcomes was not achieved. Limited PE learning occurred during the intervention owing to the language competencies of the children, which restricted achievement of objectives related to tactical and problem-solving aspects of game play. Thus, language proficiencies drove the planning process in ways that detracted from the quantity of attention to PE learning.

A recent special edition of the journal *Taighde agus Teagasc* (Research and Teaching) (Nig Uidhir et al., 2020) addresses a number of issues in immersion education. We will return to these in the section below dealing with that theme; however, one particular study from that volume deals with the classroom practice of translanguaging, defined by the authors as the systematic use of two languages in the immersion classroom, to support content learning and the development of competence in the two languages. Ó Ceallaigh and Ó Brolcháin (2020) reveal through interviews and focus groups with teachers, and classroom observations, the challenges associated with implementing translanguaging strategies in Irish immersion and Gaeltacht school contexts. They caution that care must be taken in attempts to implement translanguaging strategies in sociolinguistic and educational environments where a minority language is endangered as a community language.

2.3 Literacy development in Irish as an L2

A series of studies published during the period of this review have continued the long-standing research of Hickey et al. on L2 reading in Irish and learning of Irish orthography. Stenson and

Hickey (2014) argue in favour of phonological decoding as a learning strategy for Irish spelling as it is more consistent than English. They claim that, in early vocabulary learning at least, teaching decoding skills should help learners acquire the patterns of sound-spelling relations needed for fluent Irish reading. Similarly, they (Stenson & Hickey, 2016) argue that, despite its greater regularity, Irish spelling is sufficiently complex and distinct from English to challenge learners and require explicit instruction. In another article, Hickey and Stenson (2016) review the societal and educational changes relevant to teaching Irish in mainstream (English-medium) schools that, according to the authors, include a major shift in the curricular approach to teaching Irish, as well as changes in the status of Irish in the wider society. In the article they offer insights from a qualitative study of teachers' reflections on their pedagogical strategies, perceived priorities and difficulties encountered, and how these relate to the acquisition of L2 reading skills in the Irish context. The main issues of concern that emerged from the interviews, and clearly impact on teachers' professional practice, are pedagogical approaches to Irish, teachers' preparation to teach Irish reading, the impact of societal attitudes towards Irish, and the challenges teachers perceive in finding appropriate materials.

2.4 Irish immersion education

Immersion education has attracted a lot of research interest during the period under review, and apart from the teaching methodology studies mentioned above. A recent book-length treatment of Irish-medium education was published by Ó Duibhir (2018) in which he presents research on the linguistic characteristics of the spoken Irish acquired by pupils in Irish-medium primary schools. The study also investigates the attitudes of pupils, parents and teachers to language proficiency and to the use of Irish. Among its many findings, Ó Duibhir's study demonstrates how immersion pupils develop a competency in Irish that, while differing from 'native speaker' norms, satisfies their communicative needs and represents their identity. His study provides support for similar findings from other immersion education research in minority language contexts.

In an earlier report, Ó Duibhir and colleagues (Ó Duibhir et al., 2015) presented an analysis of models of provision for Irish-medium education across Ireland (including Northern Ireland). The report demonstrates the strengths and weaknesses of different models (full immersion schools through Irish-language units within English-medium schools) and the opportunities and challenges connected with expanding Irish-medium education.

A special issue on Irish-medium education was published in the journal *Taighde agus Teagasc* (Nig Uidhir et al., 2020). The articles in this collection cover central aspects of Irish immersion education, such as immersion teacher training, teachers' attitudes towards explicit grammar teaching in immersion settings, parents' role in immersion education, pupil transition from primary to post-primary immersion schools, and learning outcomes in Irish-medium preschools. Ó Ceallaigh et al. (2018, 2019) explore the knowledge demands associated with teaching mathematics through the medium of Irish. These studies give vital insights into the nature of requisite subject and language knowledge for designing and delivering content lessons and illuminate the challenges for both pre-service and practising teachers in providing balanced language and content instruction.

A new line of research on immersion education (Nic Aindriú et al., 2020), with implications for language teaching and learning, looks at the prevalence and types of SEN in Irish immersion primary schools in Ireland. The study aimed to establish: (1) the prevalence rate of SEN in these schools for the academic school year 2017/2018, (2) the types of SEN in these schools and their frequency, and (3) how these SEN were distributed by class groupings. A stratified random sample of 29 schools was selected out of 145 all-Irish primary schools. These schools completed an anonymous online questionnaire and the data gathered were analysed descriptively and statistically using SPSS. The key findings of the research were that the SEN of pupils in these schools has changed over the last decade. There has been a decrease in the percentages of pupils presenting with borderline mild general learning disabilities (GLD), mild GLD and moderate GLD over the last decade. At the same time, conditions such as ASD, developmental coordination delay (dyspraxia), emotional behavioural disturbance (EBD) and

attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) are becoming more prevalent. The authors conclude that, as in other jurisdictions, Irish immersion education teachers need more education and continuous professional development in domains such as the transfer of skills across languages, exposure to second languages, and in teaching strategies for pupils with SEN in order to better meet these pupils' needs.

Another interesting study published in this area (Ní Chlochasaigh et al., 2021) examined the achievements of Grade 3 and Grade 6 students in immersion schools in socio-economically disadvantaged areas on nationally-standardised tests of English reading and mathematics. The study showed that, when compared with students attending schools in areas of disadvantage nationally, Grade 3 immersion students had lower mean scores on both English reading and mathematics, but Grade 6 students achieved at about the same level in mathematics and outperformed their low socioeconomic status (SES) peers nationally in English reading. The authors claim these results provide at least some support for the idea that immersion education is 'suitable' for low SES students and that bilingual pedagogy does not impact negatively on the performance of such students in reading and mathematics in the long run.

2.5 Irish language teacher education

Another important stream of research during this period has focused on Irish language teachers and teacher training in the Irish context. Since Irish is a core curriculum subject, it is an integral part of initial primary teacher education. Nic Eoin (2016) discusses academic and professional Irish language programmes in initial teacher education in light of a HE Irish language syllabus that was developed and published between 2008 and 2011 (see also www.teagascnagaeilge.ie). The Syllabus Project, initiated by a national working group, successfully pooled academic and pedagogic resources to devise syllabuses for individual year groups within a degree programme. These syllabuses were based on the *Common European framework of reference for languages: Learning, teaching, assessment* (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001). Nic Eoin (2016, p. 31) argues that development of the syllabus was an important step in creating a collaborative inter-institutional structure through which planning for a more inspirational future in Irish language teaching and learning would be possible.

The question of diversity (or lack thereof) in the teaching profession in Ireland, particularly at primary level, has come to the fore in recent years. In relation to the Irish language, O'Sullivan et al. (2019) approached this issue in a study of students from underrepresented groups in initial teaching education courses who were participating in a Foundation Course for Initial Teacher Education (FCITE). The participants believed the communities they came from, and schools they attended, impacted on the quality of teaching received since teacher expectations of their language capabilities – and consequently their language proficiency – impacted upon their language learning. They described their largely negative experiences of learning Irish in schools that are designated as disadvantaged, and their more positive experience of learning the language on the Foundation Course. The Irish language model for the strand for students interested in becoming primary school teachers aligns with Level B1 as specified in the CEFR. The students are assessed via the Teastas Eorpach na Gaeilge Meánleibhéal 1 (B1) examination, which is aligned with the Framework. The authors argue that specific measures should be implemented across teacher education. These should, on the one hand, ensure emphasis is placed on improving the quality of Irish language teaching in schools located in communities experiencing social and economic inequality. On the other hand, they should promote social and political awareness among students and practising teachers so as to address the problematic assumptions by some regarding the language learning capabilities of students from differing backgrounds.

