

**Minority Language Advising in the
Workplace: Contextual Practices, Relational
Knowing, Mandate, and Change**

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**MINORITY LANGUAGE ADVISING IN THE WORKPLACE:
CONTEXTUAL PRACTICES, RELATIONAL KNOWING, MANDATE,
AND CHANGE**

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is entirely my own work and that it has not been submitted as an exercise for a diploma or degree in any other college or university. I agree that the library may lend or copy the thesis upon request from the date of deposit of the thesis.

Signed _____

Dated _____

Do mo chuid den tsaol: Tom, Aodán, Róise agus Sailí

BUÍOCHAS

Táim an-bhuíoch don Dr. Pádraig Hogan as a threoir agus a mholtaí fiúntacha agus mé ag gabháil don taighde seo.

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ABSTRACT

Minority Language Advising in the Workplace: Contextual Practices, Relational Knowing, Mandate, and Change

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An investigation of minority language advising in the organisational context is carried out in this thesis. The focus is on Irish language support for employees mandated by the Official Languages Act, 2003 to provide public services through Irish. The research participants are adult second-language learners of Irish, designated contacts to provide Irish-medium services at a university. *An Líonra Tacaíochta Teanga*, a language support network, facilitated by the researcher in the role of language advisor, was established to explore language anxiety and support needs. A Participatory Action Research methodology was used to bring about constructive change in professional practices and attitudes. The conceptual framework merges the theoretical lens of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991), and the Dialogue, Tools and Context Model for advising in language learning (Mynard, 2012). ‘Relational knowing’ is used as a theoretical ‘tool’. Activities over three action research cycles facilitated worker-learners to move from a situation of individual uncertainty to one of group confidence. Three distinctive language advising stances are revealed. The first role is that of language advisor as architect of learning spaces. Two positions relating to the role of advisor as action researcher are proposed. The first is a role to lead interaction with ‘critical friends’ in the minority language context. The second is that of ambassador for language learners within the organisation. New learner identities and spatial practices of *An Líonra* members are uncovered. Group transformative learning and a ‘shared mental model’, which prioritised putting colleagues at ease about interactions in Irish, are observed. These are presented as the hallmarks of *An Líonra*. The study reveals the contextual practices of minority language advising in the workplace. It highlights what happens at the intersections of learning at individual, network, and organisational levels, and the productive benefits of a focus on care and collaboration in professional development contexts. Language learners in the workplace merit attention as a significant group of ‘new speakers’ of Irish. An extended pedagogical framework is suggested for the design of future language support initiatives. A proposal regarding the establishment of a Centre for Irish Language Skills in the Workplace is presented in conclusions regarding new directions for language advising.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
SETTING THE SCENE: PROFESSIONAL, POLICY AND HISTORICAL CONTEXTS.....	1
WHAT I DID AND WHAT I HOPED TO ACHIEVE	5
WHY I DID IT	6
UNIQUENESS OF THE THESIS TOPIC	6
STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS	7
CONCLUSION	9
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	11
INTRODUCTION	11
MANDATED LANGUAGE LEARNING IN THE WORKPLACE.....	11
AFFECTIVE FACTORS IN LANGUAGE LEARNING WITH A FOCUS ON LANGUAGE ANXIETY....	16
SITUATION-SPECIFIC ANXIETY: INDIRECT LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES.....	19
AUTONOMY IN LANGUAGE LEARNING	21
THE PRACTICE OF LANGUAGE ADVISING AND THE ROLE OF THE LANGUAGE ADVISOR	23
CONCLUSION	27
CHAPTER THREE: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.....	28
INTRODUCTION	28
FRAMEWORK 1: THE DIALOGUE, TOOLS AND CONTEXT MODEL OF LANGUAGE ADVISING.	31
FRAMEWORK 2: ADULT LEARNING AS TRANSFORMATION.....	34
An Overview of Transformative Learning	34
Transformative Learning in Groups and Relational Knowing	35
Fostering Transformative Learning	38
LINKS AMONG SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT.....	40
CONCLUSION	42
CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY	43
INTRODUCTION	43
WHY ACTION RESEARCH?	43
An Interest in Change	43
Relevance of the Action Research Approach to the Research Context	44
Knowledge Interests and Positionality	47

THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS	50
OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH STAGES, DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS	51
The First Cycle: An Bóthar Foghlama.....	51
Action: One-to-One Consultations	51
Action: Reflection on Language Learning.....	52
Action: Increased Language Support through Sulis Site	53
Action: Awareness Raising through An Lónra Blog.....	54
Action: Group Language Advising Workshops.....	55
The Second Cycle: Tearmann, a Gaeltacht-Based Programme	56
The Third Cycle: An Ghaeilge san Ionad Oibre	58
Communication Procedures	58
Cúpla Ceist, a Video Initiative	60
Research Strategy for Group and Individual Context.....	62
Audio-Recordings and Observations of Group Interaction.....	62
Semi-Structured Interviews.....	63
Data Analysis	64
CREDIBILITY OF STUDY: VALIDATION STRUCTURES AND STRATEGIES	65
Triangulation	66
Researcher Reflexivity and an Audit Trail.....	66
Collaboration and Member Checking.....	67
Prolonged Engagement in the Field	68
Peer Debriefing.....	68
THE ROLES, VALUES, BELIEFS AND EXPERIENCES OF THE RESEARCHER.....	70
ETHICAL CONCERNS	71
CONCLUSION	72
CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS 1	74
INTRODUCTION.....	74
PREPARATORY PHASE: ESTABLISHING THE CONTEXT	74
THE FIRST RESEARCH CYCLE: AN BÓTHAR FOGHLAMA.....	76
TOOLS/LEADERSHIP INITIATIVES.....	76
One-to-One Consultations.....	76

Increased Language Support through Sulis Site	78
Awareness-Raising through An L�onra Blog	80
Group Language Advising Workshops	81
LANGUAGE ADVISING STANCES	84
MONITORING AND REVIEWING	85
CHANGE IN LANGUAGE PRACTICES	87
CONCLUSION	87
CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS 2	88
INTRODUCTION: THE SECOND RESEARCH CYCLE, TEARMANN, A GAELTACHT-BASED PROGRAMME.....	88
TOOLS/LEADERSHIP INITIATIVES.....	89
Supporting Group Cohesion and Relational Knowing.....	89
Developing Language Awareness.....	91
Exploring Language Anxiety.....	94
LANGUAGE ADVISING STANCES	96
MONITORING AND REVIEWING	98
CHANGE IN LANGUAGE PRACTICES AND ATTITUDES	99
CHAPTER 7: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS 3	102
INTRODUCTION: THE THIRD RESEARCH CYCLE, AN GHAEILGE SAN IONAD OIBRE.....	102
TOOLS/LEADERSHIP INITIATIVES.....	102
Communication Procedures.....	102
C�pla Ceist, a Video Initiative	107
LANGUAGE ADVISING STANCES	109
MONITORING AND REVIEWING	111
CHANGE IN LANGUAGE PRACTICES AND ATTITUDES	113
CONCLUSION	117
CHAPTER EIGHT: DISCUSSION	118
INTRODUCTION	118
SECTION 1: CONCEPTUALISING THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE ADVISOR IN THE WORKPLACE ..	119
Language Advisor as Architect of Learning Spaces.....	119
Seomra na Gaeilge.....	119
The Virtual Language Learning Space, Sulis	121

The Gaeltacht Space	122
Language Advisor as Action Researcher: Engagement with Critical Friends.....	123
Language Advisor as Action Researcher: An Ambassadorial Role	124
SECTION 2: THE HALLMARKS OF AN LÍONRA	126
Spatial Considerations	126
Líonra Appropriation of Space: The Virtual Learning Environment, Sulis	126
Líonra Appropriation of Space: An Ghaeltacht	127
A Space of Surveillance	128
Safe-Houses in the Workplace	129
A Shared Mental Model.....	131
Transformative Learning in Groups: The Organisational Context.....	133
CONCLUSION	135
CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSIONS	137
INTRODUCTION	137
SECTION 1: EMPIRICAL AND THEORETICAL FINDINGS	138
Research Question One.....	138
Research Question Two.....	139
Research Question Three	140
Dialogue.....	140
Context	141
Research Question Four	144
Tools	144
Summary of Language Advising Framework.....	146
Further Research Insights.....	147
Formalisation of Collaborations in Irish Language Learning and Support	147
Learners of Irish in the Workplace as ‘New Speakers’ of Irish.....	147
SECTION 2: IMPLICATIONS OF RESEARCH	149
New Directions in Field of Language Advising	149
Bridging the Materials Gap.....	150
Professional Development Opportunities.....	151
Language Advising Stances in the Organisational Context.....	151

Further Research	152
FINAL REFLECTIONS	155
EPILOGUE	157
Planning for L2-L1 and L2-L2 Interactions	157
Irish Language beyond the Classroom.....	159
A Research Strategy	160
Sharing Good Practice.....	161
BIBLIOGRAPHY	162
CASE FILE.....	191
APPENDIX A: TABLE OF CONTENTS FROM CASE ARCHIVE.....	191
APPENDIX B: NEEDS ANALYSIS	197
APPENDIX C: SULIS SITE.....	202
APPENDIX D: CONTENT OF AN LÍONRA TACAÍOCHTA TEANGA BLOG	207
APPENDIX E: SAMPLE MATERIAL FROM GROUP LANGUAGE ADVISING SESSION.....	228
APPENDIX F: DETAIL OF THE GAELTACHT-BASED PROGRAMME	230
APPENDIX G: CORRESPONDENCE FROM OIFIG AN CHOIMISINÉARA TEANGA	238
APPENDIX H: COMMUNICATION PROCEDURES.....	240
APPENDIX I: CÚPLA CEIST VIDEOS 1-9	248
APPENDIX J: PRESENTATION TO CRITICAL FRIENDS	249
APPENDIX K: CENTRE FOR APPLIED LANGUAGES STUDIES PRESENTATION 2010.....	258
APPENDIX L: CONFERENCE ABSTRACT JUNE 2010	262
APPENDIX M: RESEARCH ETHICS APPROVAL	263
APPENDIX N: TREOIRCHEISTEANNA/GUIDING QUESTIONS	270
APPENDIX O: ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURES	272
APPENDIX P: PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL.....	273
APPENDIX Q: AN ACTIVE OFFER OF SERVICES.....	274

GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED IN IRISH

<i>Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla</i>	Official Languages Act (OLA).
<i>Aonad na Gaeilge</i>	The Irish Language Centre at the University of Limerick.
<i>Beatha agus Sláinte</i>	A health and well-being campaign at the University.
<i>An) Bóthar Foghlama</i>	The Learning Path (Name of Action Research Cycle 1).
<i>(An) Coimisinéir Teanga</i>	The Language Ombudsman.
<i>Coiste na Gaeilge</i>	The Irish language standing committee with responsibility for Irish at the University of Limerick.
<i>Combrá</i>	The Irish word for conversation. This is the name of a programme on TG4.
<i>Cúinne na Gaeltachta</i>	The <i>Gaeltacht</i> Corner, venue for a weekly coffee morning for staff.
<i>Cúpla Ceist</i>	Some Questions (Name of Video Initiative in Cycle 3).
<i>Dialann Foghlama</i>	Learner Diary.
<i>Dialann Ghaeltachta</i>	<i>Gaeltacht</i> Diary.
<i>Focal Faire</i>	A programme on <i>Raidió na Gaeltachta</i> focusing on Irish terminology and expressions from <i>Gaeltacht</i> areas.
<i>Foras na Gaeilge</i>	The body responsible for the promotion of the Irish language throughout Ireland, both North and South.
<i>Gaelscoil</i>	An Irish-medium school.
<i>Gaeltacht</i>	An Irish speaking area.
<i>Gaeltacht Chorca Dhuibhne</i>	The West Kerry <i>Gaeltacht</i> .
<i>(An) Ghaeilge san Ionad Oibre</i>	Irish in the Workplace (Name of Action Research Cycle 3).
<i>(An) Líonra Tacaíochta Teanga</i>	(The) Language Support Network.
<i>Líonra Taighde</i>	<i>Aonad na Gaeilge</i> Research Network.
<i>Maidin Chaiife</i>	Coffee morning.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED IN IRISH CONTINUED

<i>Oidbreacht Chorca Dhuibhne</i>	Name of organisation, literally <i>Corca Dhuibhne</i> Heritage.
<i>Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga</i>	Office of the Language Ombudsman.
<i>Raidió na Gaeltachta</i>	The RTÉ Irish language radio station.
<i>Rogha</i>	Meaning ‘choice’. Name of a promotional YouTube video relating to an active offer of bilingual services at the University of Limerick
<i>Scoil na Leanáí</i>	An Irish-medium primary boarding school in <i>Gaeltacht na Rinne</i> , Waterford for children aged 10-13.
<i>Seachtain na Gaeilge</i>	The annual national Irish language festival which takes place in March.
<i>Seomra na Gaeilge</i>	The Irish language social space at the University of Limerick.
<i>Stiúrthóir na Gaeilge</i>	Director of Irish, the professional role of the researcher at <i>Aonad na Gaeilge</i> .
<i>Tearmann</i>	Meaning refuge or sanctuary (Name of Action Research Cycle 2).
<i>Teastas Eorpach na Gaeilge</i>	An accreditation system for adult learners of Irish.
<i>TG4</i>	The Irish language television station in Ireland.
<i>Treoircheisteanna</i>	Guiding questions. These questions were used to probe reflection on language learning during the Action Research project.

PROFILE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Pseudonym	Irish Language Proficiency Level ¹	Designated Contact for Irish-medium services at the University	Level of Research Participation [Names of seven key participants are in bold]
Ailín	A2	Yes	Cycle 1: Irregular Cycle 2: Yes Cycle 3: Irregular Interview: No
Aisling	B2	Yes	Cycle 1: Yes Cycle 2: Yes Cycle 3: Yes Interview: Yes
Caoimhe	B2	Yes	Cycle 1: Irregular Cycle 2: Yes Cycle 3: Irregular Interview: No
Cathal	B2	Yes	Cycle 1: Yes Cycle 2: Yes Cycle 3: Yes Interview: Yes
Daithí	B1	Yes	Cycle 1: Yes Cycle 2: No Cycle 3: Irregular Interview: No
Doireann	B2	Yes	Cycle 1: Yes Cycle 2: Yes Cycle 3: Yes Interview: Yes
Éabha	B2	Yes	Cycle 1: Irregular Cycle 2: Yes Cycle 3: Irregular Interview: No
Eithne	B2	Yes	Cycle 1: Irregular Cycle 2: No Cycle 3: No Interview: No

¹ See Footnote 6 for a detailed explanation of these language proficiency levels

PROFILE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS CONTINUED

Pseudonym	Irish Language Proficiency Level	Designated Contact for Irish-medium services at the University	Level of Research Participation [Names of seven key participants are in bold]
Eoghan	B2	Yes	Cycle 1: Yes Cycle 2: Yes Cycle 3: Yes Interview: Yes
Gearóid	A2	No	Cycle 1: Irregular Cycle 2: Yes Cycle 3: Irregular Interview: No
Meidhbhín	B1	Yes	Cycle 1: No Cycle 2: Yes Cycle 3: Irregular Interview: No
Móirín	A2	No	Cycle 1: No Cycle 2: Yes Cycle 3: Irregular Interview: No
Oisín	B1	No	Cycle 1: Yes Cycle 2: Yes Cycle 3: Yes Interview: Yes
Sailí	B1	No	Cycle 1: Yes Cycle 2: Yes Cycle 3: Yes Interview: Yes
Sibéal	B2	Yes	Cycle 1: Yes Cycle 2: Yes Cycle 3: Yes Interview: Yes

Table 1: Profile of Research Participants

PROFILE OF OTHER COMMONLY USED PSEUDONYMS

Clodagh	Critical Friend in the <i>Gaeltacht</i>
Éadaoin	Critical Friend at the University/Producer of <i>Cúpla Ceist</i>
Étaín	Critical Friend at the University/Coordinator of <i>Cúpla Ceist</i>
Íde	Critical Friend at the University
Róisín	Critical Friend in the <i>Gaeltacht</i>
Ruairí	Coordinator and Editor of <i>Cúpla Ceist</i>
Sorcha	Critical Friend at the University

PROFILE OF LESSER-USED PSEUDONYMS

Bláithín	Member of staff at the University
Bridín	<i>Líonra Tacaíochta Teanga</i> member (Not a Research Participant)
Cáit	<i>Líonra Tacaíochta Teanga</i> member (Not a Research Participant)
Crían	Member of staff at the University
Dáire	Member of staff at the University
Léan	External ‘cold caller’ in Cycle 3
Neasa	<i>Líonra Tacaíochta Teanga</i> member (Not a Research Participant)
Ríognach	Member of staff at the University
Roibeard	Member of staff at the University
Setanta	Member of staff at the University
Tomás	Member of staff at the University

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

Case Archive (CA)

Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)

First Language (L1)

Official Languages Act (OLA)

Participatory Action Research (PAR)

Problem-Based Language Learning (PBLL)

Second Language (L2)

University of Limerick (UL)

Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)

LIST OF DIAGRAMS

Diagram 1: A Pedagogical Model for the Minority Language Context, p. 158.

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Profile of Research Participants, pp. xiv-xv.

Table 2: Overview of the Data Gathering Instruments, p. 61.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Setting the Scene: Professional, Policy and Historical Contexts

The field of language advising, a relatively new field, has developed rapidly in recent years. Research typically explores language learning in formal settings such as a university language centre or a school setting. The purpose of this thesis is to investigate what framework for language advising is required in a minority language learning context and for the context of Irish in the workplace in particular. The research intention is to reveal what is distinctive about the role of the language advisor in supporting the mandated learning of a minority language, Irish in this case, in the organisational context. The standard model of language advising is further extended by an additional focus on what supports are required in the professional context where employees have a mandate to provide services in the target language.

Language advising and language support initiatives for administrative staff involved in Irish language learning to meet legislative requirements in the workplace are explored. The research takes place on the campus of a third level institution, the University of Limerick (UL). It relates to my professional practice as Director of *Aonad na Gaeilge*, the Irish Language Centre there. The Official Languages Act (OLA) was signed into law in 2003. Every public body has obligations under the general provisions of the Act. Further duties and commitments are agreed by the public body with the Department of Arts, Heritage and the *Gaeltacht*² in a language policy instrument called a language scheme. Public bodies verify the specific steps which will be taken to increase their delivery of customer services through Irish, in a structured way and over a three-year period, in these statutory schemes (*Coimisinéir Teanga*, 2006, p. 22). Commitments made in the first three-year period remain in place and are built on incrementally in subsequent schemes drafted by the organisation. *Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga*, the language ombudsman, monitors the implementation of these language schemes.

When *Aonad na Gaeilge* was established in 2001, some organisational structures were put in place to support the implementation of Irish language policy at the University. *Coiste na Gaeilge*, the UL standing committee charged with the promotion of the Irish language was established in

² The Government department with responsibility for the Official Languages Act legislation was called the Department of Community, Rural and *Gaeltacht* Affairs in 2007, and the Department of Community, Equality and *Gaeltacht* Affairs in 2010.

2001. All University faculties are represented on this committee. Following the enactment of the OLA, a working group came together at the University in 2004 to draft the first language scheme. This is a sub-committee of *Coiste na Gaeilge* and it is now called the OLA Implementation Group. All University administrative areas are represented on this group which deals with the day-to-day implementation and monitoring of commitments made in language schemes. *Aonad na Gaeilge* supports the implementation of the provisions of the OLA on campus while the Office of the Corporate Secretary³ is responsible for issues of compliance. Both the Corporate Secretary and *Coiste na Gaeilge* report to the senior management of the University (See Appendix O, p. 272).

The University of Limerick agreed its first three-year scheme in 2006. Its second language scheme relating to the 2009-2012 period came into effect on 29 December 2009. This research arises largely from a specific commitment made by the institution in its first language scheme to designate personnel, in sixteen targeted functional and administrative departments and offices, to deal with Irish-medium queries (University of Limerick, 2006, p. 17). These departments were chosen because of their high level of interaction with students or because they had a number of staff who expressed an interest in participating in Irish language improvement programmes. While working on the University's report to *Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga* on the first OLA Scheme in March 2009, I organised a meeting for the designated University contacts for Irish-medium queries⁴. The group had not come together before. Their fears of being responsible for legislative compliance, of having to deal with technical questions through Irish, and of having to deal with 'native speakers'⁵ as part of their professional remit were palpable. Apprehensions were expressed also about the lack of recognition from their line managers for the workload involved in improving their Irish language skills. It was apparent to me immediately that the group had concerns and needs which weren't being addressed. This meeting prompted the choice of mandated language learning in the workplace as a thesis topic.

³ This Office was formally known as the Office of Acting Secretary. It is referred to as such in the University of Limerick Language Scheme 2006-2009 and in the University of Limerick Language Scheme 2009-2012.

⁴ All further references to designated contacts in the thesis refer to those members of staff, from the areas of administration targeted in the University of Limerick Scheme 2006-2009, named as official contacts for Irish medium queries to the University.

⁵ The 'native speaker' as a concept is considered nebulous and vague in the field of linguistics. As Jaffe (2015, p. 9) suggests, it carries a "great deal of ideological freight". The term is used in its more familiar sense in this study to denote a speaker from a *Gaeltacht* community with a strong accent, who speaks in a local dialect and uses Irish on a daily basis in the home and local community. As this was the understanding of the research participants, all references made to 'native speaker' in this thesis are presented as consistent with this characterisation.

The University is not one with a tradition of promoting or supporting the Irish language and the creation of my own position as *Stiúrthóir na Gaeilge* was deliberated at length before being agreed by University authorities. Internal memorandums from the 1998-2000 periods record the concerted efforts of Faculty members in Irish to press the importance of Irish language promotion, and the proposed role, to the Executive Committee of the University:

There is a compelling argument in favour of giving priority to the promotion of the Irish language in the University and in the region. This aspect of its service to the community has long been neglected by the University. The University should now show initiative and vision and take its obligations seriously without waiting for others to remind or reprimand it for any perceived shortcomings or reticence. The creation of the post would be an ideal Millennium Project for the University and would send out a clear message to both the University and wider communities that the University values the Irish language as an element in Irish culture and society and is willing to play its part in providing a positive environment and supportive structure for Irish in the domain of higher education in Limerick and the Mid-West region

(Ó Dochartaigh, 2000).

The founding president of the University made a determined effort to recruit faculty internationally and to eliminate Irish as a recruitment requirement (Walsh, 2011, pp. 84-85). An internal unpublished audit of the Irish language skills of University staff in 2009 revealed that 20 per cent of respondents stated that they had no Irish language skills whatsoever (University of Limerick, 2009). The research in hand draws on this socio-historical context.

The Irish language competency of staff in public bodies has been a contentious issue for the Irish language community since the OLA was signed into law in 2003. Much commentary has been made on the basic problem of the low numbers of staff in public bodies with sufficient proficiency to provide an Irish-medium service. The annual report of *An Coimisinéir Teanga* (2010, p. 6), for example, noted that only 1.5 per cent of administrative staff in the Department of Education and Skills reported that they could provide a service in Irish of equal quality to their service provision in English. In an email to this author, John Walsh (April 2010), a sociolinguist at National University of Ireland, Galway noted that there had been an over-emphasis on language education and ‘up-skilling’ in the first set of language schemes agreed by the Department of Community, Rural and *Gaeltacht* Affairs (Case Archive, p. 16). Walsh and McLeod (2008, p. 30) report that only a small number of staff might reach a level of competence adequate to allow them to offer services to the public through Irish, no matter how “well-intentioned” they are. Using the terminology of human resource management, they refer to Irish language learning in the workplace as “in-service training”, and they regard a language improvement strategy as a

“costly and inefficient mechanism” compared to an organisational plan to recruit bilinguals. The fact that public bodies are currently expected to meet legislative requirements with their present workforce, due to a recruitment freeze in a time of recession, strengthens the urgency to explore the support requirements of existing personnel. These needs have not been examined to date. The learning environment of adult learners involved in language development programmes to meet statutory requirements is very different to that of students enrolled on university accredited language programmes or other non-accredited programmes. Sociolinguists such as Walsh and McLeod have thus far deliberated on the linguistic impact of the OLA and its significance for language revitalisation. The issue is addressed from an adult learning perspective in this thesis rather than through a sociolinguistic lens, or indeed from a pragmatic business orientation. The staff member as a valued professional, rather than the legislation and organisational compliance is a new focus. The case for the design and provision of appropriate language support structure for language learners in the workplace is made. Considering that many public bodies have included plans to ‘up-skill’ employees, it is necessary to investigate what framework of support, in addition to language awareness and language learning initiatives, is required for these staff members.

Research Questions

This thesis has sought to promote sustained change in the professional context of these worker-learners. The kind of research envisaged was to bring staff members beyond anxiety to a situation where they would be at ease dealing with queries through the medium of Irish. It was evident from the start that an action research approach, at least in some measure, would be called for. I set out on my research path to change the focus from one of compliance to care and to add to my professional knowledge at the same time. The concerns and support needs of a group of second language speakers of Irish with a legislative obligation to use Irish in their professional context are highlighted in the action research initiative. Their story as they recast a legislative requirement into a campus community enterprise is recounted in the research. The specific research questions addressed in the thesis are:

1. What is distinctive about the role of the language advisor in supporting the mandated learning of a minority language, Irish in this case, in the organisational context?
2. What are the hallmarks of *An Líonra Tacaíochta Teanga*, the Language Support Network, in the research context?
3. How might Mynard's Framework for Advising in Language Learning (2012) be re-presented to fit the support requirements of the mandated learning of a minority language in the workplace?
4. What positive changes can be brought about by drawing on the theoretical tool of relational knowing in the mandated-minority language learning context of the workplace?

What I Did and What I Hoped to Achieve

An Líonra Tacaíochta Teanga was established as a forum in which to explore the support requirements of staff that were needed to provide a quality service through Irish as part of their professional remit. I, with these members of staff, set out to create an action plan as to how support needs might be met through membership of a network. I led a discussion about their concerns and their ideas regarding the proposed direction and scope of *An Líonra* at the first meeting in March 2010, and we considered what “intentional action” might be planned (McNiff, Lomax and Whitehead, 2003, p. 22). Early observations are a useful record of what I set out to achieve (CA, p. 13). I aspired to provoke consideration of the procedural as well as the policy-making frameworks which might be necessary in developing supports. I noted the need to create opportunities for language improvement and shared learning, and to consider the life histories of the learners in planning ways to improve language confidence levels. I wondered also if workplace learning needed to be incentivised and questioned what might motivate sustained involvement in *An Líonra*. Regular monthly workshops began in May 2010. In seeking to promote productive change, an action research methodology increasingly suggested itself as the most promising. I encouraged involvement in a novel language-learning support initiative with an initial focus on helping learners to improve their language competency. The potential of sharing experiences with other learners was explored in particular. I was keen to develop the idea of increasing *Líonra* members' awareness of the importance of paying attention to their own feelings and social relationships as part of the second language learning (L2) process from the outset. A series of leadership initiatives were put in place and continually reviewed during the data gathering period from March 2010 to April 2011.

Why I Did it

The values brought to the research arise from my own tacit knowledge of the University workplace. I set out to promote an ethic and culture of care for those designated as Irish-medium contacts for the institution. The development of clear support structures at my office and at institutional level for these personnel was important to me. Informed by sociocultural theory, I believed in the significance and in the scope of nurturing the group as a new community of language practice on the campus. Recognition of the efforts of these adult learners and an acknowledgement of the time they dedicated to improving their language skills was important to me. However, there were some contradictions in my role. Although I was their key language support figure, on the other hand, I was also part of the University's representational group which liaised with *Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga* on issues of compliance. An emphasis on meeting compliance targets would be a more typical approach in the workplace context where a performance management framework informs leadership styles. I was interested in promoting care due to the risk factor involved in the professional practice of participants being named as designated contacts. Rather than driving a compliance agenda, I set out in my research to make a contribution to knowledge by creating an ethic of care in *An Líonra* as a safe but venturesome learning environment. *Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga* champions quality in bilingual-service provision. Quality issues were addressed throughout the research study as part of the participants' self-assessment of their skill level and their growing confidence to use Irish in their professional roles.

Uniqueness of the Thesis Topic

Language advising itself is a relatively new area in language learning. To the best of my knowledge, no effort has been previously made to define what model of language advising is suited to the workplace context, to the mandated context, or to the minority language learning context. No research has been published to date on the specific requirements of Irish language adult learners in the workplace while literature on mandated-minority language learning in the professional context is scant. Much has been written on the professional development of academic staff in a university setting but the focus in the thesis in hand on administrative staff is novel. The establishment of *An Líonra Tacáiochta Teanga* was a new initiative. No reference has been found to the existence of a formal language support network for learners of Irish in any

other public body in Ireland. A support network for public bodies implementing confirmed schemes was set up by *Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga* in 2006. Its aim was to assist public companies to learn from one another and to share good practice by discussing issues relating to the implementation of their schemes and the general provisions of the Act (*Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga*, 2006, p. 22). I participated in this Network until 2009 but no notice of meetings has been circulated since then.

The interdisciplinary nature of the subject makes it difficult to mark my research boundaries but the various lenses of adult education, and languages and cultural studies, add to its originality. Ryan and Walsh (2006, p. 37) suggest that there are always biographical affinities and experiences at play in how one approaches research. My professional experience has influenced my choice of thesis topic and methodology. My research experience in the field of local history and my engagement with its general principles of people, time and place in particular, inform the choice of theoretical perspectives in the thesis in hand. My early career in physical education and sport encourage me to draw briefly on the field of sport psychology in my analysis and discussion. These lenses also bring originality to the work.

Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is based on my professional practice as *Stiúrtóir na Gaeilge* and Director of *Aonad na Gaeilge*, the Irish Language Centre at the University of Limerick. Following on the research aims outlined above, the sequence and content of the chapters is summarised below:

Chapter 2: In order to place my research questions in context, five themes are explored in this literature review chapter: mandated language learning in the workplace; affective factors in language learning with a focus on language anxiety; ways of coping with situation-specific language anxiety: indirect language learning strategies; autonomy in language learning; and the practice of language advising and role of the language advisor.

Chapter 3: The key concepts which inform the research are mapped out here and the theoretical lenses used to understand and to explore the language support requirements in the workplace are presented. Two distinct frameworks are used. The first is the Dialogue, Tools and Context Model (Mynard, 2012), a theoretical model of advising in language learning rooted in sociocultural theory and constructivism. The second framework is that of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991). These are used in tandem with each other. Relational knowing (Taylor, 2000, p. 306) is drawn on

as a theoretical tool in the organisational context to counteract anxieties around legislative obligations and to illuminate the hallmarks of language advising in this specific context. Some key principles related to constructivism which influence the research are also outlined in this chapter.

Chapter 4: Issues relating to the epistemological standing of the research are considered in some detail in the methodology chapter. The foundational perspective of this thesis reflects a collaborative constructivist view of teaching and learning. It promotes the inseparable association of personal meaning-making and the social influence in determining the educational transaction. How the methodology is linked to the epistemological warrant for the research is discussed here. Details of the action research initiatives and the particulars of the comprehensive data collection process are provided and defended in this chapter. The following action research stages are identified:

- The First Cycle: *An Bóthar Foghlama*, took place during the period May to the beginning of October 2010.
- The Second Cycle: *Tearmann*, relates to initiatives during a three-day programme which took place off-campus in *An Ghaeltacht* from 4-6 October 2010. The cycle includes a brief follow-up period on return to campus.
- The Third Cycle: *An Ghaeilge san Ionad Oibre*, took place from November 2010 to April 2011. Details of the tools and leadership initiatives relating to each of these phases are given in the chapter and the validation structures and strategies used to ensure the credibility of the study are outlined.

Chapter 5: Data collected during the Preparatory Phase and during Action Research Cycle 1 is analysed here and findings relating to the tools and leadership initiatives of the first cycle are presented and reviewed. The language advising stances, a summary of the change in language practices during the action research cycle, and procedures for monitoring and reviewing are included in this chapter. These headings are also discussed in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 to ensure consistency in format across the three cycles.

Chapter 6: Data relating to the tools and leadership initiatives of Action Research Cycle 2 in *Gaeltacht Chorca Dhuibhne* is explored here and findings are presented and reviewed.

Chapter 7: Data and findings relating to the tools and leadership initiatives of Action Research Cycle 3 are investigated here. Two key initiatives are explored in the analysis.

Chapter 8: This discussion chapter is in two parts. Section 1 considers what is distinctive about the role of the language advisor in the mandated language learning context. The hallmarks of *An Líonra* are reviewed in Section 2. Various learning spaces merit attention throughout the chapter and these feed into the discussion around the role of language advisor as architect of spaces of learning in Section 1, and *Líonra* appropriation of space to their own language learning needs in Section 2. The distinctive role of the language advisor as action researcher is deliberated on in Section 1. Section 2 on the hallmarks of *An Líonra* includes a discussion on the notion of a shared mental model and transformative learning in groups.

Chapter 9: A series of insights is presented and discussed on the significance of the study within the fields of workplace learning, language advising, and language learning in general. The conclusions are structured around two headings: empirical and theoretical findings, and research implications for professional practice, community of practitioners, policy, and research.

Epilogue: Four pertinent points are made here outlining various developments which have taken place since the end of the active data-gathering phase in 2011. These developments help substantiate change and improvements arising as a result of the research itself. They are included in the epilogue to the thesis to confirm the authenticity of decisions made and the credibility and validity of the action research itself.

Case File and Case Archive: Appendices are presented separately in the Case File at the end of the thesis. Supplementary material is included in the Case Archive which is a separate volume. In order to protect the confidentiality of the participants, this is not available for public access. The Table of Contents from the Case Archive is included in the Case File (Appendix A, p. 191) for information purposes. The abbreviation CA is used in the text of the thesis to refer to the Case Archive.

Conclusion

The intellectual interests and epistemological commitments identified here in the Introduction are consistent threads throughout the thesis. These assist in appraising the work of others, in producing arguments, in setting up and structuring the research findings, and in demonstrating the contribution of this study to a distinct field of professional practice. Grogan, Donaldson and Simmons (2007, p.6) suggest that “the Ed.D. can become the degree in which the tension between theory and practice can be put to generative use in the production of knowledge that is

valid, usable, and transformative in local, context-bound settings”. Conscious at all times of the historical and language policy contexts, engagement with transformative learning theory and practice informs research and practice in the new area of mandated language learning and minority language advising in the workplace.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This literature review is organised in five sections. In order to place the research in the international context, issues relating to mandated minority language learning for the Welsh and Basque workplaces are considered initially. The second theme explored is the affective side of language learning with a focus on language anxiety in particular. The third section considers the ‘situation-specific anxiety’ arising from an obligation to learn a language and reviews some language learning strategies to deal with this. Section 4, a discussion on autonomy in language learning, precedes the fifth and final section, an exploration of the discipline of language advising. An understanding of the area of autonomy is required to make appraisals of the findings in the research literature on the role of language advisor. These five themes are intellectual threads found throughout the thesis. The review of literature on these areas will seek to illuminate the role of the language advisor in supporting the mandated learning of a minority language in the organisational context.

Mandated Language Learning in the Workplace

Language learning and improvement initiatives aiming to normalise the use of Welsh and Basque in public administration are well established due to the enactment of language legislation in the Basque Country in 1982, and in Wales in 1993. An examination of these contexts reveals some insights into the attitudes of civil servants to a strategy of bilingualism in the workplace. Legislative decisions made in Ireland to date have been largely influenced by the Welsh context. Various researchers have looked at the integration of immigrant workers in the workplace and the learning of English as a Second Language (ESL) in that context, in particular. Brooks (2009, p. 70) outlines some of the potential challenges of learning English for work. She notes that employers often have unrealistic expectations about how quickly learners can master the language and little understanding of how time-consuming it is to prepare workplace-specific language materials. Fraser (2006, pp. 246-247) has reflected on the difficulties of the French language training strategy in Canada. Some support mechanisms put in place for employees with Basque or Welsh as a second language are of particular relevance to the research context. These are explored now.

Data from the Basque Country suggests that it takes a native person anything from 160 to over 1000 hours to reach the proficiency level of Profile Four, the highest level on the Basque language competency framework. It is predicted that it takes a non-native from 860 hours to over 2000 hours to move through the various profile levels 1-4 (Cenoz and Perales, 1997, p. 266). One of the major language plans developed by the Basque Government is the “Basquisition” of civil servants. This plan has two precise aims (1) to preserve citizens’ right to use Basque with the public service, and (2) to offer civil servants the opportunity to learn Basque (Agote and Azkue, 1992). The initiative has been very closely regulated by various laws and decrees (Cenoz and Perales, 1997, p. 264). The criterion used to decide the number of jobs for which a specific level of linguistic proficiency is required is the percentage of Basque speakers in the area where the civil servant is working and the characteristics of each civil servant’s position. Language courses are coordinated centrally by the Basque Institute of Public Administration and the Basque Institute for the Basquisition of Adults (HABE). Extensive materials are available dealing with the language register of administration. The civil servant must pass a three-part exam in order to be recognised formally as having met the required competency for the position. Language programmes of varying structures, both full-time and half-time, are available and all programmes are free. The civil servant who has to obtain a particular profile is on full salary while studying to meet the required standard.

There have been many problems associated with mandated learning of Basque for the workplace and the reality that not all civil servants have achieved the linguistic proficiency of required profiles has been contentious. Some possible reasons for not meeting the prerequisite language standards have been noted by Eusko Jaurlaritza (1996) cited in Cenoz and Perales, (1997). These include work constraints, problems with courses, illness, personal reasons, and administrative problems. The ‘profile’ and examination-driven learning context differ from the Irish context but problems meeting standards and the issue of work constraints in particular are similar. Civil servants involved in the Basquisition programme are generally very happy with the quality of language teaching but their anxiety about examinations, and about the use of Basque in their own work contexts, has been noted (Cenoz and Perales, 1997, p. 268). English-medium literature on the programme is limited and it has been difficult to identify the detail of support structures which might operate to support administrators dealing with language anxiety in the workplace. Martínez-Arbelaz (2006, p. 360) has commented on the lack of incentives available to workers. They see little reason to make the effort to learn the language. She promotes a more

inclusive plan for Basquisation where the target would be the family-neighbourhood domain as well as the workplace. Cenoz (2012, p. 53) in an article looking at the challenges around bilingual policy in higher education in the Basque Country, notes the development of sophisticated policies to encourage the use of Basque in teaching and the difficulties around combining these with a focus on internationalisation. Although Cenoz focuses on language in teaching and research, the attention to the university context is of interest to the research in hand.

Similar to the Basque situation, Welsh for Adults Centres have been established across Wales. These six centres have dedicated officers to provide Welsh in the workplace courses. A focus on the implementation of bilingual practices at organisational level is apparent in reports commissioned by the Welsh Language Board and Iaith, the Welsh Centre for Language Planning. The Welsh Language Board's document *Promoting and Facilitating Bilingual Workplaces* (2009, p. 24) offers many practical suggestions on the creation of constant opportunities to use the language in the workplace. Brief reference is made to the type of daily support "beyond formal provision" required by individuals to change language practices and become accustomed to using Welsh. Although mentoring schemes and various confidence-raising schemes are mentioned, no detail of these is provided (p. 26). A second document, *Guidelines for organising Welsh Language Training in the Workplace* (2010) is also available. The guidelines were developed for the attention of training and development officers and are written from a human resource management perspective. Some reference is made to ways of dealing with lack of confidence issues of those personnel involved in the provision of Welsh medium services and interestingly coaching sessions are considered 'of value' for those who might require them: "This means having a management coach questioning the staff member as to his/her aims, fears, barriers, options, and then enabling him/her to make decisions regarding changes in working methods and the use of Welsh" (p. 22). Criteria for monitoring Welsh language 'training' include: "number of compliments or complaints about services in Welsh; number of training hours provided; and cost of training per student" (pp. 40-42). Consideration is only given to performance management targets in the proposed monitoring template. No reference is made to affective or social issues arising in the language 'training'.

Bearing in mind that the current research context is a university setting, it is practical now to look at detailed structures put in place in a Welsh university to support active bilingualism. Bangor University is a useful model as it has a well-established tradition of bilingualism. The first bilingual policy was accepted by University Council in 1977/78. *Canolfan Bednryr*, the Welsh

Language Centre, comprises a translation unit, a language scheme unit, an advanced language skills unit, and a language technologies unit. These support Welsh and bilingualism within the institution. A comprehensive organisational strategy relating to staff recruitment and appointment and appropriate linguistic requirements are detailed in an information booklet, *Code of Practice for Staff Appointments in accordance with the Language Scheme*, an appendix to the 2008 Language Scheme of Bangor University. The booklet provides advice on how to decide the appropriate linguistic level for various posts, and supports available to help individuals to learn Welsh are outlined. A language development plan is agreed by a team which includes, the new member of staff, his or her manager, a representative from the School of Lifelong Learning, and a representative from *Canolfan Bednwr*. Significantly, monitoring of progress is linked to the annual performance review. Specific courses on the use of the language in the workplace are available. A mentoring scheme is available for those who have learned enough Welsh to hold a conversation in the language, and learners are teamed up with Welsh speakers. A branch of *Cymdeithas y Dysgynywr* (CYD), an organisation which brings together Welsh learners and Welsh speakers in a social context, is active at the University, although the national structure of the organisation no longer exists. Resources to support written accuracy in Welsh, translation, and editing of documents are available. A sabbatical scheme for “Welsh language training” has been offered to those who wish to teach, lecture or train wholly or partially through the medium of Welsh or bilingually (Bangor University, 2008, p. 31). No reference has been found in the Bangor literature to attitudes to the linguistic profiling of jobs or to pressure to reach a specific language competency level in a probationary period. The formal support structures as they relate to the language skills of speaking and writing are of interest. The lack of reference to the specific support requirements of employees improving their Welsh in this mandated context is noteworthy.

Drawing on the Basque and Canadian contexts in particular, Walsh and McLeod (2008, p. 30), as noted in Chapter 1, emphasise the ineffectiveness of the approach and costs associated with ‘up-skilling’ existing staff. They highlight the need for long periods of language immersion as part of the language learning programmes. In a case-study of statutory language schemes ratified under the OLA 2003, Walsh notes little emphasis, in the schemes published in 2007, on identifying areas in public bodies where language skills were necessary or desirable. A lack of new recruitment policies targeting employees with proficiency in Irish was also apparent (Walsh, 2012, p. 331). In a submission to the Department of Arts, Heritage and *Gaeltacht* on the 2011 ‘Review of the Official Languages Legislation’ he drew attention to what he calls *idé-eolaíocht an chúpla focal* in

the public service (Walsh, 2011, p. 5). This phrase is used to describe the predominant acceptance that offering ‘the few words of Irish’ to those who look for Irish-medium services in the public sector is enough. He suggests that this is an issue of some significance in Irish language policy for a number of reasons, including the “emotional attachment of Irish people to the notion of a ‘native language’ even though most of them don’t speak it” (Walsh, 2012, p. 331). A push for the design and implementation of strategies for the recruitment of Irish-English bilinguals in the public sector and a move away from language ‘training’ is a recurrent theme in his research and contributions on language policy.

The Official Languages (Amendment) Bill 2014 provides for the addition of a new subsection requiring each language scheme to specify the positions within the public body which require proficiency in Irish (2014, p. 8). This revision of the Act draws on the Government decision in 2013 to withdraw the policy of awarding bonus points for proficiency in Irish in the civil service recruitment procedures. An alternative competency-based system has replaced this bonus system with an Irish language competency requirement linked to specified positions. In addition to this Government departments and offices must specify areas or positions which require functional bilinguals. A recruitment campaign was launched by the Public Appointments Service in December 2014 for recruits interested in joining the Public and Civil Service as Executive Officers. A Specialist Irish Language Stream has been created as part of this process. Candidates interested in applying for vacancies requiring Irish language skills must pass the *Teastas Eorpach na Gaeilge, Meánleibhéal 2 (B2)*⁶ oral and written examination (Maynooth University Language Centre, 2015).

Second language learners of Irish in the workplace, working towards meeting the legislative remit of organisations and public bodies since the enactment of the legislation in 2003, are a relatively new group of adult learners. The demand for courses is demonstrated by the list of twenty-two organisations and public bodies who have attended courses in professional Irish offered by *Gaelchultúr*, a private business development. These courses target front of house staff

⁶ The Common European Framework groups learners into three broad categories which are divided into six levels of functional language ability. The first two levels relate to the Basic Speaker, at firstly, Breakthrough or Beginner level, (A1) and secondly, Waystage or Elementary level (A2). The next category describes the Independent Speaker who is at Threshold or Intermediate level (B1), or Vantage or Upper Intermediate level (B2). The final category describes the Proficient Speaker. Level C1 denotes Effective Operational Proficiency or Advanced Skills, while Level C2 denotes Mastery or Proficiency. The Language Centre at Maynooth University has developed *Teastas Eorpach na Gaeilge*, an accreditation system based on these levels for the Irish language. *Meánleibhéal 2* is the Irish term for the Upper Intermediate level.

and those who need to work through the medium of Irish in their positions (*Gaelchultúr*, 2014). New speakers of minority language are recently attracting the attention of sociolinguists. They often emerge as a result of language renewal efforts and positive language policies prompting some individuals to become speakers of the minority language and to become devoted to passing it to the next generation. O' Rourke and Walsh (2015, p. 65) define the term to include “those individuals who acquired the language outside of the home and who report that they use Irish with fluency, regularity and commitment”. The participants in the research in hand are presented as part of this group of new speakers.

Affective Factors in Language Learning with a Focus on Language Anxiety

According to Spolsky (1989, p.15) several different factors are involved in second language learning. These comprise current knowledge and skills, including the general knowledge of the learner's first and other languages; various aptitudes including physiological, biological, intellectual and cognitive skills; a range of affective factors such as personality, attitudes, motivation and anxiety; and occasion for learning the language. It is these latter features that are most relevant to the thesis. Affect in language learning has received much attention since the 1990s, the cognitive and metacognitive domains of language learning having dominated the research focus in previous decades. In an influential book on language learning strategies, Oxford (1990, p. 140) stresses how negative feelings can inhibit progress, while positive attitudes and emotions can make language learning far more successful and enjoyable. Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986, p. 128) note how second language communication is necessarily problematic and that because “complex and non-spontaneous mental operations are required in order to communicate at all, any performance in the L2 is likely to challenge an individual's self-concept as a competent communicator and lead to reticence, self-consciousness, fear, or even panic”. An excerpt from the autobiography of Eva Hoffman, former Polish editor of the *New York Times*, describing how she felt on arriving in Canada from Krakow with little English at the age of thirteen, is useful to help understand the complex emotions involved in language anxiety:

It takes all my will to impose any control on the sounds that emerge from me. I have to form entire sentences before uttering them; otherwise, I too easily get lost in the middle. My speech, I sense, sounds monotonous, deliberate, heavy—an aural mask that doesn't become or express me at all [. . .] I don't try to tell jokes too often, I don't know the slang, I have no cool repartee. I love language too much to maul its beats, and my pride is too quick to risk the incomprehension that greets such forays. I become a very serious young person [. . .] I am

enraged at the false persona I'm being stuffed into, as into some clumsy and overblown astronaut suit. I'm enraged at my adolescent friends because they can't see through the guise, can't recognize the light-footed dancer I really am

(Hoffman, 1989, pp. 118–119).

Horwitz et al. (1986, p. 128) note a social pressure on learners in their investigation of language learning in the classroom context. They suggest that “students may also be acutely sensitive to the evaluations – real or imagined – of their peers”. The term ‘language anxiety’ then captures the worry and the usually negative emotional response provoked when learning or using a second language (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 565).

Most research carried out to date has related to language anxiety in the classroom rather than in independent learning or workplace contexts. Young (1991, p. 427) identified six sources of anxiety in the formal classroom environment and argued that there were strong connections between them and the learner’s cultural and social beliefs. Firstly, she notes personal and interpersonal beliefs such as competitiveness, negative social evaluation, and fear of failure. Secondly, the learner’s beliefs about language learning are considered, his or her priorities and preferences, views about instructional activities, and perception of mistakes count here. Thirdly, the beliefs of the teacher about language learning are relevant. The type of interactions that take place between the teacher and learner are presented as the fourth source of anxiety, the way language errors are corrected, for example, might be a source of anxiety. The relevance of classroom procedures are presented as the fifth cause of anxiety, procedures relating to oral presentations, for instance. Lastly, language testing is a significant trigger. Issues such as the format of tests, test items, and the match between practice and assessment are of relevance here. These sources of anxiety, although classroom related, are a useful starting point for a discussion of language anxiety in the workplace. The stress of language assessment, particularly oral presentations and “losing face” in these, is reiterated in the literature (Ohata, 2005, p. 9). Outside of the classroom, and of relevance to language use in the workplace, Dewaele, Petrides, and Furnham (2008, p. 949) note that phone conversations provoke anxiety. Extra attention to the content of the speech “as well as to paralinguistic clues like prosody, intonation, and stress pattern” is required on the phone as visual feedback is lacking. This is a particular difficulty for those who started learning the language later in life as ability to pick up these clues is at a lower level than those who started learning the language at an earlier age.

Psychologists make distinctions between three categories of anxiety, namely trait, state, and situation-specific anxiety. Trait anxiety relates to an enduring characteristic, “a more permanent predisposition to be anxious” (Scovel, 1978, p. 137). State anxiety relates to a specific moment in time. Little concern is given to whether or not a similar experience, giving a speech, for example, occurred in the past or if it is likely to occur again. The anxiety is transient (Spielberger, 1983 cited in Horwitz 2001, p. 113). It is the third category, situation-specific anxiety, which is of relevance to the thesis in hand. It refers to the persistent nature of some anxieties which cause typical specific patterns of behaviour to be established. It is aroused by being in a particular situation (MacIntyre 2007, p. 565). Ellis (1994, p. 480) notes that examinations, for example, might provoke anxiety. A concern with what is presented as a specific type of language anxiety, one brought on by legislative obligation to use Irish in the workplace, is explored in this thesis. Language anxiety can be linked to specific languages that the learner feels s/he ought to know and feels ashamed for not knowing them (Dewaele, Petrides, and Furnham 2008, p. 934). One example, of relevance to the research context in hand, is the case of Christine, a French-speaking Belgian who reports higher levels of language anxiety associated with Dutch, her second language (L2) than that she experiences when using her L3, L4 and L5. Christine seems to be ashamed about her level of proficiency in Dutch and suggests that this contributes to the language anxiety. Dutch is one of the official languages in Belgium and one which many French-speaking Belgians struggle with, despite years of language learning. This apparent struggle with language learning is the case in Ireland too. Christine’s case promotes attention to be given to a specific language anxiety associated with Irish, as the national language and first official language of the state, but as the second language acquired by the majority. Pritchard Newcombe (2007) in *Social Context and Fluency in L2 Learners: the Case of Wales* highlights many issues relating to L2 learners’ use of language in the community. The remarkable resemblance of many phenomena relating to the context of Irish as a minority language is striking. Although students on language learning programmes in local authorities were among her research participants, the text does not deal wholly with learners in the workplace. Issues of anxiety and confidence, time and opportunity for language learning, and sustaining motivation are noted in her analysis of the Welsh learners’ experience in the community. Similar to Newcombe, the focus in the research in hand is on the adult learner and his or her language experiences. This focus is in direct contrast to the prevalent emphasis on performance management targets in the organisational context.

Situation-Specific Anxiety: Indirect Language Learning Strategies

Yan and Horwitz (2008, p. 176) suggest that it is not surprising that such “a personal and ego-involving endeavor” as language learning is the subject of feelings of anxiety. Further fears of losing face in the workplace make this issue even more complex. Chandler (2006, p. 61) noted the lack of applied linguistic research on adult learners in general. Affective issues in the context of mandated language learning have not been investigated, to the best of my knowledge, in any great detail. Woodrow (2006, p. 312) has proposed preliminary evidence of a model of adaptive learning relevant to language learners. Adaptive learners, she proposes “show a task goal orientation, have high self-efficacy, low second language anxiety, and use metacognitive language learning strategies”. There is a consensus in the literature that strategy use is related to language performance (Oxford, 1996; Park, 1997). These findings have encouraged the exploration, in this study, of the learning support structures required in the mandated language learning context. Rebecca Oxford (1990, p. 14) classified learning strategies into two groups, direct and indirect strategies, in her Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). Memory, cognitive and compensation strategies are considered direct strategies. Metacognitive, social and affective strategies are categorised as indirect strategies. The use of indirect strategies in particular to deal with anxiety is discussed in this section and the benefits of learner awareness of these are promoted. More recently the umbrella terms of strategic learning and self-regulation are being used (Rose 2012, p. 137).

Metacognitive strategies relate to how students manage their own learning, for example, consciously searching for language practice opportunities and the self-evaluation of progress being made. Little (1996, p. 209) speaks of the “disjunction” that often arises between formal language learning and “communicative language use”. This is particularly the case in my research context as opportunities for Irish language practice or minority language use largely need to be created by the group of adult learners themselves. Affective strategies relate to learners’ feelings. Examples are anxiety reduction, self-encouragement, and rewarding oneself (Oxford, 1990, p. 141). Social strategies involve interaction with others in asking questions, cooperating with native speakers, and becoming culturally aware. Oxford (1993, p. 177) points out that “[...] some of the best learners use affective and social strategies to control their emotional state, to keep themselves motivated and on-task, and to get help when they need it”, but many learners are unaware of the scope of these strategies. She suggests that a probable cause of this is that students are not

acquainted with being attentive to their own feelings and social interactions as part of the L2 learning process (p. 179). The research literature, as noted previously, relates predominantly to language anxiety in the classroom. Trickett and Moos (1995) and Palacios (1998) have investigated language anxiety under different instructional conditions. Palacios (1998) considered classroom atmosphere rather than particular types of teaching and learning activities and found that levels of affiliation among learners, a non-competitive atmosphere and clearly defined tasks were all associated with lower anxiety levels. Trickett and Moos (cited in Horwitz, 2001, pp. 119-120) noted that the perceived sincere support and interest of the teacher reduced anxiety. Woodrow (2006, p. 312) proposes that further study is required to assess which methods are most conducive to enhancing adaptive practices and thus lead to student self-regulation.

Focusing on the distance learning environment, Harris (2003) and Hauck and Hurd, (2005) emphasise the importance of the learning site, life roles, and support for language learning. Some anxiety-related problems noted are fear of making mistakes, fear of not being understood, “freezing” when called on to speak in front of others, not matching up to expectations, and feeling too much is expected of oneself (Hauck and Hurd, 2005). These issues echo research done on the classroom situation. Some strategies employed to manage language anxiety while learning on-line include using positive self-talk, actively encouraging oneself to take risks such as guessing meaning or trying to speak, rewarding oneself when one does well, and sharing worries with other students. MacDonald (2003, p. 378) cites the interplay between ability and affective factors such as growing confidence, motivation and dynamic of the group. Collaboration, the cohesion of the group, and common trust are also emphasised as important. The findings of Hauck and Hurd (2005) reinforce this view. Strategies used in the language learning on-line context will be drawn on again in subsequent chapters.

In response to critics of the over simplification, generalisation and categorisation of language learning strategies, Oxford (2011, p. 162) admits that a single instrument could not suit all groups of language learners because of the unlimited contextual influences. Researchers are encouraged to “make cultural adaptations and re-assess reliability and validity in each study and each sociocultural context”. In a further effort to counter criticisms, she has more recently suggested the “construction of a new [data gathering] instrument specifically designed to accommodate the unique characteristics of the situated target research population” (Griffiths and

Oxford, 2014, p. 3). The specifics of minority language learning strategy use in the organisational context have not been considered previously.

Autonomy in Language Learning

Baker and MacIntyre (2000, p. 316) note that it is unlikely that there will be a reduction in language anxiety or a rise in perceived confidence unless language proficiency improves. Little (2007, p. 14) claims that the development of autonomy and growth of target language proficiency should be “mutually supporting”. Autonomy in language learning is a vast research field in itself. In order to progress my research questions, I propose to explore the theme of collaboration among autonomous learners. I consider this strand of autonomy to be the one which is of most relevance to the theoretical and sociocultural context of the research. Little (2003) stresses that a readiness to be proactive in interaction with others is necessary for the practice of learner autonomy. In an earlier article he suggests that:

Terms like “personal agenda”, “initiative”, and “self-evaluation” inevitably emphasise the individuality of each learner as regards needs, purposes, capacities, and ultimate achievement. Yet in formal educational contexts as elsewhere learning can proceed only via interaction, so that the freedoms by which we can recognise learner autonomy are always constrained by the learner’s dependence on the support and cooperation of others

(Little, 1996, p. 204).

Interaction and interdependence were key features promoted in the informal context of *An Léonra Tacaíochta Teanga* in my research context. Lienhad Legenhausen’s discussion of the principles and procedures of the autonomous learning environment (2003, p. 76) is useful in support of this position. I hope to show in the following chapters that his validation of collaborative writing as a way of fostering learning in particular supports the tenor of my own research project. Such activities lead to “negotiations of meaning and socially instigated reflectivity”. Similarly Carlile and Jordan’s discussion of the socio-constructivist context of autonomy (2005, p. 23) and their reference to peer tutoring encouraged me to think of ways I might stimulate group learning conversations, both face-to-face and online, as part of the research initiative. Swain, Brooks and Tocalli-Beller (2002, p. 172) promote “collaborative dialogue” and learners working together to co-construct language or knowledge about language. Murphy (2008b, p. 85) in her investigation of learner autonomy in the distance learning context draws on the research of Brookfield (1987) and Brockbank and McGill (1998). She argues for the need for dialogue with other learners “to avoid

reflection being limited to individual insights, self-confirmation or self-deception”. Goh and Burns (2012, p. 160) note that individual and group reflection often has a therapeutic or energising effect on learners who may be feeling apprehensive and uncomfortable, and think that they are the only ones with similar feelings.

