

Urban and Rural Ireland  
Social Change and Language

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The topic for this talk is language in Ireland and the urban – rural split with particular emphasis on the urban developments of the past few decades. This urban – rural split in Ireland is in a way a mirror of the England – Ireland split on a higher level. In both cases one is dealing with a difference in language competence, in the latter case between a colonial power and a colonised country which has shifted to the language of the colonisers. What makes the urban – rural split interesting in the Irish context is that the relationship is entirely within the colonised country. But it still has one essential element of the coloniser-colonised relation-ship: it is about relative power in society. To begin with a closer look at just what is meant by the urban – rural split is taken. This can be done by asking a number of relevant questions. How does the urban-rural split relate to the following issues:

Class

Education

Gender

The differences between the regions

The north – south difference

Local identity

The Irish language

Should one talk about an urban-rural or a rural-urban split? This is a matter of perspective. It depends where one's centre is and which side of the division is external to one's own position. How does this split manifest itself for the different groups? Is there an equality on both sides of the division or is there a

cline away from or towards one's own centre? How do these considerations relate to language?

These and similar questions will form the core of this presentation and the connection between language and identity in post-modern, post-boom Ireland will be centre stage.

## References

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Hickey, Raymond (ed.) 2011. *Irish English in Today's World*. Special issue of *English Today*, Vol. 106, June 2011. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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