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Author(s)	Smith-Christmas, Cassie;Ruiséal, Orlaith
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# Conceptualising Successful Intergenerational Language

## Transmission in terms of ‘*Saibhreas*’: Family Language Support in the Corca Dhuibhne Gaeltacht

*Cassie Smith-Christmas and Orlaith Ruiséal*

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### Introduction

In his seminal work titled *Reversing Language Shift* (‘RLS’), Fishman (1991) is adamant that this titular process hinges on successful intergenerational language transmission in the home and community. The centrality of the family to the achievement of wider language revitalisation goals is also echoed in Spolsky’s (2012) characterisation of the family as the ‘critical’ domain in language policy. However, as Spolsky rightly points out (p. 3), typically language policy has focused on the higher echelons of social organisation, such as the national governments. It has been mostly through the emergent field known as ‘Family Language Policy’ (‘FLP’; Luykx, 2003; King, Fogle, and Logan-Terry, 2008) that researchers have made explicit connections between language practices at the micro-level of the family and language policy as it is typically conceptualised in terms of the regional, state, and supranational level. Especially in the early years of its trajectory, the FLP’s emphasis lay in identifying the factors that lead to successful intergenerational transmission. These factors can be distilled into three main types: ideological factors; input factors; and output management factors (*cf.* Spolsky’s 2004 model of language policy, which has been very influential on FLP research). Perhaps not surprisingly, research has

shown that FLPs in which caregivers make a conscious decision to use the minority language with in the first place; sustain high and varied minority language input with their children; and implement management strategies which mandate responses in the minority language, are most likely to result in successful intergenerational transmission (e.g. Lanza, 1997; de Houwer, 2007; Ó hÍfearnáin, 2013; Altman et. al, 2014; Curdt-Christiansen, 2016;). However, given the complex and multilayered nature of the relationship between language, family, and society, there are various nuances to this general premise, and caregivers often find themselves having to navigate a fine balance in making various decisions—for instance, not using a strict management style once the child has established a preference for the majority language, as this might jeopardise family relationships as cause the child’s relationship with the minority language to deteriorate (Kopeliovich, 2013; Smith-Christmas, 2016; Higgins, 2019).

Despite FLP’s early focus on the factors which lead to successful intergenerational language transmission, however, there has been little critical analysis on what ‘successful’ intergenerational transmission looks like and how it should (or can) be measured. As Schwartz and Vershik (2013, p. 1) point out in their interrogation of ‘success’ in FLP, gauging ‘success’ tends to be guided by an output-driven outlook, and as Smith-Christmas, Bergroth, and Bezcioglou-Golktölga (2019) discuss, FLP research has been largely guided by the implicit understanding that successful intergenerational transmission equates to the child’s language use as an age-appropriate carbon copy of their caregivers’ language use. This point resonates with Ó hÍfearnáin’s (2019) critique of the term ‘language maintenance’ (which is often used interchangeably with intergenerational language transmission) in implying stasis rather than taking into account the dynamic, negotiated nature of language use.

Our aim in this chapter is to provide a means to conceptualise success in intergenerational transmission in a way that privileges the dynamic and emotional aspects of language use. To do this, we will propose a model, which we refer to as the ‘*saibhreas*’ model, as a means to understand how caregivers envisage successful intergenerational transmission and how they go about bringing this success to fruition. ‘*Saibhreas*’ translates to ‘richness’ in Irish, the language under scope in this chapter and we will illustrate how *saibhreas* is comprised of three intersecting components: competent language use; local language use; and embodied language use. This model was conceived through work with *Tús Maith*, the complementary family language support programme in the Corca Dhuibhne Gaeltacht in Ireland. After introducing the background to the research, the chapter will go on to discuss the three constituent components of *saibhreas* and illustrate the various balances that caregivers must strike in terms of formulating and achieving their goals, especially in terms of issues of related to purism and authenticity. The chapter will conclude by discussing how although the *saibhreas* model was developed in the context of autochthonous minority language revitalisation efforts, it can also be a lens for examining intergenerational language transmission in other contexts.

## **Research Context**

This research is situated in the Corca Dhuibhne Gaeltacht, which is in the west of County Kerry. The term ‘Gaeltacht’ refers to an area that is officially designated by the state as ‘Irish-speaking,’ and which entails certain legal and administrative provisions to ensure this designation, such as Irish as the medium of education for Gaeltacht schools. This particular research forms part of a case study of Oidhreacht Corca Dhuibhne (OChD), the area’s Irish language development centre,

which was one of the six ethnographic case studies comprising the Smithsonian Institution's Sustaining Minoritised Languages in Europe (SMiLE) initiative. Although the case studies were designed and implemented to investigate a range of research questions, our case study centred on the intersection of the family and community, which built on both authors' experience with FLP in a research and professional capacity, as well as their previous collaboration on the Irish Research Council-funded project 'The Challenges of Minority Language Maintenance: Family Language Policy in Scotland and Ireland' (GOIPD/2016/644). In particular, the SMiLE project 'The Intersection of Language and Community in the Corca Dhuibhne Gaeltacht' centres on *Tús Maith*, the family support programme, of which second author Orlaith Ruiséal is director. The fieldwork for the SMiLE project was carried out between June 2018-May 2019 and involved participant observation of both Cassie Smith-Christmas and Orlaith Ruiséal in a number of different activities (all of which were coordinated and facilitated by Orlaith Ruiséal in her duties as director), ranging from weekly activities, such as a parent-toddler group and a drama group, to seasonal activities such as the children's visit with Santa.

