

REVIEWS

Johnstone, R.M., Harlen, W., Thorpe, G., MacNeil, M., and Stradling, R. *The Progress and Attainments of Pupils Receiving Gaelic Medium Primary Education*, Stirling: SCILT, University of Stirling, 1999. 71pp.

Research report prepared for the Scottish Office Education and Industry Department.

Ever since Gaelic immersion education was introduced into the Highland and Central Scottish regions in the 1980's, Scottish citizens have been concerned with the progress and attainments of the pupils in Gaelic medium classes. *The Progress and Attainments of Pupils Receiving Gaelic Medium Primary Education* (1999) is the first longitudinal research report of its kind to compare the achievements of Gaelic immersion students with the attainments of English immersion students in the same subject areas. The report marks the first collection of data demonstrating possible outcomes of Gaelic medium education in Scotland.

Four types of Gaelic immersion, or medium, education currently exist in elementary schools across Scotland. They are:

- i. Gaelic medium primary schools.
- ii. Gaelic medium units within a school offering English medium education.
- iii. Gaelic medium classes within an English medium school.
- iv. Bilingual Gaelic-English primary education.

All of the above types are represented within the study. The study focuses on two driving research questions which the report successfully addresses - 'Do the attainments of pupils in Gaelic medium primary education match national attainment targets in Gaelic at P(primary level)3 and P5, and in Gaelic and English at P7?' and 'How do the attainments

of pupils in Gaelic medium primary education in mathematics and environmental studies compare with national attainment levels and targets?' (p.1) These questions are examined through a quantitative analysis, which is later complemented (in Ch. 5 and 6) by a more qualitative, contextual exploration of factors influencing the Gaelic medium (GMU) pupils' progress and attainments.

Gaelic medium unit (GMU) students' attainments were collected in P3, P4, P5, and P7 (approximately, ages 8 to 12), over a period of three years (May, 1996, 1997, and 1998), from the national assessment and test information available. Two different test standards were collected and analysed each year. National test information, which provides data on individual pupil attainment according to national targets in the 5-14 curriculum guideline expectations; and the AAP (Assessment of Achievement Programme), which, through standardised testing of a different subject area each year, provides the mean scores of a group of pupils in comparison to the national means (exclusive to the 5-14 policy guidelines), enabled the study. For example, in 1996, the P3, P5, and P7 *Gaelic 5-14*; the P5 and P7 *English 5-14*; the P5 *Maths 5-14* evaluations; and the P5 Science AAP were collected. In 1997, the P3, P5, and P7 *Gaelic 5-14*; the P5 and P7 *English 5-14* evaluations; and the P4 and P7 *Maths AAP* were collected. In 1998, the P3, P5, and P7 *Gaelic 5-14*; the P5 and P7 *English 5-14*; the P7 *Maths 5-14* evaluations; and the P7 *English AAP* were collected. The AAP does not require GMU students to reach the national standard of English until P7, ergo, only one grade was tested during this final round of AAP assessments.

In two cases, longitudinal data was collected on the same students over the three year period. For instance, the P3's assessed during the 1996 *Gaelic 5-14* were the same class of students evaluated during the 1997 P5 *Gaelic 5-14*, P5 *English 5-14*, and P4 *Maths AAP*. Also, the P5's evaluated during the 1996 *Gaelic, English and Maths 5-14* assessments were the same cohort evaluated during the 1998 P7 *Gaelic, English and Maths 5-14* and *English AAP*

assessments. Although this data will be a valuable resource to future researchers, it is not made full use of within the confines of this report. The report narrows its discussion to the research questions at hand by comparing the GMU achievements to those of their EMU (English medium unit) counterparts.

