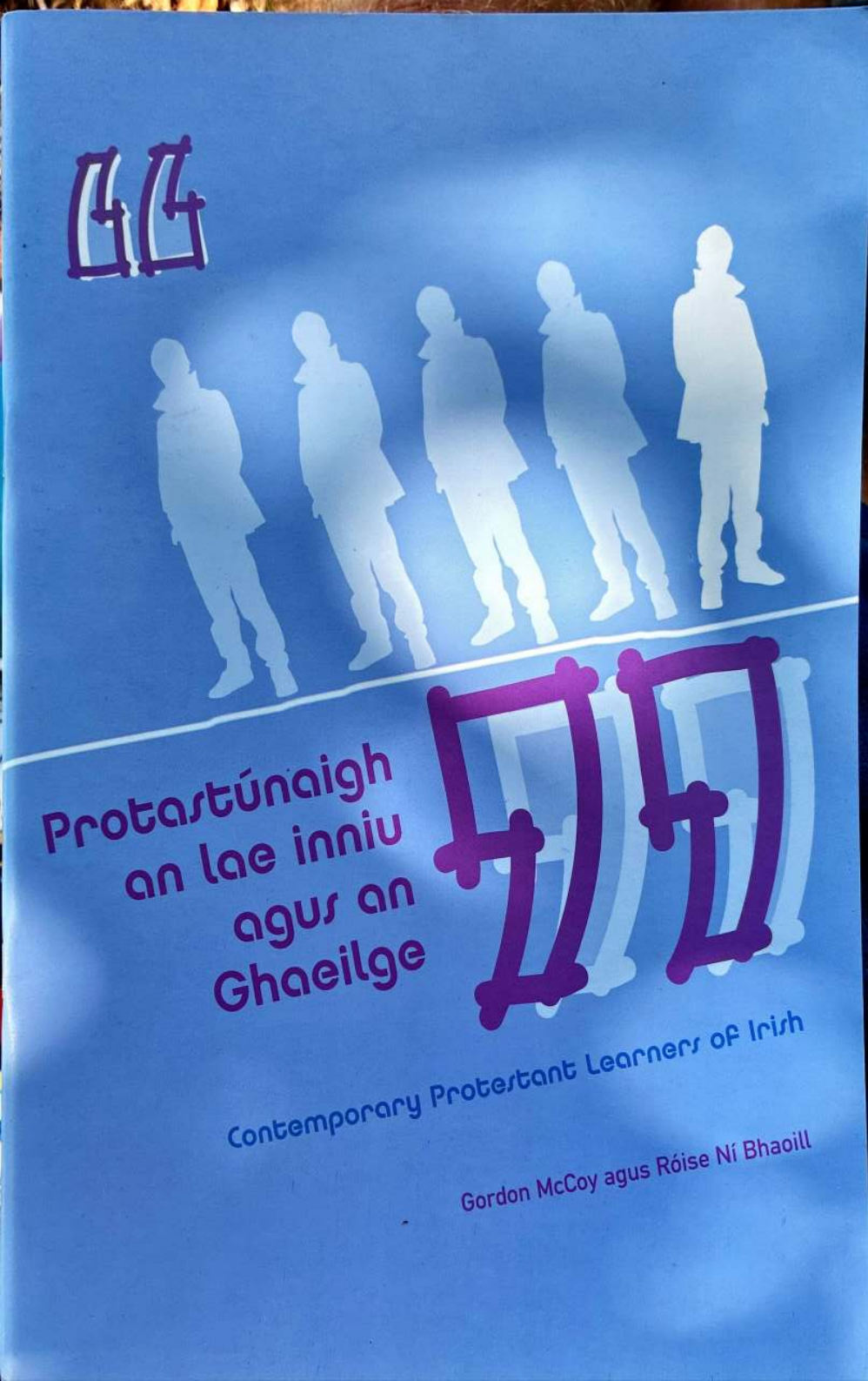

Protastúnaigh an lae inniu agus an Ghaeilge

Contemporary Protestant Learners of Irish

Gordon McCoy agus Róise Ní Bhaoill

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Gaeilge

Réamhrá

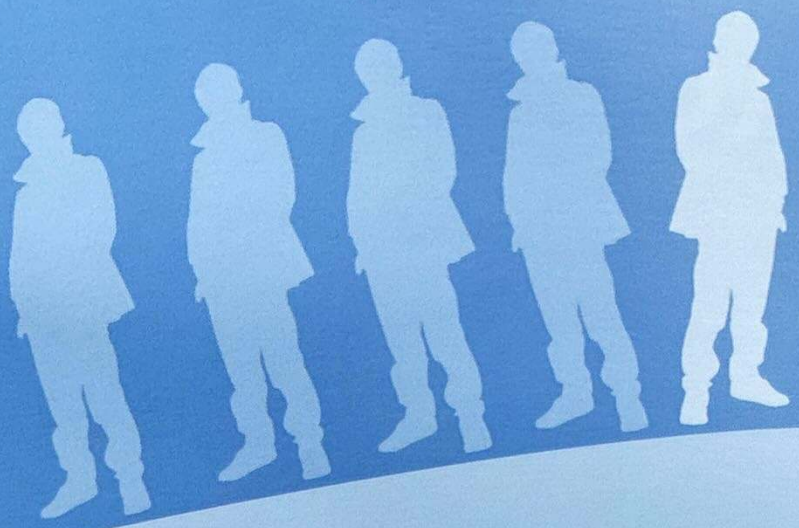
Is ceist chonspóideach í an Ghaeilge i dTuaisceart Éireann, agus ní hionann an léamh a bhíonn ag Protastúnaigh agus Caitlicigh uirthi, de ghnáth. Ní amháin sin ach bíonn tuairimí éagsúla ar an teanga taobh istigh den dá phobal sin. Mar shampla, braitear go mbíonn 'úinéireacht' ag an phobal Chaitliceach ar an teanga, nó is le Caitlicigh agus náisiúnaithe is mó a luaitear í. Ach san am chéanna níl Gaeilge ach ag an cheathrú cuid den phobal sin. Ar an lámh eile, cé go bhfuil suim sa Ghaeilge ag mionlach den phobal Phrotastúnach, bíonn bunús an phobail sin fuarbhruite go leor fuithi nó naimhdeach di. Braitheann cuid acu gur teanga mharbh í nach bhfuil feidhm léi níos mó agus tá cuid eile den bharúil gur minic a bhaineann poblachtaigh mí-úsáid aisti mar lón cogaidh cultúrtha. Tá a thuilleadh ann ar cuma leo ann nó as í, agus roinnt eile a bhfuil an dúfhuath acu uirthi. Ní scéal simplí scéal na Gaeilge i dTuaisceart Éireann.

Tugann an foilseachán seo léargas dúinn ar an taithí a bhí ag réimse leathan Protastúnach a thosaigh ag foghlaim Gaeilge i dTuaisceart Éireann. Tá sé bunaithe ar thaighde a rinne Gordon McCoy dá thráchtas dochtúireachta in Ollscoil na Ríona, Béal Feirste. Cur i láthair dhátheangach atá anseo. Sa leagan Ghaeilge, baintear úsáid as an Caighdeán Oifigiúil do chorp an téacs, agus Gaeilge Thír Chonaill atá sna sleachta cainte. Tá an leagan Bhéarla ann le cuidiú leis an léitheoir an Ghaeilge a thuigbheáil, ach ní aistriúchán focal ar fhocal atá ann. Tá gluais leis mar threoir d'fhocail neamhghnácha agus leagain neamhchaighdeánta Ultacha.

Introduction

The Irish language is a controversial issue in Northern Ireland, and Catholics and Protestants often do not interpret the language in the same way. Indeed, views on the language vary widely within both these communities. For example, it is felt that Irish 'belongs' to the Catholic community, as it is usually associated with Catholicism and nationalism. Yet only a quarter of that community knows Irish. On the other hand, although a minority of the Protestant community are interested in the Irish language, most of that community are indifferent or hostile to it. Some believe it to be a dead language or an irrelevant language, while others think that it is used by republicanism as a political tool. Others are unconcerned about the language, and some absolutely detest it. The language question in Northern Ireland is often more complicated than it appears.

This publication presents a range of the experiences of Protestant learners of Irish in Northern Ireland. It is based on research conducted by Gordon McCoy for his doctoral thesis at Queen's University, Belfast. The text is presented bilingually. The main text is written in standardised Irish and the quotations are in Donegal Irish. The English translations aim to help the reader understand the Irish and are not word-for-word translations. A glossary is included to help with unfamiliar words and non-standardised Ulster Irish terms.



San Fhoilsiúchán seo beimid ag tabhairt faoi na rudaí seo a leanas:

- ag déanamh cur síos ar trí Phreispitéireach a d'fhoghlaim an Ghaeilge: Peadar, Elaine agus Jason - athraíodh na hainmneacha san fhoilsiúchán seo;
- ag déanamh cur síos ar dhá ghrúpa i gCo. an Dúin agus ar Bhóthar na Seanchille;
- ag cur béime ar an choibhneas idir ceisteanna féiniúlachta agus foghlaim na Gaeilge;
- ag plé na tábhachta a bhaineann leis an áit a gcuirtear ranganna ar fáil, an dóigh a bhfoghlaimíonn Protastúnaigh an Ghaeilge agus na braithstintí a bhíonn acu agus iad ag foghlaim na teanga;
- ag amharc ar an tionchar a bhíonn ag ceantar cónaithe na bhfoghlaimeoirí ar an dóigh a dtéann siad i gceann na Gaeilge, go háirithe na difríochtaí idir ceantair de chuid an lucht oibre agus ceantair mheánaicmeacha;
- ag plé thábhacht na Gaeltachta ó thaobh foghlaimeoirí Protastúnacha de;
- ag amharc ar an dearcadh atá ag an phobal Caitliceach ar na foghlaimeoirí seo;
- ag déanamh cur síos ar an défhiús a bhaineann le foghlaim na Gaeilge;
- ag déanamh anailíse ar íomhánna poiblí na Gaeilge.

In this article we will:

- describe three Presbyterians who learned Irish: Peter, Elaine, and Jason – all of the learners' names in this publication have been changed;
- give an account of two groups of learners in County Down and the Shankill Road;
- emphasise the relationship between identity and learning Irish;
- discuss the importance of the location of classes, the methods by which Protestants learn Irish, and the perceptions they have when they are learning the language;
- look at the influence of the home district on the learning of Irish, particularly working-class vis-à-vis middle-class districts;
- discuss the importance of the Gaeltacht from the perspective of Protestant learners;
- look at the Catholic community's views of these learners;
- describe the ambivalence that arises from learning Irish;
- analyse public images of the language.

Gaeilge

Scéal Elaine

Tá cónaí ar Elaine tuairim is 12 míle ó Bhéal Feirste. Tá sí féin agus a teaghlach ina gcónaí ar fheirm. Cé go mbíonn sí an-ghnóthach leis an fheirm agus le tógáil a clainne féin, bíonn sí gníomhach i gcúrsaí an phobail áitiúil agus san eaglais. Tháinig Elaine ar an Ghaeilge an-luath ina saol nó ba as Contae an Chabháin a máthair agus bhí Gaeilge aicise ar an scoil:

"Sílim go raibh an t-ádh dearg orm féin nó ba as an Deisceart mo mháthair agus ba as an Tuaisceart m'athair agus d'fhág sin go raibh buntáiste an dá thaobh agam nó bhí mé in ann an dá chultúr a thuigbheáil."

Le cois cuid Gaeilge a máthar, chuala Elaine a cuid colceathracha ag úsáid na teanga le linn cuairteanna samhraidh ar an Chabhán. Bhí suim ar leith aici sa cheol agus thosaigh sí ag cur suime sa cheol traidisiúnta go luath ina saol. D'fhreastail sí ar imeachtaí ceoil Béarla agus ansin thosaigh sí ag dul chuig Fleánna Ceoil. Chuala sí amhráin Ghaeilge den chéad uair nuair a bhí sí ocht mbliana déag. Chuir Gordon ceist uirthi ar chuala sí Gaeilge á labhairt le linn na bhFleánna riamh?

"Chuala, ach is rud é a shíl mé nach bhfoghlaimeoinn go deo, siocair an dóigh a raibh Tuaisceart Éireann. Mheas mé go mbeadh sé contúirteach dá dtabharfainn fúithi san am sin. Fiú nuair a bhí muid ar scoil, iarradh orainn siúl inár mbeirteanna frid an bhaile nuair a bhris na trioblóidí amach i '69, siocair go dtiocfaí ionsaí a dhéanamh orainn ón scoil trasna an bhealaigh. Dá thairbhe sin, chothaigh do chuid comhghleacaithe an eagla ionat. Bhí a fhios agat nár chuid de do chultúr seo. San am céanna bhí mé ag éisteacht le colceathracha Protastúnacha ó Chontae an Chabháin agus ba chuid dá gcultúr siúd í – bhí sé chomh nádúrtha sin acu. Agus bhí sé chomh deas sin iad a chluinstin ag rá corrfhocail agus frása, mar sin de, bhí dhá scéal ag teacht chugam agus bhí siad i gcoimhlint le chéile."

Elaine's Story

Elaine lives about 12 miles outside Belfast. She is married to a farmer and has responsibilities to the farm and her children, but still takes a keen interest in her local community and is very involved in church circles. She first encountered the Irish language at a very early age, as her mother was from County Cavan, and had learned Irish at school:

"I think I've been very lucky in that I've had a mother from the South and a father from the North, so I've got the best of both worlds because I understand both cultures."

Apart from her mother's Irish, Elaine would hear her cousins use Irish on summer visits to Cavan. She had a keen interest in music and began to take an interest in Irish traditional music at an early age. She attended folk music events, which were in English, but went on to attend fleadhs and heard the Irish language being sung at them when she was 18. Gordon asked if she had ever heard Irish at the fleadhs:

"Yes, I did. But it was something I thought I would never learn because of the situation in Northern Ireland. I felt that it would be dangerous for me to learn it at that stage. Even when I went to school we were advised to walk in twos in the town, when the troubles broke out in '69, because of that sort of element, that we could be tackled because of the opposite school. So the fear was put in you by your peers. You knew that this was not part of your culture. At the same time I was listening to my cousins who were Protestants from County Cavan and it was part of their culture – it was so natural. And it was so lovely to hear them speak the odd word and phrase, so it was like two things were being told to me and they were just in conflict."

Níor athraigh rudaí go dtí 1997 nuair a thug cara cuireadh di dul chuig seirbhís Ghaeilge Phreispitéireach. Faoin am sin bhí Elaine an-ghníomhach san Eaglais Phreispitéireach:

"Chinn mé go rachainn chuig an tseirbhís Ghaeilge siocair gur mheas mé go raibh daoine maithe inár gcultúr, ach go raibh an bharúil sin ann fosta a tháinig ón dearcadh Críostaí, 'Léigh an Bíobla, bí i do Phrotastúnach maith agus ná bí ag éirí mór le Caitlicigh.' Bheul, tá cairde Caitliceacha agam, is maith liom ceol Gaelach agus bhí mé ag dhá bhainis in eaglaisí Caitliceacha. Shíl mé go raibh an Chríostaíocht leathan go leor lenár gcultúr go léir a ghlacadh ar bord agus ba mhian liom sin a chur in iúl dóibh, agus mé féin mar eiseamláir air. Shíl mé gur mhaith liom dúshlán i mo shaol ó tharla go dtig leat cuid de d'fhéiniúlacht féin a chailleadh agus tú pósta ar fheirmeoir agus beirt pháistí agat."

Cé nár thuig sí focal den tseirbhís Ghaeilge, chuaigh sí i bhfeidhm go mór ar Elaine agus chinn sí go rachadh sí i mbun na Gaeilge. Shocraigh sí freastal ar rang i mbaile a bhí cóngarach di. Dúirt sí go mbeadh eagla uirthi dul chuig a leithéid de rang roimhe seo ach gur athraigh an sos cogaidh rudaí agus gur tugadh uchtach di nuair a chuala sí faoi na Protastúnaigh eile a bhí ag foghlaim na Gaeilge. Cé gur fhreastail sí ar an rang ar feadh dhá bhliain níor mheas sí go raibh sí ag dul chun cinn chomh gasta agus ba mhaith léi. D'fhreastail sí ar scoil samhraidh sa Ghaeltacht uair amháin ach, siocair na ndualgas eile a bhí uirthi, ní raibh sí in ann sin a dhéanamh arís. Bhí díomá uirthi fosta nach raibh sí in ann TG4 a fháil, rud a bhí ina mhíbhuntáiste mór, dar léi, agus í ag iarraidh an teanga a fhoghlaim. Ansin chonaic sí go raibh dioplóma Gaeilge ar fáil in Ollscoil Uladh i mBéal Feirste. Bhí Elaine ag tnúth go mór leis an chúrsa nó níor mheas sí gurbh fhéidir a leithéid a dhéanamh, ná go raibh ranganna oíche fóirsteanacha ar fáil ag leibhéal an dioplóma nó na céime sa chathair.

Things did not change until 1997 when a friend asked her to attend the Presbyterian service in Irish. By that time Elaine had become very involved in the Presbyterian Church:

"I decided I'd like to go to the Irish service for the simple reason that I felt that in our culture there are very decent people, but from the Christian point of view there's that thought as well, 'Read your Bible, be a good Protestant, but don't mix with Catholics.' Well, I have Catholic friends, I like Irish music, and I've been to weddings in Catholic churches. I felt that Christianity was wide enough to take in all of our cultures and I wanted to explain to them, with myself as an example. I also thought I wanted another challenge in my life, because when you're married to a farmer and you've got two small kids you can lose your identity."

Although she could not understand the service in Irish, Elaine was very touched and impressed and resolved to learn the language. She decided to go to an Irish class in a nearby town. Elaine told Gordon she would have been scared to go to such a class previously but that the situation had improved since the ceasefires, and that hearing about other Protestant learners of Irish had encouraged her. She went to the class for two years but felt she was not progressing as much as she would like. Elaine attended one summer college in the Gaeltacht, but her commitments prevented her from going more often. She also regretted not being able to receive TG4, which she described as a 'big loss' as far as learning Irish was concerned. Then she saw an advertisement for the diploma course in Irish at the University of Ulster in Belfast. She became very enthusiastic about the course as she had thought that there were no suitable night classes at diploma or degree level in the city.

Bhain Elaine an-sult as an dioplóma Gaeilge agus spreag sé í leis an teanga a theagasc trí mheán na n-amhrán Gaeilge. Cé nach bhfuil sí iomlán líofa, tá sí sásta go bhfuil sí in ann comhrá Gaeilge a dhéanamh anois. D'éirigh chomh maith sin le hElaine go bhfuair sí post páirtaimseartha ag teagasc Gaeilge i naíscoil Ghaeilge agus ceann eile i meánscoil Chaitliceach ar feadh tréimhse.

