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Editorial

Christopher Lewin* and Erin McNulty

The revivals of Manx – introduction

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Within the academic and popular literature on endangered languages, Manx is frequently invoked as an iconic example of 'language death' – often with a black-and-white photograph of Ned Maddrell (1877–1974), the reputed last native speaker (e. g. Nettle and Romaine 2000: ix, 4), and sometimes with little awareness of the significant revitalization efforts undertaken in the Isle of Man in recent decades. Nonetheless, the Manx language movement has also increasingly garnered international awareness and acclaim. A steady stream of writers and journalists (e. g. Abley 2003; Specia 2022), television film crews, educational exchange programmes and scholars and practitioners from other minority language backgrounds have visited the island, producing glowing, largely uncritical accounts of the Isle of Man as a language revitalization success story. Since 2001 attention has focused especially on the emergence of Manx-medium primary education, a case with few international parallels of immersion schooling in a language with no traditional native speakers (Clague 2009; Wilson 2009).

Although the academic literature on Manx language revitalization remains limited, there are signs that scholarly interest is increasing: the editors of this special issue have both completed PhDs in Manx topics since 2020 (Lewin 2020; McNulty 2024); community-led digitalization initiatives within in the Isle of Man have gathered pace, notably via the Manx Corpus digital repository;[1] and a number of international scholars of language revitalization have published on the language in the last two decades, including the first monograph to have an extended focus on Manx revitalization, alongside two other small island contexts (Sallabank 2013). This special issue aims to build on this momentum, and is the first collection of its kind to

1 A searchable online repository of Manx texts and audiovisual material launched in 2021, now containing over two million words, https://corpus.gaelg.im/.

***Corresponding author: Christopher Lewin**, Celtic and Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh, 50 George Square, Edinburgh, EH8 9JU, UK, E-mail: christopher.lewin@ed.ac.uk. https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2498-7500

Erin McNulty, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultures, O'Rahilly Building, University College Cork, Cork, T12 CY82, Ireland, E-mail: erinmcnulty@ucc.ie. https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7433-7170

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bring together contributions from leading and emerging scholars and practitioners of Manx language revitalization. Most of the papers originate from two conferences and three conference sessions organized by Lewin in 2022–23.[2] This introductory essay seeks to outline the current state of the art, highlight gaps in the current research literature, and stimulate future investigation into Manx topics.

Fundamentally, Manx and its speakers merit study and attention for the same reason that any language community does: all linguistic situations have unique characteristics, as well as commonalities, which contribute to our overall understanding of language in society, and of human wellbeing and flourishing. It is anticipated that the articles in this special issue will be of interest to a broad audience of academic sociolinguists, language policy specialists and linguistic anthropologists, as well as practitioners, activists, policymakers and language users involved in revitalization efforts around the world, especially in post-vernacular or post-language shift settings and in small island or small state contexts. There is a particular emphasis in several of the pieces on language ideologies and on the socioeconomic and public policy aspects of language revitalization, and on contributing original theoretical and conceptual insights to the field. The essays will also be of particular comparative interest to those engaged with other Celtic, British and European minority languages. We especially hope that the issue will help to make the Manx context more accessible to interested scholars who have not previously worked on the language, but who may wish to include or draw on Manx data in the future, as well as enriching and developing the existing Manx language research community and informing debate and discussion within the language community itself.

1 Manx: history and context

Before discussing the research landscape in more detail, it may be helpful to situate the language context in broad historical, geographical and demographic terms. Manx is the minoritized language native to the Isle of Man, a self-governing dependency of the British crown in the Irish Sea, roughly equidistant between England and Ireland. Manx belongs to the Gaelic or Goidelic branch of the Celtic languages, and is closely

2 *Language and Society in the Isle of Man*, May 2023, Douglas, Isle of Man (University of Galway, Manx National Heritage and Culture Vannin), *Emergent norms, models and target varieties in Celtic language revitalization* (University of Galway), November 2023; *The revivals of Manx: historical and contemporary perspectives*, Sociolinguistics Symposium 24, July 2022 (Ghent University); *Manx literature and linguistics* and *The revival(s) of Manx*, International Congress of Celtic Studies XVII, July 2023 (Utrecht University). The authors would like to thank all those who contributed to, attended and assisted in the organization of these events.

related to Irish and Scottish Gaelic. Despite close linguistic and cultural links to Ireland and the Scottish Highlands, the Isle of Man came under English control in the fourteenth century, with ever increasing linguistic, cultural, political, religious and economic influence from England over the ensuing centuries. In spite of this, until the early nineteenth century, Manx was the dominant spoken vernacular of the native population, while English was the language of high and written domains, with some limited exceptions in religious contexts (Lewin and Ó Muircheartaigh 2022). The publication of translations of the Bible and the Anglican Book of Common Prayer in the 1760s and 70s boosted the language's prestige, prompting a modest flowering of literary activity, and a growth in vernacular literacy. Despite this, the socioeconomic forces favouring English proved too strong to resist, and a rapid process of language shift was essentially complete by 1900 (Broderick 1999; Hindley 1984; Miller 2007). A handful of elderly native speakers lived into the mid-twentieth century and were interviewed and recorded by linguists and pioneering language activists (Broderick 1984–86). This results in a degree of spoken continuity between traditional and revival speakers which helps construct legitimacy for the language among its speaker community (Ó hIfearnáin 2015b: 48), although the nature, degree and implications of this continuity remain contested (see especially Lewin, McNulty, and Ó hIfearnáin this issue).