Chapter 3 of the report answers the question, 'Do the attainments of pupils in Gaelic medium primary education match the national attainment guidelines (as outlined in 5-14)?' Johnstone et al's findings were, 'Yes. Sometimes.' As is common to many immersion studies, a great achievement of the GMU programme appears to be its positive effect on student language ability. The data collected on the 5-14 evaluations indicates that the P3's had achieved a level A or higher in all 4 of the language competencies tested. In P5 and P7, the GMU students outperformed EMU students in English. The qualitative data added some insight into this phenomenon since it indicated that pupils in schools with large GMU populations achieved higher *Gaelic 5-14* ratings, and students in schools with small GMU populations achieved higher *English 5-14* ratings. Thus, the majority language of the school appeared to have a direct influence on the language skills of the students. There was one exception to this, and that was among the P7 students. The P7 students were only evaluated at a level D *Gaelic 5-14* or lower. The reason provided for this decline in Gaelic language achievement at P7 was the fact that P7 was the last year prior to entry into [English] secondary school, and since there is currently little GMU provisions available at the secondary level, the researchers felt this was the reason why the students' language learning focus appeared to be on English as opposed to Gaelic. But the conclusion was left there, where further probing would have been beneficial. For example, is the reason for declining *Gaelic 5-14* scores at P7 due solely to the children's academic focus? Could it not be due to peer and adolescent growth stages? Or declining Gaelic resources and teachers at this level? Future investigation would aid this finding. Nevertheless, the

research question was answered. GMU students *do* reach the same attainments as their EMU counterparts, and often exceed them in language.

GMU attainments for English language competency proved to be higher for the 1998 AAP scores as well. Here, the difference was more marked for writing than for reading. (Ch. 4) Again, there is no exploration of why a Gaelic medium student would become a better English writer than an English medium student, and further insight into this result would have been valuable.

One recurring problem area for GMU students appeared to be in the science scores reported. In the report, 'science' falls under the umbrella category of 'environmental studies', which was the second research question probed. Due to the student numbers and the year of the science AAP (1996), only one component of 'environmental studies', 'general science', was able to be tested. Furthermore, both the science and the mathematics testing materials had to be translated into Gaelic. It is not made clear which body conducted the assessment translations, and the teachers reported that many of the curriculum materials available in these two subject areas were originally in English and had to have 'Gaelic paste-overs' attached to them because there was no Gaelic counterpart of the lessons available (or affordable). (Ch. 5) This taken into consideration, the science results showed GMU pupils attaining a lower level than their EMU counterparts, with a much wider gap at P7. (Ch. 4) In the related subject of Math, the P5's exhibited lower 'problem solving and inquiry' skills in the 1996 *Math 5-14* evaluations than their EMU counterparts; however, the P4 and P7 GMU's outscored the EMU's in the 1997 AAP standard Math testing. What does this differentiation mean?

The final two chapters of this report offer some surface perceptions of the results. For instance, the science test scores indicated that the GMU students were not attaining the same target levels as the EMU students, and the comments from head teachers and parents supported this finding. Head teachers were concerned about the shortage

of [Gaelic] science curriculum materials available, and [Gaelic] parents indicated that "Science terms do not easily translate" and "Science is neglected." (Ch. 5) The great majority of respondents; however, were pleased with the students' attainments in comparison with EMU populations. Most parents enrolled their children into GMU's for the language component, and as a result, were not disappointed since these scores were at par with English counterparts or better. One parental comment noted was, "we wanted our language to be the language of our children." (Ch. 5)

Johnstone et al's (1999) report provides a precious resource of data and beginning to Gaelic immersion educational research in the United Kingdom. While it is comforting to know that there is "no disadvantage in learning" (Ch. 6) in a GMU, it would still be worthwhile to pursue other advantages and disadvantages to Gaelic immersion education in Scotland. For example, one clear advantage appears to be in English writing attainment, yet why? Also, GMU students receiving 'free school meals entitlement' often perform better than the national mean of EMU students receiving the same entitlement, except in the cases of rural Highland schools. (Ch. 5) Why? What correlation, if any, is there between economic prosperity and GMU achievement? Johnstone mentions that the GMU children's perceptions of history, geography, and culture may be distinct from their English cohorts (Ch. 6), yet how? *The Progress and Attainments of Pupils Receiving Gaelic Medium Primary Education (1999)* is a rich source of data which has yielded a plethora of further inquiries. If it may be continued, we may learn more about lesser-used language immersion education.

Reviewed by Kara A. Smith
University of Windsor

Jones, Mari C., *Language Obsolescence and Revitalization: Linguistic Change in Two Sociolinguistically Contrasting Welsh Communities*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998. Pp. viii, 452.