Agus Elaine ag déanamh an dioplóma, chuir sí in iúl de réir a chéile don mhuintir eile a bhí ar an chúrsa gur Phrotastúnach í:

"Síleann daoine go bhfuil go leor aithne acu orm le bheith ag spochadh asam anois. D'fhiafraigh siad díom an raibh mé taobh amuigh den Chultúrlann leis an DUP nuair a bhí dráma Chathail Uí Shearcaigh ar siúl." [I mí na Samhna 2001 bhagair Saor-Phreispitéirigh go ndéanfadh siad agóid i gcoinne léiriú Salomé le Cathal Ó Searcaigh siocair go raibh sé rógháirsiúil. Mar a tharla, is í an eaglais Chaitliceach a rinne an agóid sa deireadh.]

Chuir Gordon ceist ar Elaine cad é a shíl a teaghlach agus a cuid cairde faoi í a bheith ag foghlaim na Gaeilge:

"Bhuel, mar shampla, tá a fhios ag mo theaghlach go bhfuil mé an-neamhspleách – bhí lúcháir mhór ar m'athair. Dúirt m'fhear céile, ar fear iontach leathanaigeanta é, 'Stróic leat, ach bí faicheallach le do thoil, siocair an dóigh a bpléfidh Protastúnaigh leat. Nó tá fear céile agus beirt pháistí agat anseo agus b'fhéidir go mbainfí díoltas asat agus b'fhéidir go ndéanfadh duine éigin rud inteacht gan chiall."

Mhínigh Elaine go raibh meas ag bunús na bProtastúnach a raibh aithne aici orthu ar an chinneadh a rinne sí Gaeilge a fhoghlaim, cionn is go raibh dearcadh Críostaí taobh thiar de. Tá sí ina rúnaí ar ghrúpa feirmeoirí áitiúla agus mheas sí go raibh níos mó muiníne ag na baill Chaitliceacha aisti ó d'fhoghlaim sí an Ghaeilge. Bíonn na haontachtaithe sa ghrúpa ag baint grinn aisti fosta:

Elaine said the course was 'absolutely brilliant' and was encouraged by the use of songs to teach the language. She has acquired some fluency in the language, and is very pleased to be able to hold conversations in Irish. Elaine has improved her fluency to such an extent that she taught part-time in a Irish-medium nursery school and a local Catholic secondary school for a while.

She gradually let people know on the diploma course that she was a Protestant:

"People feel as if they know me well enough to tease me. They asked, 'Why were you not outside the Cultúrlann with the DUP when Cathal Ó Searcaigh's play was on?" [The Cultúrlann is an Irish-language centre in west Belfast. In November 2001 Free Presbyterians threatened to picket a production of Salome by Cathal Ó Searcaigh there because they believed it to be obscene. As it happened, the Catholic clergy organised the picket instead.]

Gordon asked Elaine about the reaction of her friends and family to her learning Irish:

"Well for instance, my family knows me to be a very independent person – my father was truly pleased. My husband, who's a very broad-minded man, said, 'Yes, go for it, but please be careful, because of the reaction of Protestants! Because you have a husband and two children here and there might be a backlash and people decide to do something crazy."

Elaine explained that most Protestants she knew respected her decision to learn Irish, because she was coming from a Christian point of view. She is also secretary of a local farmers' group and noticed that the Catholic members seem to trust her more for learning Irish. The unionists in the group tease her good-humouredly:

"Is duine den DUP an cathaoirleach atá againn fá láthair agus nuair a bhí cruinniú an choiste ann an oíche fá dheireadh, cuireadh beagán míshuaimhnis orainn beirt, nó thoisigh siad a spochadh asainn ag rá go gcaithfeadh seisean an seomra a fhágáil nuair a thosóinnse ag labhairt Gaeilge, ach ghlac sé leis cibé. Níl athrú intinne air fúm. Tá meas aige orm agus sin é ...

Mar sin de, déarfainn go bhfuil ár bpobal solúbtha, go háirithe pobal na tuaithe. Tá daoine i mBéal Feirste an-tógtha leis an mheon Phrotastúnach agus níl áit ar bith ann don Ghaeilge. Silim go bhfuil muintir na tuaithe níos leathanaigeanta de ghnáth ná, abair, daoine ó eastáit Phrotastúnacha agus eastáit Chaitliceacha. Fán tuath, tá ar dhaoine obair le chéile, go háirithe an pobal feirmeoireachta. Tá muid an-chairdiúil lenár gcomharsana Caitliceacha chomh maith lenár gcomharsana Protastúnacha. Is dóiche go réitíonn muid go maith le chéile. Ach tá a fhios agam go mbeidh amanna ann a mbeidh muid de dhíth ar a chéile agus tá sin i gcónaí i gcúl m'intinne, nach dtugann tú do dhroim do do chomharsana, nó nach ndeireann tú aon rud a mbeidh aithreachas ort faoi. Cailleadh m'athair cleamhnais agus mo mháthair cúpla bliain ó shin agus ní thiocfadh liom iompar na gCaitliceach nó na bProtastúnach a tháinig chun tí le linn an tórraimh a chreidbheáil. Ní shílim go bhfaighidh tú sin ar eastát Protastúnach nó Caitliceach, is cuma cá dtéann tú i dTuaisceart Éireann."

Níor chuir an doicheall a bhraith sí ó Phrotastúnaigh nó ó Chaitlicigh maidir le foghlaim na Gaeilge isteach barraíocht ar Elaine:

"The chairman this year happens to be a DUP guy and the other night at the committee meeting it was very embarrassing for both him and I, because they teased the pair of us that when I started speaking Irish he would have to walk out of the room! But he took it. There's no difference in his attitude to me. He treats me with respect and that's it ...

So I would say there's a lot more give and take in our community, especially the rural community. People I know in Belfast are very into the Protestant ethos and there would be no room in that for Irish. I think rural people are more open-minded as a rule than say people from very Protestant housing estates and very Catholic housing estates. In the country people have to work together, especially in the farming community. We're very friendly with our Catholic neighbours as well as the Protestant ones. I suppose we get on well together. But we also know that there are times when we might need each other and I think that is in the back of your mind, that you never turn your back on your neighbour or say anything that you'd regret. My father-in-law and my mother died a few years ago and the attitudes of both Protestants and Catholics who came to the wakes was unbelievable. I don't think you would get that in a Protestant housing estate or a Catholic housing estate, no matter where you go in Northern Ireland."

Elaine has a blasé attitude to hostility to her from Protestants and Catholics for learning Irish:

Gaeilge

"Tá a fhios agam, mar shampla, go bhfuair bean [Phrotastúnach] amach faoi. Tá siopa aici in aice liom agus casadh orm i agus dúirt mise 'Hello' mar is gnách agus rinne sise neamhiontas iomlán domh, agus tá a fhios agam go ndearna sí sin siocair an áit a bhfuil mé ag obair agus ag teagasc. Ach bíodh aici – mura bhfuil suim aici i mo chuid airgid ní rachaidh mé ar ais chun an tsiopa chuici! Ach caithfidh mé a admháil go bhfuil fear [Caitliceach] eile ann a chonaic m'fháinne airgid. Chuir sé ceist orm cad é a bhí mé ag déanamh ag caitheamh fáinne airgid. Tá seanaithne agam ar an fhear sin, fear galánta, ach ní thuigeann sé cad chuige a bhfuil mise, Protastúnach, ag foghlaim na Gaeilge. Agus tá a fhios agam ón aghaidh a bhí air gur baineadh siar as agus nár shíl sé go raibh sin ceart. Ach níor chuir sin bac air a bheith ag caint liom fán am a chuaigh thart ...

Sílim gurb é an rud is fearr duit a dhéanamh nuair atá tú buartha fá rud inteacht nó gan a sheachaint ach aghaidh a thabhairt air go bhfeicfidh tú an bhfuil tú ceart nó contráilte. Agus fiú má mhothaíonn tú go bhfuil doicheall ag daoine romhat agus tú ag foghlaim na teanga, má mhíníonn tú go mothaíonn tú féin gur rud fiúntach atá ann – bhuel, mura nglacann siad leis sin, bíodh acu!"

Chuir Gordon agallamh ar Elaine i mí Dheireadh Fómhair 2001. Chuir sé ceist uirthi cén íomhá a bhí ag an Ghaeilge i dTuaisceart Éireann:

"Tá íomhá phoblachtach aici go fóill. Ní thig liom ach sin a rá nuair atá Sinn Féin á húsáid – agus b'fhéidir nach bhfuil seo ceart – ach bíonn an chuma air go mbíonn Sinn Féin á húsáid le cur isteach ar Phrotastúnaigh, mar shampla, i Stormont. Agus, ar ndóigh, ní dhéanann Protastúnaigh ach éirí tógtha agus a rá, 'Is leo an teanga,' seachas suí siar agus a rá, 'Caithfidh muid tuilleadh eolais a fháil fá seo.'

"I know for instance that a [Protestant] lady found out. She owns a shop near here and I met her face-to-face and I just said 'Hello' as usual and she ignored me, and I know that's because she knows where I am working and what I'm teaching. But I mean 'hard luck' – if she doesn't want my money, I'll not be back in her shop! But I must admit there's another [Catholic] guy who saw my silver fáinne [a ring-shaped badge, which indicates a degree of fluency in Irish]. He said, 'What are you doing wearing a silver fáinne?' I've known that man, a lovely man for years, but he couldn't understand or figure it out why I as a Protestant was learning Irish. And I know by the look on his face that he was very taken aback and didn't think it was right. But it didn't stop him speaking to me about old times ...

I think when you're concerned about something the best thing is to confront it and see, 'Am I right or am I wrong?' And even if you find there is some apprehension to you learning the language, if you explain if you feel it's worthwhile, and if they don't accept it, well hard luck!"

Gordon interviewed Elaine in October 2001. He asked her what image the Irish language had in Northern Ireland:

"It has a republican image still. I can't say anything more than that. I just feel that with Sinn Féin using it – maybe this isn't correct – but it seems that Sinn Féin are using it to irritate the Prods at times, say for instance in Stormont. And the Prods, of course, have the gut reaction to say, 'That's their language,' instead of backing off and saying, 'Let's find out more about it.'

D'fhiafraigh Gordon di faoin Ghaeilge agus an cultúr Protastúnach i dTuaisceart Éireann:

"Ní shílim gur cuid den chultúr Phrotastúnach í. Ní shílim go bhfuil a dhath is féidir le Protastúnaigh a bhfuil Gaeilge acu a dhéanamh ach iarracht a dhéanamh intinn Protastúnach eile a leathnú i gcaitheamh an chéad fiche bliain eile nó mar sin, ach le bheith ionraic ní fheicim í mar pháirt den chultúr Phrotastúnach amach anseo. Ní miste liom cé acu a fhoghlaimíonn mo chuid páistí Gaeilge nó nach bhfoghlaimíonn, nó tá siad níos leathanaigeanta siocair an t-eolas a thug mise dóibh ar an chultúr Ghaelach. Thig le mo mhac aithris a dhéanamh ar Ian Paisley agus a bheith ag spochadh asam ach níl leisce air inse dá chairde cad é atá mé a dhéanamh."

Nuair a chuir Gordon ceist ar Elaine cén náisiúntacht a bhí aici féin, dúirt sí seo:

"Is Tuaisceartach mé go cinnte nó ní hionann ar chor ar bith Tuaisceartaigh agus Deisceartaigh. Dar leis na Protastúnaigh gur Briotanaigh iad, ach chan é. Tá cónaí orthu in Éirinn agus is Tuaisceartaigh iad. Is saoránaigh Bhriotanacha iad – ní féidir sin a shéanadh – ach is Tuaisceartaigh muid uilig."

Agus sin ráite aici, dúirt Elaine gurbh fhearr léi Éire a bheith aontaithe, nó go bpléann Rialtas na Poblachta i bhfad níos fearr lena chuid feirmeoirí.

Gordon asked her about the Irish language and Protestant culture in Northern Ireland:

"I don't think it's part of Protestant culture. I think that all Protestant Irish speakers can do is to open up the minds of other Protestants for the next 20 years or whatever, but I can't honestly see it becoming part of the Protestant culture years on ... I don't care whether my kids learn Irish or not but even with me exposing them to the Irish culture their minds are broader because of it. My son will put on his Ian Paisley voice and tease the life out of me but he's not embarrassed to tell his friends what I do."

When Gordon asked Elaine what nationality she had, she replied:

"I'm definitely Northern Irish because the Southern Irish are completely different from Northern Irish. Prods think that they're British, but they're not. They live in Ireland and they're Northern Irish. They're British citizens – there's no denying that – but we're all Northern Irish."

On saying that, Elaine expressed a personal preference for a united Ireland, as the Republic's government treated its farmers much better than the UK.

Gaeilge

Scéal Pheadair

Tá Peadar ina chónaí i ndeisceart Bhéal Feirste, i gceantar meánaicmeach. Is ar an scoil a chuir sé suim sa teanga ar dtús, le linn ranganna ar stair na hÉireann:

"Thar thréimhse de bhlianta agus mé ar scoil ghramadaí thoisigh mé ag smaointiú ar cad é a roinn an t-oileán seo agus sílim gurb é toradh na smaointe sin an tuairim nár cheart dó a bheith mar sin ... Nuair a tháinig sin chugam, thoisigh mé a fhiafraí cad iad sainchomharthaí na hÉireann, cad iad croí-thréithe a cultúir, cad iad na rudaí a thugann daoine le chéile nach bhfuil róleataobhach, nár bhain le taobh amháin nó an taobh eile. Ba í an Ghaeilge an ghné a tháinig chun tosaigh agus ba rud í nár bhain le taobh amháin seachas an taobh eile."

Ba léir do Pheadar go raibh sé i ndiaidh teacht ar ghné den náisiúnachas a raibh, ina bharúil féin, áit ann don dá thaobh. Ach sin ráite, ní raibh sé ar a shuaimhneas le gach gné den náisiúnachas. Shíl sé go háirithe go mbeadh seans níos fearr go nglacfadh Protastúnaigh le hÉire aontaithe mura raibh feachtas foréigin ar siúl ag an IRA. Mheas sé mar sin gur chuir an IRA bac ar aontú na tíre.

Peter's story

Peter lives in a middle-class area of south Belfast. He first became interested in the Irish language when he was at school, during Irish history lessons:

"Over a period of years when I was at grammar school I started to think, 'Why is this island divided?' and I think I eventually came up with the idea that it shouldn't be ... I think from that knowledge I came round to saying, 'Well, what are the features of Ireland, what are the essential aspects of its culture, and what are the things that people share, that wouldn't necessarily be too one-sided or the other, that wouldn't necessarily belong to one religious group or the other?' The biggest feature I could see then was the Irish language, and it was something that needn't necessarily belong to one group or the other."

Peter had discovered an aspect of nationalism which he believed could be shared by both Protestants and Catholics. Yet he was not comfortable with every aspect of nationalism in the North. In particular, Peter thought that there was a greater chance of Protestants agreeing to a united Ireland if there was not a violent campaign being waged by the IRA, and as such the latter's campaign was a major obstruction to the unification of Ireland.

De réir a chéile thosaigh Peadar ag cuidiú le himeachtaí Gaeilge ina cheantar féin a eagrú. Theagasc sé Gaeilge do chairde ina theach féin, agus ag pointe amháin bhí cara dá chuid i mbun bunranga i seomra eile. Bhí sé ar chomhbhunaitheoirí an ghrúpa Ghaeilge Phreispitéirigh darbh ainm An Tor ar Lasadh, a eagraíonn seirbhísí Gaeilge ar an tríú Domhnach de gach mí in Eaglais Phreispitéireach Fitzroy. Tá idir Chaitlicigh agus Phrotastúnaigh sa ghrúpa seo, agus is é an t-aon áit a dtagann Protastúnaigh a bhfuil Gaeilge acu le chéile ar bhonn rialta. Tá croíghrúpa de 18 ball ann, cé go mbíonn i bhfad níos mó ná sin ag seirbhísí na Cásca agus na Nollag.

Nuair a phós Peadar bhí dúshlán teanga eile roimhe. Bhí suim ag a bhean chéile sa Ghaeilge, agus bhí cara leo toilteanach í a theagasc di. Chinn Peadar gur mhaith leis Gaeilge a bheith ag a chuid páistí fosta. Spreagann sé iad le cláracha páistí ar TG4 a choimhéad agus freastalaíonn sé ar chuid de na himeachtaí a eagraíonn Comhluadar, an eagraíocht a thugann tacaíocht do theaghlaigh a labhraíonn Gaeilge. Cionn is nach labhraítear mórán Gaeilge sa cheantar ina bhfuil sé, ní chluineann na páistí ach Gaeilge a gcuid tuismitheoirí. Dá bharr sin, cé go dtuigeann siad an teanga, is annamh a deir siad níos mó ná cúpla focal sa Ghaeilge. Bíonn an-fhonn ar Pheadar cuairteoirí a bhfuil Gaeilge acu a thabhairt chun an tí leis an teanga a labhairt leo, le cruthú gur teanga bheo í – agus go bhfuil sí á labhairt taobh amuigh den teach.

Gradually Peter helped to organise more Irish language activities nearer home. He taught Irish to friends in his house, and at one stage a friend was taking a beginners' class in another room. He was a founder member of the Irish language Presbyterian group An Tor ar Lasadh ('The Burning Bush') which organises services on the third Sunday of every month in Fitzroy Presbyterian Church. This group comprises Catholics and Protestants of all denominations, and is in fact the only regular social event where Protestant Irish speakers meet one another. It has a core group of around 18 members, although many more people attend the larger Christmas and Easter services.

When Peter married he faced another linguistic challenge. His wife was interested in learning Irish, and a friend was willing to teach her the language. Peter decided he would like his children to speak Irish as well. He encourages them to watch the children's programmes on TG4 and attends some of the activities organised by Comhluadar, an organisation that supports Irish-speaking families. The lack of Irish in the district means that for most of the time the only Irish heard by the children is spoken by their parents. Consequently, while they understand the language, they rarely speak more than an occasional word in Irish. Peter is keen to bring guests to the house to speak Irish to them, to prove it is a living language after all – that it is spoken beyond the family home.

Scéal Jason

Tógadh Jason ar eastát in oirthear Bhéal Feirste. Le linn a óige níor bhraith sé go raibh mórán den chultúr réigiúnach le feiceáil thart air. Mhothaigh Jason nach raibh aige ach féiniúlacht pholaitiúil seachas féiniúlacht chultúrtha nuair a bhí sé óg. Mheas sé nach raibh an t-eastát inár tógadh é neamhchosúil le go leor eastát eile i Sasana.

