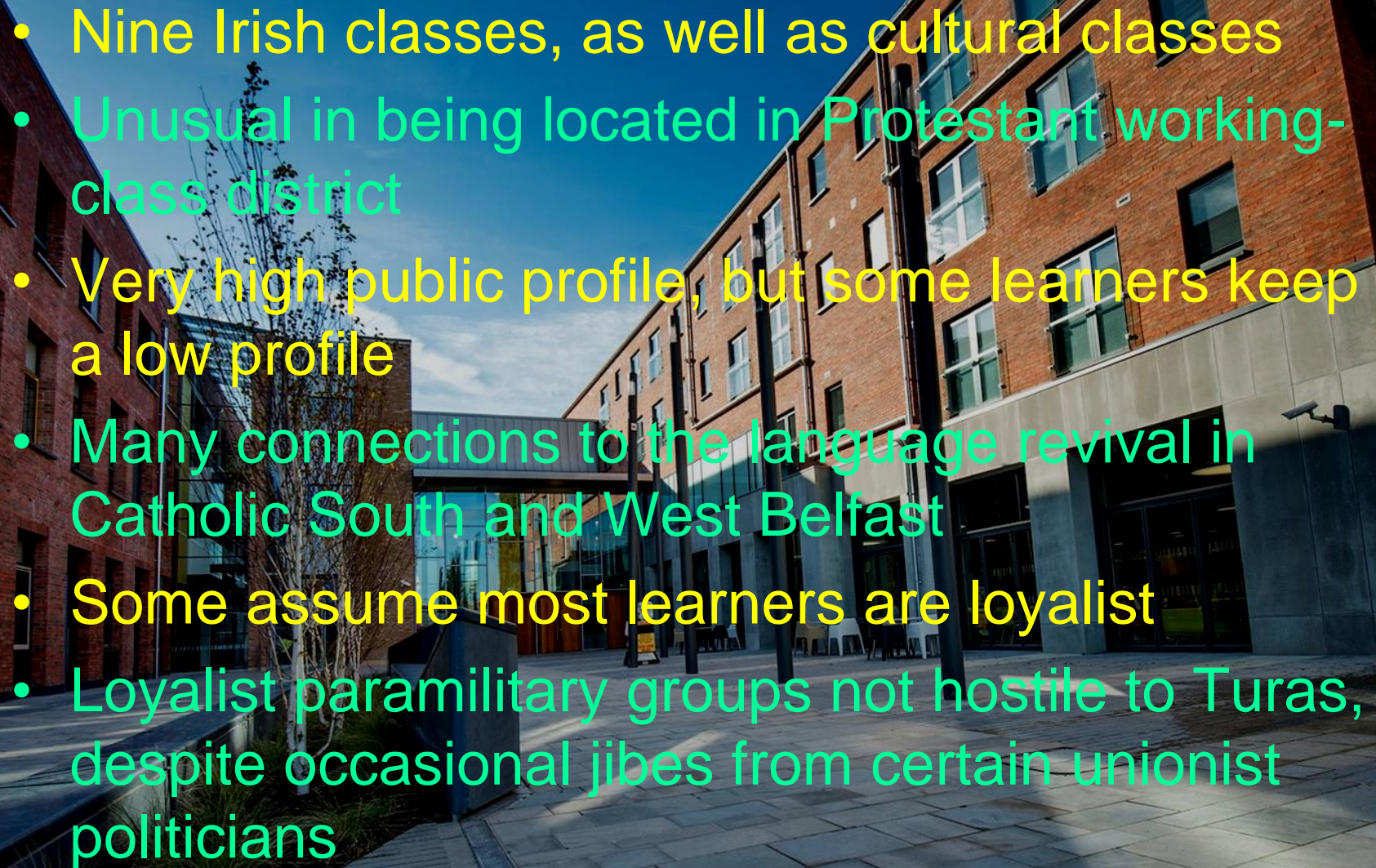


# The Use of Technology among Irish Learners in East Belfast

Gordon McCoy

Turas Project

East Belfast Mission

- 
- Nine Irish classes, as well as cultural classes
  - Unusual in being located in Protestant working-class district
  - Very high public profile, but some learners keep a low profile
  - Many connections to the language revival in Catholic South and West Belfast
  - Some assume most learners are loyalist
  - Loyalist paramilitary groups not hostile to Turas, despite occasional jibes from certain unionist politicians



Linda Ervine



Gordon

Home 20+



Linda Ervine

Timeline

2015

Highlights

### MOMENTS FROM THE YEAR

Untitled Album

### PHOTOS · 2015



### FRIENDS · 2015



Write a comment...



Linda Ervine with Lenny Deans

20 September · iOS · Edited ·

Playing Duolingo this morning and got the right answer when asked to do this bit of translation. I think this challenges the perception of some that Gaelic is a Republican language as most Republicans seem to be unable to say Northern Ireland never mind write it lol.