The Isle of Man has a population of 84,069 as of the 2021 census (Isle of Man Government 2022). Of this number, 2,223 residents claimed to be able to speak, read, or write Manx (Isle of Man Government 2022), around 2.64 % of the Island's total population. This number has increased from the 2011 census, when around 1,800 people claimed knowledge of Manx (Isle of Man Government 2012). On the face of it these figures are impressive and slightly exceed the equivalent proportion, 2.45 %, for Scottish Gaelic in Scotland (UK Data Service 2024), where there is still a substantial native speaker population, and where the figure also includes those who can understand the language. However, gathering data on speaker numbers from census records comes with caveats for any language due to the self-reported nature of census responses (Urla and Burdick 2018). This is especially true for minoritized languages, where varying degrees of confidence, lack of consensus on terms such as 'fluent' or 'speaker', as well as claims of speakerhood which are based more on cultural or symbolic affiliation to the language rather than competence, can all lead to both over- and underreporting of speaker numbers (see Kelly-Holmes and Atkinson 2017: 240; O'Rourke and Walsh 2020: 66, 152 for examples from Irish). In the authors' experience, in the Manx case responses may be aspirational or expressive of support, as there are varying understandings within the community of what it means to "speak Manx", as well as an association between the Manx language and the expression of a Manx national identity (McNulty 2023b, 2024). In addition, the Isle of Man census does not ask how often and in what contexts the respondents use the

language, and therefore is limited in the information it can provide on how frequently speakers use the language (Lewin forthcoming; McNulty forthcoming). In summary, these figures should be viewed as a broad indication of Manx's trajectory in terms of the growth of its speaker community, rather than hard and fast boundaries of the size of this community or the kinds of fluencies or competences contained within it (Clague 2009: 176).

There have been some attempts to extract different speaker profiles from the Manx speaker community to assess varying levels of linguistic competence contained within it. Notably, surveys carried out by Ó hIfearnáin (this issue, cf. 2015b: 54) found a population in 2003 of "55 highly fluent Manx speakers aged from their 20s to 80s" and in 2013 "110 adult speakers and advanced learners aged from their 20s to their 70s", although how precisely terms such as "highly fluent" and "advanced learner" are understood, and to what extent demographics and understandings of linguistic competence have changed in the last decade, are questions which require further investigation. Manx speakers, aside from a small number of examples of home transmission, acquire the language outside the traditional home environment, whether by immersion education, second-language school instruction, adult classes or self-study, and therefore have been analysed by some as "new speakers" (O'Rourke et al. 2015; Smith-Christmas et al. 2018), notably by Ó Murchadha and Ó hIfearnáin (2018) and McNulty (2023b, 2024).

As well as its presence in the education system, Manx is also prevalent in the linguistic landscape and in cultural life on the Isle of Man (see Sebba 2010; Lewis 2004; McCooey-Heap 2020 for further discussion). It is commonly encountered in place names and on signage, although rarely with equal prominence with English (Council of Europe 2024: 16; Sebba 2010). The language also has a modest presence in broadcast and social media. Manx is used at certain cultural events, although more informal usages of the language, such as meet-ups in pubs and cafés, are perhaps more common. However, as Manx is not an official language of the Isle of Man and has only limited statutory protection, government business and most mainstream education on the Isle of Man is conducted through English, and any use of Manx generally relies on the goodwill of individual organizations rather than being mandated by explicit regulations or policies (Lewin forthcoming; Wilson 2024: 80). Outside of Manx language-focused events, it is not common to hear the language spoken in public – its prevalence in the linguistic landscape belies the language's marginal overall presence in the linguistic ecology of the Isle of Man. This can create certain expectations of linguistic vitality that often go unmet, leading to frustration for some Manx speakers (McCooey-Heap 2020: 51; McNulty 2024).

2 This special issue

This special issue examines the topic of language revival, revivalism, and revitalization in the context of Manx over the past three centuries. The articles explore Manx speakers' engagement with processes of linguistic revival and renewal, which can be traced back to the context of corpus planning and literacy development in the mid-eighteenth century, via the antiquarian, revivalist and nationalist movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, to the contemporary context of language revitalization with increasing participation of state institutions, especially within education. The authors explore Manx language revitalization from varying perspectives, from that of language practitioners (Maddrell and Keggin Gell; Tooms), community-insider researchers (Lewin; McNulty), and researchers working primarily with other language communities who can provide a useful comparative perspective (Ó Ceallaigh; Ó hIfearnáin; Sallabank). The term 'revival' in the title of the was chosen as this is the usual general term used within the Isle of Man to describe the activities and achievements of the Manx language movement; because it preserves a certain strategic ambiguity with respect to ideological conceptions of continuity versus rupture, being interpretable either as referring to resurrection or rejuvenation; and because we felt the term points to wider phenomena of cultural renewal and reinvention of which 'language revitalization' forms but one aspect (cf. Costa 2016). The plural 'revivals' reflects the multiplicity of perspectives and approaches taken in the articles, as well as the historical periods in question.

