

Polish Teenagers' Integration into Irish Secondary Schools: Language, Culture and Support Systems

Introduction

Social demographics in Ireland have changed dramatically over the last thirty years: from joining the European Union in 1973, through the 1980s recession, to the economic boom of the Celtic Tiger in the mid-1990s, and back to the current downturn. With its competitive economy, Ireland became an attractive destination in recent decades and immigration numbers grew extensively, albeit not consistently. However, it was not until the enlargement of the EU in May 2004 that Ireland was faced with mass net migration from the newly admitted states (EU10). In 2005, the estimated number of immigrants from EU12 (EU10 plus Bulgaria and Romania) was 329,000, while those from EU15 (excluding Ireland and the UK) accounted for only 133,000 (www.cso.ie),¹ and this trend was unremitting until 2008. Most immigrants came from Eastern European EU12 states, and the overall number of PPS numbers issued between 2005 and 2007 indicates that Polish nationals were the dominant group (over 50 per cent in 2005, over 60 per cent in 2006, and 70 per cent in 2007).² The rationale for so many Polish people choosing Ireland as their new home can be analysed from two economic perspectives: macro and micro.³ On the macro-economic level, decisions to leave the home country were brought about by the unstable

1 <<http://www.cso.ie>>, accessed October 2008.

2 <<http://www.welfare.ie>>, accessed October 2008.

3 See K. Kropiwiec and R.C. King-O'Riain, *Polish Migrant Workers in Ireland* (Dublin: NCCRI, 2006).

situation on the Polish job market and high unemployment rates. Moreover, Ireland opened its borders to the EU10 countries without any restrictions, and offered better salaries and living conditions. On the micro-economic level, the opportunity to both work and continue education was undoubtedly an advantage, together with a chance to improve language skills and to gain professional experience abroad. Polish migration to Ireland can be described as chain migration, where people follow family members or friends who had already been living in the destination country for some time. Many Poles currently living in Ireland are target earners who emigrated in order to save money for a better future at home. In terms of age profile, they are mainly represented by two groups: firstly, people in their twenties who wish to gain professional experience, and secondly, those in their mid-thirties and forties who have settled in Ireland with their family or who are supporting their family in Poland. Surprisingly, as some research has indicated, the fact that both Ireland and Poland are Catholic countries does not seem to be a highly influential factor in the decision-making process.⁴

Intercultural education and plurilingualism

Such a large influx of people not only changes the economic circumstances of a country, but results in a culturally diverse society where various aspects of the functioning of that society are influenced, with language playing a major part in the equation. A multicultural society can create an opportunity for intercultural understanding. However, it can also present new challenges. One of the issues that Ireland has been faced with is the impact immigration has had on first and second level education. Many of the young migrant students arriving in Ireland have very little or no knowledge of English, but still need to cope with the academic demands of their new environment. This changed dynamic of Irish classrooms, from largely

4 See Kropiwek and King-O'Riain, *Polish Migrant Workers in Ireland*.

homogenous to multicultural and multilingual contexts, demands new approaches and, possibly, a new curriculum, to accommodate students' needs, which in turn would suggest an impact on teacher education programmes.⁵ The research described in this chapter aims to investigate the following issues: the cultural and linguistic accommodation of Polish teenagers in secondary schools located in the Limerick area of the mid-west of Ireland, teachers' classroom strategies and techniques to achieve this, as well as their perception of support systems available to them.

