

# **Language Ideologies in Irish Secondary Schools: A raciolinguistic approach**

Stephen Lucek, University College Dublin, Ireland

## **Abstract**

Educators are in a unique position when it comes to enforcing language ideologies. On the one hand, they are tasked with preparing young people for the world that they will encounter after graduation. On the other hand, they have a duty of care to their students' well-being. Exploring the language ideologies of educators has proven to be insightful in understanding how raciolinguistic ideologies are prevalent in education. These studies are predicated on a deficit model of disadvantage that is held by many educators. The current paper takes a look at sociolinguistic diversity in Dublin secondary schools: how secondary school principals deal with social class differences in speech and how principals' ideologies contribute to, and are shaped by, these experiences. Drawing from professional practice interviews with six principals, I will categorise the principals' attitudes to linguistic diversity through the everyday sociolinguistic practice in their schools using a language ideology perspective. What we find are principals using Standard Language Ideology and/or a deficit model of disadvantage. When viewed through a raciolinguistic lens, this creates a social-class based construction of whiteness and non-whiteness. The principals' attitudes do not only apply to their students, but extend to teachers in the school as well as society at large. The paper concludes with considerations for how to address socially diverse students in schools, which currently lies outside the official guidance for principals from the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA).

*Keywords:* Language ideologies; raciolinguistics; educational disadvantage; socioeconomic class; linguistic discrimination

## **Introduction**

The current study examines the language ideologies of secondary school principals in Dublin. The aim of this paper is to investigate how secondary school principals handle the task of including otherness in schools where they have little advice and fewer resources to do so. Principals ultimately rely on their own language ideologies to guide their everyday practice. This will be examined with data gathered through a set of professional practice interviews with principals at six Dublin secondary schools. In

considering the principals and their responsibilities, I aim to answer the question, “How do principals view social class-marked language variation in Irish secondary schools?” I will begin with a short consideration of previous studies as well as the context of the current study. I will then describe the methods that were followed. The findings section examines the language ideologies of Irish secondary school principals. Finally, the discussion of the pertinent issues and a conclusion of what these data indicate will point towards possible avenues of further research and policy.

## **Background**

Recent studies into language and education have focused on the ideologies at play. Studies in this area tend to focus on socially diverse contexts (see Cushing 2022) where sociolinguistic diversity is viewed through the lens of raciolinguistics, an identification of the systematic othering of language practices by majority language users using race as a tool of enforcement (see Rosa 2016). In the sections that follow, I will discuss how we can view any linguistic othering through the lens of raciolinguistics.

### **Race, social class and language ideology**

The larger framework that this paper follows is that of language ideologies (see Irvine & Gal, 2000). Within education, there is a tradition of viewing language practices as a function of power dynamics in language, which is an inherent perspective in language ideologies research (see generally Cushing & Clayton 2024). Language ideologies in education are investigated from the perspective of linguistic disadvantage in Lippi-Green (1997), but begin to take on new life with the emergence of the raciolinguistic perspective over the past number of years (see, e.g. Rosa 2016). Snell (2013) shows that students in a working class school in north-east England use standard and nonstandard

forms, crafting a repertoire of features that semiotically construct identity. Cushing (2022) makes clear the place of education as a site of preserving linguistic purism in England. In exploring the intricate structures of linguistic inequality, Cushing notes that taking a raciolinguistic approach “also attends to social class and how this operates as an axis of stigma” (2022, p. 14).

If we are to consider language through the lens of race, we must radically rethink how whiteness is constructed (see, *inter alia*, Gerald 2022; Swift 2024). This approach of constructing, reconstructing and negotiating the status of ‘whiteness’ enables a dynamic view of inequality. Whiteness is not allocated to all people with white skin (Cushing 2022, p. 38), but is a locally-sourced and constantly renegotiated social construct. As such, the relationship between middle class and working class speech forms is similar to that between racialised and white speech forms in other jurisdictions (see Rosa & Flores 2017; Lucek 2021). This local construction of whiteness repeats the differentiation between socioeconomic groups that has been drawn between ethnic groups. In this way, they are essentially mirror processes: social differentiation establishes similar frameworks as those that are established through ethnic differentiation (see Cushing 2022; Swift 2024).

