Attitudes towards the Irish Language on the Island of Ireland

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Executive Summary

The language we speak is part of our identity and makes us part of our community. Some languages are spoken only by a minority of people in a country and in many jurisdictions the number of speakers of regional and minority languages is in decline. At present, there are approximately 60 minority languages in Europe, with different statuses. The survival of such languages largely depends on public attitudes towards the language as well as the extent to which it is used by members of a community. At European level steps have been taken to provide protection to minority languages through the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages* (ECRML). Its aim is to protect and promote regional and minority languages as a threatened aspect of Europe's cultural heritage and to enable speakers of a regional or minority language to use it in private and public life. The charter is supervised by the Council of Europe and has been adopted by many EU Member States. Additional steps have been taken by individual countries in devising policies to protect the position of minority languages and providing opportunities to revive their use.

Over the decades there has been continued interest in the position of the Irish language, one of the minority languages in Europe. Once holding a prominent position on the island, social, economic and political factors throughout the centuries have resulted in its decline. The current situation of the Irish language on the island differs markedly between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. The Republic of Ireland has two official languages; Irish and English. According to the *Irish Constitution*, the Irish language is the first official language of Ireland, despite the fact that English is the mother tongue of the majority of the population. The language is more frequently used in Gaeltacht areas; areas where the Irish language continues to be the main spoken language of a substantial number of inhabitants. The Irish language is also one of the core subjects in primary and post-primary schools. Some primary and post-primary schools operate through the medium of Irish. A broad range of government policies exists protecting the language and several initiatives promote its use.

In Northern Ireland the position of the Irish language is complex, often politically charged and has changed markedly over time. Attitudes towards the Irish language in Northern Ireland have traditionally reflected political differences between the Protestant and Catholic communities. In contrast to the Republic, there are no official Gaeltacht areas in Northern Ireland and the Irish language is

provided only in some (mainly Catholic) schools, although some Irish-medium schools are also available.

Irish is spoken by a minority of the population in both jurisdictions, but there are significant differences in the size of this minority. Recent census figures (2011) on both sides of the border show that in the Republic, 41 per cent of the population reported being able to speak Irish (CSO, 2012), the corresponding figure for Northern Ireland was 11 per cent. This study is designed to explore the factors affecting attitudes towards, and use of, the Irish language among the adult population on the island of Ireland. In doing so, it draws, first and foremost, on data from the *Irish Language Survey 2013*, with comparisons made to the *Irish Language Survey 2001* on which it was based.[1] Further insights are provided by a comparison of the results regarding the profile of Irish speakers with that from Census data. Given that attitudes are often shaped by schooling, the study also draws on secondary analysis of the *Growing Up in Ireland* study (nine-year-old cohort) on primary school pupils and the Irish *Post-Primary Longitudinal Study* (PPLS), exploring students' attitudes to Irish in the Republic of Ireland.

KEY FINDINGS

Irish Language in the Education Systems of the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland

The *Irish Language Survey 2013* findings show that the majority of adult respondents in the Republic of Ireland had learned Irish in primary or post-primary school (either as a subject in English-medium schools or in Irish-medium schools) compared to a minority of those in Northern Ireland.

Secondary analysis of the *Growing Up in Ireland* (GUI) and *Post-Primary Longitudinal Study* (PPLS) data shows that student attitudes in the Republic towards Irish tend to be more negative compared to other core subjects. Children attending Irish-medium primary schools tend to hold more positive attitudes towards the Irish language. This may be due to a selection effect whereby parents who are positive about the Irish language and want their children to learn Irish enrol them in Irish-medium schools. The ethos in these schools is likely to build upon parental preferences; the principals of Irish-medium and Gaeltacht schools were more likely to report that Irish language and culture were important for the ethos in the school than principals in English-medium schools. Across all primary schools, however, students prefer (English)[2] reading to Irish. In post-primary

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[1]   The 2001 data was collected by Research and Evaluation Services and the 2013 data was collected by Amárach Research.

[2]   The test administered as a part of the study was the Drumcondra Reading test in English.

schools in the Republic, students considered Irish less useful than English and Mathematics. The Irish language was also considered more difficult and less interesting than the other two subjects. Interestingly, other European languages (e.g. French) were also considered difficult by some students. Students' negative attitudes towards Irish seemed to remain constant throughout their post-primary schooling. While similar data was not available for re-analysis for Northern Ireland, results of the *Northern Ireland Key Stage 3 Cohort Study* show that modern languages and creative arts were seen by students as the least useful subjects for the future (McKendry, 2007).

According to the *2013 Irish Language Survey*, there was support for teaching of the Irish language in schools with four-in-five adults in the Republic agreeing that the language should be available as a subject in school. In Northern Ireland just under half (48 per cent) felt that this should be the case. While only a small number indicated that all-Irish education was the most suitable programme for most children, the majority of respondents in both jurisdictions indicated that all-Irish schools should be provided where there is a demand for them.

Given the differences in Irish language education across the two jurisdictions, it is unsurprising to see that the level of Irish fluency among adults in the Republic of Ireland is considerably higher (basic fluency: 43 per cent; advanced fluency: 14 per cent) than that in Northern Ireland (basic fluency: 14 per cent; advanced fluency: 3 per cent). Consequently, the incidence of ever speaking Irish is higher in the Republic of Ireland (33 per cent ever; 13 per cent weekly+) than Northern Ireland (12 per cent ever; 2 per cent weekly+). Speaking some other languages also had a positive relationship with having some Irish language ability.

The Importance of Family Context in the Transmission of Language Attitudes

The extent to which a language is spoken in the home plays a strong role in inter-generational transmission of language attitudes and practice. Respondents to the *Irish Language Survey 2013* in the Republic of Ireland reported higher levels of fluency amongst their parents (Mother: 33 per cent; Father: 30 per cent with basic/ advanced fluency) than those in Northern Ireland (Mother: 11 per cent; Father: 10 per cent with basic/advanced fluency). The incidence of Irish being spoken in the home as a child impacted on the current usage of Irish amongst adult respondents in both jurisdictions. Those who grew up with Irish in the home are more likely to use Irish at present (ROI: 56 per cent; NI: 45 per cent) than those who were seldom or never exposed to Irish in the home (ROI: 18 per cent; NI: 6 per cent).

The *Irish Language Survey (2013)* sought to explore respondents' desire to learn Irish while at school as well as the wishes of their parents regarding the language. Across both jurisdictions, adult respondents whose parents wished them to learn Irish at school themselves reported a wish to learn Irish. Differences could be observed in the motivation to do so. In the Republic of Ireland the wish to study Irish 'to pass the exams' was prevalent, whereas in Northern Ireland the primary factor was 'learning Irish for its own sake'. Respondents who reported wanting to learn Irish for its own sake were more likely to use Irish currently than those who learned the language primarily to pass exams, demonstrating the importance of intrinsic motivation in language learning. Fluency and usage of the language were associated with other background characteristics such as higher socio-economic background, higher levels of education, and religion (being Catholic).

The *2013 Irish Language Survey* showed that for many, the Irish language has lower status compared to other subjects. The analysis showed that the majority of adults in both the Republic and Northern Ireland believe that science-based subjects are more important for children to learn than Irish (68 per cent ROI and 86 per cent in NI), on par with 2001 findings (70 per cent in ROI and 83 per cent in NI).

The Importance of Friends and Wider Community

International research has indicated that having opportunities to use the minority language outside the education system enhances one's language use and fluency. Having friends who use the Irish language socially was associated with language use and positive attitudes towards the language in both jurisdictions. Three-in-ten (33 per cent in ROI and 31 per cent in NI) have at least one friend who speaks Irish outside the home. Almost two-in-five adults in the Republic of Ireland (38 per cent) have 'friends who are bringing up their children through Irish at home or who use a lot of Irish with their children', which is only slightly higher than in Northern Ireland (31 per cent).[3]

Among people with some knowledge of the Irish language, limited opportunities to speak it may be one of the more prevalent reasons for not doing so more regularly. In the Republic three-quarters of respondents with basic fluency (75 per cent) and almost half of respondents with advanced fluency (45 per cent) indicated that people in their circle do not use Irish. Not knowing whether other people speak the language seems to have an impact on Irish speakers. A sizable number noted that they 'do not like to begin a conversation in Irish' (basic

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[3] The questionnaire asks about any friends, not friends in the jurisdiction.

fluency: 50 per cent; advanced fluency: 43 per cent) and a higher proportion 'do not like speaking Irish when others who are present do not know Irish' (basic fluency: 49 per cent; advanced fluency: 55 per cent). A small minority of adults across the island of Ireland (ROI: 15 per cent; NI: 10 per cent) have tried to learn/improve their Irish as adults.

Attitudes Towards the Irish Language and its Perceived Future

Many adult respondents in both jurisdictions hold positive attitudes towards the Irish language. Over two-thirds of the respondents in the Republic of Ireland (67 per cent) and almost half in Northern Ireland (45 per cent) reported a positive attitude to the Irish language. The views of respondents from the two jurisdictions differed regarding attitudes towards the Irish language and its role in the heritage and culture of Ireland. In the Republic, almost two-thirds (64 per cent) believe that Ireland would lose its identity without the Irish language. However, a significantly smaller (33 per cent) proportion of Northern Irish residents shared this view. There were notably mixed views on the level of involvement that the Government should have in preservation/promotion of the Irish language; in the Republic of Ireland there was a significantly stronger feeling that the Government should ensure that Irish is taught well in schools (53 per cent), in contrast to a third of those in Northern Ireland (34 per cent).

In terms of maintaining the language, residents in the Republic of Ireland believed that policy focus should be on 'Irish-speaking households/Gaeltacht areas' (26 per cent), whereas those in Northern Ireland believe that the language should be maintained through media; 'Television/Radio programmes in Irish' (23 per cent). Many respondents felt that the respective jurisdictions should seek to become bilingual, although with English as the principal language (ROI 43 per cent and NI 34 per cent).

The situation regarding the Irish language has some similarities to other minority languages in Europe. A review of case-study jurisdictions shows that governments have generally made considerable efforts to protect and promote lesser spoken languages. While the number of fluent bilingual speakers has remained small in most cases, numbers have increased somewhat over the years in the case of Scottish Gaelic. In Wales, the number of Welsh speakers has fallen in the past ten years despite the strong position of the language in the education system and the language policies adopted. As with Catalan in Spain, the Irish language is highly politicised in Northern Ireland, making it difficult to promote its wider use in the jurisdiction outside the Catholic communities. It could be argued that without relevant European and national legislation and policies supporting local initiatives

in promoting minority languages, the situation regarding the use of the Irish language could deteriorate in both jurisdictions. While legislation in both jurisdictions ensures the protection of the Irish language on the island of Ireland, policy implementation remains a challenge. Legislating for the protection of minority languages is only one measure in ensuring their continued use. Across jurisdictions the factors that positively impact on learning the language include motivation and interest, speaking the language in the home and opportunities to speak it in the community.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY DEVELOPMENT

The policy framework that protects the Irish language on the island of Ireland is linked to broader human rights policies as well as policies specifically designed to promote the Irish language. The rights of Irish speakers are protected in international legislation under the *Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities* and the *European Convention on Human Rights*. In the Republic of Ireland, the 20-year-strategy outlines steps to be taken to ensure maintenance of the language. With regard to the position of the Irish language in Northern Ireland, the British Government has signed The *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*, part three of which calls for the maximum efforts to be put into action to promote and protect Irish. Despite the efforts undertaken by respective governments, the number of people who can speak the Irish language outside the education system has remained small, particularly in Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland has faced additional challenges with regard to lacking political consensus on the Irish language. Overall, it could be argued that, while offering protection to the Irish language, the language policies to date have not managed to bring about any significant change regarding the use of the Irish language. This could be the result of generally top-down approaches regarding language development policies (see MacGiolla Chríost, 2000), as well as having very few meaningful opportunities to use the Irish language. Yet, the results of this study have shown that attitudes towards the language on both sides of the border are positive. At the same time, language attitudes and use are shaped by a combination of factors including family context, the education system and the broader community.

The results of this study show that respondents had more positive attitudes to the Irish language and were more likely to speak the language themselves if they came from families where Irish was spoken and where parents had wished that they learned Irish at school. Children who grow up in families where the language is used are more likely to continue using the Irish language after they leave the education system. The motivation of some respondents to study Irish 'to pass the exams' seems to indicate that the Irish language is seen as a school subject in the

Republic. In order to avoid perceiving the Irish language only as a school subject, parents could help enhance positive attitudes by taking interest in how their child is getting on with the Irish language at school and assist them with homework, if possible. Parents with low Irish proficiency or none may benefit from support in how to assist their children with Irish homework. Initiatives such as 'parents supporting parents' in both jurisdictions, for parents who wish to bring up their children bilingually, have a potential in bringing together parents who share an interest in the Irish language and offer opportunities to share their experiences.

Attitudes towards Irish can also be shaped at school level. In the Republic Irish is generally seen by primary and post-primary students as less interesting or useful than some other subjects such as English or Mathematics. While not a focus of this study, previous research has highlighted the importance of teacher competency and curriculum (Harris and Murtagh, 1999). Greater emphasis could be put on oral and aural skills. Other opportunities to speak the language could be provided by heritage clubs and various extra-curricular activities that include the use of Irish. Offering Irish as an optional subject across different types of schools in Northern Ireland could be used to provide choice for students. In addition, heritage clubs shared between schools could use the medium of Irish for some of its activities to promote the language. Increasing opportunities within schools outside of the Irish language class may encourage young people to use the language more frequently.

Previous studies have highlighted the importance of having opportunities to use the Irish language outside school context. Post-school courses such as the already existing European Certificate in Languages (see www.teg.ie) could provide those interested in improving their fluency with opportunities to do so. While there are now increasing opportunities to engage with Irish language print and broadcast media, the language could be used as a means of communication more broadly. Irish-medium interest groups and educational courses (including those online; possibly cross-border programmes) could offer additional opportunities for people to practice the language. Various leisure activities where people with different levels of Irish language fluency can meet could be utilised for the development for language skills. As cost may be one of the barriers to attending language classes, grants could be made available for local initiatives to run free courses.

The results of this study have shown that the use of, and attitudes to, the Irish language are rooted in three domains: the education system, the family and the wider community. While the inter-generational transmission of language attitudes and use within the family context is important, it needs to be supported

by the education system and having opportunities to use the language in other social contexts.

Chapter 1

Introduction, Literature Review and Methodology

1.1   INTRODUCTION

Within recent decades, much discussion in the sociology of language and socio-linguistics has focussed on concerns over the survival prospects of minority languages. It is generally agreed that what happens to a language depends on the degree to which it is used by members of a community and the importance attached to it (Nic Craith, 1999; O'Rourke, 2011b). The Council of Europe (CE) has highlighted the importance of protecting the historical regional or minority languages[4] of Europe, some of which are on the verge of disappearance. The CE notes that

> the right to use a regional or minority language in private and public life is an inalienable right conforming to the principles embodied in the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and according to the spirit of the Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (Council of Europe, 1992).

The language we speak is part of our identity as individuals and makes us part of our community. The survival of minority languages largely depends on public attitudes towards the language. Attitudes manifest themselves through positive or negative behaviour towards speakers of other languages or their inclination to learn other languages. If the language is seen as an important part of one's identity, individuals are more likely to speak it and be interested in its survival (Edwards, 2010).

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[4]   The Council of Europe defines regional or minority languages as 'those traditionally used by part of the population in a state, but which are not official state language dialects, migrant languages or artificially created languages'. Many languages fall into this bracket. The most widely spoken is Catalan. Regional or minority languages may also have official status, for example Irish and Luxembourgish, which have national language status in their respective countries but share many of the characteristics of regional or minority languages. The UK has ratified the *European Charter for Minority and Lesser-Used Languages*. Ireland chose not to ratify the Charter as, according to the relevant Minister in a Dáil (Irish parliament) debate, 'go ndéanfadh sé sin dochar do stádas na Gaeilge i gcomhthéacs Bhunreacht na hÉireann agus i gcomhthéacs a bhfuil ar bun faoi láthair chun ardú céime a thabhairt don Ghaeilge san Aontas Eorpach.' ('it could damage the status of Irish in the context of the *Irish Constitution* and in the context of current efforts to raise the status of the language within the European Union.') http://oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie/debates%20authoring/debateswebpack.nsf/takes/dail1998020500032?open document.

Irish is a minority language in the Republic of Ireland[5] and Northern Ireland. It belongs to an Indo-European group of languages, in particular, the Gaelic or Goidelic branch of the Celtic languages. The language is closely related to Scots Gaelic and Manx as well as Welsh, Breton and Cornish. By the 5th Century AD, Irish was established as the dominant language in Ireland. The situation changed dramatically from the 16th century onwards as a result of English rule in Ireland. The number of Irish-speakers dropped significantly by the end of 18th Century with less than half of the population retaining the language, with use dropping even further during the following century (Hickey, 2008). At the same time, waves of emigration resulted in a situation whereby a number of countries, mainly the United States, Australia, Canada and New Zealand, have groups of people of Irish heritage who promote the language (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2015). According to the most recent Census figures in the Republic, 41 per cent of population reported being able to speak Irish (CSO, 2012).[6] In Northern Ireland the position of the Irish language is complex and has reflected changing socio-political circumstances. Since 1998, following the Good Friday Agreement,[7] Irish has been an officially recognised minority language in the jurisdiction. According to the results of the 2011 Census, 11 per cent of the NI population have knowledge of Irish. More recent figures show that in 2013/2014 15 per cent of population have some knowledge of Irish, with four per cent using the language at home at least occasionally and a similar number reporting using Irish socially (DCALNI, 2015). In order to promote the status of the Irish language a cross-border body, Foras na Gaeilge, was established in 1999. At present, policies in both jurisdictions protect the position of the language. For example, in the Republic, the most recent document, a 20-year *Strategy for the Irish Language*, sets out the government policy to increase the number of people using Irish outside the education system (see Chapter Two). By signing the *European Charter of Regional and Minority Languages*, the UK government made provisions for minority languages, including Irish in Northern Ireland (See Chapter Three). Various initiatives in both jurisdictions promote the use of the Irish language, including language centres, TV and radio stations and print media.

Local education systems play an important role in preserving minority and regional languages (Council of Europe, 1992). It has been argued that in the Republic of Ireland, Irish has endured mainly because of its inclusion in the school curriculum as one of the core subjects (Murtagh, 2007; Ó Riagáin, 1997). At the same time, the attitudes of students in English-medium schools towards Irish are often negative (see Smyth, et al., 2004). On the other hand, pupils in Irish-

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[5] While being spoken by a minority, it is a first official language of the jurisdiction.

[6] However, little is known about the objective proficiency of these people in Irish as the Census only asks 'Can you speak Irish?'

[7] The Good Friday Agreement or Belfast Agreement was an important outcome of the Northern Ireland peace process of the 1990s.

medium schools tend to be both motivated to learn Irish and show favourable attitudes towards the language (Griffin, 2001). In Northern Ireland, between 1924 and 1927 the number of primary schools teaching Irish was halved, and the numbers studying Irish as an extra subject fell considerably between 1923 and 1926. The subsidy for Irish as an extra subject was abolished in 1934 (Mac Póilin, 2006). Since then, the Irish language has been offered as an optional subject only in some (mainly Catholic) schools. In 2000 the Department of Education in Northern Ireland set up Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (CnaG); the representative body for Irish-medium Education to promote, facilitate and encourage Irish-medium education in the jurisdiction. The Council of Europe report (2014) notes the positive approach taken by the Department of Education in Northern Ireland regarding the recommendations made by the Council of Europe in its review of Irish-medium education. However, the Committee of Experts highlighted the need for a coherent strategy for education in Irish, across all stages of education and positive measures to implement it.

1.2   RESEARCH AIMS

The study aims to explore factors influencing attitudes to, and the use of, the Irish language on the island of Ireland. In so doing, it draws, first and foremost, on 2013 survey data collected by Amárach Research. In order to explore changes in attitudes over time, the study also draws on earlier (2001) survey data which were comparable to the *2013 Irish Language Survey.* Further insights into overall trends will be provided by the analysis of Census data. Given that attitudes are often shaped by schooling, the study also draws on the *Growing Up in Ireland* study (nine-year-old cohort) as well as the Irish *Post-Primary Longitudinal Study* (PPLS) which indicate student perspectives on Irish.

The study provides a review of relevant literature, national policies, legislation and practice in the Republic and Northern Ireland. In order to contextualise Irish findings, a section of the study will explore the situation of minority languages in other jurisdictions: Wales, Scotland, the Netherlands and Spain with a focus on policy development to protect the languages and initiatives to promote language use. Drawing on various data sources, the study endeavours to provide insights into how to strengthen the position of Irish on the island of Ireland.

The study aims to answer the following research questions:

- How are school-related factors associated with attitudes to Irish?

- How are family-related factors associated with use of Irish?

- What is the attitude of adult population towards the Irish language on the island of Ireland? Has this changed over time and how?

- How do people in the Republic and Northern Ireland perceive the future of the Irish language?

- How does Ireland compare with other jurisdictions in promoting the native language?

1.3 DATA SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

1.3.1 Phase 1 – Desk-Based Research

The first phase of the study involved the identification of relevant literature and conducting a systematic literature review focussing on materials relating to attitudes to, and provision of, minority languages in educational and other settings. In addition to published research, the review also considers relevant post-graduate theses and policy documents in Ireland. In order to carry out the systematic review, literature searches of computerised databases were undertaken using specific key words.

In order to provide contextual information for the study, an analysis was undertaken on the situation of minority languages in other jurisdictions such as Scotland, Wales, Spain and the Netherlands, to provide a variety of contexts. Scotland and Wales provide broadly similar socio-linguistic contexts; whereas Catalan in Spain is spread across territories, and is highly politicised. West Frisian is a unique language in one state that strongly promotes bilingualism. The review focuses on policy developments, the position of the minority language in the education system and practical steps taken in promoting the minority languages in these jurisdictions.

1.3.2 Primary Data: *2013 Irish Language Survey*

The second phase involved analysis of primary data from the *Irish Language Survey 2013*. The survey was conducted by Amárach Research across the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland in November 2013. The primary aim of the survey was to provide robust information on the current position of the Irish language in both jurisdictions among the adult population. The survey yielded insights regarding issues such as exposure to Irish at home and in the education system; current language proficiency and usage; and attitudes towards the Irish language. The survey was designed to allow comparisons to be drawn, where possible, with the *Irish Language Survey 2001*.

Methodology of the Irish Language Survey 2013

The 2013 survey involved a probability sample of households in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland using face-to-face interviews in respondents' homes. The information for the sample was drawn by the ESRI using ROI (GeoDirectory) and by NISRA in NI (POINTER). The survey was conducted amongst adults aged 18+ with no upper age limit imposed on the sample. The respondent in each household was selected using the 'next-birthday rule'.[8] The sample yielded 1,215 respondents in the Republic of Ireland (73 per cent response rate) and 1,045 respondents in Northern Ireland (63 per cent response rate). The surveys were conducted by trained interviewers who were briefed to ensure the nature of the survey was not revealed to the respondents prior to the survey ensuring that respondents' fluency in or perception of the Irish language did not impact on their participation. The questionnaire (see Appendix 2) was available in both English and Irish, allowing respondents a choice in how to complete the survey. A pre-survey pilot was conducted to test the survey design and methodology. In analysing survey data, weighting is generally used to adjust the results of a study to bring them more in line with what is known about a population in order to adjust for over- or under-representation. The *2001 Irish Language Survey* data analysis was carried out by using un-weighted data. Since this data was not available for re-analysis, analysis of the 2013 survey data also used un-weighted data. Exploration of QNHS data revealed that for the Republic of Ireland the figures in the sample were broadly in line with those in the population on dimensions such as age and gender. The sample figures regarding age and gender were also broadly in line with NIRSA data for Northern Ireland. Thus the data can be taken as representative along these dimensions of the broader population.

Comparisons between the Irish Language Survey 2001 and the Irish Language Survey 2013

The *Irish Language Survey 2013* was designed with reference to the methodology and survey information available in relation to the *Irish Language Survey 2001* to facilitate comparisons, where possible, between the two surveys. The *Irish Language Survey 2001* was conducted by Research and Evaluation Services in November 2000 as part of their Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland Social Omnibus surveys. A number of strategies were employed to ensure consistency between the two studies (see Table 1.1), these included:

- Pádraig Ó Riagáin, Professor Emeritus of Sociology of Language, was consulted regarding the content of the survey instrument.

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[8] The adult in the household with the next birthday is selected.

- Both surveys were conducted using a face-to-face methodology in respondents' own homes, and respondents were selected using probability based random sampling.

- The sampling frames were provided by the ESRI (ROI) and NISRA (NI). The sampling frame was a listing of adults in 2001 while in 2013 it was a listing of addresses[9] due to the introduction and subsequent prevalence of this method in the interim.

- The design of the 2013 questionnaire was informed by details on question wording and routing in the 2001 report. This wording was tested for relevance in 2013 by using a pilot study to identify any areas of uncertainty.

Figures from the two surveys are presented side by side throughout this report. However, despite every attempt being made to ensure consistency, some caution must be exercised when drawing comparative conclusions due to the methodological differences (some additional questions were introduced to the 2013 survey questionnaire) and slight variation in respondent profile that results from a probability-based random sample of adults and households respectively (see Table 1.2 and Table 1.3).

1.3.3   Secondary Data

Where appropriate, an analysis of Census data, *Growing Up in Ireland* (GUI) data and *Post-Primary Longitudinal Study* (PPLS) data from the Republic of Ireland is utilised.[10] The main aim of the GUI study is to paint a full picture of children in Ireland and how they are developing in the current social, economic and cultural environment. The analysis for this report draws on the first wave of this longitudinal study of 8,568 nine-year-olds. The study combines information from parents, school principals, teachers and children themselves. In doing so it provides valuable and detailed information about the home environment of these children, their family, their school and their engagement with the schooling process. For this study, the analysis looks at primary school children's attitudes towards the Irish language across different types of schools, including Irish-medium schools. It is also explores the profile of parents who enrol their children in Irish-medium schools.

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[9]   Selection of an address-based sample tends to lead to an over-representation of people living in larger households. This is because each address has an equal probability of selection, no matter how many adults live there.

[10]   While Chapter 3 refers to the 2012 survey by the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure in Northern Ireland, the original data was not available for re-analysis.

TABLE 1.1 Comparison of the 2001 and 2013 Irish Language Survey Information

	Irish Language Survey 2001*		*Irish Language Survey 2013*	
Agency managing research	Research and Evaluation Services.		Amárach Research, Dublin.	
Fieldwork conducted by	ROI and NI: Research and Evaluation Services.		ROI: Amárach Research, Dublin. NI: Perceptive Insight Market Research, Belfast	
Methodology	Quantitative. Face-to-face survey in respondents own homes. Probability-based random sampling of adults.		Quantitative. Face-to-face survey in respondents own homes. Probability-based random sampling of households.	
Dates conducted	November – December 2000		October – November 2013	
Sampling frame designed by:	ROI: NI:	Unknown Unknown	ROI: NI:	ESRI NISRA
Sampling frame sources:	ROI: NI:	2000 Register of Electors. 2000 Register of Electors.	ROI: NI:	GeoDirectory (comprehensive listing of addresses). POINTER (comprehensive listing of addresses).
Sample Size	ROI: NI:	1,000 1,000	ROI: NI:	1,215 1,045.
Response rate **	ROI: NI:	67% response rate 64% response rate	ROI: NI:	73% response rate 63% response rate
Sample weighting	No weighting applied.		No weighting applied.	
Population coverage	Full population coverage including Gaeltacht areas.		Full population coverage including Gaeltacht areas.	

Note: * All information about the *Irish Language Survey 2001* is taken from a published report (Foras na Gaeilge, 2001).
** Response rate is based on eligible addresses in 2013 survey. Eligibility of addresses was non-applicable in 2001 due to sampling design based on Register of Electors.

Additional information was provided by the analysis of the PPLS data.[11] The PPLS study, conducted in 12 case-study schools, was first carried out when students in the Republic transferred from primary to post-primary school, with students then followed throughout their schooling career. While the study does not include Irish-medium schools, it allows for an exploration of students' attitudes towards various subjects, including Irish. Secondary data on schools in Northern Ireland was not available, but references are made to the *Northern Ireland Key Stage 3 Cohort Study*, where appropriate. The study was designed to discover the views of students aged 11-14 and their teachers on the curriculum.

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[11] The sample is not representative of the population.