The participant observation also included a continuing professional development (CPD) day for practitioners working with child-centred language initiatives in Corca Dhuibhne Gaeltacht as well as the other Gaeltacht areas within the province of Munster. The composition of the group included practitioners who worked as part of the *Cúntóirí Teanga* (language assistant programme) in local schools (all of which are Irish immersion schools by virtue of their location within Gaeltacht areas); *naíonra* (Irish immersion pre-school) leaders and co-leaders; and practitioners as part of *Cuairteoirí Baile* (home visitor) programme. The day consisted of a morning workshop designed to help practitioners identify common 'trouble spots' in children's

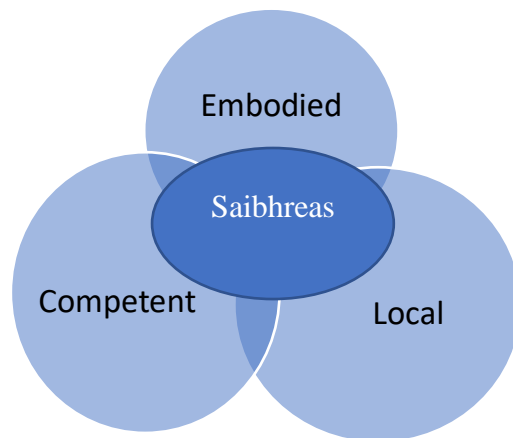
speech and to effectively deal with these trouble spots. The workshop was led by one of the OChD staff members who has wide experience working with different types of Irish speakers and who has also worked in Irish language publishing. During the second part of the CPD Day, practitioners learned rhymes and games to teach to children. Several practitioners took turns leading this part of the day, one of the whom was a language assistant at one of the primary schools in Corca Dhuibhne. Following the CPD Day, first author Cassie Smith-Christmas interviewed this language assistant and observed two of her school sessions as well as interviewed one of the home language visitors and participated in one of the home visits. Prior to the CPD Day, Cassie had also interviewed head teacher of the observation school, the *naíonra* leader, and the workshop facilitator.

Throughout the entirety of the interviews for the project (42 in total, approximately 20 hours of recordings), the concept of *saibhreas teanga* ('richness of language') emerged as a key point of import for interviewees, both for those whose language revitalisation efforts specifically involved children (e.g. practitioners, caregivers) as well as those speakers involved in other facets of language revitalisation (e.g. adult language learning and support). Discursively, *saibhreas* was constructed as the goal for various strands of language revitalisation: if children and/or adult language learners had *saibhreas*, then 'success' had been achieved. Similarly, speakers who had *saibhreas* were held up as extremely positive examples in the community. In many ways, at face value, *saibhreas* may look like being a 'native' or 'authentic' speaker, or similar to the construction of *blas* as in Will's (2012, p. 37) exploration of Scottish Gaelic:

blas may be described as a set of linguistic and paralinguistic elements, including dialectal and register variants, prosody, and the use of idiomatic expressions, which combine to bestow an almost palpable aesthetic quality to one's speech.

While initially saibhreas appeared to have a similarly 'ephemeral' nature, it did not appear to have the same exclusionary function often associated with 'authenticity' (see Woolard, 2018). This premise was especially evident in the CPD Day, which functioned as what Hornberger (2018) refers to as a 'rich point' in the data and allowed Smith-Christmas to concretise the elements of saibhreas into three distinct, yet overlapping, components, as summarised in the diagram below:

Figure 1: The Saibhreas Model



As seen from the model, language use is *saibhir* ('rich') if it is competent; local; and embodied.

The following section will give more background on *Tús Maith*, then go into a detailed

discussion of what we mean by each intersecting component of the model, centring on how caregivers and practitioners discursively construct each component. We will also look at the specific ways they foster each component in their teaching and practice and especially how they strike a balance between their goals for saibhreas and the purist-borderline-exclusionary aspects that these components can engender.

## **Background: *Tús Maith* and intergenerational transmission in the Corca**

### **Dhuibhne Gaeltacht**

The most recent (2016) census shows that of a population of 6,948 people, 1,928 (28.7%) use Irish daily outside of the education system in the Corca Dhuibhne Gaeltacht. This number and corresponding proportion is taken to be a proxy for the number of speakers for whom Irish functions to some degree as their home and community language. The proportion of daily speakers who use the language outside the education system however is much lower in An Daingean, the main town on the peninsula, and the areas to the east of An Daingean (17%), but much higher to core areas west of An Daingean (54.3%), with the remaining areas at 29.1% (Plean Teanga Ciarraí Thiar, 2019, pp. 19-21). In terms of gauging the rate of intergenerational transmission in this area, the perhaps most useful benchmark is a survey, conducted the same year the most recent census, of the language background children entering *naíonraí*. For many of the children, this would have been their first main site of language socialisation outside of the home: the survey reports that of the 88 children in the Corca Dhuibhne Gaeltacht entering local *naíonraí*, 20% of them could be classed as ‘*cainteoirí dúchais*’ (‘native speakers’); 6% could be classed as having ‘*Gaeilge mhaith*’ (‘good Irish’); 41% as having ‘*ar bheagán Gaeilge*’ (‘some Irish’); and 17% with ‘*tuisceint ar an nGaeilge*’ (‘understanding of Irish’). Sixteen percent of the