Internationally, language revitalization is often thought of as a relatively recent phenomenon, associated with the 'ethnic revival' (Fishman et al. 1985) of the second half of the twentieth century or even later: according to one recent survey, more than half of language revitalization efforts started since the year 2000 (Pérez Báez et al. 2019: 448). While it is true that the current institutionalization of the Manx revival has its immediate roots in local activism and protests from the 1970s onwards (Gawne 2002; Stowell 2005; Wilson and Mackie 2023), the organized language revitalization movement in the Isle of Man traces its origin to the foundation of the Manx Language Society in 1899, emerging from a broader cultural revival movement as well as from earlier antiquarian interest in the language and its literature (Belchem 2000). In contrast to many other communities, then, the specific factors of interest in the study of Manx revivalism include the long history or 'genealogy' (cf. Costa 2016) of linguistic and cultural revival in the Isle of Man. This provides an opportunity to explore the evolution of such a movement over successive generations, drawing on extensive documentation of the internal intellectual debates within the community in archive sources (Lewin, Ó hIfearnáin; cf. Miller 2007). This temporal depth intersects with the particular spatial dynamics of 'islandness', compact social networks

and highly localized political and economic structures (Sallabank 2013: 40–42; see also Maddrell and Keggin Gell), in which the role of individual actors and role models may have an outsize impact (Lewin, Maddrell and Keggin Gell; Ó hIfearnáin, Tooms).

In the broadest sense, the history of Manx linguistic revivalism stretches back to the flowering of Manx religious translation, printing, lexicography and collection of oral literature in the 1760s and 70s (Ó Muircheartaigh 2016; Thomson 1969). The impact of this early period on the present language revitalization community is substantial, bequeathing a standard orthography (Lewin 2022a; Sebba 2012), the dictionaries of the native scholar John Kelly (1750–1809), and a significant part of the written corpus on which the revival draws, especially the Manx Bible; see especially Lewin and McNulty's contributions in this issue for discussion of the linguistic and ideological importance of these sources to the present-day community. While historical textual scholarship may seem somewhat remote from contemporary language revitalization studies, it should be noted that significant amount of research in the sociolinguistics of Manx and its relatives takes place within or at the margins of the philological discipline of Celtic Studies. This can bring insights from historical textual scholarship seldom encountered in purely sociolinguistic discussions of language revitalization in the European context (though for increasing appreciation of the importance of archive sources in some language movements, see e. g. Spence 2018). This perspective also brings into focus the folk linguistic – or perhaps "folk philological" beliefs and attitudes many contemporary Manx speakers hold towards particular texts, native speakers or other aspects of the language's history as it is constructed and transmitted within the community. Within the span of the more recent revival movement, Lewin's contribution brings a diachronic angle to current debates surrounding ideologies of linguistic fluidity and fixity (e. g. Jaspers and Madsen 2019). Lewin suggests that the Manx revival community can be seen as an early trailblazer in legitimating hybrid language practices and identities of the kind associated with 'new speakers' in recent scholarship (cf. Ó Murchadha and Ó hIfearnáin 2018; Lewin 2017b), while also exemplifying the (re)emergence of alternative ideologies which rehabilitate more purist or strategically essentialist linguistic models.

A possible line of critique of much sociolinguistic and applied linguistic research is that there is a tendency to focus on certain overly narrow areas of intersection between language and society (e. g. in terms of educational practice and policy), sometimes to the neglect, on the one hand, of wider societal issues that impact language and, on the other, structural linguistic aspects which are nonetheless of importance for a fuller understanding and contextualization of the processes and phenomena we study. The articles in the present issue address this in various ways. Starting at the social end of the spectrum, as Block et al. (2012: 1) note, "one blind spot in the interdisciplinarianism of applied linguistics has been political economy and in

particular a detailed critique of neoliberalism as the ideology driving the practice of economics by governments and international organisations today". In his contribution, Ó Ceallaigh takes up this challenge and shows that the economic policy of the state is inextricably intertwined with the prospects for success of Manx and other language revitalization efforts, which are negatively impacted by such outcomes of neoliberal policy as cuts to the welfare state, precarious employment, high cost of living and emigration of young adults (cf. Ó Ceallaigh 2023). Ó Ceallaigh also links language revitalization to the political science concept of 'postmaterialism', building on innovative work on Manx by Wilson (2011). Similarly, both Tooms' and Maddrell and Keggin Gell's contributions highlight how the political and economic context of the Isle of Man impacts language work being conducted on the 'front lines', limiting the reach of paid language professionals and necessitating greater reliance on partnerships with the voluntary sector as well as institutions outside the island, such as the British Library. Finally, Ó Ceallaigh situates the Isle of Man's status as an offshore financial centre within the international ecology of language endangerment, noting the key role of tax havens within neoliberal capitalism and the negative impact of this on linguistic diversity worldwide, and especially in the Global South. The wider socioeconomic pressures impacting language maintenance and revitalization are also addressed by Sallabank in her concluding essay from a comparative global perspective.