TABLE 1.2   Respondent Profile (Republic of Ireland)

		Irish Language Survey 2001 %	Irish Language Survey 2013 %
Gender:	Male	50	46
	Female	50	54
Age:	18-24	21	9
	25-44	38	41
	45-64	32	31
	65-74	6	13
	75+	3	6
Country grew up:	ROI	n/a	85
	Elsewhere	n/a	15
Area grew up:	Gaeltacht area	n/a	3
	Non-Gaeltacht area	n/a	97
Occupational status:	At Work	60	50
	Unemployed	2	0
	Student	7	11
	Home Duties	20	5
	Retired	8	14
	Unable to Work	2	17
	1st Job Seeking	0	0
	Other	1	2

TABLE 1.3   Ireland Respondent Profile (Northern Ireland)

		Irish Language Survey 2001 %	Irish Language Survey 2013 %
Gender:	Male	46	44
	Female	54	56
Age:	18-24	19	8
	25-44	38	31
	45-64	26	36
	65-74	10	16
	75+	7	10
Country grew up:	NI	n/a	90
	Elsewhere	n/a	10
Religion:	Catholic	32	41
	Protestant	57	36
	Other/none	11	23
Occupational status:	At Work	n/a	47
	Unemployed	n/a	10
	Student	n/a	3
	Home Duties	n/a	7
	Retired	n/a	28
	Unable to Work	n/a	5
	1st Job Seeking	n/a	0
	Other	n/a	0

1.4 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

1.4.1 Preservation and Maintenance of Minority Languages

Increasing concerns regarding the disappearance of some minority languages and the subsequent reduction of the world's linguistic diversity have resulted in growing research on the survival and maintenance of minority languages (O'Rourke, 2005; Janjua, 2011). It has been estimated that a significant number of the world's languages are likely to become extinct by the end of this century (Evans, 2010, p. xviii). Attitudes expressed by the dominant groups can play a crucial role in the protection and revitalisation of minority languages, and support the efforts of speakers in language maintenance. The UNESCO report (2003) notes that a language is in danger 'when its speakers cease to use it, use it in an increasingly reduced number of communicative domains, and cease to pass it on from one generation to the next. That is, there are no new speakers, adults or children' (ibid., p. 2). Language endangerment may be the result of external as well as internal factors. The loss of a language may be a result of political, religious or cultural influences; it may also be the result of negative attitudes held in the community regarding specific languages and discouragement regarding its use. Both sets of factors have a detrimental impact on the inter-generational transmission of linguistic and cultural traditions (Shohamy, 2006).

Defining 'minority languages' is a complex task. They have been defined as 'languages that are traditionally used within a given territory of a state by nationals of that state who form a group numerically smaller than the rest of the state's population and which is different from the official language(s) of that state' (Thornberry et al., 2004, p 141). In the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*, they are defined as 'languages traditionally used by part of the population of a state that are not dialects of official languages of the state, languages of migrants or artificially created languages' (Council of Europe, 2014). One can also differentiate between language minority groups and non-territorial languages'. The latter are defined as

> *languages used by nationals of the state which differ from the language or languages used by the rest of the state's population but which traditionally were used within the territory of the state (ibid.).*

The issue is further complicated by the fact that some languages have official (or co-official) status in some countries and not in others, and that the size of minority language groups (i.e. number of language speakers) differs between countries (Dooly et al., 2009). Minority languages have also been categorised as territorial or non-territorial (e.g. Roma people), national or trans-national (e.g. Catalan, Basque, Breton), historical or new (e.g. immigrant or heritage languages)

(ibid.). The Irish language presents a particularly interesting case as it is the first official language in the Republic of Ireland, while being spoken by a minority of people in the jurisdiction. The Irish situation reflects policies since the foundation of the State to maintain the language inside Gaeltacht areas while encouraging its revival across the jurisdiction (Ó Riagáin, 1997). The language has a minority language status in Northern Ireland and is spoken by a relatively small number of people.

The preservation and maintenance of minority languages depend on the status conferred to the language by the dominant community and public attitudes toward the language (Fesl, 1985). The following sections explore different factors likely to influence the preservation of minority languages.

1.4.2   Language Attitudes

Language is an important component of group identity (see Cavallaro, 2005; Fought, 2006). The attitudes and actions of a majority group towards minority languages are likely to determine their position within society and the direction of language change in a community (Bissoonauth, 2011). The understanding of language attitudes and languages has undergone a considerable shift. The behaviourist approach to languages before the 1960s considered language as behaviour rather than a cognitive or mental activity. Subsequent work by Lambert and colleagues in 1960 demonstrated how perspectives on languages can change as a result of overt and covert attitudes. Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) define attitude as 'a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favourable or unfavourable manner with respect to a given object' (ibid., p. 6). In other words, attitude is not innate but is acquired through a socialisation process beginning in early childhood. While attitudes may be positive or negative, they can also be instrumental or integrative. According to Gardner and Lambert (1972), instrumental attitudes are related to the desire to receive social-status recognition or other benefits as well as learning the language for personal interest; whereas integrative attitudes are related to the desire to be integrated into another language community, for example, a community that speaks a specific language. Language learners may report both instrumental and integrative attitudes in response to instruments measuring these attitudes (Gardner, 1985; Baker, 1992). Another typology of language attitudes is put forward by Cargile et al. (1994), according to whom the nature of language attitudes is three-dimensional: 'it is cognitive in that attitudes comprise 'beliefs about the world,' affective in that they are constructed 'feelings about an attitude object,' and behavioural in that they 'encourage certain actions'' (ibid., p. 221). Attitudes are also affected by experience (Mamun et al., 2012), with positive experiences being associated with positive language attitudes.

Minority languages are strongly influenced by socio-economic factors within the society. In particular, the role of other languages is likely to diminish in situations where a country's economic and political power is represented by one dominant group (O'Rourke, 2011b). The author argues that 'the rise or decline of any language cannot be seen as a 'natural' phenomenon that occurs without human or social agency' (ibid., p. 35). In other words, attitudes towards minority languages are influenced by the differences in social positions of various linguistic groups. Public opinion that does not see minority languages as important plays an important part in defining attitudes towards them (Das, 2004). O'Rourke (2011a) and Baker (1992) argue that attitudes are a better guide for the future 'prosperity' of the language than current behaviour and that language attitudes can help explain and predict language behaviour.

1.4.3   Factors Impacting Minority Language Preservation and Maintenance

In order to preserve and maintain minority languages as discussed in Section 1.4.1, a number of countries have adopted specific language policies to ensure the survival of lesser spoken languages in these jurisdictions. Language policy can be defined as a set of measures that countries have adopted to regulate language use within their territories. In order to be effective, it is necessary to distinguish clearly between state language, official language, national language and regional or minority languages, and to define their specific social roles (Das, 2004; Mar-Molinero 2000). Language policies have also been used to integrate minority groups. For example, Hogan-Brun and Ramoniene (2005) found that the state's language and citizenship policies in Lithuania have led to changed attitudes amongst the minority communities (mostly Russian-speaking) to learn the state language (Lithuanian) and to integrate. Vigers (2012) highlights the importance of considering the impact of increasing mobility and diversity in policy-making regarding minority languages. The author argues that any policy dealing with the maintenance and revitalisation of regional and minority languages needs to consider overall linguistic diversity in a jurisdiction: this also includes migrant languages. One also needs to be mindful of the status of languages within jurisdictions with more than one official language; while many have adopted bilingual policies, in reality one language tends to have higher status than the other (Hornberger and Skilton-Sylvester, 2000).

State policies can only be effective when they are supported by community support and action. Existing research indicates that community and social networks affect patterns of language use in multilingual families (Milroy, 1987; Stoessel, 2002). Language learning and language attitudes are strongly embedded in families (Hull and Schultz, 2002; Li, 2006). Cultural capital such as parents' participation in children's learning at home facilitates the transmission of

attitudes and dispositions. Gardner (1985) distinguished between the active and passive role played by parents regarding language learning. The active role includes parental encouragement to succeed, monitoring of performance and reinforcement of success (negative active roles would include beliefs that languages are not as important as other subject areas). The passive role involves negative parental attitudes toward the second language community. According to Gardner, parental attitudes toward the language community are what is remembered most when children reflect on parental encouragement to maintain and learn a language. Romaine (2006) argues that in addition to understanding family dynamics in language transmission or maintenance, we also need to understand the role of community and other institutions in that endeavour. Additional impact is also attributable to the opportunities to speak the language within a community. Jones and Morris (2007) found that Welsh-speaking adolescents from areas in Wales where English is the dominant language across peer groups, felt less confident about using their mother tongue on social occasions outside home.

A great deal of research has centred on the distinction between integral and instrumental motivation regarding languages; with the former indicating interest in the language, while the latter represents utilitarian attitudes whereby a language is learned in order to improve one's future prospects. Clyne (1985), for example, notes that acceptance of a language as an examination and/or school subject is a major factor in German and Dutch language maintenance.

1.4.4   Irish Research

Over the years a considerable body of literature has built up on the situation of the Irish language in Ireland. Many of these studies draw on a series of surveys on the social attitudes and behaviour of the general public. Taken together, the surveys conducted in the Republic demonstrate a positive attitude towards the language, even though only a minority of people speak Irish in the jurisdiction. Perhaps the most significant material is the body of survey work commenced in 1973 by the Committee on Irish Language Attitudes Research and published by them in 1975, and replicated in 1983 and 1993 by Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann (Ó Riagáin, 1984, 1994). In 2001 Foras na Gaeilge commissioned the first all-island Irish language survey and attempted to ensure a degree of continuity with the earlier surveys conducted in the Republic.[12] The 2001 questionnaire was designed for Foras na Gaeilge by Prof. Pádraig Ó Riagáin, (then of Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann, later of Trinity College Dublin).

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[12]   A description and analysis of this earlier research can be found in Ó Riagáin, P. (1997) *Language Policy and Social Reproduction: Ireland 1893-1993*. Oxford University Press: Oxford.

Several previous studies have focussed on Irish language maintenance. A study by McGréil and Rhatigan (2009) showed that of Irish-born respondents, 40 per cent wished the language to be revived with over 50 per cent wishing it to be preserved. A comparative study of the Irish and Galician languages (O'Rourke 2005, 2011b) showed that in both situations there is a 'mismatch between attitudes and use' regarding the language. The study highlighted an interesting paradox; while people generally hold favourable dispositions towards their respective languages as a marker of identity, they do not consider it as an essential component to understanding the associated culture. There are also age differences regarding language attitudes: while surveys of adults (18+) show mostly positive dispositions towards the language, research by Walsh (2011) conducted among a group of transition year students showed that only 22 per cent of students expressed a strong motivation to learn the language and that only 14 per cent of students reported a strong interest in the language. These responses seem to be embedded in perceived relevance, with many students questioning the place of the language in their future lives. Availability of opportunities to use the language outside school are likely to shape young people's attitude to, and use of, the Irish language. Ó Riagáin et al. (2008) explored the socio-linguistic impacts of the after-school activities of adolescents attending post-primary schools. The authors found that the majority of non-Gaeltacht schoolchildren discontinue using Irish after leaving school. The authors argue that while children acquire sufficient fluency in the language at school, the use of the language in the social sphere outside school is low. The study revealed that children who use the Irish language both at home and outside tend to come from families where the language is spoken in the home. In addition, children whose parents had higher levels of educational attainment and who had high post-school aspirations themselves were more likely to use Irish outside school.

One of the most important factors bearing on attitudes to and ability in Irish in the Gaeltacht is the varied composition of the population. Ó Giollagáin (2007) describes the complex nature of the Ráth Chairn Gaeltacht in Co. Meath, observing that while the older cohorts have the fluency of native speakers, young people of school-going age have generally achieved a level of bilingualism which enables them to participate in social life in Irish. Ó hIfearnáin (2013) describes the complex attitudes of Gaeltacht Irish speakers towards the inter-generational transmission of Irish. While some families do it intentionally, others take a more relaxed attitude. Parental language fluency tended to be a factor; a significant majority of participants whose parents were fluent in Irish, had high levels of fluency themselves. Ó Riagáin (1997) argues that the crucial factors determining the extent of children's bilingualism in the home are both the availability of linguistic resources and the dispositions of the parents towards Irish. Should one

or both of the parents have limited Irish, English is more likely to become the language of the household. He also found that two native speakers of Irish will not necessarily speak Irish between themselves, or with their children. Ó hIfearnáin (2013) highlights the role of community initiatives in language maintenance. For example, the TúsMaith initiative, run by Irish-speaking mothers who had raised their own children through Irish, involves visits to families experiencing difficulties in bringing children up in Irish, giving assistance and advice. The author argues that

> *in contemporary society a more effective strategy [as opposed to immersion] is to persuade Irish speakers to maintain their language through their own participation in language policy formation than to coerce them to do so.*

While existing studies have considered different aspects of Irish language use, little is known about the link between attitudes to, and the use of, the Irish language among the adult population on the island of Ireland. This report addresses this gap in research and explores factors associated with the use of Irish language and the perceived future of the Irish language.

1.5 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

This report is structured as follows. Chapters Two and Three focus on the Irish language in the Republic and Northern Ireland providing a historical overview, description of policies and legislation as well as current language initiatives. This is followed by an overview of the case-study jurisdictions (Scotland, Wales, Catalonia in Spain and Friesland in the Netherlands) in Chapter Four. Chapters Five, Six and Seven present the research results, focussing on the place of the Irish language in the education systems in both jurisdictions; current fluency and usage of the Irish language among the adult population; and attitudes towards Irish and the perceived future of the Irish language. Chapter Eight concludes the report providing conclusions and policy implications.

Chapter 2

The Irish Language in the Republic of Ireland

2.1   INTRODUCTION

The Republic of Ireland has two official languages; *Gaeilge* (Irish) and English. Irish is the first official language of Ireland and an official language of the European Union. However, English is the mother tongue of the majority of the population. Although the aim of the Irish State has been to promote bilingualism in Ireland (O'Laoire, 2005), there are few active Irish speakers outside the educational system in non-Gaeltacht areas. In addition, the number of active speakers in Gaeltacht areas is also diminishing (Ó Giollagáin and Charlton, 2015). Towards the end of the 20th Century, many authors predicted the continued decline of the Irish language (see Hindley, 1990). Despite these predictions, the proportion of Irish speakers has remained relatively steady. Factors that have impacted on the number of proficient Irish speakers include the removal of regulations requiring all civil servants to be proficient in Irish and the lack of meaningful opportunities to use the language outside of schools due to the fragmented distribution of Irish-speakers among the population (Ó Riagáin, 1997). These factors are likely to present a serious challenge in promoting the national language.

2.2   HISTORICAL OVERVIEW AND CURRENT SITUATION

Historically Irish was the language spoken on the island of Ireland. Carnie (1995) noted that in the 14th Century Irish was banned in the court system and for use in commerce (Statutes of Kilkenny, 1366). From the 16th Century onwards, English became the dominant language among the Irish people, coinciding with the start of the plantations. English policies actively promoted the adoption of the English language in Ireland. English rule, the Great Famine and emigration had a detrimental impact on the rural population that was predominantly Irish speaking. The Penal Laws prevented Catholic children from attending school.[13] National (primary) schools that were established in the 1830s enforced the speaking of English among pupils in Irish-speaking areas; failure to do so was punishable. These developments clearly militated against the use or promotion of Irish at the time (Hickey, 2008). Gradually, Irish went from being the majority language of the island to a minority one; considerable numbers of the population switched from Irish to English in order to improve their position in Irish society

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[13]   In order to evade the discriminatory policies of Penal Laws against schooling children in their own religion, 'Hedge schools' were set up by the Catholic population; however, most of these taught in English (Coleman, 2010).

and to gain access to education (Hickey, 2008; Ó Cuív, 1966). Despite the much diminished status of the Irish language, some attempts were made to promote its use. For example, the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language - founded in 1876 – aimed to gain recognition for the language at every level of the education system (Mac Gréil and Rhatigan, 2009). A key role in the further development of policies in favour of Irish was played by the Gaelic League (Conradh na Gaeilge), established in 1893. The main aim of the organisation was to restore the Irish language. The language revival of the early twentieth century and its associated publications brought about a standardisation of the written language (Ó Baoill, 1988; Ó Riain, 1994). Many supporters of the revival of Irish came from Anglo-Irish families (Pritchard, 2004).

In 1922 the Irish Free State was established, with Irish adopted as an official language, along with English.[14] Irish was made a compulsory subject for the Intermediate Exams in 1928 and for the Leaving Certificate in 1934. In 1937, a revised Constitution designated Irish as 'the first official language' because it is 'the national language' while English was recognised as 'a second official language' (see Article 8 of the *Irish Constitution*).[15] Irish was a compulsory requirement for employment in the public sector until 1974. In 1993 government guidelines were issued on the services in Irish. The *Official Languages Act* was adopted in 2003 placing the provision of services in Irish on a statutory footing. These policy developments provided protection to the Irish language in legislation.

Today, Irish is spoken as a first language by a small minority of the population of Ireland, mainly along the west coast of Ireland. According to the 2011 Census 1.77 million people (41 per cent of the population) over the age of three defined themselves as Irish speakers (an increase of 7 per cent on the figure in 2006). However, this figure must be interpreted with caution as it is based on just one question: 'Can you speak Irish?'. Of the 1.77 million who said they were able to speak the language, 77,185 said they did so daily outside the education system. A breakdown by age shows that almost one-in-three people aged ten to 19 say that they cannot speak the Irish language (despite Irish being one of the core subjects at school). A survey conducted in 2009 reveals a high level of support for Irish (see MacGréil and Rhatigan, 2009). The study highlights the discrepancy between the high numbers claiming knowledge of Irish and those speaking it every day. The claim to have knowledge of the language is likely to reflect the importance people attach to the language as part of their national identity (Hickey, 2008).

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[14] See Article 4 of *Constitution of the Irish Free State (1922)* available at: www.irishstatutebook.ie/1922/en/act/pub/0001/print.html.

[15] *Irish Constitution 1937*, Article 8, available at: www.irishstatutebook.ie/en/constitution.

There are currently Gaeltacht areas in seven counties (Donegal, Mayo, Galway, Kerry, Cork, Waterford and Meath). The number of people in Gaeltacht areas who claim to speak Irish on daily basis seems to be diminishing. In 2002 a Government commission reported that of the 154 electoral divisions in the Gaeltacht, only 18 divisions have 75 per cent or more people in them who are daily speakers of Irish (Ó Giollagáin, et al., 2007). The 2011 Census figures show that the overall population in these areas has increased by 5 per cent, and 69 per cent of the inhabitants claim to have Irish. However, only 24 per cent claim to speak it every day, outside the education system.[16] The current state of the language in the Gaeltacht areas is paradoxically more precarious than elsewhere in the Republic. A linguistic survey from 2007 - primarily an analysis of Census data - revealed strategic weaknesses in the demographic structure of the community speaking the language, such as the number of individuals for whom Irish was the dominant language. Furthermore, for many young people in Gaeltacht areas, English is now a dominant language (Ó Giollagáin et al., 2007; Mac Donnacha et al., 2005). The publication of a follow-up study (Ó Giollagáin 2015)[17] proved controversial even before it was published; both Údarás na Gaeltachta and the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht expressed displeasure at the inclusion of recommendations which the authors made to address the challenging state of the language in the Gaeltacht.

2.3   POLICIES AND LEGISLATION

In 2003, the *Official Languages Act* was passed, giving expression to the constitutional status of Irish as the first official language. That Act led to the establishment of the office of An Coimisinéir Teanga. In 2006 the Government issued the 'Government Statement on the Irish Language 2006' in which it affirmed its support for the development and preservation of the Irish language and the Gaeltacht. In 2007, Irish was recognised as an official working language of the European Union. In 2010 the Irish Government agreed a 20-Year *Strategy for the Irish Language*. The aim of the strategy is to increase the number of people using Irish on a daily basis outside the education system to 250,000 people over the next 20 years.[18] The Strategy sets down 13 objectives, including provision of

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[16]   This constitutes a rise of 3 per cent since 2006.

[17]   However derogation was implemented regarding that status, initially for a period of five years until the end of 2011, and then again until the end of 2016, so that, for example, not all of the legal documents translated into the other official languages have to be made available in Irish. A progress report (July 2013 - September 2014) issued by the Department of An Taoiseach on the 20-Year *Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030* states 'The Department, in conjunction with the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, is engaged in discussions with various stakeholders, including the EU institutions, in order to formulate specific proposals on the optimal approach to the derogation for the Irish language in the EU institutions.' www.taoiseach.gov.ie/eng/Publications/Publications_2014/Report_2014_20-Year_Strategy_for_the_Irish_Language_2010-2030.pdf.

[18]   The strategy has been criticised for its weak focus on implementation of suggested policies and practice.

services to parents who wish to raise their children through Irish and the continuation of a high-quality broadcasting service (see Ó Cuirreáin, 2008; Government of Ireland, 2010).

The aim of Government policy is to:

- 'Increase the number of families throughout the country who use Irish as the daily language of communication;

- Provide linguistic support for the Gaeltacht as an Irish-speaking community and to recognise the issues which arise in areas where Irish is the household and community language;

- Ensure that in public discourse and in public services the use of Irish or English will be, as far as practical, a choice for the citizen to make and that over time more and more people throughout the State will choose to do their business in Irish; and

- Ensure that Irish becomes more visible in our society, both as a spoken language by our citizens and also in areas such as signage and literature (Government of Ireland, 2010).

With regard to the development and preservation of the Irish language and the Gaeltacht, 13 policy objectives were set out:

Objective 1: The special status given to the Irish language in the Constitution and in legislation such as the *Official Languages Act 2003*, the *Education Act 1998*, the *Planning and Development Act 2000* and the *Broadcasting Act 20012*, will be upheld.

Objective 2: The *Official Languages Act* will be fully implemented. The right of the public to use Irish in dealings with the State and with other bodies will be developed and the appropriate arrangements to deliver this will be put in place.

Objective 3: The Irish language community inside and outside the Gaeltacht will be given encouragement and support to transmit Irish to the next generation as a living household language. Towards this end, a wide range of services in Irish will be provided.

Objective 4: The Gaeltacht will be given special support as an Irish-speaking area.

Objective 5: Irish will be taught as an obligatory subject from primary to Leaving Certificate level. The curriculum will foster oral and written competence in Irish among students and an understanding of its value to us as a people. This will be supported by enhanced investment in professional development and ongoing support for teachers, as well as in provision of textbooks and resources, and support for innovative approaches to teaching and learning.

Objective 6: A high standard of all-Irish education will be provided to school students whose parents/guardians so wish. Gaelscoileanna will continue to be supported at primary level and all-Irish provision at post-primary level will be developed to meet follow-on demand.

Objective 7: Irish language pre-school education will continue to be supported and third-level education through Irish will be further developed.

Objective 8: The State will continue to support Foras na Gaeilge in the context of the *British-Irish Agreement Act 1999.*

Objective 9: High quality broadcast services through the medium of Irish will be ensured, especially through the continuous development of RTÉ, Raidió na Gaeltachta and TG4.

Objective 10: Every assistance and support will be given to the European Union in implementing the decision to make Irish a working and official language in the EU from 1 January 2007.

Objective 11: In order to promote Irish nationally and to preserve and strengthen it in the Gaeltacht, the work being done by the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs and by agencies and bodies which come under its aegis will continue to be reinforced.

Objective 12: The use of the Irish language by An Garda Síochána and the Defence Forces will be continued and developed.

Objective 13: The Government recognises the vital role of the Irish language voluntary sector and will continue to support it' (Government of Ireland, 2010).

An Coimisinéir Teanga has an important role to play in monitoring and ensuring compliance by public bodies with the *Official Languages Act*, and investigating complaints where bodies fail in their legal duties. A review of the *Official Languages Act* was announced in November 2011 and two years later the [then] Commissioner announced his resignation unexpectedly in December 2013 to the Houses of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Public Service Oversight and Petitions, stating of the planned legislative review of the 2003 Act [that]

> *If [those two elements] - the use of Irish in dealing with Gaeltacht communities and ensuring an adequate Irish language capacity in public administration - are not addressed by the State when the legislation is being amended, I fear that the exercise will be seen as a fudge, a farce or a falsehood.*[19]

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[19] http://coimisineir.ie/downloads/SpeakingnotesAnCoimisineirTeanga04122013.pdf.

The 'Heads of Bill' for the amended legislation were published in 2014 but have not been debated or enacted to date. Seán Ó Cuirreáin's successor as Commissioner, Rónán Ó Domhnaill has, in his first report as Commissioner stated bluntly that he does not believe the proposed amendments to the 2003 Act address the problems already identified with the legislation.[20]

2.4   LANGUAGE INITIATIVES

In the Republic of Ireland there have been various initiatives that aim to promote the Irish language.[21] Údarás na Gaeltachta and the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht support various initiatives that promote the use of the Irish language within Gaeltacht areas.[22] Financial support and sponsorship is available for the provision of Irish language pre-schools, language-based activities and events, Irish-medium youth clubs in Gaeltacht areas, development of language service centres, and initiatives to encourage Irish in workplace and Irish-medium third-level courses.

Foras na Gaeilge, which is jointly funded by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and by the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure in Northern Ireland, supports Irish language initiatives which are generally outside Gaeltacht areas. The organisation is responsible for the promotion of the Irish language throughout the whole island of Ireland, thus operating in two jurisdictions. Since July 2014, the funding of the 'community sector' has been rationalised from a previous 19 organisations to six 'lead organisations' in strategic areas plus two Irish-medium community radio stations (one in Dublin, one in Belfast) and a Belfast-based publishing project supporting Irish-medium education. Support is also offered to groups or individuals outside of the Gaeltacht to organise events through the medium of Irish, and for young people, outside school hours. In addition, the organisation also offers occasional resources to schools to support the teaching of Irish.

The Irish Language Support Schemes (funded by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht) provide financial assistance to a range of organisations and activities that support the promotion of the Irish language outside the Gaeltacht. Annual funding is received by Taibhdhearc na Gaillimhe, Gaillimh le Gaeilge, Gnó Mhaigh Eo and Gael Taca, Cork. The Irish Language Support Schemes also fund

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[20]   www.coimisineir.ie/downloads/Tuarascail_Bhliantuil_Iomlan_2014.pdf.

[21]   There are numerous online Irish language resources (see www.gaelscoileanna.ie/en/resources/nascannalinks/#Irish%20Language%20Organisations).

[22]   It should be noted, however, that there is some ambiguity around the question of which state body, the Department of Education and Skills or the Department of Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht, has responsibility for Irish-medium education.

initiatives that assist public bodies in implementing the *Official Languages Act* and that support the status of Irish as an official and working language of the European Union. These initiatives include, for example, the development by Fiontar, Dublin City University, of a database of EU terminology in the Irish language, which includes terminology required for the translation of statutory instruments and an online database for place names.

2.5 EDUCATION

In the Republic of Ireland the Irish language forms part of the core curriculum alongside with English, Mathematics and other subjects, from the beginning of primary education (from junior infants to sixth class) to the end of second-level education. Pupils may in specific circumstances be granted an exemption from Irish if this is requested by parents, depending on the age of pupils when they first arrive in Ireland, or on specific learning difficulties that they may have.[23] If an exemption is granted in primary school it follows that this exemption applies at post-primary level without any further application.[24] At post-primary level, the Leaving Certificate exam in Irish is offered at Higher, Ordinary or Foundation levels. Irish is a requirement for entry into a number of third level courses.[25]

Irish language education is available in Irish language pre-schools (naíonraí) and in primary and post-primary schools. Na Naíonraí Gaelacha were established in 1974 as a support organisation for staff in naíonraí and to create a network of such initiatives. In 1978, An Comhchoiste Réamhscolaíochta Teo was established to act as a co-ordinating and training body to provide services and resources and to oversee the expansion of the Naíonra movement. The number of naíonraí, run solely through the medium of Irish, has increased over the past few years (Gaelport, 2011).[26] An important role in the expansion was played by Forbairt Naíonraí Teoranta, (FNT) which, until June 2015, was an all-Ireland voluntary organisation that supports the promotion of education and care services in Irish for children from birth.[27] Its functions have now transferred to Gaelscoileanna Teo under the rationalisation of community sector funding mentioned previously.

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[23] There has been some concern that student granted exemptions on grounds of learning disabilities were found to be studying other European languages. www.independent.ie/irish-news/probe-as-more-pupils-shun-irish-26649606.html.

[24] See www.education.ie/en/Parents/Information/Irish-Exemption.

[25] Anybody applying to an NUI institution who was born and had all their education in the Republic of Ireland must present Irish (achieving at least Grade D at Ordinary Level) for Matriculation purposes. Students not born in the Republic of Ireland or educated for an extended period outside Ireland may apply to NUI for an exemption from the Irish language requirement. Students with specific learning difficulties affecting language acquisition (e.g. dyslexia) may also apply for exemption from Irish. www.nui.ie/college/entry-requirements.asp.

[26] See www.gaelport.com/default.aspx?treeid=37&NewsItemID=6327.

[27] Gaelscoileanna Teo was chosen in July 2014 to be the lead organisation, funded by Foras na Gaelige, to promote and support Naíonraí.

All applicants who undertake an interview to become a Naíonra Director must now undergo an Irish language interview, therefore requiring at least a minimum level of fluency in the Irish language. There has been some concern about the standard of Irish in naíonraí [personal communication, Gaelscoileanna Teo, October 2014]. Some naíonraí grew from demand in areas which have Gaelscoileanna, as a period of immersion in the language prior to pre-school brings many linguistic advantages, as well as all other developmental advantages for children. Some Gaelscoileanna give preference to pupils that attended a naíonra in their enrolment policies. At present there are 187 naíonraí in 26 counties outside the Gaeltacht areas.