This thesis takes Benson’s analysis (1997, p. 19) of the political version of autonomy in language education as a useful starting point to consider the type of autonomous learning which might be promoted in a mandated learning environment. From this viewpoint autonomy implies full control over the content and processes of learning. This version of autonomy is more similar to the concept of autonomy in adult education. The emancipation or empowerment of learners is emphasised by giving them this control. Benson and Voller (1997, p. 12) promote a focus on aspects of education which relate to the “cultures” of particular learning environments, a focus on “the content of learning and relationships between students, teachers and institutions”. It is proposed in this thesis that the potential of autonomous language improvement to address the constraints of the mandated learning context is significant. One ideological argument put forward by Cienanski (2007, p. 112) for this is that autonomous learning emphasises the individual’s right to exercise his or her own choices, and “not to be thwarted by institutional choices”. As there is no choice regarding adherence to legislation, learner choice in designing pathways for autonomous language learning is considered crucial to the success of support initiatives in the research context. Benson (2011, p. 9) has more recently turned his attention to language learning ‘beyond the classroom’. The term is used to include the variety of places, other than the conventional classroom, where learning takes place. The research in hand will make a contribution to this area.

Legislation has dictated that the level of Irish-medium services is improved in the workplace context, an objective which demanded that language support and language improvement initiatives are put in place. Little (1995, p. 180) has suggested that:

Even aims and learning targets prescribed by a government department can, by process of negotiation, become the personal aims and learning targets of a group of learners; and that by the same token, highly structured learning materials can be exploited in ways calculated to develop learner autonomy.

A government objective became the focus of personal and group language learning targets in the research context. Brooks (2009, p. 71) draws on Watkins and Marsick (1992) and suggests that

informal learning occurs when individuals make sense of their experience in the context of their daily working lives. “This involves both reflection and action and may include self-directed learning, mentoring, trial and error, networking and coaching”. These themes will be discussed in subsequent chapters. Legenhausen (2003, p. 68) makes reference to the relatively precise management of the work cycle of learners in an autonomous learning environment. Rather like the stages of an action research project, the “teacher” supports the efforts of the learners by involving them regularly and systematically in the evaluation of the learning process and outcomes. Dörnyei (2010, p.79) describes the “ideal L2 self” as the L2-specific facet of one’s “ideal self”. He suggests that it is a powerful motivator to learn the second language because the learner wishes to reduce the discrepancy between his actual and ideal selves. The pedagogy necessary to help learners imagine contexts or communities in which they might use their target language has received much attention in recent years also (Murray, 2013, p. 377). It is this support role and position of responsibility played by the educator to help learners develop a strategic capability or competence for deliberate learning which will be investigated in the next section of this chapter.

The Practice of Language Advising and the Role of the Language Advisor

The growing literature on autonomous language learning has created a philosophical drive for a consideration of the area of language advising. Mozzon-McPherson (2001, p. 6) refers to the practice of language advising as a “new profession”. She notes also the lack of consensus on an appropriate name for the role, and the lack of discourse, without making use of existing genres such as teaching and counselling, to define what advisors do. Following an examination of the literature, private consultations between language learner and advisor, separated by periods of autonomous learning, seem to be characteristic of all language advising contexts. Most references relate to self-directed language learning programmes and self-access centres for students of third level institutions. Mozzon-McPherson (2007, p. 75) emphasises that advisors are not ‘surrogate teachers’ who merely offer language teaching in a different context. “They constitute distinct personnel, primarily expert in language learning rather than in a specific L2”. Ciekanski (2007, pp. 116-7) explores research on the exact type of pedagogical interaction that takes place in face-to-face advising sessions with adult language learners in a university situation and lifelong learning institution in France. These were learners of English, Spanish, and French as a Foreign Language. The skill-set associated with advising focuses on pedagogical values and principles such as

autonomy, individualisation of programmes, authentic language learning situations, socio-constructivism and reflective practice. As Ciekanski's focus is on adult language learners, and as I shared a similar understanding of language advising when *An Léonra Tacaíochta Teanga* was first established, these values and principles informed good practice in the design of my research initiatives.

So what exactly do advisors do? As stated previously there is little consensus in the literature. Poppi (2001, p. 154) outlines the tasks of the advisor in the Military Service Special Initiative in Language Education (MISSILE) project in Italy which catered for the needs of Italian servicemen. Tasks included: “eliciting information about aims, needs, and wishes; presenting materials; giving information and clarifying; interpreting information; suggesting methodology; listening and responding; offering alternative procedures and suggesting record keeping; and planning procedures”. Rossini Favretti (1998, p. 23, cited in Mozzon-McPherson, p. 151) suggests that the advisor's role is “not to describe, nor even to prescribe the correct use of language and to guide the acquisition process, but rather to create favourable conditions that will enable a personalised development of the learning process”. Mozzon-McPherson (2014) outlined four roles of the language advisor in a presentation at UL. The first role is to help clarify and recognise priorities in language learning. Secondly, the advisor helps investigate ways of learning and relating to the subject. Thirdly, support is offered in times of stress and in developmental times, and finally the advisor helps find a sustainable way to deal with learning. Rena Kelly (1996, p. 104) discusses advising from a language counselling perspective and considers encounters between helper and learner as occasions for a variety of “helping behaviours that include, but are not restricted to, counselling: affirmation, encouragement, guidance, suggestion, direct tutoring, humour and storytelling”. It has been suggested (Karlsson et al., 2007, p. 52) that the interaction in language counselling is a “dialogue in which the role of the counsellor is not that of a questioner knowing the right answer, but a participant in a dialogue looking for a joint answer”. The learning conversation is defined as “a form of therapeutic dialogue that enables an individual to manage a problem” (Kelly, 1996, p. 94). Depending on the advisor's analysis of the learner's needs or difficulties, she or he may emphasise conceptual, methodological or psychological support (Gremmo and Riley, 1995, p. 159). It is my intention in my research to explore what exactly the role of the language advisor might be in a mandated language learning context and the lists of tasks above are a useful starting point.

Little reference has been found in the research literature to the practice of language advising in the workplace other than brief mention of “learning consultants” who provide “scaffolding” support to adult members of the United States foreign affairs community (Mozzon-McPherson, 2001, p. 15). The United States Foreign Service Institute provides full-time intensive training in sixty languages to these personnel. The diagnostic dimensions and instruments used in this language consultation service in 1999 are of relevance to my own research. These are outlined by Ehrman (2001, p.45). The process of profiling learner needs is one which was very thorough indeed, and the reference to profiling for those on “accelerated personalised training” programmes, similar to those in Welsh and Basque workplaces, are of interest. Issues such as motivation, anxiety, self-efficacy and perfectionism are considered in the “Motivation and Strategies Questionnaire”. The focus on ‘individualisation’ rather than on group workshops on learning strategies is noteworthy, as is the importance of ongoing collaboration between learning consultants and language teachers regarding student needs.

Brooks (2009, p. 71) in a discussion of ESL in the workplace recommends the recruitment and training of English-language and culture coaches and mentors at the worksite. She suggests that classes should be reconceptualised as “meetings” or “forums” in which ESL learners with more workplace experience speak to the group and share what they have learned. However, few references are made in the literature to language support networks or groups which formally deal with issues addressed in individual language advisory contexts. Initiatives such as ‘The Language Café’ coordinated by the Centre for Languages and Linguistics in the University of Southampton are popular throughout Europe but these aim primarily to create social opportunities for learners to practise their target language outside of the classroom (University of Southampton, n.d.). The ‘English Corner’ in China is another similar initiative (Gao, 2009). These ideas lend themselves well to efforts of my research participants to create their own opportunities for language use on campus. Although participants may well discuss their progress and problems with regard to the language learning process at such events, they are not designed to deal with language advising issues as such. A programme of autonomous learning (ALMS) introduced at Helsinki University Language Centre in 1994 is a model which is particularly relevant to this research. One of its aims is to foster a social community of autonomous learners, and the social and collaborative element in English language learning is fostered from the beginning. Participants are encouraged to form their own groups or join Skills Support Groups such as presentation skills, academic writing and reading, and vocabulary building groups set up by the Language Centre. Students are aware that

they are “working within the larger framework of a supportive social system” (Karlsson et al., 2007, p. 47). The collaboration between teachers to meet learner needs in this centre is of interest. One teacher focuses on learner awareness and induction into the new system as well as both group and individual counselling. The second teacher has administrative duties, and gives advice, for instance, regarding methods and materials and academic credits (p. 49).

Commonalities with the philosophical foundations of the Community Language Learning method of language teaching and learning are also found. This method is based on the Charles Curran Counselling-Learning model of the 1970s which considered affective issues as matters of primary concern in the learning process. Curran believed that the counselling-learning model would help lower the instinctive defences adult learners throw up, that the anxiety caused by the educational context could be reduced through the support of an interactive community of fellow learners. The learner, he suggested “is no longer seen as learning in isolation and in competition with others” (1972, pp. 11-12). The teacher in turn is perceived as a compassionate and empathetic agent assisting in the learning process. By understanding students’ fears and being sensitive to them, the teacher can help students to overcome their negative feelings and turn them into positive energy to further their learning (Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p. 89).

My own research context and the context of all public bodies in Ireland is one without the support of self-access materials on the topic of Irish language in the workplace. The exploration of the literature has helped focus on the peculiarities of the research environment and the need to consider issues such as time constraints, fitting learning into working lives, the role of the advisor with regard to the promotion of group collaboration and support, and group learning conversations. This group focus is novel. In the following chapters, I propose that an advisor in a mandated learning context must consider affective issues of language learning in a more overt way than is done in the general advising context in order to alleviate issues of anxiety in particular. Current language advising models need to be adapted to suit the minority language environment. These issues have not been addressed in the literature to date. I anticipate that my research will fill this gap in some way and pave the way for a preliminary examination of what is proposed as an emerging profession, that of language advisor in the public body workplace in Ireland.

Conclusion

The general topic of mandated language learning in the workplace, with an emphasis on the minority language contexts of Basque and Welsh have been explored in this chapter. The Basque practice of ‘up-skilling’ current employees has been noted, as has the profiling of positions and the recruitment of new staff with appropriate language skills, which is more prominent in Wales. The reports on the Welsh language uncovered some practical strategies of relevance to the action research initiatives with *An Líonra Tacaíochta Teanga*. These are considered further in the methodology chapter. The learning context is increasingly cited as a key factor influencing other factors in language learning. The issue of language anxiety as a situation-specific anxiety in this type of learning environment has been explored in detail, the pressure associated with oral language use was emphasised in particular. Independent language learning has been promoted as a way of increasing proficiency, and as a consequence, relieving anxiety. Indirect language learning strategies have been put forward as coping tactics. The relatively new area of language advising has been discussed and specific role of language advisor in the mandated learning context has been reviewed and endorsed. Throughout the chapter some recurring beliefs about learning have been presented. Wenden stresses the importance of making students aware of their own learning processes. She notes that without developing strategies, students “will remain trapped in their old patterns of beliefs and behaviours” (1998, p. 90). Two frameworks make up the conceptual framework of this thesis. These inform the methodological research approach taken to aid learners in their questioning of their beliefs and attitudes to Irish language learning and usage in the professional context. These frameworks, namely Mynard’s Dialogue, Tools and Context Model (2012) and Mezirow’s Theory of Transformation (1991) are the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

Building on the literature review of Chapter 2, the key concepts which inform my research procedures are outlined now in this third chapter. The theoretical lenses used to understand and to explore language support and advising requirements in the mandated workplace, to design support initiatives, and measure their effectiveness are presented. Mertz and Anfara (2006, p. 189) note that, although often abstract, a theoretical framework:

is profoundly helpful in bringing understanding of how the world is experienced. It is the lens ... framing and shaping what the researcher looks at and includes, how the researcher thinks about the study and its conduct, and in the end, how the researcher conducts the study.

Two distinct frameworks guide the enquiry in the research in hand and these are woven together in an innovative way in the conceptual framework. The primary concept put forward is the “Dialogue, Tools and Context Model”, a theoretical model for advising in language learning rooted in sociocultural theory and constructivism (Mynard, 2012). Keen to investigate the peculiarities and uniqueness of my own professional practice, the framework is explored in the thesis with a view to examining how it might be applied in, and tailored to, the mandated-minority language learning situation in the workplace. The strong research tradition of looking at the sociocultural context of language learning in my professional practice in a School of Languages also influenced the choice to use this theoretical framework. The second framework used is that of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991). This theory of adult learning engaged me from the outset as I saw its relevance to my research context, one full of assumptions and emotions relating to the Irish language. I was immediately interested in how it might be applied to the mandated language learning context. I saw potential to make connections between the dialogue phase in transformative learning, the emphasis on dialogue in language learning, and dialogue as central to the language advising model. Because of my attention to the social aspects of language learning, I sought out the literature which promoted the more personal and relational aspects of transformative learning. The two frameworks are summarised below and the connections between them illustrated. By embracing how these theoretical frameworks complement each other, I propose a view of mandated language learning that is more nuanced than one which a single framework might provide.

My understanding of constructivism as it relates to my context is made clear in the opening section of the chapter. Mynard's model for advising in language learning is presented in the second section before the third section dealing with adult learning as transformation. This third section is in three parts. Firstly, an overview of the theory of transformative learning is given. The theme of transformative learning in groups and relational knowing is dealt with next. A discussion on the fostering of transformative learning, including a focus on the workplace context, finishes this section on transformation. Some links between these schools of thought are made in the final section of the chapter. The scope and limitations of my conceptual framework in terms of developing my research questions and making a contribution to the fields of adult education and language learning are addressed. A discussion on how the conceptual framework has influenced methodology is kept for the methodology chapter.

Some Key Principles related to Constructivism which Influence the Research

The foundational perspective of this thesis reflects a constructivist view of teaching and learning. There are many varying perspectives on constructivism but a constructivist stance essentially suggests that the learner goes through a process of constructing meaning by making sense of their experiences. The various perspectives differ on aspects such as the role of experience, the nature of reality, which knowledge is of interest and whether or not meaning-making is an individual or a social process. Phillips (1995, p. 12) warns of the inclination towards relativism in many of the forms of constructivism. He questions the emphasis on socio-political processes in knowledge making and stresses the fact that nature wields substantial control over our knowledge-construction activities. In an effort to clarify the varying perspectives on constructivism, Phillips categorises six different strands as follows: firstly, Ernst von Glaserfeld on science and mathematics education; secondly, the epistemology of Immanuel Kant; thirdly, feminist theories relating to how knowledge is constructed; fourthly, Kuhn's emphasis on the role of scientific communities on knowledge construction; fifthly, Piaget's theory of cognitive development; and finally, John Dewey's assumptions about experience and knowledge (1995, pp. 5-12). These six strands come together in the debate over the individual versus the social aspect of meaning-making. On one end of the continuum, the construction of knowledge is described in terms of individual cognition, while it is considered in the context of social and political processes at the opposite end. Sociocultural theory is sometimes referred to as social constructivism (Adelman Reyes and Vallone, 2008), although differences and similarities between these are noted by

Kozulin (1998); Windschitl (2002); and van Boxtel, van der Linden and Kanselaar (2000). Cobb (1994, p.17) notes the complementarities between the sociocultural and constructivist viewpoints and suggests that each tell half of a good story, and can be used to balance the other. Mynard (2012, p. 32) promotes the usefulness of a blend of the two as a framework for research in the area of advising in language learning and in the Dialogue, Tools and Context model in particular. This complementarity and balance is promoted in this thesis.

Regardless of the position of the teacher or researcher on Phillip's continuum, all forms of constructivism emphasise learning as active rather than passive. The emphasis, as a result, is on collaboration, dialogue and cooperative learning. Constructivism therefore figures greatly in adult learning theory. Transformative learning as presented by Mezirow focuses on both the personal and social construction of meaning, perspective transformation being a cognitive process while dialogue with others is a key stage in the process of transformative learning. This adult learning theory will be explored in detail below. The consideration of learning as collaborative has influenced language pedagogy over the last number of decades as language researchers and teachers have paid attention to this view of learning. Williams and Burden (1997, p. 39), for instance, note its influence on communicative language teaching: "We can see in social interactionism a much needed theoretical underpinning to a communicative approach to language learning, where it is maintained that we learn language through using the language to interact meaningfully with other people". Constructivism continues to influence current language pedagogy particularly in the areas of technology (Rüschoff 2009), autonomy in language learning, and problem-based language learning (Mishan, 2011).

Interaction with other speakers of the language and the creation of opportunities for dialogue are integral to the language learning experience. Viewed through a sociocultural lens, issues around self-regulation, activity theory, and social power are of interest to the focus on language advising in the study in hand. Oxford et al. (2014, p. 32) have considered language learning strategies from this perspective. The concept of learner self-regulation finds its roots in the work of Vygotsky (1978) and it includes mentoring of the learner by a "more capable other", often, but not always a teacher. Following interactions with more proficient others, learners are able to draw on internalised processes which give them on-going guidance and allow them to be self-regulated (See Donato and McCormick, 1994; Oxford and Schramm, 2007). At the Oxford University Centre for Sociocultural and Activity Theory Research, sociocultural activity theory is

used “to examine the relationship between individual learning and the social situations in which that learning occurs” (University of Oxford, n.d.). This application allows teaching and learning, wherever it takes place, to be seen as a process through which we adopt what is appreciated in a culture and begin to add to that culture. Issues of social empowerment and disempowerment in language learning are issues at the heart of a consideration of social power from the social cultural viewpoint (Oxford et al., 2014, p. 32). Drawing on Canagarajah’s work in particular, Oxford discusses the various stances taken by minority L2 students when they feel that they are not being respected by members of the dominant culture or not being given opportunities to have successful interactions in their target language. Oxford (2011, pp. 97-98) proposes that their use of specific language learning strategies is significantly different because of their relationship to the target language and the less accepting sociocultural context. Although the literature reviewed here deals with the learning of a major rather than a minority language, it is the relationship of the learners with the target language and the feelings of social empowerment and disempowerment brought on by the social context in which the language learning and usage takes place which are relevant.

Framework 1: The Dialogue, Tools and Context Model of Language Advising

Van Compernelle and Williams (2013, p. 279) state that “the central tenet of sociocultural theory is that the human mind is mediated (Wertsch, 2007); that is, higher psychological functions integrate auxiliary stimuli, or mediational means, which reorganize natural, or biologically endowed, processes”. This has impacted on how second language pedagogy has been conceptualised and on what takes place in the classroom. The theoretical principles and constructs associated with sociocultural theory as related to the context of second language acquisition have been discussed at length in the literature in the field. Word limit in this thesis does not allow scope to discuss them in detail here (See Lantolf and Beckett, 2009). Mynard draws on four concepts from sociocultural theory as relevant to the exploration of advising in language learning. These concepts: mediation; Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD); speech; and tools are explored comprehensively in her work (2012, p. 29). The concept of mediation will be dealt with briefly now followed by a short overview of tools as relevant to the advising context. The concepts of dialogue and context in the Mynard model will then be summarised.

Kozulin (2003) draws on Vygotsky in his exploration of mediation and distinguishes two broad categories. The first are psychological tools, “culturally constructed artifacts that are integrated into human mental functioning” and the second relates to developmentally appropriate support from others, “human mediation”. Psychological tools are not created by the person in isolation. Wertsch discussing mediation as central to Vygotsky’s contribution to psychology and education, states that:

[Mediation] is the key in his approach to understanding how human mental functioning is tied to cultural, institutional, and historical settings since these settings shape and provide the cultural tools that are mastered by individuals to form this functioning. In this approach, the mediational means are what might be termed the “carriers” of sociocultural patterns and knowledge

(1994, p. 204).

Van Compernelle and Williams (2013, p. 279) stress that L2 pedagogy involves any form of educational activity planned to encourage the internalisation of, and control over, the language being studied by the learners. Pedagogy, they suggest, is about creating the conditions for the internalisation of psychological tools. Human mediation such as appropriate feedback from a teacher, for example, or other forms of mediation, computer-based tasks or collaborative group work, for instance, supports this internalisation.

The cognitive and practical tools used in the advising context have been explored in more detail in the literature than theoretical tools. Examples of cognitive tools in Mynard’s model are language learning journals, learning plans, and self-evaluation resources. These encourage learners to plan for their learning in a more organised way and reflective way. Practical tools are commonly used in large language resource areas to ease the organising of advising sessions, making reservations, keeping records and so forth. Theoretical tools are defined as theories and knowledge that an advisor draws on in order to work more effectively with the learner. Examples given by Mynard (2012, p. 35) are knowledge of strategies for successful language learning and knowledge of learner beliefs. The specific context of mandated learning and contextual practices in the workplace as they relate to language advising are explored in this thesis. Tools suitable for the language learning context where there is an obligation and pressure to improve language skills need attention. The situation of Irish as a lesser-used language is a further issue to be considered. Using the lens of sociocultural theory, I put forward the concept of relational knowing in transformative learning as a theoretical tool which might help to illuminate the exact support

requirements of this specific context. The theoretical tool of relational knowing is the basis for the initiatives and tasks considered in the methodology chapter. An understanding that language learners learn not in isolation but through relationships within their own immediate families, networks, community and society underpins this research. Adult learning as transformation is dealt with in the next section, Framework 2.

Dialogue, defined as a psychological tool in sociocultural theory, is given a central place in the Mynard model for advising in language learning. The mediational dialogue which is led by the advisor is dealt with by Mozzon-McPherson who examines advising sessions as “learning conversations”. The emphasis is on the skilled use of language on the advisor’s part to help the learner reflect, gather information, plan learning and review progress (Mozzon-McPherson, 2012, p. 44). The skills used in the general counselling therapy tradition and wider range of counselling approaches are drawn on here. Dialogue also relates to the internal thought process of the learner. Karlsson (2012, p. 202) for example, used autobiographical narratives as a tool to help learners reframe their “problematic” language learning stories. More attention has thus far been given to the inner dialogue of the advisor rather than that of the learner but Kao (2012, p. 87), for instance, has investigated dialogue in a peer-advising model in a classroom setting in Taiwan. The language in which the advising sessions are conducted in is only beginning to get attention. This issue will be returned to in Chapter 8.

In explaining the role of context in her model, Mynard notes that both personal and physical contexts as well as contextual practices need to be considered. It is up to the advisor to develop the relationship with the advisee so as to understand the ins and outs of personal motivations for language learning. This personal knowledge informs how the language advising process develops. In terms of physical context most research, as noted in Chapter 2, relates to the context of self-access centres in universities. Advising sessions are considered unique as there are so many varying factors involved. However, Mynard (2012, p. 36) is interested in contextual practices as part of the theoretical model. These, she looks on as a “consistent set of social practices” or “discursive patterns”. These might be identified in practices of learning advisors. It is the contextual practices of language advising in the minority-mandated language context which are explored in the thesis in hand.

Framework 2: Adult Learning as Transformation

An Overview of Transformative Learning

Conscious of the complexity of work-based language learning and language usage in my research context, Mezirow's psychocritical approach to transformative learning and the four components of the transformative learning process: experience, critical reflection, reflective discourse, and action were considered useful in efforts to illuminate practice at the University. Mezirow (2000, p. 17) presents two theoretical dimensions to a frame of reference, a habit of mind and a point of view. A habit of mind is "a set of assumptions - broad, generalised, orienting predispositions that act as a filter for interpreting the meaning of experience". For example, a habit of mind relating to Irish in the research context may be indifference to those who do or don't support Irish language promotion, or the belief that native Irish speakers are superior to competent non-native speakers. Very few subjects currently provoke such discussion, logical or otherwise, as the subject of the Irish language and its role in contemporary Ireland (Ní Pháidín agus Ó Cearnaigh, 2008, p. 212). A point of view, on the other hand, is made up of meaning schemes "sets of immediate, specific beliefs, feelings, attitudes and value judgements" (Mezirow, 2000, p.18). Some of the specific fears of research participants, such as, fears of dealing with native speakers, dealing with technical questions through Irish, responsibility for departmental compliance to legislation, and shame at lack of proficiency in the native language, were noted earlier in the thesis. These are useful examples of "points of view" which were prevalent at the outset of the research.

Transformative learning takes place when there is a transformation in one's meaning scheme or in one's entire perspective. Mezirow (2000, p. 19) states that "a more fully developed and dependable frame of reference is one that is more inclusive, differentiating, permeable (open to other viewpoints), critically reflective of assumptions, emotionally capable of change, and integrative of experience". He suggests that transformations in our habits of mind may be sudden and dramatic "epochal", or they may be slower, incremental changes in our points of view (meaning schemes) which eventually lead to changes in our habits of mind (meaning perspective) (2000, p. 8). A number of different phases in the transformative learning process are outlined. The first stage is the "disorienting dilemma", a critical incident where the adult learner realises that she is used to dealing with things in a particular way, and that now that just "doesn't fit". The learner realises that she needs to formulate a new framework to cope with this change. The

second stage, self-examination, is often accompanied by feelings of fear, anger, shame and so forth. This leads to the third step, a critical assessment of personal assumptions. The fourth step is the important dialogue stage and the recognition that others have gone through a similar process. The fifth phase is an exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions. Steps six to nine involve the formulation of an action plan, acquiring the knowledge and skills required to implement the plan, the provisional trying out of new roles, and building competence and self-confidence in roles and relationships. The last phase, step ten, is the reintegration of the new, transformed perspective back into one's life (Mezirow, 2012, p. 86). The person may take "immediate action, delayed action or reasoned affirmation of an existing pattern of action" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 24). The adult learners must learn what action might be appropriate to effect change. The importance of a feeling of solidarity with others who are committed to exploring change is emphasised in the theory. This is a pertinent point in my research context (Mezirow, 1993, p. 189).

Although Mezirow's theory and the stages in the transformative process as outlined above continue to dominate research, new perspectives on transformative learning are evolving all the time (See Taylor 2000 and 2007). The role of relationships, context, and affect, the role of rationality, the place of social action are all issues which are debated at length in the literature (See Ryan, 2001). There is growing interest in transformative learning in more informal settings and transformative learning in groups. Much attention has also been given to ways of fostering transformative learning. The relevance of these themes to the research context is looked at briefly now.

Transformative Learning in Groups and Relational Knowing

Following a review of the literature on transformative learning in groups, the work of the following researchers is of interest: Baumgartner (2001) on transformative learning in groups and organisations; Yorks and Marsick (2000) on organisational learning and transformation; and Bierema (2005) on critical human resource development education. The exploration by Dirkx and Smith (2009) of transformative learning in adult online collaborative groups is useful. It provides insights into the relationship between learning and the workplace setting. The observations of Billett (2006, p. 65) regarding "interdependence in the relational duality between individuals and their social worlds in the learning and developing of their vocational practice" are also relevant.

Foley's work (2001) on organisational change is of interest because good practice in language planning in other jurisdictions suggests that the implementation of bilingual practices in a public body should be looked at from an organisational change perspective. He suggests that his approach to organisational learning is both strategic and emancipatory. "It rejects the attempt to recast adult education and learning simply as an instrument for improving performance and productivity. It sees learning as complex "formal and informal, constructive and destructive, contested and contextual" (p. 20). Saavedra (1995), in an unpublished thesis cited in Taylor (2000, p. 314), notes some essential factors of transformative learning for teachers within a group study setting. Firstly, the necessity for all participants to have an opportunity "to situate themselves historically, politically and culturally within the context of the group", and secondly, the need to "act on new ideas" and validate these in order to explore newly acquired assumptions and beliefs. Choy (2009, p. 67) proposes that the process of transformational learning is more intensified by teams. He suggests that the critical mass formed by a team in the workplace can become more influential than the individual employee in efforts to change organisational perspective and frames.

Taylor (2009, p. 9) notes that engagement in dialogue with the self and others is one of the core elements of a transformative learning approach to teaching:

Dialogue is the essential medium through which transformation is promoted and developed ... Dialogue becomes the medium for critical reflection to be put into action, where experience is reflected on, assumptions and beliefs are questioned, and habits of mind are ultimately transformed. The dialogue is not so much analytical, point-counterpoint dialogue, but dialogue emphasising relational and trustful communication.

Wasserman, 2004 (cited in Schapiro, Wasserman and Gallegos 2012, p. 357) identifies four overlapping factors that facilitate and limit transformative dialogic moments in groups. The first and second address the qualities of those involved in the group: firstly, continuity in members' commitment and motivation, and secondly, curiosity and openness. The third and fourth factors emphasise the facilitation of the discursive process, these are emotional engagement through storytelling and reflection, and mutual sense making. Transformative learning, as previously considered, takes places through participation in rational discourse. Mezirow (1991, p. 71) stresses the point that unlike everyday conversation, rational discourse is used "when we have reason to question the comprehensibility, truth, appropriateness (in relation to norms), or authenticity (in relation to feelings) of what is being asserted or to question the credibility of the person making

(the assertion). It is the authenticity in relation to feelings, the affective side of mandated language learning, that is most relevant to my research context.

Taylor (2000, p. 297) notes that various studies have investigated the more subjective elements of relationships such as trust, friendship and support and their impact on the transformation process. Mezirow's original model only gave minor attention to the importance of relational knowing, the role that relationships with others play in the transformative learning process. The focus was on disclosure that was rationally driven. Connected ways of knowing and relationships have been discussed in various ways in diverse studies. Unfortunately, the majority of the studies reviewed by Taylor are unpublished doctoral theses. He notes the difficulty in accessing these (2007, p. 174). Various concepts such as modelling, interpersonal support, social support, family connections, networking, learning in relationship, and developing trust are explored in these research studies. These suggest that subjective elements such as camaraderie and reliance on others seem to provide the conditions essential for effective rational discourse and that the development of these types of relationships is integral to the learning process. Taylor (2000 pp. 307-308) notes that relationships were found to be important in all of the studies reviewed and suggests that "this contradicts the autonomous and formal nature of transformative learning as we presently understand it, and instead reveals a learning process that is more dependent on the creation of support, trust and friendships with others". Barbara Thayer-Bacon (1999, p. 48), promotes thinking as a social endeavour and emphasises the importance of qualities such as imagination, emotions and intuition in critical and constructive thinking. She depicts caring as openness or receptivity to the voice of the other, paying attention to and feeling what others have to say. Langan, Sheese and Davidson, (2009, p. 48) suggest that Thayer-Bacon sees caring in constructive thinking as similar to what Belenky, Bond and Weinstock (1997, p. 61) describe as playing the "believing game," as contrasted to the "doubting game" that is associated with conventional critical thinking. The emphasis on caring dialogue is central in the research in hand.

Moving briefly to the specific context of the workplace now, various aspects of mentoring and other developmental relationships are explored by Rock and Garavan (2011 pp. 116-17). They specifically focus on trust, compatibility, authenticity, dialogue, reflection, and feedback as necessary characteristics of high-quality relationships that foster personal and career development. They choose "dialogue" for its present-day associations with being deeper and more complex

rather than “conversing”. They suggest that in order to achieve deep meaning and mutual understanding, “the participants engaged in dialogue in developmental conversations need to be highly receptive and empathetic, dynamic and adaptive, inquisitive and sincere” (p. 121). Their perspective from career theory on how learning might flourish in the workplace through developmental relationships is valuable as an alternative lens to that of adult education.

Fostering Transformative Learning

Much has been written on the area of fostering transformative learning and the creation of transformative learning spaces. Schapiro (2009, p. 112) for instance, notes five common themes or characteristics of transformative learning spaces. Firstly, learning happens in relationships while secondly, there is shared ownership and control of the learning space. The third theme relates to there being room for the whole person – feelings as well as thoughts, body and soul, as well as mind. The fourth point notes that there is sufficient time for collaboration, action, reflection, and integration. The last and fifth theme is that there is space to pursue a process of inquiry driven by the questions, needs and purposes of the learners. According to Mezirow et al. (2000, pp. 13-14) the conditions or rules of this rational discourse are also the ideal conditions for adult learning:

To more freely and fully participate in discourse, participants must have the following: more accurate and complete information; freedom from coercion and distorting self-deception; openness to alternative points of view: empathy and concern about how others think and feel; the ability to weigh evidence and assess arguments objectively; greater awareness of the context of ideas and, more critically, reflectiveness of assumptions, including their own; an equal opportunity to participate in the various roles of discourse, and a willingness to seek understanding and agreement and to accept a resulting best judgment as a test of validity until new perspectives, evidence, or arguments are encountered and validated through discourse as yielding a better judgment.

Fleming (2008, p. 8) asks what kind of space would support the most interesting interactions, the most provocative debates and the most critical questioning among students? He notes that “a different kind of learning is being proposed. It involves critical reflection on assumptions that underpin beliefs, a discourse to justify what we believe and taking action on the basis of a new agreed understanding”. The role of the educator is to create spaces for such dialogue (2008, p. 11).

The Habermasian concepts of communicative action and communicative space have greatly influenced adult education theory and informed directions in action research also. As

learning spaces are explored in the research in hand, the concepts are dealt with briefly now (See Brookfield, 2008; Kemmis and McTaggart, 2007, and Wicks and Reason, 2009 for further reading). In *Between Facts and Norms* Habermas (1996) noted that communicative action opens up communicative space between people. He defined communicative action earlier in his career as happening “wherever the actions of the agents involved are coordinated not through egocentric calculations of success but through acts of reaching understanding” (Habermas, 1984, p. 286). Brookfield (2005) states that “communicative action is premised on the disposition to try to understand another’s point of view”. Habermas writes that in “communicative action participants are not primarily oriented to their own individual successes; they pursue their individual goals under the condition that they can harmonise their plans of action on the basis of common situation definitions” (1984, p. 286). He considered that opening the space for communicative action led to two particular effects. Firstly, it builds solidarity between those who disclose their understanding to one another in this kind of communication and secondly, it endorses the decisions made and understandings that people reach with legitimacy (Habermas 1996, pp. 360-361). Kemmis notes the centrality of this communicative space in action research:

The first step in action research turns out to be central: *the formation of a communicative space* which is embodied in networks of actual persons . . . A communicative space is constituted as issues or problems are opened up for discussion, and when participants experience their interaction as fostering the democratic expression of diverse views . . . [and as permitting] people to achieve mutual understanding and consensus about what to do . . .]

(Kemmis, 2001, p. 100; original italics).

Wicks and Reason (2009, p. 258) give a detailed overview of Habermas’s theory of communicative action and a useful guide on the application of the concept of communicative space to action research also. Of interest to the research in hand is their reference to the themes of leadership and anxiety as considerations in the paradoxes and challenges of opening up communicative space. Firstly, facilitators of action research need to give suitable leadership and employ social power in order to generate the conditions in which participation can thrive; and they must be able to give up power and move away from leadership control so that participants can own their work completely (see Chowns, 2008; Marshall, 2004; Nolan, 2005). Secondly, in view of the fact that all practices of inquiry stimulate anxiety (Devereaux, 1967) “communicative spaces need to be able to contain anxiety so that it may be expressed” (See Douglas, 2002). The theme of space, a recurring theme in the thesis, will be returned to again in Chapter 5.

A brief look at the work of Marsick and Watkins brings the focus back to considerations regarding the fostering of transformative learning and the opening up of this communicative space in the workplace. Marsick and Watkins (2001, p. 25) suggest that informal learning in the workplace is at the heart of adult education. They propose that adult educators can assist learners to recognise conditions in the sociocultural context that can help them learn more fruitfully or that stand in their way (2001, p. 31). In a later study Marsick et al. (2009, p. 593) put forward that the role of the ‘workplace educator’ might be to consider organisational supports and obstacles to learning as much as learning processes and strategies:

Some organisations seek frameworks e.g. communities of practice, social networks, virtual teams, knowledge of learning networks – and strategies that support informal and incidental learning; while other organisations have not aligned structures, processes and culture in ways that consistently support learning through work even though task demands seems to require this.

The challenge to organisations, they suggest, is to create “safer yet stimulating environments” that cherish group effort over competitiveness. The work of Marsick and Watkins encourages consideration of the language advisor as workplace educator.

Links among Schools of Thought

Choy (2010, p. 82) promotes reflection on learning designs to support transformational learning and suggests that workplaces must make pedagogies to support worker-learners available. Ellen Foster (1997) discussed practices which lead to transformative learning in the context of second language learning for adults and the role of the language ‘instructor’ in particular. Kelly (1996, p. 94) notes that the transformation which staff and students involved in self-directed learning have to go through is one which confronts beliefs about language and perceptions about learning and teaching roles. However, she does not draw on transformation theory as such. Goulah (2007, p. 202) drawing on the work of O’Sullivan (1999) in particular, notes that “transformative second/foreign language learning is considered as a means of advancing second/foreign language learning theory to integrate the learner’s social identity and the learning context by placing it in a larger cultural, spiritual, and ecologically-interconnected cosmological worldview”. Of more relevance to the study in hand is the work of Glynn, Ó Laoire and Berryman (2009) who have looked at transformative pedagogy and language learning in the context of minority languages. They report on three small studies relating to the teaching and learning of Māori in New Zealand

and suggest that similar strategies might be explored in the Irish language classroom. The authors promote a transformative pedagogy which should “draw on elements of socio-cultural theory, such as the interdependence of intellectual and social learning, the nature of responsive, social contexts for learning, and the development of effective communities of practice for language learning” (p. 9). This paradigm shift would result in a re-positioning of the teacher to be receptive to the lived experiences of the students. The notion of a community of practice for minority language learning and language support will be returned to in later pages.

It is important at this stage to stipulate what I mean by transformation in my research project. Welton (1995, p. 37) suggests that the aim of critical theory is “to help people stop being passive victims who collude, at least partly, in their domination by external forces”. Inglis (1997, p. 4) goes a step further in suggesting that an analysis of power leads to empowerment or emancipation: “Empowerment involves people developing capacities to act successfully within the existing system and structures of power, while emancipation concerns critically analyzing, resisting and challenging structures of power”. I am promoting an occupational version of transformation, rather than a political one. The project relates to initiatives which had to be considered in my professional practice because of a mandated situation. By definition this is not an ideal speech situation as the research participants were under pressure of law to improve their language competency. Compliance by its very nature tends to diminish choice so I set out to do something new with that context and oppose oppression. Belenky and Stanton (2000, p. 72) suggest that Mezirow’s central insight is profound: “we are all active constructors of knowledge who can become responsible for the procedures and assumptions that shape the way we make meaning of our experiences”. I set out to make something new of legislative obligation. I sought to transform hearts and minds and nurture a strong sense of camaraderie and connectedness in guiding participants on an autonomous language improvement path in order to deal with issues of anxiety. An element of care was central to the research project. Murphy and Fleming (2006, p. 51) suggest that the “aim for Habermas and adult education is not to re-embed the state and the market into the lifeworld, but instead to immunize lifeworld values of caring, ethical concerns and democratic principles into the system, and so resist and reverse colonisation”. The apparent impact of new managerialism in the higher education sector has been noted by many. (Grumell, Devine, Lynch, 2008; Slaughter and Leslie 2001, and Moreau, Osgood, and Halsall, 2007). An emphasis on the individual language learning support needs of staff rather than on institutional compliance was sought after as an alternative shift in focus.

By considering relational knowing as a theoretical tool in Mynard's Dialogue, Tools and Context framework, the adult learning theory of transformation, and the language advising framework are woven together in an innovative way. This allows me look at how relationships in *An Líonra Tacaíochta Teanga*, the language support network, are conceptualised while investigating what model of language support is required for the minority-mandated language learning context. In looking at the role of the language advisor as workplace educator through the lens of practice, I am seeking out new connections between the field of human resource development, adult education and language pedagogy. This conceptual framework steers research on language advising in groups in the workplace, a novel focus. It facilitates the exploration of the pedagogical stances, ideal conditions, and spaces created to provoke transformative learning in the organisational context. In using these frameworks to inform methodological considerations, an attempt is made to understand how to support informal language learning without making it too structured. A consideration of learning conditions and barriers, and a learning culture based on relational knowing, allow the role of the language advisor in the context of adult learning in the workplace to be conceptualised in a potentially productive way.

Conclusion

This chapter links to the discussions on language anxiety in Chapter 2. Staff responsibility for legislative compliance is proposed as “a disorienting dilemma”, a dilemma which triggered the transformative learning process. The focus is on relational knowing, solidarity with others and recent trends on transformative learning in groups. A case is made for my own interpretation of transformative learning relevant to the action research element of the thesis. The mandated-minority setting is put forward as a unique setting with implications for how transformative learning might be fostered. How Mynard's framework of advising in language learning and Mezirow's theory of transformative learning influenced the research methodology will be addressed in the next chapter, Chapter 4. My knowledge interests and positionality will be dealt with again here also.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter is organised in six sections. The first section defends the choice of action research as the most appropriate research method for the research context and for the achievement of the research aims. A short review of the action research tradition is included here. The grounding of the work in a socio-constructivist framework is explained and how this synchronises with the conceptual framework put forward in Chapter 3 is demonstrated. The second section provides background detail regarding the research participants. Section 3 is the largest section of the chapter. It consists of an overview of the actions and the extensive data gathering and analysis procedures which took place between March 2010 and April 2011. Detail further to the overview of essentials that one would expect in a methodology chapter is included in order to present a clear picture of the early research context and represent the amount of data collected over the three phases of action research. Some discussion of the first implementation phase takes place in order to inform the reader of the direction and structure of the three findings and analysis chapters to follow. The fourth section of the chapter presents the procedures for validity put in place to establish the credibility of the study. The research values and principles, and ethical considerations are presented in Sections 5 and 6 respectively. Links are made to themes discussed in the literature review throughout the chapter to demonstrate how the methodology was informed by extensive reading. In summarising the main ingredients of the research, the research strategy and the instruments used are defended as those that offered the best yield for the kinds of questions I wanted to ask, and for the kinds of developments I wanted to promote.

Why Action Research?

An Interest in Change

Research participants attended two informal meetings in the 2009-2010 period, a year before the establishment of *An Lónra* and formal data gathering. They showed little understanding of the level of language skills necessary to carry out specific work-related tasks at these meetings. Their fears around dealing with native speakers of Irish and concerns with regard to legislative compliance, documented earlier in the thesis, prompted the decision to establish *An Lónra Tacaíochta Teanga*. The ‘diagnosis’ of the problem of anxiety in relation to legislative obligation and

language competency began in earnest when the group met formally for the first time on 3 March 2010. Reconnaissance activity in action research involves firstly describing and secondly explaining the facts of the situation (Elliott 1991, p. 73). Our aim was to decide what role *An Líonra* would play for the language learners and what McNiff, Lomax and Whitehead call “intentional action” might be planned (1996, p. 18). Some observations noted were that the ‘designated persons’ never met as a group; that they rarely, if ever, had Irish-medium conversations with each other, and therefore had no occasion to learn from one another. The need to create opportunities to interact with native speakers was promoted, although the positive influence of successful second language Irish speakers as role models, particularly those from their own area, was also highlighted. The theme of anxiety was raised formally: anxiety with regard to coming to *Seomra na Gaeilge*⁷; fear of responsibility for legislative compliance; anxiety regarding dealings with native speakers; and even fear of meeting me on campus and having to speak Irish! The importance of getting more of the campus ‘grassroots’ to support Irish language and OLA initiatives was endorsed. The need for specific Irish learning materials relating to their professional roles was also highlighted. The concept of language advising was introduced and it was explained that my role in the research initiative would be an advisory rather than a teaching role. This was new territory for these learners.

Relevance of the Action Research Approach to the Research Context

Reason and Bradbury (2001, p. xxiii) describe action research as a “family” of participative, experiential and action oriented research approaches. They suggest that there are many overlaps within this family, and various emphases on different aspects of the action research grouping in general. However, they all share the following particular features in common:

[...] action research is a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes... It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities

(Reason and Bradbury, 2001, p. 1).

Dealing as I am with action research in the organisational development and workplace learning context, it is of interest to draw on how the term was originally coined in the 1940s by Kurt

⁷ *Seomra na Gaeilge* is the dedicated Irish language social space in the Languages Building on the University campus.

Lewin, a social psychologist. Lewin drew on his experience investigating group relations in the organisational and change management context in the United States. He envisaged action research as a process which would allow change and allow groups to explore questions around their present situation, the dangers of that state of affairs and what they should do about it (Lewin, 1946, p. 201). To be successful, though, there has also to be a 'felt-need', an inner realisation by every individual that change is necessary. The model also emphasised the importance of the relationship of theory to practice. Critics of Lewin's theory of action research, according to Burnes (2004, p. 978), suggested that his approach assumed that organisations functioned in a stable way; that it was only appropriate for change projects which were small-scale; that politics and organisational power were not considered; and that it was driven by management and from the top-down. Many different traditions of action research have evolved in applied fields such as education, social work, public health, organisational development and international development since the 1940s. Herr and Anderson (2005, pp. 10-28) provide a practical overview of the "multiple traditions" of action research while Campbell and Groundwater-Smith (2010) present a good overview of action research in education. They begin with the practice as it was understood by Stenhouse and Elliott in UK, and developed then by Kemmis and Carr and McTaggart and Grundy in Australia. Their discussion of the work of Zeichner and Cochran-Smith and Lytle adds the US perspective. Manfra's (2009) exploration of the theoretical divide between practical and critical action research is also useful. The consideration by Gustavsen (1992) and Pålshaugen (1998) of the importance of guiding and encouraging dialogue in the action research tradition has been of particular relevance to the research in hand. The action research model considered most suitable for this dissertation is the Kemmis and McTaggart model of Participatory Action Research (PAR) (2000, 2005 and Kemmis, MacTaggart and Nixon, 2014). Interested as I am in how theory might inform my professional practice, and in how my practice might in turn inform theory, this model offered the best yield for the kinds of questions I wanted to ask and for the kinds of developments I wanted to promote.

Kemmis and McTaggart (2005, p. 280) put forward seven key features of action research that should be considered just as important as the self-reflective spiral of planning, acting and observing, reflecting, re-planning etc. In their view, participative action research is a social process; it is participatory; it is practical and collaborative; it is emancipatory; critical; reflexive; and lastly, it aims to transform both theory and practice. The relevance of these seven features to the research in hand will be demonstrated in the analysis and discussion chapters. Keen to

develop *Líonra* members' awareness of the importance of paying attention to their own feelings and social relationships as part of the L2 learning process, action research is conceptualised as a social process in this thesis. The Habermasian concepts of 'communicative action' and 'communicative space', dealt with in Chapter 3, are drawn on in the description of critical participatory action research and in the conditions to support it (Habermas 1984, 1996). This synchronised well with the conceptual framework relating to transformative learning in groups and also with the emphasis on dialogue in Mynard's framework of advising in language learning. Concentrating as I am on the role of *An Líonra Tacaíochta Teanga* facilitator and a definition of the role of language advisor, it is fitting that the role of the facilitator of PAR is problematised in the literature. An understanding of the facilitator as someone hoping to establish a collaborative initiative rather than someone merely offering technical guidance informed my own inquiry. Kemmis and McTaggart (2005, p. 319) do not look on people involved in collaborative PAR projects as a closed group with a set membership. They are understood as:

an open and inclusive network in which the facilitator can be a contributing co-participant, albeit with particular knowledge or expertise that can be of help to the group. Moreover, at different times, different participants in some groups can and do take the facilitator role in relation to different parts of the action being undertaken and in relation to the participatory action research process.

This approach lends itself well to the dialogue stage of transformative learning but also to the emphasis on social language learning strategies and on dialogue itself in the language advising context. I had originally decided to use *An Líonra* as the subject of a case-study, as my research related to context-bound knowledge. I decided, however that because I was interested in exploring and actively cultivating change and transformation in the organisational context that action research would be a more suitable methodology. I felt that I would remain something of a detached outsider in a case-study approach. Blichfeldt and Andersen, (2006) suggest that cooperation between the researcher and the participants seems more important to the success of an action research endeavour than it is for case-study research. A greater role is played by the participants in defining the issues to be addressed, while case-study research depends more on the participants as sources of evidence. It was the collaborative nature of PAR and my role as interventionist which were the best fit.

Knowledge Interests and Positionality

Maguire (2002, p. 263) warns of the dangers of action research “being co-opted into a depoliticized tool for improving practice” with little or no critical understanding of power structures and relations. Somekh and Zeichner (2009, p. 8) suggest that by locating action research within the framework of critical theory, action research became “a means of realising the Habermasian ideal of democratizing the power differentials in social groups and institutions”. My motivation at the outset was to better understand and improve my practice supporting the mandated learning of Irish as a minority language in the workplace. Herr and Anderson (2005, p. 18) note the criticism that action research in education, as a mode of professional development and data-based decision making, in particular, often becomes a form of domestication rather than empowerment. Conscious of this, I do not neglect the political and ideological considerations of my research context, but ideology critique was not my original primary focus or orientation.

This research draws on both interpretivist-constructivist and transformative-critical paradigms. Having drawn largely on theories of adult education and socio-cultural theories of language learning in my literature review, I subsequently grounded my action research in a socio-constructivist framework. How this aided the purposes of the research will be addressed briefly now and the understanding of socio-constructivism put forward in Chapter 3 will be reiterated. While I believe that it is possible for learning to occur in many ways, a basic assumption of a social constructivist framework, as applied to my research context, is that learning is an interactive and social process. Fosnot (1996, p. 30) makes clear that social constructivism as an educational theory “construes learning as an interpretive, recursive, building process by active learners interacting with the physical and social world”. This explanation lends itself well to the emphasis on learning how to learn from others, and on individual learning through processes of collaboration in groups, both on and off the University campus. In his application of constructivism to research, Schwandt (2000, p. 197) puts forward that we “invent concepts, models and schemes to make sense of experience, and we continually test and modify these constructions in light of new experiences”. My understanding of my own role as facilitator in the process of knowledge creation was open to new influences at all stages of the action research project but in a judicious and sensitive way. This was done against the backdrop of shared understandings and practices of *An Léonra* members without losing sight of the clearly conceived aims of the research. Creswell (2003, p. 8) suggests that the interpretivist-constructivist researcher

relies on the participants' views of the situation being investigated. The impact of their experiences and their backgrounds on the research is acknowledged. Steyaert and Bouwen (2004, p. 141) promote social constructivism to guide qualitative research in the group context as relational qualities, multiplicities of social realities, and various perspectives are central to the theory. Social reality is “continuously in-the-making” as a negotiation relationship among the actors is constant. The presuppositions and limitations of the socio-constructivist paradigm were interrogated briefly in Chapter 3. The choice of paradigm stands up to scrutiny in this thesis. It lends itself to PAR; learning for transformation; dialogue in language learning; the nurturing of relational knowing; constant group reflexivity; and a purposeful focus on always building on previous experience of occasions for language practice.

Creswell (2003, pp. 9-10) notes that social justice transformative researchers consider that politics and a political agenda must be intertwined with the inquiry and must contain an action agenda for transformation “that may change the lives of the participants, the institutions in which individuals work or live, and the researcher’s life”. Working within a transformational framework, I set out to increase linguistic ability and self-confidence as distinct from merely transforming views and attitudes. However, as compliance by its nature tends to diminish choice, I do not lose sight of the social justice perspective or the emancipatory agenda. Through leading new initiatives in a different way, I counteract oppression and promote the consideration of a language support framework. These new structures are presented as an alternative to the context before research commenced. This, as noted in Chapter 3, is more of an occupational than a political version of transformation, linked to what had to change because of the mandated situation in the professional context of research participants.

It took some time to figure out the nuances of how I would position myself, with regard to the University as both my workplace and research setting, and as regards my research participants in turn. As I played a key pedagogical leadership role and as I was largely responsible for the planning the direction of the project, I cannot be considered as a researcher-as-investigating-outsider. Herr and Anderson (2005, p. 31) present six positions on an insider to outsider continuum of positionality in action research as follows: (1) insider; (2) insider in collaboration with other insiders; (3) insider(s) in collaboration with outsider(s); (4) reciprocal collaboration i.e. insider-outsider teams; (5) outsider(s) in collaboration with insider(s); and (6) outsider(s) study insider(s). The second position on the scale views the researcher as insider in

collaboration with other insiders, contributing to “knowledge base, improved/critiqued practice and professional/organisational transformation”. Although, I positioned myself here I was always keen to interact with “outsiders”, external contacts and groups as is necessary and typical of PAR (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2005 p. 299).

I was also always conscious of power relations and of *Líonra* members as ‘insiders’, considering me as an expert in the Irish language with no issue with language anxiety. While continuously problematising the role of facilitator, the collective was always promoted by considering *An Líonra* members as key stakeholders in the research rather focusing on me as practitioner. I grappled with issues around the participative process and what ‘participative’ action research might actually mean in my research context. As I was not working in a wholly transformative paradigm, I did not use a co-operative inquiry approach (Heron, 1996; Reason and Heron, 1995; Oates, 2002). As I did not envisage research participants writing up the research as co-authors with me, they were not viewed as ‘researchers’ or ‘co-researchers’ in terms of their involvement in the design and maintenance of the research process. The research is considered participatory in the sense that *Líonra* members, including myself, were doing action research ‘on’ ourselves, both individually and collectively. It was not research done “on” others (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2005, p. 282). The consideration by Ó Laoire (2014, p. 738) of the subaltern in action research is useful here. The subaltern is frequently best understood in terms of, and in relation to, the local space or local site which the researcher and participants “physically, emotionally and spiritually inhabit”. Ó Laoire promotes the need to allow research participants contribute not only in a site where he or she can have a voice but in a place where he or she can have agency and guide the research in a novel or unanticipated way. Their “negotiations and resistance in the local site they inhabit”, as well as their analysis of the research agenda can then help the researcher understand the possibilities for action presented in the research context. Such a vision of possibility was integral to the action research in the study in hand.

The Research Participants

Twenty-five members of staff were invited to participate in *An Líonra Tacaíochta Teanga* in March 2010. These were the University's designated Irish language contacts, or staff from the administrative departments targeted in the University's language scheme, who had attended language improvement programmes. Sixteen replies were received, with fifteen staff members expressing willingness to be research participants. Others who didn't reply to the survey attended the first *Líonra* meeting in March 2010. Seven members of staff were involved consistently in the research project: Sailí, Cathal, Eoghan, Doireann, Aisling, Oisín and Sibéal are the pseudonyms used in references to them. These seven were chosen as interviewees. Eight others referred to under the pseudonyms Daithí, Móirín, Meidhbhín, Gearóid, Eithne, Éabha, Caoimhe and Ailín, were involved periodically. Four of the participants, Gearóid, Móirín, Sailí and Oisín, were not designated contacts for Irish language services at the University. They participated in an Irish language programme at Intermediate Level (B1)⁸ during the period of research, academic year 2010-2011. They had agreed to represent their departments in this language learning programme with a view to being involved in Irish-medium service provision in the future. However, they had no such obligation during the period of the research project. Eleven of the fifteen participants were designated contacts for Irish-medium queries in their administrative areas. Eight of these were independent speakers at Upper Intermediate level (B2). Two of the group, Meidhbhín and Daithí, had an Intermediate proficiency level in speaking (B1), and one *Líonra* member, Ailín, was a Basic Speaker with Elementary Level proficiency (A2). Three of the fifteen research participants, Oisín, Móirín and Meidhbhín, had no previous experience of Irish in the naturalistic context of *An Ghaeltacht*. A general profile of the research participants is available in Table 1 (pp. xiv-xv).

The research took place on a large university campus. Research participants did not know each other particularly well although some had attended the same Irish classes and some were involved in other campus community initiatives together. They were at a range of administrative grades in University administration. A dedicated Irish language social space, *Seomra na Gaeilge*, was launched on campus in 2009 for the first time. *Líonra* meetings took place here. Remarkably, many of the group had not previously attended advertised events at this venue because of their perception that their language skills were inadequate (CA, p. 37). Following the March 2010

⁸ See footnote 4.

meeting two language audits were designed and completed; the first was a general language learning needs analysis and the second was related to the specific theme of Irish in the workplace (See Appendix B, p. 197). The latter involved participants completing a self-assessment of their language skills under the headings reading, writing, listening and speaking according to the competency levels of the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE). Participants chose from a series of statements of proficiency associated with specific work-related tasks. These levels are consistent with the levels of the Common European Framework described earlier.

Overview of Research Stages, Data Collection & Analysis

The three research cycles are explained in detail now. From a practical perspective the data collection and analysis process is based on a spiral of self-reflective cycles of planning, acting, observing, reflecting and re-planning. A variety of data collection instruments were used in order to collect detailed and rich information relating to the project. These are summarised in Table 2 of the thesis (p. 61). Group methods of organisational analysis, observations, and semi-structured interviews will be discussed in more detail at the end of this section as they were the main instruments used.

The First Cycle: An Bóthar Foghlama

The first action research cycle began formally in May and continued through to October 2010. The aims of this initial phase were to launch learners on their learning journey, to introduce them to the concept of autonomy in language learning and to encourage group cohesion. The actions agreed during this cycle of the programme are outlined below. Five group language advising sessions were held during this period.

Action: One-to-One Consultations

These took place during the period May-July 2010. Six of the seven key research participants attended consultations as did four other members of *An Líonra*. Following direction from personnel at the Language Support Unit at the University where I work, I followed the format for consultations put forward by Voller and Lawson (2004) at the Centre for Applied English Studies at the University of Hong Kong. An overview of their approach is detailed on the web at <http://ec.hku.hk/1to1/>. The goals of each learner, ways of planning suitable study times, vetting

resources and activities, and common useful language learning strategies were discussed at the private consultations. Informed by the discussion of Thornton (2012, p. 80); Gremmo (1995), and Riley (2003) each participant was given a choice to conduct the conversation in their L1 or in Irish as their target language. Further to the written language audit, these meetings allowed me to assess the oral skills of those participants who chose to consult with me in Irish. My log of decisions and observations are available in the Case Archive (CA, pp. 21-25). I kept this record with the intention of drawing on these as discussion triggers at subsequent group advising sessions.