Deir Jason nach raibh mórán teagmhála aige le Caitlicigh go ndeachaigh sé chun an choláiste i lár na cathrach. Thug sé faoi deara gur labhair Caitlicigh faoin Ghaeilge ar dhóigh a threisigh a dteagmháil le chéile. Labhair siad faoina dtáithí ar choláistí samhraidh sa Ghaeltacht, mar shampla. Ní raibh Protastúnaigh ábalta a bheith páirteach sa chomhrá sin agus mar sin de níor oscail siad a mbéal. Chreid sé, mar sin, gur comhartha aitheantais Caitliceach í an teanga.

I ndiaidh a thréimhse i mBéal Feirste chuaigh Jason go hAlbain, tír ar mhaígh a theaghlach go raibh dáimh mhór acu léi. Níor mhothaigh Jason an dáimh sin agus d'fhill sé ar an bhaile. Ach le linn a thréimhse i nDún Éideann chuir sé suim i gceol traidisiúnta na hAlban agus na hÉireann, agus d'éirigh sé cairdiúil le daoine a bhí cruthaitheach ó thaobh cultúir de, cruthaíocht nár tháinig sé uirthi sa bhaile. Ba de bharr na taithí a fuair sé ansin air a shíl sé gur cheart ról an cheoil thraidisiúnta i stair a cheantair féin a fhiosrú. Chuir sé an-iontas air gur ghnách lena athair féin dul chuig céilithe roimh an chogadh. Fuair sé amach ní amháin go raibh traidisiún láidir fidléireachta i gContae Aontroma ach gur tháinig stíl ar leith chun cinn sa chontae sin. Siocair na suime nua seo sa cheol, d'fhreastail sé ar ranganna ceoil in iarthar Bhéal Feirste.

Jason's story

Jason grew up in an estate in east Belfast, and later in life reflected that he experienced little of the culture of the region when he was young. He told Gordon that in his younger days he felt that his only identity was a political one; it seemed that his estate could be transposed to England, and few would notice the difference.

Jason had little contact with Catholics until he attended college in the centre of Belfast. He noticed that talking about Irish was a way in which Catholics would identify and bond with one another. For example, they would talk of their experiences of learning Irish in Gaeltacht colleges. Protestants, unable to participate in these conversations, looked on in silence. Irish seemed to be a Catholic or nationalist badge of recognition.

Jason later moved to Scotland, a country with which his family identified to a great extent. For his part, Jason could not feel fully Scottish during his stay there, and he returned home. Yet while in Edinburgh he became very interested in Scottish and Irish traditional music, and met friends who were 'culturally creative', something he hadn't experienced at home. His Scottish experience encouraged him to explore the influence of traditional music in his home district. He was greatly surprised when his father told him he had attended ceilidhs before the war. He discovered that there was a strong fiddling tradition in County Antrim and a distinctive style was developed in that county. He learned to enjoy Irish culture, particularly Irish traditional music, and attended music classes in west Belfast.

Fuair sé níos mó eolais ar stair na Gaeilge agus an bhaint a bhí ag a phobal féin leis an teanga. Chuaigh sé seo i bhfeidhm go mór air agus chinn sé go ndéanfadh sé céim Ghaeilge san ollscoil. De réir a chéile ba léir go raibh deacrachtaí ag Jason, ní amháin ó thaobh an ranganna de, ach fosta ar an taobh sóisialta de. Ní raibh an cúlra sa teanga aige a bhí ag na mic léinn eile agus mar sin de bhí sé ag titim chun deiridh sna ranganna Gaeilge. De thairbhe a chuid suime san aclaíocht níor chleacht sé na tithe tábhairne, croílár shaol sóisialta na mac léinn eile. Le linn a thréimhse ollscoile bhítí ag spochadh as Jason gur ball de chuid MI5 a bhí ann, rud a chuir isteach go mór air. (Rinne duine acu leithscéal lagbhríoch leis cúpla bliain ina dhiaidh sin ach shíl Jason nach raibh sé dáiríre.) Bhraith Jason go raibh sé ar imeall na cuideachta, toisc é a bheith ina Phrotastúnach agus ina aontachtaí.

Nuair a d'fhág sé an ollscoil, choinnigh Jason leis an teanga. Chuaigh sé a theagasc go deonach in iarthar Bhéal Feirste. Cé gur thosaigh sé a ghlacadh páirte i saol na Gaeilge arís ní raibh sé ar a shuaimhneas. Thug sé faoi deara go mbíodh claonadh ag daoine áirithe stopadh dá gcomhrá nuair a bhíodh sé sa chuideachta agus go mbeadh siad in amhras faoi. Bhí sé míchompordach fosta nuair a bhí baill de chuid Shinn Féin nó iar-phríosúnaigh phoblachtacha i láthair ag ócáidí Gaelacha. Bhí seo ag cur an oiread sin buartha air gur chinn sé gan freastal ar a leithéid d'ócáidí as sin amach. Le himeacht ama, thosaigh Jason é féin ag baint grinn as an 'paranóia' a chonacthas dó a bheith ar phoblachtaigh faoi Phrotastúnaigh a bhí ag foghlaim na Gaeilge. Mar shampla, nuair a bhí sé ag obair do chrannlia in iarthar Bhéal Feirste, dúirt sé gur dócha go mbeadh amhras ar lucht na Gaeilge faoi, dá bhfeicfeadh siad thuas ar chrann ar Bhóthar na bhFál é!

Jason discovered more information on the history of the Irish language and its connections to his own community. This impressed him very much and he decided to study Irish at university level. Gradually, however, it became apparent to Jason that he had difficulties not only with learning Irish, but also with the social aspect of his time at university. He did not have the same level of knowledge of Irish as the other students. His enthusiasm for athletics meant that he could not frequent pubs, the main social activity of the other students. Some joked that he was a member of MI5, something which bothered him greatly. (One student made a half-hearted apology for this a couple of years later, but Jason did not think he was serious.) Although he made friends at university, Jason believed his unionism and Protestantism set him apart from the other students.

After leaving university, Jason maintained his Irish language activities. He worked on a voluntary basis as a teacher in west Belfast. Yet he had reason to remain ill at ease in the Irish language environment. He noticed that certain people fell silent and were suspicious of him if he was in their vicinity. As well as that, he was uncomfortable when members of Sinn Féin or ex-prisoners attended Irish language events. This feeling of unease bothered him so much that he decided to stop working and socialising in the Irish language scene. In time he was able to joke about the republican 'paranoia' about Protestant learners of Irish he had personally encountered. He later did some odd-jobs for a friend who was a tree surgeon, and worked in west Belfast. He joked that some Irish speakers he had met would become very suspicious if they saw him up a tree on the Falls Road!

Gaeilge

Tháinig corraí ar Jason i 2001 nuair a chonaic sé scéal i nuachtán ag iarraidh ar dhuine ar bith arbh fhéidir leis 'Tiocfaidh ár Lá' a rá, maíomh sa daonáireamh gur cainteoir Gaeilge é/í. Mheas sé go raibh an moladh sin ag déanamh polaitiú ar an teanga agus dá thairbhe sin, ní thiocfadh leis féin tic a chur sa bhosca a bhain leis an Ghaeilge. Mheas sé go mbeadh sé ag tacú leis an phoblachtachas ar dhóigh éigin. Níl sé gníomhach i bhfoghlaim na Gaeilge a thuilleadh. Dúirt se go raibh a chuid mothúchán faoin Ghaeilge áit éigin idir grá agus fuath ach bhí lúcháir air gur fhág sé 'saol na Gaeilge'. De thairbhe a dhrochthaithí féin ag foghlaim na Gaeilge, tá trua aige do dhuine ar bith óna phobal féin atá ag iarraidh an teanga a fhoghlaim.

Ba é dearcadh Jason nach raibh a chúlra nó na rudaí ar chreid sé féin iontu ag teacht leis an Ghaeilge nó le pobal na Gaeilge. Rinne sé iarracht ceangal éigin a dhéanamh idir an cultúr agus an teanga agus gnéithe dá shaol féin ar nós a theaghlaigh, stair an cheantair, agus baint stairiúil na bProtastúnach leis an Ghaeilge. Ach sin ráite, bhraith sé féin nár ghlac pobal Gaeilge an lae inniu leis cibé ar bith.

Jason was particularly annoyed when a newspaper columnist urged everyone who could say 'Tiocfaidh Ár Lá' ('Our Day Will Come') to record themselves as Irish speakers in the 2001 census. Jason believed this was politicising the language and that he could not tick the boxes indicating a knowledge of Irish, as he would be supporting republicanism in an indirect way. He is no longer learning Irish. While reflecting on his experiences, he talked of his love-hate relationship with the Irish language, but he was happy to leave the Irish language scene. He feels sorry for anyone from his own community who wants to learn Irish because he is certain they will have unpleasant encounters similar to his own.

Jason basically discovered a lack of fit between his own beliefs, background, and the Irish language. He attempted to associate the Irish language and culture with his family history, the history of his area, and historical Protestant involvement in the language. But the contemporary Irish language scene seemed to exclude him all the same.

Scéal Ghrúpa Thuaisceart an Dúin

Is i gceantar thuaisceart an Dúin a bhí dream amháin foghlaimeoirí a ndearna Gordon taighde orthu. Ba Phrotastúnaigh iad uile ach bhí idir aontachtaithe agus náisiúnaithe ina measc. Is ceantar measartha suaimhneach an áit ina raibh an grúpa gníomhach ann agus is limistéar é a bhfuil tromlach ag na Protastúnaigh ann. Ceantar measúil meánaicmeach atá ann fosta agus bhí a shliocht sin ar an ghrúpa. Seachas fear amháin de chuid an lucht oibre as Baile Nua na hArda, ba den mheánaicme iad uile.

Ba léir ón ghrúpa seo gur ceist chasta atá i gceist na féiniúlachta. Bhí dílseacht mheasctha ag a mbunús; corruair chuir siad in iúl gnéithe Éireannacha dá n-aitheantas, corruair eile gnéithe Briotanacha. Bhí an méid seo le rá ag beirt acu:

"Is Briotanach mé corruair agus is Éireannach mé uaireanta eile. Ní fheicim go bhfuil contrárthacht ar bith idir dúil a bheith agam i gcruicéad agus dúil a bheith agam sa Ghaeilge."

"Tá sé de phribhléid agamsa anois go bhfuil bua an dá shaol agam. Tá a fhios agat, baineann tú an chuid is fearr as an dá thaobh. Níor tháinig mé chuig réiteach ar bith i ndáirire. Tá mé sásta féiniúlacht Bhriotanach, Éireannach nó Éireannach-Bhriotanach a bheith agam, thig leat sult a bhaint astu beirt. Bainim an-sult as a bheith ag amharc ar The Changing of the Guard nó rud inteacht mar sin ... Nuair a sheinneann siad The Land of Hope and Glory nó rud inteacht mar sin, níl mé ag rá nár cheart domh a bheith ar mo shuaimhneas leis sin agus níl fadhbanna ar bith agam leis. Déarfainn gur cinnte gur cuid díom anois cultúr na hÉireann, agus is cinnte gur fearrde mé mar dhuine dá thairbhe."

Is díol suntais gur fhoghlaim bunús ghrúpa thuaisceart an Dúin an Ghaeilge ina gceantar féin, rud a chothaigh dearcadh ar leith ar an teanga iontu. Tháinig siad le chéile i dteach tábhairne Caitliceach le Gaeilge a chleachtadh, agus chomhoibrigh siad le Caitlicigh eile a raibh Gaeilge acu le himeachtaí Gaeilge a reáchtáil in Ard Mhic Nasca.

The North Down Group

One group which Gordon studied lived in the north Down area. Although they were all Protestants, they differed in their politics; some were unionist and others nationalist. North Down is a peaceful and prosperous area with a large Protestant population. The district is fairly respectable and middle-class, features which were reflected in the ethos of the group. With the exception of one man from Newtownards, all of the group were middle-class.

It became apparent to Gordon that issues of identity were complex within this group. Most of them had a mixed, situational identity, expressing aspects of Irishness and Britishness at different times. Here is what two of them had to say about the subject:

"Sometimes I'm British and sometimes I'm Irish. I don't see any contradiction between liking cricket and liking Irish."

"I feel quite privileged now, because I mean you feel the best of both worlds. You extract from both sides what you like best, you know. I haven't come to terms with anything now really. I'm happy to be British-Irish or Irish-British or whatever, you can take pleasure from both. I mean, I take great pleasure in looking at The Changing of the Guard or something like that there ... I mean, when they play The Land of Hope and Glory or something, it doesn't mean that I shouldn't, I feel quite happy to associate with that, and I've no problems about it. I'd say that the Irish culture would certainly be part of me now, yes, sure, and I'm a better person for it."

Most of the group learned Irish in their own district, which influenced the way they perceived the language. They met in a Catholic bar to practise Irish, and they co-operated with Irish-speaking Catholics to run language events in Hollywood.

Gaeilge

Chomh maith leis sin, ba ghnách leo freastal ar chúrsaí sa Ghaeltacht. Sa sliocht seo thíos tá bean as Beannchar ag caint ar chuairt a thug sí ar choláiste Gaeilge i ndeisceart Dhún na nGall:

"Bhí rud inteacht eagraithe ag an choláiste gach oíche, agus fidléir, agus ar ndóigh, Lillis, an ceoltóir clúiteach sean-nóis, bhí seisean ann, agus ansin chuaigh muid chuig dinnéar agus céilí oíche amháin, agus ansin chuaigh tú go Tigh Bhiddy [teach tábhairne]. Ach achan tráthnóna bhí clár imeachtaí ann fosta. Thiocfadh leat siúlóid sléibhe a dhéanamh, má bhí suim ar bith agat uirlis a sheinm, thiocfadh leat sin a dhéanamh agus an sean-nós clúiteach ab ansa liom. Leoga, ní raibh ann ach cad é eile is féidir leo a dhéanamh. Ní fhaca mé a dhath ariamh cosúil leis. Níor chuala mé a dhath cosúil leis. Ní raibh a fhios agam gurbh ann dóibh. Ní raibh mé ag céilí ariamh agus bhí gach rud ina ábhar iontais agam ...

[Ansin thosaigh sí ag caint ar léacht a thug Lillis Ó Laoire faoi cheol tradisiúnta] Leis an fhírinne a dhéanamh, thiocfadh leis a bheith ag labhairt i dteanga ar bith, ach a bhfuil a fhios agat bhí sé álainn, cé nár thuig mé é."

Bhí na foghlaimeoirí níos mó ar a suaimhneas sa Ghaeltacht agus chonacthas dóibh go raibh cainteoirí dúchais réchúiseach. Níorbh ionainn a dtaithí ar fhoghlaimeoirí ó Thuaisceart Éireann. Mar shampla, cionn is nach raibh an t-atmaisféar chomh teann agus a bhíonn sa bhaile, bhí Andrew sásta an pholaitíocht a phlé. Ach bhí foghlaimeoir eile a rinne gearán go mbíodh daoine ag stánadh uirthi nuair a deireadh sí gurbh ó Bheannchar í (rud a thug le fios gur Phrotastúnach í); thosaigh sí ag rá le daoine gurbh as Contae an Dúin í, rud a cheil a cúlra creidimh. Mar sin de, bhí Andrew sásta a bheith ina Phrotastúnach go poiblí i nDún na nGall, ach bhí cuid eile a bhí níos cosantaí agus sheachain siad leideanna a thabhairt faoina gcúlra creidimh.

Furthermore, they attended courses in the Gaeltacht. In the extract below a woman from Bangor talks of a visit to a college in south Donegal:

"Every night the college organised something ... And a fiddler, and of course the famous Lillis, the séan-nós ['old-style'] singer, he was there, and then we'd a dinner one night and a céilí, and then afterwards you went to Biddy's [a pub]. But every afternoon there was a programme as well. You could have gone hill-walking, if you'd any interest in playing an instrument, you had that, and the famous séan-nós singing which I adored ... I mean it was 'now for something completely different'. I have never seen anything like that in my life. I had never heard anything like it. I didn't know those things existed. I'd never been to a céilí, and everything was a revelation ...

[And then she spoke about a Lillis Ó Laoire lecture on traditional music] Really, he could have been speaking any language, but it was beautiful you know, it really sounded beautiful, though I didn't understand it."

The learners were more relaxed in the Gaeltacht and found native speakers easy-going. Their experience of other learners from Northern Ireland was quite different. For example, as the atmosphere was less tense than at home, Andrew was happy to discuss politics. But another learner complained that the Northern Irish learners stared at her when she told them she was from Bangor (which indicated she was a Protestant); she began to tell them she was from County Down, which concealed her religious background. Thus Andrew was happy to be a Protestant in public in Donegal, whereas others were more wary, tending to avoid giving cues about their religious backgrounds.

Bhí cuid de na Protastúnaigh sásta taisteal chuig rang GCSE i lár Bhéal Feirste, ach ba bheag acu a bhí sásta dul chuig rang Gaeilge in iarthar na cathrach. I measc an ghrúpa bhí státseirbhíseach a raibh leisce air taisteal go Béal Feirste de bharr an jab a bhí aige, agus oibrí oifige a d'fhág rang cionn is gur briseadh isteach ina carr. Ba é an deireadh a bhí ar na fadhbanna agus na constaicí sin, nó gur fágadh cuid de na foghlaimeoirí gan dóigh ar bith acu le feabhas a chur ar a gcuid Gaeilge. Bhí an chuid a ba líofa acu sásta taisteal chuig ranganna in iarthar Bhéal Feirste.

Chomh maith leis na fadhbanna a bhí acu ranganna rialta a fháil ina gceantar féin, d'aithin cuid de na Protastúnaigh go raibh cineál défhiúis ag baint leis an Ghaeilge. Seo an rud a dúirt Andrew:

"Bhí deighilt idir dúil a bheith agam á foghlaim agus a bheith buailte léithe ... Ba dhúshlán í a fhoghlaim, ach san am céanna bhí an traidisiún poblachtach a bhain léithe ag búirí liom, agus bhí an íomhá leatromach atá aici ó dheas ann fosta ... áit ar bith ar casadh orm i ba i gcomhthéacs pholaitiúil a bhí sí."

Fuair Andrew an bua ar an choimhlint seo tríd an Ghaeilge a cheangal le féiniúlacht áitiúil cheantar na hArda. Cé go bhfuil íomhá phoiblí Bhriotanach agus Phrotastúnach ag tuaisceart an Dúin, tá iarsmaí de sheantraidisiún sa cheantar atá ag teacht leis an chultúr Gaelach, más féidir linn an teideal sin a thabhairt air. Mar shampla, d'inis Andrew do Gordon go mbíodh fidléir i ngach paróiste sa cheantar roimhe seo agus gur ghnách leo seinm ag damhsaí i hallaí Oráisteacha le linn an fhómhair. Tá fidléirí a bhfuil foinn ar leith acu ina gcónaí i leithinis na hArda go fóill. B'ábhar spreagtha ag grúpa an Dúin an t-eolas gur labhair Protastúnaigh an cheantair Gaeilge i bhfad ó shin. Dúirt Andrew seo:

Some of these Protestants were happy to travel to a GCSE class in Belfast, but few were willing to travel to a class in the west of the city. A civil servant was reluctant to travel into west Belfast on account of his job, and an office worker left a class in the city after her car was broken into. Given these problems some of the learners were poorly equipped with the means to improve their Irish. Those who became most fluent in Irish were happy to travel to classes in west Belfast.

