



**OLLSCOIL NA hÉIREANN MÁ NUAD  
MAYNOOTH UNIVERSITY**

**THE BILINGUAL EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE:  
THE VIEWS OF GRADUATES OF IRISH-MEDIUM  
POST-PRIMARY EDUCATION**

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Maynooth University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for  
the degree of Master of Education.**

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## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that this dissertation, which I now submit to Maynooth University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education is entirely my own work; that I have exercised reasonable care to ensure that the work is original and does not to the best of my knowledge breach any law of copyright, and has not been taken from the work of others save to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

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## **Abstract**

This research examines an area that has not had much attention in the research literature, namely, the attitudes of past-pupils of Irish-medium education towards their educational experience, towards the Irish language. It examines the relationship between these attitudes and their use of the language now. The study aims to ascertain whether students feel their Irish-medium education has been of benefit to them, and if so how, be it socially, culturally, economically or academically. It also examines their attitudes towards the Irish language, and explores the relationship between attitudes and practice by asking whether they still speak the language. The research data is then analysed and compared to previous studies on the Irish language, bilingualism, immersion education and other minority languages.

## **Acknowledgements**

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# **Introduction**

## **1.1 Purpose of Study**

This research examines an area that has not had much attention in the research literature, namely, the attitudes of past-pupils of Irish-medium education towards their educational experience, towards the Irish language. It examines the relationship between these attitudes and their use of the language now. The study aims to ascertain whether students feel their Irish-medium education has been of benefit to them, and if so how, be it socially, culturally, economically or academically. It also examines their attitudes towards the Irish language, and explores the relationship between attitudes and practice by asking whether they still speak the language.

From a professional standpoint, this topic is of huge interest to me as I have been teaching in an Irish-medium post-primary school for sixteen years. I was eager to find out whether and how students who had experienced their education through the medium of Irish felt that this had impacted on their life experiences, and to understand the kind of relationship past pupils of Gaelscoileanna now have to the language one way or another.

Many thousands of students in Ireland have had a bilingual education experience in Gaelscoileanna, some at primary level, others at both primary and post-primary level. At present there are 271 primary schools in the Republic of Ireland using Irish as the medium of instruction, however at post-primary level there are only 66 such schools. Studies have been carried out analysing this type of educational experience,, for example, Mas-Moury Mack (2015) examined the ‘Language attitudes of parents in Irish-medium primary schools’, Ivan Kennedy’s Ph.D (2012) examined ‘Irish Medium Education: Cognitive Skills, Linguistic Skills, and Attitudes towards Irish’ and Lelia Murtagh’s work (2003, 2007, 2009) has examined multiple aspects of learning Irish, from motivation to learning the language, to language use amongst second level students, to their achievement in Irish as a subject. Aine Ni Dhonnabháin’s Ph.D (2014) examined bilingualism and identity

and how Irish teenagers related to the language in this respect. I will return to these in my literature review.

In preparing to carry out this research, the topics of immersion education, bilingualism, language 'elitism', attitudes and attitudes towards language were examined. A similar study has been carried out in Scotland in relation to past-pupils of Gaelic-medium education and their attitudes towards the language<sup>1</sup> and the findings from that study will be compared with this research.

This study is interested in the attitudes of past-pupils to their Irish-medium education experience. Little research has specifically examined this aspect of the educational experience, although Lelia Murtagh's (2007) investigation into the attitudes of post-primary students' towards learning the Irish language and their use of the language found that

immersion education is successful not only in producing high levels of competence in Irish, and promoting positive attitudes and interest towards learning it, but also in introducing students to Irish language-speaking networks that facilitate maintenance and use of Irish after they leave school. In contrast, the opportunity for mainstream school students to integrate into Irish language speaking networks outside of school is generally limited to occasional courses in, or trips to, the Gaeltacht during school holidays.<sup>2</sup>

By looking at current usage of the language and by discussing the relationship of ex-students of Irish medium schools to the Irish language, the study aims to better understand the impact of this form of education, not only in developing language competence, but in terms of the broader educational and life experience.

## **1.2 Approach**

In order to understand the context of, and motivation for, the growth of Irish medium education I chose to examine the attitudes of past pupils of second level

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<sup>1</sup> Dunmore, Stuart 'Bilingual life after school? Language use, ideologies and attitudes among Gaelic-medium educated adults' (PhD. Thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2014)

<sup>2</sup> Murtagh, Lelia "Out-of-school use of Irish, motivation to learn the language and proficiency in immersion and subject-only post-primary programmes". *International Journal of Bilingualism and Bilingual Education*, (2007)10 (4): 428-453. p.450



Irish medium schools towards their educational experience. My rationale for taking this approach was based on the fact these students had been through the education system entirely through the medium of Irish until reaching third level, therefore their attitudes towards their Irish-medium education would have had many years to develop.

The main areas I chose to focus on were: whether respondents believed their Irish-medium educational experience was a positive one or not; whether they would recommend it to others, what the standard of teaching was; whether they found it easy to transition to studying through the medium of English at third level; and finally their current use of and relationship to the language. I also asked whether respondents believed their experience of learning through Irish had enabled them to learn additional languages more easily, whether they believed being able to speak the Irish language was an important part of their identity and whether they viewed their Irish-medium educational experience as being of benefit to them in their lives.

