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1. Introduction

As a modern foreign language lecturer I am fascinated by issues of language, culture and identity. To an extent my interest is compounded by the belief that we Irish are bilingual, English and Gaeilge, - a rich language with a strong oral tradition that has been an integral part of Irish identity. In September 1996 I began work as a secondary teacher in an inner city London school with a high proportion of multilingual and multicultural students. My observations and interactions with pupils at Plumstead Manor proved part of a journey of self-analysis and self-discovery, and fortified my belief that these students have enriching resources to bring to the classroom – linguistic, social and educational. Upon my return to Dublin in 2001 I observed the extent to which Ireland had undergone significant social-economic change in the intermittent years. The mélange of languages, colours, dress codes, and cultures so apparent in Irish society today have contributed much to the making of a cosmopolitan, culturally diverse country, and have sparked off many debates centred on the benefits and drawbacks of ethnic plurality. It would be inaccurate, however, to suggest that, until the late 1990s, Ireland was "new" to diversity since the traveller community and significant minority religious groups have for many years been part of Irish society. Nonetheless the recent influx of returning Irish, EU and non-EU migrant workers, asylum seekers, and international students have raised an awareness of difference and fed attitudes about otherness.

The premise of this paper is to explore multiculturalism in the secondary school context, comparing and contrasting the English and Irish experiences. My findings are based on studies carried out while secondary teaching in the UK, and also on recent surveys conducted in 4 Dublin and Kildare secondary schools. My methodology was a process of gathering data through questionnaires that I based on the issue of multiculturalism, which were answered by staff and non-national students in these schools. I intend, firstly, to explore the linguistic aspect of this phenomenon, and will discuss the English as a Second Language issue. I maintain that, while the range of languages and associated cultures to be found in contemporary secondary schools should be seen as a valuable educational and national resource, sufficient funding must be place to support and integrate those with poor English language skills. Subsequently, I will

examine the socio-political factors underlying multiculturalism in secondary schools, and will make reference to the ethnographic profiles and anti-racist policies of the schools surveyed. I will place the issue in the larger context of pluralistic British and Irish societies where I believe biased legislation and intolerant attitudes towards minority groups adversely impact on our educational system. Finally, analysing my research and findings I will assess Department of Education and Science initiatives for a more multicultural primary school curriculum, and will offer suggestions for curricular diversity in the secondary school sector, based on strategies in place in the United Kingdom.

2 Multiculturalism

2.1 Multiculturalism – the language factor

Language is a critical channel of communication through which we human beings convey attitudes and information, express thoughts and emotions. It is the means by which we articulate and relate to other our life experiences. It is inextricably linked to our cultures, to our notions of personal identity and to the way in which we make sense of the world around us. Many people are bilingual.

> *"Bilingualism simply means having two languages. Bilinguals can be ranged along a continuum from the rare equilingual who is indistinguishable from a native speaker in both languages at one end to the person who has just begun to acquire a second language at the other end. They are all bilinguals, but possessing different degrees of bilingualism. A monolingual (also called a unilingual or monoglot) is thus someone who knows only one language.[11]*

A bilingual's degree of bilingualism is determined by his or her competence in the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Abilities in these skills vary. Time spent secondary-teaching in the United Kingdom has shown me that whilst very often children of immigrant parents may possess highly developed skills in the language of their country of residence or indeed birth, English, their capacity to read and write in their parents' language, Turkish, Urdu, or Punjabi for example, may be limited or non-existent. Others may have received a comprehensive education in both the oral and literary traditions of both languages and may be termed 'balanced' bilinguals.[12] For some students, recently arrived from non-English speaking nations, the weaker language is more often than not English, the majority language, that of the school, of monolingual peers and of the community as a whole. Very often these students will experience a sense of existing in a type of limbo, oscillating between home where the first

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[11] Saunders George, <u>Bilingual Children: From Birth to Teens</u>, (Avon, 1988) p 8.
[12] Saunders, <u>ibid</u>, p 9, concedes that even balanced bilinguals are usually "dominant" or more proficient in one of their two languages, although they may not be dominant in the same language in all areas.

language prevails and between school where they are submerged in a second language, little of which they actually understand.