children were classified as ‘*gan tuiscint ar an nGaeilge*,’ meaning that they did not understand any Irish at all (Plean Teanga Ciarraí Thiar, 2019, p. 26). On the whole, these numbers suggest that intergenerational transmission in Corca Dhuibhne is not robust, as it appears that only approximately 26% percent of the children are being socialised in Irish as the primary language of the home. This mirrors the earlier Census figures suggesting that under 30% of people in Corca Dhuibhne use Irish as a home and community language.

These numbers follow from earlier indications of declining intergenerational transmission in the area; in his 1983 study, for example, Ó Riagáin (1992) found that only 25% of those respondents under 45 years of age in the Corca Dhuibhne Gaeltacht would use ‘all Irish’ or ‘mostly Irish’ with their children if starting a family today. In Ó hIfearnáin’s (2013, p.356) study, he discusses how ‘parents frequently remarked that there are no “accidental” Irish speakers anymore’ in Corca Dhuibhne, a sentiment which is encapsulated in this quote from second author Orlaith Ruiséal’s interview as part of the public meeting of the language and community rights group *Misneach*:

*go mbraitheadar go raibh níos mó tacaíochtaí ag teastáil ó na tuismitheoirí chun leanbh a thógáin le Gaolainn sa Ghaeltacht toisc ná raibh sé fé mar a bhí y’know daichead bliain ó shin nuair a raibh na haon duine ag labhairt Gaolainn agus raibh sé ana nádúrtha mar rud ach anois go mbeadh saghas go mbeadh saghas cinneadh ag teastáil chun é a dhéanamh toisc nach raibh b’fhéidir do chomharsan a’ labhairt as Gaolainn agus ná raibh daoine ag bualadh le chéile fé mar a bhídís a’ bualadh le chéile*

they felt there were more supports needed for parents to rear children with Irish in the Gaeltacht because it was no longer as it had been **y'know** forty years ago when everyone was speaking Irish and it was very natural but now that a sort of decision was needed to do it as maybe your neighbour was not speaking Irish and that people were not meeting as they used to

Orlaith's quote underscores how without widespread community use of the language, parents need more support in making the conscious decision to use Irish to their children in the first place and then further support in sustaining this decision through their language practices with the children. As a response to this understanding, Orlaith and other members of OChD set up the family language support programme, *Tús Maith* ('A Good Start'). The programme was modelled in part on the programme *Twf* ('Growth') in Wales (see Edwards and Newcombe, 2005) and takes a multi-stranded approach to fostering intergenerational transmission and encouraging children's use of the language with their caregivers and with each other (see Ní Chathail, 2003; Smith-Christmas and Ruiséal, 2019). This includes assisting caregivers to make the decision to use Irish in the home in the first place through information booklets and then in providing complementary support for early years learning. These complementary supports include an Irish language parent-toddler group and two CDs of children's songs and rhymes as well as children's books (the *Orla Uan* series), all produced and published by OChD. For older children, complementary supports include a card game produced by OChD and a monthly Irish language Saturday family activity session as well as a weekly drama group. For all children, there are key seasonal events hosted by OChD: all through the medium of Irish: a visit with Santa, an Easter egg hunt, and a games day on the beach.

In addition to these many and varied support activities, *Tús Maith* also set up the *Cuairteoirí Baile* (CB) scheme, where language assistants go into families' homes and work with them on integrating Irish in this private sphere for one hour per week. The CB scheme is state-funded through An Roinn Cultúr, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta (The Department of Culture, Heritage, and the Gaeltacht) and is designed to support a range of families with different linguistic needs, from families with extremely limited Irish to families where caregivers are fully fluent. There is no set programme for the families, and the individual CBs adapt each session to the family's, and especially to the children's, desires and expressed goals. This is in tandem with the *Cúntóirí Teanga* (CT) programme in the schools, which initially began in Corca Dhuibhne, but which is now available in all Gaeltacht areas, where CTs (language assistants) help foster children's linguistic skills through small-group sessions. The majority of the attendees at the CPD day that forms the locus of this paper worked either for the CT or CB schemes. The following analysis will examine how they construct their goals for intergenerational transmission in terms of *saibhreas* and the strategies they deploy to bring these goals to fruition.