This 1998 study is a welcome contribution to the sociolinguistics of Welsh as well as to the larger study of language obsolescence, a current topic in light of fears about the next century spelling the death of many ethnic tongues. Jones investigates whether changes in Welsh are interpretable as indications of language death and whether the ongoing standardization of Welsh is leading to dialect loss. The latter issue involves exploring the role Welsh-language immersion schooling may be playing in the maintenance and evolution of the language. The six-chapter volume contains a seventeen page bibliography, five appendices, and numerous graphs and charts.

Chapter One introduces the study and describes different types of immersion education, crucial background information because most young people in Jones' study were enrolled in Welsh-medium schools. The study of Welsh has been compulsory in Wales since 1996, and the number of immersion schools has steadily grown. Therefore schools play an important role in language maintenance or, in heavily Anglicized regions, in revitalization. French-immersion education in Canada serves as a reference point since it has been the focus of a number of serious studies. Jones pays particular attention to whether children in immersion schooling speak a school dialect, an academic register of L2 marked by certain deviations vis-à-vis the traditional norms of the community.

Jones' study was carried out in two Welsh communities: Rhymney, a village in south Wales which is 6.7% Welsh-speaking, and Rhosllanerchrugog, in the north, where 38.1% speak it. Two kinds of variables were investigated: (1) features common to all varieties of Welsh, and (2), features specific to the local dialect. Loss of features in group 1 would suggest language obsolescence, while loss of group 2 features would indicate dialect death (and

possibly standardization). Linguistic data were gathered by tape-recording free conversation among small groups of speakers of all ages, although school children are the locus of the most interesting findings. Jones also performed a matched guise study to elicit attitudes to Standard Welsh and dialect.

The speech of school children from both communities was found to contain numerous changes in group one variables, including the loss of gender marking in nouns and adjectives, loss of preposition inflection, simplification of responsive forms of yes, and over-generalization of the verb 'cael' "to get." Jones carefully points out that it is the socio-political situation of the Welsh language, rather than these changes as such, which identify them as tokens of obsolescence. Some of the phenomena noted, including the use of English tags in Welsh speech, would be considered typical code-switching behavior in healthy bilingual communities, but are pathological signs in an embattled minority language (pp. 86ff.).

Jones demonstrates that the speech of school children also lacks many dialect features (group two variables) abundant in the speech of older speakers. Dialect features (such as provection, and the 3sg preterite ending -ws in Rhymney) are being replaced by standard forms or in some cases by dialect mixture. Welsh-medium education is convincingly shown to be responsible for much of this dialect loss, in part because it fosters negative attitudes toward dialects. Indeed, an overwhelming majority of informants viewed the dialects as incorrect and inferior varieties. Surprisingly, school children were generally unable to even correctly identify the local dialect when they heard it.

Welsh-medium schools appear, curiously, to be responsible for certain other negative developments as well, in that they have given rise to school dialects. In a comparison of historically inappropriate forms among L1 (Welsh mother-tongue) immersion students, L2 (English mother-tongue) immersion students, and adult learners of Welsh, Jones finds that both L1 and L2 pupils speak a kind of school dialect not shared by adult learners. Jones

suggests that the linguistic deviations of L2 children may be negatively influencing the less numerous L1 children in some schools, but leaves this point to future research.

In Chapter Four, Jones provides brief discussions of language death and of standardization, first in general terms and then in the Welsh context. The emergence of Standard Welsh is contrasted with that of the English and French standards, which came about via the rise to prominence of a particular regional dialect; Welsh appears to be standardizing by dialect convergence or the removal of regional features until what is left is a common core of features shared by all dialects.

The sociolinguistic situation of Welsh is compared with that of its two P-Celtic sister languages, Breton and Cornish, in Chapter Five. Jones summarizes research on linguistic changes underway in Breton which are indicative of obsolescence, and discusses why the outlook for Breton appears so much worse than for Welsh. In Wales, a linguistic standard had emerged from below, with the medieval bardic schools and the 1588 publication of the Welsh Bible partially staving off dialect fragmentation and promoting a non-regional literary variety. Standard Breton, on the other hand, has had to be artificially developed from above, by committees and language planners, and Breton speakers are still embroiled in counterproductive disputes over the selection of a single orthography for its highly divergent dialects. Attitudes also play a large role in the differing fates of Welsh and Breton. While Welsh speakers have a strong Welsh identity that transcends the local region, Breton speakers have traditionally been less likely to think of themselves as Breton than to have purely local loyalties. This is partly because Brittany does not exist as a political unit in modern-day France. Finally, the Welsh movement is being led primarily by native speakers whereas the Breton movement is spearheaded by intellectuals whose L1 is French. The Breton movement thus lacks grassroots support.