One of the major steps towards embracing cultural diversity in Irish education was the publication of intercultural education guidelines for primary and post-primary schools by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2006 and 2007). The guidelines provide practical advice for teachers in such areas as classroom planning, approaches, methodologies and assessment. As Gundara points out, intercultural education should be embedded in the mainstream curriculum to prevent, as far as possible, the development of racist reactions.⁶ Therefore both primary and post-primary level guidelines suggest how intercultural education can be integrated into the curriculum. Furthermore, the Department of Education and Science in cooperation with the Council of Europe (2008) published a joint report 'Language Education Policy Profile: Ireland'. It emphasises that schools should not only provide the required support for EAL pupils (English as an Additional Language), but also intercultural education to all, paying special attention to increasing their pupils' awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity currently existing in Ireland. Realising that students' first language is a valuable cognitive tool, schools are encouraged to make active use of this resource.⁷ This line of thought is also echoed

5 D. Devine, 'Welcome to the Celtic Tiger? Teacher Responses to Immigration and Increasing Ethnic Diversity in Irish Schools', *International Studies in Sociology of Education* 15, 1 (2005), pp. 49–70.

6 J. Gundara, *Interculturalism, Education and Inclusion* (London: Paul Chapman, 2000), p. 65.

7 National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), *Intercultural Education in the Primary School: Enabling Children to Respect and Celebrate Diversity, to Promote Equality and to Challenge Unfair Discrimination* (Dublin: NCCA, 2005), p. 165;

in the Council of Europe/ DES report, which states that ‘official but lame bilingualism’ should be converted into genuine multilingualism because the ‘economic, cultural and European future of Ireland depends on the valorisation of plurilingualism.’⁸ Unfortunately, despite the publicity those reports received, many teachers still have them on their ‘ever increasing pile of stuff’ to be implemented,⁹ or are simply not aware of their existence.

English as an additional language

Although potentially affected by recent budgetary decisions, according to ‘Migration Nation’, a document launched by the Office of the Minister for Integration in May 2008, there were, at that time, almost 2000 posts for language support teachers allocated across primary and secondary level, subject to the requisite number of EAL learners in a school. Conclusions of a study conducted by DICE in 2006 revealed, however, that teachers were not satisfied with the capped two-year language support provision in the Irish educational context because ‘many children acquire only a functional knowledge of English in this time.’¹⁰ The mention of functional knowledge points at a common linguistic distinction which is appropriate here, that is, the difference between conversational fluency and academic fluency, the former being achieved earlier in most cases.¹¹ Ideally, this

Intercultural Education in the Primary School: Enabling Children to Respect and Celebrate Diversity, to Promote Equality and to Challenge Unfair Discrimination (Dublin: NCCA, 2006), pp. 45f.

8 NCCA 2006, pp. 51, 54.

9 DICE, ‘Development and InterCultural Education’, *Global Education-Teachers’ View* (Dublin: DICE, 2006), p. 29.

10 DICE 2006, p. 35.

11 J. Cummins, ‘Multiculturalism and Multilingualism in Irish Schools’, *Seamus Heaney Lectures Series 2008/09*; Lecture Two, 17 November 2008, <<http://www.spd.dcu.ie>>, accessed on 15 January 2009. Reproduced with the kind permission of the author.

division should be reflected in policy, pedagogy and assessment. Another study recently conducted by the ESRI (Economic and Social Research Institute), focusing on the integration of newcomer students in primary and secondary schools, indicates that the largest group of teachers working in language support for EAL students are mainstream teachers and only a minority holds formal ELT (English Language Teaching) qualifications.¹² Furthermore, the survey shows existing dissatisfaction with the amount of time allocated to EAL students, which ranges from thirty to forty-five minutes per individual or group. Considering how little time a Language Support Teacher has at his/her disposal, it becomes clear that effective English language learning in multicultural educational systems cannot be the exclusive task of these teachers, but is best achieved by efforts from all educators across the curriculum.¹³

Methodology

In this chapter, we consider the opinions of teachers, students and their parents, which were gathered through a survey. An overall response rate of 28 per cent was achieved from a total of sixty student questionnaires, sixty parent questionnaires, and sixty teacher questionnaires distributed. Despite the low response rate, not uncommon for this type of survey, its findings raise a number of issues and hypotheses to be followed-up on in later research.