Ireland of the 21st century is a vibrant mélange of colour, creed, culture, language and ethnicity. The past 8 years have seen mass inward migration onto our island in a movement led principally by returning Irish nationals and migrant workers, in addition to refugees, asylum seekers, and third level students. Though a sizeable 75% of these migrants are of Irish, British and American origin, a considerable 25% stem from areas of the EU and regions of the world where English may not necessarily be a first language.[13]

Origin of inward migrant to Ireland 1995-2001	Percentage	Number
Returned Irish	50%	123,100
UK	18%	45,600
Rest of EU	13%	33,400
USA	7%	16,600
Rest of world	12%	29,400

The children of many of these immigrant workers enter the Irish educational system at both primary and secondary level with very little if any English and are immediately confronted with a number of difficulties, linguistic and socio-cultural. They are now part of a system whose rules, regulations, procedures and practices may differ greatly to those of their previous schools, and suddenly they are participants in a learning process where for them a foreign language is the principle means of communication.

The Department of Education and Science recognises the obstacles that face many such students and it has sought to respond to the increasingly important English as a Second Language issue. An official Departmental document, based on a series of consultative meetings attended by a broad range of educational representative bodies, stipulates that

> *"additional teaching and non-pay resources be provided to schools at primary and second level to cater for the needs of pupils for whom English is not the mother tongue."* Moreover *"funds are being allocated to **Integrate Ireland Language Training** to provide a support programme for teachers responsible for the English language development of non-English speaking immigrant pupils."*[14]

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[13] The Central Statistics Office reported that in 2002 40,000 work permits were issued to migrant workers in Ireland of Latvian, American, Philippi no, Czech, and Polish origin. The main countries of origin for asylum seekers in Ireland in 2002 were Nigeria, Romania, Czech Republic, Moldova, and Congo DR. Some 11,634 asylum applications were received in Ireland last year.

[14] Department of Education and Science, *Promoting Anti-Racism and Interculturalism in Education – Draft Recommendations towards a National Action Plan, 3.3.2 & 3.3.3. (2002)*

Though government intentions are undeniably good and additional ESOL resources are most welcome it seems that the situation at the grassroots is proving problematic for management, teaching staff, and all students in the system. Within the 4 secondary schools I surveyed in the Dublin and Kildare area feelings of discomfort at the complexity of the English as a Second Language issue were expressed. The general consensus amongst principals and teachers was that the current provision of English language tuition for 2 years is not sufficient for many ESOL students. Given certain limited staffing resources it was felt that Departmental guidelines suggesting that *"English Language Tuition be provided to all who need it, regardless of place of birth"*[15] was unrealistic and a policy of "who needs it most" prevails in all these schools. Similar it was held that plans *"to further resource and develop ELT services and to ensure that students gain effective mastery of English for academic and social life"*[16] would be thwarted by budgetary constraints and that the English language progress of ESOL students would be decelerated by insufficient additional English language tuition. In one school with some 42 ESOL students and 3 support teachers it was reported feasible to allocate 2 recently arrived Romanian pupils with very poor English language skills a mere two weekly 40-minute sessions with language support staff within a 35-hour week timetable. Moreover it was reported that many ESOL support staff did not possess EFL qualifications, and the need for more specific training in this type of language work was highlighted in 3 of the 4 schools. All schools agreed that it was premature to celebrate linguistic and cultural diversity when evidently the language limitations of ESOL students in the mainstream classroom were adversely impacting on all students and funding as yet was insufficient to bring many ESOL students with poor English language skills to the stage where they could enjoy, actively participate and excel in their learning.

Yet all surveyed teachers and principals concurred that with time such students may adequately develop the skills to process more complex linguistic and subject matter. They accepted that in many cases bilingual students have higher levels of concept formation.

> "Intellectually (the bilingual's) experience with two languages systems seems to have left him with a mental flexibility, a superiority in concept formation, *and a more diversified set of mental abilities, in the sense that the patterns of abilities developed by bilinguals were more heterogeneous."*[17]

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[15] Ibid, Appendix 1, no 35.
[16] Ibid, Appendix 1, no 36.
[17] Peal Elizabeth & Lambert Wallace, *'Relation of bilingualism to intelligence',* Psychological Monographs, No 76, 1962, p 20.