Action: Reflection on Language Learning

Although the reflective element of the learning opportunity is essential for learning to occur (Jonassen, 1996; Moon, 1999, in Mynard 2011, p. 295), researching whether learners are reflecting on their learning is challenging as much of the reflection is internal. Keen to explore the potential of mobile devices in language learning, I gave each member of *An Léonra* an Mp3 player at the one-to-one consultations. I promoted the slogan “learning on demand, learner in command” as a catch phrase for the group (King and Heuer, 2007). I suggested that the devices might be used for receptive independent work such as downloading Irish language podcasts and listening materials from the internet. The voice recorder facility was recommended for more active work such as recording themselves reading, recording conversations and reflections. I encouraged participants to keep a log of their spoken skills throughout the project for the purpose of comparison later. I also recommended that they might begin recording reflective comments about their progress in their personal language learning plans agreed at the consultations. Murphy (2008a, p. 199) notes that the term ‘learning log’ is generally used to refer to “a regular record of language learning or learning-related activity which is kept by the learner together with some form of review of that activity in order to inform future action”. The creation of audio files was encouraged as an alternative to written language learning diaries, a format which received little group support at the May 2010 group language advising session (CA, pp. 30-32). Elliott (1991, p. 77), in a discussion on the compulsory collection of diary entries in the context of action research in the classroom, suggests that one way to ensure research participant control is to hold periodic general evaluation sessions where participants are given a chance to draw on their reflections to support the views expressed. As it was felt that the submission of compulsory diaries would add a layer of surveillance in a support initiative seeking to address the pressure of compliance, the participants

were not asked to share these formally with me. They took charge of the disclosure of ‘evidence’ in the open discussion in the group advising sessions.

Action: Increased Language Support through Sulis Site

We agreed that we would address issues around language anxiety by working on improving language proficiency. I presented my ideas for the content of a language support space on Sulis, the content learning management system of the University, at the May 2010 meeting. I anticipated that participant interactions on this site would be a key aspect of my data collection. The site was established with three main goals in mind. Firstly, it was launched as a resource site where Irish language materials relevant to the professional and personal interests of participants would be posted. Secondly, I aimed explicitly to investigate the potential for online collaboration to enhance face-to-face discussion and the group’s sense of community. Wennergren and Rönnerman (2006, p. 562) suggest that physical meetings ensure that web dialogue is more enriching and I looked forward to exploring this. I was aware that it would take some time for participants to build up the courage to contribute to the discussion forum. Thirdly, the flexibility and convenience of access to the site from one’s office desk related well to the group’s interest in investigating ways of fitting language learning opportunities into work routines.

Some screenshots from the Sulis site are included in Appendix C (p. 202) to help explain the layout and the timeline of the site. I used listening materials created at *Aonad na Gaeilge* for the “Irish in the Workplace” suite of modules on the Diploma in Irish programme. Other than those, the majority of Sulis resources were new materials designed by me for the group. Gremmo and Riley (1995, p. 160) in a general discussion on self-access language learning materials suggest that ideally a range of both pedagogical and authentic materials should be made available to learners. Language exercises were graded and posted according to language level. I planned to add folders for language awareness and cultural awareness but was reluctant to overload the participants with further categories initially. Materials and entries were filed in nine distinctive folders namely: pronunciation exercises; writing exercises; listening exercises; language descriptors; learner diary; reading; podcasts; tasks; and communication procedures. The main Sulis tools used initially were the announcement and discussion forum. Agreed action items from workshops of *An Léonra* were posted as ‘announcements’ (CA, pp. 357-363). This allowed me keep a log of decisions made as well as keeping members unable to attend meetings up to date. One of the requests made by

participants when I presented the Sulis site was that they would get feedback on their written work. I was interested in exploring ways of doing this collaboratively through the wiki tool rather than taking on the role of language tutor myself. This initiative was explored at the June 2010 meeting. The Sulis aspect of the action research project was very time consuming, mainly due to the lack of materials available on the theme of Irish in the workplace and the lack of reflective tools targeting language improvement in this legislative context.

Action: Awareness Raising through An Líonra Blog

An Líonra Tacaíochta blog was launched in May 2010. The blog was created as a forum to provoke discussion and reflection. Issues such as language learning strategies, language rights, what is meant by a quality Irish-medium service, exploring language skills, language anxiety, the importance of an active offer of services, and so forth, were explored. Melrose (2001, p. 172) suggests that discussing and interpreting applicable previous research is an important part of an action research project as it builds participant understanding. Jarvis (1999, p. 49), commenting on using fiction to foster transformative learning, found that “literary texts offer scope for examining and validating experience, but also for challenging the way experience is constructed and understood”. Entries were made on the following topics during the first research cycle: *An tÁbhar Blagadóireachta*⁹; *Alt mar gheall ar Sheinnteoírí Mp3*¹⁰; ‘Lost in Translation, a Life in a New Language’; and ‘The English Corner in China’. Copies of these articles as they appeared on the blog are available in the appendices (Appendix D, p. 207). Aware that language competency might limit the participants’ ability to express wholly what they wished to communicate, and that I might be creating new anxiety issues by requesting comments in Irish, comments on articles in English or in Irish were welcomed. A glossary was included with the articles to cater for the various language competencies of *Líonra* members. In an effort to make the blog separate from Sulis and independent of the University’s learning management system, I chose to have the blog hosted externally on blogger.com. The web format for this was more attractive than using the blog tool on the Sulis site. Mynard (2011, p. 299) advocates that this kind of “blog customization” leads to a sense of ownership and to an increase in motivation. I anticipated that it might encourage the group to create a new habit of reading other Irish-medium blogs as language practice also.

⁹ The blog content

¹⁰ An article on using Mp3 players (in language learning)

Action: Group Language Advising Workshops

The five group language advising sessions which took place during the period May-September 2010 were workshops devoted to an exploration of language learning and of language anxiety in the workplace context. The account given here is more extensive than might normally be included in a methodology chapter to give the reader a sense of the breadth of the topics covered in the data, and the scope of the language advising group session for data collection, fact-finding and monitoring opportunities. The aim of group cohesion was emphasised from the outset with pair and small group work activities promoted. Audio recordings of these sessions were made and transcripts are available in the Case Archive (CA, pp. 27-74). The following topics were explored at the May and June meetings: Making Irish part of your daily routine, (20 May 2010); reflecting on your language learning; tips for using Mp3 players in language learning; fitting language learning into working life; and the potential of the wiki tool for language practice (24 June 2010). This latter meeting was held in a computer laboratory in order to address the group's technical support needs with regard to registering on the learning management site and blog and using the Mp3 devices with personal computers. Ways to improve the receptive language skills, listening and reading were explored at the meetings on 29 July 2010 and 13 September 2010. A practical session on the design of active listening exercises using TG4, the Irish language television station, as a resource, was facilitated in July. Guiding questions for reflection on the effectiveness of various language learning habits and strategies were discussed here also. The September meeting focused on types of reading (i.e. skimming; scanning; intensive; and extensive), vocabulary acquisition, and consolidation strategies. The West Kerry dialect was explored also with a view to preparing participants for the proposed *Gaeltacht* trip. Examples of material and correspondence relating to action items at these five workshops are available in Appendix E (p. 228). Actions were discussed, reviewed and reflected on an on-going basis. I recorded my own observations after each meeting, noting any particular comments relevant to specific research questions and sub-questions, and any other information of relevance. These are a useful log of what we saw, what we sought to find out and interpret, and what we set out to change. Discussions as to whether or not an intervention had been successful and what ongoing monitoring needed to be done took place at each meeting. A meeting organised by *An Líonra* independent of me on 16 September 2010 marked a clear end to Research Cycle 1. Fact-finding and analysis at this meeting mark this reconnaissance stage prior to the commencement of Cycle 2.

The Second Cycle: Tearmann, a Gaeltacht-Based Programme

The cycle included a three-day language placement off-site in the West Kerry *Gaeltacht* and a short reflective period in its aftermath in October 2010. The benefits of a *Gaeltacht*-based programme had been considered at the March 2010 meeting. Discussions subsequently began with the Staff Learning and Development Office of the University's Human Resources Department regarding the feasibility of releasing staff to attend a programme off-campus during work hours. After much deliberation, it was agreed that staff would be allowed three days to attend a language improvement and awareness programme in the *Corca Dhuibhne Gaeltacht* from 4-6 October 2010. The off-campus *Gaeltacht* venue was considered as a temporary 'refuge' away from University grounds where critical reflection on new language experiences in a new environment might lead to new insights. The discussion of Wittman et al. (2008, p. 209) regarding a writers' retreat, supports this idea that the learning environment for transformative learning should be carefully chosen.

Choosing a setting that allows for the suspension of everyday roles and responsibilities may provide members of any group the energy for the focused and critical self-reflection necessary for transformative learning. Settings that provide space and time for both individual self-reflection and group dialogue enable individuals to engage in learning that extends beyond their existing experiences and opinions.

Documentation relating specifically to the *Gaeltacht* programme is available in Appendix F (p. 230). This was the first programme of its kind to be supported by the University's Executive. Much was made of the recognition by the institution of the efforts of these personnel to be involved in the provision of a quality Irish-medium service at the University. It was a key stage in the research project. Following much liaison with *Oidbreacht Chorca Dhuibhne*, a *Gaeltacht*-based company with a long tradition of providing Irish language programmes for adults, the language awareness and language improvement programme was designed. Language accuracy and conversation workshops were offered at two levels, one catering for a small group at A2-B1 level and the other offered at B2 level. Social, linguistic and cultural learning outcomes were agreed for the programme (See Appendix F, p. 231). It was considered that it would be the first time that participants might address issues of language anxiety. I anticipated that the facilitation of discussion by *Gaeltacht* speakers off-campus might allow opportunities for comments and observations from the research participants on these issues that might not be forthcoming if I, as an 'insider', acted as a moderator on campus.

Participants were asked to set their own learning targets for the programme in advance and to spend time during the three days to reflect on what direction *An Líonra Tacaíochta Teanga* might take after the short immersion experience. A diary template, *Dialann Ghaeltachta* was circulated beforehand to direct the participants regarding areas of reflection (Appendix G, p. 233). Pavlenko (1998, p. 9) notes that bilingual writers often develop their skills in their second language through writing and through diary writing in particular. She suggests this private activity in a “public language” allows the new second language self to gradually emerge. The diary therefore had a function other than mere data collection. However, the main emphasis in this second cycle was on the productive skill of speaking. Participants prepared a short oral presentation on their professional roles at the University for the introductory session. Sixteen members of *An Líonra* attended the trip. They were assigned language partners for the duration of the course with the explicit aim to have those with lower language competency supported by those with higher proficiency in the group. The programme was designed so that there would be opportunities to have regular interactions with native speakers in the local community (See Appendix F, p. 232).

Among the data collection instruments were my own personal observations and recordings of two language awareness sessions facilitated by Clodagh and Róisín, *Gaeltacht* tutors (CA, pp. 113-146). I presented my evaluation of the three day programme to Éadaoin, as critical friend, at a meeting in *Potadóireacht na Caolóige* on the final morning. This informed my planning for the closing session. The critical reflection of the group was audio-recorded at the final open forum, which is considered both a reconnaissance and a validation meeting (CA, pp. 147-160 and CD).¹¹ The themes of the *Dialann Ghaeltachta* were discussed at this reflective session; some were completed on site while others were received by email on returning to campus. An independent discussion among critical friends, which took place while I was facilitating the final feedback session, was also recorded. This particular research strategy is explained in detail, and justified, in the section on peer debriefing and validation structures and strategies below.

¹¹ The sound file in the Case Archive will open with VLC Media Player. Note that this file is made available for the purposes of the assessment of research rigour by a selective audience only.

The Third Cycle: An Ghaeilge san Ionad Oibre

This cycle took place during the period November 2010-April 2011. Morris (2003, pp. 204-216) presents the image of language learners needing to cross the bridge from being learners to language users. My engagement with this notion during my literature review prompted the application of the idea to my research context and to the use of Irish in the workplace in particular. The creation of opportunities for language use, an active offer of Irish-medium services available at the University, and the use of indirect language learning strategies were emphasised in the final cycle. Little (1996, p. 209) speaks of the “disjunction” that often arises between formal language learning and “communicative language use”. As project facilitator, I aimed in this research phase to explore the potential for *Líonra* members to become active speakers of Irish in their professional context and evidence of this will count as a measure of the success of initiatives. Opportunities for Irish language practice or minority language use on the University campus largely had to be created by *An Líonra* members themselves. Cycle 3 built on the *Gaeltacht* experience and the focus on the productive language skills of speaking and writing continued. *Líonra* members decided early in the cycle to increase the use of the discussion and wiki tools on the Sulis site. One formal review meeting took place during the November-December period.

Communication Procedures

Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga created more than a little flurry of excitement when its compliance officer contacted the institution in late October 2010 to say that they would be monitoring compliance with commitments made in the 2006-2009 Language Scheme. They communicated their plan to make test calls to the designated Irish language contacts before the end of December 2010 (See Appendix G, p. 238). Such unexpected developments became built into the action research strategy. This kind of flexibility in the research procedure allowed for a more authentic investigation of language improvement and strategies to cope with language anxiety. I anticipated that it would lead to a more focused and structured phase of language practice. With the increased challenge, *Líonra* members would have to engage more intimately in critical discourse to shape their identities as language learners in the professional context. Data gathering took place at information workshops which were organised in conjunction with the Office of the Corporate Secretary, the office with responsibility for legislative compliance at the University. The first workshop targeted members of *An Líonra* as designated contacts, and the second, line managers

from the targeted administrative areas (CA, pp. 213-233). Causes of anxiety and some strategies to deal with anxiety were dealt with explicitly at the *Líonra* meeting. We agreed that I would arrange to have an independent person from outside of the University make a practice call to each of the designated contacts. These calls were made in early November 2010 and constructive feedback was given to participants (CA, p. 339). I published three blog articles during this final phase to trigger reflection on issues of anxiety arising from the monitoring calls and to encourage personal reflection on social strategies in language learning. The articles were: *A Thuilleadh Machnaimh faoin bhFoghlaim*¹²; “Encouraging Yourself, Making Positive Statements”; and “Seeking Language Practice Opportunities” (See Appendix D, p. 221). Queries regarding the University’s procedures for dealing with communication through Irish (2010) were addressed at both information sessions (Appendix H, p. 240). In my role as *Stiúrthóir na Gaeilge* at the University, I had been involved in the drafting of these procedures earlier in the year. A Desktop Card with eighty supporting sound files of common phrases used in campus administration had also been created by my office. These draw largely on a Welsh model at Bangor University in Wales (See Appendix H, p. 242). The sound files were added to the *Líonra* Sulis site and members were encouraged to download them to their Mp3s for use in pronunciation practice (See Appendix C, p. 203).

Members of *An Líonra* took responsibility for raising awareness of the Institution’s communication procedures in their respective departments and offices. The research spirals of planning, action, reflection at *Líonra* meetings in October and November 2010 highlighted the challenges around the lack of relevance of Irish in the daily work routines of participants. Specific targets had been outlined in the University’s Language Scheme regarding the provision of an active offer of bilingual services. The term is used to describe providing “clients” with a language choice, Irish or English in this case, at the first available opportunity. With telephone reception, for example, the active offer of service in both official languages means using a bilingual greeting, followed by the provision of service in the language chosen by the “customer”. In order to have a more authentic focus for Irish in their professional roles, the group began working on ideas on how they might make an active offer of services in late November 2010. One idea put forward was that they would make a group promotional podcast or video outlining the services offered in the various departments. We decided that a folder for ‘tasks’ would be created on Sulis and that suggestions would be explored there (Appendix Q, p. 274). Agreed criteria to be considered in

¹² More Reflection on Learning.

designing these tasks were: that they would involve a social focus; relate to an active offer of services; be collaborative in effort; and encourage reflection on progress (CA, p. 242).

Cúpla Ceist, a Video Initiative

A break in *Líonra* meetings took place during the Christmas 2010 and New Year 2011 period. Sensing a need to boost energy again, I discussed with colleagues ways to recreate the enthusiasm that had followed the *Gaeltacht* visit and the ‘test’ phone calls. The success of involving ‘outsiders’ as facilitators in the *Gaeltacht* and in the mock monitoring calls strengthened the rationale and interest in involving critical friends in this final phase of the project also. Their role in my research strategy is discussed in further detail in the section on research validation and peer debriefing below. Ideas for a video project were deliberated on at length and the *Cúpla Ceist* initiative, the high point of the research project, was designed. This was an Irish-medium fun interview series profiling working life on campus. Research participants collaboratively prepared for interviews which were video-recorded and published online as part of a campus-wide language promotion initiative. Members of University staff other than those involved as research participants became involved in the project also. Four people participated in the actual filming and editing of the video files, Ruairí, Étaín and two University students on work experience. These were all proficient Irish speakers. The nine videos used in the research are 2-4 minutes in duration and a common template is used in each. The video files are attached as an appendix to the thesis (Appendix I, DVD). The introduction to each video clip contains a line such as *Táim sásta gnó a dbéanamh trí Ghaeilge san Ollscoil*¹³. Video is consistently used as a method to gather qualitative data to “show” changes in attitudes and interactions etc. The visual data in the research in hand is used as a monitoring and evaluation tool and as evidence of the change in language confidence apparent in research participants. Video as validation is discussed further in the section on the credibility of the study below. Comprehensive data relating to this final element of the research phase is available in the Case Archive. This includes electronic correspondence, comments made on the Sulis discussion forum, correspondence from the project co-ordinator, and *Líonra* meeting transcripts (CA pp. 327-339).

¹³ I am willing to do business through Irish at the University.

PREPARATORY PHASE: March-May 2010

Two needs analysis surveys

Nine 1-1 consultations

Observations

CYCLE 1: May-3 October 2010

Transcripts of five group language advising sessions with *An Líonra Tacaíochta Teanga*

Data from the Sulis support site

Data from *An Líonra Tacaíochta Teanga blog*

Electronic correspondence

Observations

CYCLE 2: 4-31 October 2010

Electronic correspondence

Transcriptions of two language awareness workshops

Transcription of open forum & validation meeting

Eight *Gaeltacht* diaries of research participants

Transcript of *An Líonra* meeting, 21 October 2010

Observations

CYCLE 3: November 2010-April 2011

Transcript of *An Líonra* meeting, 22 November 2010

Transcript of *Cúpla Ceist* planning meeting

Transcript of *Cúpla Ceist* review meeting

Data from the Sulis support site

Data from *An Líonra Tacaíochta Teanga* blog

Electronic correspondence

Written observations of ‘cold caller’

Data from short questionnaire on learning plans

Transcripts of meetings with critical friends

Nine *Cúpla Ceist* videos

Seven semi-structured individual interviews

Observations

Table 2: Overview of the Data Gathering Instruments¹⁴

¹⁴ For a more comprehensive overview, see a copy of the Table of Contents from the Case Archive in the appendices (Appendix A. p. 191).

Research Strategy for Group and Individual Context

Audio-Recordings and Observations of Group Interaction

The transcripts and audio recordings of the group language advising sessions, workshops and meetings are an authentic record of each step of the action research project. They structure the representation of ‘being there’ in the Case Archive. Shorter follow-up conversations were not recorded but were written-up in my observations file instead. Electronic messages from participants were saved and filed in data sub-folders also. Steyaert and Bouwen (2004, p. 141) discuss social research relating to small group contexts. Some groups are formed to bring about change. This was the case in the establishment of *An Líonra Tacaíochta Teanga*, a group created for intervention purposes. These groups are referred to as “created” group contexts while groups which already exist, such as committees or teams in the work context, are considered “natural” groups. The interrogation of the purpose of the researcher, convenor or coordinator of these groups by Steyaert and Bouwen (2004, p. 142) and their promotion of a specification of group characteristics is useful. My research focused on my changing role and the development of *An Líonra* throughout the data gathering, processing and interpretation. The social constructivist view facilitated this by allowing a range of different opinions and emotions relating to mandatory Irish to be captured on the same issue in the same session. Regular gatherings of the group allowed formal opportunities to observe the changing dynamics of *An Líonra* and the dynamics between various perspectives discernible in the various action research interventions. The data gathering, processing and interpretation is looked on as that related to *An Líonra Tacaíochta Teanga* as a “created group” in Cycles 1 and 2, and a “natural group” in Cycle 3.

Observations relating to the project and to my research questions were noted throughout the research project. Lankshear and Knobel (2004, p. 35) state that observations emphasise collecting data in real life, everyday contexts. Observations are typically used in action research and data recorded through journaling, field notes, check lists, and video. My observations were semi-structured and I used them to collect data which would shed light on the general agenda of research issues. This was done in a less resolute and less systematic way than a highly-structured observation. Rather than merely reporting cold facts of the situation, I was interested in capturing what it was like to actually be a participant. Observations are categorised in two sections. Firstly, observations which include notes made *in situ*, during one-to-one consultations, and during the *Gaeltacht*-based language awareness sessions in Cycle 2, for example. Secondly, they include

expanded notes. These are notes which were made immediately after individual or group discussion, after *Líonra* workshops or after meetings with critical friends during the period of research. These observations are dated and filed in the Case Archive. Semi-structured journal notes organised according to various and evolving research questions are also included in these expanded notes. A record of continuing analysis is demonstrated in these notes. I attempted to ensure this systematisation in my observations in order to increase their reliability. Observations carry the risk of bias regarding issues such as the selective attention, selective data entry, or selective memory of the researcher, for instance (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 410; Moyles 2002, p. 179; Shaughnessy et al., 2003, pp. 116-7). As action research generally involves a multi-method approach, observations were not, as has been shown, used on their own. They were used along with the meeting and workshop audio recordings and transcripts, and with interview data to ensure that reliable inferences are derived from dependable data.

Semi-Structured Interviews

I planned originally to use focus groups instead of semi-structured interviews in Research Cycle 3. However, in order to investigate the personal journey of the participants in a more detailed way, I made the decision to conduct seven individual interviews. Interview questions broadly related to four specific themes of the research project and literature: language improvement; language anxiety; relational knowing; and the dual role of language advisor and *Líonra* coordinator. Some individual comments made by research participants during the research initiatives were explored further also. Herr and Anderson (2005, p. 61) suggest that because of the “unique positionality of action researcher” further measures to interviews are sometimes necessary to ensure the reliability of the research. Cognisant of interviews as public performances and that I may have been hearing what participants thought I would like to hear, the interviews were part of a concerted effort to triangulate methods and data sources. Individual experiences recounted in the interviews were used in tandem with data from Sulis on the VLE, group methods data, and data from the comprehensive list of data gathering instruments presented in Table 2 (p. 61). DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006, p. 318) note some of the difficulties with transcribing audio-recorded interviews and capturing the spoken word in text. To ensure exactness of the audio and written versions, I listened to the audio files while reading the transcribed versions in order to ensure precision in my interpretation. A further challenge with the interviews in this research is the standard of Irish of the participants. They were given a choice to answer questions in English or

in Irish to ensure that language competency would not impose restrictions on how experiences were being recounted. While the choice of Irish as the language of interview for all seven might, on the one hand, demonstrate a new confidence in the language at the end of the three research cycles, the standard of Irish and frequent inaccuracies made transcription challenging. It should be noted that [sic] is only employed for extracts used in the text of the thesis itself. Due to the volume of inaccuracies, it is not employed consistently throughout the data archive. Quotations which have been translated from Irish to English are tagged as ‘translation’. A footnote system is used throughout the thesis to provide English translations of Irish words used in the text.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was ongoing throughout the data gathering process. Data was organised according to the various collection instruments in each research cycle initially. It was sorted in two broad categories, data showing my role and learning as facilitator of *An Léonra* and language advisor, and data relating to the actions and learning of research participants. The categories were refined then according to the type of data collection instruments such as blog comments, conversations with critical friends and so forth, under these two themes. As the number of participants was small, the data was organised by issue rather than by person to ensure greater anonymity. With a view to easing the process of structuring and organising texts for analysis, I used the qualitative data analysis software MAXqda initially. However, I found the textual process of coding such large volumes of bilingual data both unwieldy and overly mechanical. The issues around the fluency and accuracy of the research participants in Irish, mentioned above, also influenced the decision to abandon the computer package so that I could be in contact with the data in a more ‘hands-on’ way.

The Case Archive, a separate volume containing supplementary material, is not made available for public access. More pertinent evidence is available in the Case File at the end of this main volume. Guided by Taylor and Gibbs (2010) table of what might be coded, I looked initially at behaviours, events, activities, states, strategies, meanings, participation, relationships, conditions, consequences, settings, and reflexivity. Codes annotated and labelled in preliminary analysis of data regarding *Léonra* members were: language support requirements; language anxiety; personal learning plans in group initiative; time constraints; and getting to know each other. Early data codes relating to my own role were language advising strategies; reflection on language

learning and dialogue; sharing of strategies and group development; relieving anxiety; technology and time; social presence; monitoring; and reviewing. The categories for analysis were constructed along the way. These were reviewed in the group setting at the language advising sessions, workshops and meetings, and privately also, in order to draw some relative generalisations relating to the specific research questions. The categories became clearer after Research Cycle 2 with the themes of camaraderie, relational knowing, and critical friends gaining significance then. Final analysis was guided by Mynard's Dialogue, Tools and Context Model. The focus is on my own contextual practices and those of *Líonra* members at various stages of the research process, and episodes of learning are differentiated from episodes of action. Data analysis was driven by the themes of the literature review and conceptual framework, and the literature review in turn was extended during the ongoing interpretation of data. How the mandated and minority-language setting affected what was happening was a key concern. Data interpretation was led by an interest in the personal, social and cultural contexts of learning throughout the three research cycles and the complexity of these. Some new concepts are borrowed from other disciplines and introduced in the data review and discussion in Chapter 8. These help sharpen the research focus on spatial practices in language learning and on transformative learning in the organisational context. The application, in the discussion, of the concepts of 'safe house', 'cultural architect', 'shared mental model', and 'white space' help illuminate the complexities of supporting minority and mandated language learning in the workplace.

Credibility of Study: Validation Structures and Strategies

Melrose (2001, pp. 168-69) suggests that rigorous action research uses appropriate methods of collecting data during the action and observations phases of the cycle. This means that methods are:

suitable for the underlying critical research paradigm and the particular situation, negotiated with the research group rather than imposed; inclusive, involving, and informing for those supplying the data; practical, likely to result in new knowledge about the practice area; and systematic and sustained rather than impulsive and haphazard.

This discussion of rigour informed my own approach. Examples of the negotiation of such methods with research participants are given in Chapters 5-7. Various models have been put forward purporting diverse criteria for rigorous action research. The Scandinavian action

researchers working in the field of organisational development (Gustavsen 1998a, 1998b; Pålshaugen 1998), mentioned earlier, reject the superiority of theory generation in research in favour of practical outcomes as the main criterion. The triggering of the process of change and improvement is considered more important. I purport that the most important criteria for assessing the fruitfulness or otherwise of action research are those that assess the kinds of changes that came about, and the extent of such changes. However, as I am using the Kemmis and McTaggart model (2005, p. 280) of PAR, I am interested in theory generation and in how my practice might be improved through the application of new theoretical underpinnings. The discussion to follow regarding the validity procedures used to strengthen the credibility of this work has been informed by the themes put forward by Creswell and Miller (2000, p. 126). They present three proposed lenses for validating studies: the lens of the researcher; the lens of the study participants, and the lens of those external to the study within three separate paradigms of “qualitative” research. A discussion of research paradigms in relation to the research in hand has been given above. The procedures for ensuring validity were shaped by these. The specific precautions included to protect the evidence gathered from the biases of the researcher are outlined now.

Triangulation

Using the lens of the researcher, triangulation strategies were used to cross-check data from the variety of data collection instruments used. Themes or patterns arising in data were checked across several sources to provide substantiating evidence across multiple methods. This allowed me to highlight consistencies and inconsistencies and to decide what would be major and what would be minor themes. The blog data, interview data and observations, for example, were cross-checked to generate evidence of differences of view regarding mandated Irish language learning and supports in the workplace. Open exploratory questions at the group language advising sessions and at meetings of *An Léonra* in particular allowed me to address issues of multiple interpretations.

Researcher Reflexivity and an Audit Trail

My skills in self-reflexivity were improved through exercises completed on the Ed.D. programme at Maynooth University. These encouraged me to examine my own bias and subjectivity

throughout the research process. Researcher reflexivity is discussed by Creswell and Miller (2000, p. 127) as “a process where researchers report on personal beliefs, values, and biases that may shape their inquiry”. At times the observations are just a conscious effort on my part to record my reactions to my experience at meetings. At other times, the cultural, social and historical issues which might have been shaping the understanding of issues are noted (CA, p. 83, for example). Vivid detail enhances the contextualisation of the mandated learning of Irish as a minority language. *An Ghaeltacht* observations and diaries help locate the research participants and those observing them in the specific immersion context, adding to its credibility. The Case Archive, the thesis audit trail, is presented in a transparent way, thematically and in chronological order, for ease of use (Appendix A, p. 191). My supervisor also has a log of earlier chapter drafts as a way of investigating whether I was being rigorous in my interpretation and analysis of my data.

Collaboration and Member Checking

Consistent with my epistemological stance, collaboration with participants was a key feature of the research methodology. The participants’ view was built into the study as another validity lens. Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 314) put forward member checks as “the most crucial technique for establishing credibility in a study”. Participants have a chance to discuss and react to the data throughout the research process and to decide if the account is accurate. Continuous reflections and discussions with *Líonra* participants helped them arrive at realistic and implementable solutions to their concerns. Although *Líonra* members helped form the research questions, and steered the direction of initiatives at each reconnaissance stage, they did not formally assist with data analysis and they were not involved in writing the narrative account. However, they were given a chance to confirm their stories and to agree with my interpretations in both individual interviews and at the final meeting. In accordance with the research ethics agreement, (Appendix M, p. 264), they were given an opportunity to approve the final analysis and discussion chapters of the thesis also. How the account of the research given was validated at a later stage, by other practitioners who found it meaningful and applicable to their own professional contexts, is addressed in the epilogue to the thesis.

Prolonged Engagement in the Field

An Líonra came together for the first time in March 2010 and the final meeting took place in April 2011. As the establishment of relational knowing was a key focus, the trust established among group members allowed for an increasing comfort in disclosing information. Constructivists appreciate that viewpoints become more pluralistic and that the understanding of the research context from the participant view will be enhanced the longer the engagement in the research study. A useful example of this in the study in hand is that participants were given opportunities to address their anxieties in preparing for their presentations in the *Gaeltacht*, (October 2010); in preparing for ‘test’ calls and actual calls from *An Coimisinéir Teanga* (November and December 2010), and in preparing to go on camera for the *Cúpla Ceist* project (March 2011). Validity is tested by evaluating the impact of the action steps in the spiral of the action research process itself. The prolonged interaction with the group over the thirteen month period makes the account more credible. A core group of seven participants stayed together over the period of research. The other eight *Líonra* members who were involved intermittently added alternative views. Melrose (2001, p. 177) notes that:

[...] one meaning of rigor in AR seems ...to depend on a symbiotic relationship between the practical effects of the research (whether intended or not), especially improvements and changes perceived as beneficial by the actors, and the development of a range of theories (not necessarily shared or linked to previous theory) by the actors.

The positive changes and developments in practice and in theory-building which have occurred as a result of the research are documented in the epilogue.

Peer Debriefing

Brookfield (1993, p. 235) in an exploration of the highly controlling political culture of higher education and corporate environments suggests that educators might collaborate in their efforts to change the political culture of institutions. Conversations with critical friends and validation meetings played a large part in the justification of the research. The study became more rigorous when their inputs created the basis for the direction the research process should go. Langlois, Goudreau and Lalonde (2014, p. 226) in detailing the principles of rigour in PAR in the workplace, promote the use of a “professional co-development group” as an action-oriented data collection method. Foulger (2009, p. 1) suggests that external conversations about her own work

allowed her to address difficulties pertaining to action research: issues with regard to isolation; accounting for tacit knowledge; and data overload. These are dilemmas which are recognised in the literature also. Discussion with critical friends at various stages in the process of my own data collection and analysis helped me assess more clearly what various power asymmetries were in operation, what my own preconceptions were, and how much standing I could give to what research participants were saying.

I briefed Éadaoin, Étaín, and Íde on their role in critiquing my research before our first formal meeting on 3 November 2010. I circulated a copy of McNiff, Lomax and Whitehead's descriptions of the role of the critical friend and of the validation group prior to the meeting (1996, pp. 84-86 & p. 109). A copy of the presentation slides I used in my first meeting is available in Appendix J (p. 249). Éadaoin took on my professional role as *Stiúrtóir na Gaeilge* while I was on leave in the January-July period 2011. Her 'outsider' insights and 'insider' knowledge of my position made her a very valuable and significant critical friend, particularly during the third and final research cycle. Two language teachers from *Aonad na Gaeilge*, Étaín and Íde, also acted as critical friends. Both had vast experience of dealing with adult learners of Irish. Because three of the research participants were in an *Aonad na Gaeilge* language class for staff, taught by Íde during the research period, I was able to draw on her knowledge of the needs of these language learners in particular. Étaín reviewed all of the transcripts of the group advising sessions and *Líonra* meetings for the project. She was also central to the facilitation of the *Cúpla Ceist* video initiative. Clodagh and Róisín, *Gaeltacht* tutors and key critical friends in the second action research cycle, were unbiased observers. I sought their critique to help negate the disadvantages of researching in my own workplace, and also to draw on their expertise of language learning in the immersion context. All formal meetings with critical friends were audio recorded. Further observations made during informal interactions were recorded in writing. The recording of the conversation and independent observations of Clodagh, Róisín and Éadaoin which took place while I was facilitating the final feedback session in the *Gaeltacht* was a novel research strategy (CA, pp. 148-151). It allows access to an unbiased account of the impact of the *Gaeltacht* programme on learners as it actually happened. University line managers and representatives from the Office of the Corporate Secretary, other internal stakeholders in the research, participated in two campus meetings along with research participants in November 2010. This allowed for critical feedback from a different peer-debriefing audience and enhanced validity procedures further.

As part of my research planning phase, I presented on my proposal regarding the establishment of *An Léonra Tacaíochta Teanga* to a meeting of the National Support Network of *Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga* in Letterkenny, 30 October 2009. I also presented a paper entitled *The Irish Language Education of Third Level Staff: Meeting Legislative Requirements - The Case for ‘Perspective Transformation’* at the Irish Association for Applied Linguistics (IRAAL) conference in Limerick, 18 June 2009. These allowed opportunities to engage with an academic audience regarding my conceptual framework and practical applications of my research in the public sector. I made a concerted effort to report on my preliminary findings to colleagues on the Ed.D. programme and to academic colleagues during the research process itself and to use these opportunities for critique. I presented a paper entitled *L2 learners of Irish in the workplace: Preliminary observations on a language support initiative and its legislative framework*, at the Centre for Applied Languages (CALs) Research Day, University of Limerick, 26 May 2010 (See Appendix K, p. 258). Colleagues at this forum suggested that I look at the Community of Inquiry Framework and the concept of ‘social presence’ in particular (Garrison and Archer, 2000). I spent some time applying this framework to my research context at the preliminary analysis stage using it in tandem with the work of Mynard and Mezirow. However, rather than using a three-tiered model, I chose to stay with Mynard and Mezirow, for the sake of coherence, in the end. Finally, a paper abstract which I submitted for the Translation, Technology and Autonomy in Language Teaching and Learning conference at National University of Ireland, Galway in December 2010 was accepted. Unfortunately, I was unable to attend the conference. However, my abstract dated 29 June 2010, is another useful record of the preliminary analysis (See Appendix L. p. 262).

The Roles, Values, Beliefs and Experiences of the Researcher

Because of my position as Director of *Aonad na Gaeilge* at the University, there was a continual danger that participants would see me as a figure of power and authority and relate to me as such. This would interfere with the kind of collaborative learning atmosphere that was crucial to the success of the action research initiatives. It could also constrain the flow of feedback from the participants. There was a double danger here: firstly, a curtailment of the amount of data that was forthcoming; secondly, a restriction in the quality of that data. It was of first importance to keep such dangers at bay. With this in mind I set out to promote an ethic and culture of care for my research participants. As already noted, actions were decided in a consultative way in order to respect the autonomy of the group. I believed in the importance and the scope of nurturing the

group as a new community of language practice on the campus. As noted in the Introduction, I was aware that there were contradictions in my role in *An Líonra*. Although I was their key language support figure, I was also a University representative who liaised with *Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga*, the office responsible for issues of compliance to legislation and quality service provision. Although mindful of quality, I set out primarily to promote issues of care in the mandated language learning context. It was important to me that my colleagues got recognition for their efforts and for the time that they dedicated to improving their Irish. I therefore took a firm stance that my role in relation to my research participants at this specific time would be one where values relating to adult education would take precedence over issues of organisational compliance. An investigation of the framework of support needed to bolster confidence was my primary concern. The staff member, as a valued professional, was the first and foremost priority. The research process was designed in non-coercive way even though the context was one of obligation. How I conducted my research is consistent with these beliefs. My commitment to issues of validity has already been addressed above and references to my eagerness to present my provisional findings to critique. In setting out to boost confidence and nurture camaraderie, I was keen to establish and to foster what Taylor and Cranton (2012, p. 572) call a “transparency of practice”, a view of practice that was understood and shared by both research participants as language learners and I as *Líonra* facilitator, and a practitioner interested in fostering transformative learning.

Ethical Concerns

Cohen, Manion and Morriison (2007, p. 65) note that one of the research methods that is most vulnerable to “betrayal” is action research. The term betrayal is used here to describe a situation where information disclosed confidentially is revealed publicly in a way which causes awkwardness, unease or distress to the participant giving the information. I carried out my research in the framework of the British Educational Research Association, Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research, 2011. My research proposal was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the University and a copy of the consent form signed by participants is available in Appendix M (p. 263). Pseudonyms were used throughout the thesis to represent participant voices while ensuring anonymity. However, I had some concerns relating to the confidentiality of issues discussed at *Líonra* meetings. Even though pseudonyms were used, it may be possible to identify some of the different voices, those research participants who participated in the *Cúpla*

Ceist video series in particular. It is for this reason that access to the Case Archive, containing comprehensive data material has been restricted. It is made available for the purposes of the assessment of research rigour by a selective audience only. The Case File, comprising of appendices and video files, is included in the volume in hand (pp. 191-275). This is the data which is being made available openly. I do not think that any ethical ideals were subverted in the use of video evidence in the final cycle as the participant focus during the filming of the series was first and foremost on their involvement in a campus-wide film initiative. Their contribution to a data-collection process was a secondary issue. They understood from the outset that their videos would be made available for public viewing on YouTube. Cognisant of the negative critiques of participatory research, that of Cooke and Kothari (2001), for example, I pursued a research ethic of care. Mindful of the inconsistencies that can occur between ideals and practice; I looked out for sensitivities and needs of the research participants along the way rather than being led by my own research agenda. As Reason (2000, p. 19) citing Fox (1994) remarks: “there are two questions you can ask of your work: what joy does it bring to others? And what injustice and suffering does it address?” I was alert and compassionate to the fact that those with lower levels of language skills were more vulnerable in the group. The research blog and Sulis sites were not available for public viewing. I anticipated that there might be some power asymmetries because of the mix of University administrative grades but this did not become an issue. As most of the participants were representing their respective offices on *An Léonra*, I was attentive to the potential for some vulnerability also in relation to their professional roles. Both the research participants and I were reflexive. This allowed for a sense of joint ownership. It also contributed to ethical rigour and to what Milligan (n.d.) considers “mutual empowerment”.

Conclusion

Action research as a research method synchronises well with transformative learning. Although much of the literature relates to classroom research, Taylor (2007, p. 188) suggests that “they share similar assumptions and outcomes about teaching for change, such as a participatory approach, the emphasis on dialogue, the essentiality of a reflective process in learning, and the need for action”. My commitment to an ethic of care in my professional role supporting those involved in mandated Irish language learning throughout the action research initiative has been discussed above. Structures put in place and strategies used to ensure methodological rigour have been outlined in detail and the procedures with regard to data analysis and an overview of the

initial implementation phases is given. A clear and complete description of the research plan and steps taken has been given here. Rigour, the online language support element, and the amount of time involved in data collection were challenging. Grogan, Donaldson and Simmons (2007, pp. 7-8) promote the action research dissertation as a transformative strategy as the “capstone of doctoral studies”. They suggest that this type of research dissertation has the potential to prepare leaders who have “the capacity to reflect critically on their own practice, transform their practice, and in so doing work democratically with others in their organisation to disrupt the status quo”. My own steps to realise this potential will be outlined in the findings and discussion chapters to follow.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS 1

Introduction

Similar to the layout of Chapter 4, the findings and analysis chapters – Chapter 5, Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 – are structured according to the tools and initiatives used by me as language advisor. Following an account of observations relating to the various initiatives, each of these chapters includes the three sub-sections: language advising stances, monitoring and reviewing, and changes in language practices. The chapter in hand presents and analyses data collected during both the Preparatory Phase and Cycle 1 of the action research project. These research stages took place from March-May 2010, and May-October 2010 respectively. The chapter begins with a short section dealing with data gathered during the Preparatory Phase. An account of the four key initiatives of Cycle 1 follows. These are dealt with under the headings one-to-one consultations, increased language support through the Sulis site, awareness-raising through *An Líonra* blog, and group language advising workshops. The focus in Cycle 1, *An Bóthar Foghlama*, was on language improvement as a journey. Data gathering and analysis related to the themes of anxiety, time management, language learning strategies in the local context, and emerging social presence. My own understanding of the research context and the progression of events is presented here. My evaluation of the language advising stances I assumed is outlined prior to a consideration of the change in the language practices of the *Líonra* members, and a section on monitoring and reviewing.

Preparatory Phase: Establishing the Context

Concerns around staff obligations in relation to Irish language legislation at the University and our interest in changing how things were done were noted in Chapter 1. The reader is reminded of the palpable issues around anxiety at the 2009 meeting and at the inaugural meeting of *An Líonra Tacaíochta Teanga* in March 2010. Worries about the lack of information with regard to institutional expectations of those designated as Irish-medium contacts and concerns that the Irish-medium service would not be as efficient as the service through English were discussed. The importance of a high quality Irish service was noted. It was decided that the group would work initially towards language improvement as a first step with a view to impacting on quality of service in due course (CA, p. 14). Data from the needs analysis conducted provides further insight into the early

research and learning context (Appendix B, p. 197). The concept of the ideal self in language learning was explored briefly in Chapter 2 (Dörnyei, 2009, p. 20). The association, or lack thereof, of the professional context with members' personal visions of themselves as language learners is noteworthy. A division between personal and professional motivations for language improvement is apparent in some of the comments. The contrasting responses of Aisling in the first instance and Gearóid, secondly, illustrate this point:

I primarily feel I am responsible for ensuring that the faculty complies not just with the requirements of the OL Act, but also to try to ensure that there is an understanding of the 'spirit' of the Official Languages Act. On a personal level - I think Irish is rich language, part of my heritage that I don't want to lose.

Gearóid, working in an administrative area targeted in the Language Scheme, but not a designated contact, described his ideal L2 self as follows:

To be able to enjoy using it [Irish] un-selfconsciously, in leisure with family and friends and socially and informally at work. Sort of to use it for in a very general sense, to use it for making love, the pleasant soft things and keep English for making war, the hard sharp things. A dreamer's answer to a hard question but I'm trying to get at something that I feel is very important about the way Irish has been and the way it could be. I have absolutely zero interest in accounting in Irish, English is infinitely better suited for it.

I noted the view of Irish as not being as good as, or as suitable as English for the professional context, as a theme needing further investigation. This is dealt with in again in Chapter 6.

Interestingly, Daithí, associated language learning with the professional setting only:

I will be totally honest; I do not have an expectation or even a desire to become a fluent or everyday user of the language. However, I would like to be able to accommodate anyone who wishes to work through Irish, and I would like to reach a level of competency where I feel confident that I can express myself and communicate effectively *as Gaeilge* to other people.

Although all participants were involved because of legislative obligations to promote Irish in their administrative departments, motivations for Irish language learning were markedly different. Responses to the audits are a useful record of prior beliefs, motivational factors, individual differences and preferences, and expectations at the start of the research period. They are a record also of the participants' perceptions of their language ability at that stage. Some related their vision of themselves as language learners to their personal and social interests only, and others referred to Irish in both professional and personal domains. The questionnaire replies and the

group concerns outlined above informed the actions taken and guided decision-making in the first action research cycle.

The First Research Cycle: An Bóthar Foghlama

The Cycle focused on creating formal opportunities for the group to come together to assess their support needs and to plan ways to achieve and map progress in language improvement. The context of mandated language learning and associated practices were explored, defined and redefined during the cycle. The discussion to follow will explore how a “disorienting dilemma” (Mezirow, 2000, p. 8) became a focus for positive change. Drawing on the Mynard Dialogue, Tools and Context Framework presented in Chapter 3, the contextual practices which I steered and reviewed during the cycle are discussed. Each of the tools and leadership initiatives which were outlined chronologically in the methodology chapter are explored now. The focus of data gathering and analysis related to the themes of anxiety, time management, language learning strategies in the local context, and emerging social presence. My role with regard to nurturing changes in relation to these areas is considered. Due to the thesis limit, only significant moments are discussed and much of the detail of developments from week to week is left out.

Tools/Leadership Initiatives

One-to-One Consultations

Examples of cognitive tools in language advising are learning plans, journals, self-evaluation sheets and associated practices used to organise those tools and encourage cognitive and metacognitive processes in the language learning process. The one-to-one language learning consultations which took place between May and July 2010 allowed *Líonra* members a chance to consider their language skills and their language support requirements privately. Used in tandem with the data from the language audits, the observations made at the private consultations are an important record of what the priorities of the participants were in the early research phase. The individual learner voices captured in the consultations data and analysed below are representative of the group as a whole.

Creative ways of relating language learning to the special interests and pursuits noted in the needs analysis questionnaires were explored in the one-to-one consultations. I followed up by helping to source language resource materials in these specialist areas. Gearóid, for example, an

avid seafarer, was interested in Irish in the traditional context of boat building and maritime affairs (CA, p. 22). Aisling enjoyed mountaineering and exploring the flora and fauna of the countryside (CA, p. 24). Such leisure pursuits also informed the schedule of events for the *Gaeltacht* programme and inspired the images from nature used on the *Líonra Tacaíochta Teanga* blog (Appendix D, p. 207). Issues around language identity in language learning were to the fore in Cathal's consultation (CA., p. 28). It was important to him to be recognised as a Limerick man with Irish, rather than a Limerick man trying to be like a *Gaeltacht* speaker. He had been motivated and influenced by a young teacher from the city who had achieved high proficiency in Irish as a second language. He expressed his interest in being involved in *Gaeil Luimnigh*, an Irish-medium social group in the city. He asked me to record an audio version of *Slán le Máighe*, a traditional poem from County Limerick, for him as a pronunciation guide also. He was interested in being able to sing it at social occasions. I was encouraged by disclosures such as this to think beyond the legislative context, and to look also at the importance of place in language learning, and the local context for Irish in the city, in particular.

The one-to-one consultations created private space to discuss issues around language anxiety. Sibéal, for example, linked her nervousness to her decision to do ordinary level Irish at school (CA, p. 21). Interestingly, she did not experience the same apprehension when speaking in French or Spanish. Daithí remarked on his lack of confidence in his competency to check Irish-medium correspondence issued to job applicants in a recent University recruitment process. He was concerned about the standard of service he was able to offer through Irish (CA, p. 22). Aisling, although reasonably comfortable with her spoken language skills, discussed her general reluctance to write in Irish. Eoghan displayed high motivation to improve his language competency from the outset. He expressed that he would be willing to take unpaid leave to spend two months doing odd jobs in the *Gaeltacht* just to have the opportunity to immerse himself in the language (CA, p. 21). The emerging codes in the data of learner identities and learning spaces were important considerations in the early stages in planning to help relieve anxieties around mandate to use language in the professional context. The common issues discussed at the one-to-one consultations informed the design and content of the Sulis support site and the agendas for the five group language advising sessions in Cycle 1. The learner voices captured above will be heard again in these group gatherings.

Increased Language Support through Sulis Site

The rationale for developing the VLE Sulis site and the detail of its content were given in the methodology chapter. The site's use as a tool in the language advising contest is now analysed. Access to site statistics which were generated automatically on the VLE allowed me to monitor how files were being used. The most popular resource was *Focal Faire*, a *Raidió na Gaeltachta* series in which the meaning of *Gaeltacht* expressions and colloquial words are discussed by a panel. It was used thirty-nine times, a figure which validates the group's interest in authentic language usage. Pronunciation exercises and sample support files were used twenty-one times and twenty-seven times respectively. The video file *Feenish* and related sample exercises were viewed twenty times (Appendix C, p. 204). It was at this early stage that I realised that a visual and creative element in learning motivated the group and this knowledge informed decisions taken regarding the project focus in the third research cycle. General listening materials were more popular than resources relating to Irish in the workplace context. The work involved in developing materials to suit the mixed ability of the group was significant and the complexities of advising such a mixed group outside of the traditional classroom setting were apparent from the early stages. This challenge of dealing with a "broad range" of language standards was noted by Cathal when he compared my role to that of a teacher teaching first and sixth class in the same classroom (CA, p. 447).

One of the early requests made by participants was that they might get feedback on their written work on Sulis. I encouraged the group to post their *Gaeltacht* presentation notes on the site's wiki for group editing. Although I emphasised that the activity was about learning in collaboration with each other, there was great reluctance on the group's part to modify the text of another colleague (CA, p. 71). Despite my attempt to quell anxieties around this, presentations were posted on Sulis but not edited. Technical issues proved a further obstacle in this activity. Oisín disclosed how the "technical stuff" relating to the wiki and the blog was new to him (CA, p. 469). *Líonra* members turned to Cathal for help in deleting draft material relating to their own presentations. In view of the research focus on language anxiety, an interview comment from Cathal was illuminating: he noted that stress relating to the wiki caused participants to revert to English, their first language (CA, p. 446). The most interesting outcome of these challenges was that they were able to draw on their own resources as a *Líonra*, independent of me, to resolve technical difficulties. Cathal made every effort to make Sulis a space for the group and he

assumed a support role at this stage, organising and leading a technical support session for the group immediately before going to *An Ghaeltacht*. This was a key moment in the research as it demonstrated that it was ok to admit difficulties and anxieties, that trust and camaraderie had developed within *An Lónra*, and that they were pulling together to help each other deal with challenges.

The time constraints on research participants and the choices they made with regard to their Irish language improvement and materials on Sulis will be considered briefly now. The site was developed as a resource which they might use at their own office desk. Site statistics show that they spent 99 per cent of their time using the resources tool on Sulis. The number of visits made to the site by participants throughout the entire period of research was as follows: Cathal 81; Oisín 55; Sailí 54; Eoghan 43; Doireann 42; Aisling 31; and Sibéal 14. The number of visits was highest in May 2010 when the site was launched and low during the summer period as might be expected. It peaked when participants were involved in the task-related activities relating to *Gaeltacht* presentations and the *Cúpla Ceist* initiative in the final phase (See Appendix C1.6, p. 205). My own activity on the site (355 visits) is included here as official site reports include all activity. This includes all visits while accessing the site after the data gathering period

It is important to note that engagement with resource materials was independent work unrelated to formal course assignments or assessments. In querying the low Sulis participation of Sibéal and Aisling, in particular, they noted the challenges around it being “too independent” (CA, p. 366) suggesting that when one has homework, one does homework (CA, p. 408). Site statistics do not detail the time of the day materials were downloaded. However, entries on the discussion forum and the *Lónra* blog comments also were all written during the working day, the latest being written at 17.44 (Appendix D, p. 210). Another issue of importance in analysing the Sulis data is that although information and communication technology, recording and listening exercises, and collaborative writing on the University’s VLE were a key part of *Aonad na Gaeilge* pedagogy during the period of research, this emphasis was novel for these adult learners. The technological issues detailed above and the barriers around ICT for some of the research participants take account of this. Aisling, for example, noting that she was a private person, preferred to use the internet for personal web searches and information sourcing in her learning. She disliked the internet as a medium for information exchange (CA, p. 403).

Awareness-Raising through An *Líonra* Blog

Sailí was the most active user of the blog, entering three comments, two of which were posted in Irish. Participants were given the choice to add comments in English or in Irish and 50 per cent of comments were written in each language. The use of the target language in language advising sessions has been discussed by Thornton (2012). I considered language choice important for two reasons. Firstly, *Líonra* members were already dealing with a mandate to provide quality services through Irish, and secondly, choice helped ensure that expressions of emotion with regard to learning Irish were not limited by language competency. The *Líonra Tacaíochta Teanga* blog articles triggered consideration of issues around the affective side of language learning in particular (Appendix D, p. 207). Eva Hoffman's enlightening remarks about her own issues of language anxiety, quoted earlier, provoked reflection and showed the group that their feelings were commonplace. Sibéal's reaction to Hoffman's experience is captured in her blog comment (28 July 2010) below:

I really liked the line about becoming a false persona because she cannot express herself properly in English. It is difficult when learning any language to get past that 'false persona'. You have a limited vocabulary so find yourself talking about the same topics with different people. You wonder if you will ever get to a new level in your ability to express yourself in the new language you are learning. For this to happen the learner needs total immersion. They also need to get beyond the fear and anxiety that Eva Hoffman talks about. This is the biggest challenge - to feel the fear and say it anyway!

The reference to limited vocabulary is repeated again in a blog comment from Sailí on 28 July 2010. "This language anxiety is my life! I feel my Irish is so boring as I don't have the grammar either and I'm using the same words all of the time" (Appendix D, p. 212). Blog comments steered the agenda for group advising sessions. We explored vocabulary strategies in language learning, for example, at the 29 July 2010 session. The initiative allowed a preliminary investigation of the scope of blogs in language advising programmes. It did not lead to a high volume of data but the comments posted show a high level of individual reflection. This is similar to contributions made using other cognitive tools in language advising such as language diaries. Aisling referred consistently to her insecurities about writing in Irish throughout the research cycles. She posted an English-medium blog comment regarding the imbalance between her English and her Irish writing skills. Although, as noted in the discussion regarding the VLE above, she didn't appreciate the disclosure involved in commenting on line, she took the

opportunity to express how she empathised with Eva Hoffman. Her choice to post a comment in English substantiates Thornton's emphasis on the importance of learner choice between L1 and the target language in the language advising context (2012, p. 80). The blog was used as an information sharing and as a data gathering instrument. As noted in the methodology chapter, I purposely used blogger.com rather than the blogging tool available on the Sulis site so as create an independent space, one unrelated to University systems for *An Líonra*. However, in light of the challenges participants faced registering for Google accounts (CA, p. 86), and considering this retrospectively now, the material may have been more readily accessible if Sulis had been used instead.

Group Language Advising Workshops

A detailed overview of the content of each of the five workshops has already been given in the methodology chapter. The data captures how a group language improvement strategy was mapped out in tandem with a focus on individual requirements and a general exploration of the language support requirements, of minority language learners with legislative responsibilities. The sessions were similar to what might happen in a traditional one-to-one language advising meeting except that the focus was on the development of a group identity and dynamic and on sharing strategies for success with each other. As noted earlier, learners often do not consider the importance of social relationships in language learning or the importance of feelings along the way. The following section draws on data from key moments in the workshops with a focus on the theme of language learning strategy development in particular.

I concentrated on giving the group templates for activities to develop vocabulary, listening skills and language awareness in general. I hoped they might use these in their own independent learning, and in designing activities for each other also. The benefits of collaborative work on issues of grammatical accuracy were explored and demonstrated. Some brief examples of the sharing of strategies for success in language learning are below. Aisling explained how she accessed new vocabulary by listening to current affairs on *RTÉ Morning Ireland* at home and tuning into the news headlines then on *Raidió na Gaeltachta* in the car on the way into work. (CA, p. 76). Doireann recommended the programme *Comhrá* on TG4 as an easy programme to follow as it involved just two people in conversation (CA, p. 57). I had not reflected on how the accessibility

of a programme for language learners might be critiqued in this way before. The following excerpt is a useful example of how individual strategies for acquiring new vocabulary were shared:

Sibéal: [...] for example I was looking for the word ‘recycling’ and I was here (in *Seomra na Gaeilge*), and I saw that (points to the Irish word on sign on *recycling* bin) so I wrote it down and that was great.

Deirdre That’s exactly it. That is “noticing”. So what is the word without looking at it now?!

Sibéal: *Athchúrsáil!*

Deirdre: Good!

Sibéal: So things like that and I’d like to do the two things, write it down but use that (noticing) as well to consolidate it really.

Deirdre: I didn’t have the word for ‘compost’ myself and a flier came in the door. A bilingual flier from the County Council, letting us know that we were going to get a new brown bin soon and the word *múirín* was on it.

Eoghan: Múirín?

Deirdre: Múirín, M-ú-i-r-í-n. The word is very native, whoever translated it, translated it well I think. I’ll always remember it now because I was looking for it and it came in the post!

[Laughter]

Sibéal: That’s it!

(CA, p. 55).

Eoghan especially took a keen interest in vocabulary development and the sample template I provided for vocabulary entries. He appreciated the value of both independent work and the sharing of ideas. This is evidenced in his wiki entry: “I was practising lately using new words and phrases in sentences and the following are some examples [...]” (CA, p. 91). The group recounted that they met on two occasions during summer 2010 and that Eoghan presented activities based on the TG4 programme *Inis Airc*. Efforts to encourage such collaboration among learners were bolstered also by my promotion of social strategies at the parallel one-to-one consultations. At Eithne’s meeting, for instance, I let her know that Sailí was also reading *An Geall* (CA, p. 24).