With links to the work discussed in Section 2.2, Ní Dhiorbháin (2018) devised a pedagogical intervention for teaching four Irish-language structures to 60 student primary school teachers. The target structures were identified via an error analysis conducted on the written work of a separate group of student teachers. A deductive approach was implemented with two groups and an explicit-inductive approach was implemented with two groups, for 50 minutes per week, over an eight-week period. This study examined the effectiveness of explicit grammar teaching on the student primary teachers' achievement on the four target structures and sought to identify which explicit approach, deductive or

explicit-inductive, would be most effective in developing the students' explicit knowledge of target forms. An Irish grammar test was administered to participants before the intervention, immediately following the intervention, and again seven weeks after the intervention. Results revealed a significant positive difference in student achievement on the four target structures from test one to test two, but a slight decrease in scores in test three, for both explicit approaches.

Dunne (2019) analysed similarities and differences in views relating to teachers' role in promoting the language, as well as issues in proficiency in the language, at the beginning and end of initial teacher education in Ireland. She also examined the extent to which above-average self-reported proficiency in Irish influences the experience of teaching Irish, finding that a high level of proficiency is positively correlated with, for example, an expectation that the teacher will derive great satisfaction from teaching Irish, and with the view that it is reasonable to expect teachers to teach other subjects through Irish. In analysing questionnaire and interview data collected from student-teachers, she shows that changes occur in the way teachers regard their future roles as teachers of Irish. She also highlights the need for more support in aspects of their role such as nurturing positive attitudes to Irish amongst children and shared responsibility in promoting the language more generally.

Ó Duibhir (2016) reports on a study in which 29 postgraduate pre-service teachers elected to study a number of curricular areas through the medium of Irish, utilising a CLIL approach. On the whole, he found there was a high level of satisfaction among the group in relation to these Irish-medium content courses. Participants reported being able to practise and improve their Irish in a realistic setting and acquiring new vocabulary/terminology necessary for teaching such subjects through the medium of Irish during their teaching practice period.

Two papers by Ó Murchadha and Flynn (2018a, 2018b) investigate the attitudes of pre-service language educators towards linguistic variation in Irish using qualitative methods. They argue 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. Their research found that in their evaluations of Irish language varieties, the teachers upheld standard-language ideology – that is, they rated traditional first language (L1)/Gaeltacht varieties more positively than non-native ones. Yet, most teachers did not select the L1 varieties as appropriate target models for their students. They cited the difficulty of acquiring features of those varieties and students' lack of interest and/or lack of contact with the L1 community as reasons for this. A more recent study by Ó Murchadha and Kavanagh (2022) has expanded on the two 2018 papers by using quantitative measures of practising teachers' attitudes towards variation in Irish. The findings of this study echoed the previous two in that the teachers generally showed a preference for traditional speech on an overt measure of attitudes towards the varieties, but rated the post-Gaeltacht new speaker variety as most standard. Nonetheless, when participants rated the speakers' characteristics, a more levelled, destandardised value system emerged.

2.6 Adult learning

The final area of Irish language research we will discuss is that which looks specifically at adult learners of Irish. Here, adult learners are considered those who begin or return to learning Irish after they have completed their formal education or those over 18 who learn Irish outside mainstream educational settings. There is a general paucity of research on this cohort of learners. Although there have been a few studies of adult learners over the years, they have been sporadic. In addition, some of the existing studies prior to the period covered in this review were conducted on adult learners in countries other than Ireland – for example, the US and England. The important role of adult learners of minority languages has been recognised in many other contexts, such as Wales and the Basque Country. This has generally not been the case in Ireland, however. While there has been a great deal of research published recently on so-called 'new speakers' of Irish (e.g., O'Rourke & Walsh, 2015), most of whom are adult L2 users of the language, the bulk of this focuses on issues surrounding language ideologies and not on teaching and learning Irish among them.

Flynn and Harris (2016) explored the motivations of a small, but diverse group of adult learners of Irish attending classes in Dublin. They identified five potential classifications of learner motivations: integrative, instrumental, intrinsic, extrinsic and sociocultural. Importantly, they stated that these classifications should not be seen as exclusive as individual learners' motivation frequently includes one or more of these classifications. In a related study, Flynn (2013) explored the role of cultural components in Irish language courses for adults. He argued that classroom activities and experiences that seek to raise cultural and language awareness are particularly important in courses aiming to meet the needs of such learners. This was borne out in interviews with the adult learners in that study.

In the most comprehensive study of adult learners of Irish to date, Flynn (2020) used a mixed-methods design to investigate how attitude, motivation and identity in adult learners of the language are related to their awareness of, and commitment to, different dialects and varieties of the language as learning targets. The study generated a number of findings that carry implications for the learning process. Among them, it showed that the question of dialects in Irish language learning is still a salient issue for adult learners. Most are oriented towards a preferred regional variety of Irish. However, these learners are cognizant of the difficulties of achieving nativelike features in a particular variety; they are therefore often willing to 'settle' for native-like fluency in Irish regardless of whether they sound like a native speaker of their preferred variety.

These studies of adult learners are important because they augment the small, but growing literature on minority language learning after formal schooling has ended. In addition, they provide insights into the trajectory of learners in this category vis-à-vis Irish language revitalisation efforts. They also offer an Irish perspective on the argument that adult learners of minority languages may play a particularly important role in language planning, minority language maintenance and reversing language shift (e.g., Baker et al., 2011).

3. English as a second/additional language in Ireland

3.1 Introductory remarks

Historically a nation of emigration, Ireland has experienced significant inward migration since the 1990s, resulting in a culturally diverse population that includes people from a wide range of migrant backgrounds. Recognising that the term 'migrant' is not unproblematic, it will be used in this section simply to refer to people who have moved to Ireland and are resident here, irrespective of their migration status. International students pursuing HE or English language training, whose stay in Ireland may be somewhat shorter, are also considered in this section.

Ireland's migrant population is linguistically heterogeneous; in the 2016 census over 600,000 people reported that they speak a 'foreign' language at home, with Polish the most widely spoken foreign language (CSO, 2017a). It is estimated that up to 200 migrant home or 'heritage' languages are used in Ireland today (DES, 2017a). Research in the Irish context also indicates that a range of intersecting factors, including language (McGinnity et al., 2020a, 2020b), race (Joseph, 2020) and migration status (Fanning, 2018), impact the social inclusion and integration of migrants. This process may be further affected by attitudes towards immigration within the host community, which have been found to vary (McGinnity et al., 2018). However, since learning the language of the host community has been identified as a key issue in migrant integration in Ireland (Barrett et al., 2017; McGinnity et al., 2020a, 2020b), this section will focus on research into the teaching and learning of English, the 'de facto' primary language of Irish society.

3.2. Primary education

The number of children from migrant backgrounds at primary school in Ireland has increased over recent decades (DES, 2017a). A recent Eurydice report found that 12% of children under 15 years old in Ireland are 'foreign-born', the second highest rate in Europe after Luxembourg (European

Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2019). The 2016 census also showed that over 76,000 primary school children speak a 'foreign' language (i.e., other than English or Irish) at home (CSO, 2017a, p. 54); over 13% of the primary school population, which stood at 553,380 at that time (Oireachtas Library & Research Service, 2020).