Language ideologies have been described as a “system of ideas about social and linguistic relationships” (Irvine 1989, p. 255). The raciolinguistic perspective takes race as the motivation for linguistic othering. Race as a social construct speaks to “the co-naturalization of race and language in relation to longstanding histories of colonialism and nation-state formation” (Rosa & Flores, 2017, p. 635). In fact, the nonstandardised features of learners of English are often used to disregard and stigmatise non-white speakers (Flores & Rosa 2015) while there is an invalidation of language, described as ‘languagelessness’ and loss of legitimacy as language users (Rosa 2016, p. 174). These

forces are clear in Lucek (2021) where the semiotic process of erasure of nonstandardised speech (Irvine & Gal 2000, et seq.) is applied to the raciolinguistic proxy of “social class, where students from less affluent backgrounds simply ‘don’t have the language’ required, indicating languagelessness seen in raciolinguistic studies” (Lucek 2021, p. 219). Likewise, Cushing & Snell (2023) find that “this tripartite co-naturalisation of language, race, and class is key to the raciolinguistic perspective” (p. 367). Thus, race and class must be considered together as they shape each other and enact the same types of polarisation. With this knowledge, let us now look at how standardised varieties can be weaponised.

### *Standard Language Ideology*

When we devalue the nonstandardised language of specific individuals, we are engaging with Standard Language Ideology (SLI). This is “a bias toward an abstracted, idealized, homogeneous spoken language which is imposed from above, and which takes as its model the written language” (Lippi-Green 1997, p. 166). This power imbalance doesn’t allow for legitimate forms of variation (see Milroy & Milroy 1999). Perceptions of differences between socially-marked varieties of Irish English are well known at this point (for a comprehensive overview, see Lucek 2024) and more recent focussed studies (Lucek & Garnett 2020; Garnett & Lucek 2021; Lucek (forthcoming)) show that speakers of Irish English have deeply formed opinions and beliefs about speakers’ socioeconomic status and about the legitimacy of standardised language. These sorts of perceptions in Dublin typically attribute pleasant speaking styles and poshness to the South Side of Dublin and harsh speaking styles and low socioeconomic class to the North Side of Dublin (Lucek & Garnett 2020, p. 159–166). Legitimacy and standardness are attributed to the South Side. Perceptions of affluence pairing with

legitimacy are not uncommon in other varieties of Irish English (see Hickey 2005, p. 99–107; Lucek 2024), which help to reinforce stereotypes that are reflected in modern fiction writing (see Amador-Moreno 2012 on the *Ross O’Carroll-Kelly* stories by Paul Howard). To this point, Moore (2011) reinforces a hierarchy of desirable accents in Ireland where internet message board users of the high prestige “D4 accent” are ashamed of working class and rural accents.

Hickey (2021) cites an 18<sup>th</sup> century elocution guide as an indication that hundreds of years of speech training has revealed long-standing classist attitudes regarding correct pronunciation still seen in modern Ireland. Since independence from England in 1922, “the notion of polishing pupils’ accents was widespread and elocution classes were offered as additional instruction in schools in the afternoons” (p. 20). A private “accent reduction industry” replaced accent reduction in schools since the 1970s (pp. 21–26).

In a recent case study of an Irish secondary school, Lucek (2021) found that the principal of the school has a top-down approach to encouraging the students to learn and use a standardised variety of English despite there being little to no support for, or use of, this variety in their community. Elsewhere, we can see SLI reinforced in schools in the UK (Cushing & Snell 2023; Cushing & Clayton 2024). Inspection reports from the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted) show clear evidence of the inspectors’ own language ideologies used as a barometer for the language practices of English schoolchildren.

## **Supports**

Ireland operates a school inspection process similar to those conducted by Ofsted.

