



## Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series (KESS)

*...is a forum that encourages debate on a wide range of research findings, with the overall aim of promoting evidence-based policy and law-making within Northern Ireland*



# ***Translating Values: Insights from Multilingual and Multi-Ethnic Focus Groups in Northern Ireland***

Piotr Blumczynski  
*Queen's University Belfast*

John H. Gillespie  
*Ulster University*

# AHRC-funded research networking project studying English evaluative concepts in translation (2012-2015)



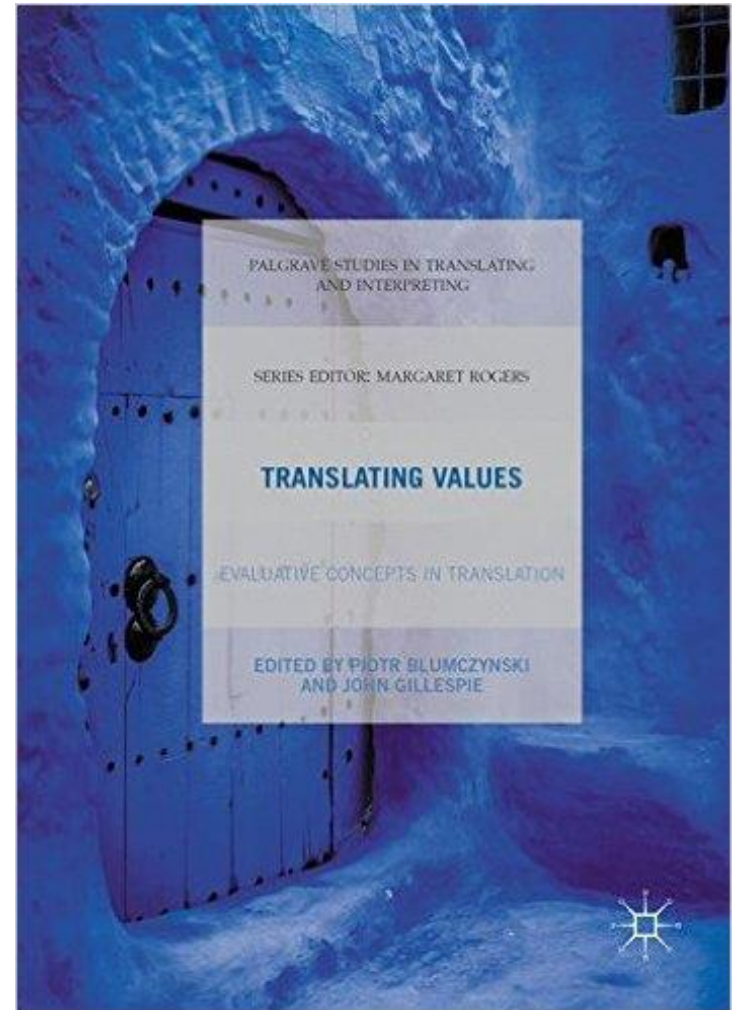
Arts & Humanities  
Research Council



# *Translating Values: Evaluative Concepts in Translation*

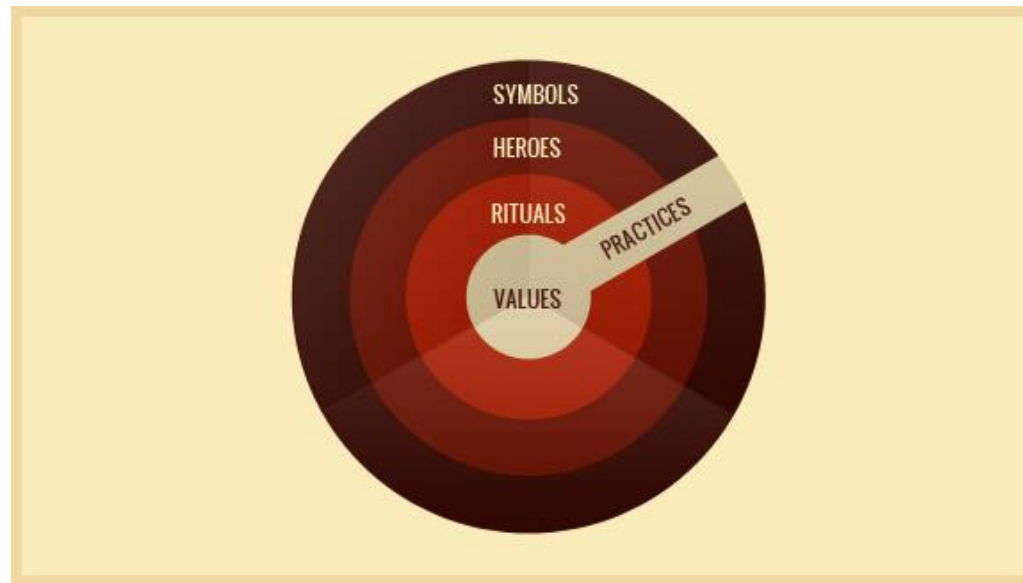
edited by P. Blumczynski,  
J. Gillespie

London and New York 2016:  
Palgrave Macmillan



# Values as the (invisible) core of culture

“The essential core of culture consists of traditional ... ideas and especially their attached values” (Kluckhohn 1951: 86)



(Hofstede 2001: 11)

# Understanding values

“conceptions, explicit or implicit ...of the desirable”

(Kluckhohn 1951: 395)

“broad tendencies to prefer certain states of affairs over others”

(Hofstede 2001: 5)

# Languages and worldviews

“No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are **distinct worlds**, not merely the same world with different labels attached”