As most children from migrant backgrounds attend English-medium schools, they learn EAL. Since the turn of the millennium, EAL instruction has been provided at primary level, typically through short daily withdrawal lessons during the child's first two years of education in Ireland (Ćatibušić & Little, 2014). Initially, schools were entitled to an additional English language support post if they had at least 14 EAL learners, up to a maximum of two teachers per school (this cap was briefly rescinded between 2007 and 2009), although these teaching positions tended to be temporary (Kelly, 2013). Resources for English language support informed by the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) were produced by Integrate Ireland Language and Training (IILT), a campus company of Trinity College Dublin; IILT also provided a programme of in-service training for teachers until its closure in 2008 (Little & Kirwan, 2019). In addition, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) published guidelines for teachers on *Intercultural education in the primary school* (2005) and *English as an additional language* (2006).

The provision of English language support was significantly reduced from 2008 onwards, owing to the impact of the global economic downturn. The number of teachers allocated to language support was halved from 2009 to 2011, and further cuts followed (Kelly, 2013; Rodríguez-Izquierdo & Darmody, 2019). Currently, only primary schools with 'high concentrations' (at least 20%) of pupils learning EAL can apply for an additional teacher; otherwise, since 2012, support has been provided through a general model, now known as the 'special educational teaching' allocation, which incorporates both learning and language support (DES, 2012, 2017b; ELINET, 2016).

Classroom-based research has investigated features of EAL development among children at primary school in Ireland. A longitudinal study involving children from a range of linguistic backgrounds in three primary schools found, through formal, functional and conversation analysis of language use in the EAL classroom, that the CEFR-derived *Benchmarks for English language support at primary school in Ireland* (IILT, 2003) reflected children's trajectory of English language development; this research also yielded considerable evidence of features of EAL learners' L2 acquisition (Ćatibušić, 2013; Ćatibušić & Little, 2014). Effective pedagogical strategies have been identified, such as the use of inquiry-based approaches which support children's EAL development, recognise their home languages, and incorporate digital learning (Kelly, 2013). Challenges have also been reported: for example, the significant gap between the performance of EAL learners and native speakers of English in the 2011 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) assessment for children in the fourth grade of primary education (ELINET, 2016). In addition, studies focusing on teachers' perspectives have drawn attention to the limited duration of English language support, the need for updated EAL assessment tools, the risks of using standardised assessments with EAL learners, and challenges in differentiating between language and learning difficulties (Gardiner-Hyland & Burke, 2018; Murtagh & Francis, 2012). Research has also shown teachers' attitudes towards multilingualism among EAL learners in English-medium schools to be ambivalent, in contrast to positive attitudes towards Irish/English bilingualism reported among teachers in Irish-medium schools (Gallagher & Leahy, 2014).

An opportunity now exists to reconsider the teaching of languages in primary school, with the introduction of the new Primary Language Curriculum, which adopts an integrated approach to language learning (DES, 2019). While this new curriculum focuses on the two languages of education, English and Irish, it acknowledges that many children have different home languages and its learning outcomes envisage the use of 'other languages' (DES, 2019, pp. 22–33). Resources for curriculum implementation include guidance for EAL support and promote activities involving home language use, shaped by research into pedagogical responses to the multilingual environment of primary schools in Ireland (NCCA, 2019; Ó Duibhir & Cummins, 2012). This includes research conducted in a culturally and linguistically diverse primary school in Dublin (Kirwan, 2019; Little & Kirwan, 2019),

which illustrates how active use of home languages within a plurilingual approach to education can also have a positive impact on children's development of language and literacy skills in English and Irish and can enable EAL learners to develop age-appropriate writing skills in their home languages, without formal instruction in the school. New guidelines – *Language and languages in the primary school* (Little & Kirwan, 2021) – elaborate practical steps towards plurilingual education that recognise migrant home languages and encompass the inclusion of MFLs in the primary curriculum.

Recognition of diversity among EAL learners is also important; research with recently arrived Syrian families points to difficulties in relation to English language support for refugee children and the need for understanding the wider challenges they face owing to trauma and displacement (Ní Raghallaigh et al., 2019). The risk of 'cumulative disadvantage' for migrant children in urban disadvantaged schools has also been identified (Rodríguez-Izquierdo & Darmody, 2019, p. 51). In addition, La Morgia (2018) has found that more multilingual support is required in therapeutic contexts for children from diverse linguistic backgrounds who have speech, language and communication difficulties. Further research is therefore required in the Irish context on support for EAL learners who face additional challenges. More studies focusing on EAL and the role of home languages in early childhood education in Ireland are also necessary (Harris, 2019; La Morgia & Billington, 2019).

3.3 Post-primary education

It has been estimated that 12% of second-level students come from a migrant background (DES, 2017a). However, research has shown that the provision of English language support at post-primary level is limited, with considerable variation in its delivery (Fionda, 2013; Lyons, 2013). Post-primary English language support has also been cut over the last decade and is now allocated without differentiation between EAL learners and students with additional learning needs (DES, 2017c; Farrell & Baumgart, 2019). The lack of visibility of EAL is another issue, particularly as it is not recognised by the Teaching Council of Ireland as a post-primary subject (Farrell & Baumgart, 2019; Rodríguez-Izquierdo & Darmody, 2019). Challenges facing EAL learners at post-primary level have emerged, for example, from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) tests for 15-year-olds. In 2018, 10% of PISA candidates from Ireland were first-generation migrants while 8% were second-generation migrants, and it was found that both first- and second-generation migrants who speak a language other than the language of education at home had significantly lower results in the reading assessment than 'Irish' students, an outcome in line with previous PISA tests (McGinnity et al., 2020a).

Regarding resources, the English Language Support Programme Project, part of Trinity College Dublin's Immigration Initiative (2007–2010) built on the work of IILT to develop EAL learning materials, based on corpus analysis of subject textbooks, which reflected the linguistic demands of the post-primary curriculum and proved useful to both students and teachers (Kostopoulou, 2013; Lyons, 2013). The challenge posed by the more academic language required for engagement with curriculum subjects is likewise evident in research into the development of EAL learning activities for geography (Gallagher & Leahy, 2019). The value of CLIL approaches to EAL has thus emerged, with post-primary teachers and students of education expressing the need for CLIL-related training (Farrell & Baumgart, 2019). Pedagogical approaches that are sensitive to students' diverse needs and contexts of learning should also be considered, as shown in research into performative language practice, including process drama, music and dance, to support English language learning among young people seeking refuge in Ireland (Piazzoli & Kir Cullen, 2020).

While the *Languages Connect* strategy (DES, 2017a), discussed in Section 4.1, has resulted in some recognition of heritage languages in the post-primary curriculum, EAL support remains an issue of concern, despite calls for more focused approaches to the integration of migrant students, including consideration of the language-related challenges they face (Faas et al., 2015). Delivery on the proposed 'actions' for education outlined in the *Migrant integration strategy* (Department of Justice and Equality, 2017, pp. 25–26) regarding training for teachers on 'managing diversity', collecting data

on the number of children requiring EAL support and reviewing the adequacy of this support, should be scrutinised at both primary and post-primary levels. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on students from migrant backgrounds should also be investigated in primary and post-primary contexts, considering further supports for English language learning, including digital resources.

3.4 Teacher education

Research with primary and post-primary teachers (Farrell & Baumgart, 2019; Fionda, 2013; Gardiner-Hyland & Burke, 2018; Kearney, 2013; Murtagh & Francis, 2012) has revealed a lack of focus on EAL in both initial teacher education and continuing professional development (CPD). It thus appears that the capacity-building goals of the *Intercultural education strategy 2010–2015* (DES/OMI, 2010), which acknowledged the need for widespread training in relation to EAL teaching, have not been fulfilled. Nevertheless, some positive steps have been reported. Farren (2016) has investigated how students of education can be guided on the use of effective strategies to support EAL learners at post-primary level, demonstrating the need for all teachers to develop an awareness of English language teaching across the curriculum. Significant research and practice initiatives have also emerged as part of the Transforming Education through Dialogue (TED) initiative at Mary Immaculate College of Education in Limerick; the TEAL Project (TED EAL), which focuses on culturally and linguistically responsive teaching; and EDNIP (Embracing Diversity, Nurturing Integration Project), which works with schools to promote the inclusion of EAL learners and migrant parents who are learning English (Higgins et al., 2020). However, O'Toole and Skinner (2018) call for greater emphasis on EAL pedagogy in Ireland as part of a more critical approach to intercultural education.