Unlike their Ofsted counterparts, the Whole School Evaluation report does not ask for

any narrative on student language, whether this be in the form of vocabulary, structures, accent or use of inappropriate language (e.g. cursing, slang). Language use is not mentioned in Whole School Evaluations of the six schools in this study. There is no official support from the Department of Education and Skills regarding English language use. In a search of guidance and policy materials and Department of Education circulars, there is no mention of socially-marked features of English and how to accommodate these. What is evident is that education pushes students towards what it terms Standard English pronunciation in oral communication (PDST 2014, p. 6). As it is the only document that specifically addresses standard pronunciation in Irish schools, the PDST document is widely used on school websites throughout Ireland.

Some school policies are posted on school websites. Each of the six schools in this study has a website that is updated periodically, usually featuring the successes of current students and promoting their ethos. On the whole, the policies are largely copied from one another, perhaps from a set template. None of the six schools mentions socioeconomic class or varieties of English in any of their policies. Principals were asked during the interview if there is a language policy in their school. Each principal indicated that there was no explicit language policy. In expulsion criteria three of the schools mention abusive language as a criteria.

It may be valuable now to consider how sociolinguistic variation within monolingual classrooms is approached by secondary school principals in Ireland without any specific guidance. The next sections report on a study of school principals in Dublin and how they view linguistic diversity, from a sociolinguistic variation perspective.

## **Methods**

The data for this paper consists of professional practice interviews with secondary school principals in various parts of Dublin between November 2018 and May 2020. The interviews each lasted approximately one hour and were recorded in the principal's office in each school (one interview was held in May 2020 via Zoom due to Covid-19 restrictions). Principals were assured that their data would be treated confidentially and has been de-identified as much as possible.

The interviews with the principals took the form of a structured interview. Some basic demographic questions led to the more substantive questions about what the principals think about their school, their teachers, their students and the students' parents. Specifically for this paper, I will be concerned with the following sample questions: Do you have a lot of difficulty when it comes to language use? Do you believe that it is the education system's job to limit nonstandardised language use in schools? Do you believe that these features can affect a student's future employability?

In total, 79 schools were approached in the autumn of 2018. These schools were strategically targeted for a number of factors. These factors are described below. One factor that was not considered is the language of instruction. There are 10 Irish medium of instruction schools in the Dublin area that could have taken part in the study, but each declined participation. In total, six schools are included in this study.

### **Demographics of Schools**

Dublin has traditionally been divided into the North Side and the South Side. The perception that the North Side is more working class and the South Side more middle

class has roots in the colonial period (see Lucek 2024; Lucek (forthcoming)). Students are generally from the area surrounding the school they attend (see Lucek 2021). This cohort includes two schools from the North side of the city and three from the South side. The fee-paying school has students from all over the city.

In the Dublin area, as of school year 2019/20, there are 35 all-boys schools, 45 schools are all-girls, and 103 are mixed (Department of Education and Skills). In the current cohort, there are 2 all-boys schools, 2 all-girls schools and 2 mixed schools.

The vast majority of secondary schools in Ireland are non-fee-paying schools. Of 715 secondary schools in Ireland, only 52 are fee-paying, or just 7.2% of the total. The majority of the fee-paying schools in Ireland are in Dublin, with 36 fee-paying schools that represent 19% of the total number of schools in Dublin. In this cohort, one school charges fees while the others do not.

A freely available resource that amalgamates data from various other official sources is Pobal.ie, a non-governmental organisation that is focused on drawing attention to socioeconomic disparities in Ireland. Their map of social deprivation classifies Ireland by small area datapoints that give a fine-grained picture of where areas of social deprivation exist in the city. Using census data, Pobal.ie provide a simple mapping tool that shows a colour-coded representation of affluence and deprivation according to a seven-point scale where 1 is ‘extremely disadvantaged’ and 7 is ‘very affluent’ (pobal.ie). In this cohort one of the schools is from an area considered to be ‘very affluent’, one school is in an ‘affluent’ area, one is from the ‘marginally above average’ group, one is ‘marginally below average’, one is in a ‘disadvantaged’ area and one is in a ‘very disadvantaged’ area. A summary of these criteria are found in Table 1, below.