In addition to the problems of finding classes in their own districts, some of the group experienced ambivalent feelings about the language. This is what Andrew had to say about the subject:

"There was a division between wanting to do it and being confronted by it ... It was a challenge to learn it, but at the same time the republican tradition of it was screaming at me, and there was the oppressive connotations of it in the South ... anywhere I met it was in a political context."

Andrew resolved his inner conflict by associating Irish with his local Ards identity. Although north Down has a British and Protestant public image, the area has resonances of old traditions similar to Gaelic culture. For example, Andrew told Gordon that there used to be a fiddler in every parish who would play in Orange halls at harvest celebrations. There are fiddlers with distinctive tunes in the Ards peninsula to this day. The Down group were inspired by the example of local Protestants who had spoken Irish in the past. Andrew explained:

Gaeilge

"Is cláir ar nós clár McAdam agus altanna eile a léigh mé [bhí sé ag caint faoi chlár de chuid an BBC ar Robert McAdam, caomhnóir na Gaeilge sa naoú aois déag], fágann sin tú ag mothú go bhfuil tú mar pháirt de thraidisiún, tá a fhios agat, níl tú ag briseadh isteach i dtraidisiún, nó i do sheasamh amach ón tslua ... Ní raibh a fhios agam fiú, go raibh Preispitéirigh a labhair Gaeilge i gContae an Dúin. Tá a fhios agat, fuair mé amach rudaí mar sin. D'fhoghlaim mé gur theagasc Neilson i mo scoil féin agus gach rud [ministir Preispitéireach ar ghnách leis seanmóirí a thabhairt i nGaeilge]. Bhuel, na rudaí seo uilig, bhuel, ní dhearna siad difir ar bith domh agus mé ag foghlaim an ruda, ach bhí tú níos muiníní ar dhóigh inteacht. Is dóiche nár shíl mé gurbh éan corr mé, tá a fhios agat."

Le cois na ranganna Gaeilge, ba ghnách le grúpa thuaisceart an Dúin dul chuig seisiúin cheoil agus damhsaí Gaelacha. Bhí suim mhór acu i logainmneacha Gaeilge agus i dtraidisiún Gaelach an cheantair. Bhí siad in ann cruthú dóibh féin ní amháin gur bhain an Ghaeilge leo féin mar Phrotastúnaigh ach le tuaisceart an Dúin, an ceantar a raibh cónaí orthu ann. Bhí an tuiscint úr seo ar an teanga ina chosaint acu ar an pholaitíocht a bhain leis an teanga i mBéal Feirste.

Siocair gur den mheánaicme bunús an ranga agus cónaí orthu i gceantar suaimhneach 'liobrálach', ní raibh leisce orthu insint dá gcairde go raibh siad ag foghlaim na Gaeilge. B'fhéidir nach n-aontódh a gcairde leo ar an bhunús nach raibh an teanga úsáideach, nó gurbh aisteach an mhaise ag Protastúnach a bheith á foghlaim. Ach ní hionann an scéal ag an lucht oibre. Ar an ghrúpa seo bhí duine amháin as Baile Nua na hArda, fear as ceantar de chuid an lucht oibre. Chuaigh seisean chuig rang i mBeannchar in ionad rang ina bhaile féin nó bhí imní air go rachadh an scéal amach go raibh sé ag foghlaim na Gaeilge. Ach chuaigh an scéal amach cibé, agus bhagair a chuid comharsan air éirí as an rang.

"It's programmes like the McAdam programme and the other articles I've read [a BBC programme on Robert McAdam, a nineteenth-century Irish language enthusiast]. All of that makes one feel that you're actually part of a tradition, you know, not breaking into a tradition, not sticking out like a sore thumb ... I discovered that in my own school that Neilson [a nineteenth-century Presbyterian minister who preached in Irish] had taught there and everything. Well, all these things, well, they didn't make any difference to me learning the thing, but there was a way in which you felt a lot more confident. I suppose I felt that I wasn't some kind of lunatic eccentric, you know."

As well as the Irish classes, the North Down group also went to traditional music sessions and Irish dancing classes. They had a great interest in the Irish roots of placenames and in the Gaelic tradition of the district. They were able to prove to themselves not only that the Irish language was relevant to them as Protestants, but also to north Down, the district in which they lived. This understanding of the language shielded them against the politicisation of the language in Belfast.

Since most of the learners lived in a quiet 'liberal' district, they were not reluctant to tell their friends they were learning Irish. Perhaps their friends would complain that the language was not useful, or they would say it was strange for a Protestant to learn Irish. But the only working-class learner, from an estate in Newtownards, had a much more unpleasant experience. He attended a class in Bangor rather than in his own town for fear that his learning of Irish would be discovered. But his secret was revealed and his neighbours threatened him for going to the class.

Scéal Ghleann Cairn

I 1993 theagasc Gordon Gaeilge do dhream a raibh cónaí orthu i nGleann Cairn, eastát tithíochta ar bharr Bhóthar na Seanchille. D'fhulaing muintir thuaisceart na cathrach cuid mhór le linn na 'dtrioblóidí' agus dá thairbhe sin bhí an teannas idir an dá phobal níos measa ná in aon áit ar bith eile sa chathair.

Is eastát iontach bocht Gleann Cairn a bhfuil a lán fadhbanna ann: dífhostaíocht, drugaí, spraoithiománaithe agus araile. Bhí cuid mhaith de mhuintir na háite den bharúil go raibh Caitlicigh ag druidim isteach orthu ar gach taobh agus go raibh na húdaráis ag déanamh iarrachta an ruaig a chur orthu. De thairbhe an chúlra seo bhí an chuid is mó de na foghlaimeoirí sa rang eaglach roimh Chaitlicigh. Ní minic a d'aithin siad an difir idir poblachtaigh agus Caitlicigh. Ach sin ráite, ba léir go raibh na Protastúnaigh sa rang fiosrach faoi Chaitlicigh, rud a dhearbhaíonn Sam McAughtry agus é ag scríobh faoin Phrotastúnachas:

"Catholics are not so curious to know about Protestants, but Protestants are always curious about Catholics"(1985:37).

Mheas cuid den rang gur fearr a bheadh siad in ann ligean orthu féin gur Caitlicigh iad dá mbeadh Gaeilge acu. Shíl siad go mbeadh seo ina bhua dá bhfaighfí greim orthu i gceantar Caitliceach. Mar shampla, tháinig tiománaí tacsaí chuig an rang a bhíodh ag dul ó hiarthar Bhéal Feirste. Is minic a chluineadh sé a chuid custaiméirí ag caint Gaeilge agus mheas sé go mbeadh sé féin i gcontúirt mura mbeadh an teanga aige. Tá cuid mhaith den lucht oibre Protastúnach den bharúil go bhfuil Gaeilge ag gach aon Chaitliceach.

The Glencairn Story

In 1993 Gordon taught Irish to a group living in Glencairn, a housing estate on the top of the Shankill Road. North Belfast is a district which has witnessed most of the 'troubles' and consequently the tension between the two communities was worse than anywhere else in the city.

Glencairn is a very deprived estate in which there are many social problems: unemployment, drugs, and joyriders, to name but a few. Some of the locals believed that the Catholic community was growing all around them, and that the authorities wanted to resettle them elsewhere. Given this background most of the learners in the class were afraid of Catholics. They did not often distinguish between Catholics and republicans. But having said that, it was clear that the Protestants in the class were inquisitive about Catholics, as Sam McAughtry attests:

"Catholics are not so curious to know about Protestants, but Protestants are always curious about Catholics."(1985:37)

Some of the learners believed that if they learned Irish they could masquerade as Catholics, which would be an advantage if they were ever 'caught out' in Catholic districts. For example, a taxi driver who used to operate in west Belfast came to the class. He had often heard his customers speaking Irish and feared he would be in danger if he did not know the language himself; many working-class Protestants believe that every Catholic speaks Irish.

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"Scaoileadh é díreach thall ansin i gcoradh an bhealaigh, thall ansin ag Lag an Aoil agus bhí sé millteanach san am agus ansin chuaigh mise chuig na ranganna Gaeilge agus dúirt a mháthair liom, 'Cad é atá tú a dhéanamh? Tá sé ceart go leor ag an dream sin a scaoil mo mhac, ach tá tusa i do shuí ansin ag foghlaim a dteanga. Níl tusa a dhath níos fearr ná iad.' Tá a fhios agat, bíonn ort smaointiú."

Tháinig an íomhá phoblachtach chun tosaigh arís nuair a phléasc buama mór ar Bhóthar na Seanchille i mí Dheireadh Fómhair 1993; maraíodh naonúr san eachtra. Rinne an t-oibrí pobail a d'eagraigh an rang athsmaoineamh ar an teanga:

"Bhuel, san am ar thoisigh mé, d'fhóir sé domh, agus ba rud é a bhí mé ag iarraidh a dhéanamh, ach nuair a smaointím ar na rudaí a tharla, go háirithe le dhá mhí anuas – b'fhéidir gur siocair achan rud a tharla. Is é an chéad rud a chuir ó dhoras mé ná buama na Seanchille, tá a fhios agat, d'fhiafraigh mé domh féin, 'Cad é atá tú a dhéanamh? Tá cuma orm go bhfuil mé ag aontú leis na daoine sin, daoine ar dhóiche go raibh Gaeilge acu a phlandáil an buama.' Agus níl a fhios agam cé acu atá ciall leis sin nó nach bhfuil, ach sin mar a mhothaigh mé, tá a fhios agat."

Despite this, the learners made an effort to identify with the language; a schoolboy wrote the Irish version of his name on the inside of his school folder, something very unusual for a Shankill scholar! Another accompanied Gordon on a week-long Irish language course in the Donegal Gaeltacht. She was very impressed by the relaxed rural environment she encountered there, which differed considerably from the tense atmosphere at home.

Some of the learners made good progress, but it was also clear that some of them were struggling with the very strong republican image of the language. One woman in the class was very enthusiastic about the Irish language, but was forced to reconsider when her nephew was killed. This is how she described it:

"He got shot dead over there at the turn of the road, just over at Ligoneil and at the time it was terrible and all, but then I went to those Irish classes and his mummy says, 'What are you doing? It's all right for them ones that shot my son, and you're sitting learning their language. It makes you no better than them ones.' You know, it does make you think."

The republican image of the language came to the fore when a large bomb was exploded on the Shankill Road in October 1993, killing nine locals. The community worker who organised the class changed her mind about the language:

"Well, at the time when I started it I was suiting myself and it was something I wanted to do, but the more I have listened to over the past few months – maybe its because of everything that's went on. The first thing that put me off was the Shankill bomb, you know, and I sat back then and thought you know, 'Why am I doing this? I seem to be going along with these people, people who probably know the Irish language who planted that bomb.' And it sort of, I don't know whether that makes sense to anybody, but it was how I felt, you know."

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Ach bhí foghlaimeoir eile nach raibh ag teacht leis an mhéid sin:

"Is i ndiaidh bhuama Bhóthar na Seanchille an t-aon am amháin a cheangail mé an Ghaeilge leis na trioblóidí, nó shíl mé ansin gur dóiche go raibh sí ceangailte leofa. Cailleadh an oiread sin daoine, agus an stócach beag a chuir an buama ag a thórramh – dhírigh na ceamaraí isteach ar na bláthfhleasca agus bhí Gaeilge ar cheann acu, agus tá mé beagnach cinnte gur fleasc Gerry Adams a bhí ann, agus Gaeilge uirthi, agus chuir sin samhnas orm, tá a fhios agat, eisean ansin ag iompar chónra an stocaigh bhig a chuir an buama. Rinne sé ceangal róthréan leis an Ghaeilge, agus ba sin an t-aon am amháin ar cheangail mé í leis na trioblóidí, tá a fhios agat. Sin an t-aon am amháin – cionn is gur úsáid sé Gaeilge."

Another learner did not agree with this interpretation:

"The only time I saw it connected with the troubles and I felt then it would have been, was just after a major bombing on the Shankill Road, and so many people lost their lives, and the wee guy who planted the bomb – at his funeral – the cameras and the television zoomed up to one of the wreaths and it was written in Irish, and I'm almost sure it was Gerry Adam's wreath, and it was written in Irish, and I felt nearly revulsion, you know, because he was carrying the coffin of the wee guy who blew the people up. It – it all sort of tied it too close with the Irish, and just at that time I associated it with the troubles, you know. That was the only time – 'cos he had used the Irish."

Ach sin ráite, dúirt sí fosta gur le gach aon duine an Ghaeilge:

"Ní shílim gur cheart di a bheith ina teanga leataobhach. Ba chóir go mbeadh sé ann dúinn uilig. Ní shílim gur cheart na Protastúnaigh a choinneáil amuigh – sílim gur cheart – is í teanga s'againne í fosta, tá a fhios agat. Is le Caitlicigh í – is le gach duine í, is le muintir na hÉireann uilig í."

Having said that, she also said that the Irish language was for everyone:

"I don't think it should be allowed to be a discriminatory language. It should be for us all. I don't think it should keep the Protestants out – I think we should – it's our language as well, you know. It's for Catholics – it's for everybody, it's for people from Ireland."

Cé gur mhian leis an bhean dul ar aghaidh leis an Ghaeilge, ní raibh sí in ann sin a dhéanamh nó cuireadh deireadh leis an rang i ndiaidh an bhuama. Ach i dtuaisceart an Dúin, choinnigh na foghlaimeoirí ag dul don Ghaeilge, cé go raibh teannas sa cheantar de dheasca cúpla buama ansin fosta.

Although she was not deterred from learning Irish by the Shankill bombing, the class had finished and was not resumed. In north Down, the learners kept up their activities, although there was tension in the area after a couple of bombings there as well.

Gaeilge

Anailís

Tá cuid mhaith ceisteanna aitheantais a bhaineann le foghlaim na Gaeilge. An náisiúnaithe iad na Protastúnaigh atá ag dul don Ghaeilge? Bhí bearna pholaitiúil idir Peadar, Elaine agus idir iad féin agus na pobail arbh as iad. Mar shampla, i suirbhé údarásach i 2001 ní dúirt ach cúig faoin chéad de Phrotastúnaigh an Tuaiscirt go raibh siad i bhfách le hÉire aontaithe (féach http://www.ark.ac.uk/nilt). Is léiriú soiléir é seo go bhfuil Peadar agus Elaine ina mionlach i measc an phobail Phrotastúnaigh i gcoitinne. Agus sin ráite, nuair a bhí Gordon i mbun taighde, bhí tuairim is trian na bProtastúnach ar labhair sé leo ina náisiúnaithe. Mar sin de, bhí níos mó náisiúnaithe ina ghrúpa foghlaimeoirí ná mar atá sa phobal Protastúnach go ginearálta. Le cois a bheith ina náisiúnaithe, bhí claonadh ag na daoine seo a bheith meánaicmeach seachas ísealaicmeach.

An féidir an Ghaeilge a úsáid le haontachtaithe a thiontú ar an náisiúnachas? Is dócha go gcuireann Protastúnaigh áirithe suim sa Ghaeilge de bharr gur náisiúnaithe iad, ach ní féidir a rá gur gléas í an teanga le haontachtaithe a thiontú ina náisiúnaithe. Cuireann aontachtaithe a gcasadh féin ar an scéal, mar a léiríonn an sliocht seo:

"Bainim féin leis an traidisiún aontachtach, agus thiocfadh liom feidhm a bhaint as an Ghaeilge chomh maith agus níos fearr nó aontachtaí ar bith eile leis an aontacht a chosaint ... is amaidí amach an smaointiú gur náisiún Gaelach Caitliceach í Éire siocair go bhfuil uisce thart uirthi. Ceanglaíonn an teanga muid le hAlbain agus leis an Bhreatain Bheag agus le Corn na Breataine, agus go fírinneach le Sasana chomh maith. Tá na Sasanaigh chomh Ceilteach is atá muid féin. Tchítear domh go bhfuil an Ghaeilge dár gceangal leis na pobail Cheilteacha eile, agus is doiligh liom a theacht leis an smaointiú gur Sasana an namhaid i gcónaí. Is ionann muid féin agus na Sasanaigh, mar sin de tchítear domh gur rud í an Ghaeilge a cheanglaíonn na hOileáin Bhriotanacha le chéile. Is teanga Cheilteach a shamhlaítear domh nuair a chluinim an focal 'British' agus chan an Béarla. Mar a dúirt sean-

Analysis

There are many issues of identity related to the learning of Irish. Are Protestants who learn Irish nationalist in outlook? There was a gap in political beliefs between Peter, Elaine, and most of their own community. For example, in an authoritative 2001 survey only 5% of Northern Protestants said they were in favour of a united Ireland (see http://www.ark.ac.uk/nilt). This demonstrates that Peter and Elaine are a minority within the Protestant community. Yet in terms of Gordon's own research, one third of the Protestants with whom he spoke were nationalist. Therefore, there were more nationalists in his group of learners than in the Protestant community in general. The nationalists he met tended to be middle-class, rather than working-class.

Can Irish be used to convert unionists to nationalism? It is likely that some Protestants take an interest in Irish because they are nationalists, but one cannot say that Irish can be used as a tool of conversion. Unionists interpret the language in their own way, as this quotation demonstrates:

"I would come from the unionist tradition, and I could actually use my knowledge of Irish at the moment to defend the unionist position an awful lot better than most of the unionists ... the absurdity of Ireland as a sort of Gaelic, Catholic nation and the idea that because the sea is round it that makes it a nation. The language links us with Scotland and with Wales and with Cornwall, and actually England too. England is as Celtic a nation as we are. So I would see the Irish language as linking us with the other Celtic peoples, and I think it's a blind spot, this obsession with England as an enemy. The English are the same people as we are, so it seems to me that the Irish language is something which holds the British Isles together. I mean the very word 'British' speaks to me of a Celtic language, you know, and not of English. Old Shakespeare with his England and her sister nations bound together by the triumph of

Shakespeare, 'Sasana agus a chomhnáisiúin á sníomh le chéile ag caithréim na farraige.' Tchím an fharraige ag ceangal náisiún le chéile. Cheangail an fharraige Cinn Tire agus Contae Aontroma ariamh anall, agus is áiféiseach líne a tharraingt síos eatarthu agus a rá, 'Seo Éire agus sin Albain.' Níl ansin ach amaidí. "

An bhfuil an náisiúntacht Éireannach agus an náisiúntacht Bhriotanach ag teacht salach ar a chéile? Bhí an méid seo le rá ag Ian Malcolm, iriseoir agus aontachtaí, ar an ábhar ar Raidió na Gaeltachta:

Pilib Mac Cathmhaoil: *"Ní thabharfá Éireannach ort féin?"*

Ian Malcolm: *"Is Briotanach mise, gan aon agó. Ach seo an rud a thug an Ghaeilge domhsa. Thug sé léargas úr domhsa. Thug sé smaointe úra domhsa, agus thug sé deiseanna úra domhsa. Anois mar shampla, nuair a théim ar mo laethanta saoire, is go Tír Chonaill a théimse – Gaoth Dobhair, nó Machaire Rabhartaigh, nó áiteanna mar sin. Bím go mion minic i gConamara. An bhliain seo caite, chuaigh mé go Corca Dhuibhne don chéad uair. Agus ba í an Ghaeilge a bhí do mo tharraingt isteach; bhí an Ghaeilge in ann mé a ghríosú. Anois, nílim ag 'tiontú' mar dhuine ó thaobh na polaitíochta de, ach tá saol agus intinn níos oscailte agam anois, agus tuigim an taobh eile. Is é sin an rud atá in easnamh orainn uilig ar an oileán seo; caithfidh muid tréaniarracht a dhéanamh leis an taobh eile a thuigbheáil. Agus dá mbeimis uilig in ann na daoine ar an taobh eile a thuigbheáil, sílim go mbeadh todhchaí gheal i ndán dúinn uilig agus ar an oileán seo, agus sílim go bhfuil sé tuillte againn."*

sea. I see the sea as binding nations together. The sea has always bound Kintyre and County Antrim, and for these absurd people to draw a line down there and say, 'This is Ireland and that is Scotland.' That's rubbish."