Primary and post-primary Irish-medium schools have played an important role in promoting the Irish language. These all-Irish-medium primary schools were set up as a response to parental demand and concerns about the standard of Irish in schools outside the Gaeltacht (Coolahan, 1998). In 2014-2015 there were 143 such primary schools in 26 counties outside the Gaeltacht (126 in the Gaeltacht). There are fewer Irish-medium schools at second level: in 2014-2015 there were 42 post-primary schools and Aonad[28] in 26 counties outside the Gaeltacht (22 in the Gaeltacht). As seen later in the report (Chapter Five) there is a very high demand for Irish-medium education. Irish-medium schools tend to be oversubscribed, demonstrating significant parental preference for this type of school. Changing parental preferences and expectations have been addressed to some extent by changes in primary school patronage in recent years, including the divestment of some existing schools and awarding patronage of new schools to other organisations and bodies. In 2015 four new Irish-medium primary schools were established. At post-primary level three new Irish-medium schools were established in 2014 (DES briefing note, 2015).[29] The threshold of demand for a stand-alone Irish-medium post-primary school is 400 pupils compared to 800-1,000 pupils in English-medium schools (ibid.). Gaelscoileanna Teo are currently devising policy guidelines for schools who wish to change their linguistic ethos and be recognised as an Irish-medium school. Some schools where the demand for Irish-medium education does not meet the required threshold have introduced 'streams' or units (Aonad) within an existing English-medium school in which students are immersed in Irish from the beginning to the end of the school day. While the Aonad model can be seen as an attempt to help with the level of provision of Irish-medium schools, Gaelscoileanna Teo prefer the establishment of stand-alone Irish-medium schools.

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[28] The Aonad operates within a parent school where English is the language of communication and teaching language of the school. The Aonad is similar to a small school, organised and run through a minority language while the parent school is run through the everyday language of the community.

[29] www.oireachtas.ie/.../educationandsocialprotection/Presentation.

TABLE 2.1   Schools in Gaeltacht Areas: Medium of Instruction and Student Numbers at Post-Primary Level

School year	Number of Irish-medium post-primary schools in Gaeltacht areas	Number of post-primary students in Gaeltacht (Irish-medium instruction)	Number of English-medium post-primary schools in Gaeltacht areas	Number of post-primary students in Gaeltacht areas (English-medium instruction)
2011/12	19	3,132	6	1,624
2012/13	19	2,149	6	1,623
2013/14	19	3,189	6	1,698

Source: Information requested by Tuairisc.ie under the Freedom of Information Act by Gaelscoileanna Teo.

There has been some concern about the falling number of people speaking Irish on a daily basis in Gaeltacht areas. Some insight into possible reasons for this can be provided by exploring the language of instruction in the Irish schools. Table 2.1 provides an overview of Irish language provision in post-primary Gaeltacht schools. The information available indicates that 35 per cent of Gaeltacht students receive their education through the medium of English. Furthermore, in the academic year 2011/12, six out of 22 post-primary schools and Aonaid in the official Gaeltacht area were not operating fully through Irish. Twenty-one primary schools in the Gaeltacht area teach at least one other subject (in addition to the Irish language) through the medium of Irish. These schools are referred as 'part-Irish' and the majority of these are located in County Mayo, with seven in Donegal and two in County Galway (personal communication, Gaelscoileanna Teo, March 2015).

The Department of Education and Skills is currently conducting a consultation process on proposals for educational provision in the Gaeltacht which for the first time addresses the unique circumstances of schools in those areas.[30] This consultation forms part of the wider developments in the area of Irish language education which also includes curriculum development in primary and post-primary sectors, language assessment and teacher education (DES briefing note, 2015).

2.6   SUMMARY

The Irish language has undergone a substantial shift in usage and status over the centuries. Once spoken by the majority of inhabitants, it is now predominantly used in Gaeltacht areas. Before the Great Famine, up to 50 per cent of the population was Irish-speaking. By the end of the 19th Century, 50 years later, this figure had been reduced to not more than 10 per cent (Ó Cuív, 1966; Hickey, 2008; FitzGerald, 2013). Irish is different from other minority languages in that it is the first official state language in the Republic of Ireland (Watson, 1996).

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[30]   www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Press-Releases/2015-Press-Releases/PR2015-05-05.html.

Despite the small number of fluent Irish speakers, a considerable number of people claim to have some knowledge of the language, not surprising as it is a compulsory subject in schools. As there are few opportunities to speak Irish outside Gaeltacht areas, ability in Irish is more likely to be passive ability (primarily by understanding the language as encountered on TV, radio, or written forms), while levels of active ability are more likely to decrease over time, as it is rarely practiced outside the formal educational system. If learners of Irish had more opportunities and motivation to use the language outside the school context, the level of Irish language proficiency is likely to be much higher. A Council of Europe report on language education policy for Ireland highlighted the fact that the dearth of opportunities to use Irish outside school continues to pose one of the more serious challenges to the societal revitalisation and the purposeful learning of the language. Promotion of the Irish language continues to be on the policy agenda; the Irish language strategy sets out a number of measures to be undertaken to improve the current situation. It has to be noted, however, that while the attitudes towards the language among the general public are broadly positive, there is not yet a significant critical mass of the speakers to bring about a change in usage. At the same time, there has been increasing popularity of Irish-medium schools and naíonraí and a spread of various language groups across the country. These trends will potentially contribute to a gradual increase in the numbers speaking Irish regularly.

Chapter 3

The Irish Language in Northern Ireland

3.1   INTRODUCTION

The Irish language is now a recognised minority language in Northern Ireland. The language underwent a significant decline by the end of the 19th Century due to the political and economic circumstances described in the previous chapter (Nic Craith, 1999; McKendry, 2007, 2014). Emerging nationalism and republicanism in the 19th and 20th Centuries, culminating in the Partition of Ireland in 1922, distanced many Protestants and Unionists from the language (Nic Craith, 1999). However, there is interest in the language among some people in Northern Ireland with a Protestant background (McCoy, 1997). Lack of access to Irish in many (Protestant) state schools has resulted in Irish language tuition being available generally only for Catholics (Nic Craith, 1999). The revival of the Irish language has been a complex process in Northern Ireland and it has been viewed in a politically divisive way. The commitment of the government to preserve and promote the language stems from the Good Friday Agreement. The position of the language is also protected by ratification of the *European Charter for Minority and Lesser-Used Languages.*

3.2   HISTORICAL OVERVIEW AND CURRENT SITUATION

The 1911 Census was the last to include a question on the speaking of Irish for the whole island (Adams, 1964). The language was represented within each of the six counties of what became Northern Ireland, with 3 per cent of the population (almost 29,000 people) reporting themselves as Irish speakers in 1911, mostly in rural areas (McKendry, 2014). Between 1911 and 1991 the recorded percentage of Irish speakers in Northern Ireland according to census figures rose from 2 per cent to 9 per cent (20,000 to 140,000 people) of the total population.

Attitudes towards the Irish language in Northern Ireland have traditionally reflected the political differences between its two divided communities. Unionists tend to associate the language with a mainly Catholic Republic, and with the republican movement in Northern Ireland itself. The language has not been taught in State (Protestant) schools, and public signs in Irish were effectively banned under laws by the Parliament of Northern Ireland, which stated that only English could be used. This was not formally lifted by the British Government until

the early 1990s. However, the first Irish-medium schools, known as Gaelscoileanna, were founded in Belfast and Derry in the 1970s, and an Irish-language newspaper called Lá ('Day') was established in Belfast. Having previously broadcast a 15-minute programme on certain nights, BBC Radio Ulster began broadcasting a nightly half-hour programme in Irish in the early 1980s called Blas ('taste', 'accent'), and BBC Northern Ireland also showed its first TV programme in the language in the early 1990s. The Ultach Trust (Iontaobhas Ultach) was also established to promote the Irish language on a cross-community basis.

In 2012 the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure in Northern Ireland conducted a survey on the public's attitudes toward the Irish language. Just over half of the respondents were positive about the future of Irish language; 52 per cent believed it is important that Northern Ireland does not lose its Irish language traditions. While 22 per cent had no views on this issue, a significant minority (26 per cent) did not feel that Irish had any relevance as part of the national heritage. Over half of the respondents wished there were more options available to learn the language, with 20 per cent seeing no need for such options. More than 40 per cent felt that the language should be supported and encouraged throughout Northern Ireland; while 81 per cent of those surveyed believed that students should have the option of choosing Irish language as a school subject if they wish. Interestingly, 52 per cent felt that the Irish language was not important to personal identity, whilst just under half (49 per cent) believed the language to be important to the region's culture.

According to the results of the 2011 Census, 11 per cent (184,898) of the population have some knowledge of Irish, one per cent higher than the 2001 Census.However only six per cent reported being able to speak the language.

3.3   POLICIES AND LEGISLATION

One of the most significant developments regarding the maintenance of the Irish language in Northern Ireland was the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement. Supporting linguistic diversity in the jurisdiction it stated that:

> *All participants recognise the importance of respect, understanding and tolerance in relation to linguistic diversity, including in Northern Ireland, the Irish language, Ulster-Scots and the languages of the various ethnic communities, all of which are part of the cultural wealth of the island of Ireland (Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Government of Ireland, 1998: 22).*

Interestingly, no reference was made to Irish in the context of the other Celtic languages and their position in the United Kingdom. It has been argued that Ulster Scots emerged from the Good Friday Agreement as a political counterbalance to Irish (McKendry, 2014; Nic Craith, 1999).

The Linguistic Diversity Unit,[31] part of The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) was established in 1999 as a result of the Good Friday Agreement to support linguistic diversity in the jurisdiction. It is tasked with developing policy for different linguistic communities and promotes the use of Irish and Ulster-Scots.[32]

The *European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages* is a European treaty[33] which was adopted in 1992 to promote historical and regional languages in Europe. The Charter was signed by the UK government in 2000 undertaking an obligation to meet certain commitments in the Charter regarding Irish.[34] The status of Ulster-Scots is also reported on as part of the reporting and monitoring arrangements by the United Kingdom and the Committee of Experts of the Council of Europe in relation to Part Two of the Charter and Irish is reported on in relation to Part Three of the Charter. The role of the Northern Ireland Executive in relation to the implementation of the Charter remains problematic.[35] The fourth periodical report on the European Charter from the United Kingdom government (December 2012) states:

> *As with the UK response to the Third Periodical Report, and despite repeated requests from the UK Government, the devolved administration in Northern Ireland has been unable to agree a contribution to this Report reflecting the views and actions of the Northern Ireland Executive relating to those issues for which they have policy responsibility. The UK Government expresses its concern at this outcome and sincerely hopes that this can be remedied in time for the next periodical report.*

An additional step in supporting minority languages has been the St Andrews Agreement (October 2006) whereby the UK Government undertook a commitment to protect and enhance the development of the Irish and Ulster-Scots languages. According to the Agreement, the Executive was tasked with

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[31] For further information see: www.dcalni.gov.uk/index/language-cultural-diversity-r08.htm.

[32] The support of newly emerged ethnic minority languages is also under the remit of this organisation.

[33] Ireland has not been able to sign the Charter on behalf of the Irish language as it is defined as the first official language of the State.

[34] The charter also lists Scots in Scotland and Ulster Scots in Northern Ireland.

[35] For further information see: www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/Report/PeriodicalReports/UKPR4_en.pdf.

developing and adopting a strategy to this effect. The Agreement suggested the introduction of Irish language legislation including an Irish Language Act, a move that has been opposed by many Unionist politicians (McKendry, 2014). A report published in 2010 by the Council of Europe Expert group on the application of the European Charter in the UK was highly critical of the failure to proceed with regard to acknowledging the place of the Irish language in the jurisdiction. It urged 'the UK authorities to provide an appropriate legislative base for the protection and promotion of Irish in Northern Ireland' (Council of Europe 2010). While acknowledging the strategy which had been put forward by DCAL entitled 'A Strategy for Indigenous or Regional Languages Minority Languages' to address the situation of both Irish and Ulster Scots, the Expert group

> *is concerned that the strategy will strive towards parity between the two languages and therefore not serve the needs of either the Irish-speakers or the Ulster-Scots speakers and will hold back the development of both languages.*[36]

Subsequently separate draft strategy documents for Irish and Ulster Scots were put to public consultation in 2012 and summaries of responses were published in 2013.[37] In Northern Ireland the language has not had historically the type of official endorsement and support previously mentioned in the South. Since the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement, as has been mentioned, Irish is an officially recognised minority language in the jurisdiction. Recent official efforts to improve the status of the language include a *Strategy to Enhance and Protect the Development of the Language* and proposed legislation in the form of an Irish Language Bill, about which a consultation process concluded in May 2015.

3.4   LANGUAGE INITIATIVES

In Northern Ireland Foras na Gaeilge carries out all the designated responsibilities regarding the Irish language including facilitating and encouraging the speaking and writing of Irish in the public and private arena where there is appropriate demand. A number of organisations have worked to promote the Irish language on a cross-community basis since the 1990s and more so since 1994 and 1998. These include Iontaobhas Ultach, Gael-Linn, Forbairt Feirste, Raidió Fáilte and the East Belfast Mission. The aim of each of these has been to show Irish as a 'shared heritage' in linguistic and cultural terms and not as the prerogative of one section of the community. Each of the initiatives has had some measure of success. Currently, for example, Irish language classes are provided by the East Belfast Mission (the Turas Centre) that is located in a predominantly Protestant area. The

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[36]   http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/Report/EvaluationReports/UKECRML4_en.pdf.

[37]   For further information see: www.dcalni.gov.uk/irish_language_consultation.pdf and www.dcalni.gov.uk/ulster-scots-consultation.

Centre brings together people from different faith backgrounds who want to learn Irish. A national initiative called Líofa (fluent) launched in 2011 by Belfast's Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure, aims to encourage 1,000 people from all walks of life across the North to sign up to becoming fluent in Irish by 2015. The original target of 1,000 has been surpassed and by September 2014 almost 7,000 people had registered.

3.5   EDUCATION

It has been argued that the revival of Irish language in Northern Ireland is to a large extent thanks to education, as the predominant profile of speakers is now second language rather than first language speakers (McKendrey, 2014). It should be noted, however, that Irish is not provided in all schools. While State or 'controlled' primary, grammar and secondary schools cater predominantly for the Protestant community (although some Catholics attend these schools), the 'maintained' (Catholic) sector provides for the Catholic community. A third sector, integrated schools, was set up in the 1970s to help to bridge the divide between the Protestant and Catholic communities by educating children together. The current pattern of language provision includes sole modern language; split provision; modular provision and dual provision. The dual provision has proven to be the more popular option with schools offering two languages to all pupils, usually French and Irish (McKendry, 2007). The numbers of pupils studying languages has dropped since the requirement to study at least one language to GCSE was dropped from the curriculum. Irish-medium schools have emerged in Northern Ireland over the last 40 years, with a significant number of pupils attending Irish-medium nursery, primary and post-primary schools (McKendry, 2014). In fact, Nic Craith (1999) argues that the demand for Irish-medium education since the late 1970s has been 'unprecedented'. The establishment of the first Irish-medium schools, however, was challenging. In 1969 some families in west Belfast who were interested in raising their children in an Irish-speaking environment set up Pobal Feirste. By the beginning of 1970, an Irish-medium primary school was founded. However, parents who managed the school were faced with great difficulties in getting the school officially recognised. The recognition was finally granted in 1984 as a voluntary maintained primary school. To cater for the growing number of children from non-Irish speaking families, parents set up a pre-school immersion programme. The pre-school or naíscoil opened in 1978. Similar developments took place in Derry. First established as an Irish-medium unit attached to an English-medium primary school in 1983, as a result of increased enrolment it developed into a free-standing school in 1993 within the Catholic maintained sector. The first Irish-medium post-primary school opened in Belfast in 1991 with two full-time teachers and nine pupils.[38]

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[38]   See www.comhairle.org/english/about-us/our-history.

Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (CnaG) is the representative body for Irish-medium Education. It was set up in 2000 by the Department of Education to promote, facilitate and encourage Irish-medium Education. There are currently 29 Irish-medium schools in Northern Ireland and a further ten Irish-medium units attached to English-medium host schools. Of the 29 schools, 28 are primary and one is post primary. Of the ten Irish-medium units attached to English-medium host schools, seven are primary and three are post-primary. There are a total of 5,256 pupils in Irish-medium education in 2014/15. This includes 885 children attending Irish-medium pre-school settings, 3,458 primary school children (Years 1-7) and 913 in post-primary schools (Years 8-14).[39] The Irish-medium sector has been growing steadily in recent years and this growth looks set to continue with new schools opening every year. There are also 44 nurseries (naíscoileanna) catering for 1,251 pupils. There are no official Gaeltacht areas in Northern Ireland, although there have been proposals to establish these in areas where Irish is more widely spoken such as the Gaeltacht Quarter (*An Cheathrú Ghaeltachta*) has been established in Belfast.

3.6   SUMMARY

The current situation of the Irish language in Northern Ireland is very different from that of the Republic, reflecting the religious and political differences between the two jurisdictions. In Northern Ireland, the Irish language is mostly spoken by the Catholic population, and available as a subject in maintained Catholic and some integrated schools. Unlike in the Republic, there are no official Gaeltacht areas in Northern Ireland. The number of Irish language speakers in Northern Ireland is smaller than that in the Republic. According to recent figures, 14 per cent of population claim to have some knowledge of Irish (DCALNI, 2015). The status of the Irish language has changed in recent years, with the Good Friday Agreement playing an influential role in gaining recognition for the language. However, public debates on the issue of Irish language are continuing. Changes in policy were followed by the introduction of various language initiatives, encouraging the speaking of Irish in the public and private arena. In addition, in Belfast there are ongoing efforts to promote the 'Gaeltacht Quarter' as an urban Irish-speaking area. Irish-medium schools and naíonraí have also increased in popularity. As in the Republic, there are few opportunities to speak Irish outside the education system. Nevertheless, broadcasting and print media provide an opportunity for language maintenance. While controversies surround the use of the Irish language in Northern Ireland, a significant proportion of the population in the jurisdiction holds positive views of the language (DCALNI, 2012). How other jurisdictions ensure the maintenance and revival of lesser spoken languages are discussed in the next chapter.

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[39]   www.deni.gov.uk/85-schools/10-types_of_school-nischools_pg/schools_-_types_of_school-_irish-medium_schools_pg.htm.

Chapter 4

Minority Languages in Selected Other European Countries

4.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of policies and practices regarding minority languages in selected countries. The Council of Europe defines regional or minority languages as those traditionally used by part of the population in a state, but which are not official state language dialects, migrant languages or artificially created languages (Council of Europe, 1992). There are approximately 60 minority languages in Europe (see Figure 4.1 for larger linguistic groups), which can be divided into five broad categories:

a)   unique languages in one state (e.g. Welsh in the UK, Galician in Spain and West Frisian in The Netherlands);

b)   unique languages spread over more states (e.g. Basque in Spain and France and Catalan in Spain, France and Italy);

c)   trans-frontier languages that are both minority and majority depending on the state (e.g. Hungarian in Slovakia and German in Denmark, Italy, Belgium and France);

d)   national languages at state level, but non-official working languages of the EU (e.g. Luxembourgian in Luxembourg and Irish in Ireland); and

e)   non-territorial languages (Roma and Jiddish) (Mercator, 2012).

The maintenance of minority languages is the focus of national policies and government initiatives across different jurisdictions. Although the approach taken varies between countries, it is generally recognised that public attitudes and meaningful opportunities to speak the language can make a difference (see Chapter 1).

The aim of this chapter is to explore the approaches taken by different countries, namely, Scotland, Wales, Catalonia in Spain and Friesland in the Netherlands, regarding the maintenance of minority languages. Web-based material (mainly websites and relevant reports) was the primary source of information for this review. The chapter also draws on available research. To gain a better understanding of the situation of minority languages in the selected countries, some background information on the general education systems of each country is essential. Hence each country review starts with a short historical overview. It

then moves on to a description of relevant policies and legislation, language initiatives and good practice in the case-study countries.

CATALAN	Spain, France, Italy, Andorre	7,200,000
GALICIAN	Spain	2,420,000
GERMAN	France, Italy, Belgium	2,220,000
OCCITAN	Spain, France, Italy	2,100,000
SARDINIAN	Italy	1,300,000
GAELIC	United Kingdom, Ireland	1,240,000
BASQUE	Spain, France	683,000
WELSH	United Kingdom	508,000
FRISIAN	Holland, Germany	400,000
FRIULIAN	Italy	400,000
LUXEMBOURGISH	Luxemburg	350,000
FINNISH	Sweden	300,000
BRETON	France	180,000
CORSICAN	France	125,000

Source: http://www.caib.es/conselleries/educacio/dgpoling/user/catalaeuropa/angles/angles7.pdf.
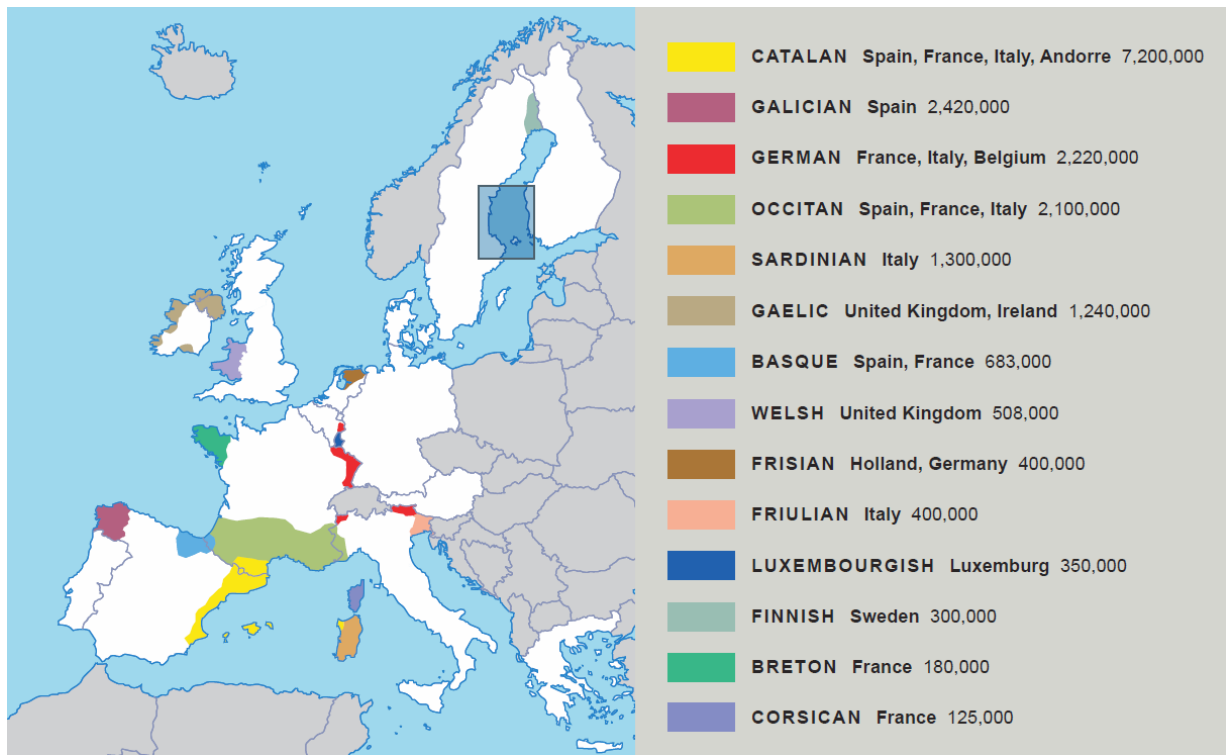
4.2   SCOTTISH GAELIC IN SCOTLAND

4.2.1   Historical Overview and Current Situation

Scottish Gaelic or Gáidhlig is a Celtic language, descended from Old Irish. Before the 12th Century it was the dominant language across Scotland. However, in the following centuries the language became largely confined to the north and west of the country (the 'Highlands' or '*Gàidhealtachd*'), driven by various socio-economic and political factors (McLeod, 2004a). The language also competed with Scots-English. The decline of Scottish Gaelic was accelerated by the Highland Clearances in the 18th and 19th Centuries. By 1901 the number of Gaelic speakers had shrunk to 5 per cent of the population and was steadily falling. Today only a small proportion of people speak the language, most of them concentrated in the Western Isles, and all of them bilingual in English. Census 2001 showed that over 92,000 people in Scotland (just under 2 per cent of the population) had some Gaelic language ability. It is worth noting that the position of Scottish Gaelic in national identity is often contested; for some the language has only regional importance, while others are hostile to the language (McLeod, 2001). Inter-generational transmission of the language can be considered satisfactory;

according to the 2001 Census, only 70 per cent of children aged 3-15 living with two Gaelic-speaking parents could speak Gaelic (General Register Office for Scotland, 2005).

O'Hanlon et al. (2013) argue that Gaelic has become more prominent in Scotland in recent decades, especially since the Scottish Parliament passed the *Gaelic Language Act* in 2005. Since then the language has been increasingly used in broadcasting, schools, and public affairs. According to the most recent 2011 Census just over one per cent (58,000 people) aged three and over were able to speak Gaelic, a slight fall from 1.2 per cent (59,000) in 2001 (Scottish Government, 2012). Figure 4.2 presents the distribution of those who stated they could speak Gaelic in the 2011 Census, showing the concentration of Gaelic-speakers on the Western isles.

FIGURE 4:2   Distribution of Those who Stated they Could Speak Scottish Gaelic in the 2011 Census
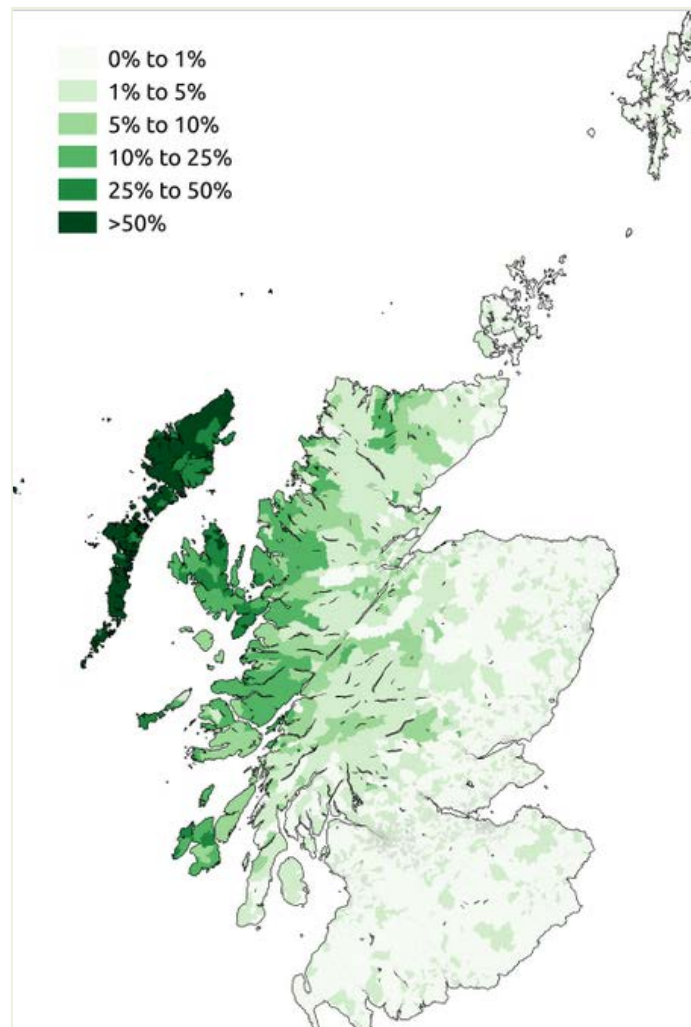
Source: *Census 2011.*

As discussed in Chapter One, the viability of minority languages depends on public attitudes towards the language and the speakers of the language. West and Graham (2011) showed that although people were generally well-disposed to the greater public visibility of Gaelic in the future, the number of Gaelic speakers was very modest. This could, at least in part, be explained by the opportunities to speak the language. In 2013 O'Hanlon and colleagues carried out a study among the adult population in Scotland, finding exposure to the language to be relatively modest. Only 12 per cent of the sample reported having heard Gaelic spoken in a public place (for example the street or a shop) in the last 12 months. The Gaelic language seems to hold a modest position in Scottish identity; the proportion of people who felt that Gaelic is important to their own heritage was relatively low at 24 per cent. Considering Gaelic to be important for one's identity did not mean that these people could speak Gaelic; over half (57 per cent) of people who regarded Gaelic as very or fairly important to their own heritage were not able to understand Gaelic.

The study did not find much support for establishing Gaelic-medium schools. Rather, there was much more acceptance of incorporating Gaelic into English-medium education as a core subject nationally. In relation to respondents' views of whether the use of Gaelic should be encouraged, 32 per cent believed that it should be encouraged throughout Scotland, and a further 55 per cent believed that it should be encouraged, but only in Gaelic-speaking areas. Respondents were also asked to identify who, if anyone, they believed to be most responsible for whether Gaelic is used in Scotland. The options given included: 'parents who speak Gaelic', 'local communities', 'nursery schools and schools', 'the Government', 'churches', 'the media' and options for 'other' and 'none of these'. 'Parents who speak Gaelic', 'local communities', 'schools' and 'the Government' were most commonly believed to have the main or secondary responsibility for the maintenance of the Gaelic language. Nevertheless, there was a widely held belief that Gaelic television did have a crucial role in ensuring the future of Gaelic. Overall, the study highlighted the fragility of the Scottish Gaelic in the UK, despite being strongly protected by legislation.