### **Table 1**

	<b>BF1</b>	<b>GN1</b>	<b>GN2</b>	<b>MN1</b>	<b>MN2</b>	<b>BN2</b>
<b>Fees</b>	Y	N	N	N	N	N
<b>Socioeconomic class (approx.)</b>	(6)	4	7	2	3	5
<b>Area</b>	N/A	South	South	South	North	North

### *Summary of the schools in this study*

In this table, schools are coded for: the sex of the students (B for boys; G for girls; and M for mixed); whether or not they charge fees (F for fees, N for no fees); and the side of the city of each school (N.B. school BF-1 is an all-boys school where students come from a variety of areas around the city).

### **Analysis**

These data are viewed through the lens of language ideologies (see Irvine 2021). This involved transcribing the interviews before conducting a case study analysis of one school (see Lucek 2021). From here, themes were identified and analysis was then conducted across the interviews. The responses are reported here under themes of general points around classroom language use, attitudes towards students, attitudes towards teachers and finally under the theme of linguistic discrimination.

### **Findings**

In this section, general observations about the interviews on the whole are presented alongside an analysis of the language attitudes and ideologies of the principals and how some comparisons and contrasts can be drawn between the principals based on some of

the school classification data. Data here will be focused on classroom-level language use.

### **Classroom language use**

The principals in this study see a disconnect between oral and written styles, as seen in 1, below. The disconnect between written and oral language is also seen elsewhere (see Snell & Cushing 2022). Students make up words (1a.), write as they speak or hear language used orally (1b.), but one principal (1c.) does have an appreciation for the differences in appropriateness in discourse types.

- 1a. I suppose just the words they're using, like the made-up words they're using. (P-GN1)
- 1b. Like what we're seeing is they write the way they speak. (P-MN1)
- 1c. The language that we're all using does change a little bit. But I do think there are different ways of speaking in different situations, definitely. (P-BN2)

This can be seen as an aspect of ideologies where specific structures are at odds with the politics of adhering to a standardised variety (see Lippi-Green 1997; Milroy & Milroy 1999; Cushing 2022). In consideration of the advice on oral language instruction, these ideologies are in concert with what is advised in PDST (2014). I will return to this point at the end of this section.

Principals are keenly aware of linguistic differentiation between their students and wider society. Some descriptions of a standardised variety of English are found in 2a. and 2b., below. Contrast this with 2c. from a principal in school where students do not use a standardised variety of English. This attitude toward a middle class accent reinforces standardised English as the idealised model (Cushing 2022, p. 9).

- 2a. Somehow the students here pick up this [middle class] accent. (P-GN2)
- 2b. I don't know if [middle-class speech is] taught or caught, but they have it. (P-BF1)

- 2c. When our students go to [review classes over Easter break] ... they tell me that they're afraid to speak up because people will know where they're from. (P-GN1)

Some schools, like GN1, seen in 2c., “don’t have problems with language use” (P-GN1) in their day-to-day activities, but trouble arises outside of their local area. One principal attributed this to the “low number of immigrants in catchment area” (P-GN2). These are in their own ways constructions of whiteness in the data, one that is more aligned with traditional constructions of race (see Gerald 2022; Cushing 2022; Swift 2024). There was also a sense that the Boys’ fee-paying school fosters its own middle class accent that is either “caught or taught” (P-BF1). For others, the high use of a prestige variety in schools (P-GN2) allows principals to disregard socially-marked varieties. The attitudes that principals have towards their students are echoes of the languagelessness of Latinx students in Rosa (2016) and assumes that there is an educational deficit to using language that is nonstandardised.