The focus on strategy sharing allowed natural opportunities for fun and I became aware in early September that my relationship with the group was changing. They started sharing more stories about their personal lives: Oisín, for example, on reading his son’s books, and Eoghan on his hound *Glaise na gCuach!* (CA, p. 83) The extract below is a good example of how these two *Líonra* members had started to work together with mutual respect for each other and how Eoghan, the more competent in Irish, took on an advisory role himself. Glynn, Ó Laoire and Berryman (2009, p. 5) suggest that such shared activities are “functional, enjoyable, and authentic experiences for all involved”. The transcript doesn’t capture the spirit of the interaction in the sound file:

Oisín: Sheol mé recording, taifeadadh, go hEoghan an tseachtain seo caite. Chonaic mé an t-amhrán *Fáinne Geal an Lae* agus bhí mé ag reciting.¹⁵

Eoghan: ag aithris an ea?¹⁶

Oisín: ag aithris an cúpla véarsa ach¹⁷ ... I thought I picked out an easy song because *Fáinne Geal an Lae* when you play it's a simple tune [hums tune *Dawning of the Day*] When I went to Eoghan with it, we had the English translation and it's very hard.

Eoghan: Ó bhí sé ar fheabhas Bhí ceol sa chúla aige agus é á aithris¹⁸.

Oisín: Dúirt Eoghan go raibh mé cosúil le Donncha Ó Dúlaing!¹⁹ [Group laughter]. But I said to Eoghan I could have been lighting him from a height, I didn't understand one word. I could have been calling him every name! I just read it out from ...

Deirdre: And is it important to understand?

Oisín: Ah it is

Deirdre: (to group) what could he do to improve? You had the English and the Irish version had you? But that didn't help you, did it?

Oisín: I didn't realise I had the English version; I just had the Irish version. I recorded it and I sent it to Eoghan and as soon as I had recorded it, I spotted the English version and straight away some of the words made much more sense to me but still to translate it, it was a very hard [...].

Eoghan: But bhí mé á rá leis nach [...] i dtaobh amhrán nó dánta níl sé tuisceanach [sic] focal ar fhocal ["riachtanach" was intended]²⁰

(CA, pp. 58-59).

Eoghan's vocabulary support to Oisín in his account of their interactions regarding the sound file, and his appreciation and praise of Oisín's effort is apparent above. Their relations strengthened my rationale to cultivate personal interests through Irish and also to facilitate further opportunities for both face-to-face and virtual collaboration. The good fun in their dealings with each other had an impact on the entire group. What was most significant was Eoghan's mentoring of Oisín, their motivation being related to language activities associated with their personal common interest in music, and their embracing of technology in the exchange. Further examples of this type of helping and appreciative behaviours are also to be found. Cathal, for example, scaffolded group learning by adding a glossary to his draft *Gaeltacht* presentation on the Sulis wiki. Sailí added a comment to acknowledge this (CA, p. 92).

¹⁵ I sent a recording, *taifeadadh*, to Eoghan last week. I saw the song *Fáinne Gael an Lae* and I was reciting

¹⁶ "Ag aithris" is it?

¹⁷ Reciting the couple of verses but [...]

¹⁸ Oh, he was excellent [...] He had music in the background while he was reciting.

¹⁹ (Eoghan said I was like Donncha Ó Dúlaing!)

²⁰ But I was telling him .. it is not necessary to understand all the words of a song or a poem.

The importance of reflection on language learning as a strategy was emphasised from the outset and the *Treoircheisteanna* posted in the *Dialann Foghlama* folder on Sulis were drawn on throughout the research process at *Líonra* workshops (Appendix N, p. 270). A recurring issue in the first phase was reference to constraints of time for language learning and reflection on ways of fitting language learning into professional and personal lives became a specific research focus. Oisín contributed a lot to these conversations, noting that he came to the University early in the morning and studied Irish in his office. He jokingly asked if the Mp3 player worked under water as he was planning to be by the pool on holidays! (CA, p. 56) Sibéal encouraged the group to consider previous experiences learning languages and relayed the potential of the Mp3 player for her personally: “I’m quite chaotic [...] but if I was to walk around and actually talk into something about what I did today, I could do it in Irish. [...] I’d be too lazy to write it down, being honest”. She noted that despite her experience in learning languages, she had never considered the issues of time and place before (CA, p. 31). This type of disclosure became more prevalent as the group got to know each other better. In general the Mp3 players were used as listening rather than as recording devices. Sibéal was the most active user. The small physical size of the players and the challenge of having to operate a “gadget” bothered some of the participants (CA, p. 404). Supports to aid adult learners overcome anxieties around mobile learning have been addressed in previous research (See Morris, 2009; Sharples, Taylor and Vavoula, 2007). Some *Líonra* members adapted advice to their own personal preferences. This was demonstrated by Sailí, for instance, who found her own ways to accommodate learning on the move. As a musician she learned tunes by ear by listening to them repeatedly on her phone. She noted in a blog comment on 28 September 2010 that she planned to draw on this experience and use her phone in a similar way to record Irish (Appendix D, p. 210).

Language Advising Stances

The role of the language advisor to develop learner awareness of language learning strategies and to encourage the sharing of strategies was most prominent in Research Cycle 1. Conscious throughout of professional workloads, particularly at busy times in University administration, the issue of time management was a constant concern in advising for language in the workplace. My focus, prior to the research period, had been on the importance of institutional recognition of Irish language learning as an area of strategic significance. I had not considered the implications for staff of leaving the office to attend classes or taking time off work in lieu of attendance at

evening programmes. I had overlooked the pressure of the administrative workload on *Líonra* members and had not reflected fully on the importance of relationships with line managers to negotiate time off for language classes. A need to develop language awareness and to strengthen acknowledgement of staff efforts to improve language competency became apparent in Cycle 1. This idea will be developed in the discussion chapter. Other more traditional roles in language advising are noted in the observations data also; promoting dialogue and creating space for discussion and sharing of stories both face-to-face and online; technical support (CA, p. 38); motivation and encouragement; and design of resource materials (CA, p. 83). Sulis statistics reveal that as site organiser, I spent 4.9 per cent of the time using announcements and 95.1 per cent on resources. Conscious of some of the participants' fears of dealing with native speakers, a very clear advisory stance taken was that of nurturing confidence about *Gaeltacht* interactions in an exploratory session on the Munster dialect prior to the *Gaeltacht*-based programme (CA, p. 63). The theme of language learning as a journey was revisited and the stage of language learning where one begins to identify with and show an allegiance to one particular dialect was discussed. I drew on the earlier conversations on the importance of a "Limerick identity" to them as language learners but also on the need to know some of the general traits of the dialect to bolster both understanding and language confidence. My intention was to prepare them for the sounds of the language in their interactions in the West Kerry *Gaeltacht* so as to relieve stresses associated with these. The listening and reading resources used in this workshop all related to West Kerry and listening activities were planned as a practice run for authentic *Gaeltacht*-based communication.(CA, pp. 61-63). I planned at this stage to set up a buddy system for the immersion experience also, pairing more competent speakers with those at a lower level. This was a period in the research where I was very much in the role of encouraging and directing preparations that might relieve anxieties around authentic interactions in the *Gaeltacht* and those with *Gaeltacht* speakers in the workplace down the line. This work, I consider, was essential ground work in steering *Líonra* members' efforts to realise their own visions as Irish language users.

Monitoring and Reviewing

My post-meeting observations are a useful log of what we saw, what we sought to find out and interpret, and what we set out to change as a *Líonra*. The following excerpt from 27 July 2010 is a pertinent example:

The scope for group sharing different learning strategies and ideas and the importance of this discussion is becoming apparent. Do they still need me to direct that though or are they becoming more independent?The example of peer learning and discussion and justification of why “*a iníon*” was the right answer is a useful example, I think. The group also seemed to really enjoy this activity, working it out themselves. What is my role here? Language expert? Facilitator? [Ceann de na haistriúcháin a bhí á lorg ag an ngrúpa ná “his daughter”]. We noted the advantage of the group giving all their various answers and arriving at a consensus as to what the right answer was

(CA, p. 81).

I noted, in September 2010, that I needed to investigate my new habit of presenting the workshops bilingually “mainly for the sake of Oisín” and wondered if I should revert to Irish (CA, p. 82). This was followed up at the 16 September meeting with the majority expressing that they would prefer workshops through Irish but appreciating that English was necessary at times to accommodate various competency levels on the *Líonra*. Discussions as to whether or not an intervention has been successful and what ongoing monitoring needed to be done took place at each meeting. Language improvement itself was monitored through the ongoing formal and informal discussion of the *Treoircheisteanna* during group language advising workshops.

Issues relating to the VLE and blog were monitored and reviewed consistently at the workshops. On initial analysis, all I saw was technical problems related to their usage. On further reflection however, it can be seen that the tackling of these issues actually became an impetus for the group to come together. They contributed to an emerging openness and trust within the group and the creation of opportunities to help each other. I looked for their direction as to how to overcome the “Sulis technicalities” at the language advising workshop on 29 July 2010 (CA, pp. 59-62). Eoghan drew attention to the experience of some of the group with Sulis and queried if *Seomra na Gaeilge* might be available for them to meet independently of me. Commenting that she lacked discipline herself, Sibéal was prompted to suggest that it might be an idea for one person to be responsible each month for bringing the group together to discuss resources. She agreed to be the designated person in August. I sensed a growing independence in the group and hoped that their proposed face-to-face interaction regarding Sulis might improve online communication. It was suggested here that although there were a lot of resources on Sulis there had to be an impetus to log in, a subject which would motivate discussion. Cathal, like Sibéal, mentioned that it required “discipline” and promoted the idea of just one subject topic (CA, p. 70). This informed how Sulis was used in Research Cycle 3 in relation to the monitoring calls and the *Cúpla Ceist* initiative in particular.

Change in Language Practices

A move away from an individual to a group focus just before the trip to *An Ghaeltacht* encouraged us further to have social targets as planned outcomes of the immersion programme. Oisín's interest in group cohesion and his intentional use of personal names is clear in the extract below referring to his plans to establish a coffee morning:

And you know it's great that we get together here at a meeting but that may only be once a month. But what I'm trying to do maybe is get a place where we can have, maybe a weekly coffee morning. Maybe in one of the restaurants in the main building, 10.30-11.30 maybe every Tuesday and let us go in and we'll get to know each. I'll get to know Brídín and Aisling and we'll get to converse

(CA, p. 70).

The meeting organised by *An Lónra* independent of me on 16 September 2010 marked a clear end to Cycle 1 of the research. Kemmis and Mc Taggart (2005, p. 319), as noted previously in Chapter 4, put forward that in some groups different participants can take on the role of facilitator during the process of participatory action research. Cathal, as mentioned before, took on the role of facilitation at this meeting. Fact finding and analysis at this meeting mark this reconnaissance stage prior to the commencement of Cycle 2 of the action research. The major change that took place during this phase is that the group began to demonstrate the traits of being a *Lónra*. Their decision to set up their own Irish language coffee morning verifies this. Oisín gave the group advance notice on 23 September 2010 that their weekly *Maidin Chaije* would be launched on 13 October in the Eden Restaurant (CA, p. 91).

Conclusion

Data relating to the outcomes of four specific tools and leaderships initiatives have been presented and analysed. The changes in the participants' individual and group language learning practices and their experimentation with various language learning strategies as detailed above were significant. As their language support needs became more defined, light was shed on my own role as language advisor. Learners had taken large steps on their journey to change language practices and to address issues of anxiety in the run up to their *Gaeltacht* programme, in Cycle 2. Their experience there will be explored in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS 2

Introduction: The Second Research Cycle, *Tearmann*, a Gaeltacht-Based Programme

Research Cycle 2 is called *Tearmann*, meaning refuge. The cycle includes a three-day language placement in the West Kerry *Gaeltacht* in early October 2010 and a short reflective period in its aftermath. The focus at this stage was on developing language awareness, creating opportunities for critical reflection, and scaffolding authentic language practice. Three specific leadership initiatives are discussed in this chapter. Firstly, supporting group cohesion and relational knowing, secondly, further development of language awareness, and thirdly, exploring language anxiety. The remaining part of the chapter is structured around the three headings used in Chapter 5: language advising stances; monitoring and reviewing; and change in language practices. The meeting at the final *Gaeltacht* session was particularly important in the monitoring, reviewing, and validating of research procedures in Cycle 2. The aims of the programme, the comprehensive preparations made, and the importance of the choice of setting were summarised in the methodology chapter. The programme design provided opportunities for dialogue, and for both individual and group reflection on issues of language learning and awareness, and language anxiety. The social programme was designed to encourage interaction both within the group and with the local language community.

Data will be explored with a view to identifying changes in group focus and identity, camaraderie, confidence, and attitude. Issues addressed in the *Gaeltacht* diaries included the significance of the immersion experience, the development of the group as a *Líonra*, and feelings regarding interactions with native speakers. Individual and group motivation for language learning and usage following the programme was also investigated. Sixteen members of *An Líonra* attended the programme, including the seven key research participants. The larger group allowed more learner voices to be captured. Some data relating to Móirín, Meidhbhín, Gearóid, Éabha, Caoimhe, and Ailín is therefore presented in this chapter also. As noted in Chapter 4, these participants only participated periodically in the research between March 2010 and April 2011. The three other staff members who attended the *Gaeltacht* programme were not research participants. Consequently, their contributions are not referred to here (See Table 1, xiv-xv).

Tools/Leadership Initiatives

Róisín and Clodagh, the *Gaeltacht* tutors, having consulted with me at length, were very clear on issues to be explored and how dialogue might be best facilitated in the workshops. I led the opening and closing sessions, participated in the workshops, and attended the social and cultural activities with *Líonra* members. I reviewed and monitored progress over the three days with Éadaoin, my colleague at *Aonad na Gaeilge*, and the *Gaeltacht* tutors acting as critical friends. I paid attention to those who didn't know many others, and to the language support needs of those who were at a lower language competency level also.

Supporting Group Cohesion and Relational Knowing

The opening session was held in a small library area in the local museum. Éadaoin suggest that the introductory presentations eased the group into the programme: *[bhí] ar gach éinne dul tríd an bpróiseas céanna agus seasamb éigin a dhéanamh sa ghrúpa.*²¹ She noted how the tight space around the table and the tea and biscuits helped establish a hospitable and supportive atmosphere (CA, p. 162). The participants were introduced to their language partners at this session. This was the first time some of them had met. Even though they were all representatives of administrative departments targeted in the University's Language Scheme, the participation of some, in *Líonra* initiatives, had been inconsistent. The general research focus on creating and changing language practices was reinforced by Róisín. She emphasised the importance of getting to know someone through Irish initially, in order to establish a habit of speaking Irish. Clodagh used various strategies to nurture the confidence of *An Líonra* members in their first workshop. The learning environment was one of positivity as is demonstrated in her interaction with Doireann:

Clodagh: [...] are you confident in your Irish?

Doireann: No

Clodagh: Say it again

Doireann: I have no confidence

Clodagh: in?

Doireann: In my Irish.

Clodagh: Listen to this, I have little confidence.

Doireann: *is beag muinín atá agam.*

Clodagh: in?

²¹ Everybody had to go through the same process and make some sort of stand in the group.

Doireann: In my Irish.

Clodagh: There's an improvement now, do you see? In this small little statement *is beag muinín atá agam as mo chuid Gaeilge*, but by Wednesday, [laughter] I'll have more confidence in my Irish and that's how it happens. Step by step, little by little. *Beagán muiníne* is "a little confidence" or self-confidence. Say it.

Doireann: *Féinmbuinín*

Clodagh: And with God's help and with effort and commitment [group laughter] it will happen!

(CA, p. 119: Translation)

Clodagh found many such ways of encouraging the group. She reiterated my own emphasis in Research Cycle 1 on the importance of reflecting on various language skills, and suggested that they give themselves credit for all that they could understand. She developed the notion of the language learning journey discussed at one of the group language advising sessions:

[...] deireann Oisín nach bhfuil sé dátheangach fós ach tá sé ar an mbóthar, an dtuigeann sibh? Tá sé ar an mbóthar, agus bhí sé an-mhaith istigh [ag an gcur i láthair], mar bhí sé sásta rud a léamh; ach roimh dó an rud a léamh, labhair sé amach, an dtuigeann sibh? Ní raibh sé ag brath go hiomlán ar na nótaí, so tá tús maith ansin ar bhóthar an dátheangachais.²²

The group were already more at ease by the second workshop and some fun interactions, with Oisín in particular, helped to break the ice (CA, p. 114). Personal stories and experiences were shared throughout the programme and allowing the group to get to know each other better. Participants enjoyed recounting their experiences of the immersion experience. Sailí, for example, described how she had answered the phone in Irish to her husband (CA, p. 158). The programme allowed for casual opportunities for the group to talk among themselves about how they were noticing their language learning. This is demonstrated in Ailín's contribution (CA, p. 154) which she made in English at the final review session:

[...] well, similar to everybody else, I found myself thinking in Irish. I found that if I listened I learnt a lot by listening. I learnt lots of verbs which is great for me because I'd forgotten them and ah what else? Just, it was strange, last night when I was watching television and I was watching an English programme but I actually thought they were speaking Irish [laughter]. But I spoke to other people at breakfast about that as well and they were saying the same thing, that your brain is trying to adjust to the language almost ... so I found that really strange but I definitely felt that by listening to everybody, and by listening to conversations at breakfast or at dinner, that I picked up a lot more.

²² Oisín says that he isn't bilingual yet but he is on the road [to being bilingual]. Do you understand? He is on the road. He was very good inside [at the presentation] as he was happy to read something. But before he read it, he spoke out, do you understand? He wasn't depending fully on the notes so that's a very good start on the road to being bilingual.

Ailín, quoted above, was at a lower competency level than most of the group. In an emotional exchange during lunch break on the first day, she said that she felt under pressure. She felt that she was the only one in the group “struggling”. I observed her growing easiness throughout the programme. Her contributions were mainly in English but her listening strategies, highlighted in the account above, led to a growth in her confidence. Those at a higher language level commented on interactions with *Gaeltacht* speakers and with members of the community. Éabha, for example, noted the importance of having a chance to work with *Gaeltacht* tutors, while Cathal had tried to make the most of the immersion experience by “eavesdropping” on the locals (CA, p. 152). Sailí recounted the social language learning strategies she used in her diary entry. She noted conversations with course tutors, with *Líonra* participants and the hotel staff. In reply to a question on how she had broadened her vocabulary, she describes a conversation over dinner regarding a book being read by a member of the group. No one at the table knew how to translate the word ‘affair’ into Irish. Their young waiter enquired in the kitchen and gave them the word *bradaíocht!* (CA, p. 180). My role regarding the creation of space to reflect on and share these overt and practical social strategies in language learning will be discussed in Chapter 8. All of the participants noted in their diaries that the programme created opportunities to get to know other members of *An Líonra*. Aisling commented that she thought they were now a “proper *Líonra*”. The following entry from Éabha supports this view:

I had an opportunity to get to know other members of the *Líonra*. I was never in the *Gaeltacht* with such a friendly group. The group is getting bigger, this is great. We’d a coffee morning this morning and there was a big crowd at it. This acquaintance is very important now that we are back in the University; it gets better support

(CA, p. 187: Translation).

Developing Language Awareness

The programme was designed to consolidate the material of the language advising workshops in Cycle 1 but also to create opportunities for participants to learn *about* the language rather than just learning the language. During the course of the facilitated discussions, some conflicting opinions regarding the use and place of Irish in the workplace were aired. Gearóid suggested that the translation of financial accounts into Irish was a waste of money. He commented that the official terminology used in the civil service or in the legal system were of “no interest to someone who wants to learn Irish” and that it was “all for hypocrisy” (CA, pp. 144-145). Róisín noted that native speakers often had to do their business with the state in English although they mightn’t

want to do so. She agreed that the new terminology was difficult but suggested that it was a case of getting used to it. The group explored issues around language status, a subject dealt with at length in the field of sociolinguistics, and a topic which would typically be on the agenda of all language awareness programmes in the workplace. Gearóid's opinion that Irish belonged to *rudáí cois tine*, fireside activities, was in direct opposition to Róisín's view that the language needed to "move on". Eoghan and Sibéal intervened to disagree with Gearóid. They emphasised the importance of Irish as a living language, as an evolving language. The significance of recognising likeminded individuals in relational knowing is relevant here. I revisited this argument in the review session at the end of the *Gaeltacht* programme, emphasised that it was important to explore both positions, and that heightened language awareness involved being able to express why Irish should be associated with the professional domain (CA, p. 155). In promoting these types of opportunities to learn in relationship with each other and to explore differences of opinion, the notion of a learning network was cultivated further.

Participants were encouraged to explore their language skills in a new way also. They were pushed to critically regard the needs and desires of *Gaeltacht* speakers rather than focusing, in interactions with them, on insecurities about personal language competence and legislative obligations. Clodagh instigated consideration of this issue. This was the first time that the group began to reflect on language rights.

[...] Ach cuimhnigh ar an duine atá ag teacht isteach chugat, an dtuigeann tú? Tá ceart ag an duine sin, tá fhios agaibh. In ionad bheith ag cuimhneamh ar an dualgas atá orainne an t-am ar fad, má thagann duine isteach sa Mhúsaem chugamsa agus má tá fhios agamsa, má labhraíonn sé, má deir sé 'Dia duit', tá teachtaireacht ansin domsa. Tá an duine sin ag cur in iúl dom gur mhaith leis nó léi seirbhís a fháil as Gaoluinn. Is ea, tosaigh ag cuimhneamh ar an duine eile seachas tú féin agus an tseirbhís a chaitheann tusa a chur ar fáil. Ach táim a rá go gcaithfidh tú an stór focal a bheith agat chomh maith²³

(CA, p. 116).

Reflection on this issue of language choice is evident in the diary data. Sailí, for instance, noted that once she demonstrated that she wanted to use Irish that the locals were helpful and happy to converse in Irish with her. Workshop discussions led to opportunities to share strategies on how

²³ But think of the person coming into you. That person has a right so instead of thinking about the responsibility we have all of the time [...] If a person comes in here to me in the Museum and if he speaks, if he says *Dia duit* there is a message there for me. That person is letting me know that she or he would like a service in Irish. So start thinking about the other person instead of yourself and the person you have to give a service to. But I'm saying that you must have the vocabulary to deal with it also.

to deal with interactions with native speakers. Doireann, for example, drew on her previous experience in her professional role at the University, of asking a caller to speak more slowly. The advantages of having a native speaker facilitate this workshop went beyond my expectations. It allowed the group opportunities to gain insight into some of the habits of those with Irish as their first language and the reasons for these. The custom of providing phone numbers in English, for example, was discussed:

Ach tá sé suimiúil [...] ach ar chúis éigin muintir na Gaeltachta I suppose cosúil le haon rud nua a tháinig isteach sa saol, anything new that came in: *rotbar* - bicycle, *cuisneoir* - fridge, *tarracóir* - tractor, the English stuck [...] agus an fáth, níl fhios agam. Was it, is saghas rud nua é, or it was new a few years ago anyway, agus just i mBéarla a thugadar an uimhir. Sin mar a thug siad amach é²⁴

(CA, p. 140).

Róisín kept the focus on Irish in the workplace context all the time and emphasised the importance of accuracy in recording Irish names and surnames. Her explanation of why many West Kerry native speakers use the English version of their names was of interest to the group. Mothers who had babies in Tralee had to have their names recorded in English on their birth certificate as the hospital staff weren't familiar with Irish (CA, p. 137). The facilitation of the group by a native speaker was important, not only because the group had an opportunity to model language, but also because it allowed access to the point of view of the native speaker as insider. Doireann mentioned that she generally added an Irish element to her correspondence to a *Gaeltacht* student once she observed the address. Róisín (CA, p. 134) promoted the importance of gestures such as this:

[...] agus tá sé sin an-tábhachtach nach bhfuil because people actually, déanann siad appreciating air sin. Tá sé actually an-tábhachtach because ní theastaíonn ó éinne sa Ghaeltacht a bheith ag cur pressure ortsa. Ní theastaíonn uaitse a bheith ag cur pressure orthu-san. Ach má thuigeann sibh a chéile insa teanga, má tá tusa sásta cúpla focal Gaoluinn a labhairt leothusan [...] tá sé tábhachtach mar bogann sé an tension a bhíonn ann. Briseann sé an leac oighir [...] an teannas, an tension briseann sé. So tá an fón tábhachtach cosúil le haon mhodh cumarsáide.²⁵

²⁴ But [...] it is interesting but for some reason, the people of the *Gaeltacht* I suppose similar to anything new that comes into life, *rotbar*-bicycle, *cuisneoir*-fridge, *tarracóir*-tractor, the English stuck. What the reasons are I don't know. Is it a new thing or was it new a few years ago anyway? They gave their numbers in English. That's how they gave them out.

²⁵ And it's very important isn't it because people appreciate that. That is actually very important because no one from the *Gaeltacht* wants to put pressure on you. You don't want to be putting pressure on them. But if you understand each other in the language, if you are happy to speak a few words to them in Irish [...] it removes the tension

The reference to tension and pressure is revealing in the above extract. It can be seen in the diary comments that discussions, observations and opportunities to interact with members of the community in person led to a much greater awareness and understanding of the native speaker. A new appreciation and a more personal and people-centred approach is evident in diary comments, such as those made by Eoghan: “Gaeltacht people use English words for mod cons e.g. tractor, bicycle, “tóg shower” and so forth. The locals were helpful and kind”. Oisín added that he enjoyed his Irish classes at the University but that “it was very special to communicate in Irish with the locals in Ballyferriter, I made a link between the place and the language” (CA, p. 174: Translation). Sailí noted how effective a common interest in music had been in giving herself and other musicians in the group access to native speakers. The local musicians, although only invited to do a short concert, ended up staying in the company of Eoghan, Sailí, Oisín and Éadaoin to play music for the night.

Exploring Language Anxiety

The skills of the two *Gaeltacht* facilitators in dealing with adult learners of Irish were pivotal to the success of Cycle 2. Róisín explored the issue of language anxiety openly. Her experience of working in an Irish language developmental role for a local authority in the provision of services through Irish added greatly to her understanding of issues. Eoghan readily admitted he was feeling “a little nervous” about his “knowledge” (CA, p. 129: translation). Common reactions to Irish were explored:

We’re Irish and when we hear a language, the first thing we think of is, Irish, oh God, school subject, genitive case, conditional tense, grammar, *séimhiú*, exams, haven’t a clue, don’t talk to me, get it away from me. And really, it’s only a language!

(CA, p. 130: Translation).

The frank conversations about language anxiety gave rise to good humoured interactions also. Róisín, in querying Oisín’s anxiety, asked him if it was off the scale altogether and was told that it was *timpeall céad*, around one hundred! When probed, Oisín recounted that he had been very fearful in primary school, that he had been in crowded classroom of boys taught by a “mad Christian Brother” and that he hated Irish (CA, p. 131). As noted in Chapter 2, the Irish language

involved. It breaks the ice [...] the tension, the tension is broken. So the phone is important like any other means of communication.

is a highly emotive subject, and particularly so for those with negative experiences at school. Verbs such as ‘hate’, ‘beat’ and ‘force’ are often used in accounts about learning Irish and references such as Oisín’s to Christian Brothers instilling fear are quite common place. A brief look at online discussion boards will verify this (Politics.ie, 2010). This sociohistorical background makes Oisín’s involvement in *An Léonra*, his evolving language competence, and his key role in initiatives relating to the support of mandatory Irish, all the more interesting.

One of the questions included in the *Gaeltacht* diaries queried if the immersion programme had helped participants feel more confident about their ability to deal with Irish-medium queries in their professional roles. Eoghan noted that he was more confident and “getting more comfortable” with *Gaeltacht* people. He commented that Róisín had really encouraged him by saying that it was “only a language” and by admitting that she had been worried herself about speaking in English when she first started working:

Yeah, but an rud faoi, smaoinigh air. Nuair a bhí mise óg ag fás suas anseo, when I was growing up here, ní raibh aon Bhéarla againn agus bhí an anxiety sin againne, ár mbéil a oscailt as Béarla [...] Bhíomar á dhéanamh ar scoil, ach dá gcuirfeadh duine éigin ceist orainn as Béarla bheimis you know, you’d freeze, you froze over. [...] Anyway an fhadhb atá ag daoine that Irish isn’t their first language I can understand ach, the only way to get over it, I suppose, is to just give it a lash and that’s it. [...] Níl sé deacair because at the end of the day, cosúil le haon rud eile, it depends on your attitude atá agat istigh anseo. [...] Níor cheart dúinn an saghas therapy session seo a bheith againn tráthnóna Dé Luain seo!²⁶

(CA, P. 132).

This disclosure on Róisín’s part that she understood what it was like to be anxious was a key moment in the workshop. It clearly allowed the participants to explore their own anxieties in a safer way. It relates well to the fourth stage in transformative learning, discussed in Chapter 3, when one realises that others have gone, or are going through, the same experiences as you. The group carried their anxieties in a lighter way by the end of the programme. Eoghan, drawing on Róisín’s statement that effective communication relied on much more than words, reminded the group of the importance of *féinmbuinín*²⁷ at the closing session (CA, p. 152). I commended their

²⁶ Yeah, but the thing about it, think about it. When I was growing up here, when I was growing up here, we had no English. We had that anxiety about opening our mouths in English [...] We were doing it at school but if someone asked us a question at school. We’d you know, you’d freeze, you froze over. [...] Anyway the problem that people have that Irish isn’t their first language I can understand but, the only way to get over it, I suppose, is to just give it a lash and that’s it. [...] It isn’t difficult because at the end of the day, like anything eile, it depends on your attitude inside here. [...] We shouldn’t be having this sort of therapy session of a Monday evening!

²⁷ Self-confidence.

achievements and noted the obvious change in Oisín in particular. Having observed him the previous evening standing publicly with a *Gaeltacht* man discussing music, I suggested that there was no way he might have had that interaction three months previously. Oisín, to the group’s amusement, said that he was “on tranquilisers” and that he had sat close to the door in case he didn’t understand! (CA, p. 157). The sound file included in the Case Archive (begins 41.45) demonstrates group camaraderie and spirit, and their positive reaction to him being named *Ambasadóir na Teanga*, the language ambassador for the weekend.

Language Advising Stances

Critical friends, as detailed in the methodology chapter, were involved in a novel way. They played roles additional to those of strengthening validation and allowing triangulation of data. This is evidenced in their discussion, which took place while I facilitated the closing session of the *Gaeltacht*-based programme (CA, pp. 147-160). Their involvement in analysing and steering initiatives in this final review session probed initial consideration of how this type of liaison with others outside of the *Líonra* might be a necessary measure to bolster the minority language community in general. This is a key theme in Chapter 8. While sitting in on the language awareness sessions facilitated by Róisín and Clodagh, I had an opportunity to observe what stances were necessary to create an environment which allowed an open and honest discussion about language anxiety. International best practice with regard to the recruitment of competent speakers, as opposed to the ‘up-skilling’ of current staff, has been explored in the literature review. Critical friends (CA, p. 149) suggested that maybe one shouldn’t get caught up with the label of “learners” in this context. They put forward a very practical approach which stressed the importance of professional knowledge as well as language competency:

[...] muna bhfuil foghlaimoirí againn, bhuel then ní bheidh daoine go deo chun seirbhís a chur ar fáil. So caithfidh glacadh leis gur foghlaimoirí sinn, is cuma cén rud; tá Gaoluinn líofa agam – b’fhéidir nach mbeinn in ann deileáil leis an gceist ar an nguthán ach oiread mar níl an t-eolas agam. Tá an t-eolas ag na daoine seo. Tá cuid mhaith Gaoluinne acu. Is dóigh liom go mbeadh daoine, go mbeidis ábalta ceisteanna a fhreagairt agus seirbhís a chur ar fáil. Má theipeann orthu, bhuel ní hé deireadh an tsaoil é. Tagann ceisteanna aniar aduaidh orainn ar fad, is cuma cén teanga atá i gceist [...]²⁸

²⁸ [...] if we don’t have learners then we’ll never have people to provide services. So we have to accept that we are learners, it doesn’t matter what; [...] I have fluent Irish – maybe I wouldn’t be able to deal with the question on the phone either because I don’t have the information. These people have the information. They have lots of Irish. I think people would be, that they would be able to answer questions and to provide a service. And if they fail, well it’s

I noted the importance of objective viewpoints and group facilitation by an outsider in my observations following the programme. *Rud a ritheann liom ná go raibh an-tábhacht le háisitheoireacht ón stráinséar, an tsúil eile. Chuir Róisín go mór ar a suaimhneas iad, chuir sí ag caint agus ag gáire iad*²⁹ (CA, p. 160). I considered her as outsider facilitator with insider knowledge of the type of expectations a *Gaeltacht* speaker might have. This motivated me to regard how I might draw on contacts and promote a more coordinated team approach at *Aonad na Gaeilge* to support *Líonra* members. My interactions with Éadaoin, Róisín and Clodagh grew steadily following the programme. Clodagh's announcement that they would welcome phone and written communication from *Líonra* members to *Oidbreacht Chorca Dhuibhne*, and that they would visit the University in the following months to see how *An Líonra* initiatives were progressing, was unanticipated. This was beyond all expectations and a vote of confidence in the efforts and the open positive attitude of the group (CA, p. 159). More importantly, the foundations were laid for future joint University-*Gaeltacht* projects. These are dealt with briefly in the Epilogue.

The *Gaeltacht* programme, although short in duration, was intensive. It was designed so as to offer as many experiences as possible for communication in the target language, Irish, and to create conditions which would encourage collaborative discourse and facilitate transformative learning. The importance of the physical learning environment necessary to promote engagement with issues of language anxiety in an authentic way was highlighted. In designing the programme, it was my intention to create experiences of language interaction which learners might draw in their professional context at the University. A clear stance taken by me as language advisor, while off-campus in *An Ghaeltacht*, was to reiterate the importance of learner reflection on feeling inside or outside his or her comfort zone. I took the opportunity, for instance, to highlight the role music had played in Oisín's successful Irish language interactions with locals:

Níor thuig éinne go raibh tú míchompordach, sin an rud you know. Agus [...] bhí an ceol féin an-lárnach nach raibh, le dhá oíche anuas chomh maith? So sin [iad] na rudaí a chuireann muid ar fad ar ár gcompord. So find your comfort zone is dócha, sa saol oibre chomh maith. Caithfimid a bheith ag machnamh air sin³⁰ (CA, p. 158).

not the end of the world. [...] Questions [unexpected questions] surprise us all. It doesn't matter what language is being used [...].

²⁹ Something that occurs to me is that the facilitation by a stranger, that 'alternative view' was very important. Róisín really put them at ease. She got them to talk and she made them laugh.

³⁰ No one realised that you were uncomfortable, that's the thing, you know. And [...] music was key, wasn't it, for the last two nights? Those are the things that put us all at our ease. So find your comfort zone, I suppose, in your professional life also. We have to be thinking about that.

The importance of opportunities for learning in relationships off-site in *An Ghaeltacht* and to create meaning from language experiences will be discussed in depth in Chapter 8. How this *Gaeltacht tearmann*, this refuge space nurtured deep reflection and consideration of assumptions about language practices will be considered also, and my role in bringing this about defined.

Monitoring and Reviewing

It was decided at the final review session on the last day of the *Gaeltacht* programme that as well as plans for social gathering and personal language development, we should think about ways of making a more active offer of the Irish-medium services available on campus. The significance of relational knowing came to the fore again in the discussion of critical friends about the challenges of improving demand for services. Clodagh commented on the emphasis on sharing and working in partnership in the group (CA, p. 159). She proposed that we begin by targeting those departments with *Líonra* members who were comfortable with providing services and that this might help encourage the others. She suggested that the habit of *An Líonra* members helping each other, from within the group, was effective as they owned the process themselves (CA, p.151). The involvement of a larger group brought a wider range of insights and strengthened measures to validate research findings. Móirín, for instance, had not been involved in Research Cycle 1. She supports Clodagh's view in her diary comment: "The *Líonra* will be very important to me when I'm dealing with queries. I know that help will be available and [I know] who can provide this help" (CA, p. 190: Translation).

Caoimhe and Aisling drew attention to the importance of institutional recognition of the efforts being made by them, as University personnel, to promote Irish. The acknowledgement of line managers was considered vital. It was decided to make every effort to draw attention to the *Gaeltacht* programme once we were back on campus (CA, p. 158). The recognition of the hard work of these staff members by University authorities became an important theme in the final action research cycle. The session closed by drawing on legislative obligations mapped out in the University's Language Scheme and a consideration of some of the steps which might be taken to link Irish in a more formal way to their professional roles. A proposal to add a line on their emails stating that they were happy to deal with business in Irish was adopted. Prompted by Cathal to make suggestions, I proposed the creation of short group promotional sound files to market their

willingness to provide services through Irish. I suggested the need for some “risk-taking” in their language use at work also:

Bhíomar ag ól caife níos luaithe, mé féin agus Éadaoin agus bhíomar ag caint faoi “mystery shoppers” a chur i dteagmháil libh (group laughter) [...] risk-taking is a big part of getting over anxiety isn't it? So could we stage something? We'd say to you [...] beidh teagmháil éigin agat an tseachtain seo ó mhac léinn ón nGaeltacht. Ní hé go mbeadh aon bhrú ort déileáil leis ach b'fhéidir mar chéad chéim go ndéarfá leat féin “bhuel, ní raibh sé sin chomh hóc sin. D'éirigh liom é a dhéanamh!” So if we can begin to think maybe of little strategies that we might use to build up an misneach anois sa chomhthéacs oibre, mar féach ar a bhfuil déanta agaibh sa Gaeltacht³¹

(CA, p. 157).

I had no idea at that stage that the institution's ability to provide an Irish-medium service, as agreed in the Language Scheme, would be formally assessed by *Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga* a month later. This will be discussed in Chapter 7.

Change in Language Practices and Attitudes

The language awareness of the group steadily progressed over the duration of the three-day programme and a more critical dimension, a shift in personal and cultural identity became evident on the return to campus in the period immediately afterwards. Róisín, in discussion with Clodagh and Éadaoin, (CA, p. 149) noted the increased confidence of the group after the programme:

Just an grúpa a bhí agamsa go raibh, go bhfuil Gaoluinn réasúnta mhaith acu agus go mbraithim uathu féinigh ar maidin go bhfuil níos mó misnigh acu de bharr an trí lá ar chaitheadar anseo. [Fuaireadar sin] de bharr an tumadh atá sórt factha acu, go dtug sé sin níos mó misnigh dóibh féinigh: uimhir a haon labhairt eatarthu féinigh. Chomh maith leis sin, chualadar muintir na háite, is dóigh liom, ag caint; agus bhíodar fiosrach agus bhíodar ag tabhairt rudaí leo go ginearálta. Is dóigh liom go bhfuil níos mó misnigh acu agus ciallaíonn sé sin go mbeidh siad ábalta fiosrúcháin ghinearálta a fhreagairt agus déileáil leo. Éadaoin: [...] níl aon amhras faoi ná go bhfuil feabhas iontach tagtha orthu.³²

³¹ Myself and Éadaoin were drinking coffee earlier, and we were talking about putting “mystery shoppers” in touch with you all (group laughter) [...] risk-taking is a big part of getting over anxiety isn't it? So could we stage something? We'd say to you [...] you'll have some contact next week from a *Gaeltacht* student. It's not that you would be under any pressure to deal with him or her. Maybe as a first step you could say to yourself “Well, that wasn't too bad. I succeeded in doing it!” So if we can begin to think maybe of little strategies that we might use to build up confidence in the professional context now. Look at what you have done [succeeded in doing] in the *Gaeltacht*.

³² Just the group that I had, that have relatively good Irish. I got a sense from them this morning that they have more confidence now after the three days, because of the immersion that they've had. [That gave] them more confidence in themselves, firstly, to talk among themselves. As well as that they heard the people of the locality talking. They were curious and generally noticing things. I think that they have more confidence and that that means that they will be able to answer general queries and deal with them. Éadaoin: [...] there's no doubt but that they have made excellent progress.

The high motivation levels of *Líonra* members for independent language learning and practice following the programme was striking. Sailí, for example, mapped out a comprehensive personal plan. This included a new focus on how she might incorporate Irish into her professional life. One of her targets related to the recording of frequently asked questions in her administrative role with a view to translating them to Irish (CA, p. 182). Following on the established practice of reflecting on language learning in Cycle 1, Cathal promoted the importance of recognising the improvement that they had made (CA, p. 157). It marked a significant advance that this metacognitive language learning strategy was being promoted by a member of *An Líonra* rather than by me. He noted that their sense of improvement had given them confidence. This was supported by Oisín: “This was our first time for a lot of us to get our chance to spend three days trying to speak it and we’ve all improved. It has made a huge difference” (CA, p. 158). Cathal proposed that there was “power in company” and drew on the importance of the proposed coffee morning to continue that (CA, p. 155). This was their first reference to group strength. It reaffirmed the research emphasis and interest in nurturing opportunities for learning in relationship with each other. The new-found confidence of members of the group and the sense that they had finally become a network was reiterated at the first *Líonra* meeting following the immersion programme on 21 October 2010. Keen to maintain *Gaeltacht* momentum, I led a discussion on planning for learning, and creating opportunities for language practice on campus at this meeting. The focus was once again on the metacognitive, affective and social strategies discussed in the literature review. The group’s first *Maidin Chaije* had taken place a week previously. Oisín noted his personal goals for their weekly gathering: “each week if I can speak to a different person, there’s barriers coming down and my confidence is growing” (CA, p. 206). The group, in creating their own forum for speaking and listening language practice and improvement, were creating strategies to deal with language anxiety. The design of authentic and purposeful opportunities to write in Irish was more challenging. Eoghan presented ideas to promote written Irish in the clubs and societies they were involved in on campus. He suggested, for example, that they might help Oisín with an advertising campaign for a traditional music DVD he had made with a local *Gaelscoil*. The demonstration of helpful behaviour is a hallmark of relational knowing and evidence of cooperation and evolving social strategies in the language learning and practice of *Líonra* members. A change in direction towards campus initiatives rather than initiatives being led by *Aonad na Gaeilge* became noticeable for the first time at the meeting on 21 October 2010.

Conclusion

The detail of a key stage in the action research cycle has been given in this chapter. The environment which probed deep consideration of feelings around interactions with native speakers in a naturalistic setting was explored at length. The major contribution of critical friends was driven home at this stage of the research project. There was a sense that the group, having had an opportunity to be together away from the context of mandate and professional remit, had been allowed, for a brief time, to consider their identities as language learners independent of this context. Fun, open communication and engagement with other *Líonra* members, in a mentored setting, changed their attitudes around legislative responsibilities. There was a sense now that they were responsible as a group rather than as isolated individuals. There was a raised awareness of the need to have their commitment and efforts to improve their language skills acknowledged at organisational level at the University. The next chapter explores their transition from being language learners to language users on the campus.

CHAPTER 7: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS 3

Introduction: The Third Research Cycle, An Ghaeilge san Ionad Oibre

This chapter presents and analyses data collected during the third and final action research cycle. The cycle took place over the six-month period from November 2010 to April 2011. As noted in the methodology chapter, the emphasis in this cycle was on creating opportunities for Irish language use in the University workplace. The focus was on exploring ways of making an active offer of Irish-medium services available at the institution, and on the use of metacognitive, social, and affective language learning strategies. Research participants were supported to cross the bridge from being language learners to language users and to embrace formal language monitoring opportunities with confidence. A process checking the University's compliance with Official Languages Act commitments was led by *Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga* at the commencement of the cycle. An analytic account of the progression of events from November 2010 to April 2011 will be given below, and records of how monitoring and evaluation occurred outlined. Similar to the layout of Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, key tools and leadership initiatives are described with commentary. Communication procedures are dealt with firstly and observations relating to *Cúpla Ceist*, a campus-wide initiative, are then considered. Data relating to contextual practices and the issues encountered is presented and analysed thematically. Consistent with the layout of the two preceding findings and analysis chapters, the headings: language advising stances, monitoring and reviewing, and change in language practices and attitudes, are used again to structure the observations.

Tools/Leadership Initiatives

Communication Procedures

A meeting to brief designated contacts on procedures regarding Irish-medium communication at the University took place on 3 November 2010 (See Appendix G, p. 238). This meeting was triggered by correspondence from *Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga* outlining their plan to investigate University compliance with commitments made as follows:

- Specific commitments made by the public body in its first language scheme, regarding providing the public with a telephone service through Irish, will be examined.

- Calls will be made to the public body on three (3) separate days during three (3) separate weeks.
- Compliance with the commitments will be tested by asking predetermined questions in Irish, by telephone, that relate to the commitments made.
- The answer given will be written down and a judgement will be made on whether it satisfactorily complies with the commitments.
- The public body will be informed of the findings of the investigation.
- The public body will be asked for an explanation and corrective recommendations if it is deemed that commitments are not being complied with satisfactorily.

A frank and honest discussion of how the designated contacts felt about this audit took place at the meeting. The official correspondence led to a higher attendance than normal. Similar to the immersion programme in Cycle 2, contributions from a larger group broaden the scope of the data and lead to more detailed insights into anxieties around language monitoring. They help define my role in helping learners to explore feelings of pressure to perform in a second language, and to normalise self-consciousness in this context. The extended excerpts from the meeting data below demonstrate some of the affective strategies used by the group.

Móirín: I'm very nervous now. I feel a lot of pressure now. I am not able to deal with Irish-medium queries. [...] Well there's no time now, in the sense of, I feel I have to go back and do my research and my practice. [...] I'm kind of conscious of the time and I'm conscious of even something simple like my colleagues sitting around listening to me stumbling and stuttering on the phone. [...] Even at the meetings, I feel, and I said this at the office meeting before I left, even when we have our weekly meetings, if it's brought up about calls coming through and they just say "ah sure we'll just put them through to Móirín". I just feel it's very handy for them

(CA, p. 216: Translation).

Price (1991, p. 105), in a discussion of the experience of anxious foreign language learners, noted their worries that others would think they were "stupid", a "total dingbat" or "a babbling baby" because they were having trouble with vocabulary and grammar structures. Móirín's honesty encouraged offers of support from Doireann who suggested that she would accept transferred calls (CA, p. 217). Echos of the initiative involving language partners in the previous research cycle are evident here. Eoghan helped make sense of the anxiety and drew on his insights from the *Gaeltacht* programme to put Móirín at ease:

[...] with any test there's going to be pressure on anyone, no matter what *líofacht* someone has in the language. But the encouraging thing that I heard down on the course was that, people from the *Gaeltacht*, when they hear a couple of words in Irish, it breaks the tension for them. This testing is going to pass by after a month, whatever, but the overall, the goodness that will come out of this is that we will be able to say a few words in Irish to anyone from the *Gaeltacht*. That's going to help then. It can develop from that. We're all going to get better in our *líofacht* (fluency) by talking, by the different things that are going on, so that will come

(CA, p. 218).

I was heartened by this example of “making positive statements” as this had been encouraged as a coping strategy to lower anxiety. Eoghan's critical reflection, and his ability to draw on *Gaeltacht* exploratory discussion in the context of fears around test calls, gave me a sense that connections were being made and understood. It was much more effective to have him remind colleagues of *Gaeltacht* discussions rather than such reflection being promoted by me. His public validation of how the group's language competency had improved was significant. Helping behaviours, or open offers of both practical and moral support to each other, had become more frequent.

Although the formal monitoring by *Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga* induced high levels of stress, it presented *An Líonra* with a ‘perfect laboratory’, a term used by Éadaoin, critical friend. I noted in my observations that the test calls fitted very well with risk-taking initiatives promoted in language learning (CA, p. 211). Motivation levels were boosted by the purposefulness of the activity and the opportunity to have a formal assessment of progress made. Aisling's comment below represents this:

Even though I'm very committed, ok I'm a bit nervous but there's no need to be nervous because [...] I'm quite happy with my Irish at the level that is going to be needed. I do think, even for people like me who are committed, it's actually given me a bit of a [boost]. But apart from motivating me, the mention of an audit [group laughter] I think, it has galvanised a little bit, right? And I think that's no bad thing!

(CA, p. 227).

My role as language advisor in stimulating group reflection and interaction is apparent at these face-to-face meetings with the group. Sulis and the *Líonra Tacaíochta Teanga* blog were used as tools to complement this dialogue. Sulis statistics recorded eighty-one ‘activities’ for November 2010 (CA, p. 326). Reflection on anxieties around monitoring, and on strategies for success was promoted in an overt way in the three blog entries, *Cúrsaí Monatóireachta*, *Straitéisí Sóisialta*, and *A*

*Thuilleadh Machnaimb faoin bhFoghlaim*³³ (Appendix D, p. 217). I attempted to bolster confidence and draw on all the discussions that had taken place since May 2010. The extract below is typical of the type of exchanges which took place. It highlights the contextual practices of advising in a mandated context in particular:

The first thing I'd say to you is to go on the blog and look at those strategies. I've tailored them to the affective side of dealing with language anxiety that we've been talking about before. Think about, rehearse what might happen, that's all you can do. Do as much practice as you can. Think about it as much as you can, but don't be fazed by it. When all is said and done, remember those discussions we had with Róisín in Kerry. Nobody is ringing from *An Ghaeltacht* to put pressure on *you* particularly. So arm yourself with confidence. Arm yourself with what you have succeeded with to date rather than thinking about "Here I am now and I'm the person that is taking the call". It is very important that your colleagues are on board in supporting you on that. [...] We need to do some more work on that, getting all of the line managers and all of the colleagues on board in terms of supporting you. [...] Those of you who are anxious or maybe working at lower levels, maybe a little more involvement with the group will do a lot in terms of supporting each other to get through it. I think your idea of forwarding a call [...] let's try that as a strategy if that [might] help the person who isn't as confident this time round

(CA, p. 218).

Many of the hallmarks of the role I played during Research Cycle 3 are evident in this quotation. The promotion of reflection, endorsement of preparation, and praise are typical strategies promoted in a traditional one-to-one language advising sessions. They were encouraged to draw on earlier experiences and anxieties, and to openly discuss feelings at *Líonra* meetings. The fostering of group support became even stronger in this cycle, and a new focus on attention to the importance of management and institutional support became evident also. The cultivation of support mechanisms and a "care-full" approach is a theme to be developed further in Chapter 8 (Grummel, Devine and Lynch, 2008, p. 14).

Once communication procedures and the accompanying language support files were published, *Líonra* members quickly understood the necessity to disseminate information to their colleagues (See Appendix H, p. 240). Doireann and Sibéal had already circulated the resources in their offices so that others would be in a position to cover for them, should Irish-medium queries be made, while they were out of the office. A 'ground-up' initiative and a new impetus to change attitudes to Irish at organisational level, and to drive the importance of institutional responsibility

³³ Let's Talk about Monitoring, Social Strategies, and Further Reflection on Learning.

for legislative requirement, became evident. It helped that the representative of the Office of the Corporate Secretary, the office with ultimate responsibility for issues of legislative compliance at the University, understood this. This was all the more significant as she was not an Irish speaker herself. This is analysed in light of the literature discussed in Chapter 2 about the importance of building language awareness in general at institutional level in order to support organisational change. Research participants were rightly sceptical about the interest of line managers in attending the information session for management personnel on communication procedures. The following comment from Caoimhe captures this scepticism:

Are you [we] going to press on them [...] the responsibility that is on the designated contact people? Because sometimes you feel that you are not getting the support, of your line managers, because you know: “who wants to be bothered with it?” [...] If it’s coming from there down, that people accept that you are taking responsibility, respect that you are [that’s one thing] but I don’t think a lot of people are feeling that. It will be interesting to see how many people turn up [to the meeting for management personnel] and how seriously managers are viewing this

(CA, p. 218).

My own concern about the importance of the acknowledgment by management personnel of the commitment of *Líonra* members to implement the provisions of the legislation in a meaningful way is also apparent in the data (CA, p. 218). The meeting of designated contacts to discuss official University procedures prior to the formal monitoring of *An Coimisinéir Teanga* was a turning point in the research. The test calls had actually become an impetus for *Líonra* members to drive the importance of organisational support and awareness of the OLA at organisational level. This was the first time that individual, group and organisational learning concerns intersected for the research participants. The formal monitoring of compliance to legislative commitments in their respective administrative areas, and their own part in that, saw them take on a new diplomatic role. The importance of critical discussion about institutional interest or lack of interest in the implementation of a bilingual strategy was perceptible. There was, as anticipated, a disappointing turn out at the meeting to brief management personnel on the communication procedures. However, a model of good practice was provided. Doireann’s line manager, for example, announced that she had attended as Doireann had pressed on her the importance of their department embracing legislative commitments in relation to Irish (CA, p. 240).

In the midst of all of the stresses around test calls, the group were able to poke fun at their anxieties. They enjoyed suggesting ways of making sure that Eoghan, who was going on

holidays during the test phase, would not escape the pressure! (CA, p. 253). The importance of having opportunities not only to use Irish but to have their competency validated by others became significant. I organised that each of the designated contacts would have a practice call from Léan, a native speaker based in the local community, in early November 2010. Her short constructive feedback was then shared with *Líonra* members (CA, pp. 339-340). This, Cathal noted, helped authenticate the learners' own sense of the progress they had made and boosted self-confidence (CA, p. 253). Monitoring calls were duly made by *Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga* and it was confirmed by phone to the University's Office of the Corporate Secretary that the quality of service provided through Irish was satisfactory. Some helping practices now characteristic among *Líonra* members are evident in the data relating to the official calls. Doireann, for example, attempted to put others at ease about the assessment once she had been monitored formally over the phone herself (CA, p. 426).

Cúpla Ceist, a Video Initiative

Cúpla Ceist was a series of short videos involving *Líonra* members in conversation with other members of the campus community in Irish (See Appendix I, p. 248 and DVD). Sailí had suggested in late November 2010 that the group needed a particular task to complete, preferably a work-related group initiative (CA, p. 242). Drawing on this idea, on strategies promoted in the earlier research phases, and on input from critical friends, the initiative was designed. It aimed to promote purposeful opportunities to speak Irish on campus and to gain experience in planning collaborative language tasks. The importance of computer-mediated communication and teamwork with regard to an active offer of Irish-medium services on campus were highlighted also. The videos were published on the *Aonad na Gaeilge* YouTube channel during *Seachtain na Gaeilge* 2011.³⁴ The use of indirect language learning strategies was a particular feature of the project, these are considered below. Attention was given, as in previous research phases, to feelings around language anxiety and to social relations in language learning also.

Etaín, critical friend and Ruairí, an *Aonad na Gaeilge* tutor, facilitated the project. They presented a sample video as a suggested template in the briefing session about the project for *Líonra* members (CA, p. 278). The group then worked independently and purposefully to decide who they might invite as interviewees and to prepare draft questions. The comprehensive

³⁴ The national Irish language awareness week held in March every year.

preparations for the video project added momentum to the *Maidin Chaije*. Critical friends noted that the project got people involved (CA, p. 349). Aisling captured how goal-setting and a definite group focus added energy to the weekly gathering, as there was something potentially fruitful to talk about (CA, p. 398). Virtual participation on the discussion forum on Sulis increased also. Draft interview questions were posted here and Sulis activity was boosted when opportunities for writing ‘naturalistically’ had a clear focus and participants sought opinions on their drafts (CA, pp. 335-342).

Similar to the experience with the wiki tool, they did not correct each other’s work. However, under my direction, Étaín, the language tutor leading the project team, probed them persistently to develop their input and observations further. The importance of group collaboration and access to a number of language experts was highlighted as an important part of the language support framework of the project. Preparation as a language learning strategy was particularly evident. Sailí used her phone to record and practice her *Cúpla Ceist* questions (CA, p. 382). Reflection levels were high and members did much self-monitoring and self-evaluating of their performance in front of the camera. The nature of the language task was important as it led to linkages with a wider audience. A discussion forum entry from Sailí noted the support she had from *Aonad na Gaeilge* personnel and from *Líonra* members in preparing for her video (CA, p. 332). I reflected on the role played by ‘outsiders’ in the group and how, similar to our *Gaeltacht* experience in Research Cycle 2, the learners were boosted by these interactions (CA, p. 345). Éadaoin, in particular, brought creativity and energy to the project. The fun element of being involved in the video series was palpable from the outset and both Sibéal and Aisling made reference to the entertainment factor in their interviews. The broadening of the *Líonra* through the involvement of project facilitators, camera crew, technical experts, critical friends, and the interviewees themselves was unanticipated. Aisling, for instance, commented in early April 2011 that the project had gone where she did not expect it to go (CA, p. 348). Having interacted on camera with other University staff with Irish, *Líonra* members were recognised on campus and were addressed in Irish by people they didn’t know (CA, p. 399). Orchestrated opportunities for naturalistic language practice in the project gave rise to and normalised random unanticipated opportunities for language usage. It also encouraged newcomers at the *Maidin Chaije* (CA, p. 427). The importance of this development of critical mass in the minority language community is a theme which will be taken up in Chapter 8.

The language awareness of the general campus community was heightened by the *Cúpla Ceist* series. The significance of the interview with the Director of Corporate Affairs, a member of the University Executive, was noted (CA, p. 411). The raising of institutional awareness of legislative requirements, as noted earlier in the chapter, became a major theme for *An Líonra* in the final research phase. This was the case for Aisling in particular. She played a monitoring role with regard to legislative compliance in her faculty and she remarked that the University would only do what they were legally obliged to do in relation to Irish language promotion. The potential for grassroots to influence management is a theme which is developed further in Chapter 8. Gearóid, it should be noted, remained firm in his agreement with the Limerick poet, Michael Hartnett, that English was decidedly more suitable for “doing business in, for finances and such” (CA, p. 311).³⁵ He was also against any effort to draw attention to the work of *An Líonra* from University authorities. At the final review meeting of the *Cúpla Ceist* initiative on 1 April 2011, he described campus taskforce efforts in other areas as “patronising old shite” (CA, p. 348). This alternative standpoint meant that *Líonra* members and I were prompted to consider our own assumptions about developments which had taken place. I had a real sense of how we had managed to make something new and creative out of legislative obligation. This is clear in my observations following this review meeting below:

I really like the idea that has come up about what *na físeáin* say about the campus as a workplace, the notion of camaraderie, campus spirit. Irish allows us to say something about the workplace. Éadaoin’s comments about liking shots of Aisling typing, Sailí walking, the campus artwork etc. make me want to describe it as the workplace through Irish rather than Irish in the workplace. This is certainly a theme that I would like to develop! I thoroughly enjoyed the discussion regarding the reactions that others have had to the YouTube clips. Aisling is thriving on it. I note her comment regarding the importance of humour as a medium. She is intrigued by those who have greeted her in Irish. [...] The whole notion of *pobal* is such a palpable theme now. I’m just delighted with that outcome

(CA, p. 350).