Some of Jones' findings will be frightening to those interested in the survival of Welsh, for she shows

convincingly that modern spoken Welsh is starting to succumb to the encroachment of English and to show signs of obsolescence even in its strongholds (e.g. Rhosllanerchrugog). Yet there are also reasons for optimism such as the fact that an increasing number of people learn Welsh as L2 every year and that the decline in number of Welsh speakers has more or less been halted. In any case, Jones book is a highly valuable piece of scholarship on the Welsh language and on the role of schools and of standardization in language maintenance.

Reviewed by Kevin J. Rottet
University of Wisconsin-Whitewater

<http://www.naactl.org/JCLL>

Ollscoil na hÉireann, Gaillimh National University of Ireland, Galway



COURSE IN SPOKEN IRISH

- Adults from all walks of life
- Third Level Students
- Foreign Adult Students

Beginners, Intermediate, Advanced

Further Information

**Áras Mháirtín Uí Chadhain
An Cheathrú Rua
Co. na Gaillimhe**

Fón : (091) 595101/595038

Facs: (091) 595041

Ríomhphost: treasanimhaoil@tinet.ie

Irish Courses for Adults

beginner - intermediate - advanced

also separate programmes in
Hillwalking - Donegal Dances - Painting
Archaeology - Tapestry Weaving - Pottery-Bodhrán
Cruinneas sa Ghaeilge - Cúrsa Oillúna do Mhúinteoirí
Environment & Culture

For a brochure on all our courses

OIDEAS GAEL
 Gleann Cholm Cille
 Co. Dhún na nGall

Fón : 073 30246
 Fax: 073 30348

Email: oidsgael@iol.ie
www.oides-gael.com

**Oideas
Gael**

The Irish Bookshop

580 Broadway, R. 1103
 New York, NY 10012
 212-274-1923

acpnpf@inch.com

Hours: 11-5 M-F, 1-4 Sat.



We have a large stock of Irish-interest
 books, in Irish and English.

<http://www.irishbooks.com>

LIST AVAILABLE

Specify area of interest, please.

CELTIC BOOKS

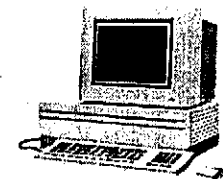
QUALITY BOOKS AT
 AFFORDABLE PRICES

History, folklore, literature,
 language, children and more.

Send \$2 for complete catalogue to:

Celtic Heritage Books
 PO Box 770637
 Woodside, NY 11377-0637
 718-478-8162 or 800-273-5281

Visit JCLL on the WEB



www.naactl.org/jcll

WORD OF MOUTH



Communication is power. An idea, passed from person to person, and village to village, can transform the world.

Start with the right idea.

Linguistics and Language Behavior Abstracts
offering

- abstracts of scholarly articles and books
- bibliographic entries for subject specific dissertations and book and other media reviews.

LLBA's timely and comprehensive coverage speaks volumes on current ideas in linguistics and language research.

Available in print, online, on CD-ROM (from SilverPlatter and NISC) and on magnetic tape.

Visit our Web site: www.socabs.org for product information, links to relevant sites, and subscription-based access to the LLBA Speech, Language and Hearing Pathology subset.

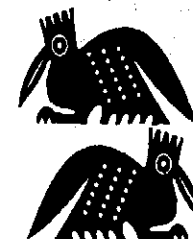
LLBA

Linguistics and Language Behavior Abstracts

P.O. Box 22206, San Diego, CA 92192-0206
619/695-8803 • Fax: 619/695-0416 • email: socio@cerfnet.com

Sociology • the Social Sciences

2 BIRDS IN THE HAND



If one bird in the hand is worth two in the bush ...
Our two sources are invaluable
... and right at your fingertips.