### **Attitudes towards students**

Principals from low socioeconomic class areas impart deficit attitudes to students (see Valencia 1997) where disadvantage (whether this be socioeconomic disadvantage or linguistic disadvantage) is something that causes a deficit in their lives that cannot be overcome. One principal referred to their students as “no-hopers” (P-MN2) while another principal invoked the raciolinguistic notion of languagelessness (Rosa 2016) when saying that they “wouldn’t have the language” (P-MN1) to really get ahead in life. This is explained through the example of securing work placements for Transition Year (4<sup>th</sup> year in secondary school) students in 3a., below. This is contrasted with P-MN1 in 3b., who has difficulty understanding their students in an echo of the SLI advice in PDST (2014):

- 3a. They can only work where their language will bring them, you know... They don't have the words that some other, a lot of other kids... they don't have those words and they're not given the words and then they're not given the confidence. (P-MN2)
- 3b. Their daily everyday language that they use in school and outside of school is completely different to what we're trying to teach them. (P-MN1)

Principals at the schools at the middle of the SEC spectrum have complex attitudes towards students noting that their students are called out each time they open their mouths in public (P-GN1 at 2c.) as other students from different parts of the city would know where they're from immediately (see Lucek 2021). While this may appear to be an empathetic connection that this principal is making with their students, we will see later at 7. how this principal views the language that these students and their parents use. As well as seeing adoption of the standardised variety early in life as a benefit to the students, principals often do not use the same variety as their students or teachers, creating a mismatch between ideology and everyday function. This will be addressed again at the end of this section.

### **Attitudes towards teachers**

The principals in this study had very different impressions of their own teachers and how they relate to the students. Principals who are aware of their teachers' linguistic practices take one of two paths, as seen in 4, below. Either they encourage the teachers to be role models for their students (4a.) or they discourage the teachers who present 'otherness' (4b.):

- 4a. Not a lot, but there's... a few teachers are from the area. I think that's good. I think they can understand the kids a bit better than us and help us. And, you know, there's a higher level of empathy. (P-GN1)
- 4b. I would know, because I live on the north side, I would know fantastic people and I know particularly a girl who's fabulous and went on to do teaching; a very strong Dublin accent. And I knew she wouldn't survive here with the kids and the parents. She'd have a struggle. (P-GN2)

The principal of GN1 mentioned that their own accent was very much out of character for the neighbourhood of their school. This principal grew up in a self-described ‘very affluent’ part of Dublin and had never been to the area where they are now principal. By and large, the principals in the socially disadvantaged schools described their teachers as ‘from the area’ and if not, they tend to leave the school after a short period of time. Indeed, there are principals of socially disadvantaged schools in this cohort who reported that their local teachers are role models for their students and are thus crucial to fostering ambition and well-being amongst the students.

### **Linguistic Discrimination**

The most prominent theme that emerges from these data is that of linguistic discrimination. On the topic of language discrimination, there was a question that each principal was asked, as seen in the examples below. That question “Can language hold your students or any students back?” was met with a very similar theme: yes, but we don’t know what to do about it. In 5, the principal of the all-boy’s fee paying school knows very well that strong accents can be limiting to other children, as they also think that their students all use a middle-class accent (see 2b., above). This can be seen as accent reduction (Hickey 2021), where a middle-class accent is either “caught or taught”.

5. I have a feeling that people pick up very, very quickly that, you know, if you have a very, very strong accent and it’s difficult to follow, that that is going to limit your communication skills and that’s going to limit, you know, your employability probably because someone will make a judgement... So I would say probably, and I’m not sure that we’re even aware of this, but when I’m doing interviews myself I would be very focused on whether the person is very articulate or not, less so on whether their accent is strong. (P-BF1)

At the other all-boys school, BN2, the principal here thinks that it's the students' own background that holds them back because they are limited, despite not residing in an area of recognised disadvantage, as seen in 6.

6. A lot of it has to do with their background as well but some of them are afraid to even, how would you say, try and improve themselves you know because of the way they'd be looked upon at home. (P-BN2)

There is an elaboration at 7. on the themes of linguistic discrimination from the principal in GN1, who earlier was quoted as being teased by the students for their own middle-class accent as the students are by-and-large working class. Here, the principal's spouse teases them because they are using what is understood as being a working class accent in saying *comeer* for 'come here'. It is this principal's acknowledgement of their students facing discrimination at review sessions at 2c., but also making a joke about taking on their working class accents that demonstrates a lack of empathy.