4.2.2   Policies and Legislation

Since the mid-1970s, efforts to sustain and revitalise Gaelic in Scotland have gained new momentum, even as the language has continued to decline in demographic terms (McLeod, 2001). In 1992 the Council of Europe drew up the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*. The UK Government signed the Charter in 2000 and ratified it in 2001 in respect of Welsh in Wales, Scots and Gaelic in Scotland and Ulster Scots and Irish in Northern Ireland. Manx Gaelic and Cornish were added at a later stage. The provisions of Part 2 of the Charter

(general principles and objectives to be pursued with respect to regional or minority languages) apply to all of the languages mentioned. In addition, specific provisions of Part 3 (measures to promote the use of regional or minority languages) apply to Welsh, Gaelic and Irish.

The Scottish Government recognises that Gaelic is an integral part of Scotland's heritage, national identity and current cultural life. This new recognition of Gaelic has now been enshrined in legislation. The Gaelic Language (Scotland) Bill was introduced to Parliament on 24 September 2004 and was passed a year later. The *Gaelic Language Act (Scotland) 2005* granted official status to the language for the first time. The Act also establishes a Gaelic language board, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, with powers to undertake strategic language planning for Gaelic at a national level. However, despite these steps taken, the position of Gaelic has remained fragile. It has been argued that if Gaelic is to have a sustainable future, there needs to be a concerted effort on the part of Government, the public sector, the private sector, community bodies and individual speakers (West and Graham, 2011). There have been attempts to increase the use of Gaelic in public administration.

Bòrd na Gàidhlig's *National Plan (2007-2012)*[40] identifies four interlinking aspects of language development which need to be addressed, and within them sets out a number of priority action areas:

Language Acquisition

Increasing the number of Gaelic speakers by ensuring the language is passed on and by securing effective opportunities for learning Gaelic, through:

- increasing the use and transmission of Gaelic in the home;

- increasing the number of children acquiring Gaelic in the home;

- increasing the uptake and availability of Gaelic-medium education;

- increasing the number of adult Gaelic learners progressing to fluency.

Language Usage

Encouraging greater use of Gaelic, providing opportunities to use the language, and promoting access to Gaelic forms of expression, through:

- increasing the use of Gaelic in communities;

- increasing the use of Gaelic in tertiary education and places of work;

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[40] See www.gaidhlig.org.uk/bord/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/National-Plan-for-Gaelic.pdf.

- increasing the presence of Gaelic in the media;

- increasing the promotion of Gaelic in the arts;

- increasing the profile of Gaelic in the tourism, heritage and recreation sectors.

Language Status

Increasing the visibility and audibility of Gaelic, enhancing its recognition and creating a positive image for it in Scottish public life, through:

- increasing the number of bodies preparing statutory Gaelic Language Plans;

- increasing the profile and prestige of Gaelic;

- increasing the visibility and recognition of Gaelic.

Language Corpus

Strengthening the relevance and consistency of Gaelic and promoting research into the language, through:

- increasing the attention given to the relevance and consistency of the Gaelic language;

- increasing the attention given to the quality and accessibility of Gaelic translations;

- increasing the availability of accurate research information (Scottish Government, 2010).

The continuing decline in speaker numbers and language use suggests that the policies put in place to sustain and promote Gaelic have been inadequate and better integrated and more forceful strategies are urgently needed if the language shift in favour of English is to be reversed (McLeod, 2006b).[41] The author argues that Gaelic is now in a severely weakened state and that its decline is ongoing, despite the revitalisation initiatives of recent years. Policies and programmes to strengthen the position of Gaelic therefore function within a very challenging socio-linguistic context.

4.2.3   Education

Scottish Gaelic was initially excluded entirely from the schools established in 1872. Gaelic-medium education in Scotland began only in 1985, building on the successes of Gaelic-medium pre-schools organised by Comhairle na Sgoiltean

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[41]   It should be noted here that the adopted policies are very recent and it may take time to see their impact.

Àraich (the Gaelic Pre-school Council) (McLeod, 2004a). In the 1970s groups of determined parents demanded that their children be taught in Scottish Gaelic. This movement continued through the following decades.

At primary level Gaelic-medium education in Scotland generally involves Gaelic-medium units within English-medium schools rather than Gaelic-medium schools (McLeod 2003). A small number of Gaelic-medium schools also exist. It has been argued that language immersion in Gaelic 'units' in English-medium schools is not as effective as it could be, due to being surrounded by English language users (MacNeil and Stradling, 2000). The schools providing Gaelic language units tend to be very diverse in terms of locality and pupil intake: some schools are located in communities where Gaelic is still widely used and many pupils have high Gaelic proficiency; whereas other schools situated in English-speaking areas and a large majority of the children enrolled come from non-Gaelic-speaking homes and are acquiring Gaelic through immersion (ibid.). Gaelic-medium education is much less developed at secondary level than primary. While the expansion of Gaelic-medium education at secondary level was not seen desirable at first, policy developments have ensured its availability. The Scottish Government supports Gaelic Medium Education (GME) through a number of policies and funding streams. Currently GME is available in 21 local authorities. This provision varies from early years up to and including secondary education. All local authorities are eligible to bid for the Gaelic Education Specific Grant to help support Gaelic provision in their area. The Scottish Government also has a Gaelic Schools Capital fund which is open to all Local Authorities to bid for support. Some research suggests that children in Gaelic-medium education keep pace with, and in some respects outperform, children in English-medium education (Johnstone et al., 1999). One major concern is the shortage of trained teachers. The need for an improved supply of teachers able to teach in the medium of Gaelic has been acknowledged by the Scottish Government. Some authors argue that while some improvements in training structures have been put in place, the resources available are not seen as sufficient (McLeod, 2003). Recent developments in initial teacher education include offering degrees in Gaelic and Primary Education to those entering into initial teacher education in 2015. This degree will qualify students to work in either the Gaelic-medium or the English-medium sectors. No previous knowledge of Gaelic is required.[42]

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[42] These programmes have been developed to help meet the national shortage of Gaelic teachers and to enhance the professional capacity of future teachers. The courses include a year-long placement that combines both Gaelic-medium and English-medium settings; and dedicated courses on bilingualism and bilingual education, with a focus on Gaelic and Scotland.

4.2.4   Language Initiatives

The *Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005* secured the status of the Gaelic language as an official language of Scotland. The Act enables the Gaelic development board (Bòrd na Gàidhlig) to require public bodies to prepare Gaelic Language Plans. This provision was designed to ensure that the public sector in Scotland plays its part in creating a sustainable future for Gaelic in Scotland (Government of Scotland, 2010). There is a wide range of organisations aimed to promote the use of Gaelic that receive funding from Bòrd na Gàidhlig. The focus of these organisations is varied, including publishing, the arts, adult learners, parental support, early years, music, translation, research and resources for schools. There is now a range of measures in place to encourage young people to take up a career in Gaelic teaching. This includes distance learning courses, part time courses and conversation courses. Bòrd na Gàidhlig supports a teacher recruitment campaign and the position of Gaelic teacher recruitment officer has been established at Bòrd na Gàidhlig.

At University of Glasgow a language initiative was established in 2009 for the development of Gaelic language and culture amongst staff and students. The University appointed the first Gaelic Language Officer in Scotland's traditional universities. They developed an annual programme consisting of informal learning opportunities for staff and students, regular cultural events, and stronger links with the Glasgow Gaelic community. A connected project, the Gaelic Language Residency Scheme, aims to provide young Gaelic speakers with the opportunity to live in a Gaelic environment and use Gaelic as their main language. The success of the initiative has led to the creation of Gaelic Language Officer posts in the Universities of Edinburgh, Aberdeen and the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI).

4.3   WELSH IN WALES

4.3.1   Historical Overview and Current Situation

Welsh (Cymraeg) belongs to an Indo-European, Celtic family of languages. Over time it evolved into Brittonic (or Brythonic), which in turn gave rise to Welsh, Cornish and Breton. The language was spoken throughout Wales and English border counties until the end of the 16th century (Welsh Government, 2009). The population of Western and Northern Wales predominantly speaks Welsh. There has been a push in the last few decades to promote the Welsh language. It now has equal status with English in the public sector in Wales and the teaching of both languages is compulsory in all schools up to the age of 16.

At present only a minority of the population in Wales are fluent in the language. The *Welsh Language Use Surveys 2004-06* (Welsh Language Board, 2008) show that the speakers of the language can be differentiated by age: levels of fluency are higher among older groups. The 2011 Census showed that the group of people aged three and over who could speak, read and write Welsh decreased somewhat from 16 per cent (458,000) in 2001 to 15 per cent (431,000) in 2011.

FIGURE 4.3 The Proportion of Respondents in the 2011 Census who said they Could Speak Welsh
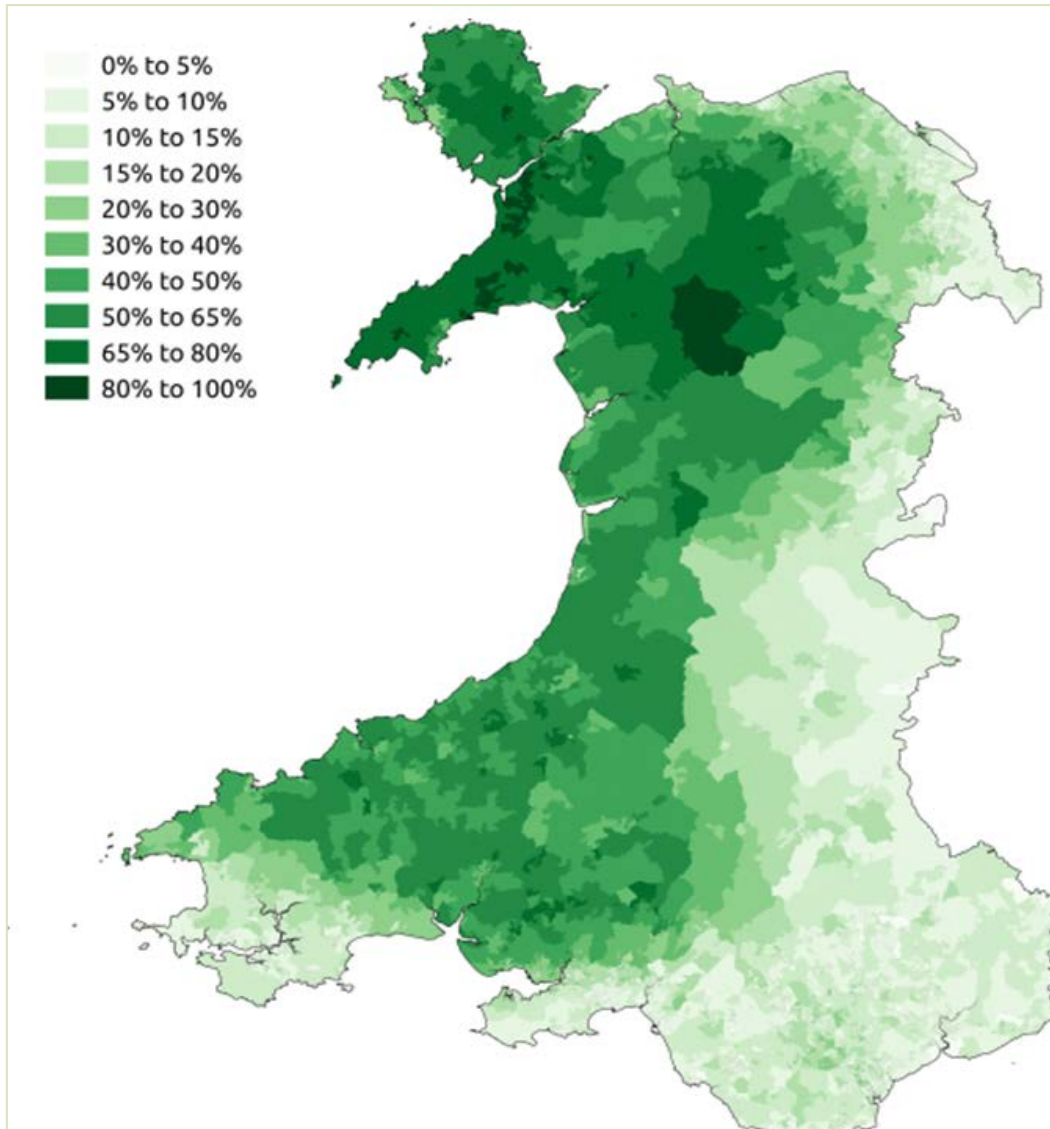
Source: *Census 2011.*

This decline of speakers has been attributed to demographic changes in the population, out-migration of Welsh speakers and in-migration of non-Welsh speakers (Office of National Statistics Wales, 2012). However the Census shows that 19 per cent of the Welsh population aged over three said they were able to speak the language. Figure 4.3 indicates the proportion of respondents who said

they could speak Welsh in 2011 Census. Despite the slight decline of the Welsh language speakers, there are still areas where the language is spoken by a substantial number of people. Llanrug in Gwynedd was the electoral division with the highest proportion of Welsh speakers, 88 per cent, in 2011. The Churchstoke ward in Powys where 4 per cent of people speak Welsh, has the lowest proportion. A quantitative survey of a representative quota sample of 483 Welsh speakers in Wales showed that the majority of the Welsh speakers questioned stated that they 'would welcome the opportunity to do more in Welsh' (84 per cent overall, rising to 92 per cent of the least fluent group). Of those interviewed, 61 per cent said they wished they 'could speak better Welsh'. These results suggest that creating the necessary conditions to bring about change in behaviour and attitudes remains a challenge (Welsh Government, 2013). At a day-to-day level, further motivators to using Welsh included:

- Welsh being the language of the home;

- Opportunities to use Welsh in the local community (for example in shops, in the pub);

- Using Welsh at the start of a relationship (for example with friends);

- Both formal and informal opportunities to use Welsh in the workplace;

- Informal opportunities to use Welsh (for example social media, texting, reading news websites);

- The availability and quality of Welsh language TV and radio, for some participants (ibid. p. 4).

The study highlights the importance of engagement with the language. The survey results showed that 36 per cent of the 16 to 24-year-old participants stated that they always or usually spoke Welsh with friends (the corresponding percentage for all Welsh speakers was 55 per cent, and 61 per cent of the 60+ age group). Welsh language use tended to diminish after leaving school, due to more limited opportunities to use the language outside the educational system. Other barriers to using the Welsh language included:

- A lack of confidence to use Welsh in a wide variety of settings, with a (mostly unrealised) fear of being judged;

- Being less fluent in Welsh compared with English;

- The lack of opportunity, or perceived lack of opportunity, to use Welsh (for example among friends, in the community, online);

- Embedded linguistic habits (for example, using English at home, or online);

- The perceived convenience for some participants of using English over Welsh (for example online, whether reading or writing in Welsh);

- Low awareness or visibility of the Welsh language, particularly online;

- Perceived issues for some with quality of content of Welsh language TV and radio (ibid. p.5).

4.3.2   Policies and Legislation

The Welsh Government operates a statutory Welsh Language Scheme, in accordance with the *Government of Wales Act 2006* and the *Welsh Language Act 1993* (Welsh Government, 2013). The Welsh Language Scheme (2011) sets out how the Welsh Government, and the civil servants covered by the scheme, will:

- Deliver Welsh-language services to the public;

- Mainstream the Welsh language as new policies and services are developed;

- Include conditions with regard to the use of Welsh as the awarding of grants and contracts.

In order to promote Welsh, the Welsh Language Measure (2011) aims:

- To provide for a Welsh Language Partnership Council;

- To establish the Office of Welsh Language Commissioner;

- To support the work of an Advisory Panel to the Welsh Language Commissioner;

- To make provisions for promoting and facilitating the use of the Welsh language and treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language;

- To provide standards relating to the Welsh language (including duties to comply with those standards, and rights arising from the enforceability of those duties);

- To investigate interference with the freedom to use the Welsh language;

- To establish a Welsh Language Tribunal;

- To abolish the Welsh Language Board and Welsh language schemes; and replace these with a Welsh Language Commissioner.

4.3.3   Education

In Wales, Welsh-medium, English-medium or bilingual education is available, depending on a number of local factors.[43] Welsh became a compulsory subject

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[43]   http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/allsectorpolicies/welshmededuca/?lang=en.

for all pupils in Wales up to the age of 14 in 1990. In 1999, it became a compulsory subject until the age of 16. All pupils in mainstream schools in Wales study Welsh (either as a first or a second language) for 12 years, from the ages of five to 16. Welsh-medium education provides opportunities for children and young people to achieve fluency in the Welsh language through studying a broad range of subjects and disciplines in Welsh. Although the Welsh language is steadily declining,[44] the amount of Welsh-speaking schools is on the rise. Bilingual education varies across Wales from education where a large proportion of the curriculum is delivered through the medium of Welsh, to education where only a few subjects within the curriculum or a very a small number of lessons are taught through the medium of Welsh. There are late immersion programmes available, which enable pupils in Year 6 (age 10-11), who have been educated in English-medium schools, to transfer to Welsh-medium secondary education. These pupils receive additional linguistic support until they are fully integrated into the normal day-to-day teaching of subjects through the medium of Welsh by the end of Year 8. Whilst education in Wales has been seen as the main factor in language acquisition, there is a current concern that this language ability does not translate into language use (Morris, 2014). The language is rarely used outside of the education system (Hodges, 2009).

Mudiad Meithrin is the main provider of over 500 Welsh-medium playgroups (Cylch Meithrin) to children in Wales. The organisation also supports parent and toddler groups (Cylch Ti a fi) which provide opportunities for parents to engage in activities that promote the development of the Welsh language in children from birth to school age. With the support of this organisation parents have an opportunity to meet, socialise in an informal setting and share experiences in bringing up their children speaking Welsh.

4.3.4   Language Initiatives

TAN 20 ('Planning and the Welsh Language') provides guidance on how Welsh language issues should be considered by local planning authorities. The Potentia programme, part of the Entrepreneurship Action Plan, is aimed at encouraging entrepreneurship in under-represented groups and provides pre-start-up support for Welsh speakers (among others) to enter business. The organisation also provides training and awareness-raising to Business Gateway on how to work with under-represented groups including Welsh speakers. Other initiatives include the Enterprise Factory (Ffatri Fenter), which provides opportunities for young Welsh speakers in the field of enterprise and Cwlwm Busnes, a website providing a virtual business networking facility for Welsh speakers. The Assembly

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[44]   See Census 2011, key statistics for Wales, www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/census/2011-census/key-statistics-for-unitary-authorities-in-wales/stb-2011-census-key-statistics-for-wales.html.

Government provides additional support to the Welsh Language Board to enable them to expand the number of local Language Action Plans. These initiatives bring together local economic, social, cultural and educational development structures in communities undergoing substantial language shift and where the language is used less and less by young people with an aim to increase and encourage the use of the Welsh language in economic, social and cultural situations at the local level. The approaches taken differ, reflecting local circumstances and needs. Organisations representing young people such as local schools, youth clubs, Urdd Gobaith Cymru and local Young Farmers' clubs are among the partner organisations.

4.4 FRISIAN IN THE NETHERLANDS

4.4.1 Historical Overview and Current Situation

Friesland (Frisian: Fryslân) is one of the twelve Dutch provinces and is located in the north of the country. Frisian[45] belongs to a West Germanic branch of Indo-European languages spoken by about 400,000 people in the Dutch province of Friesland, whose total population numbers approximately 600,000[46]. In the 16th Century Dutch became the official language and replaced Frisian in many areas. Since 1815 Friesland has been a province of the newly established Kingdom of the Netherlands. Subsequently Frisian gradually regained its position as an official language in administration, education and in court (Euromosaic, 1995). In the Province of Fryslân the official languages are the Dutch standard language and also (West) Frisian. Figure 4.4 shows the present-day distribution of the Frisian languages in Europe. The majority of the inhabitants of the Province of Fryslân (75 per cent) speak Frisian, but Frisian literacy levels are limited, despite bilingual schooling. It should be noted that the Province is officially bilingual (Frisinan-Dutch).

According to a survey by the Frisian Academy (Gorter, 1992), approximately 60 per cent of Friesland's population have Frisian as their first language. In the late 1960's nearly all Frieslanders (97 per cent) could understand the language, 83 per cent could speak it, 69 per cent read it and 11 per cent could write it (see also Pietersen, 1976). A decade later, the number who reported being able to understand the language had dropped only slightly (to 94 per cent), but speaking ability had decreased to 73 per cent, while the literacy levels had fallen marginally (read 65 per cent, write 10 per cent). Language attitudes are strongly associated

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[45] The closest related languages to West Frisian are North Frisian with circa 10,000 speakers and Sater-Frisian as the sole remaining part of East Frisian with circa 2,000 speakers. Together the three languages form the Frisian language group that, together with English, forms the North Sea group of the West-Germanic languages.

[46] Frisian speakers can also be found in Germany and Denmark.

with people's language use with Frisian speakers holding more positive attitudes towards the language (Gorter and Ytsma, 1988).

4.4.2   Policies and Legislation

In 2013 the Dutch parliament voted unanimously in favour of an act on the use of the Frisian language. The Act confirms the status as Frisian as the second official language of the Netherlands and regulates the use of the Frisian language in public administration and in the legal system. The act also forms the legal basis for the treaty on the Frisian language and culture between the National Government and the Province of Fryslân. Discussions are still under way about public radio and television (Research Centre of Multilingualism, 2010).

FIGURE 4.4   Present-Day Distribution of the Frisian Languages in Europe
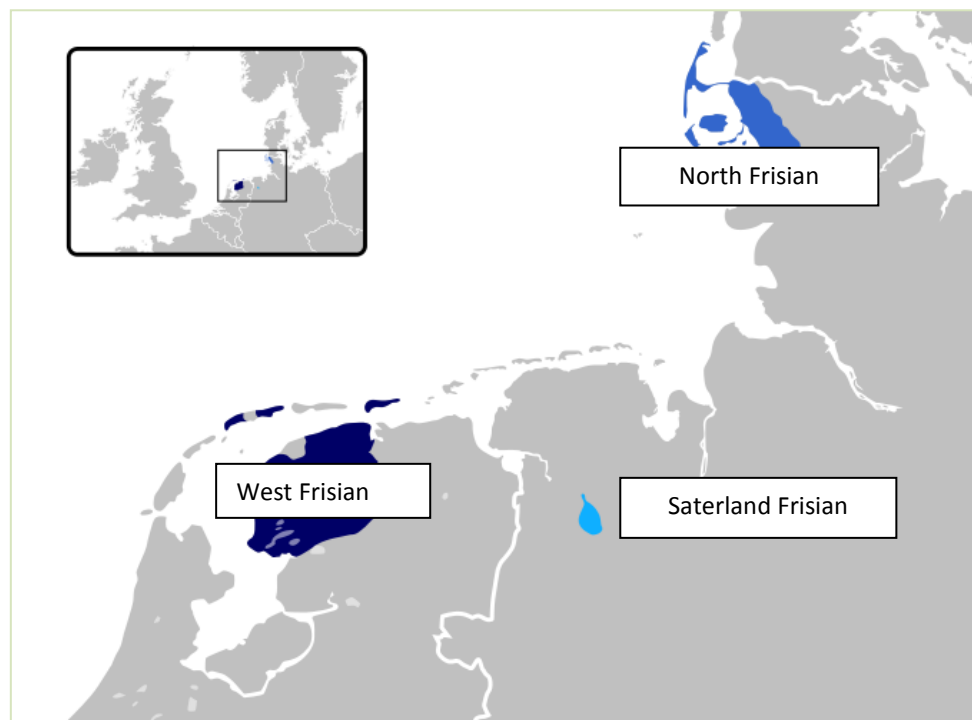
Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Frisian_languages_in_Europe.svg, 2013

While the first society for the promotion of the Frisian language was founded in 1844, during the 20th Century Protestant and Roman Catholic groups established separate organisations to support the language. Today the main organisation to maintain the language is the Council of the Frisian Movement (Ried van de Fries Beweging). In general, all political parties in Friesland share a favourable attitude towards Frisian. A special body of the provincial administration is charged with developing regulations for the use of Frisian in the public domain, including education, and with drawing up documents in the language (Euromosaic, 1995).

There have been criticisms regarding the exclusive use of Dutch regarding road signs, place names and so on. European grants have enabled the development of teaching methodologies for Frisian, producing teaching aids and organising summer schools. While Frisian is now well recognised and accepted by all political parties the implementation of pro-Frisian policies has been slow.

4.4.3 Education

The Dutch language is the general medium of secondary education, although Frisian has been taught in secondary schools since 1948. In Friesland the Frisian language became mandatory in primary education in 1980 and in lower secondary and special education in 1993. However, many upper secondary schools do not offer Frisian. In the schools that have Frisian in their curriculum, most teachers do not differentiate between mother tongue speakers and those students who learn Frisian as a foreign language. There is little exchange of information between primary and secondary schools as regards curriculum, teaching methods or language learning. At present there are no Frisian-medium secondary schools in Fryslân (Research Centre of Multilingualism, 2010).

Frisian language playgroups have been in existence since 1989. The number of such playgroups has grown strongly in recent years. There are currently about 55 bilingual or Frisian-only playgroups and day-care centres, caring for 1,300 children. Over the past decades several multilingual schools (Frisian, Dutch and English) have been established. In the school year 2005-2006 there were 492 primary schools in the province of Friesland with circa 62,000 students. About 20 per cent of these are bilingual schools; in most of the other schools Frisian is taught for only one hour a week (ibid.).

4.4.4 Language initiatives

A special feature of the region is that it promotes multilingualism in general and the Frisian language in particular. There are campaigns supporting trilingual schools, as well as those explaining the advantages of multilingualism to parents. Afûk is the most important institution in the region for the promotion of the Frisian language. The aim of the organisation is to promote the knowledge and use of the Frisian language and culture. It offers language courses and publishes magazines, computer games and books in Frisian.

4.5   CATALAN IN SPAIN

4.5.1   Historical Overview and Current Situation

Catalan (Català) is a Western Romance language spoken in eastern and north-eastern Spain, mainly in Catalonia, Valencia, Balearic Isles, and in some areas of Murcia (see Figure 4.5). Between 1137 and 1749 it was the official language of the kingdom of Aragon. Today a relatively high proportion of people speak Catalan with an estimated 4 million mother tongue speakers in Spain. It is estimated that an additional three million people in Spain speak Catalan as their second or third language, with two million more understanding but not being able to speak it. Catalan has the highest numbers of speakers in comparison with other minority languages in the European Union. The region of Catalonia has two official languages; Spanish and Catalan. The language went into decline during the Civil War, when Francisco Franco's dictatorship (1939-1975) abolished the official status that Catalan had been granted under the statute of autonomy of the Second Spanish Republic (1931-1939) and forbade its public use (Mercator, 2013). Today, Catalan is the dominant language in the education and administrative systems in the area. Road signs and labels, e.g. in museums, are usually bilingual (ibid.). The Catalan language is strongly politicised by groups close to the Catalonian National Parties who prefer the dominance of Catalan over Spanish in the region. The use of Catalan language for ideological purposes has had a negative impact on the attitudes of non-Catalan speaking groups.

FIGURE 4.5   Catalan Speaking Areas

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Catalan_Countries.svg, 2013.

Due to changes in the education system in 1978 (see below) the number of Catalan speakers has increased. The results of the 2008 Study on Linguistic Usage shows that among the population over fifteen years old most (99.9 per cent) can understand, speak (78.3 per cent), read (81.7 per cent) and write (62.3 per cent) Catalan (Arnau, 2011).

4.5.2   Policies and Legislation

The Spanish State expressed its support for main regional languages in the Constitución Española (1978) (Spanish Constitution). The document establishes Spanish as the official language of the State, but permits the autonomous communities or regions of Spain to grant official status to other languages. The legal framework on language in Spain is to be found in the 1978 Constitution, mainly in Article 3, and in the statutes of autonomy of Catalonia, Valencia, the Balearic Islands and Aragon. It is implemented in Catalonia in the 1998 law on language policy (replacing the 1983 law), in the Balearic Islands in the 1986 law on language policy and in Valencia in the 1983 law on the use and teaching of Valencian. In Andorra, Catalan is the only official language according to Article 2 of the 1993 *Constitution of the Principality of Andorra*.

In 1990, the European Parliament approved the 'Resolution on the situation of languages in the Community and on the Catalan language'. This resolution recognises the identity, current validity and the use of Catalan within the context of the European Union and proposes that Catalan be included in certain actions undertaken by European institutions.