It is supposed that exposure to a more complex environment charged with an increased number of social interactions contributes to greater adeptness at concept formation on the part of bilingual individuals. The advanced operational thinking among many bilingual students that I observed during my secondary school career in London very often accounted for excellent performances in subjects such as maths, science, art and in my own subject specialism, modern foreign languages. Their ability to separate sound from meaning very often contributed to more acute attention to structure and a greater readiness to reorganise sentences. 50% of Plumstead Manor secondary students that partook in my London questionnaires stated that their bilingualism in English and a community language, Punjabi, Gujerati, Hindi, or Turkish for example, facilitated their acquisition of a European language. Teachers interviewed in Ireland had noted that many non-national students with poor levels of English excelled at practical subjects such as maths, art, and physics whilst struggling with quite specific and demanding texts in the history, geography, and biology course books. It is quite probable therefore that in some students' cases the particular problem is not cognitive but rather linguistic. Successful planning of a support programme for each ESOL student upon entry to primary or secondary school will involve collaboration between parents, pupil, class teacher or subject teacher, and the language support teacher who may choose to carry out a form of assessment that will ascertain the new student's level of English. Such tests are not mandatory in Irish schools today, however. The Language Support Unit in Trinity College, Dublin receives funding from the Department of Education and Science and has devised a number of ESL tests that are available to primary and secondary schools. Nonetheless it is necessary to be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of various assessment tools so as not to bias our ESOL students. Whilst eliciting data about a child's English language competence they do not however identify capacities in other subjects. Moreover it has been commented that the nature of the assessment may erroneously disregard cultural or other language factors where a fluent English speaker who speak in one of the African English dialects has little understanding of, for example, the phrasal verbs so commonplace in Hiberno-English.

Not only are lack English language skills problematic for many ESOL students but also they constitute a barrier to the participation of many migrant parents in their children's education and in the school environment. The enrolment process of new non-national students, the presentation of relevant documentation, the participation of parents at parent-teacher meetings and the promotion of inter-ethnic relations among parent communities were all cited as occasions in which English language competences dictated the extent of involvement. The significance of language and literacy for adult asylum seekers in particular cannot be

overstated and fortunately at present a programme of ESOL provision is offered in VEC adult literacy schemes, though only to the extent that the Literacy budget allows.

>*"Language, first language and …alternative languages, are inextricably part of people's lives, their energy as learners and their sense of life's possibilities. Neither bilingualism nor the people I have talked to are marginal. Both have, in my view, something to tell us which may be central to learning and to people's lives."[18]*

In Plumstead Manor Secondary School, South-East London a comprehensive policy of teaching ESL was devised by the language development department accentuating the need for these pupils *"to share their experience of learning, to experience a sense of achievement, to be given the opportunity to communicate with peers, to listen without pressure to speak, and to acquire, practise and have valued language 1 literacy."* Teachers were encouraged to elaborate materials, worksheets, visuals, and explanations in which meaning was explicit. In March 1998 the school embarked on a project of training community language classroom assistants in conjunction with Greenwich University and Woolwich Polytechnic. The idea that Stage 1 and 2 ESL pupils might receive assistance with their schoolwork in their stronger language was warmly received. The British experience of multilingualism, rooted in and influenced by centuries of colonialisation, is a more varied and longer established one than that of our island[19]. Though Ireland is quite some distance away from such community language initiatives the Department of Education and Science, has already, in these early days of multilingualism in our contemporary primary and secondary schools, called for respect of our students' native languages and their continued development, where possible. It has also stated the recruitment of bilingual support staff as a future prospect. National Council for Curriculum and Assessment documentation recognises that values held of students and attitudes directed at students play a pivotal role in determining their levels of sustained learning and motivation. Given time, training, familiarity and progressive policy in this area I believe that we will learn to exploit the highly developed linguistic and cultural awareness that permeates our classrooms to the benefit of all students.

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[18] Miller Jane, <u>Many Voices</u>, (London, 1985), p 2.
[19] Though cultural diversity has been a feature of Irish society with communities of Travellers, Jewish, Chinese and Muslim part of our ethnic profile for many years, it is only since 1995 that there has been a proliferation in the number of people on our island for whom a language other than English is the first language.

Have you ever hurt
about baskets?
I have, seeing my grandmother weaving
for a long time.
Have you ever hurt about work?
I have, because my father works too hard
and tells how he works.
Have you ever hurt about cattle?
I have, because my grandfather has been working
on cattle for a long time.
Have you ever hurt about school?
I have, because I learned a lot of words
from school,
And they were not my words.

