An investigation into the feasibility of using Irish poetry as a means of increasing EFL learners' awareness of Irish culture and Irish/English in the Irish EFL classroom.

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This is to declare that this thesis is the original work of the author and it has not, in full or part, been previously submitted to this or any other institution.

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An investigation into the feasibility of using Irish poetry as a means of increasing EFL learner's awareness of Irish culture and Irish/English in the Irish EFL classroom. As well as analysing both teachers and learners attitudes to this method.

By

Jason Bell

Abstract

The aim of this study was to identify the possibilities of using Irish poetry in the Irish EFL class as a means of increasing the awareness of Irish culture and the Irish/English variety of English, for learners of EFL in Ireland. As well as incorporating the attitudes of both teachers and learners to this idea.

The procedure involved in this study was the organisation of focus groups for both teachers and learners, and also the organisation of semi-structured follow up interviews with a member of both focus groups. Four cultural lessons designed by the researcher were also piloted with learners in the research. These lessons gave the researcher first hand experience of some issues that might arise later in the study. The final step was the application of questionnaires to learners and teachers. The majority of the learners had taken part in the cultural lessons.

The main findings of the research were a vast number of learners choose to study EFL in Ireland because of Irish culture. The learners also found Irish culture, Irish/English and Irish Literature to have a positive effect on their learning. However while the teachers concluded they would like to incorporate Irish poetry and aspects of Irish culture and Irish/English into their classes they found this difficult to implement due to restrictions from syllabuses and course materials. In conclusion this researcher found that learners were not receiving the type of EFL education they wanted in Ireland due to the fact Irish culture, Irish literature and Irish/English only appeared sporadically throughout their Irish EFL experiences. The overall majority of learners articulated a desire for more of these elements to be included in the Irish EFL classroom.
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1 The Problem and its Setting

1.1 Introduction

Over the preceding years a great amount of scholarly work has been devoted to the topics of literature, culture and authentic texts. Due to the vast amount of different opinions, theories and ideas being created it can be hard to isolate and comprehend these differing strands of thought. Therefore it seemed necessary to examine a sample of such theories within a contextual framework. Considering the lofted status Irish literature holds in the academic world, a more thorough examination of the benefits Irish literature could have for the Irish ELT class was needed. This study sets out to investigate the viability of utilising the literary resources of Ireland, particularly Irish poetry, as an instrument for increasing awareness of Irish culture but that also of the Irish/English variety in EFL learners in Ireland.

The dissertation is organised as follows:

Chapter 1 gives an outline of the research problem and its setting. Whilst also highlighting the research topic’s importance and relevance, it also incorporates the methodology. Chapter 2 analyses the related literature, focusing on what is relevant for this study. Chapter 3 presents and analyses the data collected through the research methodology. Chapter 4 provides a summary and conclusions of the present study and highlights further avenues of research.
1.2 The Importance of the Study

This study is important for the following reasons:

The ELT industry in Ireland is continuing to grow apace and the vast numbers of learners entering the Irish ELT classrooms are coming from every corner of the world. While the influx of learners can be seen as a positive thing, there is a noticeable negative aspect concerning the growth of ELT in Ireland. This is primarily the lack of Irish created material from which to instruct learners. As T.S. Eliot noted about materials as far back as the 1940's, a "material artefact which is a product and the symbol of a particular civilization is an emissary of the culture from which it comes" (1948, p.92). Therefore if most textbooks used in Irish ELT classrooms are British how can Irish culture be presented to learners? One possible aid, if we heed Eliot's observation, is Irish literature, which can offer an abundance of cultural aspects for learners to be introduced to. These in turn could offer learners insights into IE.

Therefore a profundity into the attitudes of learners in Ireland towards Irish poetry but also Irish literature use in the language classroom could provide further information for course designers or language school directors in this country. An insight could also be gained into whether learners appreciate Irish culture and are motivated to learn more, whether or not they interested in learning from authentic Irish materials such as poetry, what they feel are the advantages and disadvantages of such materials. Combining these views with the views of teachers of Irish ELT learners, then this examination from both sides of the classroom could present a functional picture regarding Irish poetry and the Irish ELT classroom.
1.3 The Statement of the Problem

This object of this research was to investigate the feasibility of using Irish poetry as a way of introducing learners to different aspects of Irish culture and IE variety, while also gaining an insight into the attitudes of both learners and teachers in Ireland to this.

1.4 The Statement of the Subproblems

- The first subproblem was to identify attitudes of learners' and teachers' to Irish culture.
- The second subproblem was to identify attitudes of learners' and teachers' to IE.
- The third subproblem was to identify attitudes of learners' and teachers' to Irish poetry and other Irish literary forms.
- The fourth subproblem was to investigate the frequency with which teachers incorporate Irish poetry and other literary forms into their teaching.

1.5 The Hypotheses

- The first hypothesis is that learners were motivated to learn about Irish culture and find it interesting.
- The second hypothesis was that amongst learners there was a greater demand to learn to British/English rather than IE.
- The third hypothesis was that learners would enjoy actuating Irish literature in class, but Irish poetry would encounter some negativity due to poetry being considered difficult by learners.
• The fourth hypothesis is that teachers incorporate or want to incorporate Irish poetry and other literary forms in their lessons but are restrained from doing so more frequently by syllabuses and course books.

1.6 Delimitations

• The study was limited to learners studying EFL in the University of Limerick.
• All learners ranged from intermediate level to advanced level in proficiency.
• The study is limited to teachers working at university level in Ireland.

1.7 The Assumptions

• The first assumption is that all learners that participated in this research were studying English in Irish ELT classes.
• The second assumption is that both teachers and learners involved in the research had encountered Irish literature in their previous EFL experiences in Ireland.
• The third assumption is that some aspects of Irish culture were incorporated into both the learners and teachers previous ELT experiences in Ireland.

1.8 Research Methodology

The methods for data collection in this research were based on the premise of methodological triangulation, which is "the use of multiple methods to study a single problem" (Quinn Patton 1987, p.60). Denzin (1978) concurs with implementation of multiple methods as it offers differing aspects of the same empirical research. It was
in consideration of such theories that the researcher chose a mixture of qualitative and
quantitative methods of gathering the required data. The method of triangulation made
the research process valid and reliable and provided “stabilization of the data and
interpretive clarity” (McDonough 1999, p.2). To secure triangulation three research
tools were used to garner the suitable data.

- The study incorporated three methods of accessing primary data:

  1. Focus groups for both learners and teachers.

  2. Semi-structured follow up interviews with a learner and teacher from the
     prior focus groups.

  3. A separate questionnaire for both learners and teachers designed by the
     researcher.

1.9 Cultural Lessons & Diary

As an element of the project the researcher designed four hour-long lessons each
lesson constituting of famous Irish poems by well-known Irish poets (see Appendices
H-K). These poems were selected because they highlighted different aspects of Irish
culture and IE. Each lesson centered on increasing the learner’s awareness of Irish
culture and IE and involved spin off activities for learners, which integrated many
cultural aspects of Ireland. The poems contained various elements of Irish history.
The historical aspect of Irish culture was important for the lessons, as Kramsch (1996)
described history as being a means of preserving the way a social group represents
itself and others. These lessons were piloted with an intermediate class, an upper-
intermediate class and two advanced classes, all of mixed nationalities and sexes.
Experienced and qualified teacher trainers supervised and recorded each lesson and
feedback sessions were given. The process of designing and teaching these lessons was incorporated into a cultural lessons diary (see Appendix L).

The aim of designing and teaching these lessons was to make the researcher aware firsthand of some of the theories and arguments that the researcher would be encountering further on in the project while also providing a valuable insight into the attitudes encountered in the data collection. These lessons also provided the researcher with first hand experience with issues regarding the research topic that might arise from both learners and teachers further on.

1.10 Focus Groups

In an attempt to correlate possible qualitative information that could be implemented in the formation of questions for the teacher and learner questionnaires, two focus groups were arranged in April 2007. The learner focus group comprised of five learners who had taken part in the cultural lessons (see 1.9) and had volunteered to take part in the research. It was felt that exposure to the cultural material of the lessons would act as a catalyst for debate amongst the learners. The teacher group comprised of six teachers who were all experienced teachers. These had volunteered to take part as well. Each group was used to examine their existing knowledge on Irish culture, literature and the Irish ELT classroom. These discussions were transcribed (see Appendices D-E) and later analysed with the aim of aiding the developing of the subsequent questionnaires.
1.11 The Semi-Structured Interviews

A volunteer from both the learner and teacher focus groups were interviewed subsequently. The questions for the interviews had arisen after close review of the prior focus groups and were centered on points highlighted in the focus groups that warranted further development. These interviews were semi-structured as it allocated the researcher the ability to deviate from questions created before the interview, when appropriate information required an expedient question that had not been created before the interview. This afforded the researcher the opportunity to collect even more qualitative data that proved valuable in the research. These interviews were transcribed (see Appendices F-G) and analysed before the creation of the questionnaires.

1.12 Questionnaire Participants

The learners who participated (n=25) were studying English in the University of Limerick; they were of mixed nationalities and ranged from intermediate to advanced level in proficiency. The majority of the learners had taken part in the cultural lessons (see 1.9). The teachers who participated (n=10) were all practising English language teachers at university level.

1.13 The Questionnaire Design

In order to gather appropriate data from both learners and teachers, two questionnaires were designed. These questionnaires originated from qualitative data established in the focus groups and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaires were issued in order to ascertain the attitudes of both groups concerning Irish culture, Irish poetry
and IE in the Irish ELT classroom. Where possible, the physical structure and topics of the questions were analogous so to aid comparison but this was not always possible due to the information required from the different groups. The two questionnaires contained close-ended questions created using the Likert scale (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2000), a six point rating scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. This data was quantitative and facilitated simple construction of figures. In addition open-ended questions, which provided respondents with the opportunity to volunteer specific qualitative information were included.

The Likert scale provided the resource to measure the frequency of occurrence that different Irish literary forms appeared in both the learner and teacher experiences, with the six-point scale ranging from daily to never. Both groups were asked yes/no questions with the opportunity to expand on the answer while the learner questionnaire contained responses to statements from which they could select what they felt the most appropriate answer to be. These responses were created to control the range of data being put forward by learners in order to abet analysis, if the learner found the responses unsatisfactory they could volunteer another. The teacher questionnaire is contained in Appendix C and the student questionnaire in Appendix D.

1.14 Ethical Issues in the Collection of Data

All participants in the focus groups and interviews had volunteered on the premise they would remain anonymous in the study. Prior to the distribution of the questionnaire the participants of the research were acquainted with the nature of the study. Participants of both the focus groups, semi-structured interviews and
questionnaires were made aware of the fact that all of the information received would be treated in the strictest confidence and only the researcher would know the participants names. They were further informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. Each participant was asked to read and agree to a declaration of consent, which highlighted all the specifics of the study and the research process.

1.15 The Definitions of Terms

ELT- English Language Teaching
EFL- English as a Foreign Language
IE- Irish/English variety of English
BE- British/ English variety of English
AE- American English variety of English
AusE- Australian English variety of English
TL- Target language
L1- Native language
L2- Foreign Language being learned
TC- Target Culture
LT- Language Teaching
FL- Foreign Language
T1- First Teacher in Teacher Focus Group
T2- Second Teacher in Teacher Focus Group
T3- Third Teacher in Teacher Focus Group
IPA - The International Phonetic Alphabet is a system of phonetic notation based on the Latin alphabet, devised by the International Phonetic Association as a standardised representation of the sounds of spoken language.
2.1 Introduction

In the ever evolving and broadening sphere that is English Language Teaching (ELT) the demand for the necessary teaching and learning materials has sparked a huge explosion in the number and variations of ELT materials in the last two decades (Brown 2000, p.227). Dubin (1995, p.14) highlights the two main catalysts for such an occurrence “the spread of English worldwide [is] a phenomenon that has created more demand for every facet of language pedagogy.... the second development is.... the result of researchers’ and scholars’ work who.... have postulated views of language far more complex than those excepted in the past”. One of the pedagogical debates to arise from these phenomena has been the role of authentic materials in material design.

2.2 Communicative approach and learner autonomy

The importance of authentic materials has developed from its roots in the communicative approach and the concept of an autonomous language learner. Under the premise of the communicative approach to language learning, “effective communication was the goal, the language merely the means” (Mishan 2005, p.3). Learners of a language must maturate their awareness of linguistic structures while also “relating these structures to their communicative functions in real situations and real time” (Littlewood 1981 p.xi). Therefore language learning would be best served in relating linguistic forms with context, leading to effective communication in the real TL culture. Kramsch (1993 p.36) described cultural context to be constructed from the intentions and postulations of both speakers and listeners, which in turn guarantees that their discourse is both fluid and logical for both parties. Pedagogies that favoured stand alone linguistic structures that had been at the centre of earlier
laboured ELT materials and approaches such as the ‘Audiolingual method’, ‘Situational method’ etc, would have to be supplanted with essential antagonistic materials containing contextual, meaningful and cultural content essential for communicative competence within the language learner. In theory cultural competence stands for “language [used] effectively for communication [which] involves acquiring both sociolinguistic and linguistic knowledge and skills” (Tomlinson 1998, pp.viii-ix). As Brumfit and Johnson (1979) construe this competence is more than what they identify as a capacity for grammaticality, but a fundamental knowledge of language usage. Devitt (1997, p.458) believes this knowledge to be made up of an awareness of form and meaning, while also contending with grasping knowledge of “the language and its culture” (Mishan 2005 p.3).

Another theory that has developed over subsequent years has been that of “learner autonomy or self directed learning...[with its]...emphasis on, and respect for the individualism of the learner” (Mishan 2005 p.7). Boud (1981, p.23) credits autonomous language learners for being amenable for their personal learning, ahead of classroom instruction from their language teacher. Mishan (2005, p.10) highlighted this direction in learning as a rational step considering the communicative circumstances from which it arose. Learners who were cognizant of language usage could move outside the classroom to develop their language abilities. This movement from the teacher to the learner as the centre of learning is a foremost principle of both the communicative approach and autonomous learning. Benson (2001, p.17) propounds the concentration of each approach is on the learner as the essential medium of learning. Consequently learners grounded in both approaches using
authentic texts as Little denotes, can "explore linguistic form communicatively...produce new meanings that are situated in a genuine communicative context" (1997, p.231). An underlying knowledge or competence in a TL would lead to a learner conditioned with a physiological capacity to lead their own learning (Boud 1981, p.23). As Edge and Wharton (1998, p.295) suggests autonomous learning is an ongoing process “requiring both individual and collective effort in the classroom context”, where “encouragement [is given] to learners to move steadily away from dependence on teachers, classrooms and coursebooks: to make the most of all the learning opportunities they may find”, leading theoretically to an autonomous learner who can utilise different authentic materials in their language learning (Mishan 2005, p.9).

2.3 Authentic materials

In the previous discussion authentic materials and authenticity have been mentioned regularly, now the perception of what is authentic can be examined in a closer context. Tomlinson (2001, p.68) argues that the materials aimed at unambiguous learning have been guilty of creating contrived pieces of language for the language learner. Focusing solely on aiding the learners understanding of the linguistic feature being presented. At the other end of this material equilibrium are authentic materials, which in turn have sparked a debate on what is authentic, as well as “the ways and means of exploiting authentic materials in classroom instruction” (Bacon and Finneman 1990, p.459).

The generic consensus on authentic materials has attributed to them the following characteristics. They are materials made up of both spoken and written formats that
are generated by native speakers for other native speakers in a certain L1 (Little, Devitt and Singleton 1988). In a similar vein Little et al (1988, p.25) argues that authentic materials are forms of texts that satisfy "some social purpose in the language community in which it was produced". This definition would encompass everything from poetry to posters from magazines to menus as authentic materials. Kramsch (1993, p.77) deems the term authentic to be a response to textbooks containing artificial materials and refers to natural language usage in non-pedagogic circumstance where communication is the priority. Authentic material has been correspondingly viewed by Byram (1991, p.21) as "the use of 'authentic' language as the material from which pupils learn, providing them with experience of language produced by native speakers". These ideas are summed up in an earlier publication by Breen (1985, p.61), who has put forward a set of guidelines in order to encapsulate what is authentic, which have been taken as a basis for determining authenticity in this thesis. These are:

1. The authenticity of the text itself.
2. The authenticity of the learner's own interpretation of the text.
3. The authenticity of tasks conducive to language learning.
4. The authenticity of the actual situation of the language classroom.