4.5.3   Education

Catalan is used as the medium of instruction at all levels of the education system in Catalonia. The language has been taught in the education system since 1978 and the education policy since then has supported the following approaches: not creating separate schools or classes for Catalan and Spanish speakers; establishing a minimum number of hours dedicated to languages; the establishment of early immersion classes for Spanish speakers; and promoting the presence of Catalan in the curriculum. Since 1978 the educational landscape has changed dramatically: the number of Catalonian-medium primary schools has increased and children whose mother tongue is not Catalan learn the language at school in the so-called immersion programmes. The *Generalitat de Catalunya* (Catalan autonomous government) has full control over elementary schools, secondary schools, and the nine universities in the region (Arnau, 2011). Between the 1980s and 1990s, Catalonia transformed its school linguistic model to the

point where, in the majority of cases, it implemented the model of joint teaching in Catalan. This was based on teaching all pupils together, regardless of their first language, and on the adoption of Catalan as the medium of instruction. The current level of implementation of the model of joint teaching in Catalan is a controversial issue. In general terms it can be stated that, more or less since the beginning of the millennium, this model has been predominant in primary education and is present in the majority of compulsory and post-compulsory secondary education, although with many exceptions (Vila I Moreno, 2007).

According to law in Catalonia, pupils cannot be placed in different schools based on their mother tongue and the Catalan language is to be progressively used as pupils become more fluent in it. In addition, teachers must know both official languages and that teacher training curricula must ensure that students acquire sufficient mastery of Catalan and Spanish (Euromosaic, 2011).[47]

The situation in Valencia and the Balearic Islands is different. Since democracy was restored in 1977, the Balearics have been ruled by pan-Spanish (i.e. non-nationalist) parties, which, whilst not opposed to introducing the Catalan language at school, are not particularly eager to do so. The linguistic identity is weaker in Valencia, than in Catalonia and the Balearic Islands. Although the Valencian government controls education, its efforts aimed at increasing the use of Catalan at school, as well as public support for such initiatives, have both been inadequate (Arnau, 2011). In addition to this, some Valencian groups are engaged in challenging the unity of the Catalan language, as part of an integral campaign of anti-Catalanism.

4.5.4   Language Initiatives

From the early 1990s, Basque, Catalan and Galician language nationalists made effective use of the Internet to promote their languages. In 1993, the newly founded Open University of Catalonia (UOC) made the decision to deliver all its courses, in Catalan, via the Internet. Today the UOC has over 30,000 online students pursuing a wide range of university degrees in Catalan. A top priority for the regional governments was the teaching of their 'own' languages in their schools (the issue of the minimum hours per week for regional languages versus the national language (Spanish) remains highly controversial to this day). The Internet has been the most cost-effective delivery mechanism for supplying course materials and reference dictionaries for schools, as well as supporting language learning itself, in all languages.

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[47]   www.uoc.edu/euromosaic/web/document/catala/an/i1/i1.html.

The Institut Ramon Llull is a public body founded with the purpose of promoting Catalan language studies at universities abroad, the translation of literature and thought written in Catalan, and Catalan cultural production in other areas like theatre, film, circus, dance, music, the visual arts, design and architecture. Since its foundation, Pompeu Fabra University has implemented a policy for the use of Catalan in the areas of teaching and administration, and in the light of this, it established in its by-laws that Catalan is the University's own, official language, notwithstanding the provisions of Article 3.2 of the *Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia*.

4.6   SUMMARY

Across Europe increasing attention has been paid, in recent decades, to the promotion and maintenance of minority languages. However, a closer look reveals that although various policies and measures have been adopted at EU and national level, the numbers of speakers of these languages is continuing to fall. This chapter has shown that increasing the numbers of native language speakers depends on concerted efforts by governments, education systems, communities and minority language speakers themselves. Minority languages are protected by legislation in all of the case-study countries, as is the case for Irish in the Republic and Northern Ireland. However, as we saw in the case of Frisian, governmental support needs to be supplemented by actions of other interest groups. For that to happen, people need to feel more positive about the languages in question. Politicising the Irish language in Northern Ireland or Catalan in Spain has had a negative effect on the attitudes of some people in these jurisdictions. Secondly, Chapter Two demonstrated the importance of the education system in maintaining the Irish language. In the same vein, the prominent role of the Welsh and Catalan languages in the education system has ensured a continuous number of speakers of these languages. To support this, a highly qualified teaching force is necessary. Significant attempts have been made in Scotland to train Gaelic teachers and support is available from the Gaelic Teacher Recruitment Officer. To support language learning there are immersion classes in Catalonia for Spanish speakers; in Scotland where Gaelic is mainly taught in English-medium schools in Gaelic units, immersion is not considered as effective as students are surrounded by the use of English during the day. On the other hand, immersion classes offered in Wales for students who transfer from English-medium primary schools to Welsh-medium secondary schools are seen as having an important part to play in the language acquisition of students. Research in Ireland and evidence in Wales shows that leaving school is a crucial stage for young people regarding their (minority) language use: in general, there are fewer opportunities available to actively use minority languages outside the school system and, as a result,

proficiency is likely to decline over time. Pre-education and parent support groups also emerge as essential in supporting inter-generational transmission of the language. Strong support of minority language maintenance is evident in the Frisian Province in the Netherlands. The province is officially bilingual, the language is mandatory in primary schools and all political parties favour the Frisian language. Consequently 75 per cent of people in Fryslân speak Frisian. Finally, what makes minority languages viable is people's motivation to use them; exposure to the language, the prestige attached to it; and meaningful opportunities to use the language.

Chapter 5

Irish Language Education in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland: Survey Findings

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The status given to Irish as the national language of Ireland goes back to the foundation of the State and was set out in Article 14 of the Constitution of the Free State (1922). Article 8 of the *1937 Constitution* reaffirmed this recognition (see Chapter Two). As shown in Chapter One, language attitudes are closely associated with exposure to the Irish language. The official language status and the fact that Irish is one of the core school subjects in the Republic of Ireland (ROI) leads to greater exposure to the language in the Republic than in Northern Ireland where the options to learn Irish at school are limited. This chapter commences with a retrospective view of the Irish language education experienced by adult respondents to the *Irish Language Survey 2013*. Section 5.3 delves further into current sectoral differences (English-medium, Gaelscoileanna and schools in Gaeltacht) in attitudes, using the *Growing Up in Ireland* (GUI) study of children currently at school in the ROI, while Section 5.4 explores the attitudes of second-level students towards Irish in the ROI.

5.2 IRISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION EXPERIENCES – THE IRISH LANGUAGE SURVEY 2013

5.2.1 Irish as a Subject in Primary and Post-Primary Education

The difference in Irish language provision in the education systems of the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland was evident in the *Irish Language Survey (2013)* with significantly more people in the Republic of Ireland than Northern Ireland indicating they studied Irish as a subject in primary school (ROI: 72 per cent; NI: 8 per cent) and post-primary school (ROI: 67 per cent; NI: 25 per cent), as shown in Tables 5.1 and 5.2. While the study of Irish declined between primary school and post-primary school in the Republic of Ireland (-5 percentage points) it increased in Northern Ireland (+17 percentage points). This reflects the fact that Irish becomes available as an optional subject in secondary schools in Northern Ireland while it is not as widely available in primary schools in the same jurisdiction.[48] While Irish is a compulsory subject in primary and post-primary

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[48] Other than in some integrated schools, Irish is not available in non-Catholic schools.

schools recognised by the Department of Education and Skills in ROI, however, there are certain limited circumstances whereby an exemption may be granted, namely when a student has previously attended school outside the Republic, does not speak English or has certain learning difficulties.[49] The 5 per cent of respondents from ROI who reported not having studied Irish at primary school may fall into this category.

TABLE 5.1   Respondents' Exposure to the Irish Language in Primary School

Primary	Republic of Ireland		Northern Ireland	
	2001 %	2013 %	2001 %	2013 %
No Irish at all	5	5	88	81
Irish as a subject only	81	72	9	8
Some subjects through Irish	12	5	2	3
All Irish	2	3	0	0
Other*	0	15	1	7

Source: Irish Language Surveys 2001, 2013.
Note: *Other: Educated outside Ireland (option in 2013 only), don't know, can't remember.

TABLE 5.2   Respondents' Exposure to the Irish Language in Post-Primary School

Post-Primary	Republic of Ireland		Northern Ireland	
	2001 %	2013 %	2001 %	2013 %
No Irish at all	5	5	78	64
Irish as a subject only	80	67	18	25
Some subjects through Irish	5	3	1	2
All Irish	1	3	0	0
Other*	9	22	3	9

Source: Irish Language Surveys 2001, 2013.
Note: *Other: Educated outside Ireland (option in 2013 only), primary education only, don't know, can't remember.

5.2.2   Irish as a Medium of Education in Primary and Post-Primary Education

While there is a difference between the jurisdictions in the *Irish Language Survey 2013* in terms of Irish as a subject, this difference is less evident in Irish as a medium of education. Only a small proportion of respondents studied 'some subjects through Irish' (Primary ROI: 5 per cent; NI: 3 per cent / Post-Primary ROI: 3 per cent; NI: 2 per cent) or experienced their education through 'All Irish' (Primary ROI: 3 per cent; NI: 0 per cent / Post-Primary ROI: 3 per cent; NI: 0 per cent). Drawing on GUI data, further information on the experience of learning Irish in primary schools in the Republic is provided in Section 5.3. Section 5.3.4 explores the attitudes of post-primary students.

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[49]   See: www.schooldays.ie/articles/exemption-from-irish.

5.2.3   Examination in Irish

The respondents were asked to indicate the highest public examination they took in Irish. Table 5.3 demonstrates the differences between the jurisdictions. While 78 per cent of respondents in Northern Ireland had not taken any exams in Irish, the corresponding figure was 14 per cent in the Republic. The figures for ROI may reflect the number of students who were exempt from Irish; also while it is obligatory to study Irish unless exempt, it is not obligatory to sit the exam. Twenty-three per cent of students in the Republic listed Leaving Certificate Higher as their highest public examination in the language,[50] an increase from 15 per cent in 2001 survey. The figures presented in this table reflect the compulsory nature of the subject in schools in the Republic of Ireland.

TABLE 5.3   Highest Public Examination Taken in Irish

	Republic of Ireland		Northern Ireland	
	2001	2013	2001	2013
None	15	14	91	78
University Full level degree	2	1	1	0
University subsidiary subject	1	1	0	0
Teacher training college	1	2	0	0
A level/AS/A2	1	0	1	2
Leaving Cert Higher Level	15	23	0	2
Leaving Cert Lower Level (Ordinary and Foundation)	33	21	1	0
O Level/GCSE/Inter/Junior	28	19	5	7
Other	4	2	2	2
Not applicable/ cannot recall	1	17	1	9

Source: Irish Language Surveys 2001, 2013.

5.2.4   Incidence of Trying to Learn or Improve Irish Language After Finishing School.

The Irish Language Survey (2013 and 2001)[51] asked respondents the extent to which they had improved their fluency in Irish after their primary/post-primary education, if at all (see Table 5.4). A small proportion of adults across the island of Ireland (ROI: 15 per cent; NI: 11 per cent) indicated they had tried to learn Irish or improve their Irish as adults; these patterns are broadly comparable in the two jurisdictions.

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[50]   This also reflects an increase in the percentage taking the Leaving Certificate Exam.

[51]   The surveys draw on different populations (see above).

TABLE 5.4   Incidence of Trying to Learn/Improve Irish as an Adult

	Republic of Ireland		Northern Ireland	
	2001 %	2013 %	2001 %	2013 %
Once	2	5	2	4
Several Times	8	10	4	7
Never	90	85	94	89

Source: Irish Language Surveys 2001, 2013.

5.3   IRISH LANGUAGE IN PRIMARY AND POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

5.3.1   Primary School Characteristics

Section 5.2 used data from the *Irish Language Survey 2013* to provide a retrospective view of the Irish language in the education system in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland during the time respondents attended school. This section will present analysis of the sectoral differences between the different primary school types in the Republic of Ireland outlined in Chapter 1: English-medium, Irish-medium (Gaelscoileanna) and schools in Gaeltacht areas. For this, the report draws on the GUI nine-year-old cohort school-level weighted data. The majority of the children in the sample attended English-medium schools (93 per cent), 6 per cent attended Irish-medium, and 2 per cent attended Gaeltacht schools. All Gaeltacht schools and most Gaelscoileanna (99 per cent) identified themselves as Catholic. The corresponding figure among English-medium schools was 95 per cent. A small proportion (1 per cent) of Gaelscoileanna identified themselves as multi/inter-denominational. There were no Church of Ireland schools among Gaeltacht or Irish-medium schools.

International research indicates that more highly educated parents are more supportive of their children learning an additional language to their mother tongue (Montero et al., 2014). [52] The education level of parents varied significantly across school types. Figure 5.1 indicates that more educated parents are more likely to choose an Irish-medium primary school for their children outside the Gaeltacht area. Fourteen per cent of parents with a post-graduate degree had chosen Irish-medium schools (6 per cent of such parents chose English medium and 4 per cent Gaeltacht schools).

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[52]   http://revistas.ucr.ac.cr/index.php/rlm/article/viewFile/15077/14350.

FIGURE 5.1   Educational Profile of Primary Caregiver by Language Medium of the Primary School
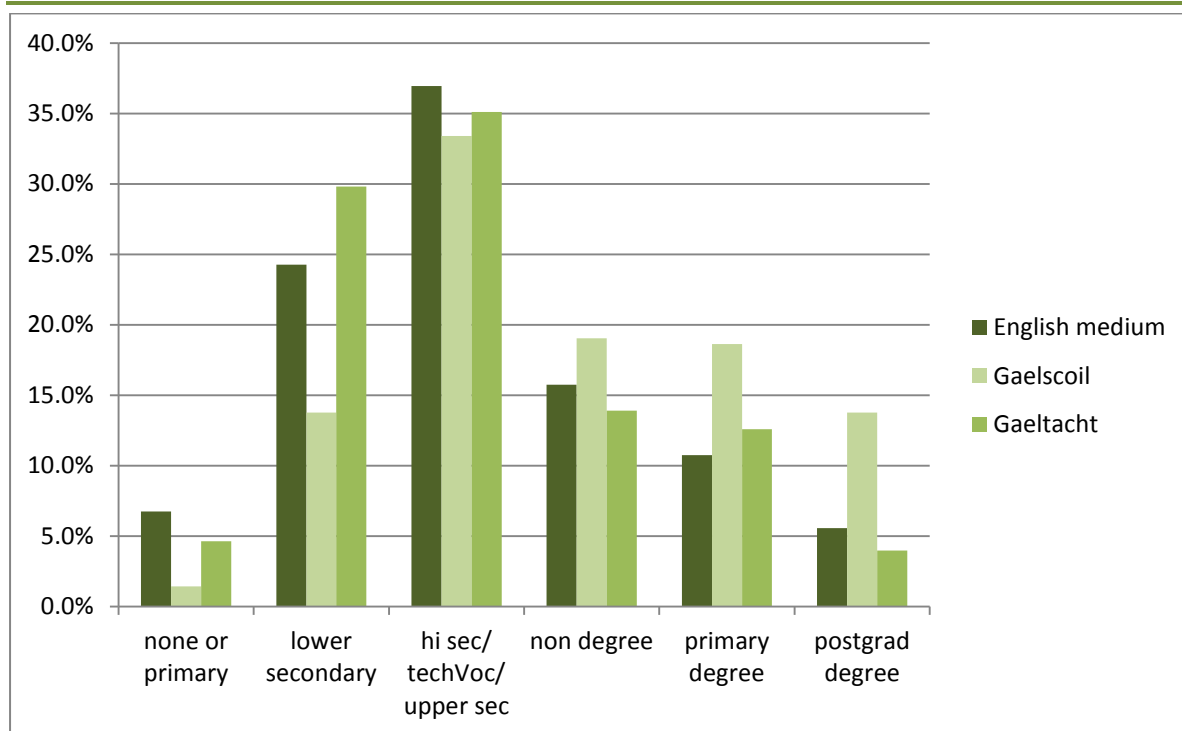
Source: *GUI data (p<.000).*

Over half of all primary schools (56 per cent) reported increased student numbers in the last couple of years. However, the situation varied significantly across the three school types. Figure 5.2 shows responses to the question whether in the last five years (the survey was conducted in 2008) the numbers coming to the school had increased, decreased or remained relatively stable. While a significant number of schools across the sectors reported increasing student numbers, 16 per cent of Gaeltacht schools reported decreasing student numbers (compared with 13 per cent of English-medium and 7 per cent of Gaelscoileanna). Gaelscoileanna were most likely to report stable student numbers (47 per cent vs. 31 per cent English-medium and 39 per cent Gaeltacht schools). While 91 per cent of all schools reported that there was another school in the area where students could go to, the analysis showed that 22 per cent of Gaeltacht schools reported having no other schools in the area (the corresponding figures were 9 per cent for English-medium and 5 per cent for Gaelscoileanna).

The principals were asked whether the school was oversubscribed. This analysis shows a clear difference between the sectors. Gaelscoileanna were far more likely than other types of schools to report that they had more applicants than places available (66 per cent Gaelscoileanna versus 38 per cent of English-medium and 23 per cent Gaeltacht schools).

FIGURE 5.2   Changes in Student Numbers
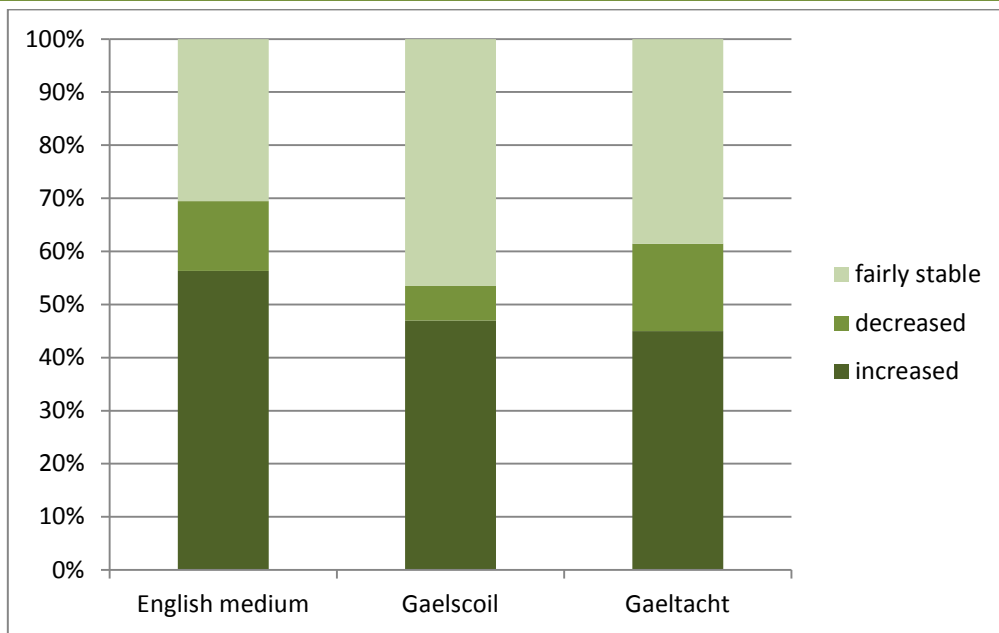
5.3.2   School Ethos

One question in the GUI study explored the importance of Irish language and culture for school ethos. When asked how important Irish language and culture were for the ethos of the school, Gaelscoileanna (97 per cent) and Gaeltacht (86 per cent) schools were far more likely to report that both language and culture were very important (the corresponding figure for English-medium schools was 49 per cent (See Figure 5.3).

School principals were also asked to evaluate the school climate in comparison to other similar schools. The reports indicate that Gaelscoileanna (63 per cent) were most likely to report the school environment being happier for pupils in comparison to other schools; English-medium (49 per cent) and Gaeltacht (37 per cent). School principals were also asked about the teachers in their schools. The analysis of the responses revealed that the majority of principals felt that most teachers in their school held positive views about the school. However, there were significant differences across the sectors. While 97 per cent of principals of English-medium schools felt that this was the case, the corresponding figures were 84 per cent in Gaelscoileanna and 73 per cent in Gaeltacht schools. The data available does not enable further exploration of the principals' own attitudes.
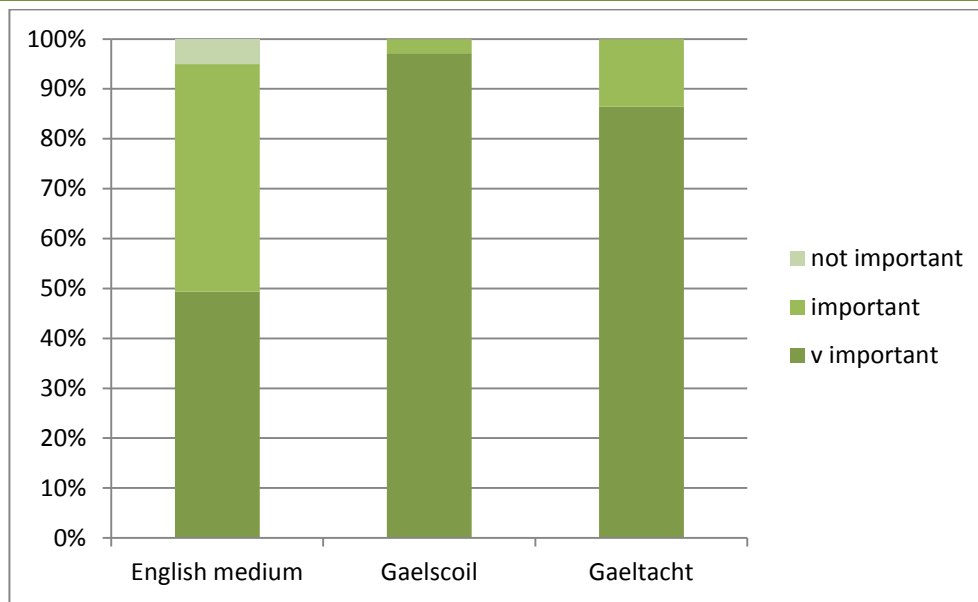
Source: GUI data, nine-year-old cohort (p<.000).

The GUI survey also asked questions of pupils themselves. One of the questions concerned liking school. The analysis did not reveal significant differences across the sectors. Across all schools 26 per cent 'always like' it; 69 per cent 'sometimes like it' and 6 per cent 'never' like it.
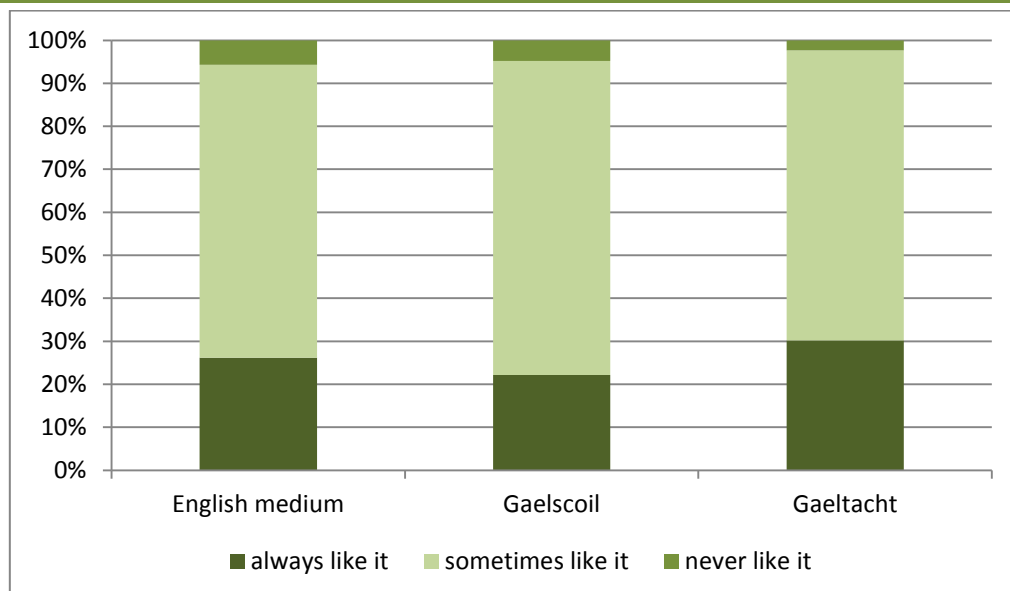
Source: GUI data, nine-year-old cohort (p<.000).

5.3.3   Attitudes Towards Irish in Primary Schools in ROI

International research indicates that the academic and social outcomes of primary school pupils are enhanced by teacher-student interactions in the classroom and approaches to teaching (Hamre and Pianta, 2005).The GUI survey asked teachers what approaches they use with their pupils (pupils work in pairs; pupils work in groups in class; pupils get the opportunity to engage in hands-on activities; pupils are encouraged to find things out for themselves; and play is used to facilitate pupil learning). Comparing the three sectors, the analysis revealed that teachers in Gaelscoileanna were more likely to use active teaching methods compared to teachers in English-medium or Gaeltacht schools, in line with McCoy, et al. (2012).

Figure 5.5 compares primary school children's attitude towards Irish, reading and Mathematics. The analysis showed that pupils' attitudes towards Irish are more negative than to English and Mathematics. There were some differences between sectors: pupils in Irish-medium schools were more likely to 'always like' Irish (46 per cent); the corresponding figures were 39 per cent in Gaeltacht and 21 per cent in English-medium schools. Pupils in English-medium schools were more likely to like Mathematics (48 per cent), compared to the other two school sectors (45 per cent in Irish-medium and 43 per cent in Gaeltacht schools). Reading, on the other hand, showed different patterns with students attending Gaeltacht schools somewhat more likely to 'always like' reading (64 per cent) compared to 62 per cent of Irish-medium and 58 per cent of English-medium school children.

FIGURE 5.5   Comparing Attitudes Towards Irish, Reading and Mathematics (Pupils' Perspectives)
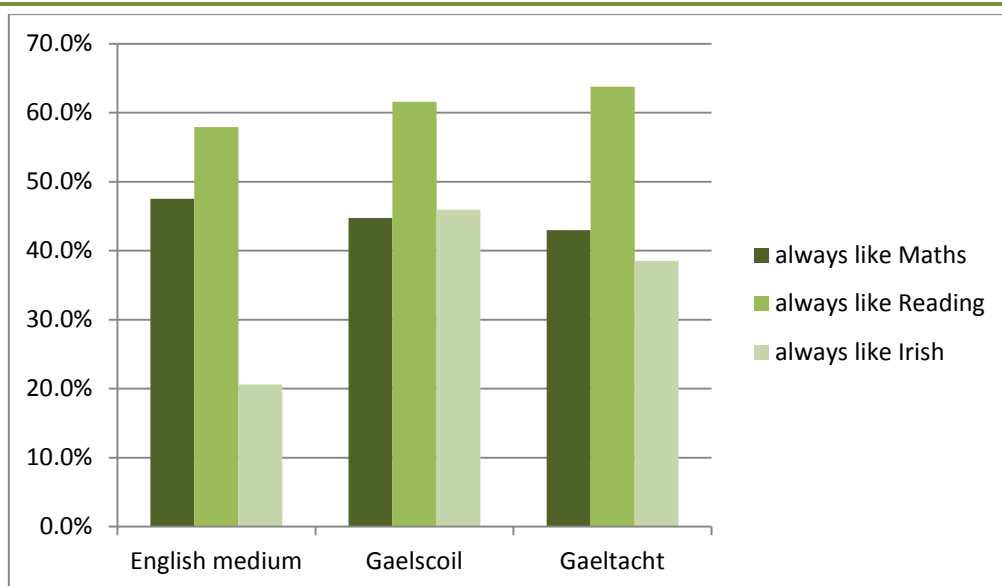
5.3.4   Attitudes Towards Irish in Post-Primary Schools in ROI

The previous section explored primary school pupils' attitude towards Irish in the Republic of Ireland. The longitudinal nature of the *Post-Primary Longitudinal Study* (PPLS) allows us to explore the extent to which post-primary students' attitudes towards subjects change as they move through the junior and senior cycles in the Republic.

The analysis of the first wave of PPLS data (first year students) shows their attitudes towards Irish, English, Mathematics and another language (Figure 5.6).[53] The analysis shows that first year students consider Mathematics (91 per cent) and English (81 per cent) more useful than Irish (50 per cent). Irish was also considered less useful than another language in the curriculum (74 per cent). Just over half of first-years considered the 'other language' interesting (57 per cent), followed by English (54 per cent), Mathematics (49 per cent) and Irish (36 per cent). English was considered to be the least difficult (12 per cent), followed by Mathematics (35 per cent), 'other language' (47 per cent) and Irish (49 per cent). Figure 5.7 demonstrates students' attitudes towards Irish across three domains: interest, difficulty and usefulness during junior cycle. The analysis shows that the subject was perceived as increasingly difficult by the students, while it was also seen as less useful in year three compared to first year. Interest in the subject had remained relatively stable.

In fifth year, the same cohort of students considered Mathematics (78 per cent), French (71 per cent) and English (69 per cent) more useful than Irish (40 per cent). English (48 per cent) was considered to be more interesting than Irish (25 per cent). While in previous years Irish was considered difficult, by fifth year Mathematics (59 per cent) is considered to be somewhat more difficult than Irish (56 per cent). In sixth year, English, Mathematics and French continue to be seen as more interesting and useful subjects than Irish. In terms of level of difficulty, French and German were seen as more difficult than Irish (see Smyth et al., 2011 for further discussion).