Apache child, Arizona
Cazden, C.B
Journal of Social Issues

Vol 26, No 2

2.2 Socio-political implications in the study of multiculturalism

"Multilingualism and multiculturalism are social phenomena and it is not possible to isolate them from their political contexts. Their different manifestations are invariably shot through with the values accorded and attached to them."

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The concept of multicultural Britain as a 'melting pot' in which diverse social, religious and ethnic groups coexist harmoniously is, in my opinion, an ideal constantly challenged. In many culturally pluralistic societies feelings of uncertainty and fear, ignorance and misunderstandings feed the perceptions of different social groups about each other. In present day France the immigration policies of the extreme right Front National under Jean-Maria Le Pen have amassed the support of some 38% of the French electorate, whilst in Germany the proliferation of vociferously anti-foreigner and anti-Semitic alliances are examples of increasing intolerance in our world. Dramatic shifts in the ethnic landscape of Irish society in recent years has initiated a spate of racist attacks and fomented a rise in racist attitudes. In a series of studies carried out in Ireland in 2001 the African Refugee Network questioned 40 refugees about their experiences. 75% of participants said that they were denied service because of skin colour whilst 25% of participants claimed to have been verbally abused. In a second study The Landsdowne Market Research group surveyed 1100 people aged 15 and over in a comprehensive study conducted countrywide and concluded that 27% of people were disturbed by the presence of minority groups. Additionally the findings of a Union of Students in Ireland study revealed that 39% of the 500 third-level students surveyed would find it difficult accepting a Traveller as a sibling's spouse whilst 20% were of the view that illegal

immigrants should be deported without exception.[20] Yet these findings reveal nothing new about a nation undergoing multicultural development. Historically our attitudes have been prejudiced and unjust towards the Traveller and Jewish communities that have long-since been part of the fabric of Irish society. For years their needs have been neglected in a culturally "homogenous" society unexposed and perhaps unprepared for the rapid social change that gripped Ireland in the late 1990s. The central role of an educational response that will promote acceptance, respect and even curiosity about difference cannot be overstated in our contemporary context of ethnic diversity and cultural pluralism.

As I perceive it schools with their classes, students and teachers are microcosms of society outside. In Ireland 18% of asylum seekers are schoolchildren[21], yet many students arrive at school with little understanding of the languages, customs and cultures of classmates. Their perceptions of other are tainted with insensitive generalizations and stereotypes and quite often the dominant social group develops an attitude of cultural and linguistic superiority. The values inculcated in our children today are critical to the future realisation of a society in which the rights of all individuals are respected. The sociologists Smith & Tomlinson (1989) believe that schools can have a profound effect on the nature of the interpersonal and interethnic relationships in society. Very often it is extremely difficult for students of ethnic backgrounds to find a strong self-identity and their own niche in school life. Bilingualism and biculturalism can contribute to sense of dividedness or dual existence. 90% of students surveyed in 4 Dublin and Kildare secondary schools <u>always</u> speak their mother tongue at home. This situation of "double ness" can have a profound impact on the personal-development of bilingual students, and their levels of attainment, educational and otherwise. For many pupils who wish to "fit in" the only means by which they might "be accepted" by the majority group in school is by denying the culture, dress, traditions, and language of the home. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment offers primary schools excellent suggestions for the support of second language learning, English, and the valuing of first language fluency in the mainstream classroom. It stresses that a positive attitude towards language and linguistic diversity should be communicated to all children in the class.[22] On occasions when indifference or even scorn is directed at a minority language and culture its users may cluster together to retain their language, and identity. 68% of non-national secondary school students I surveyed said that between and outside classes they mixed only with peers of the same ethnic group, as they felt safer and better understood by them. Only 25% stated that classmates had asked to be taught words from their different languages, and 40% had experienced incidences of racial

intolerance or verbal abuse. Educational organisations and institutions have a huge responsibility to encourage interest in cultural diversity, to develop sensitivity to difference, to promote an objective analysis of one's own cultural practices and to prevent racism within schools.