### **Competent Language Use**

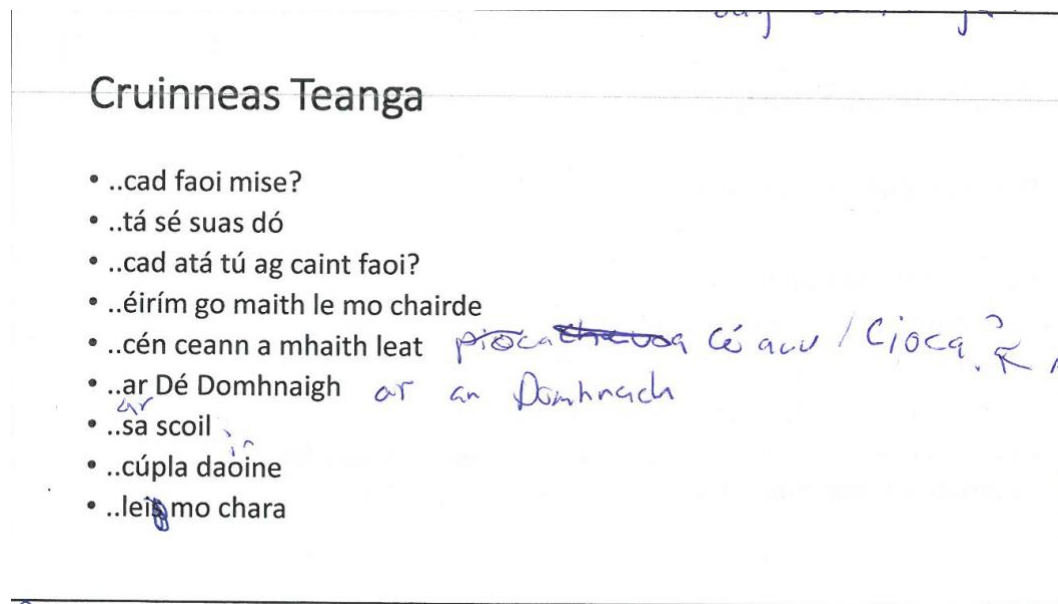
One of the three aspects of *saibhreas* is competent language use. This aligns very much with 'linguistic competence' in the traditional sense; that is, the children's use of age-appropriate syntax, morphology, phonology, and lexicon in accordance with caregivers' norms of use. This may seem a quite obvious goal of intergenerational transmission; after all, as discussed in the Introduction, the underlying definition of successful intergenerational transmission or language maintenance has tended to operate an underlying notion of the child as an age-appropriate carbon

copy of the caregivers' language use. Determining 'what counts' as age-appropriate use however is a complex—and due to the dynamic nature of language, some may argue unending—task, which forms the core of the field of child language acquisition, both in terms of monolingual language acquisition (see Fletcher and MacWhinney, 1995 for an overview) and what is generally termed 'Bilingual First Language Acquisition (de Houwer, 1990). Work by Tina Hickey (1990, 1991) and other researchers (Nic Flannchadha and Hickey, 2017; O' Toole and Hickey, 2017; Müller, Muckley, and Antonijevic-Elliot, 2018) have advanced understanding of children's acquisition of the Irish language, especially in terms of lexical development and morphophonological processes. This work, along with other work on Irish (e.g. Péterváry et al., 2014) and other autochthonous minority languages such as Welsh (e.g. Gathercole and Thomas, 2009), has illuminated the layered complexities in determining age-appropriate norms for children's language acquisition against the backdrop of societal language shift and long-standing language contact. Our goal therefore in this discussion of competence is therefore not to determine what children's age-appropriate use of Irish should look like but rather, explore how caregivers in Corca Dhuibhne discursively construct a notion of 'competence' vis-à-vis these realities, in particular, the dominance of English in Irish society, as well as the high degree of contact between Irish and English and how it manifests in the caregivers' speech (see Hickey, 2009; also O' Malley-Madec, 2007; Darcy, 2014).

Our analysis centres primarily on the powerpoint with accompanying handout and discussion around this material at the CPD day. The morning of the workshop centred on strategies to develop children's '*cruinneas teanga*,' which translates to 'linguistic accuracy.' The powerpoint and handout—an example of which is given below—lists a number of linguistic *inaccuracies*

deemed by the workshop facilitator to be common among children. The correct form of many of these listed forms would be immediately known to caregivers, but the facilitator verbally emphasised some of the correct forms in some of the inaccuracies (which is represented by Smith-Christmas' handwriting on the handout):

Image 1: Linguistic Accuracy Handout Example 1



The listed examples given all represent either an aberration in terms of preposition or a synthetic prepositional form being levelled to a more analytical form. Irish, like the other Celtic languages, employs a prepositional pronoun system to convey meaning; for instance, in the first example, ‘*cád faoi mise*,’ the correct form would be ‘*cad fúmsa*’ (‘what about me?,’ with the preposition *faoi* ‘about’ coalesced with the first person pronoun ‘*mé*’). However, what we see here is analytical levelling, which is generally understood to be an interlanguage or transfer feature where children are modelling forms on English structures (e.g. what is often referred to as ‘calquing’, as in this example they are literally saying ‘what about me?’ when using the form

'*cad faoi mise*' in place of '*cad fúmsa*'). The analytical levelling of synthetic forms such as preposition pronouns is not unique to children's use of Irish; for instance, first author Cassie Smith-Christmas has frequently heard '*aig mise*' rather than '*agamsa*' (literally 'at-me') from children who speak Scottish Gaelic. There seemed to be clear consensus among the workshop practitioners that these examples constituted inaccurate forms and should be corrected in order to develop children's competent language use. From the discussion among the practitioners, the preferred method to address these inaccuracies was linguistic modelling of the accurate form rather than overt correction of the inaccurate form (see also Ó Duibhir 2018, for more of the challenges of addressing inaccuracies in Irish language pedagogy).