(Sapir 1949, 162 in Wierzbicka 1992, 4)

“We live in concepts, and the more a given concept is central to the life of a community, the more likely people in this community are not to notice it but to **take it for granted**, as they take for granted the air they breathe”

(Wierzbicka 2006: 300-1)



# Translating Lives, Translating Values

“Everyday English words such as *right* and *wrong*, *evidence*, *sense*, *experience*, *fair*, *exactly*, *precisely*, and *really* are often used automatically and are “invisible” to native speakers who assume they must have equivalents in other languages”

(Wierzbicka 2006: 10-11; Wierzbicka 2010)





Changing a language – e.g. when moving to a foreign country – will affect a range of attitudes and perceptions, including a sense of belonging (or displacement), fulfillment (or frustration), inclusion (or exclusion), dignity (or humiliation), etc., all translating into social integration, cohesion, and respectful co-existence





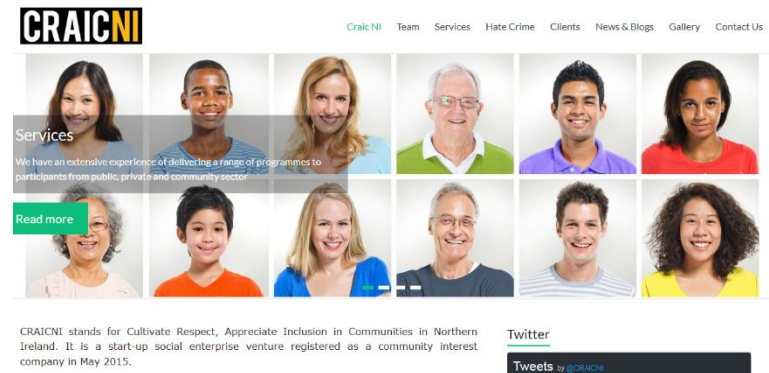
# Community Focus Groups

organized in partnership with CRAICNI  
(a community interest company)

Belfast (February 2015)

Cookstown (February 2015)

Derry/Londonderry (April 2015)



attended by over 50 participants from diverse  
linguistic, ethnic and cultural backgrounds