12 D. Byrne, M. Darmody, F. McGinnity and E. Smyth, *Integration of Newcomer Students in First and Second Level Schools* (Dublin: ESRI, 2008).

13 D. Corson, *Changing Education for Diversity* (Buckingham: Open UP, 1998); C. Leung, ‘English as an Additional Language Policy: Issues of Inclusive Access and Language Learning in the Mainstream’, *Prospect* 1, 20 (April 2005), pp. 95–113; ‘English as an Additional Language: Distinct Language Focus or Diffused Curriculum Concerns?’ in *Language and Education* 15, 15 (2001), pp. 33–55.

The first group of participants were Polish students aged fifteen and over, both male and female, attending secondary schools in the Limerick region. This particular age group was chosen to ensure an adequate degree of maturity in their responses. Nine students, seven female and two male, completed their questionnaires. Respondents in this group were evenly distributed in terms of age – three students were sixteen, three were seventeen and three were eighteen. The second group of participants consisted of the students' parents: six female and one male. Five of the parents are in the forty to forty-five age group, one is thirty-nine and one did not specify her age. The period of residency in Ireland for both students and their parents varies from just over one year to over four years. Finally, the third group of participants was composed of secondary level teachers in the Limerick region, who have Polish students in their classes. Teachers of all curriculum subjects were invited to take part in the study. The disciplines represented range from Religious Education, Music and Languages to Science and Engineering subjects, Home Economics and the LCVP (Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme). Twelve female, three male and one teacher of unspecified gender from three different schools completed questionnaires, based on their experiences of teaching sixty-seven Polish and a number of other international students from different language backgrounds. Teachers who took part in the survey also represent a broad scope of professional experience, varying from nine months to thirty-six years. The wide diversity represented by both subject area and years of practice again creates an opportunity to obtain a more complete picture of the issue in question.

The questionnaires distributed among the students and their parents were written in Polish to allow for a better understanding of the issues presented in the survey, and for a linguistically unrestricted expression of feelings and beliefs. Bearing in mind the issues addressed in the study, these questionnaires mainly consisted of open-ended questions to encourage participants to state their opinions freely, and to get a more detailed picture of the situation. Questionnaires for teachers were designed in English. They

also presented a blend of open-ended questions, as well as rating scales based on the Lickert scale.¹⁴ This approach allowed for the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data.

Results

The following sections present outcomes of the study. Findings were divided into four groups according to the topics discussed in the survey: the level of English language skills, English language support at school, support for teachers and the place of culture in school life.

Evaluation of the English language level

Students were asked to self-evaluate their level of English (listening, reading, speaking and writing), using a rating scale where 1 indicates huge problems and a need for substantial help, and 4 suggests a very good knowledge of English where no help is required. Most students assessed their listening (66 per cent), reading (77 per cent) and speaking (66 per cent) at level 3 – 'I only need help from time to time (for example, with register-specific vocabulary)' – but only 55 per cent rated their writing skills at the same level. Students were also asked to name areas that are particularly problematic for them within each skill, and the reoccurring answers were: long and/or difficult words, lack of appropriate vocabulary, long and complicated sentences. Details of students' self-evaluation of their language skills are presented in Figure 1.

14 L. Cohen, L. Manion and K. Morrison, *Research Methods in Education* (London: Routledge Falmer, 2000), p. 253.



Figure 1. Students' self-evaluation of language skills

Based on their own analysis, the students perceive that they primarily need help with subject-specific vocabulary. With regard to speaking skills, none of them admit to having major problems. Interestingly, in the cases of listening, reading and writing, a certain percentage claim not to need any help. These results suggest that, in general, the students do not think they have any serious problems with general language use. The results of the teachers' survey reveal a very different picture of their students' language level (Table 3). In their evaluation of sixty-seven students, by far the most common rating on a scale from 1 to 5 (with 1 being the highest level) was 3, or 'fair'. Eighteen students were rated as 'good', and only five as 'very good'. Although these evaluations are not specifically of those students whose responses are presented in Figure 1, they attend the same schools, and, judging from the mismatch between students' and teachers' perceptions, students seem to over-inflate their own linguistic abilities. This in itself can be problematic for English language learners, if it leads to their failure to recognise a need to seek or avail of language support within the educational system. Even in cases where this is secured, there

may be an unrealistic expectation that only subject-specific language skills are required, resulting in a low level of motivation for other types of language instruction.