For current thought and research in sociology and the
social sciences, consult

sociological abstracts (sa)
and

Social Planning/Policy & Development Abstracts (SOPODA)

Abstracts of articles, books and conference papers from more than 2,500 journals published in 35 countries; citations of relevant dissertations and book and other media reviews.

Comprehensive, cost-effective, timely.

Available in print, online, on the **sociofile** CD-ROM and on magnetic tape. Our Web site, <http://www.socabs.org>, features the *Note Us* newsletter; information on support services and document delivery; links to relevant sites; and the SAI Web Search Service offering reasonably priced subscriptions to two subsets: Marriage and Family Issues & Law, Crime and Penology.



P.O. Box 22206, San Diego, CA 92192-0206
619/695-8803 • Fax: 619/695-0416 • email: socio@cerfnet.com

Editorial Note

The editors wish to acknowledge the generous aid provided by the following individuals who served as blind referees.

James Blake, *Nassau Community College*
 James Doran, *National University Of Ireland, Cork*
 Jeffrey Kallen, *Trinity College Dublin*
 William Mahon, *University of Wales*
 Marion Gunn, *Everson Gunn Teoranta*
 Kenneth Nilsen, *St. Francis Xavier University*
 Dónall P. Ó Baoill, *Queen's University Belfast*
 Helen Ó Murchú, *Comhar Na Múinteoirí Gaeilge*
 Catriona Niclomhair Parsons, *St. Francis Xavier University*

Thanks to Helen Fitzgerald, Department of Computing, Institute of Technology, Tralee, Éire for consultation and technical assistance

Announcements

MARCH 2000 :
American Association of Applied Linguistics (AAAL), March 11-14, 1999, Vancouver, Canada. See www.aaal.org/pages/Vancouver.html for more information.

Twenty-second **University of California Celtic Studies Conference (UCLA)**, March 16-19, Los Angeles, California. Featured speakers at the conference will include Máire Herbert (NUI Cork) and Katharine Simms (Trinity College). It will feature a variety of papers; a concert at 2 on Saturday, March 18; the traditional banquet on Saturday evening; and a "conference within a conference" in celebration of St. Patrick's Day (Friday, March 17), under the sponsorship of the UCLA Center for Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Studies, entitled "The Gaelic Literary Imagination in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," featuring talks by William Gillies (University of Edinburgh), Mícheál Mac Craith (NUI Galway), Catherine McKenna (CUNY Graduate

Center), and Máirtín Ó Briain (NUI Galway). Admission to the conference presentations and concert on March 16 and 18-19 (all in Royce 314 on the UCLA campus) is free, although there will probably be a registration fee for the Clark event, which will include lunch and refreshments. For further details on the conference and the Call for Papers, please contact Professor Joseph Nagy, at UCLA.

APRIL 2000:

The **Cork Youth International Film Video Arts Festival**, 5-11 April, Cork, Ireland. Closing Date for entries: 11th March 2000. Categories: Fiction, Documentery, Animation, Experemental, Music Videos, Computer Animation. All categories can also be made in the Irish language. Format: Film—8mm, Super 8, 16mm; Video—VHS, SVHS, 8mm; VideoC. Duration: 20 minutes max. Open To: Under 12yrs, Under 18yrs, Students Under 25yrs. Special Category: Blarney Trophy Award, open to adults Videos and Copies of films are acceptable. Awards and certificates of participation will be given. For further details, please contact Helen Prout: tel. 323 21 306019, e-mail hproutl@tinnet.ie

International Linguistic Association (ILA), April 7-9, Georgetown University, Washington, DC. For more information write Ruth M. Brend at rbrend@umich.edu.

JUNE 2000

North American Association for Celtic Language Teachers, June 22-25, Limerick, Ireland. NAACL'T'2000 is aimed at teachers of Celtic languages, learners of such languages, and researchers in related fields such as Celtic Studies, Linguistics, Computational Linguistics, Psychology and Sociology. It will comprise a workshop day, two conference days and an excursion day. See <http://www.csis.ul.ie/naaclt2000/> for more information.

ACIS National Meeting. June 26-July 1, Limerick, Ireland. See <http://www.acisweb.com/cfp.html> for more information.