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[53]   For more detailed discussion on the experiences of first year students, see Smyth et al. (2004).

FIGURE 5.6   Students' Self-Reported Attitude towards Subjects (First Year)
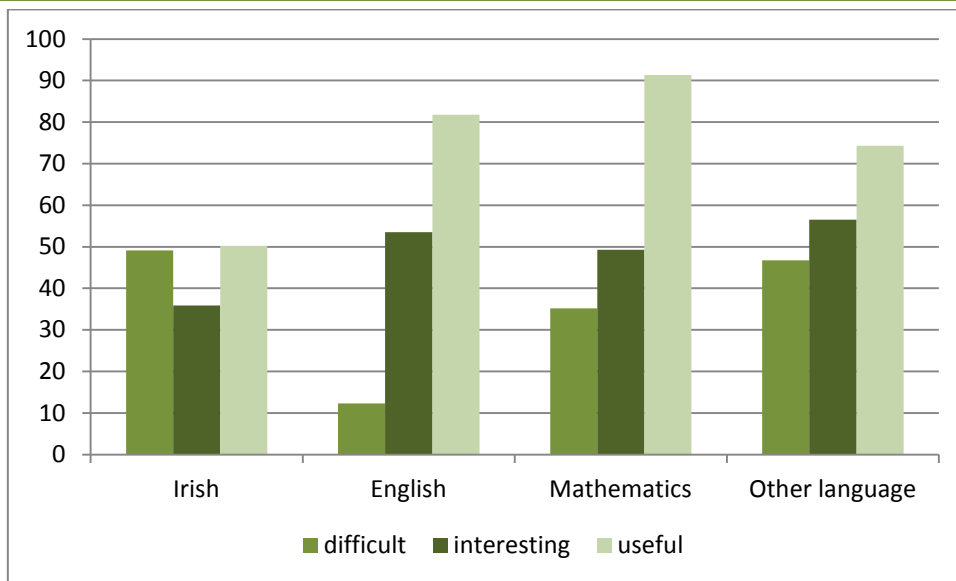
FIGURE 5.7   Trends in Attitudes Towards Irish Over Time
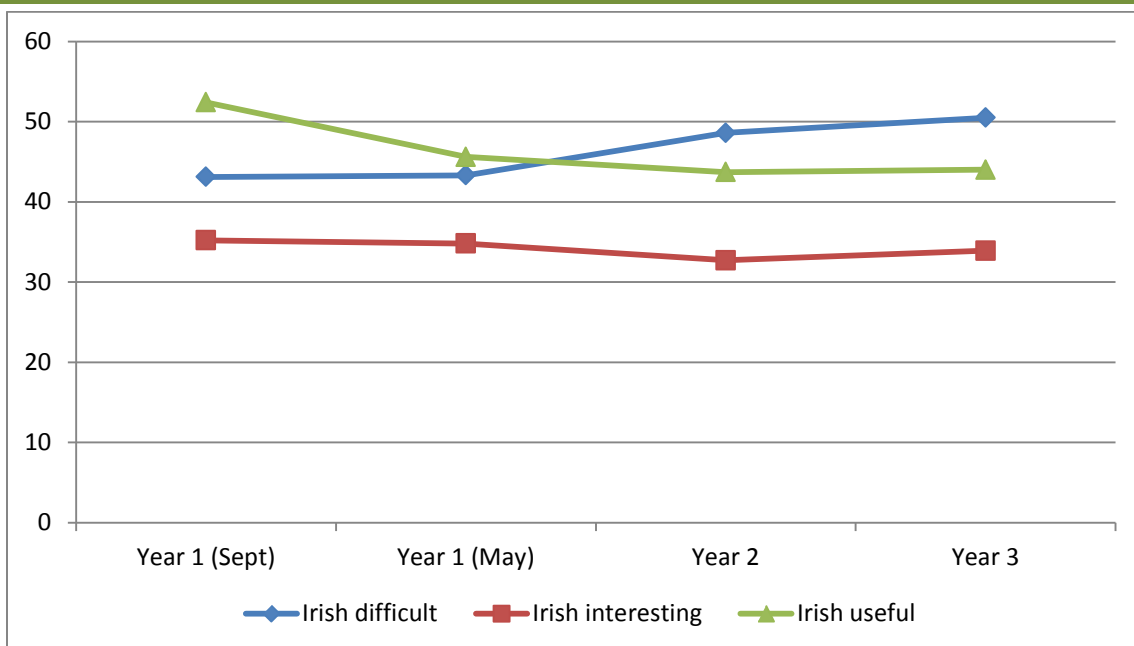
FIGURE 5.8 Attitudes Towards Irish and Other Subjects in Fifth Year
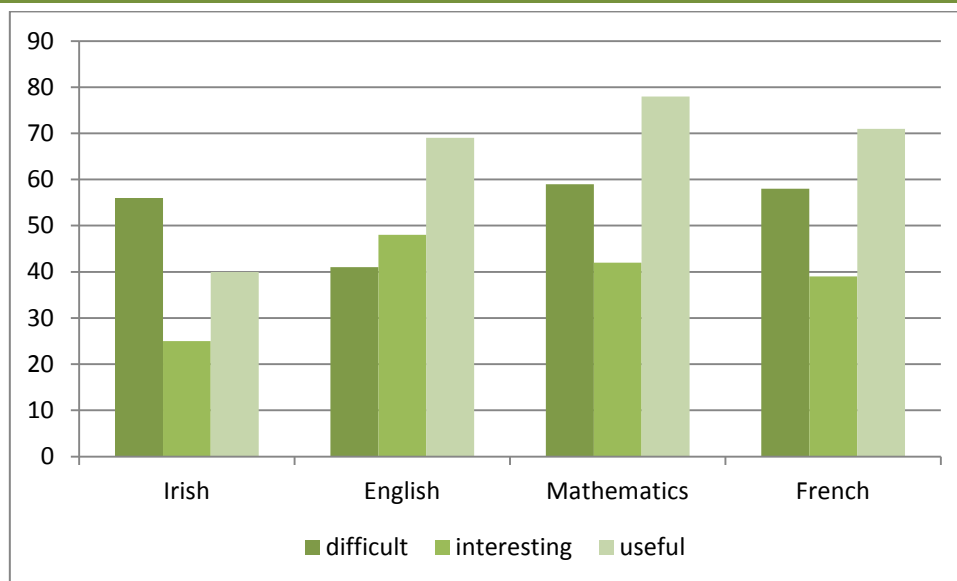
Source: Post-Primary Longitudinal Study.

While similar data were not available for re-analysis for Northern Ireland, some insights can be gained from the *Northern Ireland Key Stage 3 Cohort Study*, carried out by the National Foundation for Educational Research between 1996 and 2000, according to which modern languages and the creative arts were seen by pupils as the subjects least useful for the future. The least relevant subjects included Music, Religious Education, Irish, drama and art. The report on the key stage 4 showed that languages continued to be seen as not useful (McKendry, 2007).

5.4   SUMMARY

The chapter has shown that because of the different education systems in the Republic and Northern Ireland young people have different levels of exposure to the language. In Northern Ireland, Irish is only available in some schools and not before the start of post-primary schooling, unless the children attend one of the few Irish-medium schools. In the Republic of Ireland, the Irish language is one of the core subjects and compulsory at school, unless the child is exempt from learning the language. There have been some concerns that a proportion of school-age children report having no Irish (CSO, 2011). This could be associated with the negative attitudes some students hold for the language. This chapter showed that some children hold negative views of the language already at primary level, as shown by the analysis of GUI data. However, attitudes towards subjects tended to vary by sector with Irish-medium school children more likely to report 'always liking' Irish compared to students from Gaeltacht or English-medium schools. However, this is also likely to reflect parents' preference for the

type of school: parents who want their child to study Irish are more likely to enrol their children in an Irish-medium school and it is likely that the positive disposition towards the language is transferred to their children. It can be argued that by attending Irish-medium or Gaeltacht schools, pupils students are more exposed to the language. However, as discussed in Chapter Two of this report, there are some concerns about the instruction in Gaeltacht schools with some of them operating through the medium of English. The analysis of the PPLS data focussed on English-medium post-primary schools only. However, the data provides valuable insights into students' attitudes towards subjects at this level. The analysis showed that compared to other subjects Irish was considered less interesting and useful and, at least to some extent, more difficult. In addition, post-primary students have only a moderate interest in modern languages, compared to English and Mathematics which students consider more useful. To what extent adults in ROI and NI use Irish is discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 6

Current Fluency in and Use of the Irish Language: Survey Findings

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Research on minority languages indicates that the survival of such languages depends upon the extent to which the language is 'transmitted' from one generation to the next. Consequently the roles of the home, family and community have been acknowledged as being central to the 'transmission' of minority languages. An extensive body of literature indicates the importance of parental involvement to a child's success in school and beyond. Language acquisition is a social practice that starts from home, with parents having an important role to play in informing children's attitudes (Heath, 2001). There are many factors at play, including: parental education levels; social class; and use of the language in the home and in the wider community (Lankshear and Knobel, 2003; Heath, 2001).

As discussed in Chapter 1, O'Riagáin et al. (2008) found that parents have an important role in inter-generational transmission of language attitudes and use. Parents who value the language are more likely to be motivated to create opportunities for their children to speak it in the home and outside (Jones and Morris 2009). This chapter explores current fluency levels and usage amongst respondents to the *Irish Language Survey 2013*, drawing comparisons to Census data, and then explores some of the factors influencing current usage levels including: exposure to the Irish language when growing up; Irish language in the wider community, and personal and parental influences on motivation to learn Irish.

6.2 FLUENCY IN THE IRISH LANGUAGE

The most recent census data in the Republic (2011) showed that 36 per cent of adults aged 18 years and over indicated they could speak Irish. In the Northern Ireland Census 2011, 10 per cent of adults aged 18 years and over reported

having 'some ability in Irish'.[54] *The Irish Language Survey 2013* sought to explore the levels of fluency in more detail by providing detailed information on fluency and frequency of use. Comparisons to the Census data will be made in Section 6.4.

Respondents were asked to rate their fluency in speaking Irish using six categories (see Table 6.1.); these categories were grouped into broader categories of 'no fluency', 'basic fluency' and 'advanced fluency' during the analysis stage. The variance between respondents with 'basic fluency' or 'advanced fluency' in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland (ROI: 57 per cent, NI: 17 per cent) is comparable with the variance in the study of Irish at post-primary school between the two jurisdictions (ROI: 67 per cent; NI: 25 per cent), as reported in Chapter Five. The difference in the proportion of those who learned Irish at school and those who now consider themselves to have at least basic fluency (ROI: -10 percentage points; NI: -8 percentage points) suggests that those who learned Irish at school either did not leave school with an ability to converse in Irish, or they have lost their ability to speak Irish since leaving school. Analysis for Northern Ireland also shows that those who report using Irish tend to be Catholic (91 per cent).

Table 6.1   Fluency Levels in Spoken Irish as Declared by Respondent

		Republic of Ireland		Northern Ireland	
		2001 %	2013 %	2001 %	2013 %
No Fluency	No Irish	11	19*	75	69*
	The odd word	28	24	13	14
Basic Fluency	Few simple sentences	23	24	7	9
	Parts of conversations	24	19	4	5
Advanced Fluency	Most conversations	12	11	1	2
	Native speaker ability	2	3	–	1

Source: *Irish Language Surveys 2001, 2013.*
Notes: *2013: Including those who stated not applicable (ROI: 5 per cent; NI: 4 per cent).

As a next step, the responses of those who reported either basic or advanced fluency were further explored. These respondents were asked to indicate what difficulty, if any, they experienced with different elements of language: pronunciation; using correct grammar; expressing what he/she means; and finding the right words for special topics. Overall those in the Republic of Ireland demonstrated higher levels of confidence in their ability with fewer reporting

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[54]   Census results have been recalculated to represent adults aged 18 years+ to be more directly comparable with the *Irish Language Survey 2013*. In ROI, ability to speak Irish is reported at 40.6% of the total population aged three years+. In NI 10.7 per cent of the population aged three years+ reported some ability in Irish.

difficulty with any of these elements of language compared to the respondents in Northern Ireland. Respondents in both jurisdictions were most confident in their pronunciation, with higher proportions indicating no difficulty in this element of Irish (ROI: 44 per cent; NI: 31 per cent). Respondents in both jurisdictions were less confident with the other elements, with finding the correct words for special topics posing the most difficulty. Not surprisingly, those with advanced fluency were significantly more confident than those with basic fluency across all elements.

Respondents with basic or advanced fluency in speaking Irish were also asked to indicate their ability to read Irish using similar categories to those used to rate their speaking ability. Interestingly over half of respondents in Northern Ireland (53 per cent) who report an ability to speak Irish at a basic or advanced level of fluency indicate that they have difficulties in reading the Irish language (stating 'cannot read Irish' or 'can recognise a few words only').

TABLE 6.2 Difficulty Reported with Each Aspect of the Language as Declared by Those who Indicate Either Basic or Advanced Fluency in Irish

		Republic of Ireland*	Northern Ireland*
Pronunciation	Much difficulty	14	27
	Some difficulty	42	42
	No difficulty	44	31
Expressing what you mean	Much difficulty	24	37
	Some difficulty	46	43
	No difficulty	30	21
Using Correct Grammar	Much difficulty	25	36
	Some difficulty	47	40
	No difficulty	28	24
Finding Right Words For Special Topics	Much difficulty	29	39
	Some difficulty	48	45
	No difficulty	24	16
Fluency in Reading Irish	No reading fluency	23	53
	Basic reading fluency	38	32
	Advanced reading fluency	39	15

Source: *Irish Language Survey 2013.*
Notes: * Base: Those indicating either basic or advanced fluency (ROI: 57 per cent, NI: 17 per cent of respondents).

6.3   FREQUENCY OF SPEAKING IRISH

Another important aspect in exploring attitudes towards the Irish language is frequency with which people in both jurisdictions use the language. Respondents were asked how often, if at all, they currently speak Irish (Table 6.5). The results

reflect the variances in fluency levels: respondents in the Republic of Ireland reported higher frequency in speaking Irish (33 per cent ever; 13 per cent weekly+) than those in Northern Ireland (12 per cent ever; 2 per cent weekly+). Frequency in the Republic of Ireland significantly varied by age with those in the 35-55 age bracket displaying the highest frequency of use (19 per cent weekly+). Those living in rural areas reported a significantly higher incidence of speaking Irish than those in urban areas (rural: 38 per cent; urban: 28 per cent). A significantly higher incidence of speaking Irish was also reported by those with higher levels of education and those in higher social class categories. In Northern Ireland the incidence of speaking Irish was significantly higher amongst Catholics (25 per cent) compared to Protestants (2 per cent). Those in the 35-54 age bracket were more likely to speak Irish (15 per cent) than those aged 18-34 (13 per cent) or 55+ age brackets (9 per cent). Similar to the results in the Republic of Ireland those with a higher level of education were more likely to speak Irish.

TABLE 6.3   Frequency of Speaking Irish

	Republic of Ireland		Northern Ireland	
	2001 %	2013 %	2001 %	2013 %
Daily	3	6	1	1
Weekly	5	7	1	1
Less often	22	19	6	10
Never	71	68	93	88

Source: *Irish Language Surveys 2001, 2013; ROI Census 2011.*

It is important to take into consideration fluency levels as it was found that proficiency levels had a significant impact on the frequency of speaking Irish in the Republic of Ireland[55] with those with advanced fluency more likely to speak Irish to some extent (80 per cent) than those with basic fluency (43 per cent reporting 'ever'). While frequency of speaking Irish is higher amongst those with advanced fluency there is still a significant proportion in this group in the Republic of Ireland (57 per cent) who do not speak Irish on a weekly basis or more often. Possible influences on this pattern are explored in Section 6.6.1.

TABLE 6.4   Frequency of Speaking Irish – by Fluency Level – Republic of Ireland

Republic of Ireland	All Respondents (100%)	No Irish fluency (43%)	Basic Fluency (43%)	Advanced Fluency (14%)
Daily	6%	0%	6%	25%
Weekly	7%	1%	10%	18%

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[55]   Please note that Northern Ireland sample of 'Advanced Fluency' is too small to explore further (N=29). However, similar results to those in Republic of Ireland were reported.

Less often	19%	5%	27%	37%
Never	67%	94%	57%	20%

TABLE 6.5   Frequency of Speaking Irish – by Fluency Level – Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland	All Respondents (100%)	No Irish fluency (83%)	Basic Fluency (14%)	Advanced Fluency (3%)*
Daily	1%	0%	6%	14%*
Weekly	1%	0%	3%	17%*
Less often	10%	3%	40%	48%*
Never	88%	97%	51%	21%*

6.4   COMPARISONS WITH THE CENSUS

The Republic of Ireland Census (2011) asked individuals to answer 'yes' or 'no' in response to the question 'Can you speak Irish?' for all members of the household aged three years and over. It then probed for the frequency of speaking Irish within and outside the education system. In the Northern Ireland Census (2011) respondents were asked to answer the question: 'Can you understand, speak, read or write Irish…?' for every member of the household. This section will draw comparisons between the Republic of Ireland Census 2011 data (specifically adults aged 18 years+), the Northern Ireland Census 2011 data (specifically adults aged 18 years+), and the Irish Language 2013 study (adults aged 18 years+). Comparisons in this section are for information purposes only due to the variations in survey methodologies and sample sizes.

The *Irish Language Survey 2013* asked the participants about their responses to the 2011 Census regarding the usage of the Irish language. In both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland there was a lower level of ability recorded amongst adults in the Census 2011 than was recorded in the *Irish Language Survey 2013.* However, it is evident from the more detailed questions in the Irish Language Survey 2013 that there were differences in how people with different levels of fluency answered the Census question suggesting that the ability to speak Irish across the island of Ireland may in fact be higher than that recorded in the Census (ROI: 36 per cent; NI: 10 per cent). To ascertain how people with different fluency levels answered the 2011 census question the *Irish Language Survey 2013* asked respondents to confirm which option they had selected in the Census (see Tables 6.6 and 6.7).

TABLE 6.6   Ability to Speak Irish as Reported in Irish Language Survey and Census 2011 – Republic of Ireland

Republic of Ireland		Census 2011* %	Irish Language Survey 2013 %
No fluency	No, cannot speak Irish	64	43
Basic fluency/ Advanced fluency	Yes, can speak Irish	36	57

Source: Census 2011 and Irish Language Survey 2013.
Note: *ROI Census: Aged 20 years +, see Appendix 1.

TABLE 6.7   Ability to Speak Irish as Reported in Irish Language Survey and Census 2011 – Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland		Census 2011* %	Irish Language Survey 2013 %
No fluency	Have no ability in Irish	90	83
Basic fluency/ Advanced fluency	Have some ability in Irish	10	17

Source: Census 2011 and Irish Language Survey 2013.
Note: * NI Census: Aged 18 years+.

In the Republic of Ireland[56] almost one-third (32 per cent) of those who indicated Advanced fluency ('most conversations' or 'native speaker ability') in the *Irish Language Survey 2013* recalled being recorded as non-Irish speakers in the Census. In addition, more than half of those with Basic fluency in both jurisdictions (ROI: 64 per cent; NI: 53 per cent) recalled being recorded as non-Irish speakers. This highlights the benefit of including a more detailed question related to the Irish language in the next Census as it is evident from the *Irish Language Survey 2013* that many of those who can converse in Irish did not in fact record this ability during the Census.

TABLE 6.8:   How Respondents of the *Irish Language Survey 2013* Answered the Census Question, Profiled by Fluency Level – Northern Ireland.

Republic of Ireland	Actual Census 2011*	All Respondents (100%)	No Irish fluency (43%)	Basic Fluency (43%)	Advanced Fluency (14%)
Recorded as Irish-speaker	36%	13%	3%	12%	49%
Recorded as non-Irish speaker	64%	62%	69%	64%	32%
Cannot remember/ don't know	n/a	25%	28%	24%	19%

Source: *Irish Language Survey 2013, Republic of Ireland Census 2011.*
Note: * Census 2011 of adults aged 18+.

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56   Please note that Northern Ireland sample of 'Advanced Fluency' is too small to explore further (N=29).

In terms of frequency of speaking Irish (recorded in Republic of Ireland census only) both the Census and the *Irish Language Survey 2013* reported a high proportion of the population as never speaking Irish (77 per cent and 68 per cent respectively), with a higher overall incidence and frequency of speaking Irish reported in the *Irish Language Survey 2013.*

TABLE 6.9 How Respondents of the *Irish Language Survey 2013* Answered the Census Question, Profiled by Fluency Level – Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland	Actual Census 2011*	All Respondents (100%)	No Irish fluency (83%)	Basic Fluency (14%)	Advanced Fluency (3%)**
Recorded an Irish-speaker	10%	4%	0%	18%	41%**
Recorded as non-Irish speaker	90%	72%	76%	53%	24%**
Cannot remember/ don't know	n/a	24%	24%	29%	35%**

Source: *Irish Language Survey 2013, Republic of Ireland Census 2011.*
Note: * NI Census: Aged 18 years+. Please note in Census 'some ability in Irish' includes those saying unable to speak Irish, but has other ability (e.g. read/understand).
    ** Caution: Small base size (N=29), indicative figures only.

TABLE 6.10 Frequency of Speaking Irish in Republic of Ireland.

Republic of Ireland	Census 2011* %	*Irish Language Survey 2013* %
Daily	4	6
Weekly	2	7
Less often	17	19
Never	77	68

Source: *Irish Language Survey 2013, Republic of Ireland Census 2011.*
Note: * Census information on adults aged 18 years+.

6.5   EXPOSURE TO THE IRISH LANGUAGE IN THE HOME DURING RESPONDENTS' CHILDHOOD

6.5.1   Usage of Irish in the Home and its Impact on Current Use

The incidence of Irish being spoken at least occasionally within the home when respondents were growing up was higher in the Republic of Ireland (39 per cent) than in Northern Ireland (16 per cent), reflecting the variation in fluency levels between the jurisdictions. The findings are broadly in line with the 2001 survey.

The incidence of Irish being spoken in the home as a child had a significant impact on the current usage of Irish amongst respondents in both jurisdictions. Those who grew up with Irish in the home are more likely to speak Irish at present (ROI: 56 per cent; NI: 45 per cent) than those who were seldom or never exposed to Irish in the home (ROI: 18 per cent; NI: 6 per cent).

TABLE 6.11 Frequency of Irish being Spoken in Respondents' Homes When Growing Up

	Republic of Ireland		Northern Ireland	
	2001	2013	2001	2013
Always	1%	2%	–	0%
Often	5%	4%	1%	3%
Occasionally	17%	13%	5%	7%
Seldom	20%	20%	5%	6%
Never	58%	52%	89%	81%
Not applicable *	N/A	9%	N/A	3%

Source: Irish Language Surveys 2001, 2013.
Note: *Please note that in 2013 'not applicable' was reported amongst some respondents, particularly those who did not grow up in Ireland (ROI: 15%, NI: 10% of sample). The 2001 report does not specify 'not applicable' and these responses may have been forced into 'never', or may have been removed from the base.

6.5.2   Parents' Fluency Level and its Impact on Current Use

The respondents were asked to rate their parents' ability to speak Irish. Table 6.12 details the fluency of respondents' mothers, while Table 6.13 details the fluency of respondents' fathers. The variation in results between the two jurisdictions is consistent with the variances in the respondents' own fluency as outlined in Section 6.2, with respondents in the Republic of Ireland reporting higher levels of fluency amongst their parents (Mother: 33 per cent; Father: 30 per cent with basic/advanced fluency) than those in Northern Ireland (Mother: 11 per cent; Father: 10 per cent with basic/advanced fluency). There has been a decline over time in the proportion of respondents who state that their parents have no Irish in the Republic but not in Northern Ireland.

TABLE 6.12 Respondents Mothers' Irish Fluency Levels as Declared by Respondent

Mother's Fluency		Republic of Ireland		Northern Ireland	
		2001	2013	2001	2013
No Irish	No Irish	27%	33%	83%	79%
	The odd word	37%	27%	9%	9%
Basic Irish	Few simple sentences	16%	18%	3%	5%
	Parts of conversations	10%	8%	2%	4%
Advanced Irish	Most conversations	5%	4%	1%	1%
	Native speaker ability	3%	3%	1%	1%
	Don't know	3%	1%	2%	–
	Not applicable*	N/A	6%	N/A	4%

Source: Irish Language Surveys 2001, 2013.
Note: *Please note the 2001 report does not specify 'not applicable' and these responses may have been forced into 'never', or may have been removed from the base.

TABLE 6.13 Respondents Fathers' Irish Fluency Levels as Declared by Respondent

Father's Fluency		Republic Of Ireland		Northern Ireland	
		2001	**2013**	**2001**	**2013**
No Irish	No Irish	28%	38%	81%	79%
	The odd word	38%	25%	9%	6%
Basic Irish	Few simple sentences	16%	16%	3%	5%
	Parts of conversation	8%	7%	2%	3%
Advanced Irish	Most of conversation	4%	4%	1%	1%
	Native speaker ability	3%	3%	1%	1%
	Don't know	3%	1%	2%	1%
	Not applicable*	N/A	6%	N/A	4%

Source: *Irish Language Surveys 2001, 2013.*
Note: *Please note the 2001 report does not specify 'not applicable' and these responses may have been forced into 'never', or may have been removed from the base.

To gauge the impact of parents' fluency levels on the respondents' current usage of Irish, the data in Republic of Ireland was explored further by grouping the data into sets. The sets are as follows: both parents have 'No Irish' (62 per cent including don't know/not applicable); parent or parents with 'Basic Irish' only (28 per cent); and at least one parent or parents with 'Advanced Irish' (9 per cent). There was a significant variation between groups. Those whose parent/parents had 'Advanced Irish' indicated the highest levels of current usage of Irish (69 per cent ever, 43 per cent weekly+) compared to those whose parent/parents have 'Basic Irish' (52 per cent ever, 20 per cent weekly+) and those whose parents have 'No Irish' (18 per cent ever, 6 per cent weekly+) further demonstrating the positive impact of parents on respondents' current usage of Irish.

6.6   IRISH LANGUAGE IN THE WIDER COMMUNITY

6.6.1   Irish Language Use in the Wider Community

While respondents' own usage of Irish varies considerably between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, there are similar results in terms of the use of the Irish Language in their wider social circles. Almost two-in-five adults in the Republic of Ireland (38 per cent) have 'friends who are bringing up their children through Irish at home or who use a lot of Irish with their children', which is only slightly higher than in Northern Ireland (31 per cent). Three-in-ten (33 per cent in ROI and 31 per cent in NI) have at least one friend who speaks Irish outside the home.

TABLE 6.14 Irish Language Usage amongst Respondents' Peers, % saying 'Yes'

	Republic of Ireland	Northern Ireland
People in my circle use Irish.	23%	29%
Have friends who are bringing up their children through Irish at home or who use a lot of Irish with their children.	38%	31%
Have friends or relatives who speak any Irish at all outside their home.	33%	31%

Source: Irish Language Survey 2013.

6.6.2   Opportunities to Speak Irish

As highlighted in Section 6.3 Irish is not frequently spoken (weekly or more often) by the majority of respondents, even amongst those with Basic and Advanced fluency. To help understand barriers to speaking the language amongst those who have the ability to speak Irish (those indicating Basic or Advanced fluency), it is useful to look at the usage of Irish within the social circles of Basic and Advanced fluency respondents in the Republic of Ireland and the respondents' attitudes towards using Irish. The lack of opportunity to speak Irish may be one of the more prevalent reasons for not using Irish more regularly with three-quarters of respondents with Basic fluency (75 per cent) and almost half of respondents with advanced fluency (45 per cent) indicating that that people in their circle do not use Irish. Both fluency groups indicated that they 'do not like to begin a conversation in Irish' (basic fluency: 50 per cent; advanced fluency: 43 per cent) and a higher proportion 'do not like speaking Irish when others who are present do not know Irish' (basic fluency: 49 per cent; advanced fluency: 55 per cent).

TABLE 6.15 Inclination to Speak Irish in Social Circle amongst those with Basic (43%) and Advanced Fluency (14%) in the Republic of Ireland, % saying 'Yes'

Republic of Ireland	Basic Fluency (43%)	Advanced Fluency (14%)
'I don't like people speaking Irish when others present don't know Irish'	49%	55%
'I do not like to begin a conversation in Irish'	50%	43%
People in my circle do not use Irish/ I am unaware of people using Irish*	75%	45%

Source: Irish Language Survey 2013.

6.7   IMPACT OF MOTIVATION TO LEARN ON CURRENT LANGUAGE USE

As discussed in Chapter 1, motivation plays an important role in learning something new, including languages, and combined with other factors is likely to influence success in learning a language. This section explores the desire and motivation to learn the Irish language while at school; assesses the impact of the respondents' parents' attitudes on their own motivation; and assesses the impact of this desire on current usage of the language.