Lack of diversity within the teaching profession in Ireland, despite the multicultural and multilingual school population, is another challenge (Keane & Heinz, 2016; Schmidt & McDaid, 2015), although initiatives to enable migrants to enter teaching, such as the Migrant Teacher Bridging Programme[1] in Marino Institute of Education, are beginning to address this issue. The English Language Support Teachers' Association (ELSTA), which fostered good practice and provided CPD prior to the economic downturn (ELSTA, 2012), was revived in 2020 and is currently promoting a renewed focus on EAL. The growth of Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) education in Irish universities and how this may contribute to the development of English language pedagogy within and beyond the school system also requires further research (Farr & Riordan, 2015).

3.5 Higher education

Higher education in Ireland has witnessed rapid 'internationalisation' over recent years with the increasing recruitment of students from non-EU countries whose fees have been a key source of revenue (O'Connor, 2018). Following an initial strategy in 2010, the Departm ent of Education and Skills (DES) launched a second strategy aiming to attract international students to Ireland: *Irish educated, globally connected: An international education strategy for Ireland (2016–2020)* (DES, 2016b). According to the Higher Education Authority (HEA, the funding body for HE), international student enrolments in Ireland grew from just over 13,600 in the academic year 2007/2008 to more than 27,500 in 2018/2019 (HEA, 2020), representing 12% of all enrolments, although this intake may be affected (at least temporarily) by the pandemic (McGinnity et al., 2020a). Most international students come from outside the EEA, notably from China, India, Malaysia and Saudi Arabia, with an 84% increase in non-EEA graduates from Irish HE institutions recorded between 2013 and 2017 (Groarke & Durst, 2019). However, there is a lack of data regarding students' linguistic profiles and existing statistics 'do not include second-generation migrants or naturalised Irish citizens' (Ní Chonaill, 2018, p. 629).

International students mention the desire to study in an English-speaking country as one of the reasons for their choice of HE in Ireland (Clarke et al., 2018). As many are speakers of EAL, research has emerged in relation to the teaching of EAP. Carson and Murphy (2012) have investigated how drama can enable postgraduate EAP learners to develop communicative accuracy through meaning-

focused activities. Research from an Academic Literacies perspective has examined issues relating to power and identity in international students' writing, recommending more critical approaches to EAP teaching (Garska & O'Brien, 2019). In addition, the use of technology to support international students' engagement has been explored, with mixed findings. For example, Walsh and Rísquez (2020) found that students with EAL engaged less in flipped classroom activities in the virtual learning environment than their native English-speaking peers, while the use of gamification, involving English language learning activities, to support the initiation of Chinese students in an Irish university has proved effective (Zhang et al., 2017). A study into the use of online tools to assess short presentations also accentuates the affordances of technology for assessment in the EAP context (Carson, 2016). The COVID-19 pandemic necessitated a move to predominantly online learning in HE, and early indicators, such as the annual *Student engagement survey* point to challenges this has raised for international students (HEA, 2021) and the need for further research into language-related issues in the digital learning environment.

In terms of outcomes, English language proficiency has, perhaps unsurprisingly, been found to impact on academic achievement (Harris & Ní Chonaill, 2016) and social interaction in HE (Ní Chonaill, 2013, 2018), among both international students and students from migrant backgrounds who have grown up in Ireland. English language skills have also been found to influence students' social adjustment within the wider community – for example, their ability to source accommodation (Farrelly & Murphy, 2018). Language can also affect employment outcomes among international students who remain in Ireland, with fluency in English seen to have a positive impact on their income after graduation (Wang, 2020). The complexity of language-related issues in the context of HE is further evident from studies exploring the intersecting academic, sociocultural and psychological factors affecting international students in Ireland, highlighting the need for more holistic approaches to EAP (Garska, 2021; Ortiz Granero, 2020, 2021).

3.6 ELT in the private sector

In addition to attracting international students to HE in Ireland, 'sustainable growth in the English language training sector' is another 'strategic priority' in the current international education strategy (DES, 2016b, p. 8). This strategy projected 25% growth in the private English language education (ELE) sector, from 106,000 student enrolments in the academic year 2014/2015 to 132,500 by the end of 2019/2020, with the economic output of ELE expected to rise from €762m to €960m during this period (DES, 2016b). However, the impact of the pandemic on the ELE sector in Ireland has been profound with Marketing English in Ireland (MEI), the association of accredited language schools, estimating an 80% loss of revenue in 2020 owing to the closure of schools and travel restrictions affecting prospective students who typically come from EU/EEA countries, South America and East Asia (MEI/ILSG, 2021). Research into the ELE sector in Ireland is limited, possibly owing to the short-term nature of many courses and the often-precarious employment of teachers, although issues relating to the regulation of private English language providers have been investigated (Gilmartin et al., 2016). Teachers' attitudes towards the use of L1 in the English language classroom have also been studied, with findings indicating the need for more multilingual perspectives on language learning in teacher training and course delivery (Gallagher, 2021). However, further research into classroom practice and student perspectives on their experience at private-sector English language schools in Ireland is required. This is particularly necessary as, following Brexit, Ireland has become the leading English-speaking country in the EU, and it is envisaged that the Irish ELE sector will recover in the years ahead (MEI/ILSG, 2021).

3.7 Adult education

English language training for adult migrants, including refugees and asylum seekers, is delivered through the further education sector, with courses in ESOL provided by state-run Education and

Training Boards (Benson, 2019; Mishan, 2019). The aim of these ESOL courses is to enable adult migrants who live in Ireland and are currently unemployed to develop their English language skills; the courses generally range from Levels 1 to 4 on Ireland's National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) scale approximating to, although not formally aligned with, CEFR levels A1 to B1 (Kett, 2018). These courses tend to focus on basic language and literacy skills, although some aim to develop vocational language proficiency (Benson, 2019). In terms of duration, ESOL provision in Ireland is limited, with classes typically no more than two to four hours per week (Kett, 2018).

However, more intensive ESOL training is provided for refugees who have been resettled in Ireland under the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP), which was launched in 2015; this support involves up to 20 hours of lessons per week in the first year after resettlement (Arnold & Quinn, 2016). Nevertheless, research focusing on the language learning experience of Syrian refugees in Ireland has highlighted issues regarding ESOL provision under the IRPP, which is allocated according to migration status with little consideration of learners' English proficiency, literacy levels and language learning needs (Ćatibušić et al., 2019a, 2019b, 2021). This research involving adult refugees, teachers and other support providers also found that multilingual approaches to language teaching, awareness of refugees' use of technology for communication, and a greater understanding of the complexity of forced migration, could lead to more sustained, learner-centred ESOL provision that could also be extended to other adult migrants (Ćatibušić et al., 2019a, 2019b, 2021). The value of home language support for learners of English was particularly evident in this study, with both Syrian participants and ESOL providers noting the need for bilingual teachers, especially for learners over the age of 50 and those who face literacy-related challenges (Ćatibušić et al., 2019a, 2021). Similar issues regarding English language learning have emerged from wider research into this resettlement programme (Ní Raghallaigh et al., 2019; UNHCR Ireland, 2016) and from other studies with adult refugees in Ireland (Gusciute et al., 2016; Rose, 2015; UNHCR Ireland, 2013). The need for greater awareness of the development of intercultural competence in ESOL programmes in the Irish context has also been explored (Nagy, 2019).