# How has speaking in English changed your mind about your values: religious, moral or political?

- ✓ “It is difficult to argue in another language”  
(ability to articulate own views and emotions; having a voice; cultural, political and legal representation)
- ✓ “A new language gives a new perspective on other communities and their values”
- ✓ “I am affected by the Political Correctness observed in English”
- ✓ “In English, the value of politeness is more central than in my language”



# How do the values that are expressed in your native language differ from those you encounter in English?

- ✓ “English has less formal ways of addressing other people”
- ✓ “*I love you* in English sounds more casual and superficial than in my language”
- ✓ Problems with expressing anger or frustration





# How important is our language to who we are and what we hold dear?

- ✓“The most important aspect of our language has to do with defining our identity”
- ✓“I’m prouder of Masai now more than before. Quite often people understand importance of their mother tongue when moving abroad”
- ✓“Retaining our native language is important to maintain contact with families and friends we left behind”
- ✓“Being bilingual is good and useful; helps to integrate into a new place”



5. Is it possible for values to be fully translated?

A resounding NO – but there is value in trying!



*“We have to be more open and talk more about our values; this was a useful way to reflect on the impact of translating values on our daily lives.”*

*“Fascinating. Insightful to delve deeper into these issues and see that most people with two languages have similar experiences”*





# Policy Proposals: Multilingualism and Multiculturalism

## ***Recommended Action 1***

That existing Northern Ireland language policies and legislation should be subject to ongoing review in order to ensure that they maintain fitness for purpose in an increasingly multicultural society and remain consistent with national and international legislation.

## ***Recommended Action 2***

That steps be taken to ensure that all languages, spoken and signed, are valued within society, and that mother tongue maintenance is supported.

## ***Recommended Action 3***

That the recommendations of the Business Case Report on Sign Languages should be fully implemented to meet the statutory requirements and duties enshrined in UK disability and equality legislation.



# Policy Proposals: Encouragement of Mutual Understanding

## ***Recommended Action 1***

That the centrality of intercultural understanding to public policy, practice and the delivery of public services be enshrined in a code of practice, to be drawn up in consultation with stakeholders.

## ***Recommended Action 2***

That all possible steps be taken to ensure that users of languages are involved in the policy-making processes that affect those languages.

## ***Recommended Action 3***

That consideration be given to exploring the creation of mutually beneficial cultural/economic projects with the home communities of migrant workers living in Northern Ireland to promote openness in a global context.



# Policy Proposals: Development of Indigenous Languages

## ***Recommended Action 1***

That the provisions of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, ratified by the UK government, are fully applied and that, as an officially recognised indigenous language on an equal footing with Scottish Gaelic and Welsh, Irish should be afforded the full status and privileges that such standing entails.

## ***Recommended Action 2***

That an awareness of and respect for Ulster-Scots traditions be encouraged, and steps taken to examine ways of employing Ulster-Scots linguistic and cultural icons.



# Policy Proposals: Education

## ***Recommended Action 1***

The development and promotion of language learning through adoption of a STEM-L policy, i.e. Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Languages as a core subject, notably through:

- The development of language learning in Primary School
- The promotion of the centrality of language learning, and language and cultural awareness, in Secondary School
- The development and extension of language provision in Further Education
- The strengthening and development of languages policy and provision in Higher Education

## ***Recommended Action 2***

A further development of specialist training in Translation and Interpreting to take account of the findings of this project emphasising the relation between languages and cultural values.



# Policy Proposal: Northern Ireland Languages Council

## ***Recommended Action***

The provision of support for the Northern Ireland Languages Council to assist in its promotion of the development of language learning, language awareness and cultural understanding in Northern Ireland.





Northern Ireland  
Assembly



Queen's University  
Belfast



The Open  
University



Ulster  
University

## Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series (KESS)

*...is a forum that encourages debate on a wide range of research findings, with the overall aim of promoting evidence-based policy and law-making within Northern Ireland*