### 6.7.1 Desire and Motivation to Learn the Irish Language While at School

The results of the analysis showed that just over half of adults in the Republic of Ireland (52 per cent) recalled wanting to learn Irish in school, whilst just one-in-five in Northern Ireland (21 per cent) felt the same way (see Figure 6.1). The respondents were also asked whether they thought their parents had wanted them to learn Irish while at school with the results reflecting similar variances between the two jurisdictions with more respondents in Republic of Ireland (57 per cent) than in Northern Ireland (17 per cent) reporting their parents had wanted them to learn Irish (see Figure 6.2). Parental wish for the respondent to learn Irish was higher amongst NI respondents in higher social class groupings[57] (ABC1: 59 per cent; C2DE: 42 per cent). Respondents in the Republic of Ireland reported a somewhat higher level of desire amongst their parents (57 per cent) than themselves (52 per cent) to learn Irish. Demonstrating the impact of parental attitudes towards Irish, the analysis shows that those who felt their parents wanted them to learn Irish at school were significantly more likely to report a higher incidence of wanting to learn the language themselves (ROI: 73 per cent; NI: 71 per cent) than those who felt their parents did not want them to or were disinterested (ROI: 17 per cent; NI: 10 per cent). In both jurisdictions approximately 20 per cent of respondents were indifferent about learning the language. The perceived indifference of parents tended to be higher than for respondents.

Those who indicated they had wanted to learn the language and those who indicated their parents had wanted them to learn the language were asked the main reason they had wanted to learn Irish. The primary motivator in the Republic of Ireland for both the respondents (48 per cent) and their parents (52 per cent; as perceived by the respondent) was 'to pass exams'. This reflects the compulsory nature of the Irish language in primary and post-primary education in the Republic of Ireland. Given the variance in Irish language education in Northern Ireland it is unsurprising to see that the role of exams as a motivator in Northern Ireland is considerably less prevalent amongst respondents (11 per cent) and their parents (12 per cent; as perceived by the respondent). The primary motivating factor in Northern Ireland is 'to have Irish for its own sake' amongst both respondents (86 per cent) and their parents (85 per cent, as perceived by the respondent), reflecting the importance of the Irish language for group identity.

[57] Approximated Social Grade with its six categories A, B, C1, C2, D and E is a socio-economic classification produced by the ONS (UK Office for National Statistics). AB= Higher and intermediate managerial, administrative, professional occupations; C1= Supervisory, clerical & junior managerial, administrative, professional occupations; C2= Skilled manual occupations; DE= Semi-skilled and unskilled manual occupations, Unemployed and lowest grade occupations.

FIGURE 6.1   Desire to Learn the Irish Language While at School – Republic of Ireland
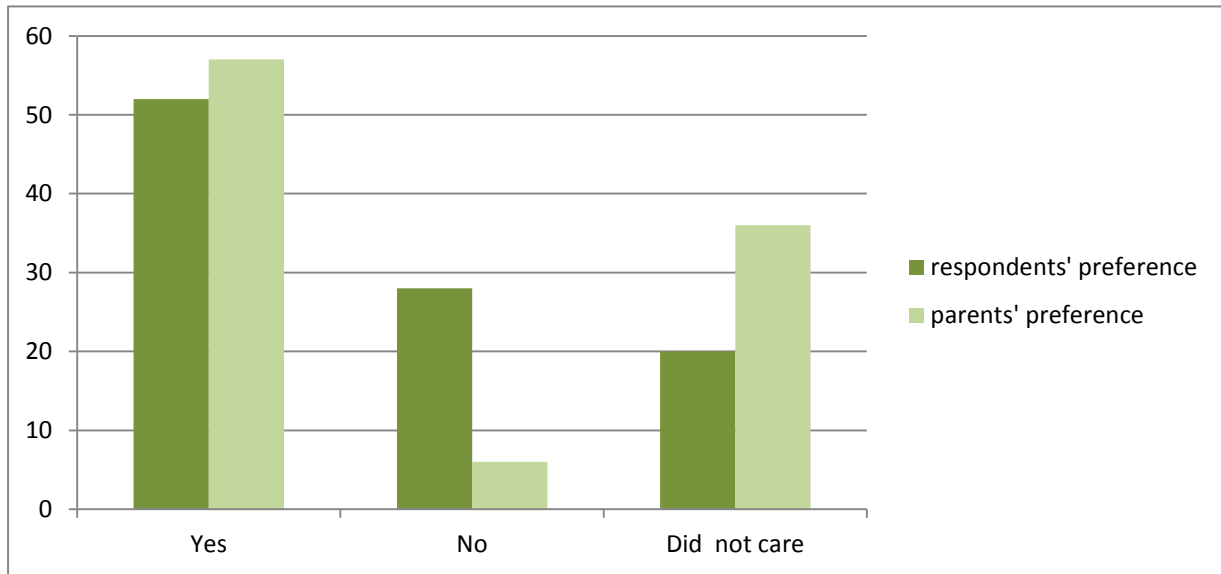
Source: *Irish Language Survey 2013.*

FIGURE 6.2   Desire to Learn the Irish Language While at School – Northern Ireland
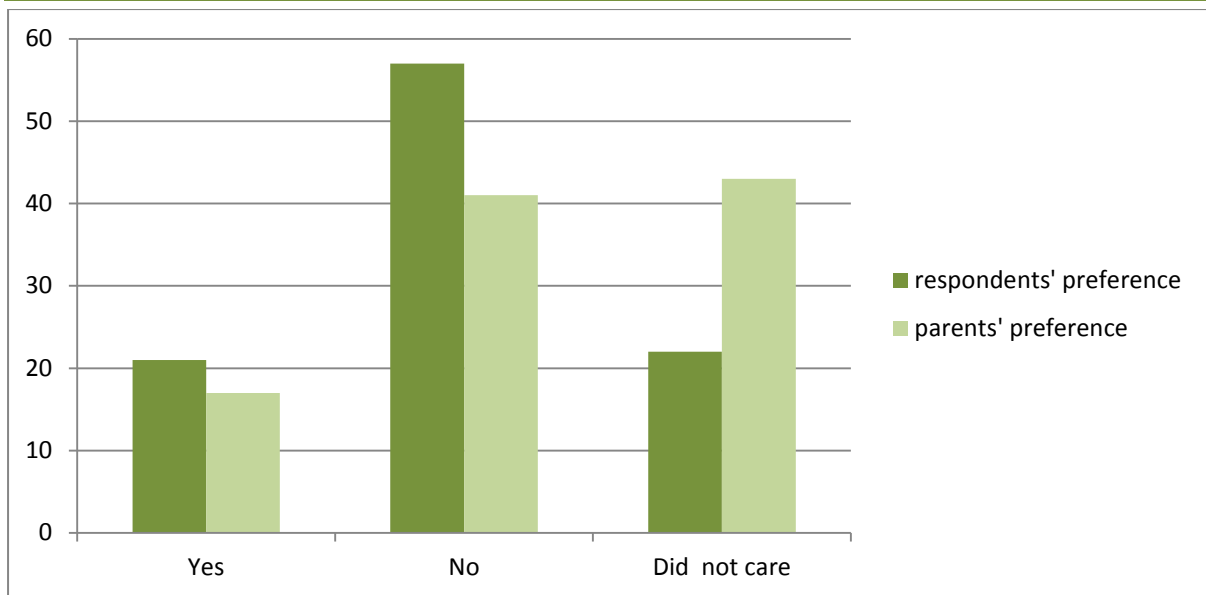
Source: *Irish Language Survey 2013.*

The respondents were also asked about the importance of Irish as a subject. The majority of adults in both the Republic and Northern Ireland believe that Science-based subjects are more important for children to learn than Irish (68 per cent ROI and 86 per cent in NI), on a par with 2001 findings (70 per cent in ROI and 83 per cent in NI).

The respondents who wanted to learn Irish themselves were significantly more likely to display a higher incidence of currently speaking Irish than those who did not want to learn Irish. Interestingly, in the Republic of Ireland the rationale for wanting to learn Irish also impacted on current usage figures with those who learned Irish primarily 'to have Irish for its own sake' demonstrating a somewhat higher incidence of ever speaking Irish at present (59 per cent) than those who learnt it for another reason (51 per cent). More significantly, those who learned Irish for its own sake were considerably more likely to use it weekly (30 per cent), than those who learnt it for another reason (19 per cent).

A binary logistic regression model was used in order to look at the simultaneous influence of a number of the factors discussed above on Irish language usage.[58] A multivariate approach allows for a more comprehensive analysis than is possible using only descriptive analysis. According to the analysis 57 per cent of the respondents in ROI (n=694) reported having some level of Irish. The analysis presented in Appendix Table A.1 (coefficients) explores which variables best predict the likelihood of speaking Irish (from a few simple sentences to high fluency level) in the Republic of Ireland, controlling for social class of the respondent. Being Catholic is strongly associated with speaking Irish. Tertiary education is positively associated with using Irish. Younger respondents - those who were less than 24 years of age - were also more likely to use Irish. Home environment when growing up was highly relevant with respondents where Irish was used in the home and those who thought their parents had wanted them to learn Irish at school more likely to use Irish as adults. The respondents were more likely to use Irish if they had friends who use Irish when socialising. Interestingly, positive disposition to learning other languages was positively associated with using Irish.

Because of the very large between-community differences in language use, the multivariate analysis of Northern Ireland data was based on Catholic respondents only. Again, the model controlled for social class. The information here needs to be approached with care as the numbers of Irish language speakers in Northern Ireland are very small; Irish speakers with any level of fluency account for only 17 per cent (n=175). Tertiary education was positively associated with speaking Irish. In line with the findings from the Republic, a home environment that promoted Irish (using it at home and wanting their children to learn Irish at school) was positively associated with using Irish later in life. The respondent's mother's fluency levels were also positively associated with using Irish.

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[58] The dependent variable 'Irish language user' is based on self reported ability in Q8c: 'And how would you rate your own ability?' The options included: no ability, few simple sentences; parts of conversations; most conversations, native speaker.

6.8   SUMMARY

Parental attitude, fluency and usage of Irish in the home all impact on the usage of Irish into adulthood. This chapter has looked at the role of family and community in influencing a young person's attitude towards Irish. The international evidence suggests that the choices families make are largely intuitive with parents/carers using the language they know best, or the language that is 'inclusive' of their partner. In terms of influences on the language choice of the child, this includes their 'community' of speakers, including parents/carers, siblings, grandparents, teachers and friends, in addition to other social influences such as the media and community activities (Irish Government, 2010). This chapter has shown that parental motivation is an important aspect in shaping children's usage of the language. While a significant minority of parents in both jurisdictions do not care whether their children learn Irish, there is a growing number of parents (across educational and class backgrounds), who, according to respondents' perception, are interested in their children acquiring the language. However, the analysis presented in this chapter also shows that parents tend to attach lower value to Irish than to other school subjects.

The chapter has also demonstrated the role education systems play in facilitating access to the Irish language. While in the Republic most pupils, unless exempt, are exposed to the Irish language, it is only students in Catholic and some integrated schools in Northern Ireland that have the language on the curriculum. Irish-medium schools in both jurisdictions enable total immersion in the language. Pupils attending these schools tend to hold more positive views about the language as the language is seen as part of the school ethos. However, it should be noted that a selection effect is likely to be at play: parents with more positive dispositions towards Irish are more likely to favour these schools. Overall, just over half of the respondents in the Republic, but just 17 per cent in Northern Ireland report having some knowledge of Irish. Those who claim to have some Irish language ability tend to come from homes where Irish was spoken and where parents had wished their children to grow up knowing Irish. Opportunities to speak the language also matter; a modest proportion of respondents in both jurisdictions report that people in their circle speak Irish. Speaking Irish also depends on the proficiency of other people with people fluent in the language reporting that they did not like to speak Irish when others present do not know the language.

Chapter 7

Attitudes towards the Irish Language and the Future of the Language: Survey Findings

7.1   INTRODUCTION

Previous chapters of this study showed how the characteristics of the educational systems; fluency in the Irish language; usage of the Irish language; and exposure to the Irish language at home and in social circles vary between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, and explored a number of factors affecting current usage of the language. This chapter explores current attitudes towards the Irish language in both jurisdictions and investigates what the future may hold for the language. The chapter starts by exploring overall attitudes towards the Irish language, then explores attitudes towards Irish language education, followed by attitudes towards the government's role in each jurisdiction and concludes with opinions regarding the future of the Irish language.

7.2   GENERAL ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE IRISH LANGUAGE

Considering that attitude towards a language is a key aspect of its use, the *Irish Language Survey 2013* explored whether the respondents were in favour of or opposed to the Irish language using a five point Likert scale (from 'strongly opposed' to 'strongly in favour')(see Figure 7.1). Over two-thirds of respondents in the Republic of Ireland (67 per cent) and almost half of respondents in Northern Ireland (45 per cent) indicate they feel positive about the Irish language.[59] While comparisons between the 2001 and 2013 surveys are to be drawn with caution, more positive attitudes towards the language were reported by the respondents in the 2013 survey relative to the 2001 survey across both jurisdictions.

Unsurprisingly those more favourable towards the Irish language were significantly more likely to speak Irish more frequently than those who were indifferent or opposed to the language. In the Republic of Ireland positive attitudes were significantly associated with higher levels of education; higher social classes (ABC1: 42 per cent); having grown up in Ireland (38 per cent) and

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[59]   Not surprisingly, there are considerable between-community differences in attitudes in Northern Ireland, with 68 per cent of Catholic respondents feeling positive about the Irish language.

amongst those in rural areas (42 per cent). There were no significant differences by gender.

FIGURE 7.1 'General Attitude to the Irish Language'
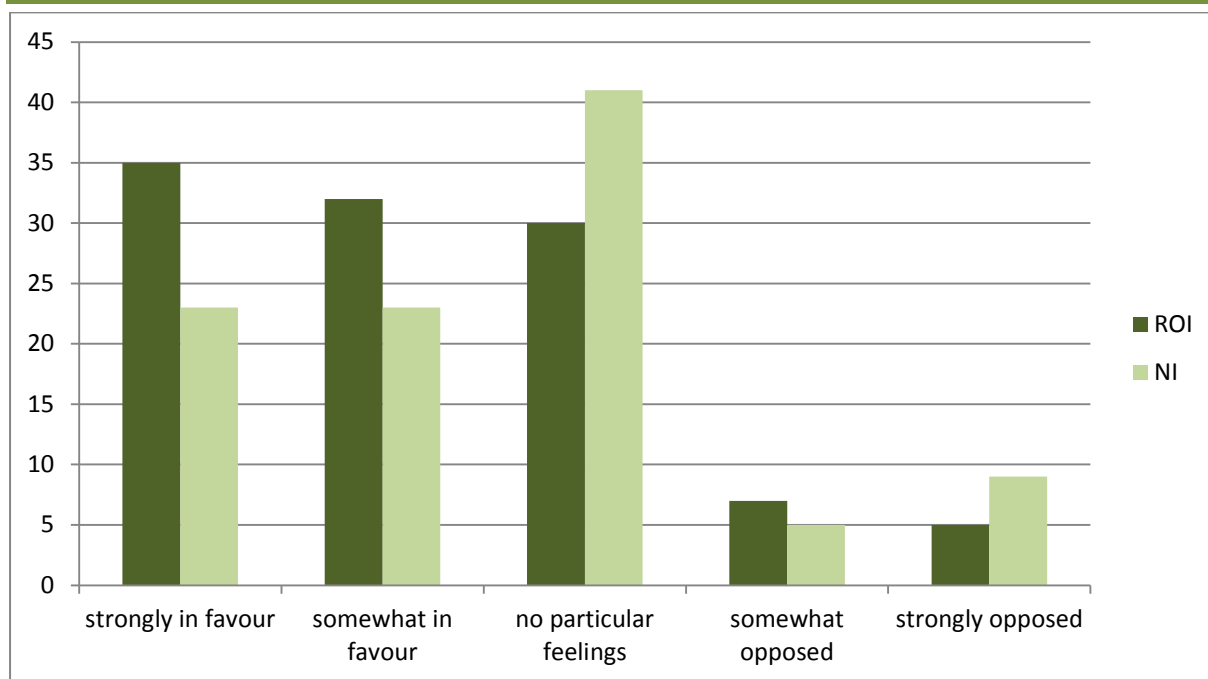
Source: Irish Language Survey 2013.

In Northern Ireland attitudes were more consistent across demographic groups with the exception of education and religion. Those with higher levels of education had significantly more positive attitudes towards the language, as did those from Catholic backgrounds (44 per cent 'strongly in favour'). Respondents with a Protestant background were less likely to strongly support the language (4 per cent 'strongly in favour') and were more likely to report having 'no particular feelings' (55 per cent) for the language. Only a small proportion of Protestants felt negative towards the Irish language (9 per cent 'Somewhat opposed'; 19 per cent 'Strongly opposed').

The respondents were asked to report the extent to which they agreed with a series of statements about the Irish language (see Figure 7.2). Respondents in Northern Ireland were more likely to express a neutral stance ('No particular feelings'; ROI: 30 per cent; NI: 41 per cent) while their counterparts in the Republic tended to be more positive (either 'strongly in favour' or 'somewhat in favour').

The association between the Irish language and Ireland's identity and culture seemed to be stronger in the Republic than Northern Ireland with over two-in-three in the Republic of Ireland (64 per cent) agreeing that 'without Irish; [jurisdiction] would lose its identity as a separate culture' compared to just one-in-three in Northern Ireland (33 per cent)(Figure 7.2).

FIGURE 7.2 Statements Regarding the Irish Language
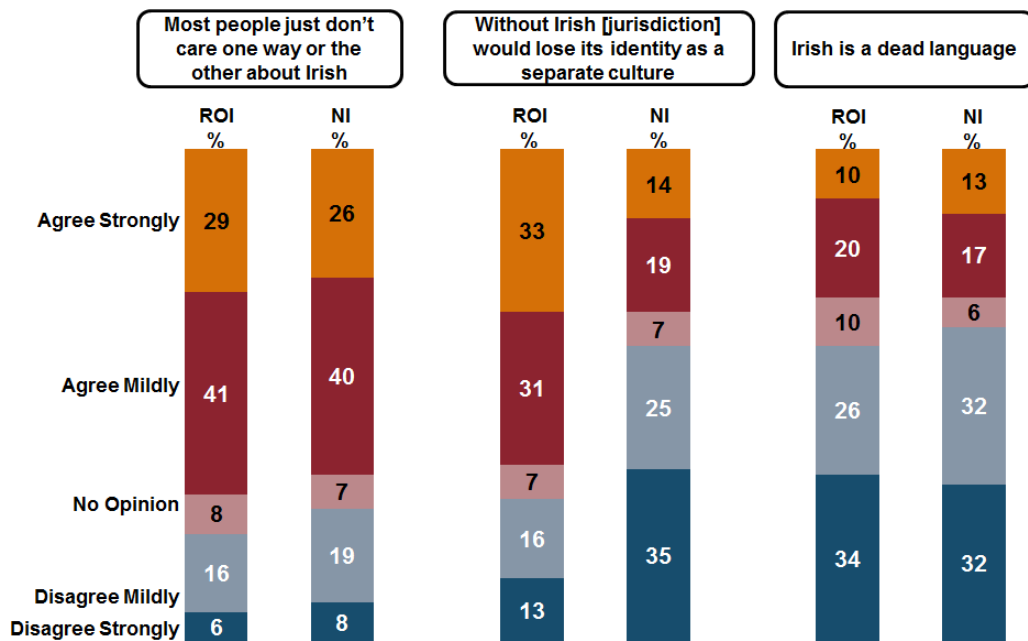
Source: *Irish Language Surveys 2001, 2013*

Next, a binary logistic regression model was used in order to examine the factors influencing positive attitudes towards the Irish language (See Appendix Table A.1). The variable is based on the item 'What would you say best describes your general attitude towards the Irish language now?', with response categories 'strongly in favour' and 'somewhat in favour' combined (67 per cent).

Favourable attitudes towards the Irish language in the Republic were significantly associated with being Catholic and having tertiary education. Perceived parental wish that the respondent learned Irish at school had a positive impact on attitudes; as did having friends who bring up their children through the medium of Irish. Other variables that were positively and significantly associated with favourable attitudes included using Irish to some extent and having made an attempt to improve their Irish language ability.[60] In Northern Ireland, 45 per cent

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[60]   As this is a cross-sectional study, these relationships are not causal. Causality can only be established using a longitudinal study on how attitudes change over time.

of the respondents hold positive attitudes towards the Irish language. Controlling for social class and limiting the multivariate analysis to Catholics only, the analysis show that only perceived parental preference that the respondent would learn Irish at school, having friends who were bringing up children using Irish and having Irish spoken in the home had any significant impact on language attitudes.

7.3   ATTITUDES TOWARDS IRISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION

In both surveys (2001, 2013), respondents were asked about the extent to which they agreed with statements about teaching and learning Irish in schools. The 2013 survey results indicated that four-in-five adults in the Republic of Ireland agree with the statement that Irish should be taught to all children as a subject in school. In contrast, just under half of adults in Northern Ireland (48 per cent) felt that Irish should be taught in schools. Overall, the responses in the Irish Language 2013 survey were more positive about teaching Irish at school than those recorded in 2001. The respondents were asked to indicate what programme would be most suitable for the majority of children in school today. In the Republic of Ireland the majority felt that Irish should be taught as a subject only (primary schools: 62 per cent; post-primary schools: 63 per cent) although one-in-five feel that some subjects should be taught through Irish in primary school (20 per cent) and a slightly lower proportion in post-primary school (15 per cent). The majority of respondents in Northern Ireland feel that Irish should be taught as a subject only (primary: 42 per cent; post-primary: 49 per cent), or not at all (primary: 32 per cent; post-primary: 28 per cent). While caution must be exercised when comparing the results with the 2001 report it is evident that respondents in both jurisdictions in the 2013 survey were greater advocates for Irish within schools than was evident in the 2001 survey.

FIGURE 7.3 Statements Relating to Irish in Schools

( ) = Irish Language Survey 2001
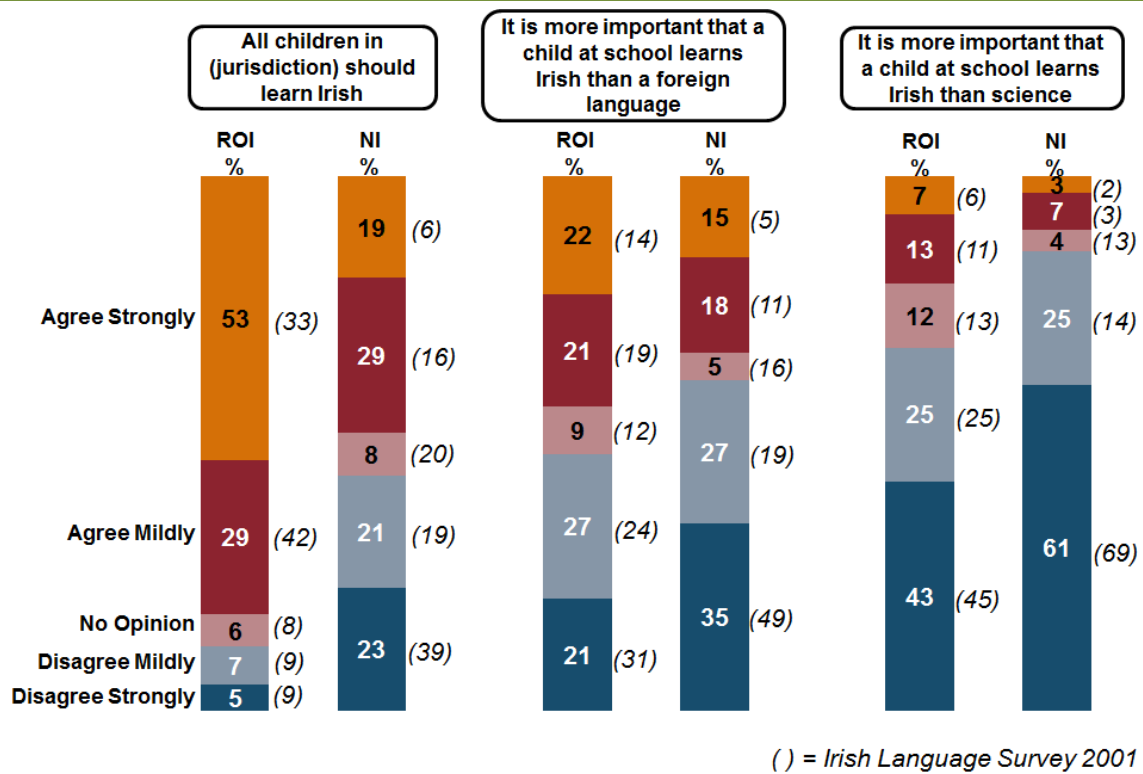
Source: Irish Language Surveys 2001, 2013

FIGURE 7.4 School Programme Perceived as 'Most Suitable for Most Children Today'

( ) = Irish Language Survey 2001
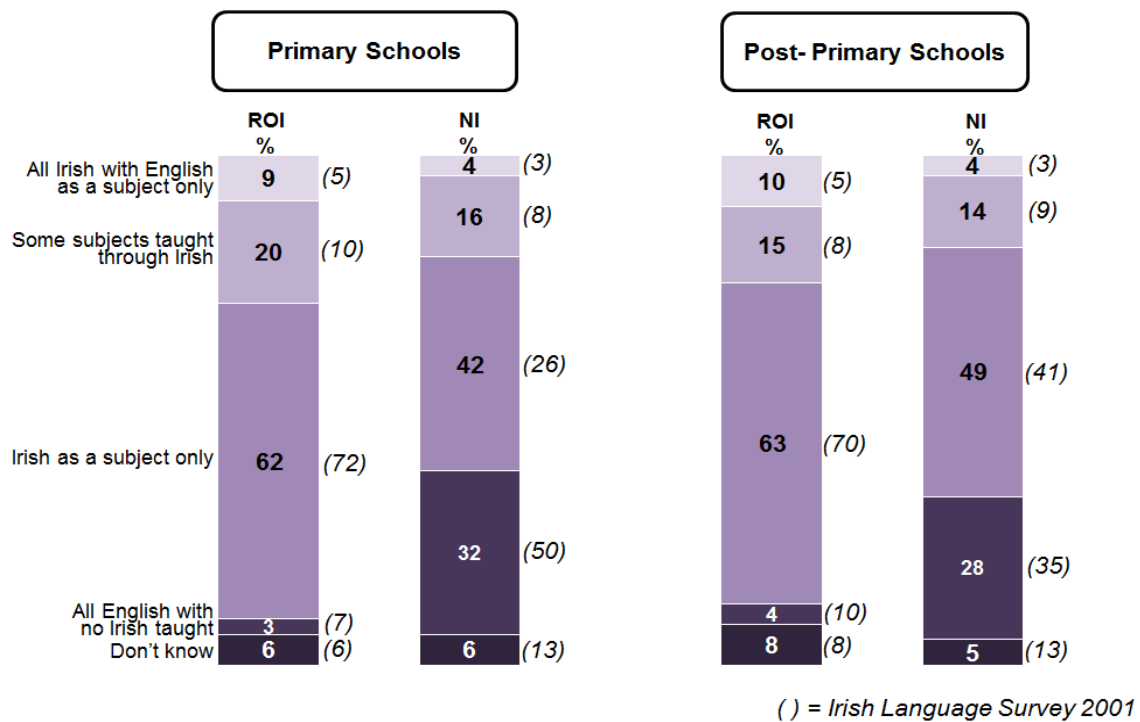
Source: Irish Language Surveys 2001, 2013

While only a minority indicated that all-Irish education was the most suitable programme for most children, the majority of respondents in both jurisdictions indicated that all-Irish schools should be provided where there is a demand for them (ROI: 72 per cent; NI: 64 per cent). While the response to this question was similar in the Republic of Ireland across the two waves, there was a higher positive response to this question in the 2013 survey than the 2001 survey in Northern Ireland. Almost one-quarter of respondents (23 per cent) in the Republic of Ireland would consider sending their child (or would have sent their child) to an all-Irish primary school if one was located near their home.

FIGURE 7.5 'The Government Should Provide All-Irish Schools Wherever the Public Want Them'
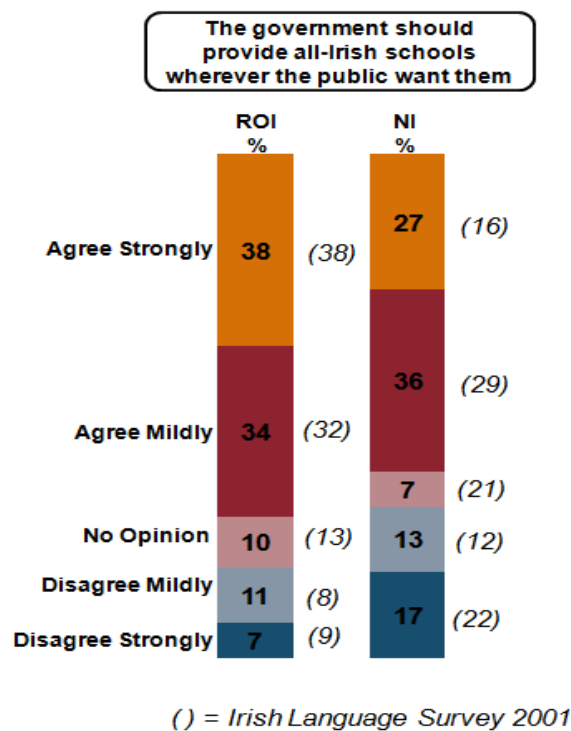
Source: *Irish Language Surveys 2001, 2013*

TABLE 7.1 Inclination to Send Child to an all-Irish School if Located Near Home (Past or Future): % saying Yes.