Research has shown the value of community-based language learning outside formal ESOL courses, for example, through the Third Age Ireland initiative, *Fáilte Isteach*, which promotes integration by bringing together adult migrants and, generally older, volunteers for English conversation classes in local settings across Ireland (Ćatibušić et al., 2021; Loxley & Lyons, 2013). Sheekey (2018) further highlights the importance of holistic approaches to language learning, focusing on storytelling and intercultural exchange in a community initiative involving adult migrants and volunteers in Dublin. The MELLIE (Migrant English Language Learning and Intercultural Education) Project at Dublin City University has also enabled refugees and asylum seekers to participate in informal language learning activities with a similar intercultural focus (Crosbie & Maillot, 2018; Marouf, 2018) and the value of this exchange, organised through the *University of Sanctuary* initiative, has been emphasised (Daniel, 2019).

The current *Migrant Integration Strategy* (Department of Justice and Equality, 2017) identifies ESOL as an area requiring action, as evidenced in a recent review of services (Kett, 2018). The need for greater focus on English language support is also apparent in policy developments aimed at improving conditions for people seeking asylum in Ireland (Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, 2021). English language learning among adult migrants in both formal and informal contexts therefore merits further research, particularly with regard to multilingual and intercultural approaches, the use of digital pedagogies in the post-pandemic environment, and the specific challenges faced by people seeking refuge, including issues relating to trauma (Ćatibušić et al., 2021; Kett, 2018; McGinnity et al., 2020a).

4. Modern foreign languages

4.1 Introductory remarks

As alluded to in our introduction, changes in policy and practice have only occurred lately to take advantage of the rich multilingual landscape of the country. In the process, these changes have sought

to harmonise the teaching and learning of MFLs at primary, secondary and higher levels. Presently, different bodies and agencies under the aegis of the Department of Education have responsibility for distinct aspects of education. The NCCA is responsible for curriculum and assessment at all levels except HE and state examinations at secondary level. The latter is under the authority of the State Examinations Commission (for JC and LC).[2] The Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) provides primary and post-primary in-service training.[3] The Post-Primary Languages Ireland (PPLI) is 'a dedicated unit providing expertise and support for foreign languages education in Ireland, predominantly at post-primary level' (PPLI, 2020). A strategic dialogue between the Higher Education Authority and HE institutions – including universities, institutes of technology (IoTs) and technological universities (TUs) – frames a cooperative approach to teaching and learning at higher level. Each HE institution signs a compact with the HEA that outlines the HE's strategic mission and goals, which can include the teaching and learning of MFLs – for example, Mission-Based Performance Compact between the GMIT/ATU and the HEA (HEA, 2019). This compartmentalised approach leads to a lack of collaboration and cohesion among the various public bodies in terms of MFL teaching and learning.

Undoubtedly, the most significant change to happen has been the first educational strategy for MFL teaching and learning to be published in Ireland: *Languages Connect, Ireland's strategy for foreign languages in education 2017–2026* (hereafter *Languages Connect*). It aims to capitalise on the Irish multilingual landscape and increase the uptake of language learning and teaching across all levels of education. The publication (DES, 2017a) stresses that knowledge of English is not enough and recognises the lack of availability and variety in language teaching. This is evident in the following sections where we report on MFL teaching and learning in primary, secondary and higher levels in Ireland, and on the noticeable impact of *Languages Connect* at primary and secondary levels (e.g., PPLI annual reports published since 2018[4]).

As previously stated, the state-funded teaching of MFLs at primary level via the MLPSI was abolished in 2012 after 14 years in operation. This was attributed to a policy decision to prioritise children's literacy in English and Irish, and numeracy (DES, 2011) and budgetary cutbacks during the 2007–2008 financial crisis (Dáil Éireann, 2011). The fact that classes were not integrated into the mainstream curriculum may have contributed to the scheme's demise (Royal Irish Academy, 2011).

In May 2021, almost a decade later, the Department of Education (DoE), replacing the DES, announced the roll-out of a new six-week 'language sampler module' in Autumn 2021 to give third- to sixth-class pupils (i.e., the last four years of primary school) an opportunity to learn a new language, including ISL[5] (DoE, 2021). In contrast with the MLPSI, the 1-hour per week language class is scheduled within the normal school timetable. It is open to English-medium and Irish-medium primary and special schools and participation is on a voluntary basis. It is worth noting that schools are given the autonomy to determine the language they wish to introduce to the children and to secure a language tutor/teacher. They receive the pedagogical support of the PPLI and extra funding from the DoE (*Languages Connect*, 2021). Five hundred primary schools have benefitted from the 2021–2022 pilot scheme rolled out in three phases. The scheme is welcomed and is seen as a springboard for 'future developments in the area of MFL and ISL in the Primary Curriculum Framework' (*Languages Connect*, 2021).

The long overdue development and publication of *Languages Connect* has given a strong impetus to language policy research in MFL teaching and learning. Recent years have seen numerous research papers related to *Languages Connect* – first before its publication, both owing to an awareness of the need to develop language skills in Ireland (e.g., Bruen, 2013b) and in response to the government call to contribute to a policy, but also since its publication in 2017. These latter papers campaign for a wider range of foreign languages to be offered within state education institutions (e.g., Oakes & Howard, 2019; Osborne et al., 2019) and assess the potential effects (or lack of thereof) of *Languages Connect* on the language education landscape in the HE sector, be it in universities (e.g., Brophy, 2019; Bruen, 2021, 2019b) or in IoTs/TUs (e.g., Berthaud et al., 2018; Carthy, 2019a). They stem from conference presentations, such as those published in the proceedings of the

National University of Ireland Conference in 2019 or those delivered at annual conferences organised by the Irish Association of Applied Linguistics (specifically in 2018, 2019 and 2021).

Within the wider European and international context, social, political, economic and technological events have had an impact on the research carried out to date. The Europeanisation (Bologna process) and internationalisation of education – particularly at higher and vocational levels but also at secondary level, which started in the early 2000s – have been ongoing. The adoption of a more student-centred instruction and the integration of new technologies have continued and even been reinforced by the necessity of dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, in the past decade, most of the publications on MFL teaching and learning have dealt with: (1) language policy (as previously emphasised), (2) various aspects of student learning, and (3) information and communications technologies (ICTs) (i.e., the extent to which ICTs can facilitate MFL teaching and learning).

The next section details the research conducted in Ireland on the teaching and learning of MFLs in: (1) primary education, (2) extra-curricular instructional programmes for heritage/home languages, (3) secondary education and (4) higher and adult education.

4.2 Primary education

The research that Ó Duibhir and Cummins conducted in 2012 on behalf of the NCCA examined the rationale for an 'integrated language curriculum' in early childhood and primary Education (3–12 years). It showed how learning a language across the curriculum and across languages (i.e., L1 and L2 – English or Irish depending on the language of instruction of the school – and an MFL) improved language awareness, intercultural awareness and enhanced learning in other subjects. It also recommended the MLPSI's approach as 'a potential model for the development of a structure to support an integrated language curriculum' (Ó Duibhir & Cummins, 2012, p. 82).

A few years later, in light of concerns about levels of English literacy, perceived diminution of competence with regard to the Irish language and a growing diversity of languages and cultures among the school-going population, Kirwan (2016) stressed 'a need to re-assess [the current] approach to the teaching and learning of language' (p. 4). In agreement with Ó Duibhir and Cummins (2012), she argues that 'an integrated approach to language teaching and the cultivation of plurilingual learning environments can be successfully employed in Irish schools' (p. 4). Her research concentrates on the benefits of cultivating a multilingual milieu where pupils are encouraged to use all their languages within their repertoire, which in turn will raise pupils' language and cultural awareness (Kirwan, 2013, 2015).