Translate this sentence



Tuaisceart Éireann.

Northern Ireland



You are correct



# Twitter debate about NI21 (liberal unionist party) poster in Irish

[View summary](#)

**James Shiels** @\_JamesShiels · Oct 2  
[@ErvineLinda](#) [@NI21official](#) how many votes did those poster win them? How many did they put off?



**Linda Ervine** @ErvineLinda · Oct 2  
[@\\_JamesShiels](#) [@NI21official](#) not an election stunt a way of showing that the language belongs to everyone

1

**James Shiels** @\_JamesShiels · Oct 2  
[@ErvineLinda](#) [@NI21official](#) by putting it on an election poster in the run up to an election in order to get cheap headlines?



**Linda Ervine** @ErvineLinda · Oct 2  
[@\\_JamesShiels](#) [@NI21official](#) by having the courage to risk criticism.

3

Language Group

Gordon

Home 20+

# East Belfast Irish Language Group

Secret Group

Joined ▾

Message

Notifications

Discussion

Members

Events

Photos

Files

Write Post

Add Photo/Video

Ask Question

Add File

Write something...

RECENT ACTIVITY

**Linda Ervine**  
31 October at 18:19

Interesting article on the languages of the British Isles.

MEMBERS

109 members (3 new)

Add people to group

Message · Invite by Email

DESCRIPTION

Add a description

Tell members what this group is about.

CREATE NEW GROUPS

Chat (4)





# Profile of the Learners

- 65% Protestant (estimation)
- Some come from quite far way - Larne, Waringstown, Banbridge
- 38% of sample over 60 years of age
- Only one learner of working age reported self as 'not working'

- 70% at beginners' level
- 45% do not speak Irish outside class
- 31% have few opportunities to speak Irish outside class
- Concerns that large class sizes prevent teachers from monitoring and correcting conversations in Irish



# Use of Technology

- 25% use Facebook (to find out about Irish language events)
- **68% use a phone, tablet or computer**
- 26% use Duolingo
- 23% use online dictionaries and dictionary apps
- 15% use BBC materials
- 8% use Google Translate
- 5% use the Lóifa (Department of Culture) website
- 5% use YouTube ('Now You're Talking' recordings)

- Need for an overall strategy to promote electronic learning, as many learners are unaware of what is available
- Turas classrooms do not have interactive whiteboards (yet!)
- Dialect problem a concern - online material mostly in non-Ulster dialects
- Learners prefer interactive content to learning passively
- Problems with Google Translate beyond simple sentences in Irish

# Room for Improvement

- 'An Ulster dialect site that is easy to navigate with pronunciation'
- 'Cuir Ulster Irish air '
- 'More resources available in Ulster dialect. Online testing'
- 'Ulster Dialect learning site'
- 'For pronunciation/dialect ... maybe an app that is regional for the language'



- 'Greater level of interaction with feedback'
- 'Develop a standardised face-to-face method (similar to Skype) where students could contact their peers in order to practise conversation'
- 'Conversation on-line!'
- 'I'd quite like a smart system that would listen to me – Ulster dialect would be great'
- 'A program similar to Rosetta Stone where you can talk with the program'

‘I think they should be advertised more. Apart from Duolingo I am not aware of any other apps. Also I’m not on Facebook so perhaps if I was I would be aware of more opportunities to learn’

**Age: 34 Occupation: Graphic designer**  
**Place of Residence: Sydenham, Belfast**

**What apps/downloads/ programs/ sites do you use?**

*In order of frequency, starting with most used:*

Duolingo (app & website)

focloir.ie

Collins Irish Dictionary (app)

iPlayer Radio (app)

Podcasts (app) - usually download various RnaG podcasts

Music (app) - for listening to native speakers

rnag.ie

raidiofailte.com/listen-live

TG4 Player (app)

Chegg Flashcards (app)

rannnafeirste.com

BBC iPlayer (app)

Learn Irish (app)



## **How useful are they to your learning?**

Incredibly. They let me do something every day, as and when I like. I can be aurally exposed to the sounds all the time as I work in front of a computer - even if I'm not concentrating on what's being said.

## **How could things be improved regarding new technologies and learning Irish?**

There is a dearth of opportunity to use technology to actually speak. e.g most of the other Duolingo languages have the facility to repeat what the speaker is saying. The Irish one doesn't even have that.



Quit



## Select the missing word

Tá an bhean sa chuisneoir .



**You are correct**

**Translation:** The woman is in the fridge.

Report a Problem

Discuss sentence (80)

Continue



Quit



Translate this text

She has a seal.



Tá rón aici



You are correct

Report a Problem

Discuss sentence (2)

Continue





Quit



Mark all correct translations

The fox eats the butterfly.

1. ☐ Itheann an madra rua an turtar.

2. ☐ Itheann an sionnach an féileacán.

3. ☐ Itheann an cat an féileacán.