Table 1. Teachers' evaluation of students' language level

<i>Student language ability</i>	<i>Number of Students</i>
very good	5
good	18
fair	30
poor	10
very poor	4

Parents were questioned on additional and specialised language support for their children within the school context. 57 per cent of parents confirmed that support was provided and furthermore indicated they were happy with the system of language provision in place. Most commonly, parents emphasised that additional English language classes 'improve his/her level of English'. 28 per cent of parents stated their children do not receive any support with regard to their English, however, they did not elaborate any further on this. Finally, 14 per cent said that although their children attend additional English classes, these lessons 'are monotonous and without any visible effort from the teacher', as the sessions are based solely on a text that is read and then summarised by students. According to the survey results, EAL learners are taken to a different classroom during the day. A minority of students have their additional English in the classroom while their peers have Irish.

Of course, students can and do also receive support within the context of their regular classes, and they were questioned on their own role in this respect. They were asked about the frequency with which they seek clarification and had to select a statement which they felt best described their own

behaviour. Approximately 33 per cent of the students stated that they ask for clarification whenever it is necessary. However, their elaborated commentary seems to indicate that it is not always the teacher whose help they are seeking. Students tend to ask fellow Polish students for translations of new words because it is much easier to ask a peer for a direct translation instead of trying to figure out the meaning from the English explanation provided. This may not be a bad thing, given the role of the L1 in cognitive development. However, another reason behind this linguistic strategy might be the fear of losing face in the classroom. Students who claim to ask for clarification only the odd time (22 per cent), openly stated that they are afraid of their Irish peers' reaction if they ask a question. 11 per cent of the respondents only look for help when they do not follow the lesson/teacher. Finally, 33 per cent of pupils say that they never seek additional explanations. Some students in this group maintain that they understand everything (66 per cent) and others (33 per cent) state that they are simply embarrassed to ask, which again indicates concern about losing face. Table 2 summarises these patterns of requests for clarification.

Table 2. Patterns of requests for clarification among Polish students

<i>Frequency of requests</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
I always ask for clarification	33%
I ask for clarification from time to time	22%
I ask for clarification when I'm completely lost	11%
I never ask for clarification	33%

Students were also asked if, in their opinion, teachers try to make themselves better understood by the international EAL students. Responses are divided between 'some do' (66 per cent) and 'they are not paying attention to us' (22 per cent). Only 11 per cent think teachers are trying to help EAL learners through changes in their speech.

Clearly, teachers have a role to play through in-class support in mainstream lessons. Those participating in the survey were thus asked to estimate how often they would use specific pedagogic strategies generally considered to enhance understanding in a foreign language learning context. These include repetition, paraphrasing, explanation, checking, breaking utterances into smaller chunks, and very careful pronunciation and articulation. Four teachers simply indicated 'yes' to this question rather than providing an estimated frequency of occurrence per lesson taught. One maths teacher did not respond but stated that it 'was not relevant as symbols in maths are international'. Figure 2 represents the responses obtained from the other twelve teacher questionnaires, indicating their perceived frequency of use of each strategy per classroom period, based on average results.

Average results indicate that teachers claim to use all of these strategies once or twice in each lesson in which a Polish student is present. No single strategy was used more than three times per lesson, and so the average results do not hide any major skew. The teachers were also asked to list additional strategies that they use to help facilitate Polish students' understanding. Table 3 below indicates some of those mentioned.