The World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance held in Durban, South Africa in August 2001 provided an opportunity for each participating country to examine its human rights record and to discuss strategies to embrace world diversity in the 21st century. Following on from this very important initiative the Irish government set about developing and implementing a National Action Plan Against Racism (NPAR) that includes a critical section on intercultural education at all levels. The document *'Promoting Anti-Racism and Interculturalism in Education – Draft Recommendations towards a National Action Plan'*, commissioned by the Department of Education and Science and developed by the City of Dublin VEC Curriculum Development Unit, is the fruit of a consultative process involving statutory agencies, non-government organisations, and educational advisors, and it consisted of open submissions, nationwide oral hearings, and a national conference in November 2002. Recommendations made in this document are based on feedback received throughout consultation and echo loudly the advice of Amnesty and other NGOs. My interpretation is of a four-pronged approach with

    a) Department of Education policy based on interculturalism with target setting, realistic timescale implementation, adequate teacher-training and resourcing, and reliable reporting and reviewing key components.

    b) At school level the importance of anti-racist and bullying documentation incorporating a clear set of procedures to be followed by staff and students is accentuated. Toys, teaching materials, and activities should have an intercultural focus, and all members of the school community should be encouraged to contribute to a school that values cultural diversity. The urgency of additional English language support for many ESOL students and their families is recognised. Furthermore school policy on recruitment of staff and admission of students must be equal and fair, transparent and unbiased.[23]

    c) An anti-racist, intercultural ethos that celebrates diversity in its many forms, cultural, linguistic, socio-economic and gender-based, should permeate all levels of the education sector.

Draft Recommendations towards a National Action Plan, Appendix 1, 21, (2002). "Agreed guidelines on anti-racist policy and codes of practice from admissions, integration, and for monitoring and reviewing these, to be developed nationally by the relevant authorities. National and local policies should explicitly register principles of inclusion and anti-discrimination relating to ethnic identity, religious affiliation, economic status, prior education experience, and residency in Ireland."

d) The expertise of traveller and ethnic interest groups, NGOs, National and International networks, parents, staff, and management at local level should drive dialogue and nurture policy in the creation of a culturally pluralistic and democratic educational system.

Within schools interviewed it was felt that some recommendations were unrealistic, perhaps even unattainable, whilst others were seen to be innovative and welcomed. There was consensus that implementation of equality recommendations regarding comprehensive education supports in the form of books, fees, uniforms, travel allowances etc and the provision of English Language tuition for all the family would be limited by inadequate resources and funding. Similarly the timeframe envisaged for the elaboration of culturally appropriate assessment procedures and the study of community languages and literature was questioned. Nonetheless suggestions for the design of antiracist policies, until recently "unnecessary" in all schools surveyed, were welcomed and it was agreed that they would be drawn up in a democratic manner influenced greatly by the input of parent committees, student representatives, staff members and senior management. Each of the four schools was at a different stage in developing an inclusive school but all school plans endorsed an ethos of equality of access and participation.[24] Whilst some intercultural targets set by schools were to be addressed in the short term, for example hanging classroom displays that represent diversity in Ireland, organising assemblies of an intercultural nature, painting signs that welcome and communicate in a variety of community languages, others were more long term and impacted on the social environment of the school. It was commented that immigrant parent participation on parents committees and in school life in general was minimal, quite often due to limited English language skills. However special effort was being made to introduce new parents at celebratory evenings, prizegivings, and parent/teacher meetings.

The sociologist Sivanandan suggests that

> "Racism is about power and not about prejudice. Racism never stands still, it changes shape, size, colours, purpose, function – with changes in the economy, the social structure, *the system, and, above all, the challenge, the resistance to that system. In the field of employment, housing, health, and education, minority groups are discriminated against.*"[25]

It is unjust to expect to our schools to be paragons of perfect intercultural practice with strong, purposeful, antiracist policies when the policies in place in the world outside their walls smacks

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[24] Such is required in the Education Act (1998).

[25] Sivanandan A, in Pumfrey P & Gajendra V, Cultural Diversity and the Curriculum, (London, 1993)

of discrimination and ethnocentric interests. Though the Irish government has ratified the 1965 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination[26] and has written anti-discrimination into Irish law and educational policy[27] further legislation for legal rights, and will, resources, and drive to implement them is needed to promote widespread respect for difference and otherness. Our immigrant policy must provide protection and rights for the 40,000 migrant workers in Ireland each year, many of which are at the mercy of their employers who retain their work permits. In addition asylum seekers, fleeing terror, persecution, poverty or destitution at home should not be placed in a position where they arrive at points of entry in the last stages of pregnancy, are prevented from working in the state and contributing to the economy, and are very often forcefully returned to their homelands some months later after trawling through and submitting complicated but unsuccessful asylum applications.[28] Similarly it must be said that to be fair to all people on this island the government should ensure that the level of benefits to asylum seekers are in line with those of Irish citizens in similar need of support.