2.4 Authentic Materials and context

Nonetheless it has been intimated that authentic literary texts have been neglected in the classroom, due to "prejudice...as a hangover from the grammar translation method" (Little et al 1988, p.21). Little et al (1988, p.22) points out that when teachers actuate materials they deem authentic, they are in fact usually accrediting articles that have appeared in newspapers and magazines and have transient value for
learners. This argument characterises the idea of context in relation to authentic materials. As Kramsch (1998, p.26) exemplifies, context is constructed of a context of situation and context of culture, situational context depending on the different ways in which a speaker uses language in contrasting situations, cultural context being context created by peoples “tribal economies, social organization, kinship patterns..., concepts of time and space” (Kramsch 1998, p.26). Therefore learners could be considered “social actors..., [with]... relationships with the language they are learning..., which are determined by the sociopolitical and geopolitical circumstances in which they live” (Byram and Grundy 2003, p.1).

Mishan (2005 p.12) develops the argument further “the idea that to be authentic, a text has to be faithful to its original cultural context calls into question the inclusion of such texts in ELT coursebooks”. Therefore authentic materials without the correct context provided can cozen learners into false impressions of the TC. Shanahan (1997 p.165) argues that FL materials have, in a bid to increase learners’ communicative skills, have taken a touristy approach to the use of authentic texts, which are skimmed over by learners with no contextual depth being added to the learning process. This lack of contextual depth can leave a learner “with a false impression...unless they are presented in an authentic context which makes clear precisely what they exemplify” (Nostrand 1989, p.49).

2.5 Authentic Materials and Authentic Language Use

Little et al (1988) verbalizes that often language pedagogy leaves the learner without secure avenues into the real world of language use, presenting a language to learners without the necessary tools to communicate with the TL in the real world. Little et al
(1988) continues that if a communicative approach is to be considered credible then learners must be competent enough to communicate in their L2. Therefore it can be considered consequential that authentic texts act as a catalyst for authentic language use and authentic engagement with the material in learners. Widdowson (1983, p.30) espouses the notion that authenticity can be excogitated as “attested language produced by native speakers for a normal communicative purpose... [as well as]... the communicative activity... to the engagement of the interpretive procedures” of the learner.

The idea of authentic engagement and language use can be added further to, authenticity can be seen to be primarily associated with materials but also, as Van Lier (1996, p.128) proposes, is present in acts of authentication between learners and teachers, and in the language used in the learning process. Authenticity in this instance has become embedded in the concept of the authentic task and language use. With a goal underpinned by the idea “control over linguistic knowledge is achieved by a means of performing under real operating conditions in meaning-focused language activities” (Ellis 1990, p.195). Guariento and Morley (2001, p.349) underlined the idea that authenticity is not only part of authentic materials but also part of the tasks used with them. To epitomise concisely, authentic is not just in relation to the text, but additionally the relationship between learner and text, and how a learner engages with the text and whether the tasks employed with the text are “conducive to learning” (Breen 1985, p.61).

Lee (1995, p.323) explicates these points further, by contending that the interaction between learners and texts in relation to suitable responses and affirmative
psychological responses is crucial to learner authenticity. After setting a basis for authenticity, the rationale that will be examined for the use of authentic materials in the language classroom, will be rationale focused on literature and its benefits in language teaching.

2.6 Literature and the language classroom

Literature has enjoyed a primary role in the majority of educational fields. It "was a fundamental part of foreign language teaching in the ‘classical humanist’ paradigm, where an understanding of the high culture and thought expressed through literature took precedence over mere competence in language use" (Maley 2001, p.180). With the mass spread of English in all sections of business, education etc throughout the world which has heralded English a lingua franca status, competence in language use took priority over the previous elitist school of taught. However there has been a gradual rethink with regards to literature and the benefits of utilising it as a resource in the ELT classroom have become more apparent.

Firstly what is literature? Its intrinsic meaning usually centres on it being “the ‘best’ writing produced in a given language or society” (Maley 2001, p.180), or correspondingly a mass of texts identified as being great (Duff and Maley 1990, p.9). Similarly it can be portrayed as “novels, short stories, plays and poems, which are fictional and convey their message by paying considerable attention to language which is rich and multi-layered” (Lazar 1993, p.5). Literature in this sense is usually deemed as literature with a capital L. Made up of a classical canon of works ranging from Shakespeare to Dickens etc., which have been selected by educational authorities as examples of perfect language reproduced. The theory of literary
language being the pinnacle of our ability in language production, and the support of
the great canon of works was further enhanced by the work of educationalist F.R.
Leavis. He contended that literature was substantial in life to its emotional power, that
intrinsically literature contained moral value that would acuminate a learner’s
intellectual ability (Hayman 1976; Leavis 1975). On this basis he strived to develop
the literary canon further and work on ‘the tradition’ of the canon. Succeeding critics
have acknowledged his influence with regards to literature and LT (Parkinson and

The idea of literature with a capital L has become juxtaposed with contemporary
literature. In the age of literary theory, the arguments against the concept of the canon
have become frequent, and the broadening range of what comes under the literature
umbrella has improved the use of literature in the ELT classroom (Maley 2001,
p.181). As literature with a small l broadens so does the teacher’s choice of materials.
This broadening has lead to the study of gay and feminist writings as types of genres
and the consideration of “new literatures developing in countries such as India and
Singapore, where English has been grafted on to cultures and societies far removed
from the metropolis” (Maley 2001, p.181). It has been perceived that local literatures
will make literature a key component of cross-cultural studies (Maley 2001, p.185).
Literature that is reflective of cultural presuppositions and practices makes
highlighting the similarities and differences between cultures an easier task (Maley
2001, p.185).
Nevertheless literature has not always been positively depicted in LT scholarly circles, as Widdowson during the 1980’s noted:

> As far as language teaching is concerned, literature has over recent years been generally purged from the programme, together with other undesirable elements like grammar and translation, on the grounds that it makes no contribution to the purpose or the process of learning the language for practical use.

(Widdowson 1984, p.180)

This view seems to have been proved obsolete considering the great volume of work, which has been published, in recent years on this topic (Brumfit and Carter 1986; Maley and Duff 1989; Collie and Slater 1987; Short 1989; Carter and McRae 1996). Yet there still is a marked lack of consistency on what status literature has in LT “owing to differences in interpretation of the precise nature of that role” (Maley 2001, p.180). Edmonson (1997, p.52) contends that the validity of literature’s high status is unjustified. That literature in language teaching seeks to justify it as an integral part of school and university curriculum (Edmonson 1997, p.53), that literature is somewhat forced to prove its benefits in educational use. Maley (2001, p.183) contends that such a large degree of debate on literatures role in ELT could be ideologically encouraged and deliberately antipodal.

2.7 Literature and motivation

Motivation can be defined by the characteristics put forward by Peacock, it is an “interest in and enthusiasm for the materials used in class...as indicated by levels of attention or action.... and levels of concentration and enjoyment” (1994, p.145).

Taking into account these characteristics, linguist Pit Corder once remarked:

*given motivation, it is inevitable that a human being will learn a second language if he is exposed to the language data.*

(Corder 1981, p.8)
This statement could be argued to be an improvident view, but it does underline the importance motivation holds in the language learning process. In relation to literature, Shanahan (1997, p.167) argues, literature is a way of invigorating language learning.

If we juxtapose that idea with the idea that motivation can also be "those factors that energise behaviour and give it direction" (Gardner 1985, p.281), then we can assume that the use of literature can increase a language learner’s motivation. It is a fascinating development that motivation now is increasingly defined in relation to a learner’s interaction with authentic texts (Mishan 2005, p.26). As Guariento and Morley (2001, p.347) explain, authentic texts are now accounted for as a means of retaining and enlarging learners’ motivation for language learning.

One of the paramount reasons for literature and other authentic texts being considered motivating for learners is because:

They have been written for a communicative purpose they are more interesting than texts which have been invented to illustrate the usage of some feature of the target language; learners are thus likely to find them more motivating than invented texts.  

(Little et al 1988,)

Duff and Maley (1990) have raised the point that the 'genuine feel' of texts that are literary provide a source of prominent motivation, while also the common themes that are present in literature, that transcend languages in their universality, in turn can lead to personal responses from learners. McKay (1986, p.192) underlines the idea that "literature may provide the affective, attitudinal, and experiential factors which will motivate them to read", developing their reading proficiency.

Lazar (1993, p.15) generates the ideas that literature is held in high regard amongst many nations, in turn learners will gain 'a sense of achievement' from working with TL literature in their L2. Similarly she affirms that the unravelling of plot lines in
literature can be particularly enthralling for learners (Lazar 1993, p.15). This interest motivates learners, to develop their linguistic competence as a result of a “richness and variety of classroom experience” (Beard and Senior 1980, p.63). Mishan (2005 p.27) points out that learner goals and personal interests must be considered if motivation is going to be high. As Peacock concurs any materials selected for a class must motivate learners (1997, p.152). Edmondson (1997, p.48) argues the opposite that in fact literature can demotivate, as not all learners enjoy literary texts in their L1. In saying that, Little et al/ (1988) insists a large and diverse range of authentic texts is fundamental in the creation of a congenial environment for language acquisition.

2.8 A definition of culture

Culture is exceptionally difficult to define categorically and comprehend. Kramsch (1996, p.2) explains:

"The term ‘cultural’ has often been associated with the term ‘social’, as when one talks about the ‘socio-cultural’ factors affecting the teaching and the learning of foreign languages. Many scholars do not distinguish between the social and the cultural”.

Kramsch adds further to the dichotomy of cultural and social factors by defining these two sides of the cultural coin. She articulates that the humanities side of culture is:

"the way a social group represents itself and others through its material productions, be they works of art, literature, social institutions, or artifacts of everyday life, and the mechanisms for their reproduction and preservation through history". (Kramsch 1996, p.2)

Followed by the social sciences aspect of culture, in which Kramsch (1996, p.2) explains is made up of the behaviours, attitudes, and beliefs etc of the social group. Comparable to what Nostrand (1989, p.51) views as a culture’s ground of meaning, its core values, patterns of thought and prevalent appropriations of human nature and society. Altepkin (1993, p.16) defines culture as knowledge acquired socially. This
knowledge is constituted in ways specific to a culture and frame what we perceive as reality. In a similar vein, Cushner and Brislin (1996, p.6) write that culture “is a collective creation... socially constructed by human beings in interaction with others. Cultural ideas and understandings are shared by groups of people who recognize the knowledge attitudes, and values of one another”.

2.9 Culture and Language

Culture and language have a symbiotic relationship, to teach one without the other is to detract from the learner, as “there is a necessary tie between language and culture” (Tomic 2000, p.235). Prodromou (1992) believes that learners tend to connect learning a language and learning about the culture of the people who speak it. Kramsch (1998, p.14) highlights the fact we conduct our social lives through language and when language is used for communication culture is inherently part of, in the fact that any culture is expressed through the medium of language. The relationship between culture and language is developed from the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which is articulated as “recognition that language.... reflects cultural preoccupations and restrains the way people think” (Kramsch 1998, p.14).

Byram (1991, p.18) in a similar vein believes that language is a fundamental part of ‘cultural reality’ which language shapes and interprets. Therefore language can be viewed as semantically encoded with culture, if we teach a language without culture “we are teaching meaningless symbols or symbols to which the student attaches the wrong meaning” (Brooks 1986, p.123). If language and culture taught together, we open the language up for cultural examination, as Valdes (1986) points out; culture facilitates rather than obstructs language learning.
2.10 Literature and Culture

A common view that has been expressed in many published works (Valdes 1986; Prodromou 1988; Buttjes and Byram 1991; Kramsch 1993; Cortazzi and Jin 1999) is that culture and language cannot be separated entirely. Tomalin and Stempleski (1993, p.8) point out that teachers should try to access culture through the language being taught in the classroom. Byram et al (1994, p.50) argue that learners need entry into the elaborate values of a nation’s culture. In Ireland one way to access the national culture would be through the rich database of literature. Carter and Long (1991, p.2) argue:

Teaching literature within a cultural modal enables students to understand and appreciate cultures and ideologies different from their own... to come to perceive traditions of thought, feeling and artistic form within the heritage the literature of such culture endows.

If we look at Ireland for an example of cultural literature we can see in Joyce’s work that “was deeply permeated with the theme of religion that the novelty of the religious-secular threshold at which the present Irish society stands, can be begin to be understood” (Mishan 2005 p.101).

Literature, culture and the learner have always been a subjective union, as reading is a “joint construction of a social reality between reader and text” (Mishan, 2005 p.103). Chambers (2004, p.15) believes, in an age where mono-cultural imperialism has become obsolete due to a number of causes including the post-colonial heritage the importance of ‘local literatures’ has risen in dealing with such schemata formation.

Literature additionally offers learners not in immediate contact with the TL culture a route into that culture. “A reader can discover... thoughts, feelings, customs...this vivid imagined world can quickly give the foreign reader a feel for codes and
preoccupations that structure a real society” (Collie and Slater 1987, p.4). Lazar (1993, p.17) contends that literature encourages learners to become aware of social, political and historical occurrences; it provides insight into the workings of cultural persons and provides concise descriptions of TC experiences. Brumfit and Carter (1986, p.193) contend that this can lead to an increase in cultural tolerance and decrease the likeliness of negative schemata amongst learners. Brumfit and Carter (1986, p.193) continue that such an aid can lower learners’ difficulty in dealing with cultural assumptions. Kramsch (1993, p.131) expresses the opinion that literature has the ability to represent a single voice of a writer amongst the voices of their community, what Bahktin (Kramsch 1993) labelled as a writer’s ability to utilise indirect speech gives learners opportunities to encounter “dialogic meaning” being negotiated.

2.11 Literature and language, growth and challenge

Literature can offer learners extremely well written pieces of language, looking in a stylistic way a text can be examined for patterns in structure and aids learners’ ability to examine texts in a systematic matter (Maley 2001, p.182). In terms of syntax it has been considered that “literature will increase all language skills because literature will extend linguistic knowledge by giving evidence of extensive and subtle vocabulary usage, and complex and exact syntax” (McKay 1986, p.191). Collie and Slater (1987, p.5) engage both previous strands with the idea of language enrichment:

Reading a substantial and contextualised body of text, students gain familiarity with many features of the written language... which broaden and enrich their own writing skills.

It is clear for language awareness to exist; a significant part of this is the increasing of learners’ interpretative skills (Carter and McRae 1996, p.12). Another factor in
language awareness is the learners’ recognition that language varies. Learners can become aware of the characteristics and reasons for non-standard language usage (Corbett 2000, 172), which can lead to healthy debates about what is an English speaker and what are the social and cultural functions of variation. This is particularly useful in Ireland where the IE is prevalent:

Irish English... comprises features of system and structure especially vocabulary and grammar... as a result of constant influence and subsequent transfer from Irish. In its written form it includes... often idiosyncratic... unstandardized spellings... to reflect particular local accents.

(Kirk 1997, p.193)

Some knowledge of such discrepancies would benefit learners interacting with Irish literature considering the worldwide regard Irish literature holds, with such non-standard grammar and colloquial phrases being encountered amongst learners especially those in the Irish ELT classroom.

Contact with literature can also ameliorate the personal growth of learners. The subjective interaction with texts can lead to emotional responses and reactions, due to personal relevance and theme universality (Maley and Duff 1989). Boumann articulates that “literature is a form of art between two creators... one being the author.... [with] his creative power of words, sparks the imagination, the creative power of the... reader” (1996, p.29). Lazar (1993, p.19) believes that enabling learners to make personal responses increases their confidence in expressing their opinion in English, leading to a rounder education of the learner. This is similar to the Leavis stance on education, where an importance is placed on training both the mind and the senses (Leavis and Thompson 1977). Literature goes beyond the superficiality of course books, which in turn can enable learners to move beyond the actual
mechanics of a foreign language (Collie and Slater 1987, p.5) benefiting the whole process of language learning.