7. I think I've been really privileged that I've never had to worry about standing up and speaking in front of people because I've had a very socially acceptable accent. ... Some of my students talk about [how] they put on an accent or they 'talk posh', they call it, where they try and soften their accent. So people can totally change how they speak, I suppose. Even I change here sometimes if I'm talking to a student or a parent my accent will change a little bit. I call all the mums and dads here *mas* and *das*. It comes out normally to me. And my [spouse] slags me. I always say 'come here to me now' because that's something that's been said to me here. \*Laughs\* You know, I say *comeer*. (P-GN1)

In 8, we have the principal from GN2, which is in a very affluent area. They feel that their students aren't affected by any limitations, but offers that they think that this could be a reason for the adoption of their middle-class accents (see also 2a., above). I will come back to the second part of this quotation, below.

8. I don't know if we see it here. Okay. I don't know if that's the reason why the accents develop here. But I'd be aware of it from interviewing. If you're interviewing people and you'd say 'would that person survive in this school?', because I would be very conscious of not putting

somebody into somewhere where they would be... So it would be something that yeah, I would be aware of if I'm taking on staff. (P-GN2)

The principal of MN1 offers an insider's view of growing up with a working class accent, as they are the only principal of these six who is native to the area where they are working. It is their opinion in 9. that respecting sociolinguistic variation is fundamental to overcoming a deficit view of disadvantage.

9. It can yeah. It can. I think we still are very, very judgemental about where somebody is from because of an accent. I think we're all to some degree responsible and still do it, maybe subconsciously or... You do make an assumption of what a person's gonna be like based on how they speak and their accent... I think you have to get them early. ... You have to get rid of these preconceptions as young as possible. Because if you don't... Like if you leave school under the thing of 'oh well, I'm from this area, I talk this way, I'm stupid', it's too late already. I think you need to get them early. You need to raise awareness about different dialects, different areas. And the fact that because you speak some way does not directly impact on your path in life. (P-MN1)

Finally, the principal in MN2 feels that their students lack the requisite words to function successfully in life (see also 3a., above) which then creates a deficit of life experience that they discuss at 10. as not knowing the affluent suburbs of Rathmines and Ranelagh, nor are they aware of Kildare Street where the Irish parliament resides.

10. Absolutely massive. An amazingly massive... Because if you don't know the word 'Rathmines' well then if someone says 'can you go to Rathmines?' it frightens you. And our kids would not know the word Rathmines. They would not know the word Ranelagh. ...They know Grafton Street but they would not know Kildare Street because they don't go anywhere and we're not imaginative enough as a profession because we don't spend enough planning time to say these kids need to spend... They're so scared of anything you know. It's really tough on them. And language is all part of that. (P-MN2)

It must be reiterated that the principal in GN2 has suggested nothing illegal at 4b. and at 8. by implying that the parents in an affluent area of the South side of Dublin would not accept a teacher with a North side accent. There is no legal protection for speakers of

varieties of any language in Ireland. Simply put, anyone can be denied a job in Ireland based on the way they speak. This is part of a wider problem of equality from a linguistic point of view. I will return to this in the conclusion.

Students' sex does not seem to have an effect on how the principals approach language, specifically SLI. The principals of both all-girls schools seem to have an expectation that there is a correct way of speaking and an incorrect way of speaking. While GN2 is in an affluent area, GN1 is in a disadvantaged area, thus reinforcing a deficit model (Valencia 1997) where their students are ashamed of their accents outside of the school (see Moore 2011). As noted above, P-GN2 has more in common with P-BF1 which as a fee-paying school reflects affluence. These two principals have students who use a middle-class accent and will be valued by society. Principals in the least affluent schools (P-MN1, P-MN2) may have a similar idea about the value of standardised language, but they don't blame the students. Rather, they want the world to change, not their students for using non-white varieties. Finally, P-BN2 acknowledges that there are pressures on young men to stay true to their neighbourhood which excuses their nonstandardised language; these boys have to use nonstandard language to fit in with their peers.