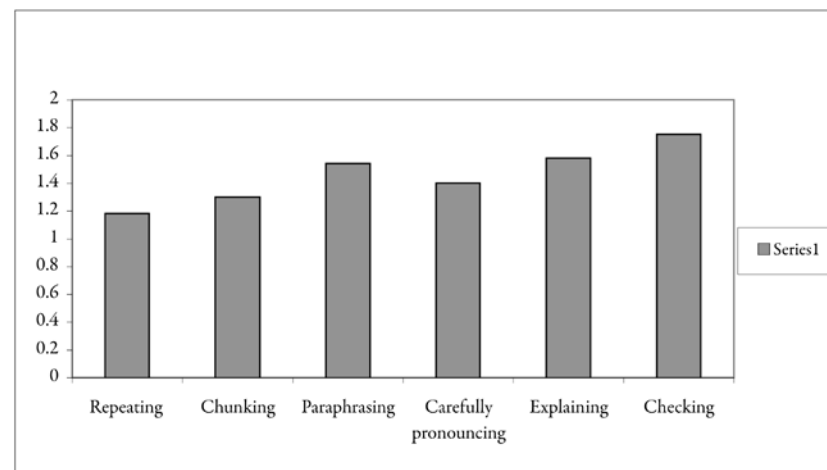


Figure 2. Frequency of strategies employed by teachers (on average per lesson)

Table 3. Additional teacher linguistic support strategies in non-EAL classes

<i>Teacher subject area(s) and gender</i>	<i>Additional support strategies listed</i>
Science and Maths (F)	Questioning, checking notes, chatting at the end of class, note participation in class.
Construction, Metalwork (M)	Drawings and construction are used as the main method of communication in this subject, ask students to explain their understanding.
Geography and Careers (M)	Have students explain in their own words, check work as they are doing it, a quick nod if info/instructions are simple.
Music, French, English, Resource (F)	Monitoring, asking questions, giving regular tests.
IT, Religion, History, ESL (F)	Checking understanding, asking students to translate for each other.
English, French, Maths, Religion (F)	Checking understanding, check if they are carrying out tasks correctly.
Maths, PE (F)	Peer teaching, group work, students present on the board, questioning, demonstrations of skills and drills, asking students to explain.
French, German (F)	Eye contact, checking written work, asking questions. Encouraging students to ask questions
French, English, Literacy (F)	Ask students to explain, get a more able student to explain in the mother tongue, observe facial expressions to check for comprehension.
English, Irish (F)	Checking quietly and individually with a student after a task has been given.

The additional strategies listed on Table 3 can be grouped into those that include pastoral involvement (for example, communicating and chatting with students inside and outside of class), non-linguistic techniques (for example, eye-contact, facial expressions, nods), peer support (incorporating same nationality peers as well as general group and pair work), and teacher elicitation through questioning, checking, student explanation, demonstration etc. Although ostensibly used relatively infrequently, it is encouraging to see the range of strategies employed by teachers, some of whom have no specific linguistic background or teacher education. And in fact, if we combine all the different strategies used in the consideration of frequency for each lesson, the occurrences are greatly increased.

Support for teachers

The evidence in the previous section suggests that teachers, despite lack of specific formal education in the field of English Language Teaching or Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), are providing a considerable amount of linguistic support during their regular lessons. Teachers were also asked to assess the availability, quality and relevance of the existing support infrastructures at school, local and national levels. In all three contexts availability was rated as either poor or very poor while quality and relevance were generally considered as good. It should be mentioned that not all the teachers 'ticked all the boxes' for all three levels and some only assessed their own school, which again might indicate that there is not much happening at local and national level and/or teachers are simply not aware of these events, for whatever reason.