Are British and Irish national identities irreconcilable? Ian Malcolm, a journalist and unionist, commented on the subject during an interview with Raidió na Gaeltachta:

Pilib Mac Cathmhaoil: *"You would not call yourself Irish?"*

Ian Malcolm: *"I am British, without any doubt. But this is what Irish gave to me. It gave me a new insight. It gave me new ideas, and it gave me new opportunities. Now, for example, when I go on my holidays, I go to Donegal – Gweedore, or Magheraroarty, or places like that. I'm often in Connemara. Last year, I went to Corkaguiny for the first time. And it was Irish that drew me in; it was Irish that inspired me. Now, I'm not 'turning' in terms of politics, but I have a life and mind which is more open now, and I understand the other side. That is what is lacking on this island, we must make a big effort to understand the other side. And if we were able to understand people on the other side, I think that we would all have a bright future on this island, and I think we deserve this."*

Gaeilge

Mar a chonaic muid ní ba luaithe, bhí Peadar in ann ceangal a dhéanamh idir an Ghaeilge agus an Preispitéireachas. Tá Protastúnaigh eile in ann an ceangal sin a dhéanamh fosta. Sna tagairtí seo thíos, déanann beirt fhoghlaimeoirí an ceangal céanna idir an Ghaeilge agus ballraíocht san Eaglais Phreispitéireach agus in Eaglais na hÉireann:

Anglacánach: *"Sílim go bhfuil braithstint san Eaglais gurb í an Eaglais seo an Eaglais a tháinig chugainn aniar ó thús na Críostaíochta. Sílim go bhfuil ceangal an-láidir againn le hEaglais Naomh Pádraig. Tchífidh tú go dtugann cuid mhór de chléir na Eaglaise ainmneacha Gaeilge ar a gcuid páistí, cuid mhór ainmneacha cosúil le 'Pádraig' agus 'Bríd'. Ar ndóigh, is féidir go dtarlaíonn seo siocair go bhfaigheann siad a gcuid oideachais ó dheas, tá a scoil diagachta i mBaile Átha Cliath. Níor mhothaigh mise go láidir an rud Albanach seo ar chor ar bith. Ó mo thaobh féin de, níl ann ach rud a cumadh, le diúltú don Éireannachas. Níl mé ag rá nach bhfuil daoine muinteartha agam a labhraíonn faoin Albanachas agus déarfadh siadsan, 'Ó, is fuath liom damhsa Éireannach, is maith liom damhsa Albanach.' Tchítear domh féin gurb ionann an dá rud."*

Preispitéireach: *"Thoisigh mé mo cheistiú féin, 'An féidir go bhfuil baint ar bith ag an Ghaeilge lenár dtraidisiún nó leis an traidisiún Phrotastúnach?' agus shíl mé go raibh, tá a fhios agat, mise atá i mo Phreispitéireach. Is eol domh go ndearna Eaglais na hÉireann géarleanúint ar Phreispitéirigh chomh maith, agus léigh mé áit inteacht go raibh Gaeilge líofa ag ministrí Preispitéireacha, go pointe áirithe. Agus ansin tá gnás an easaontaithe, an briseadh ar shiúl atá mar chuid den traidisiún Protastúnach. Is siombail iontach láidir sin agam féin."*

We saw how Peter could relate the Irish language to Presbyterianism. There are other Protestants who can make the same connections. In the quotations below, two learners relate their interest in Irish to their membership of the Presbyterian Church and the Church of Ireland:

Anglican: *"I think there's a very strong feeling in the Church that the Church is the Church which comes through from the beginning of Christianity. I suspect we have a much stronger relationship to the Church of Saint Patrick. You can see far more, a lot of Church of Ireland clergy give their children Irish names, a lot of 'Patricks' and 'Brigids'. And of course part of it can be that Church of Ireland clergy are educated in the South, their divinity school's in Dublin. I never felt this Scottish thing very strongly at all. To me it seems to be an invention, a rejection of Irishness. I mean I do have members of my family who would talk about Scottish things and they would say, 'Oh, I can't stand Irish dancing, I like Scottish dancing.' It seems to me that they're two of the same thing."*

Presbyterian: *"I began to think, 'Has the Irish language anything to do with our tradition or the Protestant tradition?' and I thought that maybe it did, you know, being Presbyterian, realising that Presbyterians as a tradition, as a denomination, were at various times persecuted as well by the Established Church, and reading somewhere that Presbyterian ministers spoke Irish very fluently, up to a certain point, and the whole notion of dissent within Presbyterianism, of breaking away from the mould. It's a very strong symbol for me."*

Chonacthas do thriúr foghlaimeoirí go raibh ceangal idir an tsuim a bhí acu sa Ghaeilge agus an t-athbhreithniú atáthar á dhéanamh ar an fhéiniúlacht Phrotastúnach de thairbhe na 'dtrioblóidí':

"Is dóiche go bhfuil baint mhór ag an cheangal atá agam le Corrymeela leis. San obair a dhéanaim le daoine óga tuigim go bhfuil Caitlicigh iontach láidir sa rud a gcreideann siad ann, agus sa rud atá ar eolas acu, agus sa chultúr atá acu agus ina chúlra, ach cuid mhaith de na Protastúnaigh a casadh domh bhí siad iontach diúltach fána gcultúr, fána dtraidisiún. Thoisigh mé a smaointiú, 'An raibh rudaí fán Phrotastúnachas a bhí maith fosta,' tá a fhios agat. Ní thig leat bualadh le traidisiún eile mura bhfuil tú cinnte de do cheann féin. Agus thoisigh mé ag smaointiú ar bhain an Ghaeilge lenár dtraidisiún nó leis an traidisiún Phrotastúnach ... Go pearsanta, sílim nach raibh eolas ar bith riamh agam ar an traidisiún Phrotastúnach seachas, 'Bhí an bua againn oraibh i 1690 agus bíodh agaibh.' ... Ní mian liom teorannú a dhéanamh ar m'intinn agus a rá, 'Is rud Caitliceach sin agus is rud Protastúnach sin agus ní théann an bheirt le chéile.' Sílim go gceistíonn muid cuid mhór, nó cheistigh mé mé féin cuid mhór faoi cé mé agus cén dílseacht atá agam agus cad é m'fhéiniúlacht agus mo náisiúntacht?"

"Tá suim agam sa scríbhneoireacht agus bhí cuma ar an chultúr Chaitliceach go raibh sé cruthaitheach agus samhlaíoch. Bhí mé ag iarraidh a dhul chuig rang ar an scríbhneoireacht chruthaitheach agus thoisigh mé ag cur suíme sa cheol agus san fhilíocht agus bhí cuma bheo bhríomhar air le taobh na bPreispitéireach dúr Albanach, tá a fhios agat. Bhí an tsaoirse agam an pobal eile a fhiosrú fosta agus tá Sarah [a hiníon] ag foghlaim na ndamhsaí Gaelacha, agus ní thig liom dul ar ais sa bhosca beag agus a bheith i mo Phreispitéireach maith, agus teach deas agam agus rudaí deasa ann. Tá mé ag dul mé féin a chur sna háiteanna a gcasfar Caitlicigh orm d'aon turas nó san áit ar féidir le Sarah leanúint ar aghaidh ag foghlaim na ndamhsaí Gaelacha."

Indeed, three learners saw a connection between their interest in Irish and their thoughts on Protestant identity, given the soul-searching that has taken place as a result of the 'troubles':

"I suppose my involvement with Corrymeela has a lot to do with it. In a lot of my work with young people I realise that Catholics are very strong in what they believe, and what they know and what their culture is, and Protestants haven't got a clue, because they have a stereotyped image of their own culture and background and a lot of Protestants that I've come across are very negative about their culture – about their tradition. I began to think, 'What is it about Protestantism that's good as well,' you know. You can't meet another tradition unless you're secure in your own. And I began to wonder if the Irish language applied to our tradition or the Protestant tradition ... Personally I just felt that I have never known the Protestant tradition to be anything other than, 'We beat you in 1690, so screw you.' ... I don't want to be ghettoised in my mind and say, 'That's Catholic and that's Protestant and the two aren't going to mix. I think we ask a lot, or I have asked a lot of myself, 'What am I?' and 'What's my identity and my nationality?'"

"I'm interested in writing and the Catholic culture seemed so creative and imaginative. I wanted to go to creative writing classes and I got interested in music and poetry and it seems much more alive and vibrant than the dour Scottish Presbyterians, you know. I have had the freedom to explore the other community and Sarah [her daughter] is learning Irish dancing, and I can't go back to being stuck in a little box and being a good Presbyterian, having my nice home and all my nice things. I am going to deliberately put myself in places where I'll meet Catholics or where Sarah can carry on with learning Irish dancing."

Gaeilge

"Is iad na Protastúnaigh agus chan na Caitlicigh na stráinséirí sa tír seo agus bhí mé ag iarraidh fáil amach fúm féin agus ag fiafraí an bhfuil oidhreacht choiteann againn sa tír seo. Bhí mé ag iarraidh a bheith mar chuid den iomlán i dTuaisceart Éireann, idir Chaitlicigh agus Phrotastúnaigh, nó más maith leat, aontachtaithe nó náisiúnaithe. Ní thig leat a bheith rannpháirteach i saol do thíre mura bhfuil eolas agat uirthi. Tchítear domh go bhfuil barraíocht againn ón chúlra aontachtach a bhfuil leithcheal cultúrtha déanta againn orainn féin."

Sa chéad tagairt tá an cainteoir ag déanamh iarrachta an Ghaeilge a bheith mar pháirt dá chultúr. Sa dara agus sa tríú tagairt, tá an tsuim sa Ghaeilge bunaithe ar an dóigh a bhfeiceann siad an teanga mar theanga Chaitliceach a bhaineann leis an phobal eile. Tá na foghlaimeoirí uile ag iarraidh seilbh a ghlacadh ar an teanga ní amháin dóibh féin ach dá bpobal fosta.

Freastal ar Ranganna

B'eisceacht é Peadar i measc na bhfoghlaimeoirí Protastúnacha; bhí Gaeilge líofa aige. Siocair gur sa tseomra ranga amháin a fhoghlaimíonn bunús na bProtastúnach Gaeilge níl sé furasta acu feabhas a chur ar a gcuid Gaeilge. Ní bhíonn deiseanna acu comhluadar Gaeilge a bheith acu in aon suíomh seachas suíomh an ranga. Ó tharla nach gcuireann cuid de na ranganna an bhéim ar chomhrá Gaeilge, d'inis cuid de na foghlaimeoirí do Gordon nach gcleachtaíonn siad a gcuid Gaeilge ach amháin nuair a bhíonn siad sa Ghaeltacht.

Cláraíonn cuid mhaith acu le ranganna Gaeilge díreach le seans a fháil an Ghaeilge a labhairt. Go minic, ní hionann an taithí a bhíonn ag foghlaimeoirí Caitliceacha agus foghlaimeoirí Protastúnacha. Bíonn fadhbanna acu ní amháin le labhairt amach san rang faoi cibé rud atá ag cur isteach orthu, ach fosta leis an taobh sóisialta de na ranganna. Mar shampla, i gcás amháin, thug múinteoir cuireadh don rang dul chuig leach tábhairne le seans a thabhairt dóibh an Ghaeilge

"The strangers in this situation are not the Catholics but more the Protestant people, and I wanted to find out about myself and the fact that there is a common heritage in this country. I was trying to be part of the whole community in Northern Ireland, both Catholic and Protestant, or if you like, unionist and nationalist. You can't have a part in your country unless you know something about it. I do feel that too many of us from unionist backgrounds have cut off our noses to spite our faces in terms of the culture."

In the first quotation, the speaker is trying to make Irish part of his culture. In the second and third quotations, the fascination with Irish lies in the fact that it is a Catholic language, it belongs to a different community. But the learners want to appropriate the language for themselves and their own community.

Class Attendance

Peter was exceptional in terms of Protestant learners: he was fluent in Irish. Most Protestants learn Irish only in the classroom and consequently find it difficult to improve their fluency of the language. They have no opportunities to use Irish socially except in classes. Given that some classes do not emphasise conversation in Irish, some learners even told Gordon they only practise their Irish while in the Gaeltacht.

Many Protestants register for Irish classes just to get a chance to speak Irish. Often the experience of Catholic and Protestant learners differ. Protestants have problems not only with speaking out in class about what bothers them but also with the social aspect of learning Irish. For example, a teacher once invited his class to go to a bar so that they could hear Irish in an environment other than the classroom. But one Protestant was worried about what kind of people

a chluinstin taobh amuigh de shuíomh an ranga. Ach bhí imní ar Phrotastúnach amháin faoi na daoine a bheadh i dteach tábhairne a raibh Gaeilge á labhairt ann. Dúirt sé le Gordon nach rachadh sé 'áit ar bith a labhraíonn siad Gaeilge'.

Cuimhnigh go raibh Peadar in ann dul chuig na ranganna in iarthar Bhéal Feirste siocair go raibh sé i gcomhluadar fear aitheanta de chuid an Chumainn. Ní bhíonn eolas ag gnáthPhrotastúnaigh ar iarthar Bhéal Feirste nó ní bhíonn cúis acu dul ar cuairt ann de ghnáth. Mhínigh Protastúnach as Baile Nua na hArda do Gordon go mbeadh sé 'ina choimhthíoch in áit choimhthíoch' dá rachadh sé ann.

Tá roinnt Protastúnach den bharúil nach mbeadh siad ar a suaimhneas i ranganna Gaeilge i dTuaisceart Éireann agus nach mbeadh fáilte rompu iontu. Ina measc siúd tá daoine atá san arm nó sna póilíní, a cuid daoine muinteartha sin agus corrstátseirbhíseach. Bhí Peadar ábalta dul go ranganna in iarthar Bhéal Feirste toisc go raibh jab neodrach aige. Mar a chonaic muid go dtí seo is ceann de na fadhbanna is mó a bhíonn ag Protastúnaigh atá ag iarraidh an Ghaeilge a fhoghlaim agus a chleachtadh ná teacht ar ranganna i gceantair neodracha.

Foghlaim na Gaeilge i gCeantar de chuid an Lucht Oibre

Is minic a bhíonn fadhbanna breise ag Protastúnaigh atá ina gcónaí i gceantar de chuid an lucht oibre. Mar a chonaic muid thuas, rinneadh bagairt ar an fhear as ceantar Bhaile Nua na hArda a bhí ag déanamh iarrachta an Ghaeilge a fhoghlaim. Tosaíonn an pobal ag caitheamh amhrais ar dhílseacht an duine a bhíonn ag dul go ceantar náisiúnaíoch nó poblachtach go rialta. Feictear seo mar cheantar na 'namhad' agus feictear an teanga mar theanga na 'namhad'. Más mian le Protastúnaigh i gceantar mar seo a bheith oscailte faoi fhoghlaim na Gaeilge, tá orthu a ndílseacht pholaitiúil a chruthú. Bheadh siad i mbaol dá mbeadh aon amhras ar a bpobal faoina ndílseacht pholaitiúil.

would frequent a bar in which Irish was spoken. He told Gordon he 'wouldn't go anywhere they speak Irish'.

Remember that Peter was able to go to classes in west Belfast because he was in the company of someone well-known in the club. But the average Protestant knows little of west Belfast and has little occasion to go there. A Protestant from Newtownards explained to Gordon that he would be a 'stranger in a strange land' in west Belfast.

There are some Protestants who believe they would not be comfortable in most Irish classes in Northern Ireland and they would not be welcome in them. Among them are those in the army, police, their relations, and certain civil servants. One of the reasons Peter believed he could go to west Belfast was because he had a 'neutral' job. As we have seen, one of the biggest problems Protestants have with learning or practising Irish is finding an appropriate class in a neutral district.

Learning Irish in a Working-Class District

Often Protestants living in working-class districts experience extra problems. We have described already how a man from Newtownards was threatened for attempting to learn Irish. The community will question the loyalty of anyone who regularly visits a republican or nationalist district as these are seen as hostile areas and Irish is regarded as the language of the 'enemy'. If Protestants from a working-class district want to publicise their interest in Irish, they have to prove their political loyalty to their own community, as they would be in danger if their peers doubted their affiliations.

Léiríonn scéal Ian Adamson an cás go maith. Is dochtúir agus comhairleoir aontachtach é a bhfuil suim aige sa Ghaeilge agus in Albanais Uladh. Sna seascaidí bhíodh sé ag freastal ar an ollscoil agus cónaí air i Sandy Row. Ba ghnách le bean ón cheantar teacht chuige ó am go chéile leis an teach a ghlanadh. Lá dá raibh sí istigh chonaic sí an bailiúchán leabhar Gaeilge a bhí aige. Bhí eagla a craicinn uirthi nuair a chonaic sí iad, agus de réir Adamson, 'mheasfá gur leabharthaí fán ealaín dhubh a bhí iontu'. Lá arna mhárach bhí Ian amuigh ag siúl thart faoin cheantar agus mhothaigh sé go raibh daoine ag stánadh air. Mheas sé go raibh an scéal amuigh faoin bhailiúchán leabhar agus leis an fhadhb a réiteach chinn sé cuairt a thabhairt ar Smithfield Market, áit ar cheannaigh sé an pictiúr is mó de Queen Elizabeth a bhí ar díol. D'fhill sé ar an teach agus chroch sé suas an pictiúr sa pharlús. Tharraing sé siar na cuirtíní agus chuir sé an bhanríon ar taispeáint os comhair an tsaoil mhóir. Sa dóigh sin chruthaigh sé a dhílseacht don choróin. Ruaig sin amhras ar bith a bhí ar mhuintir na háite.