In contrast to the consensus on the previous list, the following list contained several items that caused some disagreement among the practitioners:

Image 2: Linguistic Accuracy Handout Example 2

## Cruinneas

**Cruinneas na Struchtúr/na Comhréire**

- ..ag déanamh é
- ..sin cad a deir sé
- ..na daoine áitiúla
- ..an bhliain seo
- ..foirfe - borrowing from Irish-English 'perfect'
- ..is maith liom - B. asking do-v 'what is wrong w/ is b'ceá liom'
- ..táimid cairde
- ..níl clú agam

*tuis*

Similar to the previous list, this list also contains items that evidence contact-induced aberrations, such as the literally-rendered ‘*sin cad a deir sé*’ (‘what she said), where the superfluous ‘cad’ takes the form of English language syntax. Whereas this appeared to be deemed an inaccuracy that would warrant correction, the items ‘*níl clú agam*’ (‘I don’t have a clue’) and ‘*foirfe*’ (‘perfect’) were the source of debate among the practitioners. ‘*Níl clú agam*’ is a calque of the English ‘I don’t have a clue’ and employs the borrowing of the word ‘clue’ which in Irish orthography is written as ‘*clú*.’ Some of the practitioners indicated they viewed categorising this item as ‘inaccurate’ was ascribing to a purist ideology and indicated that they would most likely refrain from correcting a child if he or she would utter that phrase. They defended this particular stance with highlighting the ubiquity of this phrase among fully competent adult Irish speakers and also within their own personal communicative practices. Similarly, some of the practitioners appeared to object to ‘*foirfe*’ (‘perfect’) on the list. The workshop facilitator explained that she had placed the lexical item—which is a long-standing word in the Irish language and not a recent borrowing—on the list because it was simply being used in place of the English ‘perfect,’ a common expression in English as spoken in Ireland to signal agreement, e.g. ‘I’ll come at ten, so.’ ‘Perfect’. Again, some of the practitioners seemed to indicate that they felt that this item, although it was indeed a calque due to this English language usage norm, did not undermine their perceived integrity of the language, or the competence of a speaker if he or she were to utter it. Rather, to them it appeared to be an accepted facet of the long-standing contact between English and Irish, which they commonly employed in their everyday speech with other adults and also in their speech directed specifically towards children.

Although this illustration of ‘competence’ is limited to two examples, we hope to highlight how although the actual boundaries of competent Irish may be indeed negotiated, there is nonetheless an understanding of where these parameters lie, and how they should be enforced in order to support children’s linguistic development. Our analysis showed how calques and other aberrations that would violate grammatical norms of Irish would be considered ‘inaccuracies’ and therefore require correction; however, calques that did not violate grammatical norms could potentially pass under the radar so to speak, especially if they were calques frequently employed by the practitioners themselves in everyday speech. This is not to imply that this rule stands for all such similar dichotomies, but rather, to show how a tacit agreement of what constitutes competent language use can co-exist with an understanding of a long-standing language contact situation and how this is negotiated by caregivers in language revitalisation efforts (see also McLeod, 2004, for more on the challenges of purism in language revitalisation). In summary, it is clear that a main component of caregivers’ goals in intergenerational transmission is that children speak competent Irish and that programmes such as the CB and CT schemes are designed to support this goal; however, competence is still subject to negotiation within an evolving sociocultural landscape.

### **Local Language Use**

In addition to desiring children to speak Irish that is competent, we contend that caregivers also wish for their children to speak an Irish that is unequivocally ‘local’— in this case meaning that children use speech forms associated with the Corca Dhuibhne Gaeltacht. As in the discussion of competence, our aim is not to provide an exhaustive inventory of what constitutes local Corca

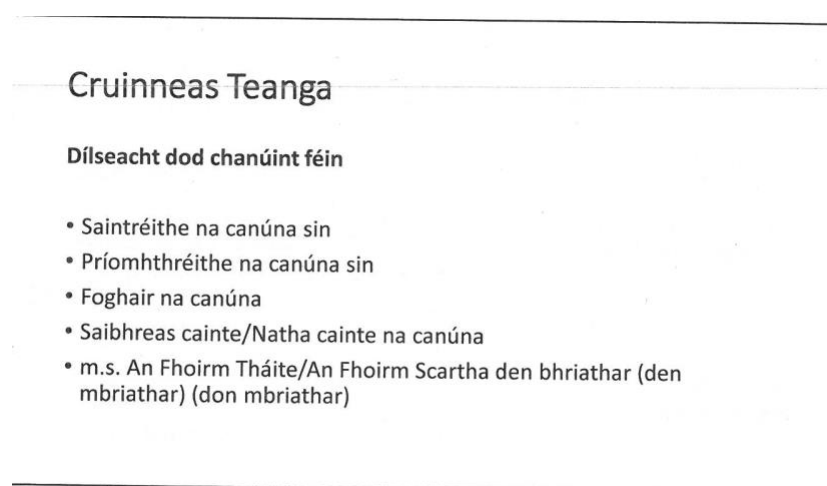
Dhuibhne Irish (see Ó Sé, 2000), but rather, to discuss how caregivers construct the importance of ‘local’ in terms of their goals for intergenerational language transmission and how they navigate the potential tensions arising from conceptions of ‘local’ versus ‘non-local’ and/‘standard’ (see Ó hIfearnáin and Ó Murchadha, 2011). In many ways, this underlying tension mirrors the discussion of purism versus acceptance as discussed in the last section; in minority languages contexts, local often lies at the heart of how authenticity is constructed (see Woolard, 2018), which in turn can potentially play a role in excluding certain speakers (see Ó Murchadha, Hornsby, Smith-Christmas, and Moriarty, 2018). In our discussion of saibhreas, we will examine how caregivers maintain a fine balance between drawing on the positive aspects of ‘local,’ including engendering a sense of place among young children, and the potentially exclusionary aspects of ‘local’ eluded to in other research.