Ultimately, the North/South divide in Dublin does not appear to factor into any measurable difference in this cohort as there is affluence to be found on the North side just as there is disadvantage to be found on the South side (cf Hickey 2005; Lucek & Garnett 2020). Further, the principals of single-sex and mixed-sex schools hold similar language ideologies. What is of paramount importance is the socioeconomic realities of advantage and disadvantage. This is reinforced by the principals of the fee-paying school (BF1) and the most affluent school (GN2) behave in incredibly similar ways. P-

GN1, who identifies as coming from a more affluent background also holds these SLI viewpoints and thus has a condescending opinion of their students.

The themes of languagelessness, inappropriateness, stigma and disadvantage are evident in these data. Each of these have counterparts in ease of expression, appropriate speech styles, prestige and advantage. By viewing these dichotomies through a raciolinguistic lens, we can see a construction of whiteness in the form of social class (see Cushing 2022). As Cushing & Snell (2023) suggest, it is wholly appropriate to investigate language issues surrounding classed linguistic practices through the lens of raciolinguistics.

### **Conclusions**

At every level, SLI exists in Irish education, whether it is part of the curriculum (PDST 2014) or as a guiding principle in the lives of principals in Irish schools. Middle-class Dublin English, in this context, is the white variety and is thus the source of linguistic discrimination. The construction of whiteness in the form of middle class speech is acknowledged by principals as they believe this to be the goal, which is what their guidance tells them. Even the principals whose students don't use the white variety believe that this should be the goal of education. Principals reinforce the deficit model of disadvantage (see Snell 2013; Snell & Cushing 2022): some use this as a way to give their students an advantage while others feel that they are acknowledging deficit to protect their students. Social class and socioeconomic disadvantage have an impact on students, but is compounded by principals' ideologies.

At the time of writing, there is no legal framework for socioeconomic class to be a protected social factor in employment or in equality legislation. However, the Equality (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2021 is the first in the history of the State to recognise

the need for protection for individuals’ “social or regional accent” (s.2(g)). This may be included in the review of the Equality Acts, which has been initiated through a consultation process (Department of Equality and Inclusion, 2023). Perhaps this will be the motivation the education system needs to re-evaluate how we approach linguistic diversity in Ireland. We can only start to talk about it being world class when we remove race and class from the classroom. Perhaps, as well, we can start to rethink how whiteness is constructed in Ireland and how race is reproduced as social class bias in society.

### **Funding**

This research was supported by a Government of Ireland Irish Research Council Postdoctoral Fellowship (Grant number GOIPD/2018/45). I am grateful to the editors of *Teanga* as well as the anonymous peer reviewers for their helpful and constructive evaluations. All remaining errors are my responsibility.

### **References**

- Amador-Moreno, C. P. (2012). A corpus-based approach to contemporary Irish writing: Ross O’Carroll-Kelly’s use of *like* as a discourse marker. *International Journal of English Studies*, 12(2), 19–38.
- Central Statistics Office (CSO). (2023) Census of Population 2022 Profile 5 - Diversity, Migration, Ethnicity, Irish Travellers & Religion. Available at: <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cpp5/censusofpopulation2022profile5-diversitymigrationethnicityirishtravellersreligion/citizenship/>

- Cushing, I. (2022). *Standards, Stigma, Surveillance: Raciolinguistic Ideologies in England's Schools*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Cushing, I. & Clayton, D. (2024). Teachers Challenging Language Discrimination in England's Schools: A Typology of Resistance. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*. [online ahead of print]
- Cushing, I. & Snell, J. (2023). The (white) ears of Ofsted: A raciolinguistic perspective on the listening practices of the schools inspectorate. *Language in Society*, 52(3), 363–386.
- Department of Education and Skills. (no date). Schools in Dublin Region. Available at: <https://data.gov.ie/dataset/schools-in-dublin-region>.
- Department of Equality and Inclusion. (2023). *The Equality Acts Review: Summary of the submissions received to the 2021 Public Consultation on the Review of the Equality Acts*. Available at: <https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/263228/432baf5b-81eb-4f52-80fe-2f50f738ec1f.pdf#page=null>.
- Flores, N. & Rosa, J. (2015). Undoing appropriateness: Raciolinguistic ideologies and language diversity in education. *Harvard Educational Review*, 85(2), 149–171.
- Garnett, V. and Lucek, S. (2021). Perceptual Dialectology between Varieties of Irish English: The Relationship between Linguistic and Political Boundaries on the Island of Ireland. In S. Lucek and C. Amador-Moreno (eds), *Expanding the Landscapes of Irish English Research* (pp. 199-216). Routledge.
- Gerald, J.P.B. (2022). Embodied Whiteness and Pathologization in EFL. *JALT Journal*, 44(2), 222–234.
- Hickey, R. (2005). *Dublin English: evolution and change*. John Benjamins Publishing.

