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JOURNAL OF CELTIC LANGUAGE LEARNING

Journal of Celtic Language Learning is an international review for researchers and teachers of modern Celtic Languages. The official publication of the North American Association for Celtic Language Teachers, JCLL includes papers presented at the association’s annual conference in addition to manuscripts submitted by Celtic language scholars worldwide. It is also a forum in which Celtic language teachers can share insights into methodology with their peers.

JCLL’s mission, similar to that of NAACLT, is to provide another forum in which teachers and applied linguists can contribute to the literature presently available on second language acquisition as well as increase communication among Celtic language teachers and researchers.

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English books and Irish aspirations: Language and material artifacts in two Irish medium schools

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This paper presents findings from a study that investigated language use and material artifacts in Gaelscoileanna, or all Irish schools located in the English-speaking areas of the Republic of Ireland. The study consisted of two case study schools in which the material artefacts were explored as part of a sociolinguistic investigation of the language environments of the schools. Findings from the study revealed that nationally and locally produced material artifacts existed in both Irish and English in distinct ways. In the schools locally-generated materials attempted to elevate the status of Irish over English. Despite that effort, material artefacts of the schools were largely in English. Contradictions between the educational efforts of Gaelscoileanna and national support afforded the schools are discussed, and implications for the development of biliteracy of students.

Background

Within the past decade there has been renewed interest in Gaelscoileanna, or Irish medium schools, located in the Republic of Ireland. Teacher unions and news reports alike have expressed concern regarding the national language policy and funding for the teaching and learning of Irish in schools (e.g., Flynn, 1993; Sugrue, 1997; Doyle, 2000; Flynn 2000). This attention has been sparked, at least in part, by the notable growth in Gaelscoileanna, with three new primary schools opened in September 2003 and a secondary school scheduled to open in September 2004 (Gaelscoileanna, 2004). Gaelscoileanna are one form of bilingual education program is known as immersion. In an immersion education program, students who come from homes in which the majority language is used are educated through the medium of a minority language (Baker, 1996). The intent of the programs is to