At the other end of the 'language-society' spectrum, some of the contributions demonstrate a renewed focus on details of linguistic forms and structures, and the use of formal linguistic data. These have been less of a focus of analysis among third wave and critical sociolinguistic approaches, which may emphasize language as social practice rather than fixed 'code' (e. g. Ricento 2006; Pennycook 2010). Such studies have made important strides in understanding the relationship between formal linguistic and social aspects of language, highlighting the importance of agency in linguistic practice, e. g. through the concept of third-order indexicality (Johnstone et al. 2006). Arising as they do as a response to arguably overly linguicentric approaches, studies on minoritized languages within the third wave of sociolinguistics have often favoured qualitative over quantitative methodologies. Recent work (e. g. Nance et al. 2016; Enríquez García 2017; Rodríguez-Ordóñez 2020; McNulty 2024) has begun to apply the insights from this qualitative tradition to structural analyses of minoritized languages to explore the role agency plays in shaping language practices in these communities. It is becoming clear that linguistic forms and structures are often a prominent concern and conditioning factor in language movements and in the lived experience of individual speakers. Users of minoritized languages have no option but to make linguistic choices (at varying levels of awareness) every time they speak or write the language. In the Manx context in particular several researchers have noted a high degree of metalinguistic

awareness and discourse among speakers. As McNulty, Lewin, and Ó hIfearnáin show in their articles, in order to analyse speakers' language ideologies with regard to such issues as nativeness, purism, language contact and language change, it is often important for the analyst to be familiar with the diachronic development of a particular linguistic feature, as well as the speaker's 'folk linguistic' understanding of that development. A lack of in-depth knowledge of these issues can easily lead to misinterpretations and well as to dismissal or oversimplification of the internal ideological debates of language communities and speakers' motivations and identities (cf. Davies-Deacon 2017 with regard to contemporary Cornish revitalization). McNulty's work in particular shows the value of triangulation from quantitative linguistic data alongside analysis of sociolinguistic interviews and ethnographic field notes, while Lewin's analysis combines interview and written data with a consideration of implications for future corpus development.

The concept of language ideology holds considerable explanatory power in the Manx context (Lewin 2015, 2017b, 2022b; McNulty 2019, 2024), and forms a key theme of this special issue. More generally, language ideologies are a key consideration in the development of theories of language variation and change in contemporary revived language movements or communities. It is evident from third-wave sociolinguistic work (e. g. Irvine and Gal 2000), that the thoughts, feelings, and beliefs of speakers, as well as wider contextual factors, play an important role in shaping linguistic forms and structures within these movements. Ideological variation within revitalized minority language communities has been touched on in emerging literature, such as O'Rourke and Walsh (2015: 66) who note the "spectrum of language ideologies" among new speakers of Irish. There has also been shown to be direct interaction between differences in language ideologies and variation in linguistic structure within Irish and Scottish Gaelic new speaker communities (Nance et al. 2016; O'Rourke and Walsh 2020; Walsh and O'Rourke 2018), providing important points of comparison with the Manx experience from languages with a close genetic relationship, but quite distinct sociolinguistic circumstances. The study of the role of ideology in linguistic norm creation in revived or revitalized languages is limited, but see Mayeux's (2015) discussion of linguistic iconicity for new speakers of Louisiana Creole, as well as discussions by Nance et al. (2016) and Rodríguez-Ordóñez (2020) of "Type III variation" among new speakers of Scottish Gaelic and Basque respectively, who use variant structures in the target language to express identity, attitudes, ideology, and other components of "symbolic competence" (Kramsch and Whiteside 2008).

Building on this body of scholarship, McNulty's contribution presents a discussion of the interaction between the spectrum of language ideologies and morphosyntactic variation in the Manx context, demonstrating that language ideology is a major force shaping variation in revived language communities. Meanwhile, Lewin

focuses on growing metalinguistic awareness of language ideology within the community, and the impact of this on corpus planning and the development of pedagogical resources. In this vein, another area of significant interest is the complex linguistic and ideological relationships and interactions between Manx and the other Gaelic languages and one hand, and English on the other, especially in view of the historical isolation of Manx from the wider Gaelic world and the adoption of an English-based orthography, sociohistorical facts which sometimes sit uneasily with strands of pan-Gaelic sentiment within the modern Manx language movement (Lewin 2017b, 2022a, 2022c; Ó hIfearnáin 2007, 2015a). The continuing negotiation of ideological stances towards these issues is a particular focus of Ó hIfearnáin's article in this special issue, and is also touched on in some of the other contributions. From a different angle, Ó Ceallaigh highlights the material underpinnings of ideology within language revitalization movement in relation to the impact of economic precarity on parental choices with regard to Manx-medium education, and on attitudes towards the spending priorities of publicly funded language agencies.