Language Advising Stances

Preliminary analysis drew my attention to spaces and places of learning on campus. My observations from early April 2011 demonstrate how I was thrilled by the development of the *Gaeltacht Bheag* idea and how Oisín might be described as the “ideas champion” (CA, p. 349). The

³⁵ Gearóid is referring to the line in Hartnett’s poem Farewell to English, “[...] the perfect language to sell pigs in” (Hartnett, 1975).

success of the *Maidin Chaije* was largely attributed to a change in the venue from *Seomra na Gaeilge*, the designated Irish language social space at the University, and the sense that it was an initiative for staff organised by staff. It was significant that it had been “taken away from an individual department” (CA, p. 470). *Cúinne na Gaeltachta*, the name given by *An Líonra* to the area where they met in the University restaurant, was their own space. Eoghan observed that as long as people were coming together each week, ideas would be generated (CA, p. 460). The notion of a particular time slot, 10.30-11.15 on Wednesday mornings, being associated with the *Maidin Chaije* at *Cúinne na Gaeltachta* was discussed by the group. They decided not to create a permanent Irish language space in the restaurant area. Their rationale was that a defined period of time would be more inclusive and would avoid elitist associations with the language (CA, pp. 380-81). This helped me see *Seomra na Gaeilge* in a different light. The role of the language advisor to facilitate the creation of safe and inclusive spaces where Irish might be spoken, and where issues around language use might be deliberated on, is discussed further in the next chapter.

Líonra members were encouraged to explore some of their assumptions about learning Irish. There was, for instance, something of a breakthrough in understanding when learners reflected on their language learning biographies in the action research. Aisling, for example, felt that although she achieved fluency in her spoken Irish when she went to *Scoil na Leanai* in Waterford at the age of ten, she lost her grasp on both English and Irish grammar. She made sense of her confidence in her spoken skills, and her anxieties in relation to writing and grammatical accuracy in Irish, by drawing on these early experiences (CA, pp. 412-413). As Murray (2014, p. 393) in a discussion of the use of narrative in language learning suggests, students when considering their language learning histories, “were not only reflecting on past experiences, they were also personalizing their learning and engaging in an exploration of self”. Sibéal made regular references throughout the research project to previous experiences in learning Spanish and French as second languages. This helped inform her understanding of herself as a learner of Irish as a second language.

The role of language advisor to engage with a wider audience to meet the support needs of the minority language context is an issue which will be explored in greater detail in the discussion chapter. Access to both technical and language expertise, for instance, were considered integral to the success of the *Cúpla Ceist* initiative (CA, p. 441). Aisling’s suggestion that I was the ‘bedrock’, the one to ensure continuity and ensure the sustainability of initiatives, is

developed in detail. This was her own experience as *an duine buan*,³⁶ the civil servant, in the senior administration of a University faculty. She had “technical knowledge, continuity and memory” (CA, p. 410). This triggered me to look at my own role in a similar way. Our sharing of expertise and mutual trust is apparent here. It confirmed the need for the networking practices which had been established, and the positive outcomes of nurturing such relational knowing. These ambassadorial concerns will also be developed further in the discussion chapter.

Monitoring and Reviewing

This section will review how careful and continual monitoring and analysis took place in the third research cycle ensuring that initiatives were adjusted and refined in the most potentially promising ways. I abandoned the language advising plan for the *Líonra* workshop on 22 November 2010, sensing a need for us to explore more openly what we had already achieved and in what direction we might steer language improvement. Cathal suggested that I was looking on with my *spéaclaí acadúla*³⁷ and that *Líonra* needs and motivations³⁷ were intrinsically linked at that stage to social language use on campus (CA, p. 240). *Líonra* members were not so interested in reflection on language learning. On further exploration, Eoghan noted that I may have been trying to push things along too fast. He made reference to the current variance in language levels among the group members but suggested that in a year or two they might all be at similar levels (CA, p. 241). Consultation ensured that initiatives were steered where the group wanted to go according to their own chosen focus. The use of dialogue was important. Indeed, the interaction in language advising is often perceived as a “dialogue in which the role of the counsellor is not that of a questioner knowing the right answer, but a participant in a dialogue looking for a joint answer” (Karlsson et al., 2007, p. 52). I reiterated the importance of us as a *Líonra* being able to accept what didn’t work as much as what did and the need for reflection on this (CA, p. 240). *Líonra* members had realised the importance of companionship as an integral marker for themselves. The following comment was revealing:

It’s just to get the ball rolling and we’re in the process at the moment of getting the ball rolling. I imagine it will take significantly more exertion when it is rolling. So I suppose we’re pumping a lot of energy in now and maybe not seeing as much as we might when it is [rolling]. You pushed us there on the e-mail and I suppose you have to challenge us too or we wouldn’t do it.

³⁶ The permanent person.

³⁷ Academic glasses.

I don't know what the next stage is but if we start doing that it'll start generating [interest]. But more [most] importantly [is that] the group feels a sense of camaraderie *agus cuideachtas* [sic]

(CA, p. 245).

The challenges of catering for individual language learning and support needs, meeting legislative requirements, and satisfying the *Líonra* focus on using language socially, were critically explored at this meeting. It was agreed that all of these aims could be mutually beneficial and that we were on our way to meeting statutory obligations in a novel way (CA pp. 248-249). I considered how the support of a mixed ability group might be looked on as an opportunity as well as a challenge. Language learners in formal classroom settings are generally grouped by ability so those at lower levels are not exposed to more proficient users in such an overt way. Those *Líonra* members at a lower skill-level were being brought on by the group (CA, p. 240). How mixed-ability grouping nurtured the development of co-operative dispositions among professional colleagues was of interest. Not only were these members of staff cultivating new capabilities in themselves and among themselves but the scope of this cooperation to boost the spirit of the University workplace in general was apparent also.

Goal-setting for the group became a clear focus of Research Cycle 3 in a way that individual goal-setting had been the hallmark of Cycle 1. Eoghan noted that they had met at lunch time over four consecutive weeks. He presented some language activities he had designed using *Inis Airc*, a documentary on *TG4* Player, at one of the sessions (CA, p. 355). Some sharing of language learning strategies and resources took place at the *Maidin Chaije* also (CA, p. 408). As well as arranging to meet formally, the group embraced informal opportunities to use Irish socially. Evidence of new habits of choosing Irish as the language of unplanned social interactions on campus is evident in the data. Cathal remarked on the likelihood of those who were in the *Gaeltacht* together greeting each other in Irish. Éadaoin, critical friend, noted how she too had observed this while walking around campus (CA, p. 344).

The Sulis VLE was monitored consistently throughout this final research phase. The wiki tool was promoted once again as a useful forum for writing practice but despite face-to-face interventions and detailed support at the meeting, participants remained reluctant to edit each others work. Feeling that support for technical issues had been offered; I discussed the general reluctance of *Líonra* members to edit each other's material with critical friends on 6 December 2010. A discussion on how it might be considered culturally unacceptable to correct someone ensued. Some useful suggestions on how to design wiki activities in a more scaffolded way were

put forward, and Éadaoin suggested that maybe I should just accept that it might be an issue that I couldn't get around (CA, pp. 266-270). Following this meeting, I decided to stop encouraging actions relating to the wiki. It was reviewed again during the interviews with research participants. Findings corresponding to this are considered in more detail in the context of safe spaces for mandated learning in the professional context, a central theme in the discussion chapter.

As well as being advocates for the success of *Líonra* members in developing their language competency and confidence, critical friends were greatly involved in the validation of data along the way. They prompted me to relate what was happening on the *Líonra* in a more realistic way to the realities of the participants' professional roles at the University, and they promoted the importance of task-based activities for *An Líonra*. *Líonra* members, *Cúpla Ceist* project facilitators, and critical friends participated in the final review meeting of Research Cycle 3 on 1 April 2011. This gave rise to an account of the social situation as it had changed, a situation where all of us as participants, met to consider the social reality of what had been built by the group. My own open collaboration with critical friends was important as a model for cooperation among *Líonra* participants. By cultivating this type of reflection with my own colleagues, I was circuitously cultivating relational knowing in the language community in general on campus. Dialogue with others and a community of language speakers was seen to be imperative for everyone in the research context. The importance of this alliance with critical friends and my role as language advisor in developing such a coalition is developed further in Chapter 8.

Change in Language Practices and Attitudes

This final section of the chapter will reconsider the significance of the main developments in the third phase of the research. Changes in language confidence, language habits and attitudes as well as changes in the language community on campus will be reviewed. Much of the review draws on data from interviews with the seven research participants which took place in early April 2011. Evidence of a new "willingness to communicate" in the workplace among participants is presented and analysed. Specific examples relating to Sailí and Cathal are outlined briefly below. Sailí's innovative efforts at using Irish in her professional capacity have been discussed previously. She noted a complete turnaround in her attitude. She originally had no interest whatsoever in using Irish professionally but she was now interested in vocabulary specific to her position at the University (CA, p. 392). Building on entries in her *Dialann Ghaeltachta* in the previous research

cycle, her calculated use of strategies was exemplary in Cycle 3 also. She planned to audit all queries to her office in order to be able to improve her capacity to deal with these in Irish (CA, p. 182). She mentions four new people on campus with whom she was communicating in Irish following her *Cúpla Ceist* video (CA, pp. 386-87). There was now a social aspect to her language improvement plan at home also. All the family were “hooked” on *Ros na Rún*, a soap opera on TG4 (CA, p. 394). She had managed to find ways of associating Irish with both her personal and social life. She displayed the attributes of the good language learner as put forward by Ó Laoire and Ní Chlochasaigh (2010, pp. 47-57). Cathal had attempted for the first time to have Irish-medium interactions with academics in the Irish section at the University (CA, p. 442). This was a big deal for him and his self-belief was boosted by leading this engagement. He described himself as *aistrithe*³⁸ as he had found a new confidence to say “you’ll have to take me with whatever Irish I have”. He attributed this progress to the reflection he had done on the *Dioplóma sa Ghaeilge* language portfolio module; to the *Cúpla Ceist* group initiative, and to Ruairí and Étaín’s emphasis that the aim of the video project was not to have perfect Irish. It was, he now accepted, ok to make mistakes (CA, p. 347). My own experience is that many adult learners of Irish are preoccupied with the importance of grammar and language accuracy. Although concerns about not having perfect Irish had not gone away, both Sailí and Cathal were now at ease with “giving it a go”.

New language habits were apparent also. Some *Líonra* members had found strategies to deal with time constraints in order to fit language learning into their busy lives. Sibéal had most success with ‘mobile learning’. She had tried using iTunes for listening practice while she walked on campus. She recognised *Coiste na Gaeilge*³⁹ meetings as a “good environment” for her and a key opportunity to interact with speakers at a higher level than herself (CA, p. 374). Eoghan and Doireann had organised a special time to speak Irish at home while Oisín’s motivation, as expressed in the data excerpt below, was exceptional:

[...] I'd spend one or two hours doing Irish every day. On my breaks [...] when I get a chance, I keep reading over my class notes, because I have notes now going back for the last two or three years. Notes from the *Gaeltacht* as well, from Ballyferriter, 'cause, that was a different, that opened new words to me, new sayings as well

(CA, p. 467).

³⁸ Transformed.

³⁹ The Irish Language Standing Committee with responsibility for Irish at the University

He reaped the benefit of dedicating this amount of time to language study. Testament to this is the fact that most of his final interview was conducted through Irish. In a demonstration of how he was availing of every opportunity to use Irish in the workplace he took a phone call, from Doireann, in Irish during this interview (CA, p. 467).

As discussed earlier, companionship was nurtured and relational knowing was cultivated as a strategy to help relieve anxiety around legislative responsibility. Collective support was integral to the success of the *Cúpla Ceist* initiative also. Oisín, while reflecting back on the research period, considered that group camaraderie had developed with the trip to Ballyferriter. “We got to know each other, and then as a result, when we came back then, a lot of us, kind of, kept together. We followed it up in our own way, and as I say, we meet at our coffee mornings” (CA, p. 473). The data also demonstrates how candidness and a readiness to express feelings nurtured relational knowing among the group. Friendly repartee led to lots of good humoured comments at the meetings of the third cycle. Aisling suggested that the group element reduced stress. She gives a detailed account of how it hadn’t been natural for herself and Sailí, colleagues in the same faculty, to speak Irish. However, Irish was their predominant medium of communication now (CA, p. 397). As a senior administrator, she understood the importance of widening the language community on campus. She sensed that something was different to what had been before (CA, p. 413). Eoghan observed how some participants in the coffee morning had “come out of themselves”. He described the helping approach of *Líonra* members; they were always trying to “coax” new people in:

[...] my attitude is that the most important thing is to put people at ease, make sure that they aren’t worried, that’s the position of a lot of people in the *Líonra*. They are very helpful, you know, we’re trying to entice others to get involved

(CA, p. 459: Translation).

I was curious about the influence of *Líonra* members on each other, and on new members of the campus community, and how their persuasion was more effective than mine or than that of other members of my team at *Aonad na Gaeilge*. Oisín, who was very involved in traditional music initiatives for staff on campus, drew on his experience and helped me look at it in a different way:

It comes in with the music as well. Often when a thing goes back to the grassroots, when it goes away from the department, and people say, oh there's Oisín, he's a porter, he's going around with his trolley and his keys, and he's speaking a bit of Irish. He's in there with

[mentions other campus porter], and they're having an old coffee morning. [...] It's the same with the music ... At one o' clock, I have a whiteboard, I'll write up little A, B, C notes. There are no music sheets because I can't read music, but again, we do it in a different way. People know that, we're doing it as a group [...] and there's no qualifications now coming into it because they don't have qualifications

(CA, p. 469).

He suggested that it was the same with the *Líonra Tacaíochta Teanga*:

Doing it as a group, yeah. That's what I think. [...] There's no egos up there. We're all in it for the love of it, and we all have the same interests. We have different levels, and people bringing on people as well, do you know? I mean, I look up to Eoghan, and Cathal is brilliant. But it's gone to the stage; I understand about 90 percent of what they say, whereas this time last year, maybe 40 percent, so, I've come on [...]

(CA, p. 469).

His reiteration of the reciprocal relationships of *Líonra* and campus community members is significant here and a key indicator of group cohesion. Cathal noted how both the support for Irish by the institution as well as his own attitude had changed since the establishment of *An Líonra Tacaíochta Teanga*. He noted how things were different because he was *páirteach san iarracht*⁴⁰ (CA, p. 439). His comment (CA, p. 244) that “there is a place in spirit and in motivation and in support that once you go beyond that point of critical mass you have a *gluaiseacht*” reminded me of Choy’s case study of worker-learners, discussed in Chapter 2. Choy (2009, p. 67) in discussing workplace-integrated learning, suggested that a team forms a critical mass that is “more powerful than an individual in transforming the organisational perspective and frames of reference”. The potential of *An Líonra* as a pressure group, nurturing organisational change regarding the provision of Irish-medium services, was evident on preliminary analysis of data relating to Cycle 3. Cathal put his own stamp on initiatives by making every effort to promote social language practice opportunities and also to build interest in associating technology with Irish. This is evidenced in the screenshot of the announcement tool on Sulis, the VLE for *An Líonra* (Appendix C, p. 204). He noted also how, following his appearance on *Cúpla Ceist*, a member of faculty instigated an Irish-medium conversation with him while training at the campus Sport Centre (CA, p. 441). What had started as a plan to relieve pressure around speaking Irish in a professional capacity had led to new positive energies in the use of Irish on campus. Aisling’s experience supports this point further. Due to her association with the video project, she ended

⁴⁰ Part of the effort.

up chatting in Irish for half an hour with staff in the University Post Room when she dropped by to post a letter (CA, p. 399). Participants had become protagonists in changing practices relating to language usage on campus.

Conclusion

It was in this third cycle that *Líonra* members, drawing on the indirect language learning strategies discussed previously, took the leap, and crossed the bridge from being language learners to language users in the workplace. Two specific initiatives, the formal monitoring by *Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga* and the *Cúpla Ceist* project were the highlights of this research phase. A new focus on working as a group to promote Irish on campus had become apparent. The nurturing of the interest of other members of the campus community in Irish language initiatives was a significant trend also. The language advising stances taken in this cycle have been put forward. The significant changes in language confidence, habits and attitudes, and the development of the general language community in the organisational context at the University have been deliberated on. I will draw in Chapter 8 on these findings and analysis to establish what is distinctive about my role as language advisor in the mandated language learning context and to consider the hallmarks of *An Líonra* members.

CHAPTER EIGHT: DISCUSSION

Introduction

The complexities and dynamic nature of language learning in the University workplace are explored in this thesis and reviewed now in this discussion chapter. Section 1 deals with what is distinctive about the role of the language support network facilitator as language advisor in the mandated language learning context. The hallmarks of *An Líonra* are re-evaluated in Section 2. This review draws on the principles of constructivism promoted as relevant to the thesis in Chapter 3. Because an assortment of learning spaces characterises the research project and the combination of these contributed to its success, spatial practices are reflected on in both Section 1 and Section 2. Baynham and Simpson (2010, p. 428) propose that spatial practices “involve the production, deployment, and appropriation of spaces and their investment with activities and meanings”. Various spaces merit attention in this discussion and these are outlined in the next paragraph. Meanings became associated with the different spaces as the study developed and as the centre-periphery relationship of the University workplace with *An Ghaeltacht* evolved.

Two distinguishing roles of the language advisor in the mandated language learning context are presented in Section 1, that of architect of spaces of learning, and that of action researcher in the workplace. The role of the language advisor to create optimal conditions for learning at *Seomra na Gaeilge*, on Sulis and in *An Ghaeltacht* is considered initially. The position of language advisor as action researcher is then explored under two separate headings. The role with regard to leading external conversations with critical friends is looked at to begin with. Ambassadorial concerns are deliberated on subsequently, and the portrayal of Aisling as ‘language champion’ is significant here. In Section 2, on the hallmarks of *An Líonra*, their learning experiences while negotiating their identities as language learners are reviewed under three headings: firstly, spatial considerations; secondly, a shared mental model; and thirdly, transformative learning in groups. Their initiative as a group to appropriate the VLE space, *Gaeltacht* space, *Cúinne na Gaeltachta*, and campus spaces in general to their own needs is considered, and the concept of safe house is introduced. In the discussion under the heading of shared mental model, the concepts of cultural architect and shared mental model are borrowed from the field of sport psychology and used to sharpen the research focus on transformative learning. In the third part of the discussion on the hallmarks of *An Líonra*, a spotlight on group

language advising links the research to the recent developments in transformative learning in groups which were presented in Chapter 3. The concept of white space, a concept used in organisational learning, is introduced here to help make sense of the transformative process which took place. The contribution of the discussion to the overall research aims is summarised at the end of the chapter.

Section 1: Conceptualising the Role of Language Advisor in the Workplace

Language Advisor as Architect of Learning Spaces

As noted in the literature review much has been written on the practice of fostering transformative learning in order to understand better the meaning of teaching and learning in particular contexts. The research context in hand, however, is outside of both the formal language classroom and traditional language advising contexts. The interpretation of de Certeau (1984, p. 117) of notions of space and place informs this discussion of the role of the language advisor as architect of the language learning environment in the workplace. De Certeau argues that “space is a practiced place”. To explain this notion, he states that the street, for instance, is transformed into a space by walkers. A space is produced by the practice of a particular place. The importance of the creation of safe spaces on campus for both personal and group reflection on attitudes and beliefs about Irish language learning and usage, and about mandate with regard to the use of Irish is reviewed below. What is distinctive about these spaces in the mandated learning context and how they gave rise to a range of experiences which fostered risk-taking and personal meaning-making among the learners is also addressed. The spaces considered in this first section are *Seomra na Gaeilge*, the VLE space on Sulis, and the *Gaeltacht* space.

Seomra na Gaeilge

Murray (2011, p.134) makes the point that it is not enough to make a facility or a dedicated room available for language practice and to expect that it might be used by learners. He advocates that the language community around it needs to be nurtured. Much of Murray’s recent work, (Murray and Fujishima, 2013; Murray et al., 2014), relates to an exploration of the language learning opportunities, or affordances, of Japanese learners of English, available in a social learning space called the L-Café, on a university campus in Japan. Social learning spaces are premised on the “idea of a *space* in which people interact, rather than on *membership* in a community” (Gee 2005, p.

214, emphasis in original). The five workshops of Research Cycle 1 were held in *Seomra na Gaeilge* with a view to creating a shared space where the group might support each other in an exploration of their learner needs and identities. The fear of crossing ‘the threshold’ and physically entering the room was noted earlier in the thesis. The barriers and boundaries of this space warrant consideration. Van Ek, in the Council of Europe publication in 1975 on the Threshold Level⁴¹, specified the communicative functions that a learner needs to be able to realise to “cross the threshold” into the target language community. *Seomra na Gaeilge* was a social space where there was a threat of stressful, unanticipated interactions with staff or students at a higher level of Irish language fluency or accuracy, or indeed native speakers. The potential of a designated language space to be a stress-inducing space is significant. Consideration had not been given to how issues of power and status within the language community itself might constrain communication. Murray (2014, p 329) states that “not only are emotions often given expression during interaction in social settings, but it is often social settings that give rise to emotions”. He draws on the work of Damasio (2003, p. 45) a neuroscientist, who lists the following social emotions: “sympathy, embarrassment, shame, guilt, pride, jealousy, envy, gratitude, admiration, indignation, and contempt”. The complexities of the *Seomra na Gaeilge* space as a power-laden site within the institution had been overlooked and some rival viewpoints relating to a dedicated space for Irish language had been unexplored. The space might be deemed an elite, non-inclusive space, one welcoming only those with Irish. One must also critically reflect on the socio-historical context of the University itself. During his term as inaugural President, Ed Walsh set out to counter traditions, such as those at National University of Ireland, Galway, requiring that academics be proficient in Irish. He makes reference to his intolerance for such “cultural bigotry” in his memoir (2011, p. 22). Finally, the fact that the space was a dedicated room for minority language use, a language marginalised in the day-to-day dealings at the University, is a further consideration. The discussion to follow draws on these observations.

Wlodkowski (1999) explains that learners are in a better position for learning when they are on their learning edge, the edge of their comfort zones. Gravett and Petersen (2009, p. 107) suggest that “educators need to maintain a careful balance between challenge and comfort in their interactions with learners”. Physical comfort, an informal arrangement of furniture, and hospitality were central to my organisation of scheduled events. The group decision to use Irish as

⁴¹ See footnote 5.

the language of the workshops, but to accept English also, eased the environment of communication. A communicative space, where perceptions and experiences of legislative and institutional demands were examined, was opened up. The unrestrained discussions at the self-organised group meeting on 16 September 2010, immediately prior to the *Gaeltacht* placement, demonstrate this (CA, pp. 59-75). The language advising micro skills of Kelly (1996, p. 104) as outlined in the literature chapter, took centre stage as issues around language anxiety were explored. A safe, caring, collaborative but stimulating context was created in *Seomra na Gaeilge* in Cycle 1. Learners were carefully nudged to their learning edge in this challenging space. The trust and respect nurtured there was sustained throughout the various other spaces of the project. Oisín, in his interview, suggested that because his confidence had grown, he could “handle” his nervousness about being in *Seomra na Gaeilge* “a little better” (CA, p. 471). The room did become a space for autonomous learning in that the group arranged independent gatherings there. It was used, however, for focused discussions around language learning rather than as an informal coffee venue for social language use. Dialogue which took place in this space in the early research period were neither understood nor positioned in the context of an institutional memory with highly-charged emotions around the issue of the Irish language. The potential for Irish language use socially was not a consideration at this stage either. These understandings came later and they are dealt with in Section 2 below.

The Virtual Language Learning Space, Sulis

This project site on the University’s VLE was promoted primarily as a learning resource site. However, the scope to create a further learning space where attention to feelings about Irish language learning might be discussed, and where group trust might be cultivated further, was given attention also. A virtual learning environment usually provides self-study resource material to consolidate learning on a structured classroom-based language learning programme. The *Líonra* site was different as it was a project site without the backbone of a specific syllabus. The resources section as detailed in the methodology chapter evolved progressively as participant requirements dictated. This, although learner-centred, made the format unwieldy and site management very time-consuming. A more coherent structure might have provided a better sense of psychological safety for the adult learners in terms of knowing what resources should be accessed and what tasks might be prioritised.

Aisling, Cathal agus Sibéal made reference to the motivation necessary to use resources and to complete VLE tasks which were not linked to official assessment or assignment. This thesis has not dealt with L2 motivation research other than by brief reference to Dörnyei's ideal language self in Chapter 2. In order for a learner to operationalise this vision, the ideal self needs to be part of a "package" consisting of "an imagery component and a repertoire of appropriate plans, scripts and self-regulatory strategies" (Dörnyei, 2009, p. 20). The experience of managing the *Líonra* VLE has highlighted the need to compile interesting resource material pertaining to applied Irish in administration as a first step, with attention subsequently given to the promotion of self-regulatory abilities to use resources effectively. The creation of eighty audio support files was a big task. It was a tedious job for participants to download them to their Mp3 players for independent language practice also. Reviewing this now, the files might be used as basic content for a more learner-friendly phone or tablet application. Further consideration will be given to the VLE, and the wiki tool in particular, in Section 2 of the chapter. However, the focus at this point will be on members of *An Líonra* rather than on initiatives put in place by me as language advisor.

The Gaeltacht Space

For the purposes of the research aims, *Corca Dhuibhne*, an area renowned for its natural beauty and literary tradition, was significant firstly as a place of retreat, a place where *Líonra* members had an opportunity to explore their identities as language learners in a context independent of institutional expectations. Fleming (2008, p.8) as noted in Chapter 3, highlights the importance of creating learning spaces that support interesting exchanges, stimulating debates and the critical questioning among students. These spaces opened up during the *Gaeltacht*-based discussions of language awareness and language anxiety which were facilitated by Clodagh and Róisín. My own reflections in the *Gaeltacht* space prompted my critical consideration of the centre-periphery relationship between the *Gaeltacht* as the main-site of language usage and the campus as a site of marginalised language. The importance of nurturing *Gaeltacht* links, through *Oidbreacht Chorca Dhuibhne*, in particular, became part of the management strategy at *Aonad na Gaeilge*. Attention is drawn here to the role of the language advisor to help the learner explore such connections. New habits with regard to deliberations with critical friends were established while off-campus in this retreat space. These are commented on further below. How *Líonra* members appropriated the *Gaeltacht* space to their own use and learning will be dealt with in Section 2 below.

Language Advisor as Action Researcher: Engagement with Critical Friends

The task of the language advisor as action researcher to lead external conversations with critical friends is reviewed now. The researcher is not aware of any other exploration of language advising using an action research methodology. It is proposed that such exchanges boost shared understanding in the language community of second language learners, tutors and native speakers in general. Critical conversations helped make sense of the data, helped to ensure objectivity, strengthened analysis and, as Riel (2010) suggests, helped to develop and sustain a culture of inquiry and innovation within the action research study. They helped problematise the taken-for-granted aspects of learning Irish in the workplace setting at the University.

My interaction with critical friends as a way of counteracting isolation in action research was discussed in the methodology chapter. I addressed this by involving Clodagh and Róisín, *Gaeltacht* tutors, as critical friends during the *Gaeltacht* placement, and by having formal and informal conversations with Éadaoin, Sorcha, Étaín, and Íde as colleagues on campus. This collaboration on my part mirrors that of the research methodology, where the learners were put in touch with each other in order to offset their remoteness as designated contacts for Irish on campus. Kemmis and McTaggart (2005, p. 299) note how PAR groups interact with various kinds of external people, groups and agencies. However, it is the outcomes of liaison with critical friends in the specific context of minority language learning which are of most significance in the research in hand. Exposure to tutors acting as my critical friends greatly increased learner opportunities for Irish language practice with competent speakers and more ‘capable others’. The positive upshot of learners having this opportunity had not been apparent previously. Norton and Toohy (2001) suggest that learners who are able to negotiate entry into the social networks of the target language are likely to become successful learners. MacIntyre et al. (2001) also illustrate how community support enhances ‘willingness to communicate’, the definitive goal in L2 teaching and learning. In this connection Clodagh and Róisín’s offer to stay in contact on email, and their unexpected proposal that they would visit *Líonra* members on campus was welcomed. As outsiders based in the *Gaeltacht*, their validation of *Líonra* motivation, interest and group spirit was greatly valued. The native and non-native speaker dichotomy is only recently getting attention in the Irish language context. O’Rourke (2011, p. 139) suggests that rather than “forming a unified speech community, ‘native’ and ‘non-native’ speakers of the minority language very often see themselves as being socially and linguistically incompatible”. The research in hand promotes the

importance of having the role learners play in providing quality Irish language services in public administration appreciated. An examination of the ways native speakers might support learners in the development of confidence and competence is desirable, as is an exploration of ways first and second language speakers might work together to revitalise the language.

Critical discussions around safe conditions for language learning nurtured cooperation with tutors also. Language tutors typically work on an hourly-paid basis and are often ‘invisible’ to the institution. Their key involvement in this action research project encouraged new contextual practices in my professional setting and provided a forum to formally value their expertise. We were all encouraged by the exchange of ideas on how we might promote autonomy in Irish language learning in general and the potential to apply *Líonra* methodologies to undergraduate teaching and learning contexts (CA, p. 263). What I thought might be an over-indulgence on my part became a useful model for a forum where ideas on engaged pedagogies for teaching adult learners of Irish in *Aonad na Gaeilge* were enhanced. Critical friends, although included for validity and methodological reasons, played a much more significant role in this research. They became members of *An Líonra* and part of the critical mass of the minority language community.

Language Advisor as Action Researcher: An Ambassadorial Role

My role as action researcher to explore the organisational culture and the political context of Irish language advising in the University workplace is of note. Aisling’s suggestion that I, as language advisor, had to be the “bedrock” in the organisation is one which will be developed further here. Her insights as a long-serving senior University administrator were invaluable. She had seen much change over the years, operating alongside several deans working towards diverse educational goals in shifting organisational structures. As noted in Chapter 7, she considered that she, as “civil servant”, had the “technical knowledge, continuity and memory” in her own job (CA, p. 410). She worked on the OLA Implementation Group so she had a strong information base and institutional knowledge. The involvement of a language learner and *Líonra* member in these implementation structures was significant. As a line manager herself, she had influence in the organisation. However, her positive experience as someone involved at the heart of the language community on campus helped others see Irish as part of the make-up of a vibrant campus community. This was an alternative perspective to that of considering obligations from an administrative or compliance viewpoint. Aisling’s insight was important to a group used only to

drafting procedures, protocol, and policy on aspects of the OLA legislation. Our mutual relationship was a new consideration. I advised on her language development while drawing on her administrative expertise. This was more reciprocal than my relationship as researcher with the other research participants. She helped me to see my role as educational leader to influence management. Her awareness of her language improvement since the establishment of *An Líonra* heightened her motivation to be a protagonist in University administration. She actively reminded management about obligations to implement the provisions of the OLA. Although she had been involved since 2006, I observed a new energy and enjoyment in her Irish language promotion (CA, p. 409). She attributed this change to *Líonra* initiatives (CA, p. 413). She might be described as the “language champion” of the University, a term used in language policy to describe a volunteer who works within an organisation monitoring, promoting and supporting conformity to a bilingual strategy (Welsh Assembly Government, n.d, p. 22).

My nurturing of links with the Staff Learning and Development Office of the University’s Human Resources Department, with the Office of the Corporate Secretary, and with the line managers of *Líonra* participants, contributed to the success of initiatives. The role of the language advisor as workplace educator is reiterated here. Irish was seen as an issue for University administration in general rather than a concern for *Aonad na Gaeilge* alone. In defining and conceptualising the role of language advisor at the University, a developmental rather than a performance perspective was cultivated from the outset. Coaching and facilitation of learning are often discussed in the context of interventions to support workplace learning. Mink et al. (1993, p. 2) refer to the role of the “coach” to create “enabling relationships with others that make it easier for them to learn”. More recently, coaching has been conceptualised as facilitation of learning by Beattie (2002). My communications with line managers before and after the *Gaeltacht* placement allowed an opportunity to highlight the effort that members of staff were making, and gave learners an opportunity to talk about their involvement and visions for Irish in their professional roles. Hutchinson and Purcell (2007, p. 14), researching private and public sectors in the United Kingdom, found that line managers were recognised as a group “with a distinctive contribution to make to learning and development”. Their key role in workplace learning to be the “critical conduits of learning” was emphasised in the study, and their role to assess developmental needs both formally and informally was advocated. Line management approval to allow *Líonra* members three working days off-campus for the *Gaeltacht* placement was integral to the success of the placement. The invitation to line managers, as representatives of the middle management of the

University, to attend the information session about *An Coimisinéir Teanga* monitoring was decisive. Even though attendance was low, it was an important awareness-raising activity. Two salient points are worth stressing in the research endeavour to conceptualise the role of language advisor in the mandated language learning context: firstly, the ambassadorial role to draw attention to *Líonra* members as key players in the implementation of bilingual policy in the public body is evident, and secondly, an ongoing review of, and involvement in, institutional politics is essential to the role.

Section 2: The Hallmarks of An Líonra

The general characteristics of members of *An Líonra Tacaíochta Teanga*, a group of learners required to improve their Irish language skills for their professional context, are considered now. Following on the discussion of language advisor as architect of spaces of learning above, some spatial considerations are dealt with initially. How *Líonra* members appropriated the VLE, *Gaeltacht*, and campus spaces to their own learning needs and language usage, and how changes in attitude and confidence come about will be reviewed initially. Secondly, the concepts of a shared mental model and the concept of the cultural architect are drawn from sport psychology to highlight what is significant about what happened in this language advising context. Finally, the transformation of the workplace context from one of individual anxiety to one of group self-belief is explored. An attempt is made to explain how certain educational phenomena came about. This informs the research account of the concerns and support needs of second language speakers of Irish with a legislative obligation to use Irish in their professional context. Consistent with Mynard's Dialogue, Tools and Context Model, the theories of transformative learning and relational knowing are used as "theoretical tools" to make sense of group language advising in a context where Irish is mandatory.

Spatial Considerations

Líonra Appropriation of Space: The Virtual Learning Environment, Sulis

Due to their lack of familiarity with the collaborative writing concept and with the technology, *Líonra* participants were on their learning edge. Rather than practising collaborative writing in Irish on the Sulis wiki, the group practised collaboration in managing a threatening task. Under Cathal's leadership, they demonstrated self-reliance and support for each other. Viewed through a

socio-constructivist lens, it might be said that their experience dealing with pressures arising from writing on the wiki bolstered their ability to deal with subsequent challenges, those related to official monitoring by *Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga*, for example. Significantly, as noted previously, when they were under pressure they reverted to English as their language of interaction (CA, p. 446). This might be considered a useful indicator of a language learning environment that is too challenging, one that is unsafe and threatening. My disappointment that the group didn't embrace collaborative writing on the wiki was discussed in Chapter 5. However, their use of the wiki in a spontaneous unintended way is of interest. Looking with another lens now, what the learners saw as the potential of this virtual space is indeed significant. The wiki was used in a non-traditional way as a bulletin board and as a discussion forum. Fifty percent of the entries relate to the promotion of occasions for social language use face-to-face (CA pp. 94-99). It became a space where they had fertile opportunities to practise the social language learning strategies explored in the initial research phase. Their appropriation of this space to their own uses helped render their language support requirements in the workplace more apparent. The wiki became a forum where they had an opportunity to exercise their own organisation and advertise how they were creating language practice opportunities for themselves.

Líonra Appropriation of Space: An Ghaeltacht

The *Gaeltacht* programme, as noted previously, was designed to allow occasions for social interaction, quiet time to reflect, and time to connect with each other and with the place. However, some diary observations were unexpected. Participants, it can be seen, naturally gravitated to their own interest areas when they were allowed free time. Group interactions with a local farmer while out walking were unanticipated (CA, p. 163). The interactions between Sailí and Oisín, both keen musicians, and the local piper were unforeseen also. The sharing of *Port na bPúcaí*,⁴² a beautiful local slow air associated with the Blasket Islands, was so much richer as a learning experience, when the legend associated with the tune was explained to them during their visit to the locality. Eoghan's personal discovery of the motto *Spiorad, Croí, Caid, Teanga*⁴³ on a sign at the GAA pitch of the *Gaeltacht* football team epitomises his *Gaeltacht* experience. He unearthed the passion and emotion associated with language and Gaelic games in the sociolinguistic context

⁴² Music of the Fairies.

⁴³ Spirit, Heart, Gaelic Football, Language.

of West Kerry. A capacity for agency in their language learning led by their identities as musicians, hill walkers, and GAA fanatics became apparent. Canagarajah (2004, p.117) suggests “that what motivates the learning of a language is the construction of the identities we desire and the communities we want to join in order to engage in communication and social life”. The personal journeys of the learners in the *Gaeltacht* helped break barriers around language anxiety and language usage, as their awareness of the language in its everyday context was heightened. Their understanding of their own identities as Irish language speakers changed. They had occasion to experience the emotions involved in Irish-medium interactions. A new appreciation of the importance of respecting the rights of someone to interact with the University in their first language was apparent. The *Gaeltacht* was a periphery space where different attitudes to Irish were witnessed by the group and where authentic opportunities for language use arose. The critical reflection, involving *Líonra* members and critical friends, which took place at the final review session on 6 October 2010, mark this as a turning point in the research. They began in earnest at that stage to negotiate the complex identities of themselves as language learners but also as designated contacts for the institution (CA, p. 149). Drawing on the earlier literature review, a communicative space (Wicks and Reason, 2009, p. 258) had opened up. *An Ghaeltacht* itself might be described as a transformative space, a liminal space, a space of becoming (Baynham, 2010, p. 425).

A Space of Surveillance

As discussed in the methodology chapter, formal monitoring of University compliance with the provisions of the Official Languages Act, 2003 by *An Coimisinéir Teanga*, took place in the November-December 2010 period. This “surveillance” might have been considered threatening in Research Cycle 1. My role as language advisor to make an intimidating situation safe is apparent in how I helped *Líonra* members plan for the formal screening of language skills. Membership of *An Líonra* meant that they were not isolated in their individual departments dealing with a directive regarding official monitoring. I advised on best preparation, facilitated discussions on anxiety, cushioned their nervousness and bolstered their confidence. My organisation of a series of telephone calls as rehearsals for unannounced phone calls from *Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga* is consistent with a socio-constructivist approach. Participants were able to draw on practiced strategies for self-regulation when they received the official calls. They had opportunities also to recall their positive Irish-medium interactions in *An Ghaeltacht*. An alternative view of the

legislative context was promoted and the quality review was promoted in a positive way as a stimulus to apply their language learning in their professional roles. Formal monitoring was an opportunity to boost motivation and bolster the purposefulness of learner repertoires. Indeed, Schunk and Ertmer (2000, p. 631) mention pride and satisfaction with one's efforts as a self-regulation process. The incongruity of the legislative context, the surveillance space, having created opportunities to verify language improvement and validate efforts, did not go unnoticed. The rehearsal calls made by Léan and the test calls from *Oifig an Choimisinéara* were seen as opportunities for external appraisal and ironically as occasions for enjoyment also. This has been demonstrated in the contributions from Cathal and Aisling presented in Chapter 7.

Safe-Houses in the Workplace

The launch of the *Maidin Chaiife* and the *Cúpla Ceist* project have been analysed as key moments of Cycle 3. Spatial concepts associated with the coffee morning and with both physical and virtual campus space are presented in this section. Issues around the social empowerment and disempowerment brought on by the social context in which language learning and language use takes place were discussed briefly in Chapter 3 (Oxford, 2011, pp. 97-98). The concept of safe-house is put forward now to help account for changes in the learning context of the University workplace in the final research phase. The word 'house' is purposefully chosen to describe what happened because it depicts the 'care-full', personal and relational view of a home rather than the impersonal nature of an institution or large organisation. In the sociological studies of Goffman (1961) and Scott (1990) safe house is usually used as a term synonymous with under-life in institutional contexts. According to Pratt (1991, p. 40) safe houses are "social and intellectual spaces where groups can constitute themselves as horizontal, homogenous, sovereign communities with high degrees of trust, shared understandings, and temporary protection from legacies of oppressions". Canagarajah (2004, p.116) used the term originally to describe postcolonial Sri Lanka where people were struggling with dual identities, learning English while also remaining Hindus. Because this "hybridity" was not permitted by missionaries, they had to find ways to live out their identities in secret, without supervision. He explores classroom sites as places where students who might be considered "culturally alien" create safe-houses to counteract the pressure of the classroom. These safe-houses might happen in small group interactions or in classroom asides between students. It is this emphasis on informal group interactions and support which are relevant to the research context in hand. Canagarajah (2004, p. 121) explores sites such

as the canteen, playgrounds, dormitories, library and cyberspace. Students are unsupervised in these spaces. Clemente and Higgins, (2008) call them “private sites for learning, spatial or temporal, real or imagined” where the students are free from the control of others. The agency shown by the members of *An Líonra* when they were ‘off-task’ in *An Ghaeltacht* is witnessed again in the vivacity of the *Maidin Chaije* which they launched immediately on their return to campus. They chose a space in the campus restaurant and designed, framed and posted their promotional poster there (Appendix P, p. 273). Their commandeering of the wiki space on the VLE to their own language learning and language practice use had paved the way for them to appropriate *Cúinne na Gaeltachta* in the restaurant to their own needs also. As noted previously, a forty-five minute period, 10.30-11.15 on Wednesday morning, was advertised as the designated time. Canagarajah (2004, p. 121), in a consideration of spatiotemporal issues, suggests that domains of time as well as space may serve as safe houses in educational institutions. These safe houses on campus move attention away from being designated contacts and counteract pressure associated with this responsibility. The *Gaeltacht* Corner became just that, a space where the group could maintain bonds which were nurtured in *An Ghaeltacht*. It became a creative space where ideas happened (CA, p. 460). In using an image from West Kerry and calling their space *Cúinne na Gaeltachta*, the group flipped the centre-periphery relationship of the campus with *An Ghaeltacht*. Ironically, a new ‘centre’, a pocket of minority language use, was created in the English majority language periphery space on campus. Palfreyman (2011, p. 17) suggests that language learning beyond the classroom, far from being unstructured, is actually “structured by the contexts in which a learner uses and internalises the language, and by the strategies which the learner uses to pursue her goals within particular contexts”. Here in this liminal space, *Líonra* members were safe, social, free from surveillance and able to promote their identities as musicians, sport enthusiasts, and members of staff through the medium of Irish. The effectiveness of the PAR methodology is demonstrated here. Connections are made with the findings of Timothy Pynch (2007, p. 199). As an adult educator, he found a natural match between PAR and his appreciation of the community development concept as a channel for “creating community as a space for mutuality and freedom; an inclusive and safe place, as a sanctuary in times of alienation and fear”.

The *Cúpla Ceist* initiative has already been presented as the successful culmination of the research project. It is reviewed here as a project which led to the creation of an oppositional culture to the one of mandate on campus and to the re-appropriation of University spaces to Irish language usage, in particular. The nine campus locations chosen by research participants were:

the post room, art gallery, a computer lab, *Seomra na Gaeilge*, the Farmers' Market, a sculpture in the University Plaza, the steps of the School of Music building, the Main Restaurant, and Plassey House, headquarters of University administration. The hybrid roles played by participants as language learners are presented in these videos (Appendix I, DVD). Their identity as designated contacts for Irish language services in their place of work is formally acknowledged initially, and they advertise their willingness to use Irish in the professional context.⁴⁴ However, the focus moves quickly to everyday social interaction through Irish, their preferred context for the language. Participants displayed much agency in choosing their interviewee, interview location and topics. The video project and their interactions around it helped in the construction of their complex identities. In the videos they create new spaces, safe houses, in which to use Irish language on campus where the pressure of legislative obligation is not so apparent, but more importantly, where their new confidence as language users might be celebrated. Spontaneous Irish language usage at other sites on campus, at the Sport Arena for example, was discussed previously. The significance of re-appropriating space not usually associated with Irish, to the use of Irish on campus, and the creation of new habits associated with this space, has great potential. It fits well with Menezes argument (2011, pp. 59-71) that affordances do not just exist in the environment, but are constructed within the learner's relationship with it. Her examination of how learners exercise their agency to find their own exacting language niches and reconstruct their learning environments is of interest. It prompts a consideration of the emergence of new language spaces in a natural way and the new language habits associated with these in the research findings in hand.

A Shared Mental Model

Group dynamics and a sense of community in *An Líonra* will be the focus now. MacDonald (2003, p. 378) notes the “interplay between competence and affective factors such as growing confidence, motivation and group dynamics” in the online learning environment. She also cites “group cohesion and the evolution of mutual trust” as significant affective features of collaborative study online. Attention to relational knowing is required in the online context to counteract the lack of face-to-face contact among learners. A similar focus is required in the mandated language learning context. It is required in this instance to thwart language anxiety.

⁴⁴ Sibéal doesn't do this but this was an oversight.

Drawing on the emergence of the social spaces and safe houses explored above and on the discussion regarding my own role nurturing relational knowing throughout the initiative, a consideration of the notion of a shared mental model, to help account for what took place on campus, is proposed.

Thayer-Bacon (1999, p. 48) uses the term constructive thinking to draw attention to the making of knowledge as a “transactive sociopolitical process with others” and she describes her epistemological view as relational. Particular importance is placed on caring as an element of critical and constructive thinking in her book *Relational “(E)pistemologies”* (2003). Caring, as noted in Chapter 3, is described as receptivity to the voice of the other. It is associated with listening to what others have to say and identifying with their feelings. This idea fits well with Sheese’s (2000) representation of the ideal teacher-student dialogue in which each participant is aware of the objectives of the other. An emphasis on the creation of a *Líonra* identity and on learning in relationship with each other intensified opportunities for meaning-making among *Líonra* members. It also created sensitivity to contextual meanings in their place of work. The influence of mission, values and personality as internal non-cognitive drivers in triggering a learning search are relevant here also (Shih, 1997 cited in Marsick et al., 2009, p. 586). These lead to a shared mental model where relation to the known and to other knowers in the creation of knowledge became gradually more apparent.

The concepts of shared mental model and cultural architect are borrowed from sport psychology to help illuminate what happened among *Líonra* members. This is a model which has permeated football management in particular in order to help players counteract anxieties around fear of failure in the game. The term ‘cultural architect’ was coined by the Scandinavian sport psychologist, Willi Railo, to describe influential players on a team that share the vision of the manager and that can help cultivate a cohesive group culture (Crust and Lawrence, 2006, p. 40). Railo (1986) has used this idea in high performance, culture-change projects, receiving much attention for the work he did with the English football team under Sven-Göran Eriksson, in particular. The term was explained by Dave Collins in a BBC documentary called the *The England Patient*:

This concept of cultural architects is a good example of the shared mental model in operation. It's almost like those are the guys who've bought into that picture, or who grasp that picture the best and therefore they can act as, as leaders, not necessarily in the formal sense, but as the, as the cement that pulls all these bricks together in the common style. (BBC, 2002)

In the football context, players become architects of their own success. Ole Jacob Madsen (2014) discussed the role played by David Beckham as cultural architect. His thinking was so close to that of Eriksson that he did his bidding without even realising. It is useful to develop this notion from the perspective of *An Líonra*. The move away from an emphasis on compliance towards a new focus on relational knowing, community, and a culture of care became their shared mental model. These concepts sit well with the previous discussion of spatial practices, with my role as architect of spaces of learning, and the notion of safe house also. A narrative of the various entities that lead to transformation and positive change in the workplace context is created. Oisín, Eoghan and Doireann might be described as cultural architects. Research data demonstrate that it was they in particular who led the promotion of the shared goal of *An Líonra* to prioritise putting people at ease about interactions in Irish (CA, p. 459).

Transformative Learning in Groups: The Organisational Context

The transformation of the workplace context from one of individual uncertainty to one of group confidence is noteworthy. The resistances and alternative discourses generated by members of *An Líonra* to the discourse of “English comes first” and the discourse of performance in the University workplace were mentioned heretofore. The change in focus from personal language improvement to campus initiatives by drawing on relational knowing as a theoretical tool is reviewed now. Taylor (2007, p. 185) has expressed concerns about the lack of discrimination among researchers regarding the critical reflection of participants and the assumption that all levels of reflection are of the same importance. Working in a transformational framework, the focus has been on relational knowing while making meaning of a challenging situation in the professional context. Findings have shown that the nurturing of a trustful relationship led to the creation of spaces of togetherness. Frames of reference regarding identities as language learners, language anxiety and professional expectations were challenged formally in the group language advising sessions. It was in the sharing of information in informal spaces where learners gained confidence. Action research allowed this to happen incrementally through cycles of discussing, reflecting, challenging, reinterpreting, and reviewing. As an awareness of the critical mass being created by *Líonra* members on campus grew, new insights developed. Members realised that they might be part of a pressure group to set in motion the organisational change required to implement legislative provisions in a meaningful way. Language anxiety became replaced by

protagonist energy on campus. Ó Laoire, Rigg and Georgiou (2011, p. 19) in their exploration of the implementation of language policy in an educational context, refer to the subaltern agency of the social actors charged with the implementation of the policy on the ground. Rather than being “passive receivers of policies” or “vague resisters”, they often steer policy in an unforeseen way. There was a push from the grassroots of the University to have staff efforts to improve language skills and to promote Irish on campus recognised, valued and celebrated. The stance taken by Mezirow is echoed here:

As learners in a democracy become aware of how taken-for-granted, oppressive, social norms and practices and institutionalised cultural ideologies have restrained or distorted their own beliefs, they become understandably motivated toward taking collective action to make social institutions and systems more responsive to the needs of those they serve

(1996, p. 11).

Líonra members learned about campus engagement, they became involved in developing the kind of attitudes to Irish that they would like promoted on campus. The timeframe involved in the action research project allowed for the development of leadership capacities and learning opportunities similar to those which might arise in formal grassroots organisations (Gouthro, 2012 pp. 51-59). An active “campus citizenship” emerged to some extent. Lewis (2006, p. 257) highlights the important role members of staff play in conveying the values of the University to the student body: “The employees at the bottom of the organisational tree are the ones that the students see most; they absorb the spirit of the institution and convey its values to the students”. There was a sense that collaborative efforts, being a *Líonra*, could effect change.

Marsick and Watkins (2001, p. 32) suggest that we need to learn more about the interface between learning at the individual, team and organisational levels in the workplace and what happens at these boundaries. The conceptualisation of spaces of learning in this study makes a contribution here. I have looked at my own role as architect of learning spaces and at how *An Líonra* appropriated spaces to their own needs in the above discussion. Following on the discussion of the ambassadorial concerns of language advisor as action researcher, I am encouraged to look at what happens at the intersections of learning at individual, *Líonra* and organisational levels. The *Líonra* bound together a group of people who shared a common challenge. The sharing of knowledge with regard to their joint interest was promoted. I propose that in the formation of *An Líonra*, and through the focus on relational knowing, the white spaces of the organisation were found. According to Johnson (2010, p. 8) the term white space in

business parlance is used to define “unchartered territory or underserved markets”. It is always used in the context of making improvements and creating a different business model to profit from. Rummler and Brache (1995, p. 9) share their explanation of the term white space with an example from sport:

[...] just as greatest potential improvements in a relay team often exist in the passing of the baton from one runner to the next, the highest impact opportunities in an organization are usually not found in its functions, but in the handoffs between its functions. These handoffs occur in the white space between the boxes on the organisation chart.

Smith, (2001, p. 318) suggests that members of various communities of practice guide and inspire ongoing work in the organisation, or function in the white spaces of organisational charts. Johnson in a blog post (2010) promotes white space as ‘a metaphor about opportunity’. It is defined in different ways according to approaches to availing of opportunities. Considering the metaphor of space used in the thesis, the term white space is harnessed here to represent the spaces where the learning of individuals, learning of the *Líonra* group and learning of the organisation coincided. These white spaces are not identifiable on the chart illustrating official organisational structures to support an Irish language policy at the University, discussed previously in Chapter 1 (Appendix O, p. 272). They are the various campus spaces appropriated by *Líonra* members to learning Irish and interacting in Irish. A new campus engagement involved actions and Irish language practices by staff across a range of administrative functions within the University. The ‘practiced’ places, such as those at *Cúinne na Gaeltachta*, the University Post-Room, the Farmers’ Market, and Sport Arena, are noteworthy as spaces of potential in the implementation of a bilingual strategy at the University. Generally, such white space is not managed by the organisation. Rummler and Brache (1995, p. 9) suggest that senior management's role should add value by managing the critical interfaces between organisational functions. In this study, in my role as language advisor, I co-created, supported and helped maintain the energy of a grassroots initiative with the potential to steer language policy in these spaces.

Conclusion

This chapter has helped analyse the ordinary in the University workplace. The exploration of spatial practices in the mandated learning environment allows insight into who the learners were and what they valued. New learner identities in the various spaces of language learning have been brought to light. The centre-periphery relationship of majority language with minority language on campus, and that of the University as workplace with *An Gaeltacht* have been considered. The

spatiotemporal considerations relating to the *Maidin Chaife* have been signalled. The exciting scope to commandeer and utilise existing spaces for Irish-medium communication and to seek out the white spaces of opportunity at organisational level has been revealed.

Newman (1994, p. 241) argues that adult teaching and learning should focus on recognising strategies to deal with oppression while helping learners to develop their skills, add to or renew their knowledge, and execute those strategies. Beck and Kosnik (2006, p. 24) discuss how a notion of community is essential to social constructivism and emphasise mutual support and the personal and emotional dimensions of community as well as collaborative learning. My role to intensify relational knowing and to create opportunities for learners to deconstruct established frames of reference regarding language learning and usage, formally and informally, individually and in groups, has been illuminated in this chapter. The impact of a growing critical mass to bolster confidence and initiative has been clarified.

The heightened profile of *An Lónra* and a new sense of staff engagement on campus did not go unnoticed by University authorities when the *Cúpla Ceist* series was launched. The institution decided to recognise Irish language learning and development as a strategic priority and the following target relating to Irish was included in the Strategic Plan 2011-2015 which was launched in January 2011:

We will be renowned for the excellence of our contribution to the economic, educational, social and cultural life of Ireland in general and the Shannon region in particular. To achieve the objectives we will: Promote the use of Irish on campus by implementing the University's Scheme 2009–2012 under the Official Languages Act. [...] Targets to measure the achievements of goal 4 will include “The number of staff who have completed Irish language courses and have received a certificate of Irish language proficiency will triple by 2015

(2011, p. 43).

The Strategic Plan reference was a significant development as targets relating to Irish were owned by the University itself rather than being imposed on the institution by legislation. This new commitment was contrary to the institutional willingness to keep the Irish language off the agenda noted in Chapter 1. The use of business jargon and performance indicators is typical of such strategic documents. At grassroots level, it can be interpreted as a step taken at organisational level, to take staff learning and development more seriously, and to value language support structures. The focus shifted from being what the University was obliged to do under legislative obligations to what the University chose to do. Chapter 9, the concluding chapter, will build on this discussion and the original research questions posed in Chapter 1 will be revisited.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This thesis on language advising in the workplace has dealt with the support requirements and the resolve of learners to improve their language skills in Irish, a minority language, in a group advising context in the workplace. The motivation for their language improvement is linked to their professional remit and the mandate on their organisation to provide quality services through Irish under the OLA, 2003. A series of insights drawing on research findings and the conceptual contribution made are reviewed in this concluding chapter. The significance of the study within the fields of organisational and workplace learning, language advising, and language learning in general is also demonstrated. The reader is reminded of the research questions:

1. What is distinctive about the role of the language advisor in supporting the mandated learning of a minority language, Irish in this case, in the organisational context?
2. What are the hallmarks of *An Líonra Tacaíochta Teanga*, the Language Support Network, in the research context?
3. How might Mynard's Framework for Advising in Language Learning (2012) be re-presented to fit the support requirements of the mandated learning of a minority language in the workplace?
4. What positive changes can be brought about by drawing on the theoretical tool of relational knowing in the mandated-minority language learning context of the workplace?

The first section of the chapter reviews the empirical findings relating to the research questions. As the first two questions have been dealt with in Chapter 8, their review in this chapter is more summary in nature. Conclusions relating to questions three and four are presented more comprehensively and the headings used by Mynard (2012), dialogue, tools and context, help structure this discussion. The emphasis, where necessary, turns to the theoretical contributions made in the research. The role of context in Mezirow's theory of transformative learning is reviewed under the heading 'context' while transformative learning in groups is reconsidered briefly in the section on 'tools'. Two key insights arising from the research, which go beyond the research questions, are probed a bit further at the end of Section 1. The first relates to the formalisation of collaborations in supporting the learning of Irish as a minority language. Secondly, it is proposed that learners of Irish in the workplace merit attention as a significant

group of ‘new speakers’ of Irish. The implications of my investigation for professional practice, for the community of practitioners, and for policy and research are dealt with in Section 2. In mapping out new directions in the field of language advising, my vision for the development of a new Centre for Irish Language Skills in the Workplace is presented. The discussion of the implications of the research is organised around four themes: bridging the materials gap; professional development opportunities; language advising stances in the organisational context; and further research. Some of the limitations of my research are noted briefly in the section on further research. The chapter concludes with a section entitled ‘Final Reflections’.