Although the focus of our analysis still lies in the CPD Day, the concept of local language use as *sine qua non* to saibhreas emerged across the interviews and ethnographic fieldwork in the SMiLE project (*cf.* Will’s concept of *blas*, which literally means ‘taste,’ but is also used to refer to someone’s accent). Similarly, the importance of children speaking local Irish emerged as a key theme throughout the SMiLE project as well as Smith-Christmas’ earlier IRC-funded project. Perhaps the most striking example is that in one of the families that Smith-Christmas worked with for the IRC project, she noticed in reading books to the children that the caregivers had gone through some of the books and written the local equivalents of certain lexical items. It was also clear from the interviews in the SMiLE project that caregivers desired for their children to have local models of language use; one grandparent—who had not been socialised in Irish in the home in the local area—for instance highly praised the *naíonra* leader not only for her

pedagogical practices for the children, but for being a paragon of the local dialect, and he related with pride an incident in which his young grandchildren corrected his pronunciation of a particular lexical item.

During the CPD day, the importance of providing children with suitable models of the local dialect emerged as a central theme. This is illustrated for example by the following slide from the handout:

Image 3: Handout Example 3



The phrases here all serve to underscore the importance of one's own dialect and what particular aspects are embedded in dialectal use. The phrase in bold '*dílseacht dod chanúint féin*' can be translated as 'ownership of own dialect' which is followed by: *saintréithe na canúna sin* (distinct characteristics of dialect); *príomhthréithe na canúna sin* (main distinctions); *foghair na canúna* (dialectal pronunciation); *saibhreas cainte/natha cainte na canúna* ('richness of speech/spoken idioms of the dialect'). This particular slide overtly encourages pride in one's own dialect and its inclusion in the workshop materials advocates that practitioners should use their own dialect when speaking to the children, a point which was further emphasised in other workshop materials as well as the discussion. This is illustrating in the following:

Image 4: Handout Example 4

**Cruinneas Teanga**

*Ana-mhaith*     *not prob because it*     *an-ueu*  
*an-sásta*  
*an-te*  
*an-mhaith*

cluas	peann/caighdeán
..cleachtadh	..cuideachta, an-chuideachta
..cuileachta	
..ana-chuileachta	
..na haon duine, na héinne	..gach aon duine, gach éinne
..ar dtús	..ar dtús
..driothár	..deartháir
..driofúr	..deirfiúr
..maidean	..maidin
..tréis	..tar éis
..aige baile	..ag baile, sa bhaile
..deire	..deireadh*
..dearúd	..dearmad

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*if you're writing dialectally*     *if you're writing for children*

On the left side, the form that is given is the one that is ‘heard’ (*cluas*) and on the right side, the written/standard form, i.e. the local form versus the non-local form. By explicitly pointing out these differences, the facilitator is able to foster practitioners’ dialectal metalinguistic awareness and encourage them to use their own dialect when speaking to children. The slide also serves a dual purpose: by explicitly pointing out the ‘non-local’ variants, the slide enables practitioners to gain knowledge of forms other than those they habitually hear and use in their own communities. This means that they are less likely to mark a ‘non-local’ feature as inaccurate, thereby inadvertently, as Martin-Rojo (2013) terms it, ‘decapitalising’ a child’s particular linguistic repertoire. As described in detail in Sallabank and Marquis (2018), this decapitalisation can occur in other minority language contexts and can lead to certain speakers feeling excluded.

The facilitator further fostered a sense of effective pedagogy for inclusion by suggesting that practitioners use standard orthography when writing for children. This suggestion, however, was met with some debate; the facilitator however stressed that unless practitioners were able to use dialectal forms one-hundred percent consistently in their orthography, students' literacy could potentially be hampered by inconsistency. She further defended her point by drawing on an example of a local poet who used dialectal forms in her writing, specifically '*Cáil*' for '*Cá bhfuil*' ('where is'), as in natural speech the two morphemes become coalesced. The practitioner emphasised in that writing '*Cáil*' children would be unable to see how '*bhfuil*' would relate to other question phrases, such as '*An bhfuil?*' (present tense question construction). Therefore, a learning opportunity would be diminished, especially for children who were not socialised through Irish at home. (As also seen on the slide, the one exception to the facilitator's rule of using standard orthography when writing for children was in the epenthesis and lenition following the intensifier '*an*').