Literature offers teachers and learners a unique situation in the fact that literature contains authentic examples of many different styles, registers and literary forms at varying levels of difficulty (Duff and Maley 1990, p.6). Matching the level of text with the learner while also challenging them is vital, to "give them the opportunity to rise to it, and to take calculated risks, thereby boosting these affective factors essential to learning, confidence, self-esteem and motivation" (Mishan 2005, p.61). McRae (1996, pp.23-24) believes that an awareness of language and text should be part of even the early stages of learning a language. The teachers' role is important in this development, as teachers' have to actively grade such a prodigious resource using their instinct in selecting the right material (Mishan 2005, p.109). Equally as important is task selection as a means to work into texts; it is significant that learner difficulty is usually represented in the task, teachers should therefore grade tasks not the texts themselves (Grelet 1981, pp.7-9). Mishan (2005, p.111) explicates that at lower levels especially, the completion of suitable tasks (choral reading etc) can spur learners on and develop interest in literature. Teachers at all levels should try to exploit responses in their task selection as "literary texts by their very essence, open to multiple interpretations means that only rarely will two readers' understanding of or reaction to a given text be identical" (Duff and Maley 1990, p.6).

2.12 Poetry

Poetry as a key part of literature contains all the previous features discussed, including all the cultural, linguistic, motivational and personal development benefits. All the
same it warrants a discussion of its own. Poetry can be perceived by language learners as a difficult form of literature, maybe due to lack of exposure to it in their previous education, or a lack of confidence in understanding it, leading to an indisposition in working with it (Parkinson and Thomas 2000, p.53).

However from the earliest publications in LT, writers have been keen to acknowledge its benefits:

> To leave poetry out of a language course... is to renounce an extremely effective and labour-saving method of absorbing useful language. It is also to abandon opportunities to humanize and warm what may also be a very dry and chilly traffic in words and information.

(Billows 1961, p.238)

Poetry is significant in nearly all cultures and languages, and this form of language is utilised universally throughout mankind (Maley and Duff 1989, p.8). This generic knowledge of poetry's unique use of rhythm, structure and universal themes can be beneficial in language learning. If such schemata are present in learners, it can aid the development of further schemata, which "permit a coherent interpretation through inferential elaboration" (Steffensen and Joag-Dev 1984, p.54). These unique features are advantageous for a language learner. Firstly rhythm is a key factor in L1 evolvement as "rhythms map on to linguistic structures in ways which, while they do not entirely how the child moves from one to the other, show how verse may facilitate this process" (Cook 2000, p.23). The poetic and rhythmic use of language in poetry can enhance acquisition. This is not to say lower language learners are infants, but how rhythm facilitates learning. Additionally the rhythmic nature of poetry aids learners' capacity for retention, due to poetry's striking rhythms and rhymes (Maley and Duff 1989, p.10)
The structure of poetry similarly is singular in its polarity, in the way can be structured and unstructured. Mishan (2005, p.104) develops the idea the poetry is a genre "which lexical, syntactic, cohesive, and semantic conventions can be flouted in creative and original ways". Similarly Lazar (1993, p.100) believes that learners encountering deviances, especially in poetry, expand their awareness of language and ability to interpret language. She continues that through the basis of learners recognising what is wrong, they can then correct the deviance and derive the correct linguistic form. In doing so they would be "reaching some kind of conclusion about the stylistic effect conveyed by the language, and hence the meaning of the poem". (Lazar 1993, p.100)

Poetry also allows for performance, Choral reading of poetry can seem natural due to its rhythmic nature. Maley and Duff (1989, p.12) conclude that "the essential features of fluent speech- such as clarity of diction, phrasing, stress and rhythm, control and variation of pace- flow naturally from the reading of poetry aloud". A final consideration is the length of poetry; the physical length and meaning of poems are usually economic which is advantageous where class time restrains (Maley and Duff 1989). Poems can offer a concentration of associated words, which can be utilised for further activities, which in turn can increase a learner’s sensitivity towards language increasing their awareness of the merits of words while also contrasting poetic and everyday language (Maley and Moulding 1985).

2.13 Summary

To conclude, despite the different views held by scholars on the benefits of literature in FL teaching, there can be no doubt teachers should be “encouraging... students to
view materials as more than linguistic objects” (Gray 2000, p.281). If this is to be the case, then literature is pivotal in a movement away from contrived pieces of texts, to texts that are authentic. As has been in the case in this chapter, numerous scholars view literature as containing cultural, personal and motivational aspects as well as providing sound examples of varying linguistic structures.

Many authors have noted how literature and poetry have added benefits of helping learners appreciate and access other cultures and develop their own ability to communicate in L2 cultures (Byram and Esarte-Sarries 1991), and that contact with such universal materials motivates learners, that it promotes authentic language use. Such materials also challenge, develop and help learners grow as people and L2 speakers while also highlighting to them vast and differing arrays of linguistic structures and the effects these have on readers. Such a wide range of benefits surely has a place in LT.

3 Data Analysis

3.1 Teacher and Learner Focus Groups

Each focus group (see 3.1.1 and 3.1.2) relevant data with regards to this study have been extracted and summarised below.

3.2 Teacher Focus Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Institution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 1</td>
<td>T1</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 2</td>
<td>T2</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Irish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 3</td>
<td>T3</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Irish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 4</td>
<td>T4</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Irish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 5</td>
<td>T5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Irish</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each teacher reported that they utilised poetry in the EFL class but this use was not limited to Irish poetry. The teachers responded that Irish poetry was most beneficial in
and Yeats who are universally incorporated in the syllabuses of many educational institutions.

In general, the teachers were reluctant in using restrictive tasks like comprehension exercises when introducing poetry to learners. T5 noted “sometimes it’s just nice to get students to read a poem and just appreciate it”. T5 articulated the belief that intensive reading would reduce a learner’s enjoyment. There was general consensus that focusing on tasks would demotivate learners and this would negate the benefits of using poetry. It would be beneficial to have a layered approach to introducing poetry, where different information about the poem would be introduced systematically as not to overwhelm the learner. Poetry was seen by the teachers as a stepping stone, for example using the main theme of a poem could lead on to a full class discussion which could be integrated into other activities in the lesson. Each teacher expounded that “a language class is not a literature class”, that this scenario had to be avoided. T2 concluded that working with the images in a poem could lead to interesting debates at higher levels of proficiency.

The teachers expressed an opinion that poetry could also be part of lessons at a lower proficiency level of English. One teacher noted that simple comprehension tasks focusing on the literal meaning of words contained in a poem could be employed successfully in these classes. T4 related that learners, could reorder the lines of poems that had been mixed up, leading to a development of their sense rhyme and rhythm. There was general consensus amongst the teachers that Irish poetry provided congenial examples of Irish culture, and that such culture had a motivational effect on
learners. T1 justified the use of Irish poetry in the development of learner’s schemata “it’s helpful in developing students’ schemata in relation to Ireland”.

The teachers reported pre-teaching IE words and colloquialisms were often necessary with learners, but sometimes demotivating. In fact it had benefited learners if they discovered the IE linguistic structures autonomously. The teachers responded that in general Irish poetry and Irish culture had proved a success with many groups, the unanimity amongst the teachers was that if learners were motivated by and interested in literature and culture, then such topic in the language classroom would prove just as motivational.

All teachers agreed that a superficial understanding of a poem was not a priority when using poetry with language learners, T3 added after all “how much of a poem does a native speaker understand?” T3 added that there is no definite interpretation of a poem. T3 concluded that this situation liberates learners to volunteer responses, as every response could be significant in some way. The teachers recapitulated that learners were consistently interested in certain facets of Irish culture for example the ‘Celtic Tiger’, Irish rural life and Celtic mythology. T3 conveyed the opinion that older learners enjoy Irish history and politics.

To summarise the teachers had a positive attitude to Irish poetry being used in Irish EFL classes. They argued that Irish poetry highlights many aspects of Irish culture and develops learners’ cultural schemata. To conclude, teachers believed that learners are motivated by Irish literature and Irish culture.
3.3 Learner Focus Group

Table 2 Profile of Learners' Focus Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learner</th>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>L1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L1</td>
<td>L1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>German</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2</td>
<td>L2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>Czech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L3</td>
<td>L3</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L4</td>
<td>L4</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>Serbian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L5</td>
<td>L5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The nucleus of the learner group recounted that they had previous experience of poetry being used in their EFL classes. However, L5 had had no definite contact with poetry in her English language education. L3 and L4 encountered it frequently throughout theirs. L3 was in the process of studying contemporary Irish literature.

All learners avouched that all tasks involving poetry had been based around group discussions and comprehension activities. L3 confirmed she had experience of describing images from poems or rearranging jumbled up sentences. L3 and L4 established the fact that they found poetry difficult, and that it is too difficult for lower levels, that poetry required a high level of understanding which was too advanced for lower levels. The group determined that children’s poems or limericks could be utilised with lower levels. However, L5 contradicted this by saying that if learners have an interest in poetry they can be part of lower level lessons. L1 agreed, “if you like literature you will try harder to understand”.

The majority of participants chose to study in Ireland because it is a native English speaking country, while L3 recounted that she chose Ireland over Britain because she preferred Irish culture. L4 expressed a liking for Celtic music; L5 concluded that
Ireland had a great social culture. Most participants wanted to experience living in a native English speaking country, as a means of improving their English.

The participants articulated the belief that Irish culture was represented by history, literature, arts, traditions and music. L5 believed Irish culture involved dancing and being friendly. L1 subsequently concluded that the landscape of hills and castles symbolised the Irish culture. Each participant deemed it extremely significant that they should learn about Irish culture. L3 added, "It helps you understand its literature, its music, its people". L3 believed living in a culture makes you motivated to learn about it. L1 stated that it is easier to compare the L1 culture to Irish culture when you are part of it.

All learners maintained that the Irish poetry they had encountered while studying in Ireland was a positive thing. L4 found it extremely interesting although L1 found the poems difficult, but when L1 comprehended different ideas in the poems it had an affirmative effect for the learner. Participants also had confidence in the fact that the language class would not become a literature class, if literature were used sparingly during the course of the learners’ studies.

To conclude, the learners perceived that poetry was difficult, however the learners articulated that their experiences of Irish poetry in the cultural lessons (see 1.9) had been positive. The learners conveyed the attitude that it is vital Irish culture is introduced in the Irish EFL classroom as it aids their understanding of other aspects of Ireland for example its people.
3.4 The Teacher Interview

Two semi-structured interviews were held after the focus groups with one member of each group. These interviews were used to pursue further information on relevant data discussed in the focus groups before the questionnaires were created. P1 was keen to highlight the relationship between poetry and culture. Literature itself is a culture of artists and writers, and this culture is an unimpaired tool for introducing the schemata of Irish culture to learners. When using poetry in class P1 was keen to help learners gather some meaningfulness from a poem, in an aesthetic sense that the learners would experience emotion from encountering the poem. On a practical level P1 has used the sonic of a poem with the learners. This sometimes involved getting learners to transcribe poems into IPA and pronouncing the line in a bid to help them understand the internal and external rhymes of a poem.

P1 believed that limericks have a lot to offer learners in terms of rhyme and humour but particularly in getting learners used to syllable and syllabic counts and being able to match them up. P1 verbalised his tendency to move away from the course book and contended that he incorporated poetry mostly into general English classes. P1 reported that learners should read through a poem on their own first, he contended that when learners encounter a text in a course book, the learner normally gathers information from it firstly before any tasks take place. P1 believed that this must be the case when learners encounter poetry.

P1 argued that it is advantageous for learners to form their own opinions on a poem firstly, before these opinions are qualified further by extra information provided by
the teacher. P1 explicated that too structured an introduction to poetry is unnecessary, as poetry contains many elements that need no real in depth analysis in the context of language learning. P1 defined culture as a mixture of anthropological and ideological strands; both customs and the meaning that people ground their opinions on. P1 expressed a desire to broaden his learner’s cultural awareness, and to make learners comfortable with and appreciative of the Irish culture. P1 vocalised his belief that talking about similarities and differences and cultures has its benefits.

P1 believed that the teaching of colloquialisms is important; P1 also highlighted the importance of Irish poetry in raising learners’ cultural awareness, by pointing out the common themes, which run through a lot of Irish poetry. “First of all, there’s a lot of geography…. there’s a lot of landscapes… there is a lot of Irish attitudes and provincial attitudes…there’s also tensions between Catholics and non-Catholics”. P1 ventured the idea that Irish poetry helps highlight IE in its vocabulary but also the ways in which Irish poetry rhymes highlighting IE pronunciation.

Overall similar to the teachers’ focus group (see 3.2) P1 articulated the relationship between poetry and culture. The cultural aspects present in Irish poetry can develop learners’ schemata in relation to Ireland. P1 highlighted the fact poetry raises learners’ cultural awareness and this is a consequential part of ELT.

3.5 The Learner Interview

This semi-structured interview was organised with a learner from the learner’s focus group (see 3.3). P2 admitted that she had little experience of poetry in her previous English language education before she came to Ireland. This proved difficult as she
struggled to understand Irish poetry encountered when studying in Ireland. P2 found not comprehending all the vocabulary demotivating. P2 believed that her interest in poetry and the use of dictionaries would somewhat resolve matters.

P2 articulated some advantages of poetry use in the language classroom “you see different ways how to use vocabulary, you meet words you wouldn’t meet in another context, it broadens your vocabulary, and you learn words from Ireland” P2 conveyed a belief that the grammar derivations in poetry helped highlight correct grammar, although at lower levels these derivations would have to be made clear to the learners. In reference to intentional derivations P2 reported further that this was not demotivating as long as the learner realised this was the case, and was informed of the poet’s purpose of these intentional mistakes. P2 continued that reading poetry in a L1 does not necessarily prove helpful as a learner is so confident in their L1 that the flouting of grammar and vocabulary rules is not always realized by the native speaker.

P2 found that Irish poetry encountered in the cultural lessons (see 1.9) was profitable for her when learning about Irish culture. P2 explained that Irish poetry embodied a great amount of history. P2 also commented on how the poetry developed the learners understanding of the history of Northern Ireland, bog bodies and Celtic Ireland and differences between the IE and BE. P2 remarked that poetry was an interesting way to learn about culture and it took the learner away from the course book, P2 personally preferred working outside the course book. P2 explained that attitudes to poetry in general in the EFL class were negative. Learners conceived it as being too difficult. P2 expounded the idea that learners in a foreign culture usually prefer poetry containing elements of the culture from which it was produced.
P2 reported that being introduced to Irish poetry had been a positive experience, it helped the learner understand the culture more, and that she would be interested in reading more. P2 verbalised the attitude that it is important to learn about English speaking cultures when studying the language. P2 found that Irish poetry emphasised the features of IE, “they use IE and British English in the same poem, which makes it easier to see which is which”.

The view that Irish poetry increases learners’ awareness of Irish culture was shared by both the teacher (see 3.2) and learner interviewees. P2 express the opinion that the experience of using Irish poetry had aided her understanding of many important historical aspects of Irish culture. P2 credited poetry with broadening learners’ vocabulary while also it accentuates various features of IE. The attitudes towards Irish poetry being a part of Irish ELT was positive from both learners and teachers in the focus groups (see 3.2 and 3.3) and the semi-structured interviews (see 3.4 and 3.5). Firstly great importance was placed on Irish culture being integrated into the ELT class. Secondly Irish poetry was recognised by both groups as being a cultural product, which can be used in raising learners’ cultural awareness while emphasising the various features of IE.

3.6 Teacher Questionnaire

Each teacher (n=10) consented to taking part in the research. All questionnaires were completed.
3.6.1 Teaching Experience

All participants had a least 1 years teaching experience and four participants had 15 years or more. The maximum number of years spent teaching was 28 years. The average years spent teaching was 11.5 years (see Figure A).

![Figure 1- Participants Teaching Experience](image)

3.6.2 Types of Language Learners Taught

Firstly English language learners ranging from ages 3 to 80+ had been taught. Twenty percent of (n=2) teachers reported to teaching all ages, while another 20% (n=2) had only taught age groups aged 15-18. Thirty per cent (n=3) had previous experience of teaching all language levels and analogously 30% (n=3) of participants had taught from beginner to advanced levels. Forty per cent (n=40) had experience of teaching all nationalities, 20% (n=2) had taught only Italians while the remainder had varied experience ranging from Asia and Europe to Mexico.
Table 3 Types of language learners taught by participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age range</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 to 18</td>
<td>15 to 18</td>
<td>3 to 70</td>
<td>15 to 70</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Teenagers and Adults</td>
<td>8 to 60</td>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>4 to 80+</td>
<td>All</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language levels</td>
<td>Elementary to pre-intermediate</td>
<td>Elementary to pre-intermediate</td>
<td>Beginner to advanced</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Various</td>
<td>Beginners to advanced</td>
<td>Pre-intermediate to proficiency</td>
<td>Beginner to advanced</td>
<td>All</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationalities</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>Asian, Mexican, European, Asian, European</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Nearly every nation</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Extremely varied</td>
<td>All</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.6.3 Attitudes to Irish Topics of Study in Irish EFL classrooms

Participants were asked to rate the statements in Table 4 below using a Likert scale.