There is no instant solution to the immigration issue. One thing is certain though. If we are to create a pluralistic society that embraces mutual respect and celebrates differences of language, colour, creed, and culture then an unbiased and equitable approach must be spearheaded at the top and reinforced in a responsible media so that the message trickles down through organisational and educational institutions to nourish the grassroots consciousness.

2.3 Multiculturalism – the role of a revised, intercultural curriculum

> *"There is inevitable significance attached to what is institutionalised within the curriculum and what is left out of it. That significance is educational as well as politically symbolic."[29]*
>
> *Wright, 1978*

The pluralistic nature of 21st century Ireland demands a revision and re-jigging of the National Curriculum along intercultural lines. There is a real need to mediate and adapt the existing curriculum to capitalize on the multiple advantages, linguistic, social and cultural, of the ethnic

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Paper on Adult Education, 'Adult Education in an Era of Lifelong Learning' (July, 2000) embodies three core principles – two of which are equality and interculturalism.

[28] Declan Keane (Master of Hollow St Hospital, Dublin) stated in a radio interview in October 2003 that between 1999 and 2000 there was a substantial increase in the number of non-EU nationals arriving in Ireland in the ninth month of their pregnancy. In 2000 70% of non-national mothers admitted in the hospital were from Sub-Saharan Africa. In January 2003 the Supreme Court decreed that the non-national parents of children born here should not automatically receive Irish citizenship.

[29] Wright B, in Pumfrey P & Gajendra V, ibid.

minorities that pass through it. When the Swann Report (the Second Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Education of Children from Ethnic Minority Groups: Education for All) was published in Great Britain in 1985 it appeared that the moment had arrived for the implementation of

> *"a programme that would reshape the curriculum in keeping with the liberal rhetoric of intercultural understanding and reciprocity."[30]*

However in a society polarized by public debate between those who advocated the reaffirmation of traditional values and educational boundaries, and those who challenged the dominance of national language and majority culture, progressive pedagogy and curriculum developments in England and Wales proved to be very contentious issues. The mélange of cultures that composed British society constituted a challenge to the nationalist, assimilationist ideals embraced by the Conservatives under Thatcher and Major. Though the endeavours of seven working groups for the secondary school subjects of Maths, Science, Technology, History, Geography, and Modern Languages, ensured the inclusion of a more comprehensive cultural perspective on curricular innovations[31], the educationalist Gurnah (1987) noticed a discrepancy between the rhetoric and the reality of an educational initiative (the Swann Committee) that was far less intercultural than it had intended to be.

Undeniably the subject content of Irish education is culturally biased. 75% of teachers surveyed in Dublin and Kildare schools confirmed the limiting and restrictive nature of the National Curriculum. They described the difficulties encountered in attempting to incorporate cultural and critical awareness into an already extensive curriculum in a classroom situation in which many students and teachers are struggling with the problematic issue of English as a Second Language. Though 85% of teachers had expressed open interest in the origins, languages and cultures of their non-national students and, moreover, had encouraged all students to objectively analyse their own attitudes to difference, it was felt that further manipulation of the curriculum along intercultural lines would involve considerable extra time, thought and planning for an already stretched workforce. In Ireland there has been governmental recognition of the Euro centric nature of much of current curricula that requires a broadening of content to explore wide and varied strands of world history, languages, arts, sciences, economies, social and religious traditions, and of the newness of an intercultural pedagogic approach for many teacher. After a lengthy process of planning, drafting, consultation, and redrafting the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment has

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[30] Jones C, *Intercultural Perspectives on the National Curriculum for England and Wales, (London, 1991).*

[31] The Science Working Group contained a 'Science in Action' component that related Science to culture and society. The English Working Group incorporated novelists, poets, and playwrights that had not traditionally formed part of the English literary 'canon'.