As in the discussion of competence, we have limited our discussion to a few examples. We hope however, that we have achieved three main aims; first, that we have clarified what we mean by 'local' and how it is discursively constructed within the scope our study; shown how it plays a constituent role in the saibhreas model; and finally, how practitioners navigate the complexities of valorising local language use while simultaneously minimising its exclusionary potential. We now turn to the final component of the saibhreas model: embodied language use.

## Embodied Language Use

The final interrelated component of the saibhreas model is what we refer to as ‘embodied’ language use. In using this term, we are drawing on Csordas’ (1995, p. 6) conception of embodiment as ‘existential ground of culture and self’ as a way to understand how caregivers articulate and work towards achieving their goals in terms of the complex social and emotional dimensions of children’s language use. We acknowledge that the particular term ‘embodied’ may entail different foci depending on one’s particular field and that discussions often of ‘language’ and ‘embodiment’ often centre on the relationship of the physical body to language, especially in terms of identity formation (Pennycook, 2009). As will be explained throughout this section, our notion of ‘embodied’ views language as a ‘way of being, similar to, as Slavec (2019, p. 155) puts it, ‘To *have* Irish in Corca Dhuibhne is a feeling and an experience, as well as an intimate commitment to *live* (through) Irish’ (emphasis original). The embodiment component of saibhreas is a means to articulate caregivers’ desire that children both *can* and *do* navigate their social and emotional worlds through Irish and crucially, that Irish is not relegated to the status of an artefact (e.g. a ‘school language’ or a ‘performance language’).

Our discussion will begin with the concept that ‘embodiment’ involves children choosing to use Irish. The importance of ‘choice’ in language use is well-established in the language policy literature, for example, Grin’s (2003) tripartite model of successful language policy at the societal level consists of the capacity to use the language (*cf.* our conceptualisation of ‘competence’); opportunity to use the language, and the *desire* to use the language. Children may evidence a *lack* of desire to use the minority language for a number of reasons, including the influence of the majority culture on identity formation (e.g. Revis, 2019); the dominance of the

majority language in peer group language practices (e.g. Kopeliovich, 2013); and the compounding effects of language shift, resulting in the child's higher competence in the majority language (e.g. Gafaranga, 2010). Further, the language shift may contribute to the child's reluctance to use the minority language due to its association with elders and thereby with authority (e.g. Meek, 2007). This residual authority of the language may be strengthened by its presence in the education system, especially in areas where community use of the language is weak (Hickey, 2007; Kavanagh and Hickey, 2013; Smith-Christmas, 2016, 2017). In Hickey's (2007, p. 56) multi-sited naíonra study, for instance, she observes that one of the target children 'saw Irish as the appropriate choice when trying to manage the other children, but there was no evidence that she perceived Irish as a normal mode of communication with her peers.' This reality is echoed in the naíonra leader's interview, in which she describes how although the children actively use Irish throughout the school day, they generally use English together in free play—'*sin an áit is mó a bheadh Béarla*' ('that's the place where English takes hold.').

Our conception of 'embodied' language use therefore centres on the idea that what caregivers want is for the children to actively *choose* to speak Irish and that the children do not limit their use of Irish to situations where the children feel they 'have' to speak the language, such as in the classroom. This was clear from the many observations of families; interviews with family members; and observations of the CPD day as well as the subsequent observations of the CB and CT sessions and it was clear that caregivers deployed multiple strategies so that, as the CB puts it in her interview, that the children have 'the chance to use the language naturally as a social language' ('*an deis acu é a dh'úsáid mar theanga sóisialta go nádúrtha*'; cf. Hickey's quote discussed earlier). One way practitioners did this was through explicitly emphasising rhymes

and games as the key components of facilitating children's language acquisition; while the first part of the CPD day was spent on linguistic accuracy, the second part was devoted to learning games and rhymes to teach and play with the children. The centrality of 'play' in practitioners' work and its role in fostering children's embodied use of language is highlighted in the *naíonra* practitioner's quote below:

*an obair atá ar siúl againn, déanaimid í trí mheán an súgraidh. So is dócha nuair a dhéanann tú spraoi agus imirt tá sé i bhfad níos fusa an teanga a phiocadh suas. Tá sé an-difriúil leis an scoil.*

The work we do, we do through the medium of play. So perhaps when you do it [through] fun and play, it's much easier to pick up the language. It's very different from school.