The Manx experience also has significant potential to contribute to comparative theoretical discussions of the revival or reawakening of 'dead' or 'sleeping' languages in the absence of traditional native speakers, both in terms of how conceptions of speakerness are constructed by language communities in such a context, and the nature of linguistic variation and change during the emergence of these new linguistic varieties. The classification of revitalized varieties of Manx has been a matter of some debate in the existing literature. In Celtic contexts, contemporary Manx is sometimes classified alongside Cornish as "the revived languages" (cf. George and Broderick 2009) or "reconstructed languages" (Davies-Deacon and Sayers 2024) of the family. This is despite the fact that the degree of reconstruction necessary in the Cornish case is considerably greater, given that the language ceased to be spoken natively in the eighteenth century, and the textual sources for the language are more fragmentary and chronologically disparate than is the case for Manx. In view of this, Ó hIfearnáin (2015b, this issue) has proposed that Manx should be seen as belonging to a particular category of "ELS [extreme language shift] languages", where continuity from traditional L1 speech has not been broken completely – as mentioned above, this is at least an important ideological framing within the community itself. Lewin (2016: 19–20), on the other hand, highlights the similarities in linguistic processes and in the construction of ideological narratives of continuity in the Hebrew, Cornish and Manx contexts, despite the greatly differing time depths of interrupted L1 transmission, and on this basis concludes that a category of "revived languages" identified by e. g. Zuckermann (2009, 2020) is an analytically useful one.

Zuckermann's "revival linguistics" or "revivalistics" framework takes Modern Hebrew as a central focus and model, as the earliest, best-attested and most successful (in terms of creating a large community of L1 speakers) case of language

revival, and seeks to apply insights from the Hebrew case to the reclamation of Indigenous languages of Australia and elsewhere (cf. Zuckermann and Walsh 2011), both in theoretical and practical terms – notably in counselling that communities embrace the "hybridity" of the resulting revived language variety which will, it is claimed, inevitably show heavy L1 interference in certain linguistic components. The existence of this "hybridity" is in itself hardly surprising, given the well-documented phenomenon of L1 imposition in cases of multilingual acquisition and language contact (e. g. Coetsem 2000). In addition, as Lewin (2022b: 664, 684–685) argues, small communities which rely largely on education and second language acquisition to grow and perpetuate themselves are likely to be more typical cases of language revival than the historically exceptional case of Hebrew (cf. Romaine 2006: 450). In such contexts, target varieties remain contested and the subject of agentive, ideological reshaping over the longer term rather than there being a definitive "founder generation", a key concept in Zuckermann's framework (borrowed from creole linguistics – see Mufwene 1996). The applicability of this concept in the Manx context is further explored in Ó hIfearnáin's contribution in relation to the long-term impact of a mid-twentieth century Manx "founder group" in terms of features reflective of inter-Gaelic borrowing, as well as persistence of this group's ideological stances. Lewin (2022b, this issue) also questions what he sees as Zuckermann's uncritical embrace of "hybridity", arguing both that this stance is reflective of the widely held, but little questioned, anti-prescriptive disciplinary ideology of linguistics (cf. Absillis and Jaspers 2016; Cameron 2012), and that it may inadvertently limit the agency of revival speakers. There is clear potential for further development of these theoretical discussions, and the application of more empirical data to explore how the linguistic practices of Manx speakers are changing, and to what extent the "moving target" described by Ó hIfearnáin (2015a: 116, 2015b: 57) may or may not be giving rise to more stabilized target norms, bringing together insights both from 'revival linguistics' and 'new speaker' research, as well as more established areas within linguistics such as second language acquisition, language contact, and new dialect formation.

3 Conclusion: future research directions

In the previous section we summarized the breadth of topics and approaches to Manx language revival covered in the recent literature, and in the articles in the present collection in particular. Naturally, not all topics of potential interest could be covered in this special issue. On the one hand, some authors could have written several papers besides the one included here, and it was necessary to be selective in choosing the topic which best complemented the rest of the collection. On the other hand, the topics available for inclusion were limited by the specialisms, interests and

capacity of the small number of scholars who have been active in research on Manx revitalization in recent years. For example, no specific research has been carried out in the area of Manx immersion education for over a decade (Clague 2007, 2009; Wilson 2009), other than limited analysis of the linguistic production of adult graduates of the Bunscoill Ghaelgagh (McNulty 2019, 2023a), and it is clearly desirable that the ways in which this important aspect of Manx language revitalization has developed and matured over the ensuing years is investigated further, not least in order to inform the future development of Manx immersion education. Similarly, there has been no research on the use of Manx in preschool settings, nor on the acquisition of revitalized varieties of Manx as a first language within the home, although cases of "new native speakers" have been reported in passing in the literature since the late twentieth century (Stowell 2000a: 144, 2005: 408). Other than one masters dissertation exploring the acquisition of Manx through informal settings such as pubs and cafés (Mannette 2012), there is no in-depth external research on adult acquisition of Manx, despite significant changes of pedagogical methodologies and expansion of electronic media and resources in recent years (Stowell 2011: 124–125; Maddrell and Keggin Gell this issue). Lewin (2024) discusses the place of Manx has occupied as a modern language subject in the island's English-medium schools since 1993, and ideologies within the language community as to whether Manx should be a compulsory or optional subject. This area, too, is under-researched, as well as being arguably in need of significant policy reform, since current provision is limited in terms of contact hours and the learning outcomes for the majority of pupils.