completed a document offering detailed guidelines on good practice for primary schools in this area. The suggestions are based on the existing curriculum and it is planned that they will be in place for January 2004. In effect they are detailed schemes of work for each stage of primary education replete with intelligent and innovative suggestions for the delivery of a more culturally respectful curricula.[32] In 3rd and 4th class Maths, for example, core elements of the Maths curriculum are identified and useful ideas for the incorporation of themes of identity and belonging, similarity and difference, human rights and responsibilities, equality, and conflict resolution are provided. The multicultural treatment of these themes is cleverly woven into the teaching of the subject and allow for an interesting pedagogic approach. In anticipation of similar guidelines for the Irish secondary school level it may be insightful to examine practices of intercultural education already in place in the UK. I observed these strategies first hand during my time secondary teaching in multicultural London, and they complement and reiterate many NCCA primary school suggestions.[33]

Mathematics & Science – Many teachers I spoke to agreed that it was very difficult to incorporate cultural awareness into the teaching of Mathematics, Information Technology and Science. However, they might introduce a religious dimension, for instance, in the calculation of the Chinese and Jewish New Years, and the Muslim tradition of Ramadan. Students who have travelled abroad on family holidays or exchange programmes may be familiar with alternative forms of measurements. Understanding of currency and exchange rates necessitates an explanation of international boundaries and socio-economic differences. Students may be particularly surprised to discover that Maths were invented by cultures from Asia or Africa, i.e., India, Egypt, and China. In Technical Drawing the history of 2D and 3D shapes (Tangram shapes from China and Origami from Japan) may interest pupils and allow for comparison of shapes in different environments (igloos in Iceland contrast with houses balanced on stilts in China.) In Science one teacher told me that he emphasised the Arabic aspect of Chemistry and used affordable resources, charts, diagrams, and maps in addition to his knowledge to support cultural awareness. In a study of the periodic table students investigated regions of the world where specific minerals were scare and abundant, thus crossing into the Geography curriculum.

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[32] Similar guidelines for the secondary school level are presently being drafted. The process is overseen by a steering committee with representatives from teachers unions, management bodies, traveller education, the African Women's Network, and experts in secondary education. The approach and delivery of the secondary-level intercultural curriculum will be distinct from that of primary level due to age and curriculum differences. Guidelines for all subjects will be given to whole school to Junior Certificate. NCCA (October, 2003).
[33] In its document *Promoting Anti-Racism and Interculturalism in Education, Chapter 5, 5.11, the* Department of Education and Science recommends that research should be carried out into examples of best practice elsewhere in European institutions.

Food Technology – The introduction of foodstuffs and recipes from a wide range of countries will educate students to the different types of balanced and nutritious diets used by humans across different cultures. They should be alerted to the fact that many of the foodstuffs we eat on a daily basis originated elsewhere e.g. the potato crop, which they may have felt "belonged" historically to the Irish, came from South America. An explanation of the diet of particular religions and of the beliefs underlying the consumptions and exclusion of certain food will elaborate on the sociological, ethnographic, and cultural factors that affect people's eating habits.

Music – The invaluable inclusion of western classical music notwithstanding, it is imperative that pupils of all cultural backgrounds see their own musical heritage adequately represented within a multi-cultural curriculum. The words of Michael Marland appeared in a 1996 edition of the Education Guardian,

> *"The non-statutory examples of the aspects of study for music are unexpectedly Euro centric, with only a single mention of 'calypso' to balance 27 western composer."*

Students should learn of the influence of Jewish synagogal songs on Gregorian chant, and no doubt will be intrigued to study the impact that African tribal drumbeats have had on the dance music of today. There is a plethora of inexpensive material for the teaching of world music. Recordings of music from many different communities can be brought to class by students, as can instruments that parents might play at home. Pupils should be given the opportunity to practise, play and record with pan-pipes from Latin America, steel-pan and calypso from the West Indies, various drums from Africa, and traditional Irish instruments. They should listen to, sing and perform the music of artists to whom they relate and who's work deals with human rights issues and the impact of war (U2 'Walk On', Live Aid 'Feed the World', Dolores Keane 'The Lion', Dire Straits 'Brothers in Arms', '1812 Overture' by Tchaikovsky). Moreover they should identify similarities and differences in musical styles and study cultural borrowings and learning from each other. (By way of Vivaldi's 'Four Seasons' students may learn of differences in world climate as they examine world regions that undergo only two seasonal changes, one humid and the other dry.)