The place of culture

It is not only linguistic differences that have the potential to make students feel foreign in the classroom; cultural factors can also play a role. When asked if their teachers use examples from other cultures in their

classroom practice, most students (88 per cent) stated that this happens only sporadically and usually revolves around the differences between Christmas traditions. Only one student mentioned a 'Multicultural Day' when EAL pupils in the school were asked to prepare small projects about their countries. Parents support their children's views, as they mainly consider the school's attitude to multiculturalism as neutral (43 per cent of respondents). Only one parent identified her daughter's school as being focused exclusively on Irish culture. Also one parent evaluated her children's school as being dedicated to promoting multiculturalism. The survey also asked students about the attitude towards their culture in the school. In relation to their teachers, most students found no identifiable attitude towards their culture, but some did say that they had experienced some negativity. Students believe that such attitudes are based on linguistic rather than cultural biases. Unfortunately, students also mentioned numerous instances of negative attitude and bullying from their Irish peers. This includes verbal abuse, physical assaults and mocking their English skills. When asked what could be done in order to change this situation, students' opinions fell into three distinctive groups: absolutely nothing but ignore the situation, go back home, and finally, become more Irish. In their questionnaires parents also pointed out that such behaviour is an everyday reality. Many parents said that schools should take a firmer and more consistent stand and condemned such behaviour. Some parents also mentioned 'intercultural dialogue' which should be initiated by the school to give both Irish and EAL students a framework in which to discuss integration and multiculturalism.

The teachers' survey included two questions on cultural issues. In the first, respondents were asked to select a statement which best described the place of culture in their teaching. Three maths teachers considered these questions non-applicable to their subject area and did not respond. The results from the other fourteen teachers are as follows:

Table 4. Teachers' integration of culture in their classes

<i>Statement</i>	<i>Selection Percentage</i>
1. I refer only to Irish culture	7.1
2. I refer mainly to Irish culture but sometimes include other cultures.	35.8
3. I refer to various cultures and national groups	57.1

In contrast to students pointing to an infrequent use of examples from other cultures in lessons, the majority of teachers (57.1 per cent) report that they do refer to various cultures and national groups, and 35.8 per cent claim that they do so 'sometimes'. There seems to be a mismatch between the perceptions of students and teachers here, but the likelihood is that the truth lies somewhere in between, when taking into account the 'smile factor' which may have caused some of the teachers to give answers which they think will be favourably received. In any case, it is positive to see cultures other than the Irish culture recognised to some degree in most classes. As can be seen from the reasons and examples given below, teachers indicate a range of positive motivations and techniques they use.

Rationale for agreement with statements in Table 4:

Statement 1 – habit, it's the only one I know.

Statement 2 – science has different applications frequently related to a country's wealth, the syllabus (music) is focused on Irish songs along with some other cultures, I'm most familiar with my own culture and feel students need this information for integration, to include all students and also to educate the Irish students about other cultures.

Statement 3 – multiple nationalities in class, adds to curriculum, engineering is a subject common to all cultures, language teaching referring to cultural events/festivals etc. gives great insight and understanding

about what is being learnt, as a language teacher various cultures come up for discussion, I often ask international students to give examples from their cultures, the syllabus (Home Economics) allows to discuss other nationalities.

Examples:

Fertility rates in Europe, social structures, man-made structure world-wide, teaching French allows me to compare cultures, through religious education and ESL classes, refer to other cultures/religions in class, lay-out of questions and answers in maths, studying ballads and folk songs from other countries, ask students about ways of doing things in their countries for comparative purposes, dishes native to different countries

Teachers were also asked the following question: 'Have you ever taken steps to familiarise yourself with the cultural and linguistic background of your international students?' They provided the following responses:

- not personally investigated, but pick up bits from school endeavours
- no
- yes, I organised a Polish cooking demonstration
- yes, when I have time. I did this in relation to religious festivals as I felt my colleagues would benefit from knowing about festivals such as Ramadan (from non-religion teacher)
- not on a formal basis but have informal chats with students
- yes, we have intercultural days and a special teacher, dedicated to the international students and to them sharing their experiences with us
- yes, during ESL classes different cultures are explored, for example, signs, festivals and holidays
- yes, but only in relation to maths, where their standard is often higher

- only in a very general sense
- yes, asking students about songs important in their cultures and lives and teaching these to Irish students, promoting ethnomusicology

While it is encouraging to see that most teachers have made some efforts, these, in general seem to be limited to what they learn from their own students and also in relation to their own subject areas. This is a good starting point, but evidence from this survey and reports quoted earlier indicate that it needs to be given a much higher priority in education, and teachers are the main agents of change in this context.