Kirwan's vision seems to be endorsed in the new *Primary language curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile* (DES, 2019). It marks an important stage in the ongoing development of the curriculum for primary schools as it values the diversity of children's languages and sees plurilingualism as a resource in the classroom. According to Keogh-Bryan (2019), the new *Primary language curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile* combined with the recent publication of *Languages Connect* provides 'a timely and fitting juncture to examine whether and to what extent FOREIGN languages could be incorporated into language learning at primary level' (p.11, our emphasis). In her *Primary curriculum review*, Keogh-Bryan (2019) foresaw major changes such as the introduction of MFLs in third and fourth classes (pupils aged 8–10), incrementally building on children's existing knowledge and awareness of language and progressing to a level of competency reached by children at the end of sixth class that would align to CEFR A1 Level (Breakthrough) (p. 144). It is important to note that the introduction of the *Primary language curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile* is the first step towards the overall revision of the primary curriculum, as outlined in the *Draft primary curriculum framework* (NCCA, 2020), which proposed the inclusion of MFLs.

4.3 Heritage languages and extra-curricular teaching and learning

Prior to the publication of *Languages Connect*, the PPLI undertook an *Audit of foreign languages provision in post-primary schools* (DES, 2017a) that raised awareness of heritage languages. Since then, the

government has developed initiatives to support the teaching and learning of heritage languages in secondary schools with, for instance, the allocation of teaching hours for lesser taught languages in secondary schools (Bruen, 2021).

The research carried out to date on heritage languages focuses on informal and/or extra-curricular learning and teaching in Ireland. Eriksson (2015) details the teaching and learning of Russian in Ireland. Nestor (2014) gives a comprehensive overview of the history behind the Polish complementary school[6] network in Ireland, while Pędrak (2019) provides a study of the perception of Polish complementary schools from the teachers', parents' and students' perspectives. It should be noted that not all heritage languages are equal when it comes to complementary schools. Otwinowska et al. (2021) underline the lack of such structures for Russian speakers in Ireland and provide significant findings about the parental transmission of Russian in Ireland, Cyprus, Israel and Sweden. In a similar vein, Diskin (2020) points out the lack of complementary schools for any Chinese language heritage variety spoken in Ireland (except Mandarin) although there are many in the UK. Her study focuses on strategies used by families to ensure the transmission and maintenance of their children's specific heritage language (e.g., the reliance on Chinese or Hong Kong-based digital media to acquire or enhance language skills).

Another piece of research details how an initiative such as The Native Scientist project can promote the extra-curricular use, learning and teaching of heritage languages for bilingual children (La Morgia et al., 2018). The project involves the organisation of free scientific workshops run outside of classroom hours by volunteer scientists in the L1 of the children attending. Strategies such as The Native Scientist project do not replace complementary schools altogether; they offer other informal means to enhance language skills for heritage languages. La Morgia is involved in a wider-reaching initiative called Mother Tongues, which aims primarily to support parents of bilingual and multilingual children living in Ireland and also to raise awareness about language maintenance in primary schools via their Language Explorers workshops (La Morgia, 2020).

Children's competence in their heritage languages is an area that is understudied in the literature. One noteworthy exception is the study carried out by Dubiel (2015), which was followed up by Dubiel and Guilfoyle (2017, 2021), who observed a 'dominance' switch between the L1 and L2 for children brought up with Polish as an L1 at home and who start acquiring their L2 when they attend English-speaking schools. Their findings show that the children's dominant language is their L1 until they reach between 8 and 11.5 years of age by which time a switch may occur and their L2 – English here – may take over. These findings would suggest that children need strong support for their L1 after the age at which the switch may occur.

A recent trend in educational policy seeks to offer support to additional heritage languages in the extra-curricular school environment. This is reflected in the provision of non-curricular heritage languages[7] for LC examinations. It also seeks to increase multicultural representation in the teaching profession in Ireland and to better support language – especially heritage language – diversity in Irish classrooms – for example, the Migrant Teachers Bridging Programme (see Section 3.4 above).

From these findings it becomes apparent that the area of heritage languages would benefit from more empirical research on the acquisition, retention and/or attrition of the heritage language to inform MFL teaching and learning policies and practice.

4.4 Secondary school

When it comes to the secondary school context, the impact of policy decisions on MFL teaching and learning is noticeable in the research published since 2012 and is in line with the points made in *Languages Connect*: owing to an increase of the Europeanisation and internationalisation of the Irish education system, researchers have called for further support for heritage languages not widely or formally offered in secondary classrooms such as Chinese and Russian (e.g., Osborne et al., 2019; Zhang & Wang, 2018). Some argue that *Languages Connect* is not sufficient to remedy the lack of integrated MFL language teaching and learning. Devitt and Ó Murchadha (2021) stress that the JC reform

for language teaching and learning takes a fragmented approach to the teaching of English, Irish and MFLs instead of a much-needed integrated approach, having a ripple effect across all educational stages of MFL teaching and learning.

Language policy can exert some considerable influence on teacher education, whether it is on how teachers are trained or what teachers should do in practice. Riordan (2015, 2018) looks at factors affecting the use of target language by teachers in the classroom. Her 2015 analysis highlights a discrepancy regarding target language use in the classroom; *Languages Connect* recommends as much L2 use as possible so as to reach 100% of the time while teachers report using the L2 in the classroom an average of 58% of the time (p. 173). Riordan explains this inconsistency by a lack of harmonisation between policy and practice – particularly between the syllabus and examination requirements on the use of the L1. European-wide policy is also present in the literature on the training of language teachers. Witte and Eberhardt's paper (2018) delved into the use of blended learning in the context of initial and further professional development of L2 language teachers of German via the European Commission-funded COMENIUS project *Schule im Wandel* – digital resources created to develop teachers' pedagogical skills (i.e., computer-assisted learning, use of virtual learning environments). Witte and Eberhardt comment on how useful such an initiative can be given the lack of professional development requirements once teachers qualify.

The Council of Europe's CEFR (2001) for language teaching, learning and assessment has guided secondary school curriculum planning and assessment since 2013. Indeed, in the 2015 JC MFLs, the CEFR was adopted to serve as a framework benchmark (DES, 2015). Considering that the Senior Cycle curriculum has not yet been revised and formally aligned with the CEFR – though at the time of writing this process is underway – the following study analyses current LC written examination papers in terms of their possible relation to the CEFR. Drawing on Ryan's postgraduate research, Ryan and Devitt (2018) review the LC written examination papers for higher and ordinary levels[8] for French and Italian and consider whether they are in alignment with the CEFR. The study's findings reveal that the LC papers for higher level include activities of B1, B1+ and B2 levels; the LC papers for ordinary level include activities of A2+, B1 and even B2 levels. It also found that the examination materials tested students' factual knowledge, understanding and analysis but failed to engage them in deeper analysis. This lack of coherence in LC assessment levels may be owing to the fact that the LC predates the publication of the CEFR. Thus, if as stated by *Languages Connect*, the CEFR is to be adopted by institutions and employers by 2026, research like that of Ryan's is invaluable to inform the current reform of MFL curriculum and assessment at LC level, and the development of accompanying CEFR-aligned teaching and learning materials.