English – *"as a subject, English has great scope for open discussion concerning beliefs, attitudes and feelings underpinning racism in a range of media."*

> *(National Union of Teachers, Great Britain, 1997)*

Themes and thoughts that run through novels and drama very often fuel powerful debate in the classroom about socio-political issues. The literature of all people can be explored in the analysis of art, life, love, and death. Graphic visuals and visits from community writers and ethnic poets and artists unearth a Pandora's box of cultural differences and communalities. Newspaper clippings and extracts of live media lend themselves to interesting discussions about stereotypes in contemporary society. Texts dealing with fear and aggression allow for suggestions as to how best diffuse interpersonal and wider conflict.

Modern Foreign Languages – As regards my own subject specialism, there is much to say in favour of incorporating cultural awareness into the classroom. When learning a language students should be aware of the extent to which these subjects are spoken, and with the aid of a map they can conceptualise the importance of French, Spanish or German in the world. Our food, clothes, lifestyles, customs can be compared with those of the Spanish, French and German speaking world, and indeed those of other countries as represented by their bilingual and bicultural peers. Students are immersed in a week-long course of language awareness in 1st year, drawing on the vast reserves of linguistic skill in the classroom to determine, for example, how one counts from one to ten in English, French, Spanish, Italian, Yoruba, Polish etc. Many Modern Foreign Language departments in British secondary schools encourage bilingual students to sit GCSE and A-Level exams in their mother tongue. In many schools community languages are taught outside school hours and parents are urged to provide their children with as much input as possible in the home language. Radio and TV, libraries, newspaper and other literature, in addition to Saturday schools, and the linguistic and cultural support provided by various religious institutions are cited as invaluable tools in the development of bilingualism and biculturalism.

The NCCA is keen to address the concerns of teachers who fear that this new intercultural initiative is just another "add-on" to an already stretched primary school curriculum. The Council stress that intercultural education is not confined to one single subject. Nor cannot be taught in a designated one-hour weekly slot. They believe that it is embedded in all subjects. Suggestions in their document alert teachers to existing opportunities in the curriculum for the promotion of cultural awareness and the analysis of difference. Moreover they provide these professionals with imaginative and alternative ways of approaching well-worn subject matter and dispel the belief that intercultural education involves time-consuming elaboration of new material. On the micro level teachers are best placed to celebrate the cultural diversity that is an essential component of contemporary Irish society.

3 Conclusion

Contemporary Ireland is more ethnically diverse than ever before, and demographic data suggests that it is becoming increasingly so.[34] International trends demonstrate that present-day society is more mobile than in the past and the constant movement of people across borders and cultural divides has huge implications for our educational systems.

It is estimated that in Irish schools multilingual and multicultural students speak over 50 languages other than English. Part 1 of this paper examined the implications of linguistic diversity in the modern-day classroom. I discussed the often-problematic issue of English as a Second Language and stressed the need for more governmental initiatives and funding to improve the situation on the ground. I looked at the interpretative, analytical and performing skills of English as Second Language students, and highlighted the benefits of linguistic diversity for all pupils when conditions are right.

Crispin Jones (1991) maintains that multiculturalism should never be theorized separately from the socio-economic and socio-political contextual conditions surrounding them. In the second section of this paper I concluded that nation state orientations have the potential to shape societal attitudes toward minority groups. I mentioned the role of a responsible and unbiased media, and the importance of balanced and just legislation. At school level I encouraged more policies of an anti-racist nature and practices that reinforce respect for difference.

Aspects of the National Curriculum reveal a certain amount of Euro centricity and cultural bias. New educational initiatives in Irish primary schools provide well thought out ideas for exploiting the existing curriculum to intercultural advantage. Part 3 of this paper describes strategies that secondary teachers might use to make the content of their classes more culturally and intellectually stimulating.

Change, though often resisted, can bring much good. If the necessary structures are put in place to manage change then its merits will be manifold. Ireland has undergone significant change to become the culturally pluralistic nation that it is today. A responsible leadership, an accessible workplace, a respectful educational system, and a well-informed public, can make multiculturalism here an unqualified good.

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[34] In 2002 40,000 work permits were issued in Ireland to migrants from outside the EU, in comparison to 36,000 work permits in 2001. In 2002 11,634 asylum applications were received in Ireland, an increase in 1,309 from the previous year. (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, 2003).

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