More generally, there is a dearth of research into Manx revitalization from a formal language policy and planning (LPP) perspective. Most existing publications are descriptive accounts of the history and/or contemporary situation of Manx revitalization, or particular aspects thereof, by professionals and scholar-activists from within the community, who are not academic specialists in language revitalization or LPP (Broderick 1999: 173–187, 2013b; Cain 2021; Gawne 2000a, 2000b, 2002, 2003; Kelly 2000; McArdle and Teare 2016; Stowell 1996; 2000a; 2000b, 2005, 2011, Stowell and Ó Bréasláin 1996, Teare 2019). While these accounts give valuable first-hand insider perspectives and a good deal of factual information, there has been little theoretical or comparative analysis of Manx language policy in its British/Irish, European and broader international context. Important exceptions are the work of Sallabank (2013) and Wilson et al. (2015) comparing the Manx situation with that the Norman languages of the Channel Islands, as well as Wilson's (2011) analysis of Manx revitalization through the lens of postmaterialism. However, equally relevant comparisons and contrasts with minority language policy for other autochthonous Celtic languages in neighbouring jurisdictions remain largely unexplored, apart from Lewin's (2024) analysis of Manx and Irish education policy. This is despite

increasing intergovernmental links between Manx authorities and those of other jurisdictions in the British Isles and Europe in recent years through the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and the British-Irish Council Work Sector on Indigenous, Minority and Lesser-Used Languages, as well as the role Irish, Scottish and Welsh role models and exchange visits have played in shaping Manx revitalization. Indeed, Sallabank (2013: 149) has suggested that Manx language policy may have been more ambitious and effective than it might otherwise have been owing to these ties.

A number of distinctive aspects of Manx LPP merit further investigation. One striking feature is the marginal role of legislation in the advances of recent decades. Apart from limited and rather vague provisions for Manx in legislation relating to education, cultural heritage and broadcasting,[3] the "legislative turn" (Williams 2013) seen with respect to many other Western European and North American minoritized languages from the late twentieth century has largely passed the Isle of Man by. There is no 'Manx language act', nor any statutory body specifically responsible for the language, and demands for such provisions have not been prominent in the discourse of the language movement. Policy instruments and provisions the analogues of which in other jurisdictions have a statutory basis – such as a national language strategy with demographic targets for increasing speaker numbers, minority language immersion education, or bilingual signage – have been introduced by more informal (and thus non-binding) mechanisms in the Isle of Man. This may reflect an ideology of pragmatism and self-reliance on the part of the language movement, reminiscent of the "*ná habair é, déan é*" ('don't say it, do it') philosophy associated with the revival of Irish in Belfast (cf. Lewin forthcoming; Armstrong 2012: 153), as well as a certain degree of suspicion of officialdom related to the hostility or indifference of the state until relatively recently. A less formal approach is perhaps also reflective of the small size and localized politics of the Isle of Man: it may be easier to effect change by having a conversation with the relevant government minister or civil servant, than to go through the protracted process of campaigning

3 See especially (1) the Manx Heritage Foundation Act 1982, which establishes the Manx Heritage Foundation as a charity and arms-length public body (now trading as Culture Vannin) and prescribes "language" as one of fourteen areas of cultural heritage which the organization is expected to support (see Maddrell and Keggin Gell forthcoming); (2) the Education Act 2001, which states that "[t]he curriculum shall include provision for […] the teaching of Manx Gaelic and the culture and history of the Island"; and (3) the Broadcasting Act 1993, superseded by the Communications Act 2021, which require public service broadcasting (in practice Manx Radio) to include some programming in and relating to the Manx language. A few other provisions relating to the language are more symbolic in their effects, including the long-standing requirement that new legislation be promulgated in both English and Manx during the annual open-air sitting of Tynwald, the Manx legislature, on 5 July, and a stipulation that banks must accept cheques written in Manx.

for, drafting and passing legislation. It also seems to be the case that non-statutory documents such as the 1985 Report of the Select Committee on the Greater Use of Manx Gaelic (Wilson and Mackie 2023), as well as the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, may fill the ideological and emotional role for speakers of language legislation and official status, despite not being binding or directly enforceable in legal terms.

The pragmatic stance of contemporary speakers is also apparent in the prominence of informal oral acquisition and use in the practice and discourse of Manx revitalization (Lewin forthcoming; Mannette 2012; Ó hIfearnáin 2007), with less emphasis on reading and writing and on formal or institutional domains. This contrasts with the trend in certain other language revitalization contexts where 'new speakers' are characterized by relatively high literacy skills (McLeod and O'Rourke 2015: 4–5), and activist efforts concentrate institutionally-driven formal domain expansion, especially in education and status planning. Sallabank (2013: 205) has suggested that Manx revivalists have followed "an alternative 'phatic domain' route of encouraging home use by learning the language themselves, speaking it with each other, and teaching it to their children", leading subsequently to greater institutional support for the language. The Manx practice of language revitalization can thus be seen as being in the spirit of Fishman's (1991: 380) emphasis on home and community language use, avoiding the over-reliance on education and other "high order 'props'" against which he warns. In practice, most language revitalization movements have found this a difficult prescription to follow (Pérez Báez et al. 2019: 467–468; Romaine 2006). Manx exceptionality here should not be overstated; as noted above, actual first language intergenerational transmission remains rare, and formal education has played an important role in the advances of Manx revitalization since the 1990s. Nevertheless, the Manx emphasis on informal oral contexts of language learning and use, on the use of Manx in friendship and acquaintance networks, and also on "'reverse language transmission' […] where parents are learning Manx from and with their children" (Sallabank this issue), appears to have led to degree of active revernacularization which has eluded many other small language movements (Sallabank 2018). These dynamics clearly merit further research, both from a theoretical perspective and with a view to informing best practice internationally.