In addition to the adoption of principles underpinning the CEFR in the MFL secondary-school curriculum, European multilingual education policies[9] and *Languages Connect* advocate an approach that integrates language and content, that is, CLIL. Furlong and Bernaus (2017) discuss research that goes back to 2011 and argue that CLIL can be used to deliver culture as well as integrated content (i.e., content and language), thus making CLIL a meaningful teaching tool for primary and secondary school learners. Advances are expected in this area of research as the PPLI has hosted a number of conferences for MFL teachers (e.g., in collaboration with the JC for Teachers association in Autumn 2019 at University College Cork[10]) where experts in CLIL delivered keynote lectures. Also, in June 2019, the PPLI in collaboration with Maynooth University launched the CLIL MFL pilot for Ireland. The teacher training took place over the summer of 2019 with classes due to start in the Autumn of 2019. The pandemic has delayed its implementation but it resumed in early 2022 with in-service teachers engaging with CLIL upskilling whilst also participating in an ongoing national research project[11] and a European research project 'CLIL LOTE'[12] supported by the European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe from 2020 to 2023.

Other studies examined how ICTs can facilitate language learning and teaching if a harmonious ICT policy is implemented (e.g., Benini, 2014) and can facilitate European collaboration at secondary level (e.g., Bauer et al., 2015; Masterson, 2018, 2020). Benini (2014) explored the use of ICTs in two different schools – School A where the use of ICTs is heavily promoted (all students had notebooks or

tablets) while School B had a more traditional approach (one computer lab for the entire school). Benini discusses the lack of a national policy framework on the use of ICTs for MLF teaching and learning. It leads to inadequate ICT training for MFL and therefore prevents teachers from integrating ICTs in the MFL classroom. Bauer et al. (2015) investigated how learning technologies – that is, computer-mediated communication – could foster distance learning for students collaborating between Ireland and Germany by increasing oral production and comprehension of authentic documents in the L2. Masterson (2018) showed that using eTwinning – an online collaboration tool for secondary schools in the European Union – with an experiential learning model enabled students to develop cross-cultural awareness and knowledge. In Masterson's study, the eight-month collaboration via e-twinning between 14- and 16-year-old Irish students learning German and German students learning English allowed them to compare their lives and cultures. Further work by Masterson (2020) reveals how the digital skills developed using the e-twinning platform can be invaluable during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, like previous studies, Masterson notes the lack of an integrated and harmonised approach to ICTs at secondary level.

4.5 Higher and adult education

Research papers on language policy in HE have identified common issues regarding MFL teaching and learning in HE institutions, including IoTs (e.g., Carthy, 2018). These include: the need to: (1) reconcile the actual language provision in relation to the goals[13] set out in *Languages Connect*; (2) widen the current language provision to a wider audience than the traditional arts students; (3) provide the teaching and learning of lesser taught languages – that is, heritage languages (of the 'new Irish'), for instance, Lithuanian, Russian, or Chinese – and languages required for international trade, primarily Arabic and Japanese (e.g., Bruen, 2019a; Carthy, 2019a, 2019b; DES, 2017a). Topics prominent in the European Union's language policy papers are also examined: citizenship, mobility, integration, intercultural competence and the CEFR. While the CEFR is guiding reform within the secondary school context, there is currently little empirical evidence of a systematic and thorough engagement with the CEFR in MFL learning, teaching and assessment in HE, even though several Irish HE institutions have undertaken the mapping of their modules and assessments on the CEFR scales. A CEFR alignment workshop was organised at Maynooth University in June 2018 to that end[14]. It included seminars such as Kelly et al.'s (2018), which reported on the implementation of CEFR levels in their language modules and programmes at the University of Limerick, and Walsh's (2018) on the use of the CEFR to prepare students for European mobilities. On this latter subject, Earls (2018) explains how student European mobility can be promoted thanks to the development of accredited modules to prepare for the Erasmus experience. Giralt and Jeanneau (2016) claim that telecollaboration can be used to prepare students for their European Erasmus mobilities. Bruen (2013a) discusses how Erasmus mobilities alter the concept of citizenship in the participants. She shows that students mostly explore their citizenship as belonging to one nation before they get to go on Erasmus. After their return, their writing productions depict both the national and European aspects of their citizenship. Intercultural competence – at European and international levels – has been studied in association with other topics, including learners' motivation (e.g., Heying & Kennedy, 2016; Kwok & Carson, 2018) or the use of computer-mediated communication (e.g., Batardière, 2015). Kwok and Carson (2018) found that integrativeness was the only variable to account for motivation and thus the acquisition of intercultural competence. Batardière (2015) examined the effect of telecollaborative intercultural partnerships on students' engagement in socio-political debates. Wider internationalisation is also explored: the study of Chinese in the Irish HE system is increasing. For instance, Zhang and Reilly (2016) investigate the effect of character writing on reading comprehension amongst Chinese foreign language learners.

In addition to the aforementioned topics, some of the studies published since 2012 explore more traditional MFL teaching and learning themes, like typical and atypical bilingual or multilingual language acquisition (e.g., Berthaud & Antonijević, 2019) or the acquisition of communication and oral/

written production/reception skills (e.g., Bruen, 2020). Berthaud and Antonijević (2019) analysed motion event description – that is, how languages possess cross-linguistically different patterns to describe movement – by simultaneous and sequential French/English or English/French adult bilinguals. For French L1/English L2 sequential bilinguals, the results show a potential animacy bias: they had more difficulties than all other participants in producing grammatically correct and pictorially accurate sentences with inanimate subjects than animate subjects. Bruen's study (2020) examined what strategies were used by undergraduate students to understand a text in their L2. The findings reveal that students mostly use cognitive and compensatory strategies but that learners do not all use them efficiently or appropriately, especially at a beginners' level, thus suggesting the need to develop pedagogical tools to teach students how to use such strategies properly.

Languages are not represented equally and clusters of research areas emerge. This trend seems to be determined by two factors: the area of expertise of the researchers involved (e.g., such as the high number of papers on the acquisition of written and oral skills through the use of translation and subtitling in Italian with several Italian researchers focusing on that area (e.g., Borghetti & Lertola, 2014; McLoughlin & Lertola, 2014)), and the nature of the language studied (e.g., the number of papers published on the acquisition of Asian writing characters (e.g., Osborne, 2018)).

The use of technology and more precisely, Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) is extensively researched in its own right in Ireland. Amongst others, studies have reviewed how web conferencing can support SLA (Wigham, 2017); how telecollaboration can enhance students' communication skills via feedback provided by language teacher students (e.g., Guichon & Wigham, 2015; Vidal & Thouësny, 2015); how social media like Facebook can affect the acquisition of Chinese characters (Zhang & Lu, 2014); how typing Chinese characters can enhance their learning (Zhang & Min, 2019); how the virtual learning environment (VLE) can remedy space and time issues in MFL teaching and learning and thus facilitate SLA (Alderete Diez, 2015); how the Internet can create a virtual language environment with access to a wide range of resources (Watson, 2014); how student digital video creation can enhance MFL teaching and learning (Rodgers & Ní Dhonnchadha, 2018); how gamification can boost students' engagement (Giralt & Murray, 2019); and even how students need to be taught the digital skills required to avoid being distracted by technologies (Murray et al., 2020).

These empirical studies offer valuable and timely insights into school and university students' blended learning experience. Their findings may guide the practitioners' approaches to overcome some of the challenges faced by students during the sudden and unexpected transition from traditional classroom learning to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, and also to develop a new blended learning model in the post-COVID era.