- Hickey, R. (2021). In Sheridan's Shadow: Elocution and its legacy. In L. Caon, M. Elenbaas and J. Grijzenhout (eds), *Language Use, Usage Guides and Linguistic Norms* (pp. 17–30). Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Irvine, J. T. (1989). When talk isn't cheap: Language and political economy. *American Ethnologist*, 16(2), 248–267.
- Irvine, J. T. (2021). Revisiting Theory and Method in Language Ideology Research. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, 32(1), 222–236.
- Irvine, J. T. & Gal, S. (2000). Language ideology and linguistic differentiation. In P. Kroskrity (ed.), *Regimes of Language: Ideologies, Politics, and Identities* (pp. 35–84). School of American Research Press.
- Lippi-Green, R. (1997). *English with an Accent: Language, Ideology and Discrimination in the United States*. Routledge.
- Lucek, S. (2021). Standard language ideology in an English-medium Irish secondary school: Conflicting perspectives on the discouragement of nonstandard language. *Journal of Language & Discrimination*, 5(2), 199–225.
- Lucek, S. (2024). Perceptions of Irish English. In R. Hickey (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Irish English* (pp. 587–609). Oxford University Press.
- Lucek, S. (forthcoming). The Linguistic Perceptions of Dublin Teenagers: social class, language beliefs and mediatization. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*.
- Lucek, S. and Garnett, V. (2020). Perceptions of linguistic identity among Irish English speakers. In C. Amador-Moreno and R. Hickey (eds), *Irish identities: Sociolinguistic perspectives* (pp. 104–130). De Gruyter.
- Milroy, J. and Milroy, L. (1999). *Authority and Language* (3rd edn). Routledge.
- Moore, R. (2011). Overhearing Ireland: Mediatized personae in Irish accent culture. *Language & Communication*, 31, 229–242.

- NCCA. (2006). Intercultural Education in the Post-Primary School. Available at [https://ncca.ie/media/1976/intercultural\\_education\\_in\\_the\\_post-primary\\_school.pdf](https://ncca.ie/media/1976/intercultural_education_in_the_post-primary_school.pdf).
- PDST. (2014). Five Components of Effective Oral Language Instruction. Available at <https://pdst.ie/sites/default/files/Oral%20Language%20Booklet%20PDF.pdf>.
- Rosa, J. D. (2016). Standardization, racialization, languagelessness: Raciolinguistic ideologies across communicative contexts. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, 26(2), 162–183.
- Rosa, J. D. & Flores, N. (2017). Unsettling race and language: Toward a raciolinguistic perspective. *Language in Society*, 46, 621–647.
- Snell, J. (2013). Dialect, interaction and class positioning at school: from deficit to difference to repertoire. *Language and Education*, 27(2), 110–128.
- Snell, J. & Cushing, I. (2022). “A lot of them write how they speak”: policy, pedagogy, and the policing of ‘nonstandard’ English. *Literacy*, 56(3), 199–211.
- Swift, K. (2024). Whiteness as the standard: Shifting ideologies, race, and social context. *Linguistics and Education*, 82. [online ahead of print]
- Valencia, R. (ed.) (1997). *The Evolution of Deficit Thinking: Educational Thought and Practice*. London: Routledge.