There was undoubtedly a strong belief that learners should learn about Irish culture with 80% (n=8) of learners strongly agreeing with this statement, while 20% (n=2) agreed with the statement. Attitudes towards literature and poetry in the Irish EFL classroom were divided, 50% (n=5) of participants strongly agreed that Irish literature including poetry should be introduced to learners while a further 10% (n=1) agreed with this idea. However 20% (n=2) expressed no preference and 20% (n=2) actually disagreed with the idea that learners should encounter Irish literature and poetry.

Importance was attached to the idea that learners in an Irish ELT class should encounter the IE variety with 80% (n=8) strongly agreeing and 20% (n=10) having no preference. There is noticeable lack of dubiety amongst teachers that Irish culture is an intrinsic part of an Irish ELT class. These numbers seem to indicate further what Kramsch (1998) and McBride (2000) view as the unbreakable union of language and culture and the fact the language cannot be isolated from its cultural context.
Table 4 Learners in the Irish ELT classroom should

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learners in the Irish ELT classroom should learn about</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree or disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Irish culture</td>
<td>8 (80%)</td>
<td>2 (20%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish literature including poetry</td>
<td>5 (50%)</td>
<td>1 (10%)</td>
<td>2 (20%)</td>
<td>2 (20%)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IE</td>
<td>8 (80%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2 (20%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.6.4 Learner motivation

There appeared to be a steady belief amongst the teachers that learners were motivated to learn about Irish culture, see Table 5 with 90% (n=9) agreeing in some degree, this finding concurs with the views expressed in the teacher focus group (see 3.2). In saying that Irish literature and poetry proved motivating to a degree 40% formulated the attitude that it motivated learners, however half the participants could neither agree nor disagree with 10% (n=1) disagreeing. Surprisingly there is a more concentrated approval that introducing IE in the class is motivational for learners with 30% (n=3) strongly agreeing and 60% (n=6) agreeing that learners are motivated to learn more about this variety.

Table 5 Learner motivations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learners are motivated to learn about:</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree or disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Irish culture</td>
<td>5 (50%)</td>
<td>4 (40%)</td>
<td>1 (10%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish literature including poetry</td>
<td>2 (20%)</td>
<td>2 (20%)</td>
<td>5 (50%)</td>
<td>1 (10%)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IE</td>
<td>3 (30%)</td>
<td>6 (60%)</td>
<td>1 (10%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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3.6.5 Irish Poetry, Irish Culture and IE

There was a surprising outcome when participants were asked whether they believed Irish poetry could be used as a tool for introducing learners to different aspects of Irish culture and IE, 60% (n=6) strongly agreed and 30% (n=3) agreed that Irish poetry was a useful tool (see Figure 2). The overriding belief was that Irish poetry could be an effective teaching aid in highlighting Irish culture and IE. Where there was a mixed consensus on whether learners should be introduced to Irish literature and poetry and similarly in 3.6.4 whether it is motivational for learners. In 3.6.5 the view was that Irish poetry is a primary source of Irish culture and IE. So therefore if as articulated by the teachers a more cultural aspect was to be added to Irish ELT pedagogies (see Table 4) then Irish poetry could be integrated in to more lessons for this purpose. As Collie and Slater (1987) indicated literature including poetry could help learners discover much about a TL culture while improving their language skills.

Figure 2 - Using Irish poetry to introduce Irish culture and IE
3.6.6 Culture in the Irish ELT classroom

Fifty per cent (n=5) of teachers (see Figure 3) defined culture in part as being symbolised by history. Art and literature was interestingly low with 10% (n=1) considering it is an integral part of a definition of culture. This contrasted with the fact that 40% (n=4) of participants actually had taught literature as part of culture. When asked whether this cultural material came from textbooks or personally selected materials 50% (n=5) reported that they had selected their own material, 50% (n=5) reported having taken cultural material from both the course book and their own materials. The fact that course books cannot provide teachers in this situation with the appropriate cultural material indicates the need for an examination of Irish EFL materials for their cultural content. Considering, as highlighted in the focus group (see 3.3) differing aspects of Irish culture were given as influencing the learners’ choice in studying the English language in Ireland.

Figure 3  Defintions of Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Culture</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customs</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art and Literature</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4  Types of culture taught

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Material</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Irish Symbols</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History and Politics</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.6.7 Attitudes to the use of Irish poetry in the Language Classroom

The majority of participants (n=9) acknowledged the fact that they had used Irish poetry in their language classes before. Nonetheless the timeframe in which Irish poetry had appeared was inconsistent, ranging from “once in five years” to “rarely” and “infrequently”. Some participants (n=3) noted the constraints of a syllabus to be a partial cause for this.

A number of teachers recounted (n=5) using tasks such as whole class discussions on poetry, while others (n=2) tended to focus on rhyme scheme and words that rhyme, a primary reason being “a word that rhymes in IE may not rhyme in AE and visa versa”. Seventy per cent (n=7) utilised the linguistic features of the poems to raise learner’s awareness of linguistic structures, as well as highlighting for learners vocabulary that is context dependent as well as IE lexis. One participant expounded, “I have used their knowledge of linguistics to point out the characteristics of Hiberno-English (HE), both in speech and writing, and to get them to identify these constructions in literature”. One hundred per cent (n=10) of participants admitted raising learners’ cultural awareness was always part of task selection criterion.

Irish poetry that had been presented to learners by the teachers was mostly Heaney due to the cultural nature of his poems, but also participants had put Yeats and Kavanagh forward as suitable authors. Every teacher (n=10) recognised that Irish poetry could be used to highlight Irish culture. The teachers had a very positive attitude towards the poetry’s cultural aspect, reasoning that “references to particular historical events” and the raising of “issues in a novel way” could be used in tandem with other materials to develop stimulating cultural lessons. There was a universal
acknowledgement by the teachers that Irish poetry had a place in Irish EFL classes, as the varied methods of utilising this poetry put forward, underpinned differing ways of introducing Irish poetry into Irish EFL pedagogies.

3.6.8 Attitudes to IE and colloquialisms in Irish poetry

All participants (n=10) credited Irish poetry as a means of underlining features of IE for learners. Such features presented by participants were “mostly the lexical items, with some of the grammatical and syntactic features, and occasionally the phonetic aspects”, or “prepositional usage; pronunciation; alternative meanings for words such as "mean" (adj) or "ride" (n., v.)”.

Every teacher (n=10) accepted that learners should have contact with colloquialisms in class. Reasons that were given included students are generally interested in them, they may hear them and so may need them for comprehension, they are part of the unique culture of the country and “IE is a valid variety of English”. Learners are in Ireland learning English; they need to be able to at least receive IE”. A common trait amongst all responses was a need for learners to be aware of IE in order to be able to communicate better in everyday Irish life. Therefore for learners living and studying in Ireland it must be noted that a lack of IE in Irish EFL classroom could be prove to be a hindrance in learners communicating outside the class, in their TC. This finding coincides with Tomlinson’s (1998) theory that learners must develop a cultural competence with their TL, comprised of knowledge of linguistic skills but also sociolinguistic skills, for example IE traits.
3.6.9 Participants’ Past Experiences of Poetry

One hundred per cent (n=10) of teachers had studied poetry in their own education, some participants (n=7) had studied poetry right through from primary to university level. Others (n=2) had only experience with poetry at secondary level education, while one (n=1) had only experienced poetry in third level education.

Sixty per cent (n=6) of teachers accounted for their previous experience as a crucial factor in using poetry with their language learners, however 40% (n=4) construed this previous experience had no bearing on them. In relation to the teachers’ previous educational experiences of poetry being an influence on ELT poetry use the views are polemic. For example one teacher argued, “once you are given an awareness of, and love of poetry, it stays with you; poetry is a particularly powerful form of literature, it condenses emotion and expression in very carefully selected words”, an opposite reason proposed was the way poetry is taught traditionally, and the way it can be written, poetry for poets, can make it inaccessible for many. Overall however a unanimous amount of teachers had encountered poetry in their education. This coincides with the fact the majority of teachers had used poetry in their lessons therefore it seems the teachers previous education influenced their choice of poetry as material for the EFL class.

The teachers’ attitudes towards poetry and its perceived difficulty, and its use with all language levels was divided in two, 50% (n=5) of participants were not discouraged in using it because of its ‘difficulty’, while 50% (n=5) perceived this was the case citing obscure ideas and arduous lexis as deterrents. Fifty per cent (n=5) articulated the belief that poetry could be used with all language levels and 50% (n=5) believed it could not. Participants saw Irish poetry in some cases as offensive, 80% (n=8)
believed you would have to intensively search for offensive material, while 20% adhered to the idea that it depends on a learners' own cultural background whether they find something taboo or offensive, with different cultures containing different taboos. Participants maintained that only extreme offence or material too sensitive for learner's cultural and religious background would hinder their use of Irish poetry.

3.6.10 Frequency of Literary Forms

The teachers were asked regarding certain literary forms frequency of appearance in their Irish ELT classes (see Table 6 below) and whether these forms were from their personal material or course books. The least frequent, according to participants, was plays, 60% (n=6) of teachers reported that form as appearing never. Short stories was the only form to appear weekly at 20% (n=2) and also weekly at 30% (n=3), this was a logical occurrence considering their succinct nature and their popularity amongst learners. Novels appeared yearly at 70% (n=7) mainly down to their size. Poetry however appeared 20% (n=2) weekly, 60% (n=6) at monthly and 10% (n=1) yearly. With short stories only occurring slightly more frequent than poetry, poetry appeared in learner materials more regularly than first anticipated.

The teachers believed that a substantial amount of literature would be exploited in the language class if the syllabus allowed it. One teacher noted that Irish poetry would invigorate the class and motivate learners. The sparse frequency at which the varying literary forms appear indicates that syllabus constraints have a negative effect of which additional materials teachers can use. Considering the willingness of teachers to incorporate such forms in the class, it would highlight a need for more literary forms to appear in Irish EFL course books.
Table 6 Frequency of literary forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forms of literature</th>
<th>Daily</th>
<th>Weekly</th>
<th>Monthly</th>
<th>Yearly</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poetry</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6(60%)</td>
<td>3(30%)</td>
<td>1(10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novels</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1 (10%)</td>
<td>7(70%)</td>
<td>1(10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short Stories</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2(20%)</td>
<td>3(30%)</td>
<td>5(50%)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plays</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1(10%)</td>
<td>3(30%)</td>
<td>6(60%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.7 Students’ Questionnaires

Each learner (n=25) consented to taking part in the research. All questionnaires were completed. All learners were studying EFL in Ireland.

3.7.1 Learner Profile

*Figure 5 Age Profile of Participants*
Of the participants 12% (n=3) were aged 18-21, 48% (n=12) were aged 22-25 and 40% (n=10) were aged 25+. No participants (n=0) were aged 16-18. Female participants constituted 68% (n=17) while male participants made up 32% (n=8) of the total. The learners (n=25) were all at undergraduate level and the average number years spent learning EFL was 6.84. Each had studied at either primary level, high school or university level. Sixty per cent (n=15) had studied EFL at all levels. In addition 20% (n=5) had attained private lesson as well.

Table 7 Profile of Learner Nationalities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finish</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.7.2 Reasons for studying in Ireland

The teachers volunteered a number of main reasons for studying in Ireland (see Table 8). It is clearly the case that the majority of learners come to Ireland to study EFL due to a positive impression of Ireland and its culture, with 40% (n=10) giving that reason.
### Table 8 Reasons for Studying in Ireland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Count (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A positive impression of Ireland and its culture</td>
<td>10 (40%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always wanted to visit Ireland</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland has an advanced education system</td>
<td>4 (16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less expensive than Britain</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Want to study in Ireland next year</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To improve my English</td>
<td>6 (24%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erasmus Programme</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.8 Participants definition of culture

When the learners' defined culture, they came up with a number of variables (see Table 9). Learners had a common notion of culture as either existing in material form of art, literature or “patterns of behaviour” or shared knowledge of “social norms and customs”. Some participants alluded to new cultures that transcend boundaries, which “has nothing to do traditions or where you come from, maybe you can call it popular culture”. However the common view of culture amidst learners was it consisted of art, music and literature. The fact learners associated culture with history was not surprising as the majority of learner respondents had taken some part in the cultural lessons designed by the researcher (see 1.9).
### Table 9 Participants definitions of culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Count (Percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>History &amp; tradition including art, music, literature and customs</td>
<td>15 (60%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human behaviour and values which makes use different from animals</td>
<td>5 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too vast to define</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A knowledge shared by a group of people</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity of a nation</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 3.9 Attitudes to Irish topics and variations of English

The learners strongly agreed with Irish culture being taught in an Irish EFL classroom, with 80% (n=20) agreeing in some degree. The participating learners were also consistent in their views on IE with those of the teachers, as an overall majority of respondents were in favour of IE being studied in class as a linguistic topic. As anticipated by the teachers', opinions were varied about Irish literature and poetry use with learners. Sixteen per cent (n=4) strongly disagreed with the literature and poetry use in the language class. Five respondents did not have an opinion on literature however 24% (n=6) strongly agreed and 40% (n=10) agreed that literature and poetry did have pedagogical benefits for Irish ELT classrooms.

When asked which variety of English they wanted to learn, the learners reported a majority preference for BE, with 40% (n=10) favouring it. AE was the next with 32% (n=8), IE had 20% (n=5) ahead of Aus/E with 8% (n=2) of learner preferences.
3.10 Literature, Poetry and ELT

Sixty four per cent (n=16) of learners had previous experience of poetry in their EFL experience. There was a marked difference between teacher Table 6 and learner Table 10 in terms of the frequency certain literary forms appeared in the language class. Literary forms appeared more frequently with learners than teachers. This might be the result of learners experiencing different course books and educational institutions, when the teachers might be obliged to use a course book or remain within a syllabus for long periods. However, one frequency trend that is similar is the fact short stories and poetry are most frequently used, with short stories and poetry appearing weekly for 20% (n=5). Comparably novels and plays appear with the least frequency, novels appearing yearly with 44% (n=11) of participants and plays similarly at 64% (n=16) of the participants. The fact that novels and plays appeared so infrequently with both learners and teachers suggest their size and form are not practical for language teaching.

The majority of participants (n=18) reported having read poetry in L1. Numerous respondents credited poetry in their L1 as developing “a particular type of sensibility” to language in the reader, which is the fact learners have become aware of elemental
features of poetry such as language deviation or structural form. This assists learners working with L2 poetry. Seventy two percent (n=18) of learners also believed that a mixture of textbooks and authentic materials would be the best resource for language learning.

Table II Frequency of literary forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Daily</th>
<th>Weekly</th>
<th>Monthly</th>
<th>Yearly</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poetry</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5(20%)</td>
<td>8(32%)</td>
<td>8(32%)</td>
<td>4(16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novels</td>
<td>2(8%)</td>
<td>2(8%)</td>
<td>5(20%)</td>
<td>5(20%)</td>
<td>11(44%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short stories</td>
<td>2(8%)</td>
<td>5(20%)</td>
<td>8(32%)</td>
<td>8(32%)</td>
<td>2(8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plays</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1(4%)</td>
<td>4(16%)</td>
<td>4(16%)</td>
<td>16(64%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.11 Irish poetry and ELT

The majority of learners recounted that Irish poetry could increase their awareness of Irish culture and IE. Forty per cent (n=10) of learners stated that contact with Irish poetry would increase awareness of IE vocabulary. One opinion was that learners (n=3) are seeing events through the poet, therefore additional emotive information is being transmitted; “poetry unveils the thoughts, the personality and the traditions of the author”, and this can increase authenticity. A further 4 respondents (n=4) construed that Irish poetry contains archaic language; the respondents felt that Irish poetry juxtaposes both archaic and contemporary language thus highlighting the difference. Sixteen per cent (n=4) deemed Irish poetry successful in highlighting
“troubles of society” while another 16% (n=4) were of the view that Irish poetry emphasised cultural and societal values.