Section 1: Empirical and Theoretical Findings

Research Question One

The distinguishing roles of the language advisor as architect of supportive spaces of learning and as an action researcher in the workplace environment have come to light in this research. The principles of respect and care for *Líonra* members were at the nucleus of all initiatives. By preserving these core values in the learning environment occasions to nurture relational knowing were intensified. The worker-learners were facilitated to apply their language learning and other learning to their professional context in more imaginative, effective, sociable, and rewarding ways. An integral part of the role I played as architect of spaces of learning was the planning for orchestrated occasions to use social language learning strategies in the naturalistic context of *An Ghaeltacht*. Preparations for interactions with native speakers in the professional context involved practice opportunities, scaffolded by a language advisor, to explore, address and re-assess learner anxieties around such communications. The findings suggest that a language support strategy which incorporates plans for manageable social interactions with native speakers is effective. In short, such opportunities bolster confidence, develop the learners’ capacity for self-appraisal, and most importantly, helped establish the value and relevance of language learning for the professional context.

This study has highlighted two specific roles of the language advisor as action researcher; the first relates to engagement with critical friends, the second is a representative role within the organisational structures of the University. It has been shown that as well as validating research procedures and findings, as is typical of all action research projects, my critical engagement with colleagues broadened opportunities for the research participants to use Irish with a wider circle of

proficient speakers. The cultivation and support of a vibrant minority language community was therefore a key pedagogical posture taken by the *Líonra* facilitator as language advisor. Secondly, the ambassadorial role played by the language advisor in highlighting support needs and promoting a discourse of care for learners of Irish as a second language in the organisational context, is also distinctive. The anxieties of employees about legislative obligations and mandate have not been researched in detail previously. The impetus to push now for the development of a language advising infrastructure for organisational contexts has been justified as necessary by the research carried out in the thesis.

Research Question Two

The characteristics of a language advising group in the workplace context have not been investigated in any great detail before. The innovation and energy required for learners of Irish, as a minority language, to create their own language learning opportunities, and to commandeer existing spaces of the workplace for Irish language practice, has been established in the research findings. How the learners launched their own culture of language learning associated with their leisure activities, and managed to weave individual and collective language learning goals together is significant. It is their spatial practices as a group of autonomous language learners which merit most attention. The portrayal of the *Maidin Chaifé* as a safe house has demonstrated an expressed need to support learners, with an obligation to use Irish as part of their professional remit, to find ways to explore and address the issue of language anxiety. In promoting and normalising the use of Irish in the workplace according to their own shared mental model, they added to the status and power of Irish as a minority language, by showing management how it was valued by the grassroots of the organisation. Their association of Irish with a series of new and varied sites on campus justifies the research assertion that attention be given to the white spaces of opportunity relating to the implementation of an organisational bilingual policy. The application of the concept of cultural architect in the research in hand, and the spotlight on those who played that role in *An Líonra Tacaíochta Teanga* help illuminate changes in language practices and the meaning of these. The potential of what can happen, when learning groups are encouraged to work and to socialise as a team, in a professional landscape of support, empathy, challenge, collaboration, and critical reflection is great.

Research Question Three

A framework for language advising for Irish as a minority and mandatory language in the workplace has been created in this thesis. In detailing the sequence of events which led to the establishment of a supportive learning and professional environment and the enhancement of professional capacities, a conceptual contribution has been made to Mynard's Dialogue, Tools and Context framework. A number of new insights and conclusions emerge. The findings prompt a rethinking of how the foundational model might be tailored to the minority and mandated language learning context. Although, dialogue, tools and context, the three elements of the framework, cannot be fully separated from one another, the various headings are discussed individually below. However, the emphasis remains on detail relating to the specific language advising 'context' throughout.

Dialogue

From the group advising standpoint, the emphasis on group dialogue and the practice of social strategies in the informal learning environment are of most interest. The journey of discovery around language learning beliefs and identities was a journey with peers where the use of social language learning strategies in a social network was prioritised. The pedagogical framework was one which promoted learner autonomy and encouraged decision-making around what learning strategies should be used. As advisor, I moved from a more directive approach at the early *Líonra* workshops to one that was less so as the project evolved. However, I continued to stimulate learners' reflections on what and how they were learning. As their use of social strategies developed, they moved from a situation of taking opportunities presented to them to try out strategies to one where they created their own occasions to deploy and to individualise strategies. Their use of social strategies was exhibited in their preparations for *Líonra* presentations, their participation in self-organised sessions on language learning materials, their arrangement of the weekly coffee morning, and their interactions with the *Cúpla Ceist* production team. Throughout the three research cycles, they decided which questions were answered by peers, which questions they needed answered by me as advisor, and which questions might be directed to members of the *Gaeltacht* speech community. The new Irish-speaking professional self of each *Líonra* member began to emerge when bolstered by social occasions to use language informally in the workplace. The examples, noted previously, of how they were autonomous in a collective way in decisions

about what directions their learning might take is noteworthy. They developed a tool kit of strategies and created a series of opportunities to use these in their work and leisure contexts. A new collaborative dialogue in the community of practice of minority language teachers, learners, support staff, and language advisors in general is promoted in this study. Data support the proposal that collaboration between learners, colleagues, language specialists and native speakers was a key pedagogical principle in facilitating the exploration of the dual identities of these staff members as both language learners and designated contacts. The language advising model presented, showcases dialogue and cooperation with others, and the collaboration of both advisor and learners with a wider circle of language users reflecting on what the most favourable conditions and the greatest barriers to language learning might be. This is developed further in the section on further research insights at the end of Section 1 below.

Context

The need to consider the idiosyncrasies of the language advising role in this very specific and under-researched context has been warranted necessary by the research. The disorienting dilemma of language anxiety in the context of mandated language learning triggered interest in the study initially. This explicit challenge became the impetus to arrange occasions for learners to engage with native speakers in order to develop language skills, cultural understandings, and insights. The focus in my study was on enabling learners to manage the challenges around learning and using Irish for professional purposes. Similar to how Hauck and Hampel (2008, p. 297) promote strategy training tailored to the specific context of online language learning, I propose that this research has led to useful insights into strategic learning in the mandated and minority language context. The planning of opportunities for Irish-medium exchanges helped relieve language anxiety in the research in hand. However, the need to support learners in the creation and pursuit of such opportunities in a minority language has been highlighted. Some conclusions regarding the explicit language support and language advising structures are arrived at below.

The reader is reminded again of the comment from Oisín who expressed that he just needed to be interacting with people with a higher Irish language competency. The period when *Líonra* members demonstrated highest motivation and engagement on campus was when they were participating in the group *Cúpla Ceist* project. Their desire to work on specific tasks to improve their Irish is noted in the data (CA, p. 242). Research findings suggest that particular

importance needs to be attached to task-based opportunities to use Irish in the workplace. The language advisor must facilitate discussion on the *savoir faire* of creating opportunities for minority language practice. These tasks may relate to the place of work but need not necessarily be linked to professional duties. Some more recent project designs at *Aonad na Gaeilge* which have been informed by this study are outlined in the epilogue.

The importance of paying attention to centre-peripheral and spatio-temporal relationships in learning a minority language has been highlighted in the research. The spatial practices of *Líonra* members in their learning management are revisited now but with a specific focus on two metacognitive language learning strategies, organising learning and seeking practice opportunities. The findings support the argument that new habits need to be created by learners of a minority language and that in order for learning to be most effective, these should become traditions of local space and time. As Mozzon McPherson (2007 p. 68) suggests, the “good management of any learning environment cannot happen disconnected from other pre-existing spaces with which users may interact (e.g. the classroom, the virtual space, the library, the home, the workplace)”. An unexpected outcome of this research was that a language support initiative became part of general workplace engagement activity. In the field of sociolinguistics it is generally considered that the status or power associated with a language is strengthened by its association with the workplace domain (See Spolsky, 2004; Shohamy, 2006; Angouri, 2013). This encourages further consideration of how the promotion of a minority language, Irish in this case, might be enhanced through a combination of interlinked developmental initiatives in the professional setting. Focusing on centre-peripheral relationships for a moment, new insights into the specific social strategy of interacting with native speakers in the naturalistic setting of *An Ghaeltacht* are notable. The proposal from *Oidhreacht Chorca Dhuibhne* tutors saying that they would continue communication with *Líonra* members following the *Gaeltacht* visit, was discussed in Chapter 6. These interactions had significance beyond just keeping in touch, as the native speakers, having explored issues around language awareness and anxiety with members of *An Líonra*, understood their needs as learners. The study has shown what can happen when cultural understanding and language awareness are enhanced through orchestrated opportunities for social strategy use. Learner motivation for language improvement was heightened when learners identified with why native speakers should have access to a quality Irish-medium service in the professional context.

Turning to affective language learning strategies now, some conclusions regarding the strategic behaviour best suited to the context of language mandate are arrived at. Although Oxford (1990) in dealing with affective strategies, suggests discussing feelings with someone else, her general emphasis is on strategies for the individual. As illuminated by theories of adult learning, the practice of group dialogue and reflection, and open disclosure of feelings are, I purport, essential affective strategies in mandated language learning. In this study, they helped change the prevailing ethos from one of individual anxiety to one of group intent. Although opportunities for private reflection were made available in the *Líonra* blog entries and in the *Cípla Ceist* initiative, the dominant strategy was a constant reminder to openly express feelings and to draw on each other for support in order to move from a doubting to a believing posture. The intention was to develop a network to support individuals within the institution. The emphasis was not on how personnel might represent the organisation but on how the organisation might support them in their language improvement plans. The development of *Líonra* support and relational knowing as a solution to a specific problem in the workplace revealed how this type of support can boost the spirit of the workplace in general. It also draws attention to how continuing professional education in the workplace might be approached to allow emotion back into a domain where feelings are often considered inappropriate.

Having explored the contribution the research makes to the importance of context in Mynard's Dialogue, Tools and Context Model, the role of context in transformative learning is considered now. While addressing a perceived gap in his early work on transformative learning, Mezirow (2000, p. 6) acknowledges the importance of the emotional, the affective, and social context in the meaning-making process. It was the workplace context itself, and a legislative obligation in an institution with a short history of promoting Irish, which created the disorienting dilemma for these learners. Research findings concur with those in the literature quoted earlier. Conditions were right for action research. As workplace educator, I capitalised on the context when fostering transformative learning. In designing interventions and creating opportunities for individual and group reflection and experimentation, real occasions to face fears were created in a new communicative space. However, the approach was one of support and constant interaction regarding mutual projects and initiative. Wah, 1999 (cited in Smith 2001, p. 319) suggests that "new knowledge is created when people transfer and share what they know, internalise it and apply what they learned". Following experiences provided by involvement in *An Líonra*, and the challenge of engagement with the formal monitoring process of *An Coimisinéir Teanga*, an

opportunity to provide evidence of a new confidence presented itself. Each research participant was happy to make public their statement that she or he was willing to ‘do business’ on behalf of the University in Irish. In doing so they demonstrated changes in their frames of reference. They shared an enthusiasm to apply their learning and expressed a willingness to engage in a professional capacity with others through Irish. Changes in attitude and behaviour and an alternative to the more oppressive structures of legislative obligation and institutional compliance were developed. In creating their own safe house in their professional environment, the context itself, one which was originally a site of distress, became a more comfortable place for *Líonra* members.

Research Question Four

Tools

The fragile emotional texture of mandated language learning in the workplace was highlighted in this study. Ways of handling this vulnerability in a supportive way have been demonstrated by drawing on relational knowing as a theoretical tool in the approach to language advising. The study has contributed to understandings of the usefulness of this theory in the professional context to bring about positive change. By extending transformative learning theory to this organisational setting, the possibilities of the theory to help understand group learning in both the workplace context and the language advising context have been uncovered.

The review turns now to the positive changes brought about by drawing on the theoretical tool of relational knowing. The practices of *Líonra* members in developing and raising awareness of their own common vision regarding Irish language promotion disrupted the status quo in an organisational context where Irish had been traditionally kept off the agenda. The application of the concept of shared mental model to the theory of transformative learning in groups in order to better understand what happened has been novel. The concept fits well with literature on learning in the workplace also. Marsick and Faller (2012, p. 380), quoted previously, conclude that organisational learning and change necessitate alignment toward a common vision. The research initiative aimed primarily to support learners to deal with a challenging situation in their professional context. Their potential to become what Mezirow and Associates (2000, p. 30) called agents of change, looking at and tackling current norms, was an unanticipated outcome.

As negotiators of change with a shared mental model they made new connections within the administrative structures of the University. One of the positive changes brought about by drawing on the theoretical tool of relational knowing is that the white spaces of the organisational chart were found. The research evidence suggests that language awareness issues impacted on the agenda of the whole organisation in a significant way. This was the case as these issues were led by popular interest. The architecture of language promotion within the organisation was one designed by *Líonra* members. New connections were made through interactions of *Líonra* members with the grassroots of the University, with middle management and with the executive committee of the University in the *Cúpla Ceist* initiative. These associations led to the development of an awareness of the need to identify and to tap into the potential of white spaces in efforts to drive organisational change with regard to the implementation of bilingual policy.

The international research literature on learning for transformation deals with what the facilitator of transformative learning does to create or to design communicative space. The main focus in the literature on language advising, as noted in Chapter 2, is on what the advisor does to create optimum conditions of learning. I contributed to the growth of the learners by facilitating learning conversations around the challenges of using Irish in their professional context, and organising opportunities and spaces where deep connections could be made with the subject matter. It is the learner rather than the facilitator who ultimately decides whether or not a learning experience is transformative (Dirkx and Smith, 2009, p. 65). The importance of letting the group decide what spaces they themselves would associate with the language and how this makes a contribution to dialogue around agency and autonomy in the workplace warrants attention in this study. In choosing their own venue for the *Maidin Chaiife* they created their own space in which to celebrate their identities. It was a space where every day interactions with colleagues counteracted the pressure of mandate. In allowing them make their own decisions regarding their learning path, they were not only empowered but motivated to widen their social circle by inviting others to attend their *Maidin Chaiife*.

Research supports the significance of relationships in transformative learning (Taylor, 1998, p. 43). The research in hand has demonstrated how helping relationships were integral to the dynamics of the group language advising initiatives. In forming *An Líonra*, the development of relational knowing was an explicit aim. Here, resonating with Bottrup (2005, p. 516), I purport that trust, confidence, critical support, empathy, and frankness are integral to the encouragement

of learning in a network in the workplace setting. The nurturing of these traits among *Líonra* members while involved in language initiatives led not only to a new confidence in Irish but to significant changes in the ambiance of the workplace itself also. The research findings have led to a valuable insight for fruitful practice in contexts where education professionals are mandated to provide a high quality service through the medium of Irish.

Summary of Language Advising Framework

The pedagogical framework of language advising devised and implemented during the research might be described as one where learning in relationships was provoked through the nurturing of social relationships, relational knowing, and through the promotion of social strategies in language learning. The learning context, described originally by Oisín (CA, p. 28) as one where *Líonra* members didn't meet or converse with each other, and one which didn't offer opportunities to learn from one another, was transformed. Trust, group helping behaviours, networking, dialogue, reflection on assumptions, and feedback are all part of this model. The language advising role in relation to the nurturing of relational knowing and a hospitable language community in a group setting, is an extension of the advisory role in the more traditional one-to-one context. The notion of practice put forward and the model of language advising proposed are ones where learners are encouraged to consider in a creative way spatio-temporal issues in their design of language practice opportunities. Relationships between the learner of Irish as a minority language, workplace colleagues, and *Gaeltacht* contacts are nurtured. The clear focus on networking within the minority language community helps make real connections with the language and leads to regular authentic opportunities for language practice and for the development of language awareness. The model is one where indirect language learning strategies are learned, practised and reflected on. Risk-taking is encouraged, empathy is high, challenges are embraced with good humour, and courage is bolstered by a language advisor who helps co-create a springboard for independent language use. This is in stark contrast to autocratic models of management and administration - in the public sector or elsewhere - which are essentially an exercise in monitoring compliance and performance. The performance management model which evolved in this research is one where a new culture of support was established. This encouraged individual members of staff to take on responsibility for their own continuous language improvement and service provision through Irish while also celebrating their contribution to a vibrant and sociable campus community. Having summarised this new framework of language advising, two other

insights beyond the research questions are explored further now. The first relates to a proposal relating to a focus on the importance of formalising coalitions in minority language learning and support. The second suggests that a new spotlight should be put on learners of Irish in the workplace as new speakers of Irish.

Further Research Insights

Formalisation of Collaborations in Irish Language Learning and Support

What began as a focus on collaboration among learners grew to include attention to how I collaborated with others and on an extended membership of the PAR group. The impact of these partnerships on learners who felt supported by a new sense of belonging to a broader language community was palpable (CA, p. 307). Action has been taken in this study to foster a coordinated approach to the development of a community of teachers, learners, competent and native speakers, and researchers dealing with adult learners of Irish. The research has produced a strong warrant for the case that this coordinated and expanded pedagogical framework should be the hallmark of initiatives relating to Irish language support. The management of learning in this way might address the sense of disconnection adult language learners and language speakers often feel because their target language is a lesser-used language. In widening the language support network and formalising new kinds of coalitions, new opportunities to develop further understanding of how the teaching, learning and language support requirements of a minority language differ from majority languages might be created. The development of collaboration among learners themselves and language users in general, and the nurturing of critical friendships between all professionals involved in minority language learning is, I suggest, vital to the support and growth of the minority language itself.

Learners of Irish in the Workplace as 'New Speakers' of Irish

As noted earlier in the thesis, it was never the intended outcome of the OLA legislation that it would bolster the community of second language learners of Irish (Walsh, 2010). The research findings in hand suggest, that with the right support and tailored interventions, learners of Irish in the workplace can cross the threshold from being language learners to language users. As well as becoming new speakers of the language, they can be supported to critically reflect on what a quality service through the medium of Irish for their organisation might be. Findings imply that

language learners in the workplace deserve further attention in the context of language planning and policy. Ó Riagáin (2009, p. 114) suggests that language policy must consider language users in general and that the stability of language usage is dependent on the stable social networks of users. My focus on the professional context and work institutions as a new site for new networks of language learners, and on the support infrastructure required in this specific context, is the first on the topic. Ó Riagáin argues that a viable language policy has to aim to recruit from the ranks of those currently speaking English rather than servicing those currently speaking Irish. The research in hand supports the drive for language revival to ensure language survival. Consequently, the workplace is promoted as a context which should be targeted in Government implementation of the 20-Year Strategy for the Irish language 2010-2030. The findings have shown what can happen when small educational interventions are made and when the needs of learners are investigated and met. The growth in the number of adult learners of Irish, who have participated in language ‘training’ initiatives in the workplace, was noted in Chapter 2. The strategy for Irish aims to have 250,000 people speaking Irish daily by 2030. New ways of developing social connectedness and sustaining social networks of Irish language speakers in the workplace could well play a major part in increasing numbers if the implementation of the 20-year plan was better coordinated at national level.

As noted previously, the research evidence suggests that language-inclusive recruitment policies are vital to capacity building in organisations. This current research has demonstrated how innovative language support measures also lead to capacity building. The strong trend in public bodies to date towards the up-skilling of existing employees was highlighted earlier in the thesis. An ongoing exploration of innovations in workplace learning is necessary in those public bodies required to work with existing personnel to meet their remit to provide Irish language services. The study may influence the debate around up-skilling and language improvement being a key organisational strategy for public bodies meeting Irish-medium service provision requirements. The *Líonra* language support model is one which might be used by organisations who have already invested a lot of time and funding into the improvement of the Irish language skills of employees. The Welsh model for the successful implementation of bilingual strategy in organisations discussed in Chapter 2 included four stages. These steps related to the development of language awareness, the drafting of supporting procedures, a language improvement audit, and formal language learning programmes. The research in hand suggests that this strategy might be strengthened further by a fifth step, one offering employees access to an

ongoing language advisory support service. Evidence from the data suggests that an infrastructure of language support, an underlying and ongoing principle of respect and care for others, knowledge sharing, and access to guidance and expertise, can lead to much more than mere legislative compliance.

Section 2: Implications of Research

New Directions in Field of Language Advising

The implications of this research for professional practice, the community of practitioners, and policy and research are reviewed now. The study has been the first relating specifically to language advising for Irish, and the first step in the development of the field of language advising in the professional context in Ireland. The implications of the findings for those involved in the implementation of legislation and support of language learners and speakers in the workplace are significant. A recommendation arising from this research is that a Centre for Irish Language Skills in the Workplace with a university base should be established. This centre of research and practice would create a new support infrastructure for consultancy at national level. Practice in Wales might be followed; the Welsh Government, for instance, announced capital funding for the development of a Welsh Language Skills in the Workplace Centre at Coleg Cambria in Wrexham in December 2014.

The first step in the establishment of the centre would be consultation with representatives of the Department of Arts, Heritage and the *Gaeltacht*, office of *An Coimisinéir Teanga*, *Foras na Gaeilge*, *Gaeltacht* partners such as *Oidbreacht Chorca Dhuibhne*, and academic experts in language advising, pedagogy, and sociolinguistics. The centre would support practitioners involved in informing language policy in organisational settings and those involved in the development, improvement and delivery of Irish language services. The support network of *An Coimisinéir Teanga* noted in Chapter 1 might be rejuvenated as a first step. Irish language development officers in public bodies, including language officers funded by a *Foras na Gaeilge* initiative in Northern Ireland in 2013, could draw on expertise and resources at the proposed centre. The centre might support the Department of Arts, Heritage and the *Gaeltacht* which has been given responsibility for the implementation of “Irish language training and Irish language proficiency testing” as part of the implementation plan of the 20 Year Strategy for Irish (2013, p.

14). The potential of collaboration among policy makers, the language community, including new speakers, experts in language teaching, learning and advising, and experts in organisational learning would be harnessed. Further links could be made through this centre with academics in other disciplines, and with those with expertise in human resource development and organisational change in particular. This would help both establish and professionalise the field of language advising in the workplace, and in the adult education arena further. Recommendations relating to materials development, continuous professional development, language advising initiatives, and further research at the proposed centre are considered below.

Bridging the Materials Gap

The gap in the availability of resource materials for the teaching and learning of Irish for the professional domain, as highlighted in this research, is a key priority. In light of the findings arising from the initiatives in the research in hand, materials to trigger reflection on the affective side of mandated language learning for second language speakers are necessary. A specific focus on language learning strategies in materials for the workplace is proposed. The suggestion by Oxford (2014, p.3) noted in the earlier literature review, that a new data gathering instrument specifically designed to accommodate the unique characteristics of the “situated target research population” should be considered. The development of a comprehensive bank of self-access resource materials addressing terminology requirements, and the various language registers and discourses required in the professional context across the public sector is proposed also. This development should happen in conjunction with the Department of the Public Sector at *Foras na Gaeilge* who coordinate *Scéim do Sholáthbróirí Sainchúrsaí Oiliúna Gaeilge don Earnáil Phoiblí*⁴⁵ (*Foras na Gaeilge*, 2015). The established difficulties of new technical terminology being accepted by *Gaeltacht* speech communities have to be kept in mind also (Ní Ghearáin, 2011). Ways of involving this community in the development of specific workplace terminology should be considered. For instance, a radio series involving a panel of *Gaeltacht* speakers, similar to the *Focal Faire* series used as a resource in Cycle 1, focusing on specific workplace terminology, could be produced. Collaboration with exemplary speakers might increase acceptance of such terminology while strengthening coalitions across the minority language community.

⁴⁵ The Scheme for Providers of Specialist Irish Language Courses for the Public Sector.

Professional Development Opportunities

A continuous professional development qualification in language advising is proposed. A specialist suite of modules relating to minority language advising in general, with an option to focus on language advising in the workplace or educational context, is envisaged. The scope to draw on majority language support models and to adapt them as necessary to the minority context, or indeed to create joint initiatives, is immense. The opinions of those outside of Irish language circles would inform new directions also and strengthen inquiry around the status and value of using Irish in the professional domain. The design of learning outcomes and course materials for the professional development modules would benefit from collaboration with Welsh and Basque partners interested in the use of minority languages in the workplace. I propose drawing on expertise at the University of Hull with regard to the initiative also. Mozzon-McPherson, in the School of Languages, Linguistics, and Cultures at Hull has promoted trans-national qualifications in language advising previously (2007, p. 80). The involvement of the community of professional practice would help build on the research findings relating to both language advising in groups and minority language advising.

Language Advising Stances in the Organisational Context

A vision regarding the type of facility required at the proposed Centre for Irish Language Skills in the Workplace is based on the research findings and the pedagogical values, postures and principles held during the research process. Strategies to deal with interactions with proficient speakers and technical queries in the workplace, and guidance on developing learner awareness of language skills in the professional domain, would be core concerns. A consideration of how information and communication technology may be exploited to create alternative learning spaces, to meet the language support needs of worker-learners, is proposed. Language advising clinics and language mentoring programmes could take place either face-to-face at the proposed centre or via Skype. Language support initiatives using social media, LinkedIn and Twitter in particular, might be designed to connect personnel working in similar administrative areas with common terminology across various public bodies. In light of the 2014 revisions to the OLA and the recruitment campaign of the Public Appointments Service noted in Chapter 2, there is need for the development of an advisory facility to aid public bodies in deciding what language competency is required for specified positions. This calls for engagement by language advisors in

further critical external conversations with international experts on language benchmarks in the organisational setting. Associations with the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks in Ottawa, with *Iaitb*, the Welsh Centre for Language Planning, and *Canolfan Beddyr* at Bangor University, Wales are promoted in particular.

New ways of highlighting the importance of valuing language skills in the workplace and promoting efforts to improve such recognition might also be investigated at the language advising facility. The consideration of white space in the discussion chapter has highlighted opportunities to lead an organisational strategy regarding bilingualism with a care element. A useful task for public bodies with an obligation to implement the provisions of the OLA might be to consider activities that are far removed from their current way of meeting requirements, requirements which are often met minimally and reluctantly. A focus on developing connections across organisations and addressing the learning support requirements of the person as the ‘service provider’ would ensure that a care element is built-in to all compliance-driven measures. Engagement with the support services at the proposed Centre might be the first step for an organisation in looking at legislative obligations in a fresh way.

Further Research

My contributions are open to critique and query and open to improvement rather than proven for all times, but the research evidence is substantiated with data and by the overall success of the initiatives that have formed the core of this current research. Some of the limitations of the study in hand are noted now before reflection on areas for further research. Although the research sample is representative of an institution which is more advanced than other public bodies in Ireland in terms of supports for developing staff capacity in Irish, it is small and unique. Interviews outside of the actual research context may have allowed for more generalisable results relating to what MacIntyre (2007, p. 572) refers to as the ‘momentary restraining forces’ that come into play when a second language learner is deciding whether or not to begin communication. Although the section on validity in the methodology chapter has outlined stringent measures put in place to monitor validity, the inherent dangers associated with investigating one’s own professional practice mean that I may have had blind spots. While full success in self-scrutiny cannot be assured, every effort was made to be vigilant in the enquiry and to invite frank perspectives from others. A profile of the role of language advisor in the

mandated and minority language context is presented for the first time in this research. However, findings have been limited by my capacity to take on this new role by drawing on good practice in the literature on language advising in general, and on my own experience of teaching and learning, rather than on any formal qualification in the area of language advising. Furthermore, while the interdisciplinarity of this research is indeed one of its strengths, the scope of the literature relating to organisational and workplace learning, psychology, adult education, and sociolinguistics is immense. A data-coding scheme relating to critical reflection and its relationship to transformative learning might have led to more purist analysis in the field of adult learning. Similarly, a more systematic research into advisor-learner interaction might have allowed for deeper insights into the language advising discourse of the workplace in the field of language learning.

However, the managerial implications of the findings and the impact on my own professional context are significant. An alternative way of dealing with compliance and with anxieties, has been evidenced in this study; one which rather than being an exercise in conformity and drafting of procedures leads research participants on a journey of individual and group discovery. Having led a forthright exploration of the disorienting reality of a problem in the professional context and found alternative responses which allowed *Líonra* members and the institution itself flourish, my own professional practice has been transformed. The study has prompted the rebranding of *Aonad na Gaeilge* as a centre of research as well as a centre for teaching and learning. It has also driven a consideration of the kind of educational leadership required in the minority language context. The improved understandings of practice and of attitudes that need to be developed are now part of a new theoretical and pedagogical framework, one with a focus on the continued nurturing of learner agency in language improvement, and the development of critical friendships, both new and old. The next step is to map out a research strategy and to consider new developmental roles relating to tutor development, materials design, language advising, and *Gaeltacht*-liaison roles at *Aonad na Gaeilge*.

My research findings support a strong case for further exploration of the minority language use of adult learners beyond the classroom according to two key themes: interaction between L2 and L1 speakers; and spatial practices and autonomy in language learning in groups. A third area suggested for further research is one relating to ‘practice architecture’. Building on the language awareness workshops for learners co-designed with *Oidbreacht Chorca Dhuibhne* as part of this study, an argument is made for a language awareness programme targeting native speakers

of Irish as the next step. The delicate nature of partnerships between native and non-native speakers of Irish in the specific context of the workplace could then be investigated further. The work of Bourgeois, a Canadian expert on linguistic minorities, noting the importance of liaison between community and language learning institutions in minority languages, would be a useful starting point here. The design of a language mentoring initiative to consider the challenges and opportunities of these liaisons should be considered. The scope for the design of occasions for authentic language interactions and mentoring initiatives in the professional context in particular is great. As worker-learners have a real sense of the need for realistic communication with members of the wider speech community, the workplace could be looked on as a laboratory where innovative minority-language pedagogy might be explored. Little research has taken place on the potential of such mentoring opportunities in the Irish language context. Indeed, the current conceptualisation of new speakers of Irish, particularly among younger people, is ‘a distancing from the *Gaeltacht* model’ (O’Rourke and Walsh, 2015, p. 68). They do not require such liaisons or indeed see them as necessary. The specific benefits of the cooperation of new speakers of Irish in the workplace with native or highly competent speakers to address issues around language anxiety as well as to improve cultural awareness needs to be investigated further. The potential of using computer-mediated communication to create engagement opportunities with a view to consolidating relationships is proposed. Such collaborations would also allow opportunities to explore further issues around language authenticity and ownership and recognition of different types of Irish speakers as noted by O’Rourke and Walsh (2015). This would also lend itself to new ways of looking at the centre-periphery relationships of Irish in administration and Irish in the *Gaeltacht*.

The focus on spatial practices in language learning in the research helps signpost the direction in which future initiatives relating to Irish language learning beyond the classroom might go. The opportunity to be led by the agency and autonomy shown by the learners in my research should be embraced. The work of Hinton, (2011 p. 314) and Ó Laoire (2012) on endangered and minority language pedagogy would be a useful starting point here. Future directions might be guided by the work of Terry Lamb, Garold Murray, Alice Chik and Naoko Aoki on learner autonomy and their consideration of various spaces, including digital environments, and how they impact on learning outside of the classroom (AILA, n.d.). Research involving the adaptation of these to the organisational context would be of interest in order to gain further insight into the

affordances for language learning that emerge in this environment and their implications for the role of language advisor.

Having forged links in this study between spatial practices in language learning and advising, and PAR methodology, I propose research into the application of the emerging theories of practice architecture and ecologies of practice to illuminate the practices of those involved in Irish language teaching, learning, support and promotion. These are theories being developed by Kemmis et al. (2014) about what practices are made of and how different practices relate to each other. The potential to put the sociolinguist, the expert in pedagogy, the adult learner specialist, and the language advisor working together in new research networks in the minority language context is immense. The suggestions for further research detailed above should be positioned with the theoretical framework of a critical friends group. They should experiment with different research methodologies and methods, and with recent trends in think aloud protocols and learner narrative in language research, in particular. The fruitfulness of Mezirow's theory of transformative learning in the thesis in hand warrants further exploration of language support using this specific lens.

Final Reflections

A narrative of language advising for minority and mandated language in the workplace has been created in this thesis and an infrastructure to support the implementation of bilingual practices in the workplace has been put forward. In establishing *An Líonra*, various options were open with regard to the connections which might be made, and the route which might be taken on the language learning journey of the group. Palfreyman (2005, p. 13) might suggest that *Líonra* members found and constructed opportunities for autonomy in unlikely places. The communal development of new spatial habits and the emphasis on actively organising occasions for group learning is noteworthy. A shared mental model and the influence of cultural architects saw the group occupy communicative spaces and safe houses, cross the bridge from being language learners to language users, attract new members to their network, and claim the white spaces of opportunity within the structures of their organisation. As language advisor, I helped them orienteer their way and explore opportunities without deciding what exact route they might take. I facilitated learning conversations and 'therapeutic dialogue' to enable them to manage obstacles and problems along the way (Kelly, 1996, p. 94).

It has been shown that the impact of asking current employees to take on responsibility for the provision of Irish-medium services for the organisation is more complex than previously noted. The staff members providing administrative services through Irish are at the heart of this research. Learners of Irish for professional purposes have not been given any great attention up until now. They are presented now as a significant cohort of new speakers of Irish. In addressing the challenges around creating status for a minority language when business is done predominantly through the majority language in the place of work, consideration needs to be given to how making the language part of the vibrant social fabric of the workplace impacts on organisational support and professional take-up. The local and thick description of the richer sense of professional self-understanding, and enhanced capacities for dealing with language anxiety among the research participants demonstrates what can happen when members of staff are supported to create new energies. These research findings are all the more significant at a time when the confidence of practitioners involved in the implementation of OLA legislation is at an all-time low. The lenses of sociocultural and transformative learning theory have helped illuminate how the beliefs, attitudes, and motivation of *An Léonra* members, interacted with cultural meanings and social interests in the organisational context. Changing beliefs led to changes in the language learning and the language advising situation. The research has informed a new vision regarding ways to support learners, and involve colleagues and members of the speech community, in developing a critical mass to support Irish as a minority language in the workplace. The extended pedagogical framework is one which nurtures the development of networks, new coalitions, new synergies and perspectives, as well as collective histories. It involves a process of navigation through various learning spaces. It also requires that we venture into other disciplines to help us understand how this new connectedness might be sustained.

EPILOGUE

The active data gathering phase for this research ended in April 2011. The passing of time has shown that one of the enduring benefits of the action research has been that changes in attitudes and procedures relating to the language support of adult learners of Irish have become embedded in my professional practice. The account given here in this epilogue strengthens the validation of the action research carried out. Some of the pertinent developments since 2011 relating to Irish language support activities in the organisational context will be reflected on now. Drawing on research conclusions, the commentary is organised under four headings. Remarks are offered initially on advances made relating to the formal planning for learner interactions with native speakers and with other learners of Irish in the workplace. Secondly, observations relating to developments in autonomy in language learning beyond the classroom are made. The reader is updated on the status of the *Líonra* coffee mornings, on the use of technology in language support, and on developments relating to the association of Irish with more general campus engagement initiatives. Thirdly, the collaborative approach with regard to a research strategy at *Aonad na Gaeilge* is outlined. The final section presents how the sharing of practice with the community of practitioners is seen as further validation of the doctoral research process. The involvement of various critical friend groupings in the planning of initiatives is a common thread throughout the epilogue.

Planning for L2-L1 and L2-L2 Interactions

A central focus has been the continuous nurturing of links with the West Kerry *Gaeltacht* and consideration of ways to increase interaction between learners of Irish as L2 with L1 speakers. I led a pilot project in autumn 2012 which aimed to bring *An Ghaeltacht* to the University through the voice-chat tool, Skype. This built on the earlier exploration of ways to encourage the use of Irish in the workplace and ways to address anxieties around having to deal with native speakers. Considerations relating to the time constraints on adult learners working full-time, but seeking sustained opportunities for language practice, were key concerns as before. A new model of learner-native speaker interaction was investigated. I established a new critical friend grouping involving University colleagues with expertise in language materials design for English as a Second Language (ESL), computer-mediated technology and problem-based learning (PBL). Róisín and Clodagh from *Oidhreacht Chorca Dhuibhne* and Ruairí, *Aonad na Gaeilge* tutor, were also

members of this group. We jointly designed a six-week problem-based language learning project. The design of the initiative was informed by the expressed interest of *Líonra* members to develop opportunities for writing and also to draw on their preference for specific language tasks. Doireann and Eoghan, research participants, and four other members of UL staff interested in developing Irish in the University workplace, participated in the project. Native speakers, Róisín and one of her West Kerry contacts, a lady with no experience of language pedagogy, interacted with the learners via Skype. Ruairí took on the role of PBL facilitator. In a research presentation at an internal University symposium in May 2013, I used the following diagram to explain our language support model. A hybrid model of problem-based language learning (PBLL) and blended learning (BL) as a pedagogical framework for the minority language context is put forward. The thesis research findings regarding the need for an expanded view of pedagogy and strong liaisons with critical friends are reiterated and revalidated in this proposed framework.

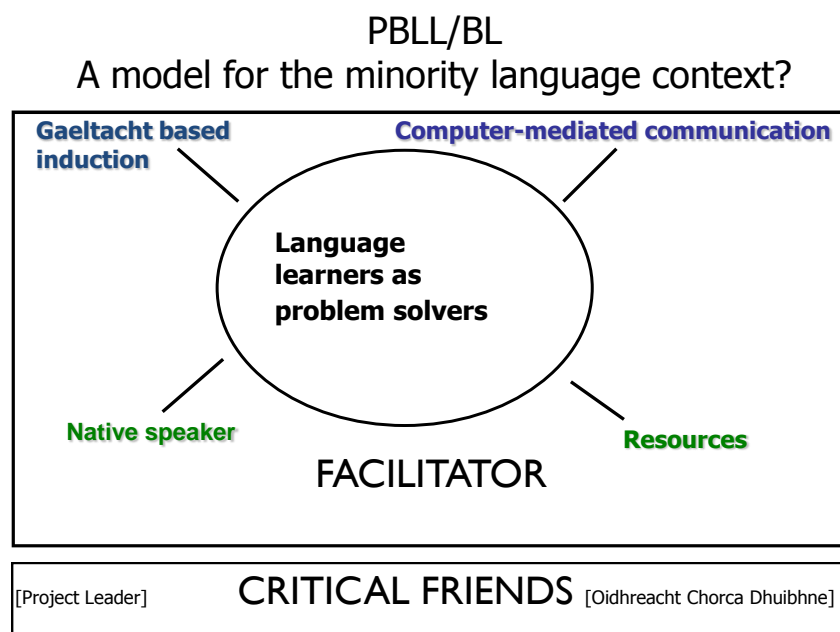


Diagram 1: A Pedagogical Model for the Minority Language Context

New formal collaborations between two *Aonad na Gaeilge* groups of worker-learners have taken place more recently (2014). Interactions between a small University staff group with worker-learners registered on an outreach programme in a public body have been facilitated. Assessment instruments for the two language cohorts included collaborative tasks requiring information

gathering on email and phone prior to a physical meeting of the two groups on a *Gaeltacht*-based weekend programme. Here they participated in a workshop facilitated by Róisín and also recorded interviews relating to the use of Irish in the professional context. The pedagogical framework developed in the thesis which emphasised the importance of such new connectedness among different groups of learners in the minority-language context is seen in practice again here.

Irish Language beyond the Classroom

The focus turns now to autonomy in language learning and language usage beyond the classroom. The coffee morning at *Cúinne na Gaeltachta* is a well-established weekly event on the University's social calendar. It now attracts regulars from outside of the campus community. Oisín still plays a key role in managing this space. It was he, for example, who invited a group of local Transition Year students to the coffee morning with a view to letting the young Limerick students see that Irish was used socially on campus. One-to-one language advising clinics for staff are advertised as part of the University's Human Resources Learning and Staff Development Programme. In my facilitation of discussions around planning for language learning, many of the participants in these clinics mention attendance at the *Maidín Chai fé* as one of their learning targets. The sustained involvement of *Líonra* members in their coffee morning since 2011 further validates research findings about learner agency and appropriation of learning space.

The research concern with spatial and temporal considerations in adult learning and in experimental learning spaces has continued. The slogan “learning on demand, learner in command”, (King and Heuer, 2007) used at *Líonra* group language advising workshops remains in use. However, with advances in mobile phone applications, the Mp3 player has become defunct. An interesting development has been a smallscale project on the potential to use the mobile messaging app, WhatsApp, as a language support forum for adult learners of Irish. I led an initiative supporting University staff preparing for exams in the *Aonad na Gaeilge* modules in Applied Irish in the Workplace in 2014. A language support ‘help desk’ was provided via WhatsApp with participants sending and receiving text, images, and video and audio media messages to each other via their smart phones. Sailí and Oisín, research participants, were part of this group. Staying with the use of media for a moment, *Líonra* members were also involved in the

planning and screening of the *Rogha* project in 2011.⁴⁶ This YouTube video was part of the University's official campaign relating to the active offer of bilingual services at the institution. The video encapsulates the spirit of campus and community engagement with regard to the promotion of Irish in the organisational context of the University (*Aonad na Gaeilge*, 2011).

Informed by the research findings on the importance of associating Irish with personal pastimes, *Beatha agus Sláinte*, a campus health and well-being campaign, was designed. This has taken place in 2013, 2014, and 2015 over the ten-week period from early January to *Seachtain na Gaeilge*, the national Irish language festival. The project, which was modelled on the RTÉ *Operation Transformation* series involved a different type of critical friends group. Language specialists at *Aonad na Gaeilge* liaised with health and fitness experts from the University's Sport Arena, from the office of the National Certificate for Exercise and Fitness, and the Physical Education and Sport Sciences Department. A guest lecture by a sport psychologist as part of the project noted the importance of multiple rather than unitary personal goals as part of a theory of lifestyle change. The *Beatha agus Sláinte* project promoted green exercise, one group-walk per week on campus, weight loss, social encounters, and opportunities to speak Irish. It is a good example of how Irish has remained part of the social fabric of the campus. Bilingual fitness facts with supporting sound files were tweeted for those who wished to access language resources independently (*Aonad na Gaeilge*, 2013). Following the promotion of the potential of perspectives from other disciplines, including sport psychology, to inform practice in minority language learning, further new experimental spaces of Irish language support in the organisational context were found in this initiative.

A Research Strategy

In an effort to help define what messages we might give to learners at *Aonad na Gaeilge*, I, with *Aonad na Gaeilge* tutors, established a *Líonra Taighde*, a research network in 2014. Methodological and theoretical considerations and the *Líonra Taighde* research interests have been informed by the research findings and implications outlined in Chapter 9. The joint understanding on this new *Líonra* is that our research will be a social process, that it will be participatory, practical and collaborative. It will involve reflexivity and it will impact on both theory and on practice. We have

⁴⁶ *Rogha* means choice. Members of *An Líonra*, UL staff, and students and pupils from local schools stood in the formation of the word ROGHA in the University plaza. This was part of a campaign to highlight language choice and the availability of services in Irish at the University.

set up a VLE space to share literature as a first step, and preliminary discussions have taken place on a research strategy relating to our professional practice at *Aonad na Gaeilge*.

Sharing Good Practice

The account of the research given in the thesis has been further validated by other practitioners who have found it meaningful and applicable to their own professional contexts. I was invited, in 2013, to be a member of the National University of Ireland, Galway *Coiste Seasta um Cháilíocht Teanga*. This committee advises the University on Irish language proficiency requirements for certain academic and administrative University posts. I have also shared reflections on my experience of supporting mandated and minority language learning in the workplace context to *Coiste na Gaeilge*, the committee with responsibility for Irish at Maynooth University (10 May 2013). More recently, following the publication of the Waterford Institute of Technology Language Scheme 2014-2017, I was asked to make a presentation to the institution's Irish language committee, *Bord na Gaeilge*, on the implementation of a bilingual strategy in the organisational context (18 November 2014).

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CASE FILE

Appendix A: Case Archive Table of Contents

CASE ARCHIVE	1
Preparatory Phase.....	1
Presentation Slides.....	1
18 & 20 March 2009	1
2 March 2010	8
Observations.....	12
Observations [29 September 2009].....	12
Observations [2 March 2010].....	13
Correspondence	15
To Thesis Supervisor [4 March 2010]	15
Correspondence to Dr. John Walsh, Sociolinguist [April 2010]	16
Correspondence prior to Private Consultations [24 May 2010].....	20
Observations following One-to-One Consultations	21
Brief Observations: Eoghan [21 May 2010].....	21
Brief Observations: Sailí [21 May 2010].....	21
Brief Observations: Sibéal [21 May 2010]	21
Brief Observations: Gearóid [24 June 2010].....	22
Brief Observations: Daithí [29 June 2010]	22
Daithí: Follow-up Correspondence after One-to-One Consultation.....	22
Brief Observations: Cathal [9 July 2010].....	23
Brief Observations: Aisling [13 July 2010].....	24
Brief Observations: Eithne [14 July 2010].....	24
Brief Observations: Éabha [21 July 2010]	25
Éabha: Correspondence after One-to-One Consultations	26
Needs Analysis	26

Action Research Cycle One	27
Transcriptions.....	27
Transcript of Group Language Advising Session [20 May 2010]	27
Transcript of Group Language Advising Sesssion [24 June 2010]	38
Transcribed Extracts: Group Language Advising Session [29 July 2010].....	54
Transcribed Extracts: Group Language Advising Session [13 September 2010]	58
Transcript of Group Language Advising Session [16 September 2010]	59
Observations.....	75
Observations & Record of Ongoing Analysis & Interpretation [12 May 2010]	75
Observations & Record of Ongoing Analysis & Interpretation [20 May 2010]	76
Observations & Record of Ongoing Analysis & Interpretation [21 May 2010]	76
Observations & Record of Ongoing Analysis & Interpretation [23 May 2010]	77
Observations & Record of Ongoing Analysis & Interpretation [1 June 2010].....	78
Observations/Semi-Structured Notes as per Research Questions [24 June 2010]	79
Observations & Memos [27 July 2010].....	81
Observations re Sibéal & Oisín [29 July 2010].....	82
Observations/Semi-Structured Notes as per Research Questions [13 Sept. 2010].....	82
Observations/Semi-Structured Notes as per Research Questions [16 Sept. 2010].....	86
Sulis Discussion Forum (Virtual Learning Environment) Group Discussion	88
Sulis Wiki Pages.....	90
Wiki: Eoghan & Oisín [17 September 2010].....	90
Wiki: Oisín [17 September 2010]	91
Wiki: Oisín [23 September 2010]	91
Wiki: Eoghan [24 September 2010].....	91
Wiki: Cathal [1 October 2010].....	92
Wiki: Aisling [1 October 2010].....	93
Wiki: Doireann [3 October 2010]	93
Wiki: Eoghan [20 October 2010]	93
Wiki: Oisín [22 October 2010]	94
Blog Entries and Comments	94
Electronic Correspondence re Gaeltacht Trip	95
Email to An Líonra Members [6 September 2010]	95

Email to Manager, Human Resource Division [12 August 2010].....	96
Action Research Cycle Two.....	97
Correspondence regarding Course Content & Design	97
Correspondence trail with Clodagh, Oidhreacht Chorca Dhuibhne Tutor.....	97
Correspondence with Human Resources Division.....	105
To Learning, Development & Equal Opportunities Manager [9 September 2010].....	105
From Learning, Development & Equal Opportunities Manager to Line Managers.....	106
Planning Notes & Memos re Immersion Programme	107
Planning Notes [28 August 2010]	107
Information pack re Turas Gaeltachta.....	108
Letter from Oidhreacht Chorca Dhuibhne	113
Transcriptions.....	113
Transcript: Language Awareness Session 1 with Clodagh [4 October 2010].....	113
Transcript: Language Awareness Session 2 with Róisín [4 October 2010].....	127
Transcript & Audio File: Open Forum/Validation Meeting [6 October 2010].....	147
Observations.....	160
Observations [4-6 October 2010]	160
Observations [6 October 2010].....	160
Gaeltacht Diaries.....	163
Aisling	163
Eoghan.....	166
Doireann.....	169
Oisín	174
Sailí.....	175
Cathal	183
Éabha	185
Móirín.....	188
Meidhbhín	191
Correspondence following the Programme.....	193
From Deirdre to Lónra Members & Office of Corporate Secretary [7 Oct. 2010]	194
From Deirdre to Human Resources Division [7 October 2010].....	194
From Clodagh to An Lónra Members [11 October 2010].....	195

From Oisín to An Líonra Members re Maidin Chaife [12 October 2010]	197
Eoghan’s Entry for the University Magazine, UL Links [November 2010].....	197
Transcriptions.....	198
Transcript of An Líonra Meeting [21 October 2010]	198
Observations, Memos & Semi-St. Notes as per Research Questions [21 Oct. 2010].....	210
Action Research Cycle Three	213
Transcriptions.....	213
Communication Procedures: Session 1 [3 November 2010]	213
Communication Procedures: Session 2 [3 November 2010]	219
An Líonra Tacaíochta Teanga Meeting [22 November 2010]	234
Meeting with Critical Friends [6 December 2010]	253
Cúpla Ceist Planning Meeting [8 February 2011].....	277
Cúpla Ceist Review Meeting [1 April 2011]	293
Presentation Slides.....	313
Critical Friends [6 December 2010].....	313
Sulis Data	321
Discussion Forum Thread: Inspreagadh an Ghrúpa [28 October 2010].....	321
Discussion Forum Thread: Ag Machnamh Dom [28 October 2010]	321
Discussion Forum Thread: Breithlaethanta [28 October 2010].....	321
Discussion Forum Thread: Monatóireacht Fhoirmeálta [28 October 2010].....	322
Sulis Site Statistics: Number of Visits per Participant.....	323
Sulis Site Statistics: Total Activity per User since Site Creation.....	323
Sulis Site Statistics: Most Popular Resource.....	325
Site Site Statistics: Total Activity per Month.....	326
Cúpla Ceist Discussion Forum: Sailí [25 February 2011]	327
Cúpla Ceist Discussion Forum: Oisín [1 March 2011]	329
Cúpla Ceist Discussion Forum: Deirdre [2 March 2011]	330
Cúpla Ceist Discussion Forum: Doireann [3 March 2011].....	331
Cúpla Ceist Discussion Forum: Aisling [4 March 2011]	331
Cúpla Ceist Discussion Forum: Sailí [9 March 2011].....	332
Cúpla Ceist Discussion Forum: Cathal [11 March 2011]	333
Cúpla Ceist Discussion Forum: Oisín [12 March 2011].....	334

Cúpla Ceist Discussion Forum: Eoghan [14 March 2011].....	334
Email Correspondence.....	335
To Éadaoin, Étaín & Sorcha [28 October 2010].....	335
From Éadaoin [28 October 2010].....	335
To Éadaoin [1 November 2010].....	336
From Éadaoin [2 November 2010].....	337
From Éadaoin [28 March 2011].....	337
From Oisín [1 April 2011].....	339
Observations of ‘Cold Caller’ re Communication Procedures [22 November 2010].....	339
Observations.....	341
Personal Observations [22 November 2010].....	341
Personal Observations [7 March 2011].....	345
Personal Observations [16 March 2011].....	347
Personal Observations [2 April 2011].....	348
Observations of Étaín, Critical Friend [2 March 2011].....	350
Observations following Interview with Aisling.....	351
Short Questionnaire: Update on Learning Plans.....	352
Doireann [30 November 2010].....	352
Oisín [2 December 2010].....	353
Eoghan [6 December 2010].....	355
Cathal [16 December 2010].....	355
Blog Entries & Comments.....	357
Announcements Cycles 1-3.....	357
22 May 2010.....	357
17 September 2010.....	360
27 September 2010.....	361
22 October 2010.....	361
2 November 2010.....	363

Interview Transcripts	363
Sibéal [13 April 2011].....	363
Sailí [13 April 2011].....	376
Aisling [15 April 2011].....	395
Doireann [15 April 2011]	413
Cathal [15 April 2011].....	434
Eoghan [18 April 2011].....	447
Oisín [18 April 2011]	462

Appendix B: Needs Analysis

B1. FOGHLAIM TEANGACHA / LANGUAGE LEARNING

1. Ainm

2. Úsáidim an Ghaeilge

- Sa bhaile
- Ag an scoil le mo pháistí
- I mo phost Ollscoile
- Go sóisialta
- I mo rang Gaeilge amháin
- Go hannamh
- I gcomhthéacs eile

3. Cuir na scileanna seo (san ionad oibre) in ord tábhachtacha duit féin. 1 = níl sin tábhachtach dom agus 4 = tá sin fíorthábhachtach dom

	1	2	3	4
Labhairt na Gaeilge	Labhairt na Gaeilge 1	<input type="radio"/> Labhairt na Gaeilge 2	<input type="radio"/> Labhairt na Gaeilge 3	<input type="radio"/> Labhairt na Gaeilge 4
Scríobh na Gaeilge	<input type="radio"/> Scríobh na Gaeilge 1	<input type="radio"/> Scríobh na Gaeilge 2	<input type="radio"/> Scríobh na Gaeilge 3	<input type="radio"/> Scríobh na Gaeilge 4
Forbairt ar scileanna éisteachta	<input type="radio"/> Forbairt ar scileanna éisteachta 1	<input type="radio"/> Forbairt ar scileanna éisteachta 2	<input type="radio"/> Forbairt ar scileanna éisteachta 3	<input type="radio"/> Forbairt ar scileanna éisteachta 4
Léamh na Gaeilge	<input type="radio"/> Léamh na Gaeilge 1	<input type="radio"/> Léamh na Gaeilge 2	<input type="radio"/> Léamh na Gaeilge 3	<input type="radio"/> Léamh na Gaeilge 4

4. Cad í an fhís atá agat duit féin mar fhoghlaimoir Gaeilge? (Ceist dheacair tá fhios agam ach is fiú díriú uirthi!)

5. Cad iad na gníomhaíochtaí foghlama teanga is fearr leat?

- Cleachtaí aonair
- Obair bheirte
- Obair ghrúpa

6. An bhfuil aon taithí agat ar dhialanna foghlama a choinneáil nó ar anailís a dhéanamh ar an dul chun cinn a dhéanann tú mar fhoghlaimoir teanga? Tabhair sonraí má tá!



7. Tabhair sampla (i) den chineál ábhar léitheoireachta a thaitníonn leat i mBéarla agus (ii) de theideal/de mhír éigin ar léigh tú i nGaeilge le déanaí



8. Cuir tic le haon ráiteas atá fíor!

- Tá taithí agam ar fhóraitm phlé ar líne (i mBéarla)
- Tá taithí agam ar chóras Sulis na hOllscoile
- Tá taithí agam ar bhlaganna a léamh (i mBéarla nó i nGaeilge)
- Tá seinnteoir Mp3/iPod agam
- Bainim taitneamh as foghlaim na Gaeilge ar an ríomhaire

9. An bhfuil aon mholtaí agat don chineál tascanna grúpa Líonra a mbeadh sainspéis agat iontu? [Luaigh do chuid caitheamh aimsire anseo más mian leat]



10. An mbeifeá toilteanach bheith mar rannpháirtí taighde dochtúireachta ar ábhar a bhaineann le foghlaim teangacha san ionad oibre (i.e. páirt a ghlacadh in agallamh, dialanna foghlama a chur ar fáil don taighde 7rl). Ba mhór agam do chuid rannpháirtíochta!

- Bheinn
- Ní bheinn

Submit

B2. AN GHAELIGE SAN IONAD OIBRE/IRISH IN THE WORKPLACE

1. Ainm

2. Déan cur síos ar do phost san Ollscoil

3. Tabhair cúpla sampla den ábhar plé a bhíonn agat le "custaiméirí" na hOllscoile ar an rphost agus ar an nguthán

4. Éisteacht/Labhairt (Roghnaigh ráiteas amháin "Tá mé")

- Ábalta teachtaireachtaí simplí sa ghnáthchúrsa mar "Cruinniú Dé hAoine, 10rn" a thógáil agus a chur ar aghaidh
- Ábalta riachtanais shimplí laistigh de mo réimse oibre féin a rá mar "ba mhaith liom 25 de.... a ordú"
- Ábalta comhairle ar nithe simplí a chur ar dhaoine i mo réimse oibre féin
- Ábalta an chuid is mó de na teachtaireachtaí a thógáil agus a chur ar aghaidh, ar chóir déileáil leo le linn gnáthlá oibre
- Ábalta a bheith páirteach go héifeachtach i gcruinnithe agus seimineáir laistigh de mo réimse oibre féin agus argóint a dhéanamh i bhfabhar cáis nó ina choinne
- Ábalta comhairle a thabhairt/láimhseáil a dhéanamh ar cheisteanna casta, leochaileacha nó achrannacha, mar cheisteanna dlí nó airgeadais, feadh an mhéid saineolais atá agam

5. Léamh (Roghnaigh freagra amháin: "Tá mé")

- Ábalta tuarascálacha gearra nó tuairiscí táirgí ar ghnáthnithe a thuiscint má chuirtear i láthair iad i dteanga shimplí agus gur ábhar sa ghnáthchúrsa a bhíonn i gceist
- Ábalta an chuid is mó de thuarascálacha gearra nó lámhleabhair sa ghnáthchúrsa i mo réimse saineolais féin a thuiscint ach dóthain ama a bheith ann
- Ábalta brí ghinearálta litreacha nach dtiocfadh sa ghnáthchúrsa agus altanna teoiriciúla i mo réimse oibre féin a thuiscint
- Ábalta an chuid is mó de chomhfhreagras, tuarascálacha agus litríocht táirge fíriciúil, ar dóigh go dtiocfainn trasna orthu, a thuiscint
- Ábalta comhfhreagras a bhíonn curtha i láthair i dteanga neamhchaighdeánach a thuiscint
- Ábalta tuarascálacha agus altanna a dtiocfainn orthu i mo chuid oibre, lena n-áirítear smaointe casta i dteanga chasta, a thuiscint.

