



**“I Never Felt Like a Foreigner or I Didn’t Belong or I Was Second Class”:
Passing For a Native Speaker in Northern Ireland**

**Professor Karen Corrigan, Newcastle University, UK
<k.p.corrigan@ncl.ac.uk>**

2015 will be remembered as the year in which over one million people migrated to Europe, which witnessed a four-fold increase in the number of immigrants since the previous year. Northern Ireland (NI), which was once synonymous with emigration, has not been immune from these recent accelerated population movements. Indeed, the region has experienced significant demographic and societal changes resulting not just from these unprecedented globalising migratory trends but also from the dividends of the 1990s Peace Process (Devlin Trew 2013). This presentation explores the findings from the first project to investigate the sociolinguistics of globalization and migration (Blommaert 2010; Collins et al. 2009; Slembrouck 2011) in NI from both synchronic and diachronic perspectives. The approach thus mirrors that of Hymes (1974: 77) since it is one that explores “linguistic phenomena from within the social, cultural, political and historical context of which they are part.” It also describes public engagement initiatives (Amador-Moreno et al. 2016; Wolfram 2012) that have drawn on this research as a means of promoting an appreciation for socio-cultural and linguistic ‘super-diversity’ (Vertovec 2007, 2014) in a region which in 2001 had a population that was 99.15% ‘White’ and in which ethnic divisions were strictly along religious lines (Corrigan 2010; Hainsworth 1998; Irwin and Dunn 1997; McCafferty 2001; NISRA 2008; Ruane and Todd 2010).

The 2011 Census, as well as Caldwell et al. (2012), Irwin et al. 2014, McDermott (2012) and Russell (2016) demonstrate that the population of twenty-first century NI has been altered dramatically through immigration. Those newcomers who have competence in English use varieties that bear traces of their ethnic minority heritages and also feature innovations generally associated with contact settings (Clyne 2003; Cornips 2000; Siegel 2016; Thomason 2009; Thomason and Kaufman 1988;). Simultaneously, their speech incorporates recently acquired features of Northern Irish English dialects. Indeed, in certain contexts their L2 ability is such that they can pass as native speakers (Piller 2002). Doing so demands the acquisition of two different types of linguistic resource, i.e. local and translocal. The *after*-perfect in (1) below is an excellent example of the idiosyncratic former type since it is exclusive to the English spoken on the island of Ireland or varieties like

those of Newfoundland that have been influenced by it (Clarke 2010). The presence in this region amongst younger speakers, in particular, of the BE-LIKE quotative in (2) is a prime candidate for the translocal category and indeed has been described by Buchstaller and D'Arcy (2009: 292) as the “flagship globally available linguistic resource”.

(1) I'm **after** giving her some custard (Corrigan 2010: 62)

(2) And then they **were like**, “Oh what results did you get?” (Corrigan 2010: 101)

Research on the acquisition of local and translocal variants by young migrants in England and Scotland shows that the speech of ethnic minorities patterns differently to that of their locally born peers (Drummond 2012; Schleef et al. 2011; Verma et al. 1992). This variation depends on factors like the degree to which individuals identify with the indigenous or exogenous community values to which they are exposed. Research on this topic has also forged ahead in the Republic of Ireland, as Migge (2012), Nestor et al. (2012) and, more recently, Diskin (2016) and Kobińska (2016) demonstrate. This presentation hones in on the following research questions in the Northern Ireland migratory context:

- (i) Do newcomers show the same linguistic constraints as their locally born peers?
- (ii) How do speakers make use of linguistic variation to express local belonging and/or dissonance?
- (iii) To what extent are the migratory experiences of the Irish Diaspora and inward migrants to NI similar?

In order to address these, ethnographic interviews with migrants to Northern Ireland (aged between 5 and 19 years old) from elsewhere in Europe and further afield were conducted between 2012 and 2014. They generated linguistic data from different parts of the grammar that has been interrogated from a variationist perspective. This aspect of the presentation thus addresses the first of these concerns and illuminates our understanding of the emergence and spread of language change in contact settings more generally. The interviews also probed migrants' attitudes to local community norms as well as their own linguistic repertoires and daily use of languages, revealing answers to the second question. In order to explore the third, the experiences of these contemporary immigrant populations were compared with the language ecologies (Haugen 1972) of Northern Irish emigrants captured in the *Corpus of Irish English Correspondence* (1750s-1920s) (McCafferty and Amador-Moreno 2012). They also experienced what it was like to enter a new community and be exposed to different ethnic, socio-cultural and linguistic norms. I will argue that there are points of synergy and divergence between both groups of ‘new speakers’ (O'Rourke and Pujolar 2015) that offer really valuable insights into the sociolinguistics of globalization and migration.

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