Conclusion

A range of issues relevant to educators in the contemporary multicultural Irish society were analysed in this study: EAL students' levels of English language skills and provisions made for them, strategies employed by students and teachers to ensure language comprehension in classrooms, and teachers' evaluations of the support infrastructure available to them at school, local and national level. Finally, the place given to the inclusion of different cultures in school lessons of various subjects was considered. A number of conclusions can be drawn from the findings of this study.

Firstly, the findings confirm that EAL provisions do not seem to take into account research on the development of linguistic abilities in a foreign language. The current two year system appears to have been insufficient for students whose language skills have been by and large assessed as 'fair' by their teachers. This is especially problematic given that they have to face the same academic programme as their Irish peers. More encouraging is the fact that most teachers, despite not having any formal language teaching qualification, display a knowledge and use of a variety of techniques they employ in classrooms in order to help their EAL students. This is of

particular interest in the light of the teachers' evaluation of support systems. Availability of those systems at all three levels (school, local, national) was rated as poor or very poor. However, both quality and relevance were perceived as good. This seems to indicate that although difficult to gain access to, once this has been achieved, the support infrastructure is considered helpful. On the other hand, the perception of support not being available might be due to scarce resources in this area, on the other, teachers might simply not be aware of their existence. This, in turn, may be the result of heavy workloads and other professional pressures. At the same time, it nevertheless suggests the need to diversify in terms of support options; from conferences and workshops to websites with freely downloadable materials and discussion forums.

Finally, most schools and teachers were rated as neutral in their attitude to cultural difference and the daily routine of dealing with it. Unfortunately, their answers also indicate a degree of ethnic tension and bullying among students. Although some of the situations described earlier could be attributed to the general teenage culture, it nonetheless hints at a lack of multicultural awareness at the grass-root level. As some parents recommend, schools should not only take a firm stand when faced with potentially racist behaviour but also become a forum for intercultural dialogue. In general, the results of this study seem to indicate that, even though Ireland's second level education system has taken steps towards embracing its new social reality, these actions lack consistency and nationwide scope. This, in turn, makes the task of educating children to become conscious members of a multicultural society which celebrates its diversity even more challenging.

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Adult Learners Encountering the Polish Language in Ireland

Introduction

This chapter aims to explore motivational patterns and attitudes among Irish adults towards acquiring Polish as a minority language and their perceptions of the challenges and prospects that this presents. It draws upon data collected under the auspices of the IRCHSS-funded project 'Second Language Acquisition and Native Language Maintenance in the Polish Diaspora in Ireland and France' (see Appendix).

Since the enlargement of the European Union in 2004, Polish migrants have formed one of the largest and most vibrant minority communities in Ireland, making a significant contribution to the multicultural diversity of their adopted country. As a consequence, the Polish language has grown in importance on the linguistic market in Ireland with large sections of the host society greatly inspired to master it. Polish-language programs have been offered by various educational institutions with a view to equipping community interpreters, translators, educators, language-support teachers, and police service employees with the Polish language skills necessary to assist Polish migrants and their children.

In the course of the present discussion, the linguistic paradigm shifts taking place in Ireland will be analysed in a wider context of multilingual practices in Europe and in the light of the most recent recommendations of the European Council as to effective ways of fostering interlingual and intercultural communication in the EU. Also, motivational patterns and attitudes towards the target language and culture will be scrutinised within the generality of research into attitudes and motivation in second/foreign