Notwithstanding the successes of the Manx language movement, its focus on pragmatism, vernacularity, informal domains and *ad hoc* policy implementation over the pursuit of legislative safeguards and official status can be seen as a double-edged sword. Concrete organizational goals – such as establishing Manx-medium nurseries or primary education – are prioritized over more abstract or intellectual aims which may be seen as having less immediate practical applications, such as corpus planning and linguistic research, as well as the pursuit of formal language rights and legislation. The Cornish language movement, with its perceived faction-

fighting and linguicentric preoccupations (Davies-Deacon 2017), is often cited as a cautionary tale in Manx circles (Lewin 2022b: 668). Nevertheless, a lack of corpus planning activity can be a hindrance to the provision of adequate learning resources and dictionaries etc., potentially having a knock-on effect on success rates in acquisition and use of the language (Lewin 2017b; forthcoming). The emphasis on getting on with practical actions also means that there has been little open debate or "ideological clarification" as to the movement's objectives (Sallabank 2013: xiii). This arguably allows outdated or counter-productive views to remain unchallenged, such as the consensus in favour of retaining the optional status of Manx as a school subject (Lewin 2024).

Furthermore, without being placed on a clearer and more secure footing, existing policy provision may be vulnerable to reversal, especially in view of worsening public finances, and strategic planning for further progress is more difficult. There may also be a risk that a lack of policy discussion within the community may lead to an absence of scrutiny and accountability with regard to what official bodies are doing (or not doing). This is in addition to the lack of impact assessment of existing Manx language activities, which makes it difficult to quantify whether current provision is in fact meeting community needs and contributing to social wellbeing, or whether further support is needed. A recent report by the Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages highlighted a number of challenges and weaknesses in current support for Manx, including "an overreliance on voluntary sectors and motivated individuals" and a "lack of statutory bodies" which, "alongside the lack of official status, constitutes yet another barrier hampering the adequate development" of Manx, as well as the need for additional investment if the Isle of Man Government is to meet its legal obligations under Part III of the Charter (Council of Europe 2024: 9–10). The Committee also raised concerns over the long-term sustainability of Manx-medium education in view of the lack of higher education provision for the language, and thus a lack of pathways for the training of new Manx teachers (Council of Europe 2024: 13–14, 49). This highlights the broader topic of the long-term sustainability of language revitalization movements, which as Sallabank notes in her contribution to this issue, has yet to be theorized and explored in depth.

To return to the topic of the formal linguistic features of contemporary Manx, there is considerable scope for further investigation, building on existing limited studies of lexis (Broderick 2013a; Clague 2004; Kewley Draskau 2006; Lewin 2017b; Ó hIfearnáin 2015a) and morphosyntax (Kewley Draskau 2004/2005, 2006; McNulty 2023a, 2024, forthcoming). Pronunciation and orthography have barely been addressed except in the broadest terms (e. g. Ó hIfearnáin 2015b), although certain aspects are touched on in Lewin's (2016, 2022b) general overviews of the linguistic structure of the revived language. Very little of this research has been quantitative or

corpus-based in nature, apart from McNulty's work on morphosyntax. There is significant potential to expand the investigation of linguistic features and language ideologies in the contemporary Manx language community to consider written data in greater detail, including pedagogical, lexicographical and other resources, building on the groundwork of Lewin (2017b, 2022b, forthcoming). Much work remains to be done on the philology and (socio)linguistics of the historical corpus of L1 Manx (see Lewin and Ó Muircheartaigh 2022 for recent developments), which, as outlined above, is also of relevance to the revival context. There is also a dearth of studies of the language of texts produced by earlier generations of Manx revivalists from the late nineteenth century onwards.

