



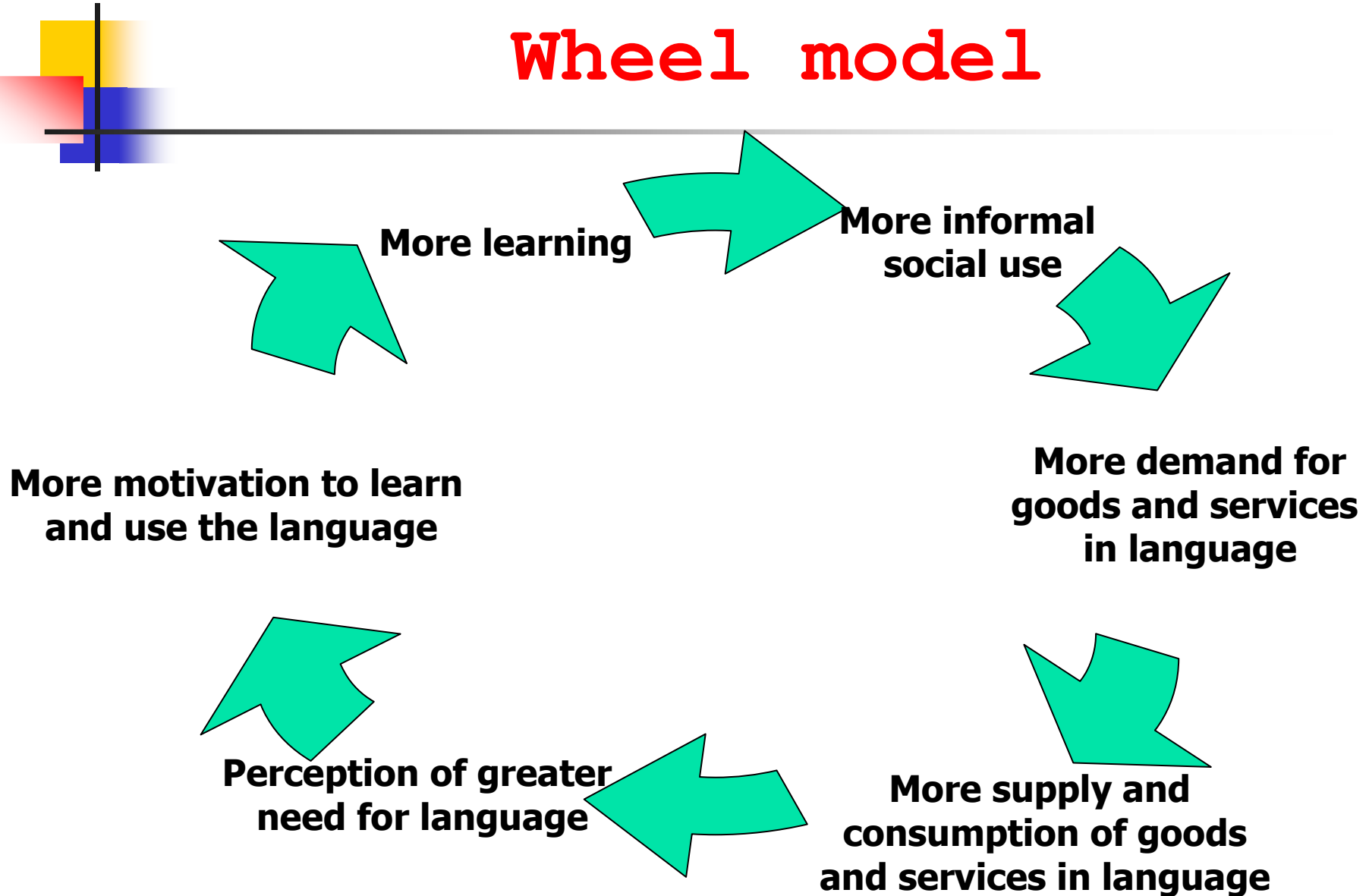
RESEARCH SEMINAR
UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

**An overcoat wrapped around an
invisible man? Language legislation
and community language
revitalisation in Ireland**

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Strubell's Catherine Wheel model





Background to Irish legislation

- Official but minoritised status of Irish
- Official Languages Act, 2003
- Constitutional status not reflected in legislation
- Language Commissioner
- 650+ public bodies
- 3 types of obligations: statutory, based on regulations, based on language schemes



Language schemes

- Section 11: body required by Minister to prepare scheme
- Measures to enhance services in Irish, 'means of communication'
- Scheme agreed with DCRGA each 3 years
- 24 schemes agreed (38 bodies) – mid '06
- 20 schemes awaiting approval
- 71 requested (almost 20% of total)



Typology of Schemes

A. National bodies without Gaeltacht remit:

- Arts Council; Courts Service, Dept. Arts, Sports & Tourism; Dept. of Environment; Dept. of Finance; Dept. of Taoiseach; Director of Public Prosecutions; Office of Commission for Public Service Appointments; Offices of Ombudsman & Information Commissioner; Office of Secretary General to President; Public Appointments Service; Referendum Commission; Revenue Commissioners

B. Bodies with specific Gaeltacht remit:

- Local authorities in Donegal, Galway, Kerry, Waterford; Donegal VEC; Dept. of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs; Dept. of Education; Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology; HSE West; NUI Galway; NUI Maynooth

Characteristics of Schemes

- Category A relatively weak:
 - Relatively low impact on local language use
 - Contracting out of translation work
 - Little direct bilingualisation of organisational culture
 - Irish classes: inefficient and costly
- Category B stronger:
 - More detailed commitments, particularly in Galway-based bodies, to a lesser extent in other Gaeltacht
 - Attention to sub-offices in Gaeltacht
 - High potential to create Irish language employment



Problems with Schemes

- **Front-line staff**

- Minimal improvements to oral communication
- Lack of unambiguous choice Irish/English

- **Oral vs. written communication**

- Weak social status of Irish, poor literacy

- **Recruitment**

- Vague commitments to 'reviewing' policy
- Personnel issues

- **Stimulation of demand**

- Weak on publicising schemes, 'active offer'



Conclusion

- Significant for language planning in context of Catherine Wheel
- Several challenges remain although elements of Irish schemes may become future provisions of amended Act
- Need for parallel language awareness campaign
- Development of national language planning framework