6. Scríobh (Roghnaigh freagra amháin: "Tá mé")

- Ábalta gnáthiarratas simplí a scríobh chuig comhghleacaí mar “An dtabharfá 20X dom le do thoil?”
- Ábalta nóta cuimsitheach gearr a scríobh chuig comhghleacaí nó chuig teagmháil aitheanta i gcuideachta eile
- Ábalta nótaí sách cruinn a thógáil ag cruinniú nó seimineár nuair a bhím cleachtaithe ar an ábhar nó nuair is gnáthábhar é
- Ábalta déileáil le gnáthiarratas ar earraí nó ar sheirbhísí
- Ábalta déileáil le réimse leathan de ghnáthshuímh agus de shuímh neamhghnácha ina n-iarrtar seirbhísí gairmiúla ó chomhghleacaí nó ó theagmhálacha seachtracha
- Ábalta nótaí iomlána cruinne a dhéanamh agus bheith lánpháirteach i gcruinniú nó i seimineár ag an am céanna

*

7. Cuir tic le haon am/lá NACH n-oirfeadh duit do theacht le chéile an Líonra Tacaíochta

- Dé Luain 10.00-13.00
- Dé Luain 14.15-17.00
- Dé Máirt 14.15-17.00
- Dé Céadaoin 10.00-13.00
- Dé Céadaoin 14.15-17.00
- Dé hAoine 10.00-13.00

*

8. Cuir do chuid roghanna maidir le gearrchúrsa Gaeltachta don Líonra Tacaíochta Teanga in ord tosaíochta

	Cúrsa le linn na seachtaine oibre: uastréimhse 3 lá i mBealtaine	Cúrsa le linn na seachtaine oibre: uastréimhse 3 lá i Meitheamh	Cúrsa deireadh seachtaine (Meitheamh)	Cúrsa deireadh seachtaine le mo theaghlach (Meitheamh)
Céad rogha	<input type="radio"/> Céad rogha Cúrsa le linn na seachtaine oibre: uastréimhse 3 lá i mBealtaine	<input type="radio"/> Céad rogha Cúrsa le linn na seachtaine oibre: uastréimhse 3 lá i Meitheamh	<input type="radio"/> Céad rogha Cúrsa deireadh seachtaine (Meitheamh)	<input type="radio"/> Céad rogha Cúrsa deireadh seachtaine le mo theaghlach (Meitheamh)
Dara rogha	<input type="radio"/> Dara rogha Cúrsa le linn na seachtaine oibre: uastréimhse 3 lá i mBealtaine	<input type="radio"/> Dara rogha Cúrsa le linn na seachtaine oibre: uastréimhse 3 lá i Meitheamh	<input type="radio"/> Dara rogha Cúrsa deireadh seachtaine (Meitheamh)	<input type="radio"/> Dara rogha Cúrsa deireadh seachtaine le mo theaghlach (Meitheamh)
Tríú rogha	<input type="radio"/> Tríú rogha Cúrsa le linn na seachtaine oibre: uastréimhse 3 lá i mBealtaine	<input type="radio"/> Tríú rogha Cúrsa le linn na seachtaine oibre: uastréimhse 3 lá i Meitheamh	<input type="radio"/> Tríú rogha Cúrsa deireadh seachtaine (Meitheamh)	<input type="radio"/> Tríú rogha Cúrsa deireadh seachtaine le mo theaghlach (Meitheamh)
Ceathrú rogha	<input type="radio"/> Ceathrú rogha Cúrsa le linn na seachtaine oibre: uastréimhse 3 lá i mBealtaine	<input type="radio"/> Ceathrú rogha Cúrsa le linn na seachtaine oibre: uastréimhse 3 lá i Meitheamh	<input type="radio"/> Ceathrú rogha Cúrsa deireadh seachtaine (Meitheamh)	<input type="radio"/> Ceathrú rogha Cúrsa deireadh seachtaine le mo theaghlach (Meitheamh)

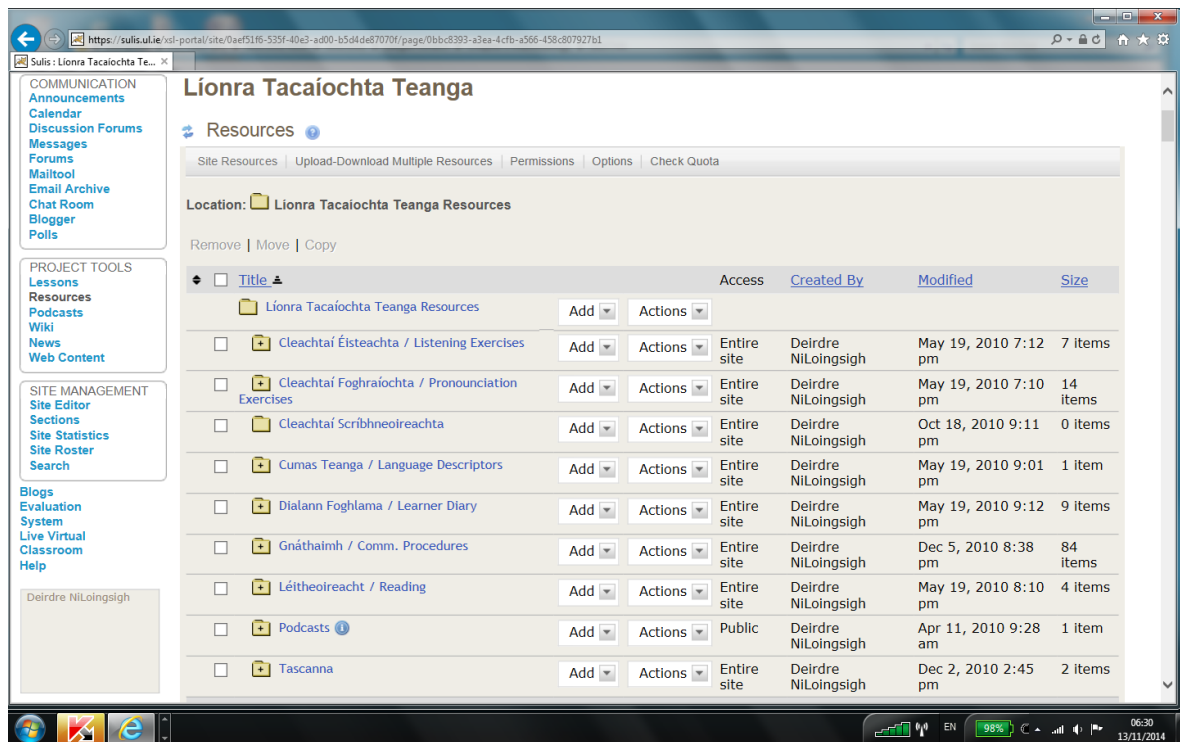
B'fhearr liom rogha eile a mholadh: Luaigh anseo thíos é mar sin!

9. An bhfuil baint agat le haon club nó cumann ar an gcampas? Tabhair sonraí anseo má tá



Appendix C: Sulis Site

C1. SCREENSHOTS FROM THE SULIS SITE



The screenshot displays the 'Líonra Tacaíochta Teanga' (Language Support Network) website. The main content area is titled 'Resources' and shows a list of sub-folders within the 'Líonra Tacaíochta Teanga Resources' folder. The table below summarizes the visible sub-folders and their details.

Title	Access	Created By	Modified	Size
Líonra Tacaíochta Teanga Resources				
Cleaichtaí Éisteachta / Listening Exercises	Entire site	Deirdre NILoingsigh	May 19, 2010 7:12 pm	7 items
Cleaichtaí Foghraíochta / Pronunciation Exercises	Entire site	Deirdre NILoingsigh	May 19, 2010 7:10 pm	14 items
Cleaichtaí Scribhneoireachta	Entire site	Deirdre NILoingsigh	Oct 18, 2010 9:11 pm	0 items
Cumas Teanga / Language Descriptors	Entire site	Deirdre NILoingsigh	May 19, 2010 9:01 pm	1 item
Dialann Foghlama / Learner Diary	Entire site	Deirdre NILoingsigh	May 19, 2010 9:12 pm	9 items
Gnáthaimh / Comm. Procedures	Entire site	Deirdre NILoingsigh	Dec 5, 2010 8:38 pm	84 items
Léitheoireacht / Reading	Entire site	Deirdre NILoingsigh	May 19, 2010 8:10 pm	4 items
Podcasts	Public	Deirdre NILoingsigh	Apr 11, 2010 9:28 am	1 item
Tascanna	Entire site	Deirdre NILoingsigh	Dec 2, 2010 2:45 pm	2 items

C1.1 Sub-folders in the 'Resources' Folder

University of Limerick
Hello, Deirdre I | (Logout)

Quicklinks: GA3021_SEM1_2010/I | GA3032_SEM2_2010/I | GA3034_SEM2_2009/0 | Líonra Tacaíochta Teanga Edit

My Workspace My Active Sites

View Site As: - Select Role -

Home

COMMUNICATION
Announcements
Calendar
Discussion Forums
Messages
Forums
Mailtool
Email Archive
Chat Room
Blogger
Polls

PROJECT TOOLS
Lessons
Resources
Podcasts
Wiki
News
Web Content

SITE MANAGEMENT
Site Editor
Sections
Site Statistics
Site Roster
Search

Blogs
Evaluation
System

Líonra Tacaíochta Teanga

Resources

Location: Líonra Tacaíochta Teanga Resources / Léitheoireacht / Reading

Remove | Move | Copy

Title	Access	Created By	Modified	Size
Léitheoireacht / Reading				
"Athair" Text of Poem & roinnt ghníomhaíochtaí. Léibhéil A & B	Entire site	Deirdre NILoingsigh	May 19, 2010 8:59 pm	27.5 KB
Físeán Feenish: Athair le Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill	Entire site	Deirdre NILoingsigh	May 19, 2010 8:43 pm	23 bytes
Litr ó Oidhreacht Chorca Dhuibhne.doc	Entire site	Deirdre NILoingsigh	Sep 13, 2010 9:42 am	26.5 KB
Téacs agus Mp3 ón Líonra Sóisialta / Lá B1 ard	Entire site	Deirdre NILoingsigh	May 19, 2010 8:42 pm	160 bytes

C1.2 Example of Reading and Listening Materials Provided on the Sulis Site

3. Can I take your name? / Cén t-ainm atá ort? [Listen](#)

4. Hold on please / Nóimeád amháin le do thoil [Listen](#)

5. Sorry I don't have much Irish myself but if you give me your name and number, I'll get an Irish sp back. Otherwise, if you don't mind I can deal with your query now in English. / Is oth liom nach bhfuil n agam féin ach má fhágann tú d'ainm agus d'uimhir, iarrfaidh mé ar chainteoir Gaeilge glaoch ar ais ort. Nó, más féidir liom do ghnó a phlé leat i mBéarla anois díreach. [Listen](#)

6. I'm sorry but the person who normally deals with Irish medium queries is not available at the mo nach bhfuil an té a bhíonn ag plé le ceisteanna i nGaeilge ar fáil faoi láthair. [Listen](#)

7. Would you like to leave a message in English? / Ar mhaith leat teachtaireacht a fhágaint i mBéarla? [Liste](#)

8. Would you like to make an appointment to meet him? / Ar mhaith leat coinne a dhéanamh leis? [Listen](#)

9. Would you like to make an appointment to meet her? / Ar mhaith leat coinne a dhéanamh léi? [Listen](#)

10. Can I take a phone number for you please? / An bhféadfá d'uimhir theileafóin a thabhairt dom? [Listen](#)

11. Seán will be back at 2 o' clock / Beidh Seán ar ais ar a dó a chlog [Listen](#)

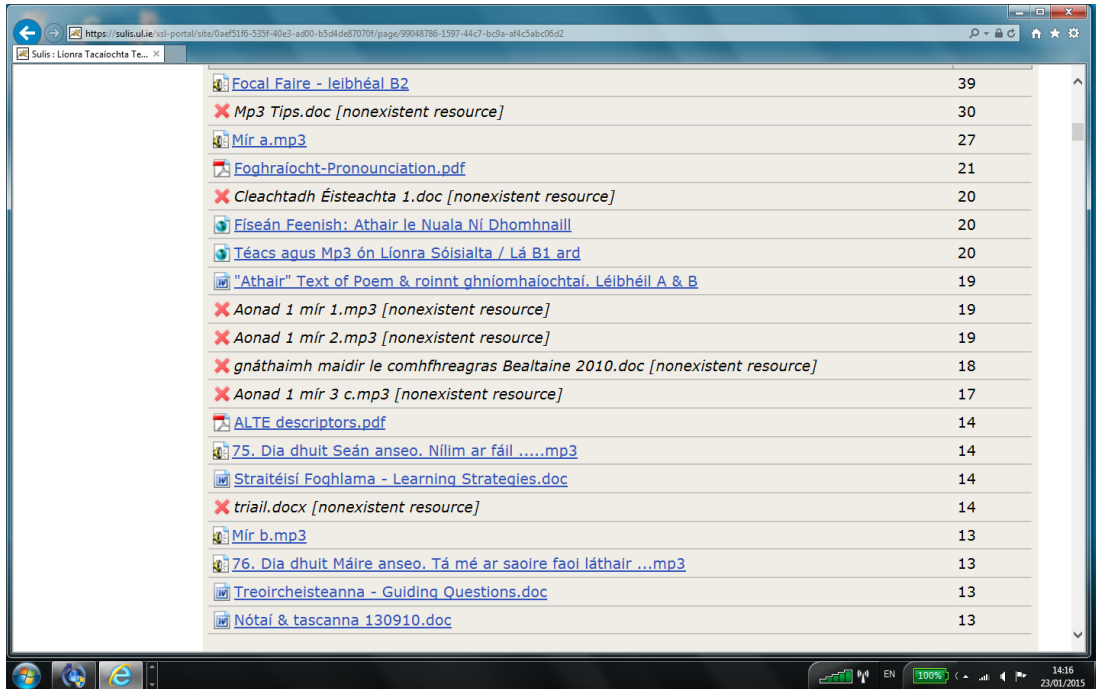
12. He will be back to the office later / Beidh sé ar ais san oifig níos déanaí [Listen](#)

13. She will be back to the office later / Beidh sí ar ais san oifig níos déanaí. [Listen](#)

14. He will be back after lunch / Beidh sé ar ais taréis lóin [Listen](#)

15. She will be back after lunch / Beidh sí ar ais taréis lóin [Listen](#)

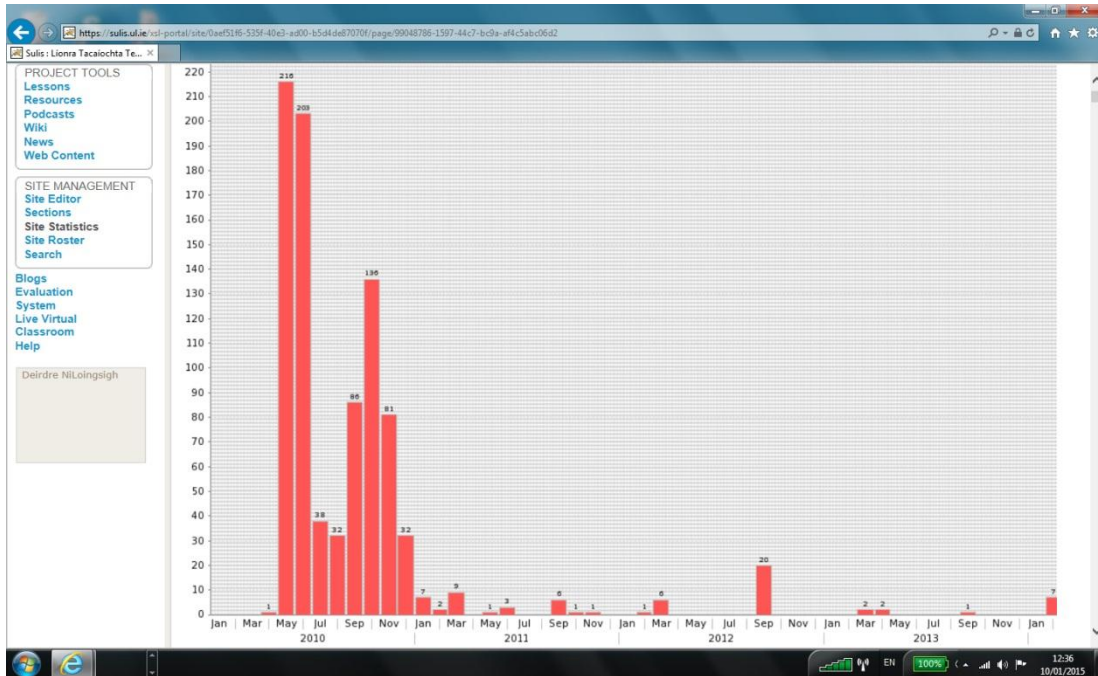
C1.3 Supporting Mp3 files on Sulis



C1.4 Most Popular Resources on Sulis



C1.5 The Announcement Tool on Sulis



C1.6 Sulis Site Statistics: Total Activity per Month

Líonra Tacaíochta Teanga

Discussion Forums

You last visited on: 04/12/2013 07:02:11 AM
The date and time now is: 04/14/2013 12:59:19 PM

Discussions	Topics	Messages	Last Message
Main			
Questions Have questions about how something covered in the course? Use this forum to ask. Contribute a reply!	1	1	10/02/2010 07:29:53 PM
Class Discussions Use this forum to participate in class discussions.	6	21	02/28/2011 02:38:36 PM
Cúpla Ceist! - Due: 03/17/2012 12:04:00 AM Beimid ag cur cúpla ceist ar dhaoine difriúla timpeall na hOllscoile don sraith d'agallaimh (series of interviews) i rith Sheachtain na Gaeilge. Cad na ceisteanna a chuirfimid orthu? Ceisteanna bunúsacha, greannmhara, dáiríre - cad a cheapann tu?	11	19	03/13/2011 01:38:31 PM
Other			
Student Lounge Use this forum for other questions/topics amongst yourselves.	0	No messages	No messages

C1.7 Cúpla Ceist Discussion Forum on Sulis

C2. SAMPLE WIKI ENTRY

Eoghan posted this material for editing on 7 July 2010

Seo samplaí de nathanna a bheadh oiriúnach do poirtéirí agus iad i mbun a gcuid oibre. An bhéadfá doras CM 045 a h-oscailt Le do thoil. Ar mhiste leat riomhaire a h-aistriú ó seomra DM054 go dtí seomra C1 057. Ná dean dearmad ar an gcleachtadh sábhála dóiteáin inniu ag 3 i.n. Oisín : “Cá bhfuil tú suite faoi láthair ? “ Eoghan : “Táim ag iompar beart go dtí an Leabharlann” Oisín : “Beidh mé i dteagmháil leat níos déanaí”

Cé hé an poirtéir atá i bhfeidhm ERB inniu. An bhfuil éinne in aice an Seomra Fáiltithe faoi láthair. Tá dhá bhord agus cúpla cathaoir ag teastáil i seomra EG0 10. Nathanna eile Tar isteach Séan.....

Cá bhfuil tú anois / faoi láthair.

An bhfuil tú soar faoi láthair.

An fheidir leat teacht go dtí fhoirgneamh ER nuair a bhíonn an t-am agat?

An fheidir leat teacht anall chugam ?

Ba mhaith liom cabhair uait ag bogadh trealamh agus troscáin.

Tá cabhair ag teastáil uaim ag bogadh trealamh / troscán.

An bhfuil teagmhas (event) san Fhoirgneamh CSIS inniú?.

Tá mo radio briste, an bhfeidir leat gaoch orm ar an teileafón / guthán?.

Tá pacáiste / litir agam duit.

An bhfuil duine lena h-ainm Séan.. I d'fhoirgneamh?

An bhfuil boird breise agat / boird le spáráil agat?

An bhfuil fhíos agat go bhfuil an aláráim ag bualadh?

Tá duine éigin ag lorg ud?

Cén uimhir teileafóin atá agat?

Sheol mé roimhphoist chugat níos luaithe

An bhfuil Séan...bunaithe (based) I d'fhoirgneamh ?

Go raibh maith agat don lámh cúnata (for your help).

Appendix D: Content of An Líonra Tacaíochta Teanga Blog

Déardaoin 20 Bealtaine 2010

An tÁbhar Blagadóireachta!



Cuireadh an Líonra Tacaíochta Teanga ar bun chun freastal ar **bhur gcuid riachtanais tacaíochta** ar fad mar fhoghlaimeoirí Gaeilge san ionad oibre anseo in Ollscoil Luimnigh. Fuair eas **tuisctint éigin** ar chuid de na riachtanais sin nuair a bhuaileas libh ag tús Mhí na Márta. An rud ba mhó ar léirigh sibh ag an geruinniú sin ná **nach mbíonn dóthain teagmhála** agaibh leis an teanga féin, nach mbíonn aon teacht le chéile mar ghrúpa agaibh, nach mbíonn sibh ag labhairt le chéile agus nach bhfuil ag éirí go maith le himeachtaí mar mhaidineacha caife agus 7rl.

Luaigh cuid agaibh **an brú** a bhíonn i gceist le freastal ar imeachtaí i Seomra na Gaeilge (nó le bualadh liomsa sa phasáiste fiú!). Is spéis liom féin féachaint ar an **imní theangeolaíoch** a bhíonn i gceist ag foghlaimeoirí nuair a bhíonn siad díreach tosaithe amach ar an mbóthar foghlama. Bhreá liom féachaint ar bhealaí eagsúla chun an brú agus an bhuaire aigne seo **a laghdú trí rannpháirtíocht sa Líonra**.

Tá ról ar leith ag an Líonra daoibhse atá ainmnithe mar theagmhálacha le Gaeilge. Tá brú eile ar fad i gceist le **seirbhís den ardchaighdeán** a sholáthar trí mheán na Gaeilge mar chuid de ról proifisiúnta Ollscoile. Tá suim ar leith agam san ábhar seo agus is dóigh liom go bhféadfaimis an-chuid a dhéanamh chun an strus seo (más ann é!) a laghdú go mór **trí phobal tacaíochta an Líonra a chothú agus a threisiú**.

Tabharfar deis daoibh ar an mblag seo plé a dhéanamh **ar an bplean gnímh is fearr** atá de dhíth **chun dul i ngleic** le cuid de **na dúshláin** seo thuas. Súil agam go mbeidh deis againn díriú ar an taobh éadroim den fhoghlaim chomh maith!

Annagh, Oileán Acla atá sa phictiúr thuas (do Ghearóid ach go háirithe!) Bíonn oll-iarracht (agus neart dreapadóireachta) i gceist le dul chomh fada leis an trá álainn seo, ach is fiú go mór an iarracht! An bhféadfaimis an rud céanna a rá maidir leis an mbóthar foghlama teanga?

bhur gcuid riachtanais tacaíochta – your support needs

tuisceint éigin – some understanding

nach mbíonn dóthain teagmhála – don't have enough contact

an brú – the pressure

imní theangeolaíoch – anxiety associated with speaking a language that is not your first language particularly at the early stages of learning

a laghdú trí rannpháirtíocht sa Líonra - reduce this through participation in the Líonra

seirbhís den ardchaighdeán – quality service

trí phobal tacaíochta an Líonra a chothú agus a threisiú – through the development and strengthening of a supportive community on the Líonra

ar an bplean gnímh is fearr – on the best plan of action

chun dul i ngleic – to address

na dúshláin – the challenges

oll-iarracht – super effort

Dé hAoine 21 Bealtaine 2010

Alt mar gheall ar Sheinnteoirí Mp3



B'fhéidir go mbeadh cúpla smaoineamh anseo thíos daoibh maidir leis na seinnteoirí Mp3 nua a úsáid! Iar-mhic léinn de chuid an Open University a bhí mar rannpháirtithe taighde.

A project at The Open University recently investigated how personal mobile devices are used by students The aim was to find out more about the ways in which those who are engaged in teaching and learning use mobile technologies, and in particular in relation to spontaneous learning and teaching practices and the

intersection with daily life and work. The focus of the investigation was on the types of activity undertaken, innovative or unexpected uses of mobile devices, and any issues mentioned by participants. The research is intended to help inform those who are interested in the potential of mobile learning, who are designing learning with a specific type of mobile device in mind, or who own a mobile device but may not be making the most of it for their own teaching and learning. The project's findings in relation to mp3 players were of particular interest because although mp3 players were widely used for entertainment, they also turned out to be useful in a much wider range of activity. In terms of receptive use, participants reported downloading podcasts, audio books, documentaries, lectures, conferences, interviews and other listening materials from the web. In more active mode, they recorded conversations, lectures and conferences. Materials and listening exercises were sometimes distributed to students, and the voice recorder facility was used by teachers to capture students' spoken reflections on their learning. A connection with PC applications could be made by subsequently including audio files in a spreadsheet or Powerpoint slides. Participants were also quite active in transferring files to other media, perhaps for the sake of convenience: they copied audio courses and CDs onto their mp3 player and created mp3 files from Real Media lectures. The presence of activities relating to a foreign language (Greek, Japanese, Spanish) was noted in the same study, suggesting that languages may be a fruitful area for informal learning with mobile devices. Amongst participants in the study, mobile phones were used for learning Greek and for storing information in Japanese, whilst mp3 players were used "to understand Spanish better, with listening materials downloaded from the web" and "for recordings of Japanese language drills and dialogues". Another reported use of mp3 players was in "recording and playback for conversation analysis". Mobile devices have opened up a vast range of possibilities for learning in ways that are convenient and suited to the needs of an individual within the context of their lifestyle. Everyday innovation happens when a person discovers a way of using his or her mobile device to enhance an existing activity, to replace it with something more valued, or to undertake something that would not have been possible before.

Kukulska-Hulme, Agnes and Bull, Susan (2008). Theoretical perspectives on mobile language learning diaries and noticing for learners, teachers and researchers. In: Proceedings of the mLearn 2008 Conference, 7-10 Oct 2008, Ironbridge Gorge, Shropshire, UK.

Posted by Deirdre at 12.13

Labels: active mode, receptive use, seinnteoirí mp3

1 comment:



Sailí 28 Meán Fómhair 2010 16.31

I didn't like the idea of the MP3 at all as I'm not a bit technical minded and the thought of blogs, wiki, downloads etc terrified me, but since then I have realised that I do use a mobile device for learning. I record tunes to my phone and by listening to them repeatedly I'm learning them by ear, so I have decided to copy this for my Irish and use my phone to record Gaeilge we shall see !

Dé Céadaoin 23 Meitheamh 2010

Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language.



Tháinig mé ar an **sliocht seo le déanaí ó dhírbheathaisnéis** Eva Hoffman (1989) ***Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language.***

Déantar **cur síos an-chumhachtach** ann ar an **réimse mothúchán** a bhíonn i gceist le "language anxiety" (imní theangeolaíoch). The complex set of feelings that constitute Foreign Language Anxiety is powerfully described in Eva Hoffman's (1989) autobiography .

Eva was born in Krakow, Poland and emigrated with her family to Canada in 1959 at the age of 13. She deeply regretted the loss of her sophisticated and confident Polish self in her interactions with native speakers of English. Speaking English shortly after her arrival filled her with fear and rage:

"It takes all my will to impose any control on the sounds that emerge from me. I have to form entire sentences before uttering them; otherwise, I too easily get lost in the middle. My speech, I sense, sounds monotonous, deliberate, heavy—an aural mask that doesn't become or express me at all. (. . .) I don't try to tell jokes too often, I don't know the slang, I have no cool repartee. I love language too much to maul its beats, and my pride is too quick to risk the incomprehension that greets such forays. I become a very serious young person (. . .). I am enraged at the false persona I'm being stuffed into, as into some clumsy and overblown astronaut suit. I'm enraged at my adolescent friends because they can't see through the guise, can't recognize the light-footed dancer I really am" (p. 118-119)

We can only assume that Eva Hoffman did overcome her language anxiety in English: She obtained a PhD in the United States, became editor for The New York Times, published several books in English, and settled down in Hampstead, UK.

It is very common that inexperienced users of their second language (Cook, 2002) can suffer from relatively higher levels of tension associated with use of this language.

REF: Hoffman, E. (1989). *Lost in translation: A life in a new language*. New York: Penguin Books.

POST A COMMENT:

Have you any thoughts on how the experiences of Eva Hoffman with English might be similar (or dissimilar) to your own feelings about Irish, particularly about using Irish in your position at UL? What is different (if anything) about how you feel about using Irish in your job and using the language socially or informally?

Gluais

sliocht - excerpt

le déanaí - recently

dírbheathaisnéis - autobiography

cur síos - description

an-chumhachtach – very powerful

réimse - range

mothúchá(i)n - feelings

Posted by Deirdre at 17.51

Labels: [inní theangeolaíocht](#), [language anxiety](#)

3 comments:



Aisling 24 Meitheamh 2010 14.24

Yes - I can empathise with Eva Hoffman's issues about communicating in her 2nd language. I proofread anything I write in English - spelling, punctuation, grammar. My standard of Gaeilge is not high enough to do that if I write in Irish.



Sibéal 28 Iúil 2010 17.44

I really liked the line about becoming a false persona because she cannot express herself properly in English. It is difficult when learning any language to get past that 'false persona.' You have a limited vocabulary so find yourself talking about the same topics with different people. You wonder if you will ever get to a new level in your ability to express yourself in the new language you are learning.

For this to happen the learner needs total immersion. They also need to get beyond the fear and anxiety that Eva Hoffman talks about.

This is the biggest challenge - to feel the fear and say it anyway!



Sailí 28 Meán Fómhair 2010 16.23

An inní theangeolaíoch atá i gceist anseo is ea mo shaol! Mothaím go bhfuil mo chuid gaeilge leadránach mar níl an graiméar agamsa ach oirid agus táim ag úsáid na focal ceanna an tam ar fad.

Dé Sathairn 11 Meán Fómhair 2010

The 'English corner' in China



Tháinig mé ar **alt spéisiúil** le déanaí mar gheall ar **iarrachtaí fhoghlaimoirí Béarla** (mar dhara teanga) a gcuid Béarla a chleachtadh sa tSín. The Chinese students do not have much opportunity to practice their English with native speakers of English, rather like ourselves on campus with little occasion to practice Irish with speakers of Irish as a first language. Tá cúinní Béarla nó 'English corners' i gcuid mhaith de **mhórchathracha na Síne** agus tá siad ar fáil ar beagnach gach aon champas ollscoile agus coláiste chomh maith.

The learners describe the 'English Corner' as 'a weekly gathering in a park, a square or at a street corner where university and middle school students create their own learning environment with each other and passers-by, to practise English' These 'English corners' are attended by hundreds of enthusiastic learners. In most English corners, there is little organisation and participants simply know that they can come and speak English to other learners at particular times. They may talk to complete strangers or make friends with people through practising English together at will.

I've put some excerpts from the article below. Is dóigh liom go bhféadfaimis-ne mar Líonra **tarraingt ar a gcuid taithí agus ar a gcuid dea-chleachtais**. The importance of the English corner in giving learners an opportunity for "self-assertion" in their language learning process is of note to us. Remember those discussions we've had about language anxiety! The sharing of learning experiences and nurturing of a strong sense of companionship is, I think, one of the most significant features of the 'English corner'. These learners are very motivated to direct their own language learning in an independent way. It relates well to what we would like to achieve as *An Líonra Tacaíochta Teanga!*

Some comments from participants in an 'English corner' in a coastal city of China in 2005

Sliocht /Excerpt 1

It was quite a dramatic experience to talk to Steve (the voluntary coordinator with a big personality). The first time I came to Blue Rain Cafe, I was ill at ease in a corner, listening to others. There were [. . .] repeated references to Steve, which made me look forward to meeting him. [. . .] Then he appeared in the cafe'. [. . .] I rushed to talk to him wondering whether this skinny man was the legendary Steve. [. . .] I asked him a question quite directly: 'So you are Steve? What makes you so famous?' He [. . .] laughed, 'Because I'm ugly!' I could not think of an immediate response. (Jess Lee, 28 July 2005. Translated from Chinese original.)

Sliocht /Excerpt 2

When I came here for the first time, I was quite nervous and also excited. I thought that with my clumsy English I would make a spectacle of myself. I did! [. . .] What I did not expect were your responses. You did not sneer at me or look down upon me. You responded to my poor performance with empathetic smiles and encouraging eyes. [. . .] By and by, I started feeling that I came to [. . .] cafe' not only for practising spoken English, but also listen to your reflections on life. [. . .] As for me, I cannot learn all of those things from my textbooks. (Alex 1985, 30 July 2005. Translated from Chinese original.)

Sliocht 3/Excerpt 3

It had been a physical labour for me to learn English. It was torture. [. . .] Now I am no longer anxious for (exam) results and have removed the self imposed shackles of achievement. [. . .] 'May I introduce myself?' Here I am again.(Shaqiang, 22 August 2005. Translated from Chinese original.)

Sliocht/Excerpt 4

The purpose of going there for me is to find someone who I could have a deep talk with for sharing the same interests. [. . .] It think that it's better not to ask too much about private matters such as what do you do or what's your name [. . .]. Just find something in common and exchange personal ideas. After leaving, you will recall this

chat the whole week and you would expect to meet such a friend next time.
(Mayflower, 31 July 2005. English original.)

Sliocht/Excerpt 5

When I talk to foreigners in English, I feel that I am talking on behalf of my nation and my people. When I talk to other Chinese in English, I feel that I am talking for myself. (An unnamed participant, 21 December 2005. English original.)

Sliocht/Excerpt 6

The first time I went there, I had a great time with Jett, Joy, Jason, and Jane. It happened that four of us five had names that started with the letter J, so we came up with an idea to form a group, jokingly named J-Group. And I changed my original name Emily to Jemily and then became a member of the group. [. . .] We formed such a group to help us all practise English well. We had fun chatting in English [. . .] We not only chatted in the English corner but also on the internet. (Emily, 13 September 2005. English original.)

Discussion

Research revealed “that committed learner leaders played a crucial role in maintaining and strengthening a sense of community among the participants and supporting their learning efforts. Both club coordinators were ordinary English learners, but they saw the learning of English as inseparable from sharing their experiences, reflections, and emotions with other learners in the learning process. They spent time caring for and encouraging other participants, especially newcomers—see Excerpt 1 above. As the participants gave each other emotional support when using English together in the club—see Excerpts 2 and 3—they began to see English as a medium for self-assertion and part of their self-identities—see Excerpts 4 and 5. The club also acknowledged the participants’ capacity for organizing and sustaining their own language learning efforts through developing their own communities or social groups. Consequently, some participants in the excerpts began to see themselves in charge of their learning and even assumed leadership of their own subgroups—for example, Emily in Excerpt 6. In some sense, learning English in the club resembles a humanistic approach to language learning as it values the importance of ‘understanding, personal assumption of responsibility, and self-realization’ in the learning process (Tudor 1993: 22).

REFERENCE: The 'English corner' as an out-of class learning activity
Xuesong Gao *ELT J* (2009) 63 (1): 60-67. doi: 10.1093/elt/ccn013

Comment

What is your reaction to the excerpts from the research article? Do they raise any issues for you/us as members of a language support network? What are we missing? What might be better practice? [Fáilte roimh fhreagraí Béarla agus Gaeilge!]
Mar eolas daoibh breathnaigí ar shuíomh ghrúpa de Ghaeilgeoirí i gCathair Luimnigh ag an seoladh gréasáin www.gaeilluimni.ie

Gluais

alt spéisiúil – an interesting article

iarrachtaí fhoghlaimoírí Béarla – efforts of learners of English

de **mhórchathracha na Síne** – large Chinese cities

tarraingt ar a gcuid taithí agus ar a gcuid dea-chleachtais – draw on their experience and good practice.

Posted by Deirdre at 14.59

Labels: community, english corner, self-assertion, support

2 comments:



Sailí 28 Meán Fómhair 2010 16.13

Fuair mé rphoist faoin maidin caife a beidh ag súil gach seachtain ar maidin De Ceadaoin, b'fheidir go mbiedh sé comh súil leis an "English Corner". Táim neirbhiseach bheith ag caint as gaeilge mar níl mo chuid gaeilge an mhaith ach táim ag tnú cleachtadh ar aon nós



Doireann 12 Aibreán 2011 11.45

Táimid ag bualadh le chéile gach Céadaoin i mBialann Eden don Maidin Chaife. Bíonn slua mór ann de ghná agus tá níos mó suim ag daoine ann le déanaí. Bhíomar ag caint mar gheall ar ainm a chur ar an áit ina mbualaimid agus dheineamar cinneadh "Cúinne na Gaeltachta" a úsáid.

Tá súil agam go dtaitníonn an ainm sin libh.

Dé Luain 1 Samhain 2010

Cúrsaí Monatóireachta



A chairde, toisc go bhfuil an scéal tagtha ó Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga go mbeidh monatóireacht á déanamh acu sna seachtainí amach romhainn, ba mhaith an smaoineamh é réamhfhacnamh a dhéanamh ar conas mar a bheidh agaibh má fhaigheann sibh glaoch! An rud is fearr ná an réamhullmhúchán cuí a dhéanamh agus glacadh leis go bhfuil tús an-éifeachtach curtha agaibh leis an bpróiseas sin cheana féin.

Ba mhaith liom tarraingt arís ar cuid de na cúiseanna a chuireann leis an imní theangeolaíoch ar bhlag an lae inniu agus ar chúpla straitéis chun dul i ngleic leo. I'd like to encourage you to think a little about how your personality affects your language learning also, e.g. your attitude to risk taking etc. I've come across a really useful resource created by the University of Helsinki Language Centre (of all places!). They are really ahead of us in their supports to students engaged in self-directed language learning.

They propose that every language learner is a unique blend of personal characteristics and background factors which affects the experience of learning. The characteristics and background factors are not stable, but like the pattern in a KALEIDOSCOPE they change with time and context. You have all changed yourselves in recent weeks with

regard to your progress in Irish. Check out the two links below and come back to the blog then and reflect on some causes of anxiety and some solutions below. I've tailored these so that they relate more now to the legislative context at UL.

<http://h27.it.helsinki.fi/vkk/kaleidoskooppi/sound/personality1.php>

<http://h27.it.helsinki.fi/vkk/kaleidoskooppi/sound/personality2.php>

Some causes of anxiety

- Fear of making mistakes
- Fear of issues of "compliance" to legislation
- Fear of not being understood
- Fear of critical reaction from others
- Worrying about my accent
- 'Freezing' when called upon to speak
- Getting to grips with grammar
- Remembering/knowing vocabulary related to my job at UL
- Wanting to translate every word but finding it doesn't help
- Discovering that Irish does not follow the same patterns as English
- Realizing how much work it takes to reach a standard where I could confidently offer a UL service through Irish
- Not making progress quickly enough
- Not matching up to the expectations of others (line managers?)
- Feeling too much is expected of me i.e. I am the person taking the calls for my entire department/section
- Fear of dealing with technical questions
- Fear of dealing with native speakers

We mentioned some strategies to deal with "language anxiety" briefly at the 21 October meeting. I've added to these below. Remember the discussions we had at an mBuailtín, draw on these to put yourselves at ease!

Some strategies used to deal with "language anxiety"

- Use positive self-talk (e.g. I can do it; it doesn't matter if I make mistakes; others make mistakes). The most important thing is that I show respect for the caller requesting a service in Irish.
- Actively encourage myself to take risks in language learning, such as guessing meanings or trying to speak, even though I might make some mistakes. Try and take lots of "risks" in using Irish in the next few weeks. Have I added the line re Irish medium services to my email signature? Have I thought about making an ACTIVE OFFER of services
- Imagine that when I am speaking on the phone that it is just a friendly informal chat
- Tell myself when I speak that it won't take long!
- Give myself a reward or treat when I do well
- Let us all know how you get on i.e. help encourage others to be confident!
- Be aware of physical signs of stress that might affect my communication in Irish
- Write down my feelings in a day or notebook (or on the discussion forum on Sulis!)
- Share my worries with departmental colleagues / fellow members of *An Líonra*
- Let Deirdre know that I am anxious!
- Use relaxation techniques e.g. deep breathing, consciously speaking more slowly, etc.

Please add your own comments on other potential/real causes of "language anxiety" peculiar to this context of "monitoring"? Do put forward some possible solutions also! Remember that our focus all the time is on group support and that we have agreed that we have really become a Líonra in recent weeks, hence the spider's web image above! Any suggestions on some actions/supports we should put in place to deal with these spotchecks over the next few weeks? Can those of you who are not "ainmnithe" as formal University contacts for Irish medium services help out in any way?

Posted by Deirdre at 11.49 No Comments

Dé Máirt 16 Samhain 2010

Straitéisí Sóisialta



Learning strategies are steps taken by students to enhance their own learning. Strategies are especially important for language learning because they are tools for active, self-directed involvement, which is essential for **communicative competence** in the language. Appropriate language learning strategies result in improved proficiency and greater self-confidence. (Oxford, 1990, p. 1). We looked at "affective strategies" in dealing with language anxiety in the last blog entry. This blog will introduce you to a new set of strategies called social strategies.

Language is a form of social behaviour; it is communication, and communication occurs between and among people. Learning a language thus involves other people, and appropriate social strategies are very important in this process. Three sets of social strategies, each set comprising two specific strategies are included here: asking questions, cooperating with others, and empathising with others.

Asking Questions

This set of strategies involves asking someone, possibly a teacher or native speaker or even a more proficient fellow learner, for clarification, verification, or correction.

(1) Asking for clarification or verification

Asking the speaker to repeat, paraphrase, explain, slow down, or give examples; asking if a specific utterance is correct or if a rule fits a particular case; paraphrasing or repeating to get feedback on whether something is correct. [Cuimhnigh nach bhfuil aon fhadhb le hiarraidh ar dhuine éigin ar an bhfón rud éigin a rá arís]

(2) Asking for correction

Asking someone for correction in a conversation. This strategy most often occurs in conversation but may also be applied to writing.

Cooperating with Others

This set of two strategies involves interacting with one or more people to improve language skills. These strategies are the basis of cooperative language learning, which not only increases learners' language performance but also enhances self-worth and social acceptance.

(1) Cooperating with peers

Working with other language learners to improve language skills. This strategy can involve a regular learning partner or a temporary pair or small group. This strategy frequently involves controlling impulses toward competitiveness and rivalry!

(2) Cooperating with proficient users of the language

Working with native speakers or other proficient users of the language, usually outside of the language classroom. This strategy involves particular attention to the conversational roles each person takes. (NB An Scéim Mheantóireachta)

Empathising with Others

Empathy can be developed more easily when language learners use these two strategies.

(1) Developing cultural understanding

Trying to empathise with another person through learning about the culture and trying to understand the other person's relation to that culture. [An dóigh libh go raibh deiseanna agaibh tuiscintí mar sin a fháil ar phobal na Gaeltachta ar an mBuailtín?]

(2) Becoming aware of others' thoughts and feelings

Observing the behaviour of others as a possible expression of their thoughts and feelings; and when appropriate, asking about thoughts and feelings of others. [Beidh deis agaibh seo a dhéanamh mar chuid den Scéim Mheantóireachta]

Tógadh an t-ábhar thuas ón leabhar *Language Learning Strategies: What Every Teacher Should Know* le Rebecca Oxford, Heinle & Heinle Publishers, Boston, 1990. [lgh. 146-147]

Posted by Deirdre at 10.18 No comments

Labels: cooperation, peers, social strategies

Dé hAoine 19 Samhain 2010

A Thuilleadh Machnaimh faoin bhFoghlaim



Is fiú go mór an iarracht léitheoireacht a dhéanamh faoi thábhacht na straitéisí meiteachognaíocha (metacognitive strategies) d'fhoghlaimoirí teanga. Hang in there for a minute and don't let the terminology put you off! Metacognition refers to an awareness of one's own thinking. Some of you have been coordinating your Irish language learning very well over the last few months. You will more than likely identify with some of the language learning strategies outlined in the group classified as "metacognitive strategies". Three different strategy sets are outlined below: centering your learning, arranging and planning your learning and evaluating your learning.

Centering your Learning

This set of strategies helps learners to converge their attention and energies on certain language tasks, activities, skills, or materials. Use of these strategies provides a focus for language learning.

(1) Overview and linking with already known material

Overviewing comprehensively a key concept, principle, or set of materials in an upcoming language activity and associating it with what is already known. This strategy can be accomplished in many different ways, but it is often helpful to follow three steps; learning why the activity is being done, building the needed vocabulary, and making associations.

(2) Paying attention

Deciding in advance to pay attention in general to a language learning task and to ignore distractions, and/or to pay attention to specific aspects of the language or to the situational details.

(3) Delaying speech production to focus on listening

Deciding in advance to delay speech production in the second language either totally or partially, until listening comprehension skills are better developed. Some language

theorists encourage a “silent period” of delayed speech as part of the curriculum, but there is debate as to whether all students require this.

Arranging and planning your learning

This set contains six strategies, all of which help learners to organise and plan so as to get the most out of language learning. These strategies touch on many areas; finding out about language learning, organising the schedule and the environment, planning for tasks, and seeking chances to practice the language.

(1) Finding out about language learning

Making efforts to find out how language learning works by reading books and talking with other people, and then using this information to help improve one’s own learning.

(2) Organising

Understanding and using conditions related to optimal learning of the new language; organising one’s schedule, physical environment, and language learning notebook.

(3) Setting goals and objectives

Setting aims for language learning, including long-term goals (such as being able to use the language to take a telephone query) or short-term goals (such as finishing reading a short story by Friday).

(4) Identifying the purpose of a language task

Deciding the purpose of a particular language task involving listening, reading, speaking, or writing. For example listening to the radio to get the latest news on the financial crises, reading a play for enjoyment, speaking to the hotel manager to book a room, writing a letter to persuade someone not to do something rash. This is sometimes known as purposeful listening / speaking/reading/writing.

(5) Planning for a language task

Planning for the language elements and functions necessary for an anticipated language task or situation. This strategy includes four steps; describing the task or situation, determining its requirements, checking one’s own linguistics resources, and determining additional language elements or functions necessary for the task or situation.

(6) Seeking practice opportunities

Seeking out or creating opportunities to practice the new language in naturalistic situations. Consciously thinking in the new language also provides practice opportunities.

Evaluating your learning

In this set are two related strategies, both aiding learners in checking their language performance. One strategy involves noticing and learning from errors, and the other concerns evaluating overall progress.

(1) Self-monitoring

Identifying errors in understanding or producing the new language, determining which ones are important (those that cause serious confusion), tracking the source of important errors, and trying to eliminate such errors.

(2) Self-evaluating

Evaluating one's own progress in the language, for instance, by checking to see whether one is reading faster and understanding more than one month or six months ago, or whether one is understanding a greater percentage of each conversation.

Tógadh an t-ábhar thuas ón leabhar *Language Learning Strategies: What Every Teacher Should Know* le Rebecca Oxford, Heinle & Heinle Publishers, Boston, 1990. [lgh. 138-140]

Más spéis leat breathnú ar taispeántas gearr de shleamhnáin ar YouTube faoi na straitéisí meiteachognaíocha seo, lean an nasc thíos. Tá "Witchcraft" Frank Sinatra mar thionlacan ceoil leis!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xoKUCrWLCWA>

Add some comments regarding how you have evaluated your progress in Irish in recent weeks. Fáilte roimh nótaí tráchta i mBéarla nó as Gaeilge.

Posted by Deirdre at 10.27 No comments

Labels: metacognitive, reflection, self-evaluation, self-monitoring, Sinatra

Dé Céadaoin 2 Márta 2011

Encouraging Yourself! Making Positive Statements



"The heart has such an influence over the understanding that it is worthwhile to engage it in our interest!"

Lord Chesterfield

Language learners often need to find ways to keep their spirits up and persevere as they try to understand or produce the new language here are some examples of positive statements that you might say privately to yourself! Use them regularly especially before a potentially difficult activity.

I understand a lot more of what is said to me now [Tuigim i bhfad níos mó anois ná mar a thuigeas cheana]

I'm a good listener (reader, speaker, writer) Is léitheoir, scríbhneoir, cainteoir maith mé]

I pay attention well [Tugaim aird mhaith ar rudaí]

I enjoy learning Irish [Bainim taitneamh as an Ghaeilge a fhoghlaim]

I can get the general meaning without knowing every word. [Bíonn tuiscint agam ar an mbrí ghinearálta gan tuiscint a bheith agam ar gach aon fhocal]

I'm reading faster than I was a month ago [Tá scil na léitheoireachta níos fearr anois agam anois ná mar a bhí mí ó shin]

People understand me better now [Tuigeann daoine níos fearr anois mé]

I had a very successful conversation today [Bhí comhrá an-éifeachtach agam inniu]

I can tell my fluency is increasing [Is léir dom go bhfuil mo chuid líofachta ag treisiú i gcónaí]

I enjoy writing in Irish [Is maith liom a bheith ag scríobh as Gaeilge]

Writing helps me discover what's on my mind [Tugann an scríbhneoireacht deis dom a bhfuil ar m'intinn a scagadh]

I don't have to know everything I'm going to write before I start [Ní gá dom plean do gach aon fhocal a scríobhaim a bheith agam sula dtosaím]

I'm confident and secure about my progress [Táim muiníneach faoin dul chun cinn atá á dhéanamh agam]

I'm taking risks and doing well [Táim ag dul sa tseans agus tá ag éirí go maith liom]

It's ok if I make mistakes [Is cuma má dhéanaim earráidí]

Everyone makes mistakes, I can learn from mine! [Níl éinne nach ndéanann earráidí, is féidir liom foghlaim ó mo chuidse féin!]

When used before or during a language activity, positive statements are for self-encouragement e.g before a presentation, one might say "I'm sure I can get my point across even if I make errors". When used after a very good performance, such statements take on a self-reward function, e.g. "I really did a good job this time"

Tógadh an t-ábhar thuas ón leabhar *Language Learning Strategies: What Every Teacher Should Know* le Rebecca Oxford, Heinle & Heinle Publishers, Boston, 1990. [lgh. 165-166]

Déanaigí na frásaí seo nó a leithéid a úsáid sula dtugann sibh faoi na hagallaimh ar mhuintir an champais agus i ndiaidh na n-agallamh féin. An fiú an measúnú seo a dhéanamh ar bhur gcuid iarrachtaí an Ghaeilge a chleachtadh an dóigh libh? Do think about why it is good to evaluate how well you are doing!Ná bíodh leisce oraibh bhur dtuairimí/mothúcháin a thaifeadadh ar na gléasanna MP3nna! Freagraí sa bhosca thíos

Posted by Deirdre at 10.41 No comments

Dé Céadaoin 2 Márta 2011

Seeking Language Practice Opportunities



Language learners must seek out – or create – opportunities to practice any and all of the four language skills, reading, writing, speaking and listening. If students want to reach moderate to high proficiency, classroom time cannot usually provide adequate practice opportunities. Therefore, students will need to find additional chances to practice the language and must realise **it is up to them** to search for these occasions. Here are some examples of seeking practice opportunities. Viva, who is learning Spanish, decides to practice her listening comprehension skills by listening to popular songs on the radio. Sachi actively seeks out new American friends to talk with at the local community club. Bob decides to submit his name and address to the German magazine's pen-pal list so that he can begin correspondence in German. Eva takes out a subscription to *Le Monde* as a way of pushing herself to practice reading French every day. Each of these involves a conscious decision to look for or create new chances to practice the target language.

Tógadh an t-ábhar thuas ón leabhar *Language Learning Strategies: What Every Teacher Should Know* le Rebecca Oxford, Heinle & Heinle Publishers, Boston, 1990. [ch. 160]

Tá deis cleachtaidh cruthaithe agaibh leis na hagallaimh ar phobal an champais atá á n-ullmhú agaibh. B'fhiú moltaí eile maidir le deiseanna leanúnacha chun bhur gcuid scileanna éagsúla sa Ghaeilge a chleachtadh a roinnt le chéile sa bhosca do nótaí tráchta (comments) thíos!

Posted by Deirdre at 10.06

Appendix E: Sample Material from Group Language Advising Session

E1. CORRESPONDENCE, 22 JULY 2010

[Message sent to *Líonra* members regarding the action plan for the next meeting]

A chairde,

Beidh teacht le chéile againn dóibh siúd atá fós ar an gcampas Déardaoin 29 Iúil, 11.00 i Seomra na Gaeilge. [Our next meeting for anyone not on holidays will be Thursday 29 July @11 in Seomra na Gaeilge]. For those of you who missed the last meeting, we had a technical support session, looked at using Sulis, the Mp3 players and *An Líonra* blog. Thángamar le chéile ar mhaithe le bheith cinnte go raibh gach éinne ar a chompord le Sulis agus leis an Mp3 a úsáid. Dheineamar cleachtadh ar an bhFóram Plé [Féach Tasc Scríofa – Sulis] agus ar ábhar a thaifeadadh ar an seinnteoir Mp3. Phléamar Blag an Líonra Tacaíochta Teanga agus liosta de threoircheisteanna maidir le machnamh a dhéanamh an bhur gcuid foghlama chomh maith.

Plean Gníomh/Action Plan for 29/07/10

1. Ba mhaith liom dá ndéanfadh sibh machnamh ar na **treoircheisteanna** atá curtha agam faoin gcomhad “**Dialann Foghlama**” ar **Resources Sulis** roimh an chéad teacht le chéile eile. I have put a list of bilingual trigger questions on Sulis (in Learner Diary folder under Resources) for you to look at and consider before the meeting. Try to make a voice recording on your Mp3 or write down some of your reflections on just SOME of these questions if you get a chance before the next meeting. **REM: Ideally you should be logging and dating these sort of reflections every week.** Don't worry I won't be asking you to read them out or anything! But I hope we might have a general discussion drawing on your observations.

2. If you have not already registered for the Líonra Tacaíochta Blog, please sign up. You will all have received invitations to register in your email. Message came from Deirdre [mailto:no-reply@google.com] You will need to create an account with Google if you don't already have one, step by step directions are available when you follow the link below. Do think about making some English comments on the BLOG!

3. Any of you who haven't met with me to discuss a personalised learning plan. I would be available to meet on Monday next or Thursday. Táim i ndiaidh bualadh leis an gcuid is mó agaibh faoin am seo, is dóigh liom.

4. For those of you who have not yet signed in on Sulis – it is available at the following link. You should use your UL user name and password on this site. <https://sulis.ul.ie/xsl-portal>

5. Dóibh siúd a chaill seisiún 24 Meitheamh – check out the **Mp3 tips** document on Sulis. **Please bring your Mp3 players to the meeting on Thursday**

6. If any of you are interested in converting WAV files to Mp3 (which are smaller files using up less space on your Mp3 player and PC) See message from ITD below re free download to do this conversion. Níl aon eolas teicniúil de dhíth chun an bogearra a úsáid.

7. Chuireas ábhar ar faoin uirlis WIKI (Project Tool, Sulis). These are phrases that Eoghan and Oisín have translated. Check out the Wiki tool, do pluck up the courage and edit any words/sentences that might be phrased better/more accurately! Tá cearta eagarthóireachta (editing rights) ag gach éinne sa ghrúpa! Maith sibh beirt, a Oisín agus a Eoghain!

Feicfidh mé an tseachtain seo chugainn sibh. Beannachtaí, Deirdre

From: ITD

To: Deirdre.Ni Loingsigh

Subject: ITD - Reference UE200023<o:p></o:p>Hi Deirdre,

This program is free and will do batch conversion of wav to Mp3 files.

http://download.cnet.com/WAV-to-MP3-Encoder/3000-2140_4-10060500.html

Regards

ITD

E2. ACTIVITY TOPIC, 29 JULY 2010

[An Fhoghlaim Ghníomhach: TG4 mar acmhainn](#)

Roghnú an chláir/choosing the programme

Gníomhaíochtaí réamhéisteacha/activities to do before your watch the programme

Bain úsáid as an “Bileog chleachtaidh do mhír clos-amhairc/Worksheet for audio-visual extract” ar SULIS (Roghnaigh cúpla ceist amháin roimh ré)

Na fotheidil mar acmhainn/using the subtitles as a resource

Féidearthachtaí mar ghrúpa?

SAMPLA

<http://beo.tg4.ie/main.aspx?level=Faisneis&content=126563713025>

Saibhir ach Salach (John Gilligan)

Appendix F: Detail of the Gaeltacht-Based Programme

F1. CORRESPONDENCE FROM HUMAN RESOURCES DIVISION

-----Original Message-----

From: Learning Development and Equal Opportunities Manager

Sent: Thu 8/12/2010 10:01

To: Line Manager

Cc: Deirdre.Ni Loingsigh; Éadaoin

Subject: RE: Gaeltacht based staff development programme October 2010

Line Manager,

A Gaeltacht based language learning programme has been planned for members of An Líonra Tacaíochta Teanga (UL Irish Language Support Group) from Monday 4th -Wednesday 6th October 2010 inclusive. This staff development programme will be hosted by Oidhreacht Chorca Dhuibhne and it is supported by Aonad na Gaeilge, UL and the Staff Learning and Development Office, Human Resources. I am contacting you hoping that you might be willing to release the staff member(s) from your area from office duties on these dates should they be interested in participating in this programme. The individual(s) listed are either the designated contact for Irish medium services in your area or are participating in language learning programmes with a view to offering an Irish medium service in the future as required under the UL Official Languages Act Schemes 2006-2009 and 2009-2012.

The trip to the Corca Dhuibhne Gaeltacht will take place from

11.00 Monday 4th October -15.30 6th October

Irish in the workplace: A language accuracy and language awareness programme

You might therefore confirm if you are happy for Sibéal to be released on the days outlined above by return. Car pooling for the event will be encouraged but we are requesting that individual departments will cover whatever travel costs are incurred. All other costs will be covered by Aonad na Gaeilge, UL and HR.

Many thanks

Learning, Development & Equal Opportunities Manager
Human Resources Division
Office D1043
University of Limerick
Limerick

F2. OUTLINE OF GAELTACHT PROGRAMME

Cúrsa Oiliúna do bhaill foirne Líonra Tacaíochta Gaeilge Ollscoil Luimnigh Baile an Fheirtéaraigh, Trá Lí, Co. Chiarraí.