As discussed above, Manx has not been the subject of as much in-depth and informed academic analysis as its prominence in the lore of 'language death' and revitalization might suggest. In part this reflects a range of structural and ideological factors inhibiting its study, some of which are likely to remain challenging in the future. Historically, Celtic Studies, the field within which Manx has traditionally been situated, has had a bias towards medieval material, as well as original 'native' (rather than translated and/or explicitly Christian) literature, both largely lacking in the Manx context (cf. Thomson 1969: 177). According to O'Rahilly (1932: ix) in his seminal work on the dialectology and historical linguistics of the Gaelic languages, "[i]t is, perhaps, too much to expect that Manx, that Cinderella of Gaelic tongues, should ever attract many students". Although O'Rahilly himself in fact made important contributions to Manx linguistics, he is better known for his "linguistic Darwinist" approach to language and dialect contact and language shift (Ó Dochartaigh 1987: 219–231; Lewin 2017a: 146–150), and his negative and exaggerated comments on the influence of English on the structure of Manx:

> From the beginning of its career as a written language English influence played havoc with its syntax, and it could be said without much exaggeration that some of the Manx that has been printed is merely English disguised in a Manx vocabulary. Manx hardly deserved to live. When a language surrenders itself to foreign idiom, and when all its speakers become bilingual, the penalty is death.
>
> (O'Rahilly 1932: 121)

While few would espouse such rhetoric today, the views of O'Rahilly and other Celticists have continued to colour assumptions about Manx both within scholarship and in the language movement, affecting, for example, the way in which Manx orthographic practices are analysed and evaluated (Lewin 2022a, 2022c, forthcoming). The whole field of language revitalization studies, in which Manx is beginning to be represented, has emerged since O'Rahilly and Thomson (1969: 177) described Manx as the "Cinderella" of the Celtic languages, and Manx is now more

vibrant than either would have imagined. Nevertheless, within the academy, the language remains to a significant extent in the shadow of its larger neighbours.

There is no getting away from the small size of the Isle of Man and of the Manx language community, and the ways in which this impacts capacity for research on the language. This is compounded by the lack of academic research institutions and funding sources within the Isle of Man – a strikingly anomalous situation for a polity which in most respects functions as a small nation state.[4] The impact of this on research on all aspects of contemporary Manx society was well summarized by Miller (1993: 85) more than three decades ago:

> We know more about the Isle of Man in the Neolithic age than in the Post-Modernist times of the present crisis. With no true tertiary level educational institution on the Island to act as a potential focus for research there is a dearth of investigation into contemporary issues: for instance, more is known of the health of herrings in the Irish Sea (Liverpool University has its Marine Biological Station on the Island) than of the very schoolchildren from the Island's sink estates who are learning Manx.
>
> (Miller 1993: 85)

The situation has changed little, and in some ways has worsened: the University of Liverpool's Centre for Manx Studies, established in Douglas in 1992, closed due to Isle of Man Government funding cuts in 2015, while the Marine Biological Station mentioned in the excerpt above was closed in 2006. There has been some expansion (as well as subsequent contraction) of degree programmes available through the island's further education college via a partnership with the University of Chester, but support for research is limited. As a result, investigation of Manx topics tends to be conducted by independent and retired scholars, as well as by those with the resources to pursue doctoral studies later in life. As a case in point, no fewer than 14 of the 26 authors of chapters in one of the latest volumes of *A New History of the Isle of Man* (Thornton et al. 2025: xix–xx) are listed as independent researchers, with several others being retired or holding honorary positions; only a handful of the professional academics represented primarily specialize in Manx topics.

While independent and retired scholars make invaluable contributions to Manx studies, the inadequacies and inequities of this situation are obvious, especially with regard to building capacity, skills and long-term collaboration and knowledge exchange among younger and early career scholars. This is only exacerbated by the impacts of funding cuts, precarious working conditions and commercialization within the neoliberal university sector, with which the academic readership of this

4 In comparison, the rural county of Ceredigion in Wales (where Lewin was based for a period during the writing of this essay), despite having a population smaller than that of the Isle of Man, hosts two universities and a major deposit library.

special issue will be all too familiar. Much of the analysis presented by Ó Ceallaigh of the impact of neoliberal austerity on language revitalization applies equally to academic research on the topic. Under these circumstances, echoing Illingworth and Scott (2023) in their introduction to a recent special issue of *Nottingham French Studies* on "Early career voices in French studies", we might characterize the organization and editing of the present issue as an instance of "hope labour" (Kuehn and Corrigan 2013) on the part of two early career researchers whose continued work within this field is far from guaranteed within the current climate, no matter how strong the case we make for the social and intellectual value of the study of Manx and other minoritized languages.

The lack of research institutions in the Isle of Man means that research into Manx language topics faces additional obstacles in terms of securing institutional and funding support. It is possible, of course, for scholars to obtain grants from major funders in the UK, Ireland and further afield, as both of the present authors have demonstrated in recent doctoral and postdoctoral projects. A notable recent achievement in this connection is a project to transcribe and analyse eighteenth-century Manx manuscript sermons (Lewin and Ó Muircheartaigh 2022), the first externally-funded collaborative research project focusing on Manx language and literature, which was supported by the British Academy and Leverhulme Trust Small Project grant with additional funding from the Manx cultural organization Culture Vannin. Although these examples show that progress is possible, researchers making the case for funding work on Manx topics inevitably face additional challenges in demonstrating the relevance and impact of their projects, in comparison with larger minority languages such as Irish, Welsh or Basque, where there are dedicated institutions, academic departments, publication outlets and funding schemes for the languages in questions. Among other impacts, we hope that this special issue may stimulate discussion within the Isle of Man regarding possibilities for better supporting research and higher education in the island, both in respect of the Manx language and more generally.

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