Figure 6 Benefits of Irish poetry

3.11.1 Further Advantages and Disadvantages of Irish poetry and ELT

Learners were asked a number of questions as part of the questionnaire (see Appendix) on the advantages and disadvantages of poetry for which they could chose from a number provided answers. The answers were constructed in an effort to condense the amount of data being collected in order to aid analysis of the data. Learners could select more that one response. The number of times an answer was selected was known as response counts. Learners responded that encountering poetry would help “you understand or interpret other poetry”. Participants believed this type of understanding (n=15) would lead to a sense of achievement or would motivate “you to try and understand and learn more about poetry”. This finding supports Little et al (1997) assumptions that authentic texts like poems stimulate an interest in
learners due to their energising effect which learners find motivating, as well as Mishan’s (2005) belief that if a learners rises to the challenge of literature it boosts affective factors conducive to learning.

Figure 7 Understanding different parts of poetry...

Learners acknowledged that Irish poetry (see Figure 8) could be most helpful in broadening “your cultural awareness of Ireland” with 29.31% (n=17) of response counts favouring that option. A further 22.41% (n=13) credited Irish poetry with an ability to increase “your awareness of IE”. Similar to the views of the teachers, learners see Irish poetry as means of increasing their cultural awareness.
When asked about poetry in a language class learners (see Figure 9) conveyed that it is mostly (n=13) “interesting because you like poetry in general”, which contradicts generic assumptions that learners dislike poetry. A factor in this attitude could be the positive exposure learners received in the cultural lessons (see 1.9). A number (n=13) of learners found poetry “motivating because you are using authentic texts”. There appears to be a conjoint attitude that literature and poetry have a motivating effect on learners.
Motivating because you are using authentic texts
Interesting because you like poetry in general
Boring because you don't like poetry
Scary because you might not understand all of the poem

In the case of understanding poetry (see Figure 10) 61.53% (n=16) of learners “understand some of it”. One response was “you might understand the words but not the metaphors etc, the language can be tricky as well”, while 38.46% (n=10) of learners explained that they understood most of the poetry they encountered. A respondent argued “with the help of a teacher a student can understand a lot of poetry unless it is really difficult”. Most participants mentioned a teacher being part of their process of understanding. Seventy two per cent (n=18) of learners reported that you can learn from poetry without understanding all of it, one example cited was “you can always learn new vocabulary” another example was “you learn because you know what you don’t know and have to improve on in terms of language”.

Figure 9 Poetry in the language classroom is...
Nearly 40% (n=16) of learners accepted that poetry helps learners “understand the poet’s culture” (see Figure 10) while 26.08% (n=12) appreciated poetry brought “a change from the normal textbook”. Additionally 17.39% (n=8) thought poetry could improve their English, with the cultural aspects of poetry seeming to take importance over its linguistic benefits for learners. One respondent affirmed a Leavisite view of poetry which “benefits you as a person in general not just your English skills”, while another response considered poetry and other literature as motivational, “you can see a use for your language that you might not discover when only using the textbook”.

Figure 10 When you read poetry in English do you...
In terms of disadvantages, poetry was viewed by learners as sometimes too difficult "and as a result learners get bored" with 96% (n=24) of respondents agreeing with this view. One respondent found "poetic sensibility and understanding hard to find"; another believed some learners have a negative idea of poetry from an L1 education. Another respondent argued that some teachers do not have the necessary skills to stimulate learners to become motivated when using poetry.
3.12 Learners’ Suggestions for Future Use of Poetry

Nearly 50% (n=17) of participants would like “to see more literature, in general used in language learning”. Twenty eight point five seven per cent (n=10) concluded more poetry in textbooks would be beneficial, while 22.85% (n=8) participants expressed a preference for more poetry to be used in the language classroom itself. In conclusion, a respondent added “using poetry is highly beneficial in a holistic approach to learning and developing students as human beings, as world citizens and in understanding other cultures better and in being more tolerant towards other culture and nations”, a further comment was that when studying EFL in Ireland Irish poetry is a “medium to learn more about Irish culture and definitely should be included in the teaching”, while a final commentator determined culture should be an integral part of language learning.

To summarise the main findings from the data collected, both teachers and learners were of the opinion that Irish culture should be an integral part of EFL in Ireland. Both groups also expressed the idea an awareness of IE was needed by learners for life outside the classroom as a means of developing their communicative competence in Irish society. However, a surprising finding was that although some negativity was shown by learners towards Irish poetry being used, in Irish EFL teaching, there was an overall positive attitude towards Irish poetry’s language learning benefits. Both learners and teachers underlined the cultural, linguistic and motivational benefits of Irish poetry use in the Irish EFL classroom.
4.1 Summary of the Study

The aim of the study was to investigate the viability of utilising Irish literature most notably poetry as a means of increasing learners' awareness of Irish culture and IE. Included in this aim, was an examination of attitudes of both teachers and learners to this idea.

The methodology used in the present study was as follows: four hours of cultural lessons based on Irish poetry as a means of the researcher investigating first hand the viability of the study. In order to elicit data for the study and the questionnaire design, a learner and teacher focus group was held. A semi-structured follow up interview with a member of each group was organised for clarification of points raised in the focus group, and for the elicitation of further data. Finally a questionnaire was distributed to learners (n=25) and teachers (n=10) in order to garner a final measurement of attitudes of both teachers and learners to the research problem. Due to the scale of the project no definite conclusions or generalisations can be made, but one can espial some insightful particularities and attitudes.

The learner and teacher questionnaires were scrutinized in detail, to be compared and contrasted both qualitatively and quantitatively. The teachers defined culture as being primarily constructed of history, customs, arts and literature and language. The most favoured cultural definition forwarded by the teachers was a historical one. The majority of learners similarly articulated that Irish culture was represented by history and tradition however this definition included art, music and literature as factors.
There was an overriding attitude amongst the teachers that Irish culture should be presented to learners in the Irish ELT classroom. While 80% strongly agreed with the idea that learners should also encounter IE when studying in the Irish EFL classroom. There was a unanimous attitude amongst the teachers that learners studying in Ireland must have some knowledge of colloquialisms and IE as it aided their cognition of these distinct language features outside of the classroom. Just fewer than half the teachers reported that they felt learners would be motivated if they were to learn about Irish literature including poetry, while 90% of teachers concurred that learners would be motivated if IE was integrated into their learning experience. The majority of these teachers conveyed the attitude that Irish poetry was an appropriate material to introduce aspects of Irish culture and IE. Identically, the preponderance of learners asseverated that Irish poetry had the ability to transmit Irish culture and IE upon learners.

The majority of the Irish cultural aspects that were utilised by teachers ranged from literature to music to history and politics. The teachers also pointed out that the materials they used in lessons were either from their own personally selected material or a mixture of both course book and personal material. Not one teacher reported using the course book as the only source of cultural material. Six of the teachers reported as having been exposed to poetry in their own education which in turn increased the likeliness of them employing poetry in their own classes; however half the teachers recognised that the reputation of poetry being essentially difficult could deter them from considering poetry in their lessons as a viable option.
A small percentage of teachers stated that they would deliberate over using Irish poetry that may contain taboo themes for some learners, for example the troubles in the North, however the majority felt Irish poetry contained minuscule amounts of such taboo subjects. As well the types of tasks both teachers and learners reported as either using or experiencing in general with poetry fell into two groups, those that focused on what the linguistic features were of the poem and the second which deployed Irish poetry as a springboard for further tasks or discussions.

4.2 Examination of the Hypotheses

1. The first hypothesis was that learners are motivated to learn about Irish culture and find it interesting.

The numbers in this research supported the hypothesis overall. The attitudes of learners' towards Irish culture were eminently positive. From the early stages of the research it was reported in the teacher focus group that learners find many aspects of Irish culture fascinating including the 'Celtic Tiger', rural Irish life and Irish history and politics. It was then fitting that learners associate the term culture in the main with the nations history and politics (see Figure 3). Every participant in the learner focus group stated that it was extremely important to learn about Irish culture. The data from the questionnaires also upheld the hypothesis. The majority (n=9) of teachers agreed that learners are motivated to learn about Irish culture. Forty per cent of learners declared that Irish culture was the principal reason they had chosen to study in an Irish EFL class. Additionally 80% of learners stated that it was exceedingly important for learners in the Irish EFL classroom to be made aware of Irish Culture.
2. The second hypothesis was that there is a greater demand amongst learners to be introduced to English varieties such as BE rather than IE.

The second hypothesis was supported by the research. Forty per cent of learners (40%) displayed a preference for learning BE, however there was some importance placed on IE. Twenty per cent of learners reported they favoured learning that variety. Additionally learners placed great emphasis on the fact IE should be part of the Irish EFL class. A superior amount of learners (n=20) expressed a need for learners in Ireland to come into contact with IE. Consequently the belief from both learners and teachers is that IE is motivating and relevant.

3. The third hypothesis was that learners would enjoy actuating Irish literature in class, but Irish poetry would encounter some negativity due to poetry being considered difficult by learners.

The third hypothesis was supported by the research. Learners displayed a positive attitude towards Irish literature on the whole, however there was some negativity reported by learners towards Irish poetry. A number of learners reported poetry in general as being difficult. Learners (n=16) related that learners should encounter poetry. There was a small percentage of negativity shown towards Irish poetry and learners reported that it was difficult to understand. However as the semi-structured interviewee reported the more exposure she got in the cultural lessons (see 3.5) to Irish poetry the more the learner viewed Irish poetry as being beneficial in EFL learning and a viable option for increasing the cultural awareness of learners. The learners accredited Irish poetry as having a number of advantages including highlighting societal values, IE vocabulary and cultural conflicts.
4. The fourth hypothesis is that teachers do incorporate or want to incorporate Irish poetry and other literary forms in their lessons but are restrained from doing so more frequently by syllabuses and course books.

The fourth hypothesis was supported in so far as the teachers reported in the focus group they have used not only Irish poetry but poetry in general at various times during their teaching. However, they conveyed that the poetry selected was based on the aims of the class, not primarily because it was Irish. The teachers additionally expressed the opinion that Irish poetry is useful in developing learners' schemata regarding Ireland. One teacher reported that they would readily incorporate Irish literature and poetry in their lessons, however syllabus restrictions made it impossible to deviate from the course book. Furthermore a majority of the teachers agreed that Irish literature should be part of Irish ELT classes. However with the majority of Irish literatures frequency of use being reported mostly on a monthly to yearly basis, the logical conclusion gleaned from the research is that teachers want to incorporate Irish literature and poetry but are restrained by exams and syllabuses from doing so.

4.3 Pedagogical Implications

From the data received in this study it is clear that a more holistic approach is needed in Irish EFL teaching. Considering language and culture cannot be separated (Kramsch 1998) it further highlights the fact a cultural aspect in Irish ELT is vital for the EFL learners in Ireland. There was recognition amongst both teachers and learners in this research that Irish culture; literature including poetry and IE was an integral part of a learner’s experience studying English in Ireland. The reality is the materials being used in the EFL classroom do not contain the required amount of
vibrant cultural material. Culturally speaking, teachers expressed the importance of learners being presented with the facets of Ireland that differentiates the culture and the language from other English speaking countries, however were restrained from doing so by adhering to syllabuses. There could be a more concentrated effort to incorporate these facets into the pedagogies of ELT in Ireland.

Reflecting on the significant volume of learners in Ireland it is important for Irish culture to become an integral part of Irish EFL teaching. With a significant proportion of learners expressing Irish culture as the main reason for studying in Ireland it could be argued that the current pedagogies are failing to give learners their preferred EFL education when they choose to come and study in Ireland. Overall the positive attitude towards Irish poetry from the learners can be accredited to the influence of the cultural lessons (see 1.9) in which the majority of respondents took part in. The Irish poetry contained in these lessons most likely had a positive effect on the learners thus showing learners that Irish poetry was a tool which could improve their linguistic skills while also increasing their awareness of Irish culture and IE. Therefore Irish poetry could be integrated more into Irish ELT as a means of bringing more culture and IE into the language classroom.

Given the small number of teachers (n=10) and learners (n=25) involved in this survey it is of course it is not possible to draw extensive conclusions which can be generalised to a wider context. Rather it is argued that the value in this research lies in the study’s ability to draw attention to features that might be explored further in future studies and to show the diversity of attitudes expressed by respondents and to illustrate the individual teachers and learners belief that raising awareness for the need
for more Irish culture, IE and Irish poetry to incorporated into the pedagogies of the Irish EFL industry.

4.4 Recommendations for Further Research

This study focused on learners and teachers from university level language centres, this research could be expanded to encompass private language schools. These schools comprise of learners coming to Ireland usually during the learners' holidays and courses provided contain more culture-orientated general English courses. Researching learners and teachers from such institutes would offer the qualitative data with which more concrete assumptions regarding this research question could be made.

With the expansion of local literatures in English, these literatures could become the basis for comparing and contrasting different cultures, such forms of literature could in theory form the basis of cross-cultural course books or even specific cross-cultural pedagogies.
Reference List


1. This study aims to investigate the feasibility of using poetry by Irish authors as a means of increasing EFL learner's awareness of Irish culture and Irish/English in the Irish EFL classroom. While also analysing both teachers and learners attitudes to this method.

2. This questionnaire will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

3. Your real name will not be used in this dissertation; instead initials will be used (e.g. T1, L1) to refer to different participants. This information will be destroyed upon the completion of my dissertation.

4. The information I collect will be used solely in my dissertation and any information will not be shared with any other parties.

5. You have the right to withdraw any information you have provided at any time you deem necessary.

6. You may contact the above-mentioned persons at any time for clarification of any points or for any extra information.

Consent Section
Title of Study: Raising cultural awareness in the Irish EFL classroom: Irish poetry as means of increasing EFL learners awareness of Irish culture and Irish/English.
• I hereby declare that I have been made fully aware of the nature of this study, and how the information received will be used.
• I understand there is no obligation for me to take part in this study and can withdraw at any time without explanation, and that all information will be treated with respect and confidentiality.
• I understand that by completing the online questionnaire I am providing the necessary consent.

Finally thank you very much for helping me with my study.
9. Have you ever used Irish poetry in your classes?
   - [ ] yes
   - [ ] no
   If yes, how often?

10. What types of language learning tasks have you used with Irish poetry?

11. Have these tasks been aimed at increasing the learner's awareness of Irish culture and/or the Irish/English variety?

12. Have you ever used Irish poetry to present Irish culture to your learners?
   - [ ] yes
   - [ ] no
   Could you provide an example?
5.

13. How in your opinion can Irish poetry be used to present information on Irish culture to your learners?

14. What features of the Irish/English variety can Irish poetry help highlight to learners?

15. Personally is it important for you to make learners aware of Irish colloquialisms?
   - yes
   - no
   Please give reasons:

16. Did you encounter poetry during your own education?
   - yes
   - no
   If yes, at which level of education was it encountered?
17. In your opinion, does the familiarity with the nuances of poetry from your own education make you more likely to use poetry in your own classes?

- [ ] yes
- [ ] no

Please give reasons for your answer

18. Have you ever felt discouraged to use poetry in your class due to its perceived 'difficulty'?

- [ ] yes
- [ ] no

If yes, please explain

19. In your opinion, can poetry be used at all levels of the Irish EFL classroom?

- [ ] yes
- [ ] no

20. In your opinion, does Irish poetry contain cultural content that may be offensive to learners (i.e. violence in the North) and therefore should be approached with caution?

21. Would cultural content that may be deemed offensive to learners stop you from using certain Irish poets or poems that contain such content?

22. How often are these different types of literature used in your classes, whether it be from a textbook or your own personally selected material?

- Poetry
- Novels
- Short stories
- Plays

23. Any further comments on this questionnaire or on Irish poetry and the Irish EFL classroom...
1. Reminder: Have you read and approved the consent form
   - yes
   - no

2. Age
   - □ 16-18
   - □ 18-21
   - □ 22-25
   - □ 25+

3. Gender
   - □ Male
   - □ Female

4. Nationality

5. Native Language (L1)

6. Your current level of education?

7. How many years have you spent learning English?
8. In what types of educational institutes (schools) have you studied English?

9. Why did you choose to study in Ireland?

10. How would you explain/define the term 'culture'?
11. Note: Irish/English is the type of English spoken in Ireland and differs from other types of English in pronunciation, syntax, vocabulary and so on.

Learners in the Irish EFL classroom should, during their studies learn about:

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree or disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
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<tr>
<td>Irish Culture</td>
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<td>Irish/English</td>
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<td>Irish Literature (including poetry)</td>
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12. What variety of English would you prefer to learn?

- □ American  □ British  □ Irish  □ Australian  □ Other

If answer is other please specify, also give reasons for your preferred variety.