Ian Adamson's case illustrates this point well. He is a unionist councillor and a doctor with an interest in Irish and Ulster-Scots. In the 1960s he was at university and was living in Sandy Row. A local woman used to visit from time to time to clean the house. One day she caught sight of his Irish language book collection. According to Adamson she was so scared 'that you would think they were black magic'. The next day Ian was walking around the district and he noticed that people were staring at him. He believed that the story about his book collection was circulating, and to address the problem he went Smithfield Market, where he bought the biggest picture of Queen Elizabeth he could find. He returned home, hung the picture in his living room, pulled back his curtains, displayed the Queen to the world, thus proving his loyalty to the Crown. This removed any doubts about his loyalties from the minds of the locals.

Rinne Gordon agallamh le foghlaimeoir i gCúil Raithin i mí na Nollag, 1999. Bhí seo le rá aige faoi dhearcadh na bProtastúnach i leith na Gaeilge:

"Cé go n-amharcaim féin uirthi ar chuid mhór leibheál, tá na daoine atá ag iarraidh ísliú céime a thabhairt di ag iarraidh amharc uirthi ar dhóigh pholaitiúil. Tá mé ag iarraidh cuimhneamh an raibh duine ar bith a d'amharc uirthi ar dhóigh dhearfach, agus caithfidh mé a admháil go bhfuil mé ag streachailt nuair a smaointím air sin. I gcás amháin bhí doicheall ann roimh chárta Nollag dátheangach, tá sin cineál tragóideach, tá a fhios agat. Chuala muid sin ón tríú páirtí agus níor pléadh é. Tá aithne agam ar chuid de na daoine a bhfuil baint acu leis agus déarfainn, gan a bheith ag iarraidh iad a dhamnú gan ábhar, gur mó an dochar ná an mhaith a dhéanfadh sé an rud a phlé, tá a fhios agat. Tá sin measartha tragóideach agus brónach. Tuigim go ndearnadh polaitiú ar an teanga. Tchím an taobh sin de. Ach má dhéanann tú do mhachnamh air, seachas a bheith ag géillstean do na

Gordon interviewed a learner from Coleraine in December 1999. He had this to say about Protestant views of the Irish language:

"Whereas I would be looking at it multi-level, people who want to denigrate it look at it in a very partisan political way. I'm trying to remember if there were any who were very positive about it and I must admit I struggle when I think of that. In one case there was hostility to a Christmas card in Irish and English which is kind of tragic, you know. We heard it through a third party, and it wasn't talked through. And knowing some of the people concerned, without totally prejudging, it would have most likely been more harmful than positive to talk it through, you know. That's pretty tragic and sad. I can appreciate where the language becomes politicised and maybe what we've gone through. I can see some angles of that. But if you don't stop thinking about it with that gut reaction, it's pretty straightforward that the language is not a political tool and it's been a cultural resource long before you got into some of the labels that were applied to it today."

seanchlaontaí dúchais, tá sé soiléir nach uirlis pholaitiúil an teanga agus gurbh uirlis chultúrtha í i bhfad sular cuireadh na lipéidí uirthi atá uirthi inniu."

Bhí seo le rá ag Ian Malcolm fán ábhar sa bhliain 2000:

"Sa ghnáthshaol, déarfainn go bhfuil sé de dhualgas orm bheith go réasúnta cúramach. Is aontachtaí mise, mar is eol do chách, agus chomh maith leis sin tá cónaí orm i gceantar dílseach go leor. Níl a fhios ag chuile dhuine i mo cheantarsa go bhfuil an Ghaeilge agamsa de thairbhe go bhfuil a fhios agamsa go mbeinnse thíos leis dá mbeadh an t-eolas sin acu. Is cuimhin liom trí nó ceithre bliana ó shin, nuair a bhí géarchéim Dhroim Crí ag dul ar aghaidh. Ní bhainim an teach amach san oíche go dtí a trí nó a ceathair a chlog de thairbhe go n-oibrím seal na hoíche. Agus an oíche áirithe seo, bhí mé ag dul isteach i seomra na ríomhairí le rud inteacht a dhéanamh. Ach d'amharc mé amach frid an fhuinneog agus chonaic mé seisear leaid mór ag teacht i mo threo. Agus dúirt mé liom féin, 'Ó, Dia ár sábháil. Chonaic siad mé ar TG4 nó rud mar sin.' Agus an rud a tharla, chuir siad bac bóthair os comhair mo thí féin. Ní raibh siad do mo lorgsa, buíochas le Dia. Cuid den LVF a bhí ann, agus chuir sé sin imní orm mar a thuigfeá dár ndóigh. Ach dá thairbhe sin, tá mé cúramach nach bhfuil a fhios ag chuile dhuine go bhfuil Gaeilge agamsa."

Feictear mar sin go mbíonn ar roinnt Protastúnach a ndílseacht pholaitiúil aontachtach a fhógairt os ard ina bpobal féin agus iad ag foghlaim Gaeilge. Níl sé sin ag teacht lena n-íompar sa rang Gaeilge, áit a mbraitheann siad nach féidir leo a dtuairimí polaitiúla a nochtadh. Is doiligh freastal ar an dá thrá.

Ian Malcolm had this to say about the subject in the year 2000:

"In everyday life, I'd say I have to be very careful. I am a unionist, as everyone knows, and as well as that I live in an area that's loyalist enough. Not everyone in my district knows that I have Irish because I know that I would suffer if they did. I remember three or four years ago, during the Drumcree crisis. I don't reach the house until three or four in the morning because I work a night shift. On this particular night, I was going into the computer room to do something. And I looked through the window and I saw six big lads coming in my direction. And I said to myself, 'Oh, God save me. They saw me on TG4 or something.' And then they set up a roadblock opposite my house. They were not looking for me, thank God. They were part of the LVF, and that worried me, as you would certainly understand. And because of that, I am careful to ensure that not everyone knows I speak Irish."

Some Protestant learners may have to stress their unionism in their own community, but underplay their political beliefs in Irish language circles. They find it difficult to cater for both sides.

Gaeilge

Foghlaim na Gaeilge i gCeantair Mheánaicmeacha

Tá cuid mhór buntáistí ag foghlaimeoirí meánaicmeacha Protastúnacha thar fhoghlaimeoirí ón lucht oibre. Bíonn deis ag an chéad dream dúshlán na réamhbhraithstintí faoin teanga a thabhairt trí dhul ar saoire chun na Gaeltachta, éisteacht le ceol Gaelach, nó stair agus litríocht na Gaeilge a léamh. Fágann an teanga lorg ar a saol. Chomh maith leis sin, is gnách go mbíonn níos mó taithí ag an mheánaicme Phrotastúnach ar Phoblacht na hÉireann agus ar an mheánaicme Chaitliceach agus, dá thairbhe sin, b'fhéidir nach bhfuil an leibhéal céanna seicteachais agus amhrais i gceist agus a bheadh leis an lucht oibre. As siocair go mbíonn an teagmháil seo ann idir an dá phobal, ní ghoilleann sé an oiread sin ar Phrotastúnaigh mheánaicmeacha smaoineamh ar an Ghaeilge mar 'theanga Chaitliceach' nó braitheann siad in amanna go bhfuil níos mó i gcoitinne acu le Caitlicigh mheánaicmeacha ná leis an lucht oibre Protastúnach.

Tábhacht na Gaeltachta

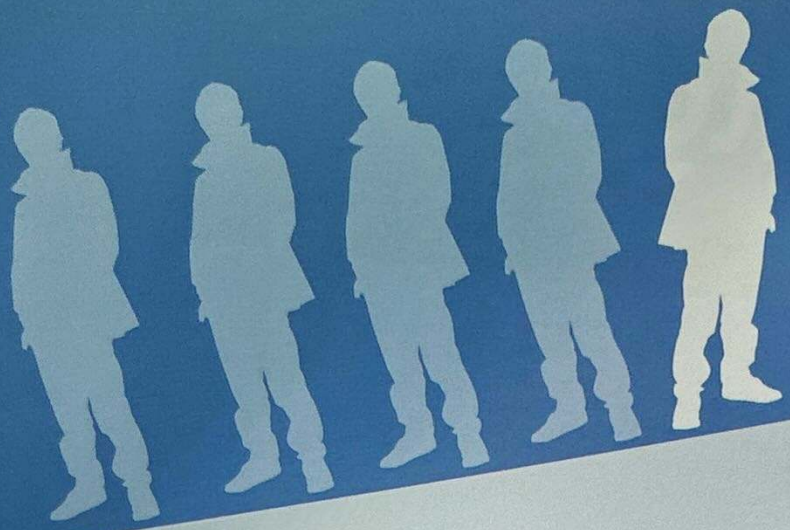
Bíonn tábhacht ar leith ag an Ghaeltacht ó thaobh na bhfoghlaimeoirí Protastúnacha de. B'fhearr le cuid acu dul chuig scoileanna samhraidh sa Ghaeltacht ná freastal ar ranganna Gaeilge i gceantair náisiúnaíocha i dTuaisceart Éireann. Bíonn siad den bharúil go mbeidh bá ag 'muintir an Deiscirt' leo siocair go measann siad nach mbeadh an oiread sin poblachtach ina measc. Tá roinnt acu ar fearr leo staidéar ollscoile a dhéanamh ar an Ghaeilge ó dheas toisc nach bhfuil siad ar a gcompord le saol na Gaeilge i dTuaisceart Éireann.

Learning Irish in Middle-Class Districts

Middle-class Protestant learners of Irish have many advantages over working-class ones. Among these is their ability to challenge common preconceptions about the Irish language. When they explore the Gaeltacht on holiday, listen to Irish music, and read history and literature, they integrate the Irish language into their lives. Many middle-class Protestants are less sectarian than their working-class counterparts, and have more experience of the Catholic community and the Republic of Ireland. Therefore, it does not bother them too much to think of Irish as a 'Catholic language' as they feel at times they have more in common with middle-class Catholics than working-class Protestants.

The Importance of the Gaeltacht

The Gaeltacht is of special importance to Protestant learners. Some would prefer to go to summer colleges in the Gaeltacht than attend classes in nationalist districts of Northern Ireland. They believe that Southerners will be more sympathetic to them because they will be less republican in outlook. There are those who would prefer studying Irish in the South at university level because they are not comfortable with the Irish language scene in Northern Ireland.



Sa sliocht seo a leanas déanann foghlaimeoir as Ionad Ban Bhóthar na Seanchille cur síos ar thuras chun na Gaeltachta i dTír Chonaill:

"Measaim nár bhraith cuid mhaith de na mná a bhí linn go mbeadh Dún na nGall chomh socair is a bhí, tá a fhios agat. Fuair muid buaileadh bos mór agus muidinne as Bóthar na Seanchille, ó mhuintir na Gaeltachta, tá a fhios agat. Ní raibh siad ag dúil leis na daoine a bheith chomh cairdiúil is a bhí nó leis an mhéid Gaeilge a bhí á labhairt ach an oiread ... Maidir leis an Ghaeilge a fhoghlaim sna ranganna, bhuel bheifeá ag foghlaim agus chríochnódh an rang agus ba sin é, agus an t-aon am a d'amharc tú ar an Ghaeilge ná nuair a bheifeá ag déanamh do chuid obair baile, ach an deireadh seachtaine sin bhí muid ag toiseacht a dhéanamh athrá agus thoisigh rudaí a theacht chugainn go nádúrtha, agus mhothaigh mé rud beag aisteach, nó dúirt mé liom féin, 'Cad é atá muid a dhéanamh anseo? Tá muid inár suí anseo i dtír eile agus ag labhairt teanga eile.' Bhí sin iontach aisteach – mhothaigh sé saoithiúil."

Dúirt foghlaimeoir eile ó Bhóthar na Seanchille an méid seo:

"Cibé uair a théim trasna na teorann, fágaim deireadh i mo dhiaidh – ar dhóigh inteacht – tá a fhios agat, mothaíonn tú an scamall seo ag éirí, mar a bheifeá i ndiaidh ualach a bhaint díot, nó rud inteacht, agus tá suaimhneas ann agus níl na fadhbanna céanna ag na daoine.

Tuairimí Caitliceacha faoi Fhoghlaimeoirí Protastúnacha

Tá réimse leathan barúlacha i measc an phobail Chaitlicigh maidir le foghlaimeoirí Gaeilge Protastúnacha. Bíonn idir doicheall agus fáilte chroíúil ann don Phrotastúnach. Léiríonn cás Jason gur féidir le saol na Gaeilge a bheith cúng agus gur minic béim ann ar an chomúnachas Caitliceach. Is léir ón taithí a bhí ag Jason go mbíodh drochamhras ar chuid de phobal na Gaeilge faoi strainséirí. Cé gur minic a bíonn Protastúnaigh in ann teacht ar chomhréiteach in teanga féin, bíonn fadhbanna ag cuid acu maidir le hucht labhartha na teanga. Faigheann cuid de na

In the next extract, a learner from the Shankill Women's Centre describes a trip to the Donegal Gaeltacht:

"I think a lot of women that we went with, they never expected Donegal to be quite so relaxed as what it was, you know. We got an enormous applause, like, for being from the Shankill, I think amongst the Gaeltacht, you know. They didn't expect the friendliness of the people and just how much Irish was being spoken, as well ... You sort of were learning it when you were in class and you came out and that was it, and the only time you looked at it was when you were thinking of homework, but that weekend we were sort of starting to repeat ourselves and it all came sort of naturally to us, and I felt a wee bit strange 'cos we were sort of going 'What are we doing here? We're actually sitting as if we're in a different country and we're talking in a different language.' That was quite strange – it felt funny."

Another learner from the Shankill Road said the following:

"Whenever you go over the border, you feel this cloud lifting, you've shed this burden or something, you know, and it's so relaxed and people don't have the same problems."

Catholic Opinions on Protestant Learners

There is a wide variety of opinions within the Catholic community about Protestant learners of Irish: the Protestant experiences range from the negative to the warm welcome. Jason's case demonstrates that Irish speakers can be narrow-minded and emphasise Catholic communalism. It is obvious from Jason's experience that some Irish speakers were suspicious of strangers. Although Protestants can often develop favourable attitudes towards Irish, some still have problems with speakers of the language. Some

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Gaeilge

Protastúnaigh a fhoghlaimíonn Gaeilge cúinne beag dóibh féin i saol na Gaeilge ach tá cuid eile a bhíonn i gcónaí ar an taobh amuigh.

Tá cuid den phobal Caitliceach den dearcadh gur féidir leis an teanga daoine a aontú agus tá sé de nós acu fáilte a chur roimh dhuine ar bith a dhéanann iarracht í a fhoghlaim. Cé go mbíonn fadhbanna ag roinnt Protastúnach le saol na Gaeilge, tá roinnt eile a mhothaíonn sábháilte go leor i gcomhluadar lucht na Gaeilge. Síleann cuid acu gur droichead thar an amhras seicteach í an Ghaeilge, agus go gcuireann Caitlicigh níos mó muiníne i bProtastúnaigh a labhraíonn Gaeilge.

Tá iarracht mhór á déanamh ag cuid de lucht labhartha Caitliceach na Gaeilge an teanga a chur i láthair an phobail Phrotastúnaigh. Tá dhá fhiontar ar leith a ndéanfaidh muid trácht orthu anseo mar shampla de seo. Tosaíodh an dá thionscnamh i ndiaidh shos cogaidh 1994.

Fiontar 1: Fiontar Ealaíon na bPáistí

Tá fiontar i nDoire ar a dtugtar Fiontar Ealaíon na bPáistí. Mar chuid den fhiontar seo, tugtar páistí Caitliceacha agus Protastúnacha le chéile. Suíonn siad taobh le taobh agus insíonn dhá scéalaí scéal dátheangach dóibh. Ansin oibríonn na páistí le chéile ar ábhar ealaíne bunaithe ar théamaí an scéil seo. Cuirtear an obair uile le chéile agus cuirtear ar taispeáint ansin í. Tá sult á bhaint ag na páistí as an fhiontar seo a chuireann an teanga chun tosaigh ar dhóigh dhearfach shuimiúil.

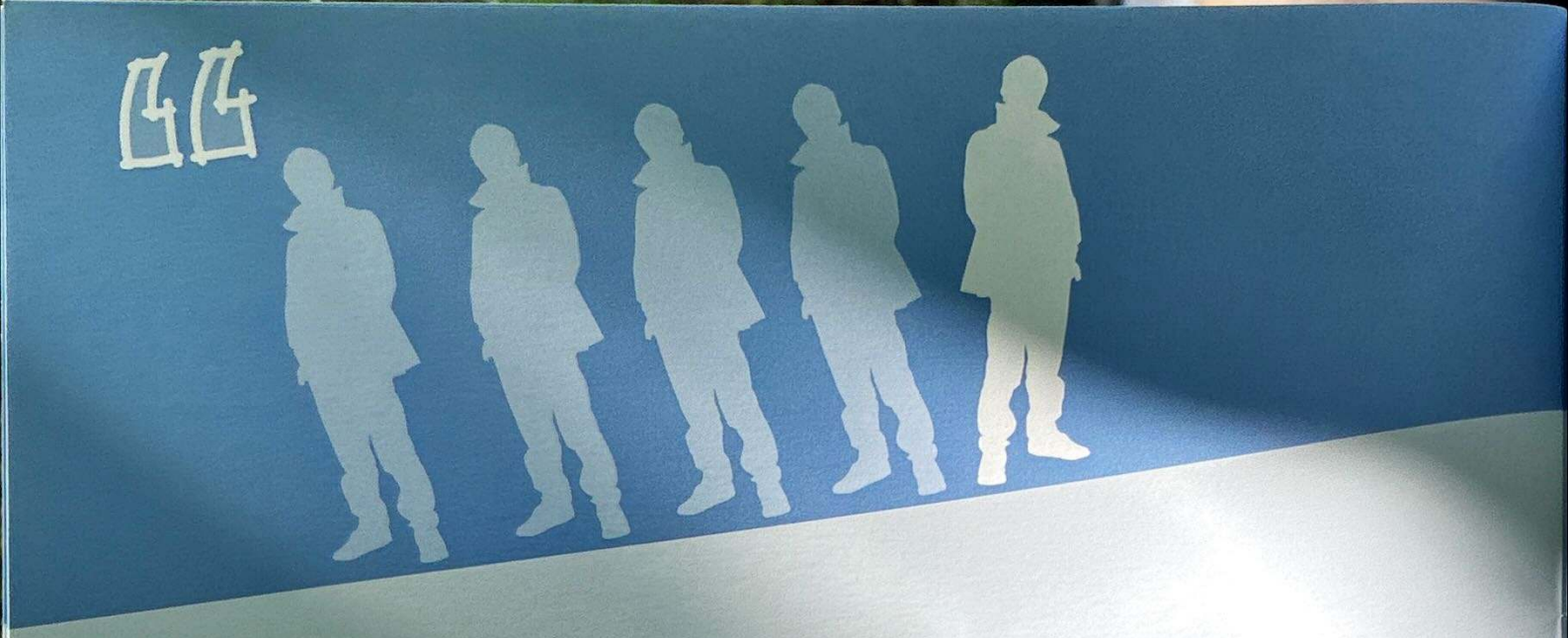
Protestant learners find a niche for themselves in the Irish language scene but there are others who remain on the outside.