5. A research agenda for the future

The foregoing review demonstrates the vibrant and varied nature of language teaching research in Ireland. This work has resulted in some advances in knowledge and practice in the Irish context and it has informed, at least to an extent, the international research community more generally. Nonetheless, a number of research areas remain to be explored satisfactorily. A clear example of this is work on CLIL in Ireland. The Council of Europe/Department of Education – as early as 2006 – noted a lack of progress in this area in their Language Education Policy Profile for Ireland; yet, since the model has not been widely adopted, only very few studies have considered the role or impact of partial immersion or CLIL for Irish or any of the languages taught in the jurisdiction.

Another area in need of more work is bi-/multilingual testing and assessment. Despite a clear(er) understanding of the nature of multilingual knowledge and use among Irish stakeholders, research and practice in relation to these issues are still very much lacking. Some progress has been made in relation to Irish – for example, the new Primary Language Curriculum (see above) and the wider prevalence of polyglossic approaches to teaching and learning in the classroom – but much more work is needed.

There has been almost no discussion of multilingual approaches to language assessment for other languages and this must be addressed.

Language practices among minority/heritage language speakers, which make up the vast majority of multilinguals in Ireland, is also poorly understood in the Irish context. More work in this area would certainly inform the teaching and learning of such languages in schools and beyond. Studies exploring plurilingual approaches to education, enabling the integration of children's languages in the classroom, in addition to the development of EAL support, are therefore necessary, particularly given current curriculum and policy initiatives at both primary and post-primary level. Research investigating how language issues may intersect with other challenges – for example, for children from refugee backgrounds – would also be required.

Recognising the role of language in integration and inclusion, further research is required into language teaching and learning among adult migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. The investigation of multilingual, trauma-informed, and technology-enhanced approaches to English language teaching could thus inform practice, especially with the current rising number of people seeking refuge in Ireland. Moreover, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, and given the potential of Brexit to broaden the prospects for work and study in Ireland, there is a need for research to examine language-related issues on the socio-economic and educational experience of migrant workers and international students.

Additionally, there is a growing literature on third-age language learning that highlights potential social and cognitive benefits for such learners (e.g., Pfenninger & Singleton, 2019). Rich opportunities exist for research into adult language education, including third-age learners, in both the private or state-run sectors in Ireland, which should be exploited.

The research reviewed in this paper shows a trend towards increased collaboration between research, policy and practice at different levels of education. An example of this is the Researchers in Residence Scheme that was launched by the Teaching Council in January 2022. Through this initiative, language education researchers are invited to partner with teacher(s) and school(s) to improve the teaching and learning experience for both learners and teachers. This could prompt the development of new avenues and networks for language teaching research across all levels of education, spanning a wide range of curriculum and extra-curricular languages.

The lines of inquiry identified here as areas for further investigation offer the basis for a broad research agenda across applied linguistics, language education, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics and multilingualism. As most Irish higher-level institutions have departments and research centres that continue to develop programmes and projects to support the undertaking of such work, we are confident that ongoing research will advance language teaching and learning in Ireland.

Notes

[1] See further: https://www.mie.ie/en/research/research_projects/migrant_teacher_project/migrant_teacher_bridging_programme/

[2] See further: https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation-information/341d4e-bodies-under-the-aegis-of-the-department-of-education-and-skills

[3] See further: https://www.pdst.ie/about-us

[4] See further: https://ppli.ie/about-us

[5] The scheme includes the following ten other spoken languages: French, Spanish, German, Italian, Lithuanian, Romanian, Polish, Portuguese, Arabic and Tamil.

[6] Complementary schools are typically 'organised by minority ethnic and linguistic groups to support their own communities' (NALDIC, 2011). See further: https://www.naldic.org.uk/Resources/NALDIC/Initial%20Teacher%20Education/Documents/Developingcommunitylanguages.pdf

[7] Latvian, Lithuanian, Romanian, Slovenian, Modern Greek, Finnish, Polish, Estonian, Slovakian, Swedish, Czech, Bulgarian, Hungarian, Portuguese, Danish, Dutch, Croatian and Maltese. See further: https://languagesconnect.ie/news/accredited-grades-for-non-curricular-languages/

[8] The Leaving Certificate examination for MFLs is available at both higher and ordinary levels. A more advanced level of proficiency is required to attain a higher level than an ordinary level (see https://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/how-to-understand-the-new-points-system-1.3161636)

[9] See further: https://www.anefore.lu/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/EURYDICE-Key-Data-on-Teaching-Languages-at-School-in-Europe.pdf

[10] See further: https://ppli.ie/news/ilovemfl-a-conference-for-mfl-teachers/

[11] See further: https://ppli.ie/news/clil-cpd-and-rollout/

[12] See further: https://www.ecml.at/ECML-Programme/Programme2020-2023/CLILinlanguagesotherthanEnglish/tabid/4298/Default.aspx

[13] The four main goals of *Languages connect* are the following: (1) Improve language proficiency by creating a more engaging learning environment; (2) Diversify and increase the uptake of languages learned and cultivate the languages of the new Irish; (3) Increase awareness of the importance of language learning to encourage the wider use of foreign languages; and (4) Enhance employer engagement in the development and use of trade languages.

[14] See further: https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/sites/default/files/assets/document/CEFR%20assessment%20seminar_Maynooth_8%20June%202018_Information-2_0.pdf

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Marie-Thérèse Batardière is a lecturer in French at the University of Limerick (UL). She has been involved for many years in the field of education, first as a member of the Continuous Professional Development team for secondary school teachers of French under the guidance of the Department of Education (Dublin) and, more recently, as Language Coordinator of the Professional Master of Education at UL. Her research interests include the impact of language immersion on second language acquisition and the use of computer-mediated communication tools to enhance language learning, develop sociolinguistic competence, and promote intercultural dialogue. The latter research informed the implementation of ERASMUS SPEAKS, a Transnational Virtual Exchange Project (TEP) between UL and five European partner universities that won the European Language Label Award 2021.

Sarah Berthaud is a lecturer in French at the Atlantic Technological University, Galway City. She lectures in French language and culture (applied and general), translation and interpreting, second language acquisition, and psycholinguistics. She regularly contributes to the Association des Études Françaises et Francophones d'Irlande (ADEFFI), the Irish Translators' and Interpreters' Association (ITIA) and the France-Ireland Network for Culinary Arts, Hospitality and Tourism (FICAHT). She is the co-founder of the newly-created Language Educators Society in Ireland. Her current research focuses on simultaneous and sequential bilingual acquisition, the impact of technologies on translation and interpreting, as well as modern foreign language teaching and learning, including the use of technologies and foreign language policy in Ireland.

Bronagh Ćatibušić is an Assistant Professor in Applied Linguistics at the School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences, Trinity College Dublin. She has extensive experience in the Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and intercultural education. Her research interests relate to language learning and teaching, curriculum and assessment, technology-enhanced language learning, and linguistic diversity in the context of migration. Her publications focus on issues including linguistic and cultural support for refugees, and learning English as an additional language. She has a long record of teaching, research and community engagement with refugees and migrants in Ireland and is involved in the University of Sanctuary initiative, developing English language and intercultural support for refugees.

Colin J. Flynn is Assistant Professor in Irish and Applied Linguistics at Dublin City University. He is currently Deputy-Director of SEALBHÚ, the DCU Research Centre for the Learning and Teaching of Irish (www.dcu.ie/sealbhu), a member of the Royal Irish Academy's Coiste Léann na Gaeilge agus an Léinn Cheiltigh (Irish Language and Celtic Studies Committee), and a member of the Executive Committee of the Irish Association for Applied Linguistics. His research and teaching are focused on second language learning, language teacher training, minority language maintenance and revival, bilingualism and multilingualism. His publications include books and articles on second language learning theories, language teaching methods, language attitudes, L2 motivation, cultural awareness and identity, and metalinguistic knowledge.