13. During your EFL classes has poetry been used?

- ○ Yes
- □ No

14. How often have these types of literature been used in your EFL classes?

- □ Poetry
- □ Novels
- □ Short stories
- □ Plays
- □ Other (please specify)
15. Do you read poetry in your own language?
   - yes
   - no
   If yes, does this help you understand English poetry, how?

16. Do you as a language learner prefer learning from:
   - authentic materials (e.g. music, poetry, film in English)
   - textbooks (e.g. Headways)
   - both
   Give reasons for this preference

17. How could using poetry by Irish writers help you learn about Irish culture and the Irish/English variety of the English language?
18. Please note: For items 18 – 25 EXCEPT 22 please select the responses that best describes your view. You may select more than one response.

**Understanding different parts (words, themes, images, metaphors) of poetry:**

- [ ] motivates you to try and understand and learn more about poetry
- [ ] makes you feel like you have achieved something
- [ ] helps you understand or interpret other poetry
- [ ] Other (please specify)

19. **Poetry by Irish authors could help you:**

- [ ] learn new vocabulary
- [ ] increase your awareness of Irish/English
- [ ] broaden your cultural awareness of Ireland
- [ ] improve your grammar
- [ ] understand metaphors and other features of poetic language
- [ ] Other (please specify)

20. **Do you/ would you find poetry in the classroom is:**

- [ ] motivating because you are using real texts
- [ ] interesting because you like poetry in general
- [ ] boring because you don't like poetry
- [ ] scary because you might not understand all of the poem
- [ ] Other (please specify)
21. In general when you read poetry in English do you?
- [ ] understand all of it.
- [ ] understand most of it.
- [ ] understand some of it.
- [ ] understand none of it.
- Other (please specify)

22. Can you learn from poetry without understanding all of it?
- [ ] yes
- [ ] no
- If yes, please explain how?

23. What are the advantages of using poetry in the EFL classroom?
- [ ] poetry is interesting
- [ ] poetry helps us understand the poets culture
- [ ] poetry is a change from the normal textbook
- [ ] poetry can help improve our English
- Other (please specify)

24. What are the disadvantages of using poetry in the EFL classroom?
- [ ] poetry is too hard and as a result learners get bored
- [ ] you can't learn anything from poetry
- [ ] I never understand poetry
- [ ] I don't like poetry even in my own language
- Other (please specify)
25. In the future would you...

- [ ] like to see more poetry used in the classroom
- [ ] like to see more poetry included in textbooks
- [ ] like to see more literature, in general used in language learning

Other (please specify)

26. Would you like to make any further comments on using poetry, or learning more about Irish culture and Irish/English in the EFL classroom........
Appendix D

Transcript of Teacher Focus Group

I-Hello everyone, Thank you for being present today, the purpose of this focus group is to ask you as teachers some questions on my research topic. The information gathered will be used to help construct a teacher questionnaire. As I have said the topic of my research is investigating the feasibility of using Irish poetry as a means of increasing learners' awareness of Irish culture and IE, and the attitudes of both teachers and learners to this. I just want to begin by asking who has used poetry in their classes up to this point.

T 1, 2, 3, 4, 5- [All teachers respond yes]

I- What poets in general have you used?

T5- Yeats

T4- Paddy Kavanagh, Heaney.

T1- A lot Heaney

T1- Enda Muldoon

I- So have you used predominately Irish poets?

T1- No, no not at all.

T4- British, American poetry.

T5- Yes, whatever poetry suits what I'm doing with the class.

T1- I use limericks and who the hell knows writes those.

[combined laughter]

T5- That camera isn't on is it?

I- It's only for transcribing purposes.

T5- Ok grand.
T3- I used some Japanese poets, but I don’t remember their names, ah but just for Haiku.

T5- They use those in books actually.

T3- Because of their simplicity.

I- What were the overall aims of using these poets? What was the aim of the lessons?

T3- Ah ah, sorry.

T4- No go on.

T3- For the Haiku they’re great for teaching syllables, ah ah correct syllable use in words or sentences. There can be only a certain number of syllables per line, so so students having problems understanding how many syllables for example Japanese students ah they would say Mac-o-Donalds instead of McDonalds, that type of poetry would help correcting that sort of thing.

T5- That’s so cute though.

[combined laughter]

T1- Japanese poetry is syllabic, but not all poetry is syllabic, its important to know something about poetry, if your going to focus on syllables in an Anglo-Saxon poem, ya know, its not going to work.

I- Ok so, what in general are the types of tasks you have used in class, when using poetry.

T5- Sometimes its just nice to get students to read a poem and just appreciate it.

T3- For sure.

T5- Yeah yeah.

I- They you find learners understand poetry.

T5- Sometimes they do, ya can get some Yeats stuff with someone reading it, they have lots of images and they let it wash over them and they talk about how they feel.
I- So you prefer to work with the poems like this instead of for example comprehension questions etc?

T4- Yea

T5- Yea I guess so.

T2- To work with the images of a poem is always good. I found with higher levels you can work with tone, how serious or not the poem is. I use the playful tone for example Philip Larkin's poetry is great for that sort of thing. They find it difficult, they think its completely serious.

I- So a more free flowing approach is better, letting students interact with the poem rather than being restrained by comprehension focused exercises.

T5- Ya, you can do it like, I use 3 verses of a poem that's about freedom and the whole class discuss it as a topic, freedom like. The poem is just a stepping stone, you can do other things, its poetry you don't want to beat it into a pulp.

T2- A language class is not a literature class. I use poems as an intro into a lot of lessons, its not the main focus of lessons.

T3- Then I also think it depends on the level, if your dealing with lower levels, its going to be more difficult to express how they're feeling, you can do some simple comprehension questions with them just on the literal meaning maybe. Then at higher levels you can put much more into it.

I- Which levels do you mostly use poetry with?

T5- Nearly all books have poems. There not world renowned authors, you know simple things students continue the poems with their ideas or order the verses of a mixed up poem.
T4- At lower levels its quite its quite good to get them to order sentences to get them rhyming its helpful for pronunciation, very simple rhymes for them to get rhythm I wouldn’t use something very Irish/English with them.
I- Do you prefer to use Irish poets, because were in Ireland?
T4- Depends on the theme of the lesson and personal taste as well.
T2- Depends on context, students in Japan have no interest in Ireland, however people actually here are more likely to be stimulated by Irish poetry.
T1- I use Irish poets partly because of schemata looking at the Irish context because its helpful in developing students schemata in relation to Ireland, yes it’s a useful tool.
I- Do you find Irish poetry difficult to use because of Irish/English and colloquialisms?
T5- Well all poetry contains colloquial or poetic or literary language.
T4- Yea it does.
Do you pre-teach colloquial language?
T3- Depends on the task and how much detail you want to go into if you pre-teach too much your flogging a dead horse.
I- At which levels has Irish poetry worked well with?
T1- I have taught with it at higher level at higher level and it hasn’t gone down well at all.
T4- Depends on the group.
T2- Yes.
T4- Something that has gone down well with everyone could sink with other groups.
We have used it as part of culture lessons with Spanish teachers from intermediate up to advanced and because the interest is their any poem will go down well with people.
who are interested. Anyone interested in culture will have interest and will know a lot already. In some cases they can be more interested in literature than Irish people are.

T2- Ya like some people are more interested in literature anyways, you have to allow for that.

T1- In your experience are students interested in Irish culture?

T5- Yes in general they would be.

T1- IRA IRA IRA that’s the mantra for some students.

[combined laughter]

T3- I think a lot of that also depends on the group dynamics, how much they’ve bounded and how much they are willing to go with a lesson ah am at the start if they have an attitude that they’re just not interested, then you kinda working against them.

T1- Ya but you can still do something with the poems. You can focus on grammar and sentence structure and like violations because you have a lot of violations. You have like sentences that don’t have full stops, they don’t have punctuations whatever feature that’s being violated, like why are they doing this.

T4- I think its important to show them you can read stuff and not understand it all, maybe just get a feeling, like listening to song. If you try and explain the lyrics of a song like they could have been wasted ha ha when they wrote the song. It doesn’t necessarily make any sense but that doesn’t take away from singing along.

T1- Like usually the European students especially the romantic languages tend to identify more with poetry, probably because there is similarities between derivations in the language and they may get more of the emotional impact in poetry say than someone that comes from outside Europe.

T3- When you’re talking about understanding, how much of a poem does a native speaker understand.
T5- Yea.
T3- Like who has the correct understanding or what is the correct understanding.
T5- Exactly.
T3- It frees the students because whatever they think can be relevant to the discussion.
T4- In school they destroy poetry, they take any bit of life, art or inspiration out of it to the point where you just learn it off by heart da da da da like. So its dead and buried.
T2- There’s nothing worse than a real close reading of every single point.
T4- Yea how do you even explain it.
T1- If you explained all poems there would be no need for writing poems you would just say it, so in poetry this is something that can’t be just said, but you can feel it, you can identify with it up here [points to head] or in here [points to heart].
I- What would you say are the main cultural issues students are interested in.
T4- It depends a lot on age, we have got a lot of students who are young and have no interest in culture, they don’t care about history or literature.
T3- More nightlife culture!
[combined laughter]
T1- A lot of them care about the Celtic Tiger.
T4- They care about where they can get food ha ha.
T1- The Greek students love the mythology, they come over and want to hear more, they’re all about the Celts.
T3- Slightly older students have an interest in history and politics, the Spanish are politically motivated.
T2- The old lifestyle, rural lifestyle that’s disappeared now, ya know Paddy Kavanagh, cycling to dances and stuff. Students do be genuinely interested in that sort of thing.
I. What other texts do you use, are they Irish authors?

T4: I use a lot of newspaper clippings there short and to the point the compactness of them are great.

T3: Roddy Doyle is great as well, for culture and Irish/English students love the films of his work.

I: So comical things work better?

T4: Well no, you can use Angela's Ashes for example, that works well.

T3: Ya the poem he writes, what would it be like if Jesus was born in Limerick, pieces like that, short and funny are good its harder to use novels. You have to use short excerpts and the novel is losing its value.

T2: The Dubliners is great because its short.

T4: Ya the least scene of The Dead is beautiful.

I: Do you yourselves enjoy using poetry?

T1: I think we enjoy it more than they do ha ha.

T5: Ya I keep showing the last 5 minutes of the Heineken Cup final and I keep expecting them to be as excited as me but its not the case.

T3: If the students get something from it and they are enjoying it, like anything I would enjoy it as well and get a kick from that.

I: Do you read poetry out loud or play a cd of it?

T5: Both

T4: I get them to read it themselves first.

T5: Its nice for them to hear it.

T1: Well especially with Heaney its crucial, with rhyming and form highlighting themes and for me as an American I cant understand the rhyme until I hear it spoke by an Irish person with the accent.
T3- And if you’re talking about authenticity, an Irish poem its good to read it aloud with an Irish accent.

T2- Rhyming in different languages is different so you have to be careful with that.

T1- There’s a lot of play in poetry with parallels, parallel forms, if its onomatopoeic its probably part of the theme so you look at that, you can look at phrase structures and clauses and look for repetition.

I- Well we’ve run out of time so thanks for help its been very interesting.
Appendix E

Transcript of Learner Focus Group

I-Hello everyone, Thank you for being present today, the purpose of this focus group is to ask you as learners some questions on my research topic. The information gathered will be used to help construct a learner questionnaire. As I have said the topic of my research is investigating the feasibility of using Irish poetry as a means of increasing learners’ awareness of Irish culture and IE, and the attitudes of both teachers and learners to this. I want begin by asking when you were learning English in your country did you ever encounter poetry or literature.

L1- Some not a lot.

L2- Yes I did.

L3- All the time in college.

L4- I encountered World War 1 poems, Sassoon because our teacher was familiar with him.

L2- For example when I was studying at the Hungarian School of English I had an Irish teacher and he loved poetry, I can’t remember which poems exactly because it was so long ago, but we did lots of poetry.

I-What types of exercises were used with the poems you encountered?

L2- We were discussing it then answering questions on it.

L3- We had to order sentences and pick some pictures sorry images from it.

I-Do you find poetry difficult?

L3- Yes it was hard.

L2- Yes poetry requires a higher understanding; it can be too extreme for weak people.

I-So you don’t think poetry can be used with lower levels?
L2- It depends on what type of poems you're, child poetry can be used, but more serious poetry cannot be used.

L3- Anything that is difficult cannot be used but simpler poems can be used, limericks were used with us and they were fun.

L1- I think if you like poems then they can be used at most levels.

L4- If you like literature you will try harder to understand.

L3- In other literature they say what they mean but in poetry you have to guess.

I-Do you read literature outside the classroom for your own enjoyment?

L2- Yes

L3- Of course

L1- Definitely

I-Is it in English or your L1?

L2- Both, not anything translated because it loses its value.

L3- It loses it uniqueness.

L2- If you translate for example from Serbian to English its not the same, it doesn't have the same feeling.

I-Can you name any authors your familiar with?

L3- Actually I'm studying Irish literature and I'm doing a lot of poetry, Yeats and Heaney for example.

L4- Actually I study law so I only know some writers, I find poetry difficult.

I-Why did you choose to come to Ireland to study?

L2- Because we couldn't chose ah I am joking. Actually I could chose between England and Ireland so obviously chose Ireland ha ha ha.

L3- I love the Celtic idea so I came here.

L2- Apart from literature I like Celtic music and Celtic stuff.
L1- I wanted to drink Guinness ha ha ha, I heard Ireland is the best party.

L4- I wanted to improve my English. It's good to come to a native speaking culture and speak English all the time.

L3- The other option for me was England but I don't like English people.

L2- then you fit well here ha ha.

[combined laughter]

L1: When I say culture what do you think of?

L3- History and literature.

L2- Arts, traditions, music and everything.

L1- Yeah all those things.

L1: When I say Irish culture what do you think of?

L3- Vikings.

L2- Music, people playing fiddles and dancing.

L1- Friendly people, history and music.

L4- Hills and castles and big old houses.

L1- Do you think it is important to learn about Irish culture?

L2- Yes definitely.

L3- It helps you understand its literature, its music, its people.

L1- Everyone learning English here should be made to study Irish culture its important.

L1- Do you have to be in the country to learn about the culture?

L2- No but, ah its much easier when you can interact with the people, its much more interesting.

L3- You are more motivated to learn when you are living there.
L1- Its easier to compare your own culture with the other culture when you are living here.

L2- And then you realise that you don’t drink as much and that’s a much comforting thought ha ha ha.

I- Do you think its worthwhile looking at poetry you have encountered here?

L2- Yes its really interesting. I found the poems hard and didn’t get all the ideas but it felt good when I did understand something.

L1- I would prefer one poem to be looked at over some time. It would make understanding easier.

L2- Yes, one class is too short, because we don’t get enough time to discuss it.

L3- We could look at the poem before class and we would be more familiar with it and could discuss for longer.

L2- Yes we need to use dictionaries, especially for poetry and this takes time in class when we could do this outside class.

I- Do you then think the language class becomes a literature class?

L2- Yes but then we can do 1 or 2 classes with literature and then don’t use it for a while.

L1- To understand a poem you need to understand the language and so you have to learn new language so it is a language class.

I- So what are your final comments on Irish culture, Irish poetry and IE?

L2- Its important and fun for us to encounter Irish culture and poetry, I learnt lots of new things from the poetry we used in class, it was difficult at times but it was good for me.

L3- Yea I agree it was very interesting and I would like to do some more.
L1- We don't use culture much in class, Ireland is famous for its culture so I want to see more of it in class that's why I came here anyway.

L4- Well I enjoyed the culture in your lessons I found it nice to see different parts of Irish culture I didn't do before.

L5- Ah well I agree with what was said, the course book is boring sometimes and I like using something real from this country like the poems and I want to learn more about Irish culture.

I-Thanks very much for your time, you've been very helpful cheers.
Appendix F

Transcript of Semi-structured Teacher Interview

I- So just to follow up on the focus group we had, I just wanted to ask a few more questions. How important do you think literature is in the Irish EFL classroom?

P1- Well if you’re thinking in terms of culture it’s a culture of artist and writers ya know, there’s such a wealth of poets that come from Ireland, in terms of teaching the culture and the schemata it’s a big part of the culture. I know from some of the attitudes I get about writing they extend their own talent to the talent of the writers. I don’t know how that works but it does be something enthused by the Irish psyche.