Here, we see a very 'embodied' approach to language acquisition; the *naíonra* leader views her role as facilitating acquisition through the medium of play, rather than 'teaching' the language, which could have the potential for Irish to be seen as an 'object' rather than a 'way of being.' The *naíonra* leader's statement that 'It's very different from school' also underlines illustrates how practitioners try to foster the children's positive emotional relationship with the language from the child's initial entry to the *naíonra*. This sentiment is also echoed in the CB's interview, where she discusses how she consciously tries to disassociate the CB visits from a sense of school:

*so thá siad tar éis an lá a chaitheamh ar scoil agus anois thá siad a' teacht isteach so ní-caithfidh tú é a dhéanamh i slí 'oh ní obair scoile é seo ní obair scoile é seo ní obair bhaile é seo' rud éigint 'tháimid chun cluichí a imirt'*

so they're just after spending a day at school and now they're coming in so- you have to do it [the CB session] in a way 'oh this is not school work, this is not homework' something [like] 'we're going to play games'

This quote also clearly illustrates how practitioners use play as a means to encourage children to use the language. In centring on embodiment as a 'way of being,' we also intend to highlight how caregivers actively desire for the children to *experience* the world through Irish and for children to articulate the psychological and physical sensations associated with emotions —both positive and negative—through Irish. The most striking example we encountered of this aspect of embodiment was through an interview with one of the two singers on the 'Sicín Mise Go Sona Sásta' ('I'm a Happy Chicken') CD produced by the OChD.

*'Sicín mise go sona sásta táimse anseo insa an tuí im' luí. Féach anois ar mo dhá sciatháinín, eireaballaín álainn is gobaín buí.' Agus rachfá ar ais dtís na leanaí agus is maith leo é agus is maith leo ar an ngob agus mar shampla sona sásta agus bíonn na leanaí féin, leanaí beaga anois abair naíonáin bheaga agus naíonáin mhóra bíonn siad chomh sásta toisc go mbíonn an sicín sásta you know. Agus samhlaíocht atá acu mar agus tá sé ag múineadh saibhreas na Gaelainne dhóibh agus mar sin do you know. Mo dhá sciatháinín abair tá fhios agat agus eireaballaín álainn agus gobaín buí, tá sé chomh simplí ach fós nuair a*

*chloiseann tú leanbh á rá déarfá ó tá sé sin go haoibhinn abair an Ghaelainn  
deas atá aici nó aige. You know so rudaí beaga mar sin atá ann a dtuigeas tú,  
rudaí beaga iad san a bheadh caillte mar mbeadh an an Oidhreacht anseo chomh  
maith*

((Singing)) ((I'm a happy chicken/Here I lay in the hay/Look now at my two little wings/ A pretty little tail/And a little yellow beak)) And it goes back to the children and they like it and they like the mouth and for example happy and the children themselves—young children in pre-school or just in primary school—they're so happy because the chicken is happy you know. The imagination they have— and it teaches them the richness of the Irish language and things like that you know. 'My two little wings' you know and 'beautiful little tail' and 'yellow beak,' it's simple but still when you hear a child say that, you say, that's lovely the Irish he or she has. You know little things like that you understand little things that would be lost if Oidhreacht [Corca Dhuibhne] wasn't here

Children's ability to experience empathy—that is, projecting another being's emotions onto themselves—is an important component of their developmental trajectory, in that it shows understanding of not only of themselves as beings, but as other beings as separate from them (Simms, 2008, p. 70). Here, the singer gives us a very simple but concrete example of this empathy: the children are happy because the chicken in the song is happy, and the singer highlights how the children are able to form this empathetic connection through their

imagination. He also explicitly mentions ‘saibhreas’ in this quote, and although his examples of saibhreas (relating to lenition and noun-adjective syntax) align more with the competence component discussed earlier, we argue that this quote also evidences the ‘embodiment’ that caregivers strive to facilitate in children: that children are able to experience emotion through Irish and in turn use language to relay this type of emotion; that Irish is part of their being, a way in which they experience the world.

## **Conclusion**

In the opening of this chapter, we argued for the need for a concrete and holistic means to conceptualise ‘successful’ intergenerational language transmission. We hope that through this discussion of the saibhreas model and its three constituent components—competent language use; local language use; and embodied language use—we have provided a tangible means by which to understand how caregivers frame their visions of ‘success’ and how they go about bringing this success into being. We have hopefully shown how although the constituent components themselves provide a concrete means to conceptualise ‘success,’ the boundaries of the individual constituent components are malleable and may be negotiated by caregivers over space and time. Further, although the saibhreas model emerged from the specific context of language transmission in the Corca Dhuibhne Gaeltacht, we argue that this model can function as a lens to gauging and understanding ‘success’ in other language transmission contexts. As explained in our discussion of ‘competence,’ linguistic competence is generally seen as *sine qua non* to successful transmission, and our particular discussion centred on the boundary negotiation process in terms of the language contact, which naturally would be applicable to other contexts, but certainly, other language-specific features may take precedence in understanding how

caregivers' view 'success' in other contexts. Similarly, although we have discussed the importance of 'local' in reference to the Corca Dhuibhne dialect, 'local' may take other forms in other contexts; for example, the child's sense of a particular national identity and use of culturally-appropriate terms of address, for instance. Finally, given the discussion across various contexts about the child's propensity to prefer the majority language at the expense of the minority language, we argue that our notion of 'embodied' to mean that not only does the child *want* to speak the minority language, but does so in akin to 'way of being' rather than an artefact, is applicable to other contexts. We hope that in the saibhreas model, we have provided researchers and caregivers alike with a useful conceptual tool in the challenging process of successfully transmitting a minoritised language to a child.

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