	Republic of Ireland*		Northern Ireland*	
	2001 %	2013 %	2001 %	2013 %
Primary	13	23	5	12
Post Primary	8	18	5	11

Source: *Irish Language Surveys 2001, 2013*
Note: * In 2001 this question was asked of all respondents, in 2013 it was only asked amongst those with children. Due to unavailability of the 2001 data, the 2013 data has been recalculated from 'all respondents'. Therefore comparisons here are for reference only.

7.4   ATTITUDES TOWARDS GOVERNMENT POLICY

The Irish Language Study 2013 explored respondents' perceptions of their government's position on Irish. The results reflect the more positive attitudes towards Irish overall in the Republic of Ireland with almost two-in-five (37 per cent) indicating that the government does too little for the Irish language and almost one-in-three (31 per cent) indicating that the government does enough. Those with advanced fluency were most likely to indicate that the government does too little (67 per cent). However, over one-quarter of those with no fluency (26 per cent) also indicated that the government does too little. Those in Northern Ireland are more polarised in their views with respondents indicating the government does too little (29 per cent) or enough (24 per cent) in similar proportions while some indicated that the government does too much (16 per cent). There is a notable number of respondents in both categories who indicated having no opinion on this matter.

TABLE 7.2   Perception of Present Government's Position on Irish (Own Jurisdiction Only)

	Republic of Ireland		Northern Ireland	
	2001 %	**2013 %**	**2001 %**	**2013 %**
Government does too much	4	4	20	16
Government does enough	36	31	23	24
Government does too little	15	37	15	29
Don't know	45	28	41	31

Source: *Irish Language Surveys 2001, 2013*

In terms of initiatives the government should focus on, residents in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland believe that their respective governments should give the greatest attention to teaching the Irish language well to school-going children (ROI: 53 per cent; NI: 34 per cent). There was also support for maintaining Irish-speaking households in Gaeltacht areas (ROI: 43 per cent; NI: 27 per cent). Respondents from Northern Ireland were somewhat more likely to regard the provision of public services in Irish for Irish speakers as important (ROI: 26 per cent; NI: 30 per cent). Differences between the two groups were also evident in considering TV and radio programmes in Irish, print media and websites as important.

FIGURE 7.3 Perceived Importance of Government Initiatives to Improve the Position of the Irish Language
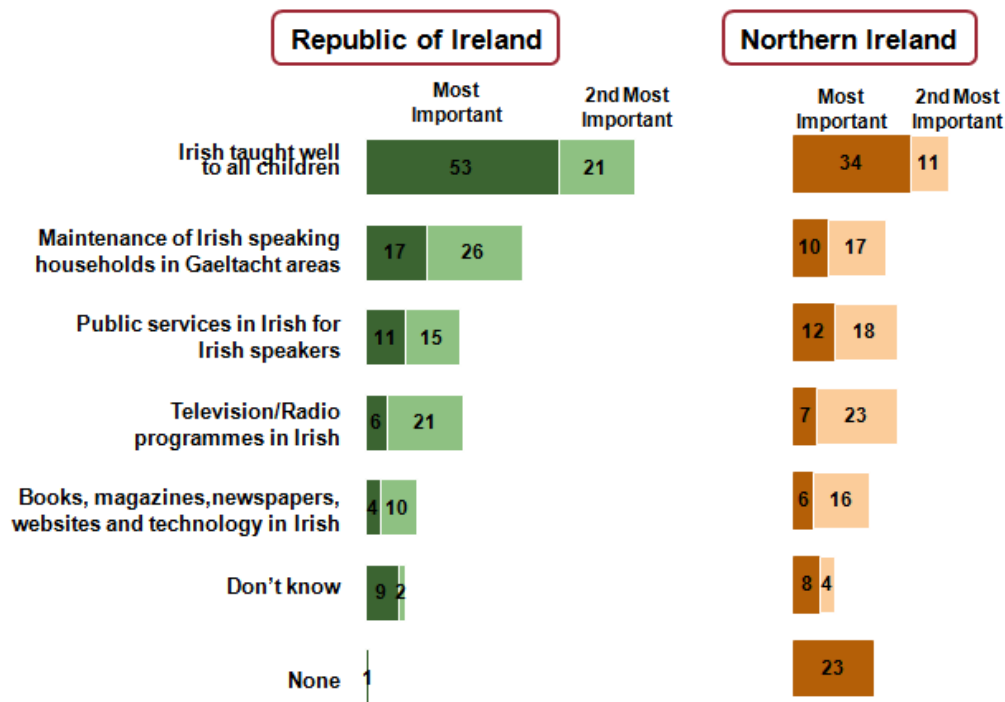
Source: Irish Language Surveys 2001, 2013

7.5   PERCEIVED FUTURE OF THE IRISH LANGUAGE

The *2013 Irish Language Survey* asked respondents to state how important they felt it was that their children grew up with the Irish language and what they considered will happen to the Irish language in future. In the Republic of Ireland over three-in-four parents indicated that they feel it is important their child grows up with the Irish language (78 per cent). While this sentiment is less prevalent in Northern Ireland (with only 28 per cent of parents), it is felt even amongst those indicating no Irish fluency themselves (21 per cent), albeit being higher amongst those with some level of fluency (68 per cent).

Regarding the future of the language, the most desired outcome is that the country should remain bilingual, with English as the principal language (ROI: 43 per cent; NI: 34 per cent). Very few indicated that the Irish language should be disregarded and forgotten (ROI: 1 per cent; NI: 8 per cent).

TABLE 7.3 Importance to Respondent that their Child Grows Up (or Grew Up) Knowing the Irish Language Among those with Children

	Republic of Ireland*		Northern Ireland*	
	Self	Partner	Self	Partner
Very important	40%	29%	8%	8%
Somewhat important	38%	34%	20%	15%
Not important	22%	25%	71%	67%
Not applicable	–	12%	–	10%

Source: *Irish Language Survey 2013.*
Note: * Base 2013: Respondents with children (ROI: 59%; NI: 67%).

TABLE 7.4 Respondents' Single Preferred Option Regarding the Future of the Irish Language

	Republic of Ireland	Northern Ireland
[Jurisdiction] should be bilingual, with <u>English</u> as the principal language.	43%	34%
It should be preserved as an important historical, cultural heritage literature and music, but not as a spoken language.	25%	30%
It should be preserved as a spoken language, but only in the Gaeltacht.	17%	14%
[Jurisdiction] should be bilingual, with <u>Irish</u> as the principal language.	5%	3%
Irish should be the principal language (like English is now).	1%	2%
The Irish language should be disregarded and forgotten.	1%	8%
Don't care	3%	6%
Don't know	5%	3%

Source: *Irish Language Survey 2013.*

7.6 SUMMARY

This section explored current perceptions of the Irish language in terms of overall attitude; Irish language education; government policy and the future of the Irish language. Compared to the 2001 survey there have been some positive developments regarding attitudes to, and use of, the Irish language. The primary factor influencing attitudes to Irish seems to be the home environment: whether the Irish language was spoken in the home and whether the respondents thought their parents wanted them to learn Irish at school. In the Republic, usage and attitudes were found to be mutually reinforcing; positive attitudes were associated with using the language as an adult and attempting to improve their Irish language fluency. Parental attitudes to their child learning Irish at school and having friends who were bringing up their children speaking Irish were positively associated with language attitudes in Northern Ireland.

Chapter 8

Conclusions and Policy Implications

8.1   INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, there has been considerable interest in minority or lesser spoken languages resulting in an increasing number of research studies on strategies to promote minority language maintenance and revival. The definition of minority or lesser-spoken languages is difficult, considering the difference in status of such languages across jurisdictions. Some languages, including Irish, are distinctive in that they have an official status as a national language, despite being spoken by a relatively small proportion of people.

Research on language maintenance and revival of minority languages has focussed on inter-related issues such as language attitudes, language use, practices and language policies (Edwards, 2010; Nettle and Romaine, 2000). The factors that influence language maintenance vary across jurisdictions, reflecting different historical legacies. Patterns of linguistic behaviour are learned in complex social arenas including the home and wider community, the education system, the work place, the media and social networks (Das, 2004). An issue that has been considered of particular importance for language maintenance across jurisdictions is linguistic transmission from one generation to the next (Saarikivi and Marten, 2012).

Over the centuries, the position of the Irish language on the island of Ireland has changed dramatically. Having been spoken by the majority of the population in the past, by the 17th Century it had undergone a considerable decline reflecting the political situation at the time. The Great Famine also contributed to a further fall in the number of Irish speakers (Mac Gréil and Rhatigan, 2009). In time English became the dominant language in Ireland. In the last quarter of the 19th Century the Gaelic Revival endeavoured to promote Irish culture and language. Since the formation of the Republic in 1922, various governmental policies have attempted to revive and maintain the Irish language, mainly through the educational system. The situation in Northern Ireland is particularly complex, reflecting the 'politicising' of the Irish language. Following the Good Friday Agreement and other policies adopted to respect different languages, including Irish, there seems to be a growing formal recognition of the language.

This study focuses on the situation of the Irish language on the island of Ireland and explores people's attitudes towards the language. In doing so, it draws on the *2013 Irish Language Survey* of the adult population in the Republic and Northern Ireland. Additional information is based on the *2001 Irish Language Survey,* Census data and a re-analysis of data from the *Growing Up in Ireland* study and the *Post-Primary Longitudinal Study* in the Republic of Ireland. This chapter starts by exploring the position of the Irish language in the education systems in the Republic and Northern Ireland. The chapter then moves to discuss the importance of family context and wider community in shaping language use and attitudes. The final section presents the policy implications of the study findings.

8.2 IRISH LANGUAGE IN SCHOOLS IN THE REPUBLIC AND NORTHERN IRELAND

The situation of the Irish language today is influenced by the way the language is taught in the education system in both jurisdictions. In the Republic of Ireland Irish is one of the core subjects in the curriculum in primary and post-primary education. There are also a number of Irish-medium pre-schools, primary schools and post-primary schools. Irish-medium schools are increasingly popular and tend to be over-subscribed compared to English-medium and Gaeltacht schools. Not all Gaeltacht schools are Irish-medium: 35 per cent of Gaeltacht post-primary students are receiving their education through the medium of English (see Chapter 2). In the Republic, attitudes towards the Irish language tend to be negative with primary pupils preferring (English) reading and Mathematics to Irish, and post-primary students perceiving it as difficult and the least useful or interesting subject. The situation is somewhat different in Irish-medium primary schools reflecting the way in which positive parental dispositions towards the language are reinforced by the school ethos. Some research evidence points to the positive impact of Irish language immersion with children attending Irish-medium schools having greater self-reported desire to learn, ability in, use of, and opportunity to speak Irish (Murtagh, 2007), but this is likely to reflect the selection of families into these schools. Interestingly, the author found that that the wish to study the language had less to do with intrinsic motivation and tended to have a utilitarian value as proficiency in Irish was seen as enhancing career possibilities. These findings are supported by analysis presented in this report which shows that respondents from the Republic indicated having studied the language to pass exams.

In Northern Ireland the provision of Irish in schools varies between sectors. These school types differ by the religious background of students. The Irish language is provided in maintained Catholic and some integrated schools. Even then, the Irish

language can be offered as an option after other modern European languages such as French, German, Italian or Spanish (McKendry, 2007). In recent years, the Irish-medium sector in Northern Ireland has been growing. At present children in the jurisdiction may enrol in Irish-medium education, including nurseries, primary and post-primary schools. According to the findings of this study, learning Irish in Northern Ireland seems to be driven by intrinsic motivation, with respondents reporting studying language for its own sake.

In both jurisdictions options to speak the Irish language outside school are relatively limited, possibly resulting in students seeing the Irish language as a 'subject', something that many stop using once they leave the education system. In recent years, there have also been cuts in funding for Irish language initiatives.

8.3   PARENTAL ATTITUDES AND LANGUAGE TRANSMISSION AT HOME

The education system has been seen as having limited usefulness in producing bilingual speakers who use Irish regularly in their homes and in the wider community (Murtagh, 2007). It has been argued that in reviving Irish into a community language a disproportionate responsibility is placed upon the education system (Kennedy, 2012). Though the majority of people believe in the importance of Irish for Ireland's identity, a sizeable minority do not see it as important for their own Irish identity (Watson, 2008; McCubbin, 2010). Irish is also seen as less important than other school subjects by English-speaking parents (Harris and Murtagh, 1999). In the same vein, this study has shown that the majority of adults in both the Republic and Northern Ireland believe that science-based subjects are more important for children to learn than Irish. The results of this study have highlighted the importance of home environment in supporting Irish language leaning; in both jurisdictions parental perceived wishes for their children to learn Irish and having Irish spoken in the home had a positive impact on language attitudes and later language use.

8.4   CURRENT SITUATION REGARDING IRISH IN REPUBLIC AND NORTHERN IRELAND AND PERCEIVED FUTURE OF THE LANGUAGE

Census 2011 in the Republic sheds some light on the use of Irish by asking whether the respondent can speak Irish and the frequency of using the language. The figures show that 41 per cent of respondents reported using Irish. Irish language usage as reported by the Census data has its limitations as it draws on self-reported responses and has no information on the respondents' fluency levels (Kennedy, 2012).

At the time of the 2011 Census in the Republic the total population of all Gaeltacht areas was 96,628. In these areas, 69 per cent of the population indicated they could speak Irish with just 24 per cent noting they spoke Irish daily outside the education system. The proportion who spoke Irish in Gaeltacht areas had dropped very slightly from 70 per cent in 2006. The data shows that of all daily Irish speakers who use the language outside the education system just over one-in-three lived in Gaeltacht areas.

According to the results of the 2011 Census in Northern Ireland, 11 per cent of the population have knowledge of Irish. As in the Republic, levels of self-reported fluency cannot be assessed as they are not recorded by the Census. The Census results vary by age and religious background: knowledge of Irish tends to be greater among people between 16-44 years of age and those living in rural areas, and Catholics (1 per cent) were more likely than Protestants (0.5 per cent) to report Irish being the spoken language in their home. Only 4 per cent of the general population in the 2013 survey say that they occasionally use Irish in a social setting. The survey also found that 29 per cent of Catholics and 8 per cent of Protestants would like to learn more about the language.

The latest Census figures in both jurisdictions suggest a small upward growth in the proportion of Irish speakers. It could be argued that this may reflect the result of ongoing efforts at government and local level in language revival and maintenance.

Considering the limitations of Census data regarding the use of the Irish language, more detailed information was sought from adult respondents in the Irish Language Surveys, 2001 and 2013. The 2013 data shows that in the Republic, 57 per cent of adults claim to have some ability in the Irish language. Three per cent of respondents reported having Irish at the level of native speaker's ability (2 per cent in 2001), while 11 per cent reported being able to conduct most conversations in Irish (12 per cent in 2001).

According to the *Irish Language Survey 2013*, 17 per cent of adults in Northern Ireland have some Irish language ability. In 2013 one per cent of the respondents reported having Irish at the level of native speaker's ability (none in 2001). Two per cent of respondents claimed to be able to conduct most conversations in Irish (1 per cent in 2001). The survey data are useful for indicating areas in which the respondents are most likely to experience difficulties. The results show that Irish speakers in Northern Ireland tend to have greater difficulties in pronunciation,

using grammar correctly, and generally expressing themselves compared to respondents in the Republic.

The research to date and figures available on Irish speakers on both sides of the border tell a complex story. Various surveys have shown that the majority of Irish people have positive attitudes towards Irish. The *Irish Language Survey 2013* shows that 35 per cent of adults in the Republic and 23 per cent in Northern Ireland are strongly in favour of the language. Understandably those from Gaeltacht areas (in the Republic) and those who speak Irish have more positive attitudes towards the language. However, the use of the language is not in line with attitudes (Ó Riagáin, 2008). As indicated in research conducted in Wales (Welsh Government, 2013), people may have positive attitudes towards the language even if they do not speak it. This is likely to reflect the importance people attach to the language in relation to national identity and heritage.

While many respondents on the island of Ireland have positive attitudes towards the Irish language, the Irish Survey 2013 figures show that 15 per cent of the adult respondents in the Republic and 33 per cent in Northern Ireland reported having no Irish.

There have been many policy developments to assist the revival of the Irish language in both jurisdictions. The promotion of the Irish language can also be seen in the rise of Irish language print and broadcast media. Despite various governmental policies and initiatives introduced over the years, only a minority speak it proficiently. At the same time, according to the *2013 Irish Language Survey,* one-in-three (31 per cent) in the Republic of Ireland felt that the government does enough compared to one-in-four (24 per cent in Northern Ireland). It could be argued that government policies can only be effective when supported by parental participation in child's education, reinforcing success; the approaches in schools regarding language provision; and community action including setting up various initiatives to promote the language. The Irish language faces the same issues as many other minority languages across Europe. While attitudes are generally positive towards the language (or getting more positive in NI), the increase in the number of people who can speak the language has been slow. As in Scotland the language has only regional importance for some respondents in Ireland. Unlike Ireland, Scottish Gaelic gained more protection as a result of passing the *Gaelic Language Act* in 2005. In addition, Scotland places particular emphasis on the quality of their Gaelic language teachers and recruitment of teachers is the responsibility of Gaelic Teacher Recruitment Officer. The importance of teaching Irish well at school has been highligthted by Irish respondents. The Welsh example shows that the strong position of Welsh in

the education system has protected the numbers of Welsh speakers to a certain extent, although in some areas the numbers of Welsh speakers are falling. The education system also plays a strong role in Catalonia, where all pupils have to learn the language and teachers need to be fluent in Spanish as well as Catalonian. Frisian, an official language in the Fryslân province of the Netherlands, has a strong position, because the country actively promotes bilingualism.

With regard to the future of the Irish language, 43 per cent of respondents in the Republic and 34 per cent in Northern Ireland believe that their jurisdiction should be bilingual with English as a principal language.

8.5   IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY DEVELOPMENT

The policy framework that protects the Irish language on the island of Ireland is linked to broader human rights policies as well as policies specifically designed to promote the Irish language. The rights of Irish speakers are protected in international legislation under the *Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities* and the *European Convention on Human Rights*. In the Republic of Ireland, the 20-year Strategy outlines steps to be taken to ensure maintenance of the language. With regard to the position of the Irish language in Northern Ireland, the British Government has signed the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*, part three of which calls for the maximum efforts to be put into action to promote and protect Irish. Despite the efforts undertaken by respective governments, the number of people who frequently speak the Irish language has remained small, particularly in Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland has faced additional challenges with regard to lacking political consensus on the Irish language. Overall, it could be argued that, while offering protection to the Irish language, the language policies to date have not managed to bring about any significant change regarding the use of the Irish language. This could be the result of generally top-down approaches regarding language development policies (see Chriost, 2000), as well as having very few meaningful opportunities to use the Irish language. Yet, the results of this study have shown that attitudes towards the language on both sides of the border are positive.

This study shows that positive attitudes in the Republic of Ireland have not translated into a significant increase in Irish speakers outside Gaeltacht areas. In addition, inside the Gaeltacht areas the number of people who use the language on a daily basis is falling, as seen in the recent DES report (Department of Education, 2015). The policy implications can be grouped into three broad areas: the family, the education system, and the broader community. Attitudes are

shaped, first and foremost, by family experiences. The results of this study show that the language environment in the home, and parental wishes for their children to acquire Irish at school, have a significant impact on future language use and attitudes. Children who grow up in families where the language is used are more likely to continue using the Irish language after they leave the education system. Considering that not all parents can speak the language, initiatives including support on how to help their children with Irish language homework could prove helpful. In addition, parents-for-parents initiatives set up within communities could bring together parents who wish to bring their children up learning Irish. Any existing initiatives assisting parents who wish to bring up their children as bilingual could be made more visible and available across the jurisdictions. General awareness of the role of the home environment in shaping children's language attitudes may motivate parents to seek out opportunities for their children to use the language outside the school environment. What informs parental choice and what parents perceive as barriers to bringing up their child bilingually warrant further research, especially in relation to motivations and practices regarding Irish-medium schools in both jurisdictions.

Attitudes towards Irish can also be shaped at school level. The results from primary and post-primary schools show that in English-medium schools, Irish is not considered as interesting or useful as some other subjects. Change in students' attitudes towards the language across their educational career and the main factors impacting on this change would warrant a longitudinal study. In order to help the students see Irish language not just as 'a subject', possibly one additional subject could be taught through the medium of Irish, as suggested in the 20-year *Strategy for the Irish Language*. This approach is successfully used in Spain in teaching English as a foreign language. In addition, the provision of post-school courses could be useful for those wishing to continue learning Irish. For example, students could avail of the already existing European Certificate in Languages (see www.teg.ie).

International research indicates that for a revival and maintenance of the language, there needs to be opportunities to use the language in a wider community. While there are now increasing opportunities to engage with Irish language print and broadcast media, the language could be used as a means of communication more broadly. Irish-medium interest groups and educational courses (including those online; possibly cross-border programmes) could offer additional opportunities for people to practice the language. There have been some developments in the use of Irish in social media, including the development of the Irish strand of the Duolingo app. Various leisure activities where people with different levels of Irish language fluency can meet could be utilised for the

development of Irish language skills. As cost may be one of the barriers to attending language classes, grants could be made available for local initiatives to run free courses.

This report has looked at the use of, and attitudes towards, the Irish language on the island of Ireland. Despite socio-political differences between the Republic and Northern Ireland, the position of the Irish language continues to be on the policy agenda in both jurisdictions. The report shows a disconnection between language attitudes and language use in both jurisdictions, but to a more marked degree in Northern Ireland. This raises challenges for policy regarding adopting measures for Irish language maintenance. State policies can only be effective when supported by families, the education system and wider communities. The biggest challenge remains the provision of opportunities to use the Irish language in social contexts. Further studies could focus on the role of Irish language communities in the language policy development and the exploration of the availability of opportunities for people of all ages to use the Irish language.

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Appendix 1

Regression Analysis

Table A.1   Has Some Irish Language Ability – ROI

	B	S.E.	Sig.	Exp(B)
Demographic characteristics				
Female Ref: male	-.033	.157	.834	.968
Married/ cohabiting Ref: single	.290	.179	.104	1.337
Have kids Ref: no kids	.175	.181	.334	1.191
Education				
Secondary education	.419*	.186	.024	1.521
Post-secondary education	.096	.092	.294	1.101
Tertiary education	.717<	.264	.007	2.047
Ref: Primary education				
Age				
Less than 24 years of age	1.172*	.396	.003	3.228
betw2544	-.074	.224	.741	.929
betw4564	-.065	.221	.767	.937
betw6574	-.280	.262	.285	.756
Ref: 75 years of age +				
Born outside Ireland Ref: born in Ireland	-2.986***	.338	.000	.051
Urban Ref: rural	-.610***	.157	.000	.543
Catholic	1.110***	.193	.000	3.033
Family and social circle's disposition towards Irish				
Irish spoken at home Ref: Irish not spoken at home	.680***	.169	.000	1.973
Parent wanted them to learn Irish at school Ref: parents had no interest	1.167***	.164	.000	3.212
Mother fluent Irish speaker Ref: mother modest or non-speaker	.862*	.433	.047	2.367
Knows some other languages Ref: does not know other languages	1.198***	.174	.000	3.314
Have friends bringing children up with Irish Ref: no such friends	-.281*	.223	.207	.755
Have friends who use Irish Ref: no such friends	.753**	.234	.001	2.124
Constant	-2.055	.298	.000	.128
Nagelkere R=.528				

Notes: *signifies < 0.05; **signifies <0.01; ***signifies <0.001; < signifies < 0.10.

Table A.2   Positive Attitudes Towards the Irish Language: ROI

	B	S.E.	Sig.	Exp(B)
Demographic characteristics				
Female Ref: male	.148	.145	.308	1.159
Married/ cohabiting Ref: single	.120	.165	.466	1.128
Have kids Ref: no kids	-.178	.166	.284	.837
Education				
Secondary education	.151	.175	.389	1.163
Post-secondary education	-.002	.084	.981	.998
Tertiary education	.534*	.235	.023	1.706
Ref: Primary education				
Age				
Less than 24 years of age	-.355	.325	.274	.701
betw2544	-.179	.206	.386	.836
betw4564	-.055	.210	.793	.946
betw6574	-.471	.255	.065	.625
Ref: 75 years of age +				
Born outside Ireland Ref: born in Ireland	-.526	.223	.018	.591
Urban Ref: rural	-.492**	.146	.001	.612
Catholic	.397	.167	.018	1.487
Family and social circle's disposition towards Irish				
Irish spoken at home Ref: Irish not spoken at home	-.043	.172	.805	.958
Parent wanted them to learn Irish at school Ref: parents had no interest	.612***	.167	.000	1.845
Mother fluent Irish speaker Ref: mother modest or non-speaker	.537	.492	.275	1.710
Knows some other languages Ref: does not know other languages	.047	.164	.776	1.048
Have friends bringing children up with Irish Ref: no such friends	.652**	.212	.002	1.919
Have friends who use Irish Ref: no such friends	.303	.235	.197	1.354
Uses Irish language	1.398***	.230	.000	4.046
Has tried to improve fluency in Irish	1.365***	.362	.000	3.916
Constant	-.268	.264	.310	.765
Nagelkere R=.347				

*Notes: *signifies < 0.05; **signifies <0.01; ***signifies <0.001; < signifies < 0.10.*

Table A.3 Has Some Irish Language Ability – NI, Catholic Respondents Only

	B	S.E.	Sig.	Exp(B)
Demographic characteristics				
Female Ref: male	.106	.252	.675	1.112
Married/ cohabiting Ref: single	.485	.285	.088	1.625
Have kids Ref: no kids	-.179	.309	.562	.836
Education				
Secondary education	.494	.378	.191	1.639
Tertiary education	1.186**	.404	.003	3.275
Ref: no qualifications				
Age				
Less than 24 years of age	-.056	.651	.931	.945
betw2544	-.422	.504	.402	.656
betw4564	-.295	.480	.538	.744
betw6574	-.386	.519	.457	.680
Ref: 75 years of age +				
Born outside Ireland Ref: born in Ireland	-1.973	.797	.013	.139
Urban Ref: rural	.289	.263	.271	1.336
Family and social circle's disposition towards Irish				
Irish spoken at home Ref: Irish not spoken at home	.984***	.266	.000	2.675
Parent wanted them to learn Irish at school Ref: parents had no interest	1.311***	.263	.000	3.709
Mother fluent Irish speaker Ref: mother modest or non-speaker	1.262	.641	.049	3.534
Knows some other languages Ref: does not know other languages	.264	.294	.370	1.302
Have friends bringing children up with Irish Ref: no such friends	-.078	.310	.801	.925
Have friends who use Irish Ref: no such friends	.140	.314	.657	1.150
Constant	-2.321	.538	.000	.098
Nagelkere R=.341				

Notes: *signifies < 0.05; **signifies <0.01; ***signifies <0.001; < signifies < 0.10.

Table A.4 Positive Attitudes Towards the Irish Language: NI, Catholic Respondents Only

	B	S.E.	Sig.	Exp(B)
Demographic characteristics				
Female Ref: male	-.330	.287	.251	.719
Married/ cohabiting Ref: single	-.288	.312	.356	.750
Have kids Ref: no kids	.432	.335	.197	1.541
Education				
Secondary education	-.757	.392	.054	.469
Tertiary education	-.584	.456	.200	.558
Ref: no qualifications				
Age				
Less than 24 years of age	-.237	.718	.741	.789
betw2544	-.348	.548	.525	.706
betw4564	.062	.515	.905	1.064
betw6574	.068	.546	.901	1.070
Ref: 75 years of age +				
Born outside Ireland Ref: born in Ireland	-1.104	.474	.020	.331
Urban Ref: rural	-.326	.296	.271	.722
Family and social circle's disposition towards Irish				
Irish spoken at home Ref: Irish not spoken at home	1.004	.407	.014	2.730
Parent wanted them to learn Irish at school Ref: parents had no interest	1.290**	.414	.002	3.633
Mother fluent Irish speaker Ref: mother modest or non-speaker	-1.095	.783	.162	.335
Knows some other languages Ref: does not know other languages	.480	.331	.146	1.617
Have friends bringing children up with Irish Ref: no such friends	.870	.358	.015	2.387
Have friends who use Irish Ref: no such friends	.438	.372	.239	1.550
Uses Irish language	.369	.504	.464	1.446
Has tried to improve fluency in Irish	1.573	.675	.020	4.823
Constant	.714	.547	.191	2.043
Nagelkere R=.336				
	B	S.E.	Sig.	Exp(B)

Notes: *signifies < 0.05; **signifies <0.01; ***signifies <0.001; < signifies < 0.10.

Foras na Gaeilge

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