I- When you’re using poetry in your class would you consider using Irish poetry for linguistic or cultural aims?

P1- I would probably try to teach how Irish poetry could be deciphered, in other words some sort of meaningfulness. I dunno possibly an aesthetic sense or some emotive sense from the poem. Mostly at a practical level I’m looking at the sonic more than anything else. I’m kinda surprised when I encounter European language students that don’t hear the rhyme, the music part of it. It shouldn’t surprise me but it does because our languages are so close it interests me. I’ve taken entire poems and written them out in IPA and taken small groups and each group takes a line before I show them what I have and then I get the students to try and pronounce the line and then see if they get the internal or external rhymes.

I- Would you that make you want to use for example a limerick form of the poem?

P1- Yea that’s the attraction at using those types of poems they can be really nasty but at the same time fun. Actually I’ve used limericks with Spanish teachers and focused on the rhythm and I’ve focused on the rhythm and the syllabic counts. Where they are counting syllables just to match it up.
J- Are your hands tied by the syllabus or can you supplement your own materials?

P1- I hardly ever use the textbooks. I am orientated towards can do statements our goals with my students. More than anything else they have to be able use some form relative to their proficiency level.

I- Would you bring in poetry on a regular basis?

P1- Well in general English classes I would be inclined to bring poetry.

I- Do you grade your poems?

P1- No I like to point out certain occurrences, that have thematic relevance, certain lines that rhyme and why this might be and so on.

I- So you like to work into poems?

P1- Yea.

I- Is that Important?

P1- Well why would you read a poem unless you are going to get something out of it. There's no point. Usually students read other things for information so why can't they get information out of the poem.

I- Do you find it difficult to stop a language class becoming a literature class?

P1- When I'm teaching English through literature it works on more than the form level, you're also working on the schemata level so I bring it all in.

I- What do you think of students encountering poems on their own first?

P1- It's a good thing lets them form their own opinions, and qualify them with more information or by adding more information on top of that, for example sonic information and then let them decide what difference does that make to their original ideas.

I- So you're in favour of a layered approach?

P1- Yea definitely.
I. So you encounter a poem add some information and then add some more?

PI- I think it's natural I don't read a poem and a light bulb goes off in my head and I know exactly what the poet means. I sit down and go what the hell is he exactly talking about and then I decide what am I supposed to get out of this. I might read it 10 or 20 times over a year before I formulate an opinion on it.

I- If a student's first encounter with a poem is too structured it can be a negative experience?

PI- Yea I don't wanna decide for them what a poem means first of all with good poetry there are aspects where were not actually able to give some meaning to, there's some emotion that you might feel, some sort of vision that you have, whatever you have when you walk away from it its yours.

I- Do you teach mixed ability classes?

PI- Yea.

I- How would you utilise poetry with such classes?

PI- In the language aspect, whatever you're trying to get through to them is that something that appeals to all levels. If your looking for your students to determine what meaning comes out of a poem it is maybe more beneficial to keep them in small mixed groups, higher level students can edify things for lower levels by pointing out different things and that way if you put a lower level group together, they're going to get frustrated. So you also have to watch the group dynamics because if you have one person who dictates to other people then that's not productive either.

I- How would you define culture?

PI- If I was to define culture partly anthropologically through its customs but also ideologically through kinda of like their bottom of their search for meaning, what they ground their opinions on.
I- Do you set out to improve students cultural awareness?

P1- O yea, probably that's my number one motive, make them happy here, make them wish they lived here. Probably spending a lot of time pointing out similarities and difference, and talking about like difficulties adjusting to the culture, especially Asian students.

I- Is cultural awareness important in the Irish EFL classroom for general knowledge, personal development or integration?

P1- What I have to do a lot of is checking phrases etc myself, not being Irish. I would say that cultural awareness is a mixture of all three which all inclusively benefits the students.

I- Do you teach colloquialisms?

P1- Of course it's very important, especially for students living here.

I- How do you think Irish poetry helps with cultural awareness?

P1- Well I mean, part of what happens in Irish poetry there's a lot of geography and there's a lot of landscapes. Then there are a lot of provincial attitudes, which seems to be dying now but was noticeable in the past. There's also tension between Catholics and non-Catholics.

I- The others ha-ha.

P1- Yea ha-ha the other two or three guys left. There's a lot of attitudes expressed, there's a lot of language used that you probably wouldn't find in academic texts.

I- In terms of Heaney for example, can poetry like this make students aware of IE?

P1- Definitely, not just vocabulary but the way words are rhymed is interesting for me as an Irish American. I see two things and say how do they rhyme and then I try and think how does an Irish person say that and I try and make them rhyme, it's not always that easy.
I- Do you play recordings of poems to your students?

P1- Yeah, especially with Heaney, he’s recorded so much of his work, and it adds to the authenticity.

I- In terms of tasks which ones do you favor incorporating into poetry work?

P1- In terms of meaning I don’t usually do much, in relation to the form if something is going on, I will ask them how does this affect the meaning or how you interpret what the poet is saying. I also might have groups working on one or more lines translating into IPA. I might call attention to word stress or sentence stress. I’m very much sound orientated more than anything else, it involves sounds or deciphering some sort of meaning from students.

I- Do you think a teacher’s lack of knowledge of poetry say from their previous education makes this literary form off-putting for teachers?

P1- No, I’d say teachers are wary of poems that are complex in other words meaning can be hard to attain from just the meaning of words alone. Some poems seem not to make sense, but if you look at rhyme scheme, words that rhyme and things like that they focused on that they would be less intimidated and not just try to teach just meaning of words alone but looked at form.

I- Is it important to have background knowledge of poets and poems?

P1- I think it makes it easier because it gives you greater scope at how to look at a poem. If you greater scope at how you can teach the language in the poem, something working on a sonic level for example alliteration or assonance they could used to highlight for students what’s going on in the poem.

I- Does a personal enjoyment of poetry help your teaching of it?

P1- I think sometimes it helps the teacher, I’m not so sure about students and I think you should keep them in mind first and foremost.
I- Personally if you enjoy certain poems are you likely to integrate them into your teaching?

PI- Ya I definitely prefer real formulaic poetry, form focused poems with lots of rhyming, poetic music and sound that ring off each other.

I- Thanks very much for your time.

PI- No hassle.
Appendix G

Transcript of Semi-structured Learner Interview

I- Ok thanks for your time, I just want to ask you some questions just to follow up on the focus group. Did you encounter in your EFL experiences?

P2- No not I Sweden, there’s not much poetry used.

I- Do you find Irish poetry difficult?

P2- Yes it’s harder to get the context when you don’t understand all the words, then you don’t understand the meaning of the poetry.

I- So without intervention from teachers or other teachers you won’t understand?

P2- Yea or dictionaries, but if you have interest in poetry yourself to read it, then you work hard on your own to understand.

I- What do you think are the benefits of using Irish poetry in the EFL classroom?

P2- You see different ways to use the vocabulary, you meet words you wouldn’t meet in another context, it broadens your vocabulary and you learn words specially from Ireland which helps because you are living here.

I- Has poetry in the Irish EFL context benefited your language learning?

P2- Yea, its mostly beneficial as it points out the way in which grammar can be manipulated in specific ways, also by showing me the incorrect grammar I can correct it and this helps my learning, I’ve learnt a lot of Irish English words and I have got a lot of information on Irish culture.

I- Because poetry contains mistakes in grammar and vocabulary on purpose does that intimidate you?

P2- I guess you just need to know its that way. Then its fine, not all people know this, its just a thing to point out, and why these mistakes are part of the way a writer shows us things.
I- Do you think encountering L1 poetry aids understanding of English poetry?

P2- Yea I guess so, but on the opposite side of that you are a lot more confident in your L1, and you don’t really notice the intentional mistakes in grammar and vocabulary. You notice these things when you learn a language.

I- Is there any similarities in your L1 poetry in terms of form or other things with English poetry?

P2- Not really poems are really long and epic like stories.

I- Do you find Irish poetry makes you more aware of the Irish culture?

P2- Yes you can learn through the poetry about Irish culture, Irish poems have a lot of history in them and I also noticed a lot of nature and scenery, the Irish scenery is very beautiful. The poems we did in the classes with you were very nice, I taught Vikings was just Swedish history, I learnt more in two classes since I came here about Irish culture and history.

I- Did you learn anything else after encountering Irish poetry?

P2- Yes I learnt much about Northern Ireland and the violence there. I also learnt about the bog bodies of Ireland and I also encountered much about the Irish Celts and the old Irish life in the countryside. I learnt much IE vocabulary so I even notice the difference in the way you speak and British people speak which is a benefit.

I- Did you enjoy looking at Irish culture through Irish poetry?

P2- Yes I like it; I think it’s a good way to show it, I didn’t know poetry could be used for this. It also takes us away from the course book which is good because the book is boring. When you use different media its keeps you motivated but that’s a personal choice.

I- So it motivates you?
P2- Yea I think so because for me it's important to learn new vocabulary and how do you say Irish words?

I- Colloquialisms?

P2- Yes that’s it and I like literature anyway so that’s good for me.

I- In general what do you think students attitudes to poetry is in EFL classes?

P2- I think the attitude is mixed considering we're all from different places and poetry has different places in the students own countries. I didn't like poetry hugely but from working in class with your lessons I see the good values it has in teaching.

I- Do you prefer cultural poetry or contemporary poetry maybe shorter poems?

P2- I dunno I like the cultural poetry we did in class am all poetry shows you something different, that it has a reason for being used. But maybe like if its got something to do with the culture in the country, its easier for people to read it and they are in Ireland and they want to learn about the culture and history.

I- Can you see yourself reading more Irish poetry after your experiences here?

P2- Yea I hope so I would wont be too scared haha. But seriously it interests me I hope to try and read some more.

I- Do you think it's important to learn about native speaking culture when you're and EFL student?

P2-Yes it is, not only if your living in the country, when I was studying years ago we learnt about different English's and different colloquialisms that you understand that its not just English English but English as a world language.

I- Do you think Irish poetry highlights the differences between IE and BE?

P2- Yea I think so because in poems they use IE and BE which makes it easier to see which is which, you can compare it in the short text.
I- Did you have positive or negative attitudes to literature from your previous ELT experiences before Ireland?

P2- Positive, it's a good to use and learn new language so its different from course books as well, I cant say we studied literature but I read a lot in English. However I would see my attitude to poetry has changed, I feel it was very good for me to read it and it made me realise that its good in EFL.

I- Did you enjoy studying here in Ireland?

P2- Yea it was good; I improved my English and learnt more. I learnt about Irish culture and IE through poetry and living here I know a lot more.

I- Thank you very much for your help.

P2- Thank you.
Appendix H

Cultural Lesson 1

Lesson Plan

Level: Advanced

Aids: Video, w/b, overhead

Materials: Handouts, peat and turf

Class time: 1 hour

Aim(s):
To introduce the poetry of Seamus Heaney to learners and to make them more culturally aware of the history of Ireland and past problems in the North of Ireland

To improve learners ability to recognise and interpret figurative language in poetry such as metaphors

To introduce new vocabulary related to violence and the body, and vocabulary related to the poetry of Heaney.

To improve students awareness of IE

Assumptions:
That learners will have a large enough vocabulary and general knowledge of the language to be able to work with the poetry of Heaney, and also have a good discussion

Anticipated Problems and solutions to them:
Learners might find the poetry daunting at first but enough work on vocabulary and teacher will help motivate the learners and provide a good level of understanding for the learners
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time/Stage</th>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>Aim</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 minutes</td>
<td>T introduces himself and takes the roll. T introduces le to the topic by giving some general information on the bog bodies etc. T hands around pieces of turf and peat so learners could get an idea what a bog is like. T plays excerpt from a video called ‘The History of English’ containing a scene about the bog bodies.</td>
<td>To engage learners with the topic of the class, and to introduce learners to the physical/visual appearance of the bog bodies in order to develop learners ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 minutes</td>
<td>Learners are given handout 1 (see attachment A) containing articles on the ‘bog bodies’ and ‘Celts’. Learners discuss the questions given. Learners use dictionaries provided with difficult words.</td>
<td>To lead into the main topic/metaphors of Heaney’s bog poems. To engage the learners in the ideas of sacrifice as a cultural entity, that takes place throughout different cultures. To practise learners gist reading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 minutes</td>
<td>Learners are shown a piece of the film ‘In the Name of the Father’ highlighting the ‘troubles in the north’</td>
<td>To act as introduction into the time in which Heaney was writing the poetry. To highlight people sacrificing themselves for their country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 minutes</td>
<td>T gives out handout containing ‘The Tollund Man’ by Seamus Heaney. T pre-teaches lexical sets, one concerned with the vocabulary of the body, the second words learner associate with violence.</td>
<td>To help learners understanding of the poem and to lead into the poems figurative/metaphoric language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 minutes</td>
<td>Learners work together and pick out as many metaphoric images as they can and try to explain them. T elicits the answers, and helps with any understanding. T elicits from learners which words they think are IE vocabulary.</td>
<td>To help learners become aware of poetic language containing metaphors and IE and help learners understanding of the poem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time/Stage</td>
<td>Procedure</td>
<td>Aim</td>
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<td>40 minutes</td>
<td>T elicits the connection between the sacrifice of the bog bodies and the sacrifice of Catholics in Northern Ireland. T elicits learner’s awareness of other types of sacrifice. T elicits class discussion on class topic to sum up.</td>
<td>To highlight for learners the connection Heaney makes in ‘The Tollund Man’ between different periods of Irish history. To develop learners schemata in relation to the violence in the North.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Iron Age man lay slightly aslant in the peat, with head and the upper part of the body raised, resting on the bottom of the old excavation. His head lay to the north and his legs to the south. It could be seen already that he lay on his chest, with the left leg extended and the right arm and leg bent. The peat-cutters had completely exposed the head, but in doing so had damaged it to some extent. It had also been affected by the weight of the peat that had pressed down on it for centuries. In spite of all it serves, like the head of The Tollund Man, to give an impression of how this man looked on the threshold of death, many years ago. This time the effect is not of one of tranquillity but of pain and terror. The puckered forehead, the eyes, the mouth and the twisted posture all express it.

There could scarcely be any doubt as to the cause of death. A long cut ran round the front of the neck practically from ear to ear, so deep the gullet was completely severed. The wound was evidently made with several strokes by another person, the direction and the appearance of the cuts showed that they could not have been made after death. As there was no traces on the throat of cord or pressure marks that might have been caused by hanging or strangulation, the cutting of the throat was evidently the cause of death.

Bog Bodies in Ireland

For thousands of years the bogs, through their extraordinary preservative qualities have kept ancient remains intact that would have otherwise perished on dry land; such as the bodies of unwary travellers trapped in the bog, or prehistoric track ways; and sometimes even whole villages and farms.

The abundance of materials recovered from Irish bogs makes it possible to look into the lives of the people who lived in or near wetlands and to build a story of their s Bogs can be treacherous places and it is likely that some of the bodies found in the peat were those of travellers who slipped into bog pools and were trapped. Some have been mentioned as human sacrifices to their Earth God.