Some Catholics believe that the language can unite people and therefore will welcome anyone wishing to learn Irish. Although some Protestants experience difficulties with Irish speakers, others feel comfortable in their company. Some of them believe that their interest in Irish overcomes sectarian boundaries, and encourages Catholics to trust them more.

Some Catholic Irish speakers are making real efforts to bring the Irish language to the Protestant community. Two projects which began after the ceasefires in 1994 exemplify this trend.

Project 1: The Children's Art Project

In Derry, the Children's Art Project brings together Catholic and Protestant schoolchildren in a neutral environment. The children are seated together, Catholic next to Protestant, and are introduced to two storytellers. They listen to stories in both Irish and English, and produce joint artworks based upon the themes in the stories. The works are mixed together and are put on display. The children have responded enthusiastically to the programme, which presents the Irish language to them in a positive light.



Fiontar 2: Cúrsa Ghael-Linn

Cuireann an eagraíocht cúrsa cultúrtha ar fáil do scoileanna ina dtugtar blaiseadh den Ghaeilge agus den chultúr Gaelach dóibh. Tairgtear an cúrsa seo do na scoileanna stáit agus tá sé dírithe ar dhaltaí na séú bliana. Mar chuid den chúrsa tugann aoiléachtóir caint ar ghnéithe éagsúla den teanga: logainmneacha, sloinnte, an tionchar atá ag an Ghaeilge ar an Bhéarla in Éirinn srl. Bíonn ranganna gairide Gaeilge mar chuid den chúrsa fosta. Maireann an cúrsa idir ocht agus deich seachtain agus glacann tuairim is 150 dalta as gach cearn de Thuaisceart Éireann páirt ann gach bliain. Tá aischothú dearfach faighte ó na daltaí ar an scéim go dtí seo: chinn beirt acu Gaeilge a dhéanamh ar an ollscoil, fiú. Tá Gael-Linn ag forbairt an chúrsa seo do dhaoine fásta.

Project 2: The Gael-Linn Course

Children in state grammar schools are given a short course in Irish language and culture. The course is offered to sixth-form students during their free periods. A guest lecturer delivers a talk on an aspect of the Irish language, such as placenames, surnames, and the influence of Irish on the English language in Ireland. This is followed by a short lesson in Irish. The course runs for eight to ten weeks and each year approximately 150 pupils participate, from all over Northern Ireland. The students responded enthusiastically to the courses, and two even decided to study Irish at university level. Gael-Linn is adapting the course for adults.

Défhiús

Is léir faoin am seo go bhfuil cuid mhaith de na Protastúnaigh atá ag foghlaim Gaeilge défhiúsach faoin teanga. Agus iad ag foghlaim na Gaeilge braitheann siad go bhfuil siad ag foghlaim faoina gcultúr féin, ach san am céanna gur cultúr coimhthíoch é. Tá roinnt Protastúnach nach bhfuil in ann ionannú a dhéanamh leis an Ghaeilge siocair nach bhfuil tacaíocht le fáil acu ina bpobal féin:

"Tá sé saoithiúil, nó deir cuid amháin díom, 'Bhuel, tá tú anseo agus tá tú i do chónaí san áit seo agus ba cheart gur cuid díot an Ghaeilge,' ach san am céanna ní bhaineann sí le mo chúlra, agus mar sin is rud inteacht í atá sa bhreis ar mo chúlra féin ... Tá sé chóir a bheith cosúil le bheith ag foghlaim teanga choimhthíoch, sin an rud a bhfuil sé cosúil leis. Ba mhaith liom braithstint gur liom féin an cultúr Éireannach. Ba mhaith liom mo chuid féin a dhéanamh de – ach ní fheicim í i gcúlra mo theaghlaigh agus is fadhb sin

Ambivalence

The reader will notice that many of the Protestant learners we have described so far held ambivalent feelings about the Irish language. As they learn Irish they feel they are learning their own culture, but simultaneously looking at another one. Some Protestant learners have difficulty in identifying with the Irish language because their interest receives little support in their own community:

"I find it strange, because a part of me says, 'Well you're here and you live in this land and it should be part of you,' but in a sense at the same token, my background isn't, and therefore it nearly feels that it would always be an 'add on' ... It's nearly like learning a foreign language, it's nearly like that, yeah. I would like to feel that I own an Irish culture. I would like to establish it as part of my - but I don't see it in my family background and therefore it's difficult

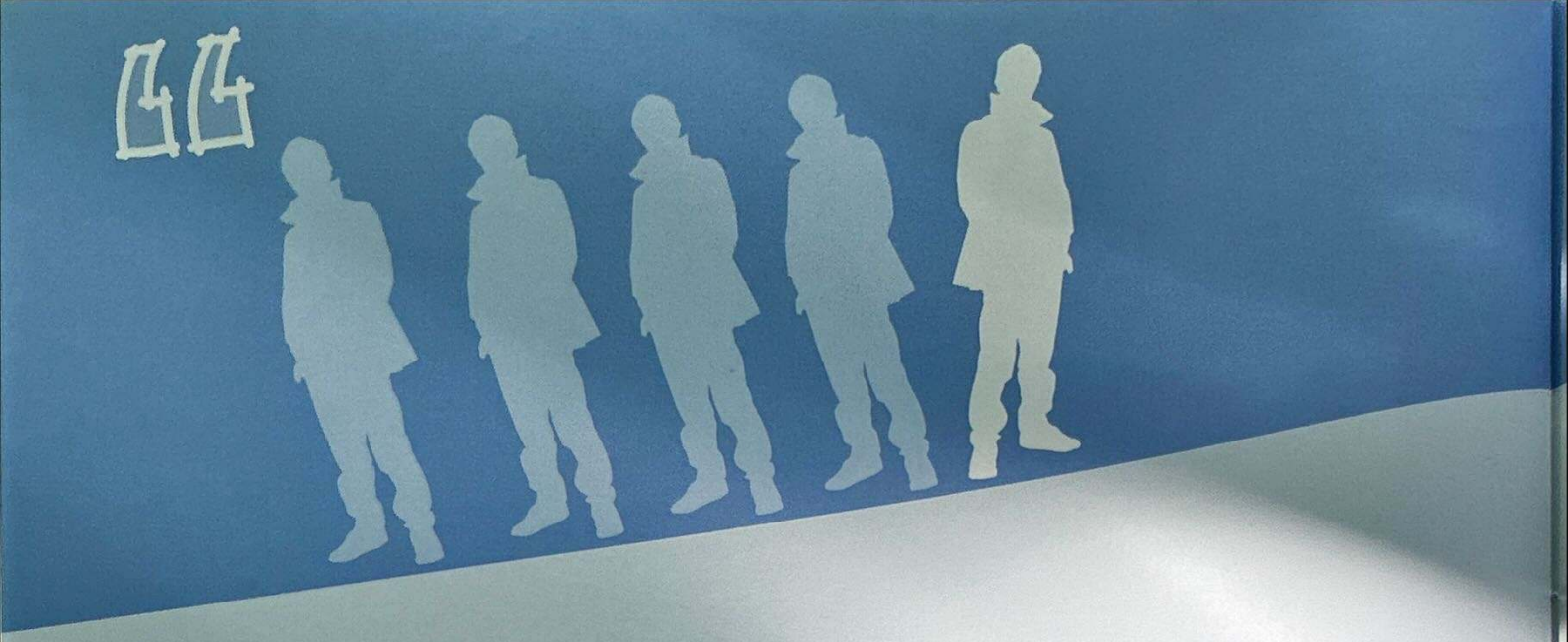
Gaeilge

... I mo chiorcal féin, sa teaghlach, idir chairde agus a leithéid, ní bheadh siad 'mo spreagadh nó ní bheadh tuigbheáil iomlán acu uirthi; mar sin de, níl mé ag dul ar ais chuig rud inteacht a bhaineann le mo dhúchas féin. Ní mian liom a bheith cúng, nó bac a chur le cairdeas. Ba dheas liom sin ach siocair an áit a bhfuil cónaí orm, agus an obair a dhéanaim, níl na deiseanna ar fáil agam i ndáirire. Sin mura mbrúnn an rang [Gaeilge] meascán agus leathnú, agus athrú. Tá athrú déanta aige sa chiall sin. Cé acu a leanann sé ar aghaidh, sílim go nglacfaidh sé cinneadh comhfhiosach ó mo thaobhsa de agus b'fhéidir go mbeadh sin doiligh san fhadtéarma. Níl a fhios agam."

Le gur féidir le foghlaimeoirí ionannú leis an teanga, caithfidh siad foinsí eolais a bheith acu. Níl an cainteoir sa téacs thuas ach i ndiaidh tosú ar an Ghaeilge a fhoghlaim. Tá sí ag streachailt le ceangal a dhéanamh idir í féin agus an teanga, ach braitheann sí nach cuid dá cúlra í. Nuair a chríochnaigh Gordon an t-agallamh léi, mhínigh sé di go raibh an Tiomna Nua aistrithe go Gaeilge ag Protastúnach agus bhí sí an-tógtha leis an eolas sin. Ní raibh de bhuairt uirthi ach nár inis duine éigin seo di blianta ó shin.

... In my own circle of friends and family and stuff, it wouldn't be really encouraged, or they wouldn't appreciate it fully, so it's not something that I'm actually going back to, what I feel to be my roots or something. I wouldn't want to be narrow, I mean, exclude friendships [with Catholics/Irish speakers] across the board, or whatever, you know. I'd quite like that, it's just circumstances, and where I live, and everything, and work. It just reinforces the circle that I'm in, and there isn't the opportunities, really. Unless the [Irish] class, the likes of the class forces a mix and a broadening, and a changing over, it's forced a change in that sense. Whether it continues, I think it would need to be a conscious effort on my part which might be difficult on a long term basis. I don't know."

The degree to which learners can identify with Irish sometimes depends upon the knowledge that is available to them. The speaker in the above quotation had just begun to learn Irish. She struggles to identify with the Irish language, but feels she cannot as it is not part of her background. When Gordon had finished interviewing this learner, he attempted to demonstrate to her that there was a tradition of Protestant Irish speakers. He did this by showing her a Protestant translation of the New Testament into Irish, whereupon she became tremendously excited, exclaiming, 'Why did no-one show me this before? Why did no-one tell me about this?'



Tá Protastúnaigh eile ann a shíleann go bhfuil an ceart acu féin nuair a deir siad gur leo an teanga agus go bhfuil na daoine a shéanann sin ina bpobal féin contráilte. Éiríonn siad soiscéalach faoin teanga, fiú. Feictear dóibh go dtiocfaí an teanga a úsáid le haontachtaithe a dhéanamh níos liobrálaí ina ndearcadh ar chúrsaí cultúrtha agus polaitiúla:

"Bheadh sé deas dá nglacfadh Protastúnaigh leis gur cuid den tír seo muid. Chónaigh muid anseo i rith ár saoil, agus téann ár dteaghlaigh siar na céadta bliain. Is linne an teanga an oiread leo féin – is páirt dár bhféiniúlacht í, mar atá i gcás duine a bhfuil creideamh eile aige. Bhí an teanga ann sular éirigh idir Protastúnaigh agus Caitlicigh. Sílim dá bhfaighfeadh Protastúnaigh eolas ar a n-oidhreacht chultúrtha go rachadh sin chun sochair don tír seo agus don chaidreamh pobail ... Tá fíoroidhreacht chultúrtha caillte orthu, tá an amaidí seo de bheith ag bualadh an druma Lambeg ar an dara lá déag éadomhain. Tá rud inteacht i bhfad níos saibhre ná sin acu. Bhí mé ag iarraidh a theacht air sin mé féin, chomh maith le bheith ag foghlaim na Gaeilge ... Ba mhaith liom go ndéanfaí iarracht inteacht le heolas a scaipeadh i measc an phobail Phrotastúnaigh ar an chultúr seo atá ina oidhreacht choiteann ag gach duine ar an oileán seo, seachas a bheith i gcónaí ag diúltú do gach rud nach bhfuil ag caitheamh 'sash' oráisteach nó corcra, agus sin go díreach an áit a bhfuil muid anois."

Íomhá Phoiblí na Gaeilge

Dá nglacfaí leis gur le gach duine an teanga, agus go ndéanfaí fíorú ar an phrionsabal sin, ní bheifí ag déanamh iontais de Phrotastúnaigh atá ag foghlaim na Gaeilge. Ach síltear go bhfuil foghlaimeoirí Protastúnacha neamhchoitianta, agus is minic a tharraingíonn sin súil na meán orthu. Corruair, measann na Protastúnaigh seo go bhfuil siad ceaptha i zú Gaelach, agus corruair braitheann siad go bhfuiltear á n-úsáid i bhfeachtais Ghaeilge nach bhfuil baint phearsanta acu leo. Sa tagairt seo thíos tugann bean as Ionad Ban na Seanchille, a raibh rang ann idir 1993 agus 1999, a barúil ar an ábhar:

Other Protestants are convinced they are right when they claim the language for themselves and believe that other Protestants who dislike the Irish language are wrong. They even become evangelical in outlook. They believe that the Irish language could be used to make unionists more liberal in their cultural and political outlook:

"It would be nice to see Protestants accepting that we're part of this country. We've lived here all our lives, and our families date back centuries. Like, this language is as much ours, as much a part of our identity, as it is of somebody of a different religion. This language was here before any of this conflict between Protestant and Catholic. I think that's something that would do an awful lot for the advance of this country and the advance of community relations, if Protestants became more aware of the cultural heritage that they share with their Catholic neighbours ... And they lack a real cultural heritage, this nonsense of beating Lambeg drums on the 'Twelfth', really, it's a bit shallow. They've got something a lot more rich than that. I was trying to tap into that on my own as well, learning Irish ... I would like to see some kind of attempt to raise the awareness among the Protestant people of the cultural awareness that they share with everybody on this island, instead of saying 'no' to everything that doesn't wear an orange and purple sash, which is really what it has become.'"

The Public Image of Irish

If it were commonly accepted that Irish was for everyone, and this principle became a reality, no-one would remark upon Protestant learners of Irish. Yet they are considered to be unusual, and are often subject to media attention. They sometimes think they are trapped in a kind of Gaelic 'zoo', and occasionally feel they are used in Irish language campaigns which have little personal relevance for them. In the following quotation, a learner from the Shankill Women's Centre, which ran Irish classes from 1993 to 1999, gives her opinion on the subject:

Gaeilge

GMc: *"Cad é a shíleann tú den phoiblíocht uilig a fuair an rang?"*

Foghlaimeoir: *"Sílim go ndeachaigh siad rófhada leis. Sílim gur sin an fáth nár lean mé do na ranganna nó ba é an deireadh a bhí air gach uair dár fhreagair mé an guthán ní raibh ann ach, 'Gaeilge, Gaeilge, Gaeilge, Gaeilge, Ionad Ban na Seanchille, Ionad Ban na Seanchille.' Bhí clár ar an teilifís faoi cúpla seachtain ó shin – an BBC – 'Here and Now' – tháinig siadsan anseo fosta agus bheir siad orainn. Cuireann sin brú ar dhuine. Éiríonn tú tógtha, nó, tá a fhios agat go ndéanann muid rudaí mos tábhachtaí ná an rang Gaeilge – reáchtálaíonn muid crèche, mar shampla."*

Nuair a bhíonn an Ghaeilge á teagasc in áit cosúil le hIonad Ban na Seanchille, is mian le 'lucht na comhoidhreachta' scéal mór a dhéanamh den ghrúpa le taispeáint go bhfuil dul chun cinn á dhéanamh acu. De thairbhe nach rud coitianta é an Ghaeilge a bheith á foghlaim ag Protastúnaigh, bíonn ráchairt ag lucht na meán ar na Protastúnaigh 'Ghaelacha'. Ní amháin go bhfuil siad ag fiorú fhís na comhoidhreachta, síltear dá bharr sin gur daoine níos liobrálaí iad. Cuirtear os comhair an phobail iad mar eiseamláir chultúrtha nó pholaitiúla don phobal Protastúnach uile. Is ualach trom ag foghlaimeoirí Protastúnacha an tuairim seo, nó ní fheictear do chuid mhór acu gur ceannródaithe iad don Nua-Phrotastúnachas seo. Tugann an phoiblíocht uile eolas dá bpobal ar na ranganna agus tugann sé deis do dhaoine atá i gcoinne na Gaeilge fealltóireacht chultúrtha a chur ina leith. Mar shampla, tháinig deireadh leis na ranganna in Ionad Ban na Seanchille siocair go raibh daoine ag rá go raibh siad ag tarraingt droch-chlú ar an áit agus go raibh eagla ar dhaoine roimh ionsaí ó dhílseoirí. Bíonn sé i gcónaí i bhfad níos éifeachtaí obair thraspobail a dhéanamh i nGaeilge go suaimhneach, ar shiúl ón spotsolas.

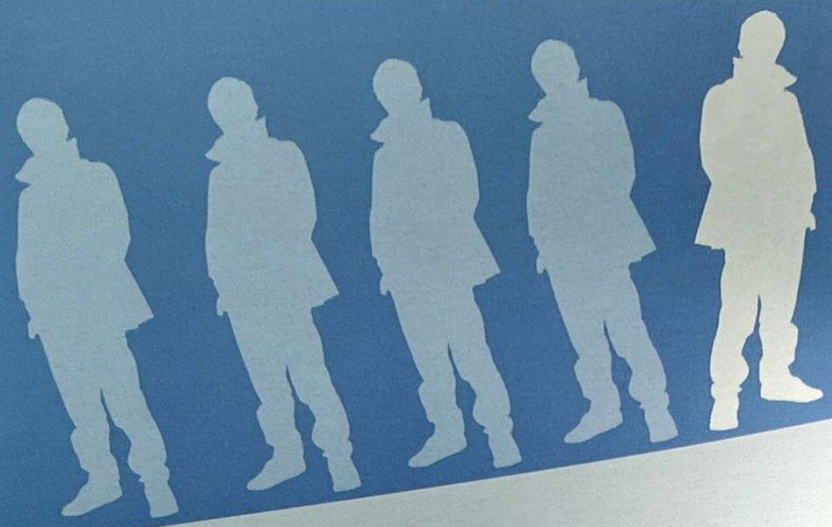
Is é an míbhuntáiste atá leis an chlaonadh nadúrtha seo ag foghlaimeoirí Protastúnacha gan poiblíocht a chuartú ná go bhfuil siad ag tacú le híomhá phoiblí na Gaeilge mar theanga Chaitliceach, náisiúnaíoch nó phoblachtach.