Is iad aidhmeanna an chúrsa ná

- deis a thabhairt daoibh saol na Gaeltachta a bhaiseadh agus léargas a fháil ar an nGaeilge mar theanga bheo agus mar theanga oibre sa phobal.
- deiseanna foghlama teanga agus cultúrtha a sholáthar daoibh sa chomhthéacs nádúrtha seo.
- deiseanna a thabhairt daoibh aithne mhaith a chur ar a chéile go sóisialta.
- deiseanna plé a dhéanamh ar ábhar a bhaineann leis an bhfeasacht teanga, cearta teanga, an tábacht a bhaineann le seirbhísí den chaighdeán ard trí Ghaeilge san ionad oibre agus mar sin de.
- deiseanna dul i ngleic le cuid den bhuairt aigne a bhíonn i gceist daoibh maidir le Gaeilge a labhairt le muintir na Gaeltachta agus machnamh a dhéanamh ar sin.
- deiseanna machnamh a dhéanamh ar a bhfuil romhainn mar Líonra Tacaíochta Teanga nuair a fhillimid ar an Ollscoil.
- Deiseanna a thabhairt daoibh pé spriocanna pearsanta a leagann sibh amach daoibh féin don chúrsa a bhaint amach

The aims of the three day programme are to

- give you all an opportunity to taste Gaeltacht life and gain insight into Irish as a natural means of communication in community and work life.
- Provide you all with language and cultural learning opportunities in this Gaeltacht context.
- Give you all the opportunity to get to know each other socially
- Give you all the opportunity to discuss subjects related to language awareness, e.g. language rights, the importance of a high quality service through the medium of Irish in the workplace etc.
- Give you all an opportunity to address issues of language anxiety relating to speaking Irish to muintir na Gaeltachta and opportunities to reflect on that.
- Give us all an opportunity to reflect on the direction the Líonra Tacaíochta Teanga should take when we return to UL.
- Give you all opportunity to achieve whatever targets you set for yourselves for the three days.

	Luan 4ú Deireadh Fómhair	Máirt 5ú Deireadh Fómhair	Céadaoin 6ú Deireadh Fómhair
11.00 – 11.30 11.30 - 1.00	Fáiltiú & Clárú (Tae / Caife) Cur i láthair bhaill an Líonra Short presentations by Líonra members Cur i láthair ag Cairtróna Ní Chathail ar scileanna teanga “Exploring Language Skills”	9.30 – 10.45: Rang Comhrá Gaelainne [Conversation class, 2 levels] 10.45 – 11.15: Tae/Caife 11.15 – 12.15: Cruinneas na Gaeilge: Treoir [Session on language accuracy, 2 levels] 12.15 – 1.00 Gaeltacht Chorca Dhuibhne mar atá (Cur síos ar staid na Gaelainne / Feasacht Teanga) [Language awareness session]	9.30 – 10.45: Rang Comhrá Gaelainne [Conversation class, 2 levels] 10.45 – 11.15: Tae/Caife 11.15 – 12.15: Cruinneas na Gaeilge: Treoir [Session on language accuracy, 2 levels] 12.15 – 1.00 Seisiún plé (An inní theangeolaíoch) [Open discussion on language anxiety]
1.00 – 2.15	Lón	Lón	Lón
2.15 – 3.30	An Ghaeilge san Ionad Oibre: Teanga Riaracháin & Teanga Bhainistíochta [Session on the Irish language in the workplace]	Siúlóid Oidhreachta: Cosán na Naomh [Heritage walk]	Turas ar Ionad an Bhlascaoid, Dún Chaoin [Trip to visitor centre]
3.30 – 5.00		Agallaimh/grúpa fócais (ionad le deimhniú) [Short individual/ group meetings with Deirdre]	
Imeachtaí Oíche Am dinnéir le deimhniú	Cuairt ar phub áitiúil	Blaiseadh de cheol / amhránaíocht / fhilíocht Chorca Dhuibhne [Social event]	

F3. GAELTACHT DIARY AND QUESTIONNAIRE

DIALANN GHAELTACHTA⁴⁷ **4-6 DEIREADH FÓMHAIR 2010**

Ainm:

Dáta:

Freagair as Gaeilge nó i mBéarla

AN ÁIT AGUS MUINTIR NA HÁITE

- **Eolas a chuir tú ar an áit agus ar mhuintir na háite (cé hiad na daoine a casadh ort sa cheantar 7rl...)**

[Your knowledge now of Baile an Fheirtéaraigh itself, of the locals etc. Who did you meet etc...]

TEANGA

- **Rudaí a thug tú faoi deara faoi úsáid na teanga sa phobal (m.s. sa teach tábhairne, san óstán, sa mhúsaem, agus sa tsiopa; difríochtaí idir sean agus óg; fir agus mná; páistí scoile agus páistí nár thosaigh ar an scoil go fóill; muintir na háite agus daoine as baile isteach)**

[LANGUAGE: What did you notice about language usage in the community, in the pub, hotel, museum, shops]

⁴⁷ The content of the Diary and Questionnaire is based on templates received from An tOllamh Dónall Ó Baoill, Queen's University Belfast, 2010.

CULTÚR

- **Tuiscintí a fuair tú ar shainiúlacht chultúrtha na Gaeltachta (is féidir amhránaíocht, ceol, scéalaíocht, béaloideas agus rudaí nach iad a lua)**

[CULTURE – mention any new understandings you now have of the cultural peculiarities of this Gaeltacht area]

CANÚINT

- **Focail is leaganacha cainte a d'fhoghlaim tú**
[DIALECT – mention any new words or phrases you learned]

- **Focail a chuala tú nach bhfuil san fhoclóir**
[Did you hear any words that are not in the dictionary?]

Ceistneoir

1. Déan achoimre anseo ar na rudaí is mó a chuaigh i bhfeidhm ort i gcaitheamh an ama a chaith tú sa Gaeltacht.
[Summarise here some of the things that impacted on you most during your Gaeltacht trip]

2. Ar éirigh leat do chuid spriocanna pearsanta féin a bhaint amach le linn an chúrsa? (Luaigh na spriocanna thíos)

[Did you manage to meet the targets you had set out for yourself for this three day programme. Mention some of those targets below]

3. An raibh deis agat aithne a chur ar bhaill eile den Líonra? Cén tábhacht a bhainfidh leis an aithne seo amach anseo agus sibh ar ais san Ollscoil an dóigh leat?

[Did you get a chance to get to know other members of An Líonra? How important are these new acquaintances to you when you are back on campus?]

4. Conas mar a bhraith tú agus tú i mbun cumarsáide trí Ghaeilge le muintir na háite ar an mBuailtín? An bhfuil aon athrú tagtha ar do mheon mar gheall ar an mbuairt aigne sin ar phléamar cheana?

[How did you feel when you were interacting through Irish with the locals over the three days? Has your attitude to the “language anxiety” we talked about previously changed in any way?

5. Ar chuir an taithí seo sa Ghaeltacht le do mhisneach chun gnó na hOllscoile a dhéanamh trí mheán na Gaeilge amach anseo? Conas?

[Did this Gaeltacht experience help you in any way to be more confident about your ability to deal with Irish medium queries in your job? How?]

6. Cad a mholfá mar chéad chéim eile anois (i) duit féin go pearsanta agus (ii) don Líonra ansin?

[What are your recommendations regarding (i) your own next step & (ii) the next step for An Líonra?]

7. Aon rud eile gur mhaith leat a lua

[Anything else you’d like to mention

F4. CORRESPONDENCE TO LÍONRA FOLLOWING THE PROGRAMME

-----Original Message-----

From: Clodagh

Sent: Mon 10/11/2010 17:15

To: Deirdre.Ni Loingsigh

Cc: Róisín

Subject:

A Dheirdre, Éadaoin is a chairde go léir,

Beannachtaí chugaibh ó Bhaile an Fheirtéaraigh? Conas atá sibh go léir?

Tá súil agam gur bhain sibh tairbhe agus taitneamh as an turas go dtí Ionad an Bhlascaoid Dé Céadaoin seo caite. Is áit an-spéisiúil ar fad í agus tá léargas iontach ann ar an saol mar a bhí ar an mBlascaod Mór.

Go raibh míle maith agaibh as an misneach a léirigh sibh ar fad agus an cúrsa trí lá i nGaeltacht Chorca Dhuibhne ar siúl agaibh. Bhí sé an-fhuirist dúinne, mé féin agus Róisín, sibh a mhúineadh mar bhí sibh féin chomh dírithe ar an obair a bhí idir lámha. Maith sibh!

An mbeidh teacht le chéile agaibh arís go luath agus sibh thar n-ais arís san Ollscoil? Guímid gach rath oraibh sa chéad chéim eile den bhfoghlaím agus beimid an-sásta teacht i gcabhair oraibh le gnéithe de bhur gcuid oibre amach anseo.

Ba mhaith linn ár mbuíochas a chur in iúl as an gceol iontach a bhí ag an ngrúpa chomh maith.

Go n-éirí le bhur gcuid oibre. Beimid ag súil le freagra nó dhó ar an ríomhphost uaibh.

Le gach dea-ghuí ó Róisín agus ó Chlodagh

Appendix G: Correspondence from Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga

October 2010

Monitoring of implementation of certain commitments of the language scheme

Dear Sirs,

One of the functions of Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga under section 21 of the Official Languages Act 2003 is to monitor compliance with the provisions of the Act and to take all necessary measures to ensure compliance with those provisions.

As you are aware, your first language scheme was agreed with the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs during 2006. This Office monitored compliance with this scheme at the end of the three year implementation period. A monitoring report was presented to you on completion of this process.

This Office would like to carry out testing on the manner in which the commitments made in your first language scheme, regarding providing the public with a telephone service through Irish, are met. This testing will begin in November 2010 and we hope to complete it before the end of the year. Further information on the working procedure to be followed can be found in the enclosed appendix.

You will be informed of the results of the investigation on completion of the process. In the event that the investigation finds that commitments of the language scheme have been contravened, corrective recommendations will be sought to rectify any contravention.

Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Colm Ó Coisdealbha
Compliance Manager

Investigation into compliance of commitments made in language scheme regarding telephone service through Irish

Objective

To ensure that public bodies comply with statutory commitments made in language schemes regarding the availability of certain telephone services through Irish.

Investigation Procedure

- Specific commitments made by the public body in its first language scheme, regarding providing the public with a telephone service through Irish, will be examined.
- Calls will be made to the public body on three (3) separate days during three (3) separate weeks.
- Compliance with the commitments will be tested by asking predetermined questions in Irish, by telephone, that relate to the commitments made.
- The answer given will be written down and a judgement will be made on whether it satisfactorily complies with the commitments.
- The public body will be informed of the findings of the investigation.
- The public body will be asked for an explanation and corrective recommendations if it is deemed that commitments are not being complied with satisfactorily.

Appendix H: Communication Procedures

H1. COPY OF PROCEDURES

A Quality Statement⁴⁸

Under the general provisions of the Official Languages Act, (OLA) the University of Limerick has a legislative obligation to answer Irish medium queries on email or by regular mail in Irish. The University has made further commitments in its 2006-2009 and 2009-2012 Official Languages Schemes in targeted administrative departments by designating at least one person in these areas to deal with both oral and written Irish medium queries. These procedures are being published for the attention of all University of Limerick personnel. They are of particular relevance to staff in areas targeted in the UL Official Languages Schemes 2006-2009 and 2009-2012. All members of the campus community are invited to use the desktop card and supporting sound files. The text and Mp3 files of the desktop phrases and other common standard Irish phrases in administration are available on the UL websites www.ul.ie/aonadnagaeilge and www.ul.ie/ola

1. General

1.1 All targeted areas will promote their commitment to providing services through the medium of both official languages in their promotional literature.

1.2 The names of members of staff designated to provide a service through the medium of Irish will be available on the department's website. Every member of staff in each of these targeted areas should be aware of these contact names and extension numbers.

1.3 All staff should reply courteously to customers (as per 2009-2012 Scheme definition of customers) who wish to conduct their business in Irish.

1.4 All Irish medium queries should be logged and reported to the UL OLA Implementation Group on a yearly basis.

1.5 The turn around time for a written Irish language reply should be the same as that for an English language reply

1.6 Learners of Irish will be encouraged to practice their Irish by greeting the caller bilingually when answering the telephone. (See useful phrases and supporting sound files)

2 Written Correspondence in Irish

2.1 Where standard letters exist in the targeted administrative areas, these should be translated to Irish.

2.2 Non standard replies should be outsourced to translators (see UL translation procedures at www.ul.ie/ola)

2.3 A standard template for an acknowledgement letter is available on the Acting Secretary's website www.ul.ie/ola

⁴⁸ These procedures draw on the code of practice outlined in the Bangor University Scheme, 2008 regarding communication with the public in Welsh (Bangor University, 2008, p. 16)

2.4 English translations should be filed with Irish versions

2.5 Personal names and surnames do not need to be translated in email signatures/out-of-office replies

3. Telephone communication with the public

3.1 The University welcomes telephone communication in either Irish or English. Main Reception will answer each call bilingually by stating Ollscoil Luimnigh/University of Limerick.

3.2 If the customer gives their name in Irish every effort should be made to pronounce the name correctly. [Never ask what that is in English!]

3.3 If the customer gives their name in Irish and the UL person dealing with it has difficulty writing it or spelling it, they should ask the person to spell it. There should be no issue with inserting an accent (síneadh fada). See guidelines in appendix 1.

3.4 If a caller begins the call in Irish, the UL contact should respond in Irish. If it so happens that whoever answers the call cannot speak Irish, the standard response(s) on the attached desktop card should be used before transferring them to the designated person to deal with Irish medium queries for the area.

3.5 Where a call is taken by a bilingual individual, or if the call is transferred to that individual, he/she should make it evident that he or she is bilingual. The ensuing conversation will be in the caller's preferred language.

3.6 In a Division/Department which has bilingual members of staff who are unavailable at a given time to take an Irish medium query, the person who answers the phone should politely explain the situation to the caller and

(i) an arrangement should be made for a staff member with Irish to return the call, unless the caller is willing to discuss his/her business through the medium of English, or

(ii) if urgent the call should be transferred to Aonad na Gaeilge (extension 4754)

3.7 All greetings and instructions on answering machines in offices and divisions targeted in Scheme 2006-09 and Scheme 2009-12 will be bilingual. [Note personal names do not need to be translated into Irish].

3.8 A desktop card aid for answering the phone and supporting sound files have been created by Aonad na Gaeilge. [below]

4. Counter services

4.1 The division/department will display the UL symbol promoting bilingual services

4.2 The “designated person” will deal with Irish medium queries

4.3 If the “designated person” is unavailable the option to make an appointment with that person should be offered. See standard responses and other useful phrases on the desktop card/Mp3 resources.

H2. DESKTOP CARD

On the phone

Start with:

(1) Greeting, and the name of your Unit/Office*

Dia D(h)uit ([Audio file 1](#))

[Note that the pronunciation aid for departmental names are in a separate file]

When you hear the caller asking for a named person reply:

(2) “Thank you, who’s calling please”?

Go raibh maith agat, cé atá ag caint? ([Audio file 2](#))

(3) “Can I take your name”?

Cén t-ainm atá ort? ([Audio file 3](#))

Then you can put them through and ask them to:

(4) Hold on please

Nóiméad amháin le do thoil ([Audio file 4](#))

If the named person is not in or if the caller did not ask for a named person don’t panic!! Simply explain:

(5) “Sorry I don’t have much Irish myself but if you give me your name and number, I’ll get an Irish speaker to call you back. Otherwise, if you don’t mind I can deal with your query now in English.”

Is oth liom nach bhfuil mórán Gaeilge agam féin ach má fhágann tú d’ainm agus d’uimhir agam, iarrfaidh mé ar chainteoir Gaeilge glaoch ar ais ort. Nó, más maith leat, is féidir liom do ghnó a phlé leat i mBéarla anois díreach. ([Audio file 5](#))

or

you could explain that the person that usually deals with Irish medium queries is not in the office at the moment:

(6) “I’m sorry but Máire, the person who normally deals with Irish medium queries is not available at the moment”.

Is oth liom nach bhfuil an té a bhíonn ag plé le ceistanna i nGaeilge ar fáil faoi láthair. ([Audio file 6](#))

The following are some questions you might ask the caller:

(7) “Would you like to leave a message in English?”

Ar mhaith leat teachtaireacht a fhágaint i mBéarla? ([Audio file 7](#))

(8) “Would you like to make an appointment to meet him?”

Ar mhaith leat coinne a dhéanamh leis? ([Audio file 8](#))

(9) “Would you like to make an appointment to meet her?”

Ar mhaith leat coinne a dhéanamh léi? ([Audio file 9](#))

(10) “Can I take a phone number for you, please?”

An bhféadfá d’uimhir theileafóin a thabhairt dom? ([Audio file 10](#))

Some other useful phrases are

(11) “Seán will be back at x o’clock”

Beidh Seán ar ais ar a x a chlog. ([Audio file 11](#))

(12) “He will be back to the office later”

Beidh sé ar ais san oifig níos déanaí. ([Audio file 12](#))

(13) “She will be back to the office later”

Beidh sí ar ais san oifig níos déanaí. ([Audio file 13](#))

(14) “He will be back after lunch”

Beidh sé ar ais tar éis lóin. ([Audio file 14](#))

(15) “She will be back after lunch”

Beidh sí ar ais tar éis lóin. ([Audio file 15](#))

(16) “Thank You”

Go raibh maith agat. ([Audio file 16](#))

(17) “Bye”

Slán. ([Audio file 17](#))

(18) “All the best”

Go n-éirí leat ([Audio file 18](#))

Where a call is taken by a bilingual individual, or if the call is transferred to that individual, he/she should make it evident that he or she is bilingual. The ensuing conversation will be in the caller's preferred language.

(19) "Hello, how are you. I can deal with your query in Irish if you wish"

Conas atá tú? Is féidir liom labhairt i nGaeilge leat más mian leat. ([Audio file 19](#))

Irish version of Departmental names/ Targeted Areas [Audio files no. 20-39]

Note that shortened versions are available for departments marked * (Audio files 78-82)

Some other useful phrases [Audio files 40-71]

40. Are you looking for someone in particular?

An bhfuil duine faoi leith uait? ([AF40](#))

41. Can I help you?

An féidir liom cabhrú leat? ([AF41](#))

42. Could you give me a reference number?

An dtabharfá an uimhir thagartha dom? ([AF42](#))

43. Have you made an appointment?

An bhfuil coinne agat? ([AF43](#))

44. Do you know what Department he is in?

An bhfuil a fhios agat cén Roinn ina bhfuil sé? ([AF44](#))

45. Do you know what Department she is in?

An bhfuil a fhios agat cén Roinn ina bhfuil sí? ([AF45](#))

46. Excuse me

Gabh mo leithscéal ([AF46](#))

47. He will be with you shortly

Beidh sé chugat gan mhoill ([AF47](#))

48. She will be with you shortly

Beidh sí chugat gan mhoill ([AF48](#))

49. He is on the way
Tá sé ar a shlí (AF49)
50. She is on the way
Tá sí ar a slí (AF50)
51. I'll find out if she is available
Gheobhaidh mé amach an bhfuil sí ar fáil (AF51)
52. I'm sorry for the delay
Maith dom an mhoill (AF52)
53. She is at extension 343
Is é 343 an fholíne s'aici 343 (AF53)
54. He is at extension 343
Is é an fholíne s'aige 343 (AF54)
55. The line is engaged
Tá an uimhir gafa (AF55)
56. There is no answer
Níltear ag freagairt (AF56)
57. The information is available on our website
Tá an t-eolas ar fail ar an suíomh idirlín (AF57)
58. Good morning / Good afternoon
Dia duit (AF58)
59. I'm learning Irish
Tá mé ag foghlaim Gaeilge (AF59)
60. Sorry but I don't understand what you've said
Is oth liom nach dtuigim é sin (AF60)
61. Would you mind repeating that again please?
Ar mhiste leat é sin a rá arís? (AF61)
62. Turn right
Cas ar dheis (AF62)

63. Turn left

Cas ar chlé (AF63)

64. Go upstairs

Téigh suas an staighre (AF64)

65. You have to go to another building

Caithfidh tú dul go dtí foirgneamh eile (AF65)

66. Thanks a million

Go raibh maith agat (AF66)

67. You're welcome

Tá fáilte romhat (AF67)

68. Don't mention it!

Ná habair é! (AF68)

69. You're welcome (alternative)

Go raibh maith agat féin (AF69)

70. Would you mind calling back later

Ar mhiste leat glaoch ar ais ar ball? (AF70)

71. Extension 343

Fo-líne 343 (AF71)

Press Office / Speeches – standard welcome phrases [Audio files 72-74]

(72) “Hello everyone and welcome to the University of Limerick”

Dia daoibh go léir agus fáilte romhaibh go hOllscoil Luimnigh (AF72)

(73) “Guests, friends, students and colleagues I would like to welcome you all here this evening to the University of Limerick”

A aíonna, a chairde, a scoláirí agus a chomhghleacaithe, ba mhaith liom fáilte a chur romhaibh go léir anseo go hOllscoil Luimnigh tráthnóna. (AF73)

(74) “It is my pleasure to welcome you all to the University of Limerick”

Tá áthas orm fáilte a chur romhaibh go léir go hOllscoil Luimnigh (AF74)

Standard voicemail [Audio Files 75-77]

75. Hello, this is Seán. I am unable to take your call at the moment but if you leave a brief message and your contact number, I'll call you on my return.

Dia duit, Seán anseo. Nílím ar fáil faoi láthair ach fág teachtaireacht agus d'uimhir agus glaofaidh mé ar ais ort nuair a fhillfidh mé. (AF75)

76. Hello, this is Máire. I am on annual leave at the moment. Please contact my colleague Síle at 061-203344

Dia duit. Máire anseo. Tá mé ar saoire faoi láthair. Is féidir glaoch ar mo chomhghleacaí, Síle, ar 061-203344 (AF76)

77. You've reached the voicemail of Síle Ryan at the Kemmy Business School. Please leave a message and I'll get back to you as soon as I can.

Síle Ryan anseo i Scoil Ghnó Kemmy. Fág teachtaireacht le do thoil agus cuirfidh mé glaoch ar ais ort chomh luath agus is féidir (AF77)

[Appendix 1 of Communciation Procedures]

Guidelines on inserting a síneadh fada (accent in Irish)

Press 'Alt Gr' and the vowel you require or

Press 'Ctrl' 'Alt' and the vowel you require or

Insert 'symbol' (main toolbar) and choose vowel you require or insert symbol and pick out the symbol you require and press shortcut keys. Choose the buttons you wish to use in order to make a shortcut for the desired letter.

Appendix I: Cúpla Ceist Videos 1-9

These video files are available on the enclosed DVD. They will open with VLC Media Player.⁴⁹

Cúpla Ceist 1

Cúpla Ceist 2

Cúpla Ceist 3

Cúpla Ceist 4

Cúpla Ceist 5

Cúpla Ceist 6

Cúpla Ceist 7

Cúpla Ceist 8

Cúpla Ceist 9

⁴⁹ <http://www.videolan.org/>

Appendix J: Presentation to Critical Friends

[6 December 2010]

OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH
UNIVERSITY OF LIMERICK



An Taighde Feidhmeach

Tréithe
Sibhse mar chairde criticiúla?
Bhur ról-sa ...
Féidearthachtaí amach anseo



Ceisteanna taighde

How might a new emphasis on a community of learners help address the support requirements of adults involved in mandated second language learning (L2) in the workplace?

Two sub questions:

How might the role of the facilitator of an initiative such as a workplace *Líonra Tacaíochta Teanga* (a Language Support network) be defined?

To what extent does the concept of "social presence" (Garrison & Anderson, 2003) in the learning environment shape the learning of these second language learners?



Comhthéacs na Litríochta (A)

An fhoghlaim faoi dhualgas

Taobh mothaitheach den fhoghlaim teanga

le béim ar an imní theangeolaíoch

An fhoghlaim fhéinriartha

An chomhairleoireacht teanga



Comhthéacs na Litríochta (B)

- (i) Teoiricí an Aosoideachais –
Transformative Learning [An Fhoghlaim
Tharfhoirmithe]
- (ii) Community of Inquiry Framework
[Pobal fiosrúcháin]
[An fhoghlaim chumaisc]



Pobal Fiosrúcháin

Elements	Categories	Indicators (examples only)
Cognitive presence	Triggering event	Sense of puzzlement
	Exploration	Information exchange
	Integration	Connecting ideas
	Resolution	Apply new ideas
Social presence	Affective	Expressing emotions
	Open communication	Risk free expression
	Group cohesion	Encouraging collaboration
Teaching presence	Design and organisation	Setting curriculum and methods
	Facilitating discourse	Sharing personal meaning
	Direct instruction	Focusing direction

Creatlach Choincheapúil

Relational knowing: [Feasacht choibhneasta?]Ról caidrimh éagsúla sa phróiseas tarfhoirmithe (tarfhoirmiú); cabhair, tacaíocht, cairdeas, tuilleamaí ar bhail an ghrúpa

....

Béim ar "social presence" [an láithreacht shóisialta] chun tacú leis an bpróiseas tarfhoirmithe



Modheolaíocht

<http://lionratacaiochtateanga.blogspot.com/>

<https://sulis.ul.ie/xsl-portal/site/0aef51f6-535f-40e3-ad00-b5d4de87070f>

[http://www2.ul.ie/web/WWW/Services/Aonad na Gaeilge/An Ghaeilge san Ionad Oibre/Comhaid Fuaim](http://www2.ul.ie/web/WWW/Services/Aonad_na_Gaeilge/An_Ghaeilge_san_Ionad_Oibre/Comhaid_Fuaim)

<http://www.ulpva.ie/jobsearch.asp?CategoryID=22&menu=4>



Bailiú Sonraí

Sonraí cáilíochtúla amháin

Dialanna

Próifíleanna

Nótaí cruinnithe

Fóraim phlé

Taifeadadh & Agallaimh



Céim 1

Bunú an Líonra

Sulis

Blog

Seinnteoírí Mp3

Seisiún duine le duine



Breathnóireacht/Tuairimí

Bainteach leis na ceisteanna taighde



Céim 2

Dianchúrsa Gaeltachta



Breathnóireacht/Tuairimí

Bainteach leis na ceisteanna taighde



Céim 3

"Crossing the bridge....."



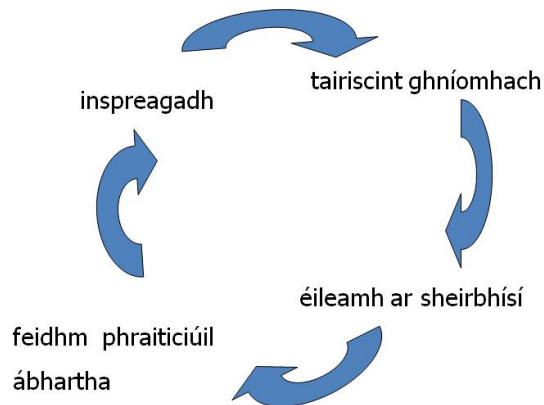
Observations

Anxiety; language support gap; time constraints; recognition of effort; mixed ability; high motivation; my role as facilitator; emphasis on dialogue

..... related to my values as researcher



Féidearthacht?



Bhur gcuid tuairimí féin



Appendix K: Centre for Applied Languages Studies Presentation 2010

**[Title Slide] L2 learners of Irish in the workplace:
Preliminary observations on a language
support initiative and its legislative
framework.**

Deirdre Ní Loingsigh, UL CALS Research Day 2010

Slide 2: Overview of Paper

Background

Theoretical framework

Methodology – An Action Research Project

Observations

Slide 3: Professional Practice

Official Languages Act, 2003

Establishment of OLA Meitheal Oibre

Design/pilot of materials 2004/05

Dioplóma programme Autumn 2005

UL HR/Executive Support

Slide 4: Targeted Offices & Departments

UL Scheme 2006/09 & UL Scheme 2009/12

Student Affairs Division

Student Academic Administration

Finance Division

Human Resources Department

Information Technology Division

Library Information Services

Research Office

Information & Compliance

Lifelong Learning & Outreach

Procurement & Contracts

Campus Life Services

Co-Operative Education & Careers

Buildings & Estates

Faculty of Arts, Humanities &

Social Sciences

Faculty of Science & Engineering

Faculty of Education & Health

Sciences

Slide 5: EdD Literature Review

Slide 6: Methodology

Action research establishes self-critical communities of people participating and collaborating in all phases of the research process; the **planning, the action, the observation and the reflection.** (Cohen & Mannion, 2007)

Slide 7: Interventions (to date)

Establishment of Lónra

Sulis

Blog

Mp3 players

One-to-one consultations

Gaeltacht programme

Slide 8: Observations

Anxiety; language support gap; time constraints; recognition of effort; mixed ability; high motivation; my role as facilitator; emphasis on dialogue

..... related to my values as researcher

Slide 9: Learning as a Dialogue among learners

As means of communication/language practice

As critical reflection/collaborative discourse

As part of process of becoming an autonomous learner

Slide 10: Critical Friends?

Appendix L: Conference Abstract June 2010

[29 June 2010]

Translation, Technology and Autonomy in Language Teaching and Learning Conference at National University of Ireland, Galway

Supporting the practice of learner autonomy among second language learners in the workplace

The Official Languages Act, 2003 was passed into law to improve the level and quality of Irish medium services provided by public bodies to customers. This paper examines some of the language support requirements of adults learning Irish as a second language in the workplace in order to meet legislative commitments. The facilitation of a work-based Language Support Network is the focus of the action research project presented. Network participants are the designated staff contacts for Irish medium queries, in targeted administrative areas, on a university campus. Some explicit anxiety issues relating to mandated language learning in this work context are addressed by the Network.

Ushioda (1996) suggests that learners' ability to make conscious decisions about their learning can be greatly hampered by affective factors such as anxiety. Dewaele, Petrides, and Furnham (2008) propose that improved self-perceived proficiency leads to lower language anxiety levels. Little (2003; 2007) contends that a readiness to be proactive in interaction with others, is necessary for the practice of learner autonomy, and that the development of autonomy and growth of target language proficiency should be "mutually supporting". These arguments inform the paper, and opportunities created for language improvement, collaborative learning, critical reflection and learner autonomy among the university-based Network members are presented. Following an overview of data collection methods, preliminary observations asserting the significance of group critical reflection as a key element in developing the practice of learner autonomy among Network participants, are made. The discussion draws on current trends in adult education literature regarding transformative learning in groups and the important dialogue stage of the transformative learning process (Mezirow, 2000). The ecological world view, focusing on key concepts such as self-organisation and connectivity, is also proposed as a useful theoretical framework for analysing the meaning of the social interactions of the Language Support Network members.

Appendix M: Research Ethics Approval

[Approval Number FAHSS_REC125]



FACULTY OF ARTS, HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

APPENDIX A - INFORMATION SHEET

[A bilingual version of this document will issued to all research participants]

Re: *Mandatory language learning in the workplace: changing the focus from legislation to adult learner.*

Dear member of the UL Language Support Network

As you know I am currently exploring mandatory language learning in the workplace as a thesis topic for my doctorate in education. Please take some time to read the following information regarding participation in my research project.

- Drawing on my professional practice as *Stiúrtóir na Gaeilge* at UL and my experience of facilitating strategic language education programmes for UL staff since 2005, I plan to explore the language support requirements of the University's designated Irish language contacts and of those involved in language learning programmes from "targeted" departments, as part of my research. I would like to create something new out of UL's obligation to adhere to legislative requirements by nurturing all of the individual energies that have developed in the last few years, in formal language programmes, through this collaborative support network. As a member of staff either responsible for the provision of an Irish medium service in your department/office/unit at UL or as someone involved in a language improvement programme supported by your department, you are in a key position to make observations about how this might happen.
- The UL *Líonra Tacaíochta Teanga* will meet monthly in the May 2010-March 2011 period and various language improvement initiatives will be proposed. A three-day *Gaeltacht* based programme is also planned. As a member of *An Líonra* you will be encouraged to take part in a one-to-one consultation to map out a language learning plan and to complete individual and group language related tasks each month. You will be requested to keep a regular record of your learning experiences in written or audio format and as a research participant you will be asked to make some of these reflective comments available as data. You will be asked to draw on your observations in group discussions or if you so wish to send copies of your audio/written reflections to me as researcher.

- If you decide to participate in the formal research project, your contributions on the project website on Sulis and on the *Líonra Tacaíochta Teanga* blog may be used as data. As researcher, I would also like to draw on observations and comments you make at the regular Network meetings on campus and at the *Gaeltacht* based workshops. You will also be invited to participate in a formal interview at the end of the research project (maximum one hour). The Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Science Guidelines regarding the use of these testimonies will be followed. As research leader, I am conscious of the busy professional lives of adult learners and I will encourage all participants to fit Irish language learning opportunities with their administrative role and social routines on campus.
- All research will be conducted on the University campus/virtual learning environment (Sulis) and on a three day *Gaeltacht*-based language awareness programme supported by the UL Staff Training and Development Office and Aonad na Gaeilge.
- There are no particular risks or benefits to you if you choose to participate in my formal research project.
- I recognise all participants' entitlement to confidentiality and anonymity. Ground rules relating to these will be agreed at a formal meeting of *An Líonra Tacaíochta Teanga*. Pseudonyms will be used in the thesis itself. A copy of my research findings, analysis and discussion will be made available to all research participants before the thesis is formally submitted to NUI Maynooth.
- Please note your right to refrain from answering questions, or to withdraw from the research project at any stage.
- Should you have any concerns about participation in this research, please contact the chairman of the UL Research Ethics Committee at the contact below. My own contact details and other relevant contacts are also available below.

Researcher:

Deirdre Ní Loingsigh, Stiúrthóir na Gaeilge, Aonad na Gaeilge, (LC0-015) Department of Languages, Literature, Culture and Communication, University of Limerick
e-mail: deirdre.niloingsigh@ul.ie **phone:** 061-213463

Head of Department:

[Dr Frédéric Royall](#)

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FACULTY OF ARTS, HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

APPENDIX B – CONSENT FORM

Consent Section:

I, the undersigned, declare that I am willing to take part in research for the project entitled

Mandatory language learning in the workplace: changing the focus from legislation to adult learner.

- I declare that I have been fully briefed on the nature of this study and my role in it and have been given the opportunity to ask questions before agreeing to participate.
- The nature of my participation has been explained to me and I have full knowledge of how the information collected will be used.
- I am also aware that my participation in this study may be recorded (audio) and I agree to this. However, should I feel uncomfortable at any time I can request that the recording equipment be switched off. I am entitled to copies of all recordings made and am fully informed as to what will happen to these recordings once the study is completed.
- I fully understand that there is no obligation on me to participate in this study.
- I fully understand that I am free to withdraw my participation at any time without having to explain or give a reason.
- I am also entitled to full confidentiality in terms of my participation and personal details.

Signature of participant

Date



DÁMH na nDÁN, na nDAONNACHTAÍ agus na nEOLAÍOCHTAÍ SÓISIALTA

AN COISTE EITICE TAIGHDE

AGUISÍN A – BILEOG EOLAIS

[Gheobhaidh gach rannpháirtí taighde leagan dátheangach den cháipéis seo]

Maidir le: *Mandatory language learning in the workplace: changing the focus from legislation to adult learner.*

Do bhall an Líonra Tacaíochta Teanga, OL

Mar is eol duit, táim ag tabhairt faoi dhochtúireacht san oideachas i láthair na huairé agus is é an t-ábhar atá á scagadh agam ná an fhoghlaim teanga faoi dhualgas reachtaíochta san ionad oibre. Bheinn buíoch díot ach beagán ama a chaitheamh ar an eolas a leanann a léamh mar gheall rannpháirtíocht i mo thogra taighde.

- Ag tarraingt ar mo chuid taithí phroifisiúnta mar *Stiúrthóir na Gaeilge* in OL agus mo chuid taithí mar áisitheoir ar chláracha oideachais teanga do bhaill foirne na hOllscoile ó 2005, is é an plean taighde atá agam ná iniúchadh a dhéanamh ar na riachtanais tacaíochta teanga díobh siúd atá ainmnithe mar theagmhálacha le Gaeilge ag an Ollscoil, agus díobh siúd ó spriocréimsí riaracháin atá ag glacadh páirte i gcláracha foghlama teanga. Ba mhaith liom an deis a thapú léamh nua a dhéanamh ar dhualgas OL cloí le riachtanais reachtaíochta agus an sprid agus an spéis atá léirithe ag foghlaimoirí aonair thar na blianta a chothú anois trí líonra nua tacúil comhoibritheach. Mar bhall foirne a bhfuil d'fhreagracht ort seirbhís trí Ghaeilge a chur ar fáil i do roinn/oifig/aonad, nó mar dhuine a bhfuil baint agat le clár feabhais teanga le tacaíocht roinne, is duine tú le tuiscint ghéar ar an gcomhthéacs foghlama seo. Ba mhór agam do chuid tuairimí a fháil ar conas toise an phobail Ghaeilge seo a neartú mar sin.
- Tiocfaidh an Líonra Tacaíochta Teanga le chéile go foirmeálta agus go rialta sa tréimhse Bealtaine 2010-Márta 2011 agus déanfar tograí éagsúla a chur chun cinn chun feabhas a chur le scileanna teanga na mball. Tá cúrsa trí lá sa Ghaeltacht beartaithe chomh maith. Mar bhall den Líonra, déanfar tú a spreagadh chun páirt a ghlacadh i seisiún comhlairleoireachta teanga duine le duine chun clár foghlama teanga a leagadh amach duit féin. Iarrfar ort tascanna aonair agus tascanna grúpa a chur i gcrích gach aon mhí chomh maith. Iarrfar ort taifead rialta a choinneáil ar do chuid taithí foghlama i scríbhneoireacht nó mar chomhad fuaime, agus mar rannpháirtí taighde iarrfar ort cuid de na nótaí tráchta machnamhacha seo a chur ar fáil mar shonraí taighde. Iarrfar ort tarraingt ar do nótaí tráchta machnamhacha ag seisiún pléghrúpa, nó iarrfar ort cóipeanna de na

smaointe a chur ar aghaidh chugamsa mar thaighdeoir, má tá tú toilteanach an leagan scríofa nó fuaimne féin a roinnt liom.

- Má dhéanann tú an cinneadh páirt a ghlacadh sa togra taighde foirmeálta, tá seans ann go ndéanfar do chuid iontrálacha ar Sulis, suíomh an togra, agus ar bhlag an Líonra Tacaíochta Teanga, a úsáid mar shonraí taighde. Beidh mé ag iarraidh tarraingt ar do chuid tuairimí agus rannpháirtíochta sna cruinnithe Líonra agus ag na ceardlanna Gaeltachta mar thaighdeoir chomh maith. Tabharfar cuireadh duit páirt a ghlacadh in agallamh foirmeálta ag deireadh an togra taighde chomh maith (u/chloig ar a mhéid) Leanfar treoracha Dhámh na nDán, na nDaonnachtaí agus na nEolaíochtaí Sóisialta maidir le húsaid na fianaise seo ar fad. Tuigim go maith, mar cheannaire taighde, an brú oibre agus ama a bhíonn ar fhoghlaimoírí fásta. Déanfaidh mé gach iarracht rannpháirtithe a mhealladh chun deiseanna foghlama Gaeilge a shní isteach lena rólanna riaracháin agus lena ngnáthaimh shóisialta ar an gcampas.
- Déanfar an taighde ar fad a stiúradh ar champas na hOllscoile, ar an timpeallacht fhíorúil foghlama (Sulis) agus ag an gclár trí lá ar an bhfeasacht teanga. Cuirfear an cúrsa Gaeltachta seo ar fáil le tacaíocht Acmhainní Daonna, OL (An Oifig um Oilúint agus um Fhorbairt Foirne) agus Aonad na Gaeilge.
- Ní bheidh aon bhuntáiste nó míbhuntáiste ann duit má dhéanann tú an cinneadh páirt a ghlacadh i mo thogra foirmeálta taighde.
- Tugaim suntas ar leith don teidlíocht ag gach rannpháirtí i leith na rúndaíochta agus na neamhainmníochta. Déanfar treoracha ina leith seo a aontú ag cruinniú foirmeálta den Líonra Tacaíochta Teanga. Úsáidfear bréagaimneacha sa tráchtas féin. Déanfar cóip de mo chuid torthaí taighde, mo chuid anailíse agus plé ar fad a chur ar fáil do gach rannpháirtí taighde sula gcuirfear an tráchtas faoi bhráid Ollscoil na hÉireann, Má Nuad, go foirmeálta.
- Tabhair faoi deara go bhfuil sé de cheart agat staonadh ó cheisteanna a fhreagairt am ar bith. Tá sé de cheart agat tarraingt siar ón togra taighde am ar bith chomh maith.
- Má tá aon cheisteanna agat faoi rannpháirtíocht sa taighde seo, bheinn buíoch díot ach teagmháil a dhéanamh le Cathaoirleach Choiste Eitice Taighde, OL ag an seoladh thall. Tá mo chuid sonraí teagmhála féin agus teagmhálacha eile ábhartha thall chomh maith.

Taighdeoir:

Deirdre Ní Loingsigh, Stiúrthóir na Gaeilge, Aonad na Gaeilge, (LC0-015) Scoil na dTeangacha, na Litríochta, an Chultúir agus na Cumarsáide, Ollscoil Luimnigh
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DÁMH na nDÁN, na nDAONNACHTAÍ agus na nEOLAÍOCHTAÍ SÓISIALTA

AN COISTE EITICE TAIGHDE

AGUISÍN B – FOIRM TOILITHE

Mír Toilithe:

Déanaimse, a bhfuil mo shiniú thíos, a dhearbhu go bhfuilim toilteanach páirt a ghlacadh sa togra taighde dar teideal

Mandatory language learning in the workplace: changing the focus from legislation to adult learner.

- Déanaim a dhearbhu go bhfuil gach eolas agam faoin staidéar seo agus faoin ról a bheidh agam féin ann, agus go raibh deis agam ceistanna a chur sular aontaigh mé go nglacfainn páirt ann.
- Míníodh nádúr mo rannpháirtíochta dom agus tá gach eolas agam ar conas mar a dhéanfar an t-eolas a bhaileofar a úsáid sa taighde.
- Tá fhios agam chomh maith go bhfuil seans ann go ndéanfar mo chuid rannpháirtíochta sa staidéar a thaifeadadh (taifead fuaimne) agus aontaím leis seo. Beidh sé de cheart agam, áfach, iarraidh ar an taighdeoir an gléas taifeadta a mhúchadh am ar bith, má táim míchompordach faoi aon rud. Tá sé de cheart agam cóip a fháil d'aon taifeadadh a dhéantar. Tuigim cad a dhéanfar leis na buntaifeadtaí seo ag deireadh an togra.
- Tuigim go hiomlán nach bhfuil aon dualgas orm páirt a ghlacadh sa taighde seo.
- Tuigim go hiomlán go bhfuil sé de cheart agam tarraingt siar ón taighde am ar bith gan miniú nó cúis a chur ar fáil.
- Táim i dteideal na rundaíochta iomláine i leith mo rannpháirtíochta agus mo chuid sonraí pearsanta chomh maith.

Siniú an Rannpháirtí

Dáta

Appendix N: Treoircheisteanna/Guiding Questions

[Guiding Questions]

An Líonra Tacaíochta Teanga

Machnamh ar an dul chun cinn san fhoghlaim: Treoircheisteanna 24 Meitheamh 2010

(1) Do I know what I want to achieve, what I want to improve, what I want to learn in Irish?

An bhfuil a fhios agam, cad ba mhaith liom a bhaint amach, cad ba mhaith liom a fheabhsú, cad ba mhaith liom a fhoghlaim sa Ghaeilge?

(2) Can I analyse and discuss my motivation for learning?

An féidir liom anailís a dhéanamh ar mo chuid inspreamaidh don fhoghlaim. An féidir liom sin a phlé?

(3) Can I make effective use of my weekly timetable?

An féidir liom mo thráthchlár seachtainiúil a láimhseáil go héifeachtach?

(4) Can I identify my strengths and weaknesses in the Irish language generally?

An bhfuilim in ann mo chuid láidreachtaí agus mo chuid laigí ginearálta sa Ghaeilge a aithint?

(5) Can I set short-term learning objectives?

An bhfuilim in ann spriocanna foghlama a leagan amach don tréimhse ghearrthéarma?

(6) Can I identify suitable media/materials for learning?

An bhfuilim in ann meáin/acmhainní oiriúnacha a aithint don fhoghlaim

(7) Can I plan a timescale for my learning objectives?

An bhfuilim in ann scála ama a phleanáil do mo chuid spriocanna foghlama

(8) Can I assess my progress in relation to these objectives?

An bhfuilim in ann an dul chun cinn a dhéanamh a mheas de réir na spriocanna seo?

(9) Can I use reference materials effectively (dictionary, grammar etc.)?

An bhfuilim in ann foinsí tagartha a úsáid go héifeachtach (foclóir, graiméir 7rl)?

(10) Can I use effective strategies to learn and memorize new information?

An bhfuilim in ann straitéisí éifeachtacha a úsáid chun eolas nua a fhoghlaim agus chun an t-eolas sin a chur de ghlanmheabhair?

(11) Can I identify key words and concepts?

An bhfuilim in ann eochairfhocail agus coincheapa a aithint?

(12) Can I take effective notes from texts and lectures/classes/meetings?

An nglacaim nótaí éifeachtacha ó théacsanna agus ó léachtaí/ranganna/cruinnithe?

(13) Can I categorize new vocabulary?

An bhfuilim in ann rangú a dhéanamh ar fhoclóir nua?

(14) Can I organize learning materials by topic, theme etc.?

An bhfuilim in ann acmhainní foghlama a eagrú de réir toipice, de réir téama?

(15) Can I make a schematic plan or "mind-map" of an oral or written presentation?

An bhfuilim in ann plean scéimreach nó scéimléaráid a dhéanamh de chur i láthair ó bhéil nó de chur i láthair scríofa?

(16) Can I analyse and edit a first written draft?

An bhfuilim in ann anailís nó eagarthóireacht a dhéanamh ar chéad dhréacht scríofa?

(17) Can I use corrections to advance my learning?

An bhfuilim in ann ceartúcháin a úsáid chun mo chuid foghlama a chur chun cinn?

(18) Can I practise pronunciation and intonation with good results?

An bhfuilim in ann cleachtadh a dhéanamh ar mo chuid foghraíochta agus tuin chainte le torthaí maithe?

(19) Can I learn from working with others?

An bhfuilim in ann foghlaim ó bheith ag obair le daoine eile?

(20) Can I contribute to a support group/working group such as An Líonra?

An bhfuilim in ann cur le grúpa tacaíochta/oibre mar an Líonra?

(21) Can I help to identify and assign particular roles in a working group?

An bhfuilim in ann rólanna éagsúla a aithint agus a shannadh i ngrúpa oibre?

(22) What ways do I learn best i.e what I do and why it helps me?

Cad iad na slite is fearr ina bhfoghlaím an Ghaeilge i.e. an rud a dhéanaim agus cén fáth go gcabhraíonn sin liom?

(23) What is my favourite time and place for learning?

Cad é an t-am agus cad í an áit is fearr liom don fhoghlaim?

Moltaí ginearálta/General recommendations

(24) Take note of what you learn each week i.e the topic, new vocabulary, speaking, reading, writing, what you now know more about, what you need to learn more about, your next learning target.

Glac nóta den mhéid a fhoghlaimíonn tú gach seachtain, i.e., foclóir nua, labhairt, léitheoireacht, scríbhneoireacht, cad air a bhfuil níos mó eolais agat anois, cad faoi gur mhaith leat a thuilleadh eolais a fháil air, do chéad spioc foghlama eile.

(25) Take note of your interactions with other members of An Líonra (on-line & face to face).

Tabhair aird ar do chuid cumarsáide le baill eile de An Líonra, (cumarsáid eadraibh féin ar líne nó duine le duine)

(26) Take note of what role dialogue with others plays in your language learning (swopping of strategies etc).

Tabhair aird ar an ról atá ag cumarsáid le daoine eile i do chuid foghlama teanga (malartú ar straitéisí 7rl).

(27) Take note of how you fit language learning into your working life.

Tabhair aird ar conas mar a shníonn tú an fhoghlaim isteach i do shaol oibre (má dhéanann tú sin)

(28) Date every written/audio entry.

Cuir dáta ar gach aon iontráil scríofa/fuaim.

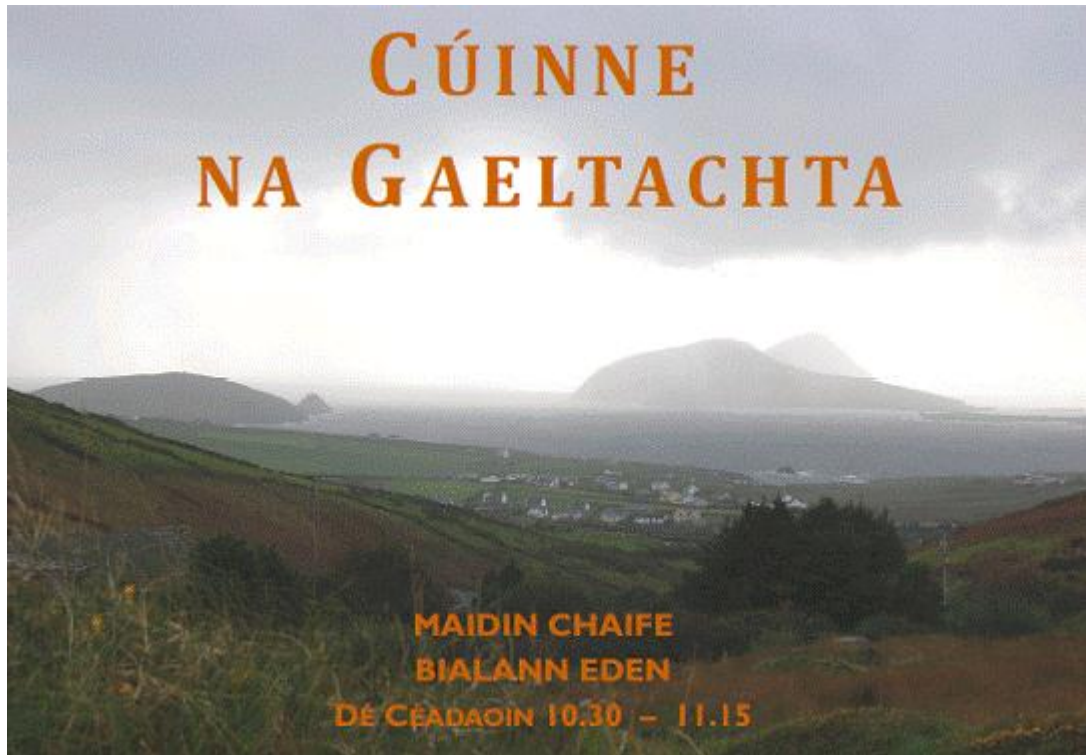
Appendix O: Organisational Structures

[Structures relating to the implementation of the Official Languages Act, 2003 at the University]



Appendix P: Promotional Material

[Copy of poster circulated weekly on University email]

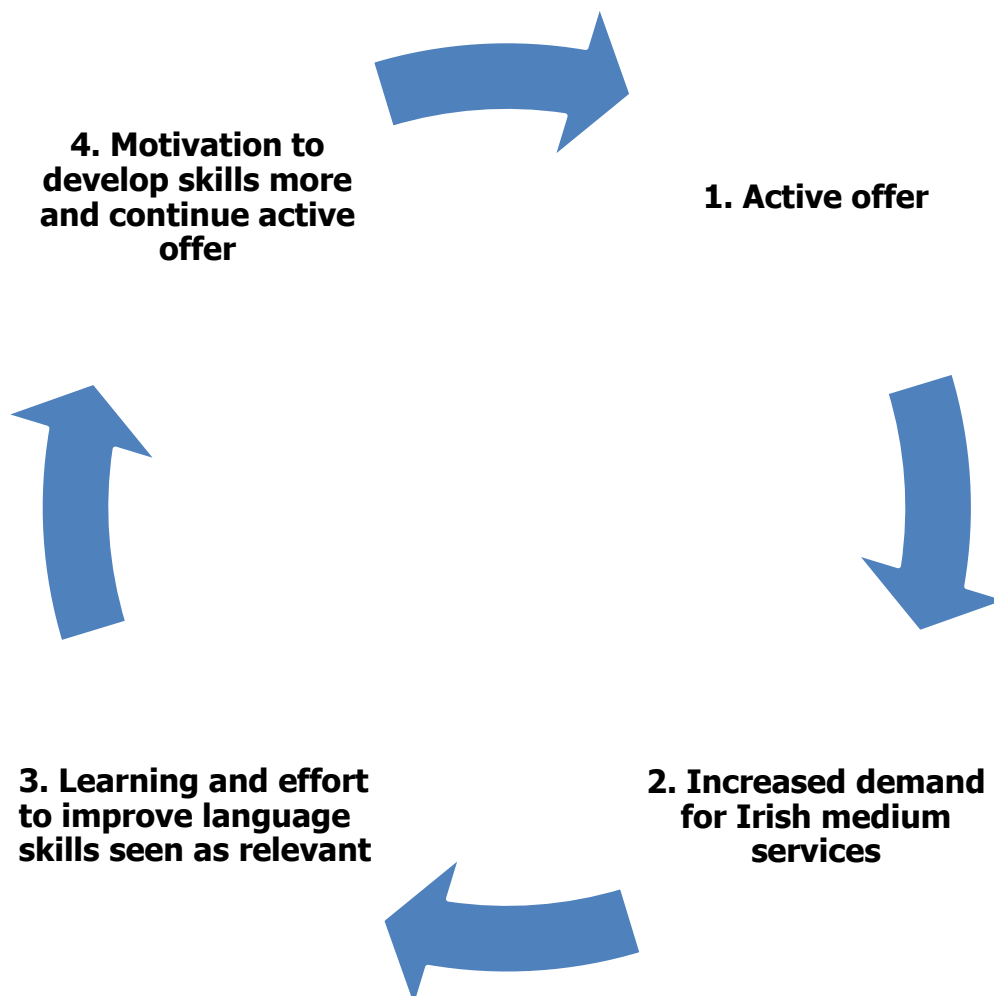


Appendix Q: An Active Offer of Services

[This material was posted in the Sulis folder “Tascanna/Active Offer” on 21 December 2010].

Treoracha maidir le hábhar an fhilleáin seo [Active Offer/Tairiscint Ghníomhach]

Active offer is all about providing “customers” with a language choice of Irish or English at the first available opportunity. This folder contains some examples of good practice regarding an active offer of French/English services in Canada in particular. We need to decide what tasks *An Líonra Tacaíochta* are going to carry out with regard to making an active offer of current services in the various targeted administrative areas at UL. Possible tasks for your consideration as a group will be outlined in this subfolder. Remember the cyclical diagram (below) I showed you at one of the recent *Líonra* meetings. I think that there could be a real spinoff in terms of motivation if you could get into the habit of being more forward about offering language choice. Some of you have expressed the “artificial” nature of the use of Irish in the workplace at UL – well the only way we can change that is by creating (1) an awareness of services available to students and to members of the public/campus community and (2) providing language choice at every opportunity we get. Think about how good you felt after dealing with the test phonecalls!



The following is an excerpt from the UL Official Languages Scheme 2009-2012 (leagan Béarla agus leagan Gaeilge) outlining the commitments we have made to make an active offer of bilingual services at UL. For information Sorcha and Étaín are working on the official symbol at the moment and will look for your opinion on this in the New Year.

3.2.4 An Active Offer

A UL symbol to promote bilingual services on campus will be commissioned. Promotional post-it notes will be distributed among all administrative functional areas. (Year One);

A poster campaign to promote availability of services through Irish will be undertaken. (Year One);

Members of staff prepared to interact with customers in Irish on a “meet and greet” basis, and/or on the telephone in departments and offices other than those targeted areas will be requested to have their names published on the UL website;

Where application forms and information leaflets are provided as separate Irish and English language versions, equal prominence will be given to both versions at all public locations and the Irish language version will be as readily accessible as the English language version.

The updated list of staff (May 2009) prepared to conduct business through the medium of Irish will be available to staff at Main Reception. This will facilitate clients who wish to conduct their University business through Irish. The list will be updated yearly.

3.2.4 Tairiscint Ghníomhach

Déanfar coimisiúnú ar shiombail OL do sheirbhísí dátheangacha a chur chun cinn ar an gcampus. Scaipfear nótaí poist poiblíochta ar fud na réimsí feidhmiúla riaracháin go léir. (Bliain a hAon);

Tabharfar faoi fheachtas póstaer chun an fháil atá ar sheirbhísí trí Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn. (Bliain a hAon);

Iarrfar ar bhaill foirne atá toilteanach idirghníomhaíocht a dhéanamh le custaiméirí i nGaeilge ar bhonn “fáiltithe”, agus/nó ar an teileafón i ranna agus in oifigí seachas na spriocréimsí a gcead a thabhairt a n-ainmneacha a fhoilsiú ar ghréasán OL;

I gcás bileog eolais agus foirmeacha iarratais a soláthraíodh i leaganacha ar leith Gaeilge agus Béarla, tabharfar an ardréim chéanna do gach ceann den dá leagan ag gach ionad poiblí agus beidh fáil chomh furasta céanna ar an leagan Gaeilge is a bheas ar an leagan Béarla.

Soláthrófar liosta nuashonraithe na mball foirne (Bealtaine 2009) atá toilteanach gnó a dhéanamh trí mheán na Gaeilge do na baill foirne ag an bPríomhionad Fáilte d’fhonn éascaíocht a dhéanamh do chliant ar mhian leo a ngnó Ollscoile a dhéanamh trí Ghaeilge. Déanfar an liosta seo a nuashonrú gach bliain.