(From Irish Peatland Conservation Society of Ireland
http://www.ipcc.ie/infobogbodies.html)

Celts and Human sacrifice
From the words of Julius Caesar

All the Celts are completely devoted to religion, and for this reason those who are greatly affected by diseases and in the dangers of battle either sacrifice human victims or vow to do so using the Druids as administrators to these sacrifices, since it is judged that unless for a man's life is given back, the will of the immortal gods cannot be placated. In public affairs they have instituted the same kind of sacrifice. It is judged that the punishment of those who participated in theft or brigandage or other crimes are more pleasing to the immortal gods; but when the supplies of this kind fail, they even go so low as to inflict punishment on the innocent.
Questions to consider
1 How Glob’s body found?
2 Was the body completely intact? Was their damage?
3 How did he die?
4 Who killed this man? Why did he die in this way?
5 Why was this find so interesting?
6 How do you think he felt before he died?
7 Have you ever seen a mummified body before?
8 How would you feel if you found one?
9 Were bodies found in Ireland? how are they similar to Glob’s bodies i.e. who was killed, why?
10 How do you feel about these deaths, were they justified?
11 What do you think their occupations were?
Appendix I

Cultural Lesson 2
Lesson Plan

Level: Upper Intermediate

Aids: TV, Video, Overhead

Materials: Handouts

Class time: 1 hour

Aim(s):

To familiarise learners with poetic structures
To introduce learners to cultural issues related to Ireland
To introduce learners to new IE vocabulary in order to aid understanding of Heaney’s poem

Assumptions:

Learners will be aware of the topics of violence in Northern Ireland and the Vikings and will have enough interest and suitable vocabulary to work on the exercises/tasks they are given

Anticipated Problems and solutions to them:

Some of the vocabulary and phrases in the poem might prove difficult, but help from a dictionary and the teacher will aid understanding.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time/Stage</th>
<th>Procedure</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>T</strong> introduces himself.</td>
<td><strong>To engage learners with the topic of the poem</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>T</strong> elicits learners thoughts on violence Learners discuss topic in groups <strong>T</strong> initiates brief class discussion</td>
<td><strong>To get learners to express ideas they have on the topic</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 minutes</td>
<td><strong>T</strong> elicits ideas on what may be the themes of the poem, by introducing the title of the poem ‘North’ <strong>T</strong> elicits who might the poet be</td>
<td><strong>To get learners actively involved in the themes of the poem from the start.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 minutes</td>
<td><strong>T</strong> shows learners video clips of the Vikings in Ireland ‘Vikings- Warriors from the Sea’ and the troubles in the north ‘A History of Ireland’</td>
<td><strong>To help learners understand the historical background to the poem.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 minutes</td>
<td><strong>T</strong> elicits attitudes of the learners to what they saw.</td>
<td><strong>To enable learners to hear the aural features of the poem, which can help with understanding.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 minutes</td>
<td><strong>T</strong> plays recording of the poem.</td>
<td><strong>To help learners ‘read into’ the poem, to help with learners understanding, highlighting the difference between poetic and ‘normal’ language.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 minutes</td>
<td><strong>T</strong> hands out the poem North with 3 paraphrased versions of each stanza (see attachment A). Learners work in groups to come up with the correct paraphrased stanza Learners regroup in pairs for further discussion Brief class discussion on correct answers</td>
<td><strong>To promote learners autonomous understanding of the poem</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 minutes</td>
<td>Learners working in two groups try to describe/create a visualisation of one half of the poem, i.e. a video for the poem Learners mark key images that have to explained/created for the video. Learners then mark alternative images that may be used Learners may draw these images as well Learners come together and compare their ideas</td>
<td><strong>To engage learners with the real/metaphoric images in the poem in a motivating way, and helps the learners actively engage with the poem.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Attachment A

Explanation 1
In the poem ‘North’ Heaney is talking to Viking women, comparing the troubles in his country Britain, with that of the struggles of Viking women. Heaney is standing in the centre of the country. He imagines their voices coming from the sea and from the Viking’s boat which has a tongue and talks to the poet. The Vikings tell Heaney that they were the kings of geography and trade. These Vikings who had lived in Dublin and sailed their stone coloured ships. These Vikings were buried at the bottom of rivers and laid down beside their swords.

Heaney hears from the Vikings how Thor hit people he wanted revenge on with his hammer. People who were backstabbed or hurt their own people were punished. That if you don’t punish this sort of violence these offences will keep happening in cycles. The Vikings also tell Heaney to lie down in the dark and he will write better poetry. He will see the Northern Lights in his mind. This will make his eyesight clear as icicles and he will see lots of treasure he has never seen before if he does this.

Explanation 2
In ‘North’ Heaney is talking to Viking women, comparing the troubles in his country Britain, with that of the struggles of Viking women. Heaney is standing in the centre of the country. He imagines their voices coming from the sea and from the Vikings boat which has a tongue and talks to the poet. The Vikings tell Heaney that they were the kings of geography and trade. These Vikings who had lived in Dublin, and sailed their stone coloured ships. These Vikings were buried at the bottom of rivers and laid beside their swords.

Heaney hears from the Vikings how Thor hit people he wanted revenge on with his hammer. People who backstabbed or hurt their own people were punished. That if you don’t punish this sort of violence these offences will keep happening in cycles. The Vikings tell Heaney to lie down in the dark and he will write better poetry. He will see the Northern Lights in his mind. This will make his eyesight clear as icicles and he will see lots of treasure he has never seen before if he does this.

Explanation 3
In the poem ‘North’ Heaney the poet is walking on the beach when he looks towards, he is impressed by the noise of the Atlantic and he looks towards Greenland and Iceland where Vikings used to live. He then begins to have a religious experience. Viking ghosts appear before him and begin to tell them that Thor their god of geography and trade supported their own people being betrayed by other Vikings. That he lied to them and took their women away from them.

They warn Heaney that violence leads to backstabbing among your own people and revenge attacks like what happened to them. Peace will only come about when people are too tired to fight anymore.
Appendix J

Cultural Lesson 3
Lesson Plan

Level: Advanced

Aids: TV, Video, Tape recorder

Materials: Handouts

Class time: 1 hour

Aim(s):
To help to Learners engage and respond to the cultural issues relating to the Irish Famine using the poetry of Eavan Boland and the song ‘The fields of Athenry’

To parallel the themes of Boland’s poetry with that of ‘The fields of Athenry’

Assumptions:

Learners will have a good enough lexical range to be able to discuss these cultural issues.
Learners will find the topic and material challenging but interesting

Anticipated Problems and solutions to them:

Learners might find some of the poem difficult but other stimulus will help overall understanding of the poem, dictionary and student help will help with understanding of the poem.
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<tr>
<th>Time/Stage</th>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>Aim</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 minutes</td>
<td>T introduces himself and takes the roll</td>
<td>To give learners a chance to engage with the initial impact of the poem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T plays recording of the ‘The Famine Road’ by Eavan Boland.</td>
<td>To allow learners a time for a quick personal response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 minutes</td>
<td>T asks learners what do you think of that. Do you remember any images? Discuss with your neighbours what do you think of that?</td>
<td>To get learners thinking and interacting with the poem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T hands out text of the poem, allowing learners to read through it. T gets learners to pick out any interesting images or phrases you understand, and pick out anything that you find really strange. T highlights IE vocabulary and lets learners go through the poem again.</td>
<td>To motivate to understand and interact with the poem with a greater scope of understanding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 minutes</td>
<td>T asks learners what is going on in the poem? (hopefully getting Famine response, elicit any general information learners have on it) T asks learners to match parts of the poem which they feel match with some descriptive words the T puts up on overhead (see attachment A), learner for this exercise. Learners compare notes ideas with neighbouring s/s. T elicits response from learners</td>
<td>To help with learners precision of language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 minutes</td>
<td>T shows learners video ‘The Famine Road’ and elicits what learners think? What’s interesting etc How does this relate to the poem.</td>
<td>To actively involve learners with text, by matching words with parts of the poem learners work into the text more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 minutes</td>
<td>T hands out learners text of ‘The Fields of Athenry’ with some gaps, learners fill in the gaps, and notes the similarities and differences with the poem in characters, who is speaking, themes, the way themes are treated (romantically, pragmatic) etc. T plays recording. Learners fill gaps in, T elicits response on which Learners prefer, poem or song and why, what type of song is it etc.</td>
<td>To elicit themes and images that learners find for themselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 minutes</td>
<td>T shows learners video ‘The Famine Road’ and elicits what learners think? What’s interesting etc How does this relate to the poem.</td>
<td>To reinforce themes and images seen in the poem by the learners, to ‘flesh out’ the information the learners already have.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T plays recording. Learners fill gaps in, T elicits response on which Learners prefer, poem or song and why, what type of song is it etc.</td>
<td>To underline the parallel between poetry and music, to reinforce themes and issues that learners have already encountered in a more romantic and different way, and to give another angle on the famine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time/Stage</td>
<td><strong>Procedure</strong></td>
<td><strong>Aim</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>T highlights IE vocabulary and phrases</td>
<td>To make learners aware of IE features.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Attachment A

What do you think?

striking  awkward  unexpected  ambiguous

powerful  weak  odd  disgusting  horrible

unclear  clever  personal  cruel  barbaric  honest

False  ‘choice words’  comparison

ture  image  idea  statements  love

British  Irish  death

famine  disease  poor  rich  stupid  hatred

unfair  gruesome  funny  anger  pain
Appendix K

Cultural Lesson 4
Lesson Plan

Level: Intermediate

Aids: Video/TV, tape recorder.

Materials: Handouts

Class time: 1 hour

Aim(s):

To increase awareness of cultural stereotypes in 20th century Irish Rural life.
To extend and practice learners range of descriptive vocabulary
To make learners aware of the literary work Patrick Kavanagh and the film ‘The Field’

Assumptions:

Learners will have a good enough lexis to take part in the descriptive language tasks
Learners will find the Kavanagh and ‘The Field’ interesting and motivating

Anticipated Problems and solutions to them:

There will be a lot of new vocabulary which may hinder learners understanding but with help from the teacher and dictionary this should help remedy any problems
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time/Stage</th>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>Aim</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1 minute  | T introduces the topic of ‘cultural stereotypes’  
T introduces the video ‘The Field’ based on the drama by John B Keane.  
T hands a task sheet entitled ‘cultural encounter’ (see attachment A) | To get learners to begin to engage with the topic  
To make learners aware of the clip they are about to view.                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 2 minutes | T writes down the characters they will see in the clip on the board.  
T instructs to watch the clip and in particular look at the character ‘Bull McCabe’, T instructs learners to just enjoy the clip first.  
T replays the clip and learners fill in the task sheet.  
Learners discuss their answers together before reporting to T what they think. | To make learners aware of what they should look for in the clip  
To aid learners understanding  
To get learners to get a feel for the scene and be better prepared to fill in task sheet the next time  
To get learners using descriptive vocabulary  
To highlight to the learners what a cultural stereotype is, and how you can’t always stereotype people.                                                                 |
| 25 minutes| T gives an in-depth account of the character and what else happens in the film; learners note the differences and similarities of what they presumed the character would be like after watching the clip and why they believed this.  
T introduces the poet Patrick Kavanagh, and handouts the learners two excerpts of poems ‘stony grey soil’ and ‘the great hunger’ | To make learners aware of the poet and the poems they will look at.  
To compare and contrast the cultural stereotype of an farmer in early 20th century Ireland  
To sum up the characters encountered in fun way, while using descriptive language to describe stereotypical characters.                                                                 |
| 40 minutes| T plays recording of piece while learners read  
Learners read again throw the piece trying to recognise what characters are there, how do they feel, any images they can explain, are there similar images in the video clip are this people similar or different to the Bull McCabe, and in what ways. |                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 50 minutes| T elicits any ideas. To sum up the topic the learners following a mock personal ad (see attachment B), pick any characters they have encountered and write a quick personal add that would be placed in a ‘lonely heart’ section of a paper/magazine. |                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
Attachment A

A Cultural Encounter (influenced by Tomalin and Stempleski 1993)

Look at the piece of film, fill in or guess the persons details by looking at the film

Name
Age
Kind of family
Background

Hobbies

Favourite possessions

What type of person are they, how would you describe them?
(Angry, friendly, kind, mean, hurtful, old, smelly, annoying etc)
Sample Personal Ad
I'm a single white man, 53, intelligent, with unusual interests in politics, science, music and dance.

I'd like to meet a woman with different interests, who wants to find out more about the world, who can easily say her likes and dislikes (I hate trying to guess), be happy in the ways of charming a man and in being loved always, who enjoys fun, movies, travel and Italian food, so we can enjoy nights in and nights out together, switching between both while we fall in love.

My 23-year-old company Freeware LTD takes up most of my life, leaving no room for children, but I still have room to love the special one. I spend a lot of my time travelling to give talks to other companies, often to Europe, Asia and Latin America; it would be nice if you were free to travel with me some of the time.

If you are interested, reply and we'll see where it leads.

Mr X
Appendix L

Cultural Lessons Diary

Lesson 1

The lesson concentrated on ‘The Tollund Man’ by Seamus Heaney and the topic of the bog bodies which are bodies of people who were sacrificed for their religion and buried in bogs around Ireland. The majority of the learners were familiar with the poetry of Heaney as he is a Noble Prize winning author. The poem was selected because it focused on the violence in Northern Ireland which is an important phase of Irish history.

The learners seemed to enjoy the use of realia and the chance to get them acquainted with the physical nature of the bog helped the development of their schemata in relation to the bog. The aesthetic link between the sacrifice of the bog people and the modern day bloodshed in socio-cultural feuds such as that in Northern Ireland seemed to be grasped by the learners.

However it was agreed between the researcher and teacher observing that too much time was spent on leading into the poem instead of leading the learners work their way into the poem. Direct negative questions would also have to be avoided for example asking learners would they sacrifice their lives for their country. A more beneficial scenario would be small groups of learners discussing such ideas. However, good elicitation aided learners understanding of figurative metaphorical language which featured prominently throughout the poem.
Learners found the material presented to them difficult but the more the learners worked into the poem the more the experience was described by them as rewarding. The use of authentic materials including video, poetry and recording helped the learners interact with the poetry and good class discussions followed on many areas of Irish culture.

Lesson 2

The second lesson which was created was based again on the poetry of Seamus Heaney, but this time concentrated on the history of Vikings in Ireland. The poem selected was entitled ‘North’. The researcher believed that due to the fact the class was made up of European learners a topic such as Vikings would induce lively debate and discussion amongst them. The process of adding layer and layer of further information on the topic as the class progressed proved successful in the class. However the observing teacher noted that the researcher’s interaction patterns were too similar, variation was needed as well as more group work amongst the learners to enrich the lesson and to provide opportunities for vibrant discussion amongst the learners.

Learners enjoyed creating sketches of what they felt a film version of the poem would be like. This promoted real use of language and allowed learners time to interact with the new vocabulary they had encountered as they had to visualise the poetic images. Learners were made aware of various features of IE. Learners also engaged creatively with various cultural aspects of Ireland while familiarising themselves with the poetry of Seamus Heaney. The additional authentic materials used such as the videos also reinforced the new ideas the learners were encountering. While the materials the
Lesson 3

The lesson concentrated on a key aspect of Irish culture and history: the Irish Famine and included the poetry of Eavan Boland and the poem 'The Famine Road'. The engagement with this cultural issue was supplemented by the song 'The Fields of Athenry'. There was good interplay between the teaching aids; both audio and visual which had a layering effect on the learners which helped give them an insight into various aspects of the Famine.

The interaction patterns were also improved, learners were allowed to work in small groups which provided learners with the opportunity to provide personal responses to a sensitive issue. In the future the video clip from 'The Famine Road' would be used first as it provided a powerful tool for discussion as the images were extremely striking and emotional. Also a word map could have been used to link different strands of thought from the learners and give a more holistic view of this event.

The learners also practised the majority of their language skills, including reading, listening and writing. The learners enjoyed the 'The Fields of Athenry' as it provided a different avenue of thought on the class topic, which was a romanticised view, and supplied learners, a new medium for exploration. The learners enjoyed discussing the topic and seemed to be motivated. The sensitive nature of topic allowed learners to discuss the varying aspects of the event in an informal but productive way. The learners were also introduced to a good amount of colloquial language and IE vocabulary. The various authentic materials linked well thematically and the additional information each one provided gave learners a good overview of such an important socio-historical event in Irish history.
Lesson 4

This lesson concentrated on increasing learners’ awareness of cultural stereotypes and also of a stereotypical Irish farmer from the early 20th century. It was the researcher’s belief that a humorous and relaxed approach was needed for a lesson with an intermediate class in an effort to restrict demotivation amongst learners of this proficiency. The lesson consisted of the poems ‘Stony Grey Soil’ and ‘The Great Hunger’ by Paddy Kavanagh. The lesson also incorporated the film ‘The Field’. In an effort to practise and increase learners descriptive vocabulary the learners completed a work sheet entitled ‘A Cultural Encounter’ which involved the learners describing the stereotypical farmer from the film clip they have seen in ‘The Field’. The film clip however should have been shorter as mentioned by the supervising teacher, as the clip was too long the learners lost the initial powerful impact of the clip.

Similarly my error correction was too lenient and this could lead to fossilisation amongst learners of the errors. However the learners did encounter certain IE words which they had never previously encountered. Another suggestion by the observing teacher would be to allow learners to write their opinions in their L1 and translate them into English using dictionaries, due to the fact some learners struggled to cope with the language level of the poems and film clip.

However overall the learners enjoyed the humorous side of all the different tasks, and particularly enjoyed writing the piece for the lonely hearts column, although the piece was humorous the learners encountered many real descriptive phrases and practiced using real language for communicative purposes. The authentic nature of all the materials helped promote good discussion amongst the learners.