GMc: *"What do you think about all the publicity the Irish class got?"*

Learner: *"I think they went a bit too far with it. I think that's another thing that actually put me off even continuing to learn it because it just got that every time you were answering the phone it was, 'Irish, Irish, Irish, Irish, Irish, Shankill Women's Centre, Shankill Women's Centre.' There was one on TV the other week – the BBC – 'Here and Now' - they came and nabbed us for that too. It was very flipping pressing on you. It gets a bit annoying. I mean we do much more important things here than the Irish class, like run a crèche, for example."*

When groups such as that within the Shankill Women's Centre are founded, those involved in the 'common heritage industry' are anxious to publicise them, in order to demonstrate progress with their own work. These Gaelic Protestants are invited to speak to the media, not only because they are exceptional, but also because they are believed to be more liberal – good cultural and political examples for their co-religionists to follow. This presumption weighs heavily upon them, as many never imagined themselves as trailblazers of a new Protestantism. Such publicity only serves to inform hostile elements of these Protestant 'traitors'. For example, the classes in the Shankill Women's Centre ended because some users complained that the publicity was giving the centre a bad name and they feared loyalist reprisals. It is better to carry out cross-community work in Irish on the quiet, for the spotlight can be far too bright.

But this approach, as well as the natural reticence of Protestant Irish speakers to publicise themselves, ensures that the public image of the Irish language is one of a Catholic, nationalist and even republican language.



Conclúid

Is léir go bhfuil an cheist seo maidir le Protastúnaigh agus an Ghaeilge i dTuaisceart Éireann níos casta ná mar a thuigtear go minic. Is léir fosta go bhfuil níos mó ná aon fhreagra amháin ar an cheist, 'Cé leis an Ghaeilge?'

Is dócha gur an bharúil is leitheadaí i measc phobal Thuaisceart Éireann nó gur leis an phobal Caitliceach nó náisiúnaíoch amháin an Ghaeilge. Tá Protastúnaigh ann a shíleann nach bhfuil baint nó páirt acu féin nó ag a bpobal leis an teanga. Ach níl ansin ach cuid den scéal. Tá Protastúnaigh eile ann atá neodrach nó ar nós cuma liom faoin teanga agus tá cuid eile arís ar féidir leo cruthú dóibh féin gur 'leo' an teanga trí cheangal a dhéanamh idir an Ghaeilge agus a dteaghlach, a gceantair, logainmneacha, a gcuid polaitíochta, nó stair an Phrotastúnachais i gCúige Uladh. Tá tuilleadh arís a théann i dtreo na teanga siocair gur den phobal eile í agus go gcuireann sin cuma choimthíoch, eachtrannach agus tharraingteach fiú uirthi.

Is beag cainteoir Gaeilge a déarfadh gur leis an phobal Caitliceach náisiúnaíoch amháin an Ghaeilge agus is gnáth go mbíonn fáilte roimh an fhoghlaimeoir Protastúnach i measc phobal na Gaeilge. Bíonn fearadh na fáilte ann cionnas go bhfeictear go minic do Chaitlicigh gur pobal cairdiúil iad. Ach corruair buaileann foghlaimeoirí Protastúnacha le daoine a bhíonn amhrasach fúthu nó na cúiseanna ar fhoghlaim siad Gaeilge.

Conclusion

It is clear that the issue of Protestants and the Irish language in Northern Ireland is more complicated than is often imagined. It is also apparent that there is more than one answer to the question 'Who owns Irish?'

It is likely that most people in Northern Ireland believe that Irish belongs to the Catholic or nationalist population. There are Protestants who believe that Irish has absolutely nothing to do with them or their community. But this is only part of the story. There are other Protestants who are neutral or indifferent about the language and there are even those who can prove to themselves that the language is 'theirs' through a variety of means – through their families, their home districts, placenames, their political beliefs, or the history of Protestantism in Ulster. There are also those who take an interest in Irish because they believe it belongs to the other community, which makes the language appear strange, exotic and attractive to them.

There are few Irish speakers who would say that Irish belongs only to the Catholic nationalist community and the Protestant learner is usually welcomed in Irish language circles. This welcome can be especially warm as Catholics tend to regard themselves as friendly. Protestant learners have, however, occasionally met with people who are suspicious of both them and their motives for learning the language.

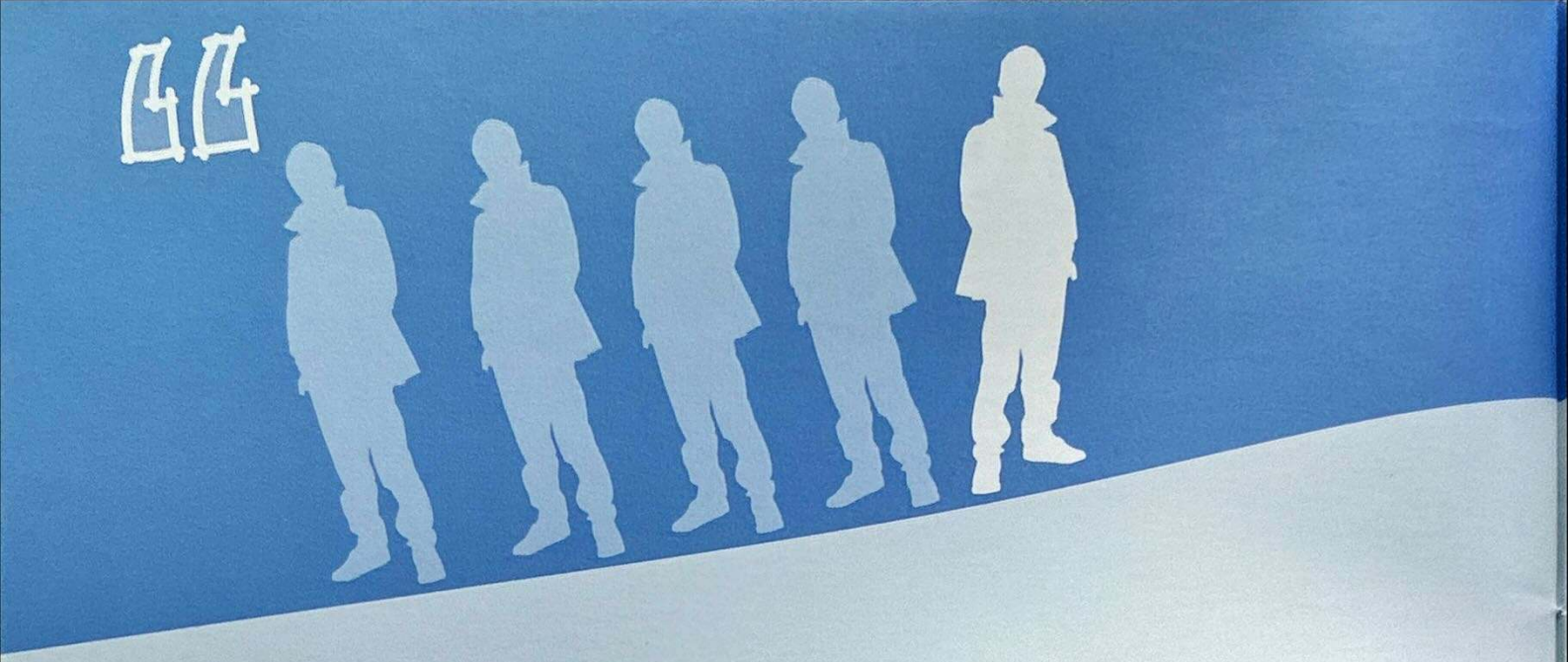
Gaeilge

Bíonn leisc ar fhoghlaimeoirí Protastúnacha a mbarúlacha ar leith faoin chreideamh nó faoin pholaitíocht a nochtadh i gciorcail Ghaeilge mar go mbraitheann siad go bhfuil siad, san aon am amháin, ag cur eolais ar chultúr coimhthíoch agus ag fiosrú a gcultúir féin. Bíonn leisc orthu fosta aon cháineadh a dhéanamh ar phobal na Gaeilge ó tharla go mbraitheann siad gurb aíonna agus cuairteoirí iad féin ina measc. Feictear fosta nach mian le Protastúnaigh aird na meán a tharraingt orthu agus mar sin de ní bhréagnaíonn siad an íomhá Chaitliceach náisiúnaíoch a bhíonn ag an teanga.

Ach tá scéal na bhfhoglaimeoirí Protastúnacha ag feabhsú ó tháinig an próiseas síochána agus níl an bhuairt chéanna orthu freastal ar ranganna nó imeachtaí Gaeilge i gceantair náisiúnaíocha nó poblachtacha. Bíonn plé níos oscailte anois ar cheisteanna féiniúlachta agus cultúir, agus tá an éagsúlacht chultúrtha i measc na mbunphrionsabal atá taobh thiar den tsochaí úr atáthar a chruthú. Le tamall anuas, tá méadú ar an líon Caitliceach atá ag cuidiú le Protastúnaigh Gaeilge a fhoghlaim agus tá i bhfad níos mó deiseanna ag Protastúnaigh an Ghaeilge a fhoghlaim anois ná mar bhí roimhe seo.

Protestant learners are often reluctant to reveal their distinctive political or religious beliefs in Gaelic circles as they feel they are simultaneously observing an unfamiliar culture as well as exploring their own. They are reticent to criticise Irish speakers as they feel they are guests or visitors among them. Protestant learners of Irish are often media-shy; they do not publicly belie the image of a Catholic and nationalist language.

Yet matters are improving for Protestant learners since the peace process began, as they are less afraid to travel into Catholic or nationalist districts to attend Irish language events or classes. There is greater discussion of issues of identity and culture, and cultural pluralism is one of the basic principles in the creation of a new post-conflict society. In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of Catholics helping Protestants to learn Irish and Protestants have far more opportunities to learn the language than before.



Ní féidir a rá gur ag leanúint an tslua atá Protastúnach ar bith atá ag foghlaim na Gaeilge. Corruair bíonn ar fhoghlaimeoirí an teanga a thréigean siocair nach nglacann a bpobal féin leis an Ghaeilge. Is fadhb ar leith seo ag foghlaimeoirí ón lucht oibre, atá faoi bhrú dul leis an slua. Níl na laincisí céanna ar fhoghlaimeoirí meánaicmeacha maidir le treascairt nósanna pobail de agus dá thairbhe sin tá sé níos fusa ag Protastúnaigh meánaicmeacha Gaeilge a fhoghlaim gan barraíocht de bhagairt óna gcomhghleacaithe féin. Fiú, tá siad den bharúil gur tairbhe mhór ag a bpobal féin an machnamh atá déanta acu ar chúrsaí cultúrtha agus bíonn siad díograiseach maidir lena roinnt leo. Ach sin ráite, is féidir le mochucháin dhéfhiúsacha a bheith ag aontachtaithe a fhoghlaimíonn an teanga fúithi go fóill.

Más suim leis an phobal Caitliceach spéis sa Ghaeilge a chothú i measc an phobail Phrotastúnaigh is léir gur gá aird a thabhairt ar an taithí éagsúil, idir mhaith agus olc, a bhíonn ag foghlaimeoirí Protastúnacha. Is léir gur ceist ghoilliúnach ceist na Gaeilge i dTuaisceart Éireann go fóill agus gur gá tuiscint nach féidir talamh slán a dhéanamh de go bhfuil gach Protastúnach atá ag foghlaim na teanga ina náisiúnaí déanta, nó ag dul sa treo sin. Is gá fosta a bheith tuigseach agus gan uasal le íseal a dhéanamh ar Phrotastúnaigh nó aineolas a chur ina leith muna mian leo ionannú a dhéanamh leis an teanga ach an oiread. Thar rud ar bith eile, is fiú aithint go bhfuil réimse leathan dóigheanna ina ndéanfaidh Protastúnaigh a gcuid féin den Ghaeilge.

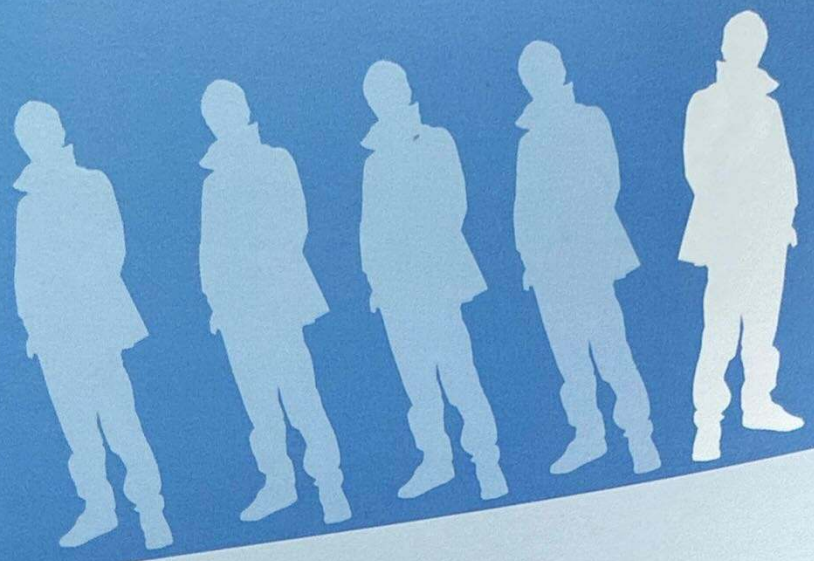
Protestant learners of Irish are certainly individualistic. Occasionally some might feel the need to abandon their interest in the language because they identify with a community which rejects it. This might be more the case for working-class Protestant learners, who are under pressure to conform to the values of their own community. Middle-class Protestants have less of a problem with flouting the conventions of their community and learn Irish with little fear of threat from their peers. Indeed, Protestant learners feel they have a lot to offer to their own community in terms of their reflections upon cultural matters, and they are keen to share their knowledge. Even so, unionists who learn Irish can have ambivalent feelings about the language.

If the Catholic community wants to increase Protestant interest in Irish, the experiences of Protestant learners, both good and bad, must be taken into consideration. Obviously the Irish language issue is still a sensitive one in Northern Ireland and it is necessary to realise that every Protestant learning Irish is not a confirmed nationalist, or in the process of becoming one. It is essential to be understanding and not to patronise or treat as 'ignorant' Protestants who do not identify with the language. Most important of all, it is necessary to understand that there are many different ways in which Protestants can feel ownership of the Irish language.

Gaeilge

Gluais Glossary

ábhar spreagtha	a source of inspiration
achan (U)	every = gach aon *Std.*
aiféaltas	embarrassment
aisteach an mhaise	a peculiar/odd thing to do
aischothú	feedback
aitheantas	identification
aithreachas	regret
aontacht	union
aontachtaí	unionist (noun)
aontachtach	unionist (adjective)
athbhreithniú	reconsider
bá	sympathy
ag baint grinn asti	'taking the mickey out of her'
a bheag nó a mhór	more or less
beirt (U)	two things/ people = two people *Std.*
bíodh aici	She can do what she likes ('I don't care')
bíodh sé... ná bíodh	whether he was... or not
bláthfhleasca / fleasca	wreath
braith	feel
braithstint (noun)	perception
braithstint (verb) (U)	perceive = brath *Std.*
tá de bhua acu	it is one of their advantages / qualities ...
ag búirí liom (U)	screaming at me = ag buireach liom *Std.*
bunús	most of
ar an bhunús	for the reason
i gcaitheamh	in the course of
caithréim	victory
ceansú	pacify
ceaptha	caught
chonacthas do	it seemed to
coibhneas	relationship
comhaimseartha	contemporary
comhartha aitheantais	
Caitliceach	a Catholic badge of recognition
comhfhiosach	conscious (adjective)
comhoidhreacht	common heritage
comúnachas	communalism
constaicí	obstacles
contrárthacht	contradiction
i gcoradh an bhealaigh	at the turn in the road
corraí	anger
crannlia	tree surgeon
cúinsí	circumstances
cuid féin a dhéanamh de	identify with
cuma leo ann nó as	they couldn't care less whether it existed or not
cur ó dhoras	to put off, dissuade
cur suas de	refuse, oppose
daonáireamh	census
déabhlóid	devolution
défhiús	ambivalence
défhiúsach	ambivalent
deighilt	division
a dhul (U)	to go = dul *Std.*
ag dul don Ghaeilge	involved in (learning) Irish
dílseach	loyalist
is díol suntais	It is noteworthy ...
dóiche (U)	likely = dócha *Std.*
dúfhuath	detest
ealaín dhubh	black magic
easaontú	disagreeing, dissenting
d'éirigh idir	quarrelled
eiseamláir	examplar, paragon
fá (U)	about = faoi, mar gheall ar *Std.*
fágaim deireadh i mo dhiaidh	I leave everything behind
fealltóireacht chultúrtha	cultural treachery
d'fhóir sé domh	it suited me



féiniúlacht — identity
fíorú — realisation
fríd (U) — through = tríd *Std.*
géarleanúint — persecution
géillstean — submit = géilleadh *Std.*
gné(ithe) — aspect(s)
goilliúnach — sensitive/touchy
ilghnéitheach — diverse
imeallú — marginalisation
inse (U) — to tell = insint *Std.*
inteacht (U) — some = éigean *Std.*
íomhá — image
ionchur — input
ionnanú le — identify with
ísealaicmeach — lower class
Lag an Aoil — Ligoneil
leithcheal — neglect
leithinis — peninsula
maolú teannais — reduction of tension
mhaígh — implied
meánaicmneach — middle class
náisiúnach — national (adjective)
náisiúnachas — nationalism
náisiúnaí — nationalist (noun)
náisiúnaíoch — nationalist(ic) (adjective)
náisiúntacht — nationality

poblachtach — republican (noun)
poblachtach — republican (adjective)
réamhbhraistintí — preconceptions
réamhbhreithniú — prejudgement
réchúiseach — easy-going
sainchomhartha — characteristic
scoil diagachta — divinity school
smaointiú (U) — thinking = smaoineamh *Std.*
solúbtha — flexible
spochadh as — 'taking the mickey out of'
spraoithiománaithe — joyriders
stróic leat — 'On you go'
tchítear domh — it seems to me
teacht salach ar a chéile — clashing with each other
tionchar — influence
toiseacht (U) — starting = tosnú *Std.*
thoisigh (U) — started = thosaigh *Std.*
tor ar lasadh — burning bush (a Presbyterian symbol)

treascairt — subverting
tuairim is — approximately
tuigbheáil (U) — understand = tuiscint *Std.*
uasal le íseal a dhéanamh ar — to patronise
uilig (U) — all = uile *Std.*

Tagairt *Reference*

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