

The Domination of Language: A Diachronic Study of England's Language Policies and Planning in the Celtic Periphery from the Times of Alfred the Great to the Annexation of Ireland.

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In spite of the absence of any law proclaiming English as the sole language of the United Kingdom, it is widely used in international discourse today. English however, as a language that emerged from many influences (Angle, Saxon, Danish, Norse, Norman, French...), was not developed with the intention of becoming a dominant language. Non-Germanic languages were largely spoken in Wales, Scotland and Ireland, and such regions had their own strong cultures embedded in the larger Celtic world. How then, did the United Kingdom come to assert the lingual domination of such a newly born language? This would have required a strong political will of control through language, backed up by a powerfully implemented legal system and governmental enforcement. Together, it would be possible to force the people to switch from their inherited languages to an imposed language; in a word, to assimilate their identities.

The regionalist issues the UK has recently dealt with show us, however, that the enterprise of forced Anglicisation did not succeed before regional and linguistic revivals took place all over Europe. These movements within the British nations require us to go back to the origins of the languages and cultures confronted by English, so that we may develop an understanding of what kinds of language policies may have taken place from the times of such confrontations onwards.