### **1.3 The Irish language in Ireland: A brief history.**

In order to appreciate the current context and use of the Irish language it is necessary to examine its history as this provides important information on the changes that occurred over time and why they occurred. The Irish language has been in existence for many years. Many scholars believe it existed over 2,500 years ago, with widespread use at the beginning of the Christian era. Irish, being a Celtic language, belongs to the same group as Scots Gaelic and Manx. Naturally, the language has changed over the years, for example, the so-called 'Middle Irish' period from 900 – 1200 saw some words from Scandinavian being used, like 'pingin' (penny) and 'margadh' (market) but it did not have a huge impact on the syntax of the language.

Towards the end of the eleventh century the Anglo-Norman conquest started a period of multilingualism in Ireland, with the introduction of French and English - but Irish remained strong and some of the Normans began to speak it too. By the start of the sixteenth century most of Ireland was speaking Irish once again, however this was short-lived, as the Tudor and Stuart conquests and plantations, the Cromwellian settlements and the enactment of the Penal Laws (1695) had the

cumulative effect of eliminating the Irish-speaking ruling classes and destroying their cultural institutions (Killeen, 2006). English became the language of social mobility because those given settlements during the plantations were English-speaking and they were given positions of power and/or administration. In this way the language became synonymous with employment and trade and spread further throughout the countryside. Parents, as Hindley comments, were keenly aware of the benefits of using the English language, ‘although there were Irish speakers nearly everywhere in 1800...in almost all the Leinster and Ulster counties the language was no longer in use among the children of the great majority of families’.

<sup>3</sup> It is clear that parents no longer viewed Irish as a necessary tool with which to equip their children to ensure prosperity, instead the language was sent into decline. The language was dealt a further blow with the Act of Union in 1801 which sought to further strengthen the colonial grip on the country. Although Irish people were now represented in parliament in Britain, their political representatives used the English language.

In 1831 the British Crown enacted the Education Act. This established a national education system for Ireland – but education was to be offered through the medium of English only (Raftery & Fischer, 2014). The so-called ‘bata scoir’ or ‘tally stick’ was introduced into classrooms. ‘Children attending school had to wear a stick on a piece of string around their necks. Each time they used Irish a notch was cut into the stick. At the end of the day, they would be punished according to how many notches they had on their stick.’<sup>4</sup> As a consequence, the Irish language was in effect being eliminated through the education system, as English – once again - became the language associated with education and upward social mobility.

That is not to say there was no education on offer through the medium of Irish, there was, due to the continued existence of illegal ‘hedge schools’ or *scoileanna scairte*. These schools had been in existence since the 1600’s when ‘local educated men began an oral tradition of teaching the community.’<sup>5</sup> Although called ‘hedge

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<sup>3</sup> Hindley, S. *The death of the Irish language: a qualified obituary* (London: Routledge, 1990) p.13

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.askaboutireland.ie/learning-zone/primary-students/looking-at-places/meath/fr.-eugene-ogrowney/the-irish-language-in-the-1/>

<sup>5</sup> [www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com)

schools' they were not confined to the outdoors, with classes often taking place in barns or houses. Tuition was usually offered in the so-called 'three R's' but occasionally Latin and history were taught also. However, the enactment of the Education Act and the establishment of the national school system - whose new schools would be largely under the control of the Catholic clergy – meant that hedge schools went into decline as the clergy of the time preferred these new schools and made it known to their congregations. In this way the official, state-recognised, system of education led to a growing use of English among the younger population.

According to the census of 1841, the population of Ireland was close to eight million, of which 2.5 million were L1 (first language) speakers of Irish (de Fréine, 1978). The Great Famine, 1845 – 1849, caused the deaths of approximately one million people and led to the forced emigration of another one and a half million. The areas most impacted were along the west coast of Ireland, those areas where the Irish language was the main language. Learning the English language became a necessity for survival, social mobility and indeed, for emigration - with English being the main language spoken in America at the time, and of course in Britain. English was also necessary for those who remained at home as land owners and those who sublet land from them to the poorer classes all spoke English. It became a necessity to know English so as to communicate with those landowners and those likely to offer employment.

Data from the 1851 census on the number of Irish speakers in the 26 counties of the Republic of Ireland (as it is now known) reveals that only 1.49 million of the 5.11 million population spoke Irish.<sup>6</sup> This table was obtained from the CSO website:

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<sup>6</sup> Punch, Aidan, 'Census Data on the Irish Language', in *A New View of the Irish Language*, ed. Nic Phaidin & O Cearnaigh (Cois Life, 2008) p.43 - 54

TÁBLE 1:—LÍON NA NGAEDHILGEOIRÍ AGUS LÍON NA NDAOINE GAN GAEDHILG I NCACH CÚIGE DE SHAORSTÁT ÉIREANN LE LINN GACH MÓRÁIRIMH Ó 1851 GO 1926.

TABLE 1.—NUMBER OF IRISH SPEAKERS AND NON-IRISH SPEAKERS IN EACH PROVINCE OF SAORSTAT ÉIREANN AT EACH CENSUS FROM 1851 TO 1926.

BLIAIN Year	SAORSTÁT ÉIREANN		LAIGHIN LEINSTER		MUMHA MUNSTER		CONNACHTA CONNACHT		ULAIDH (3 Contaeithe) ULSTER (3 Counties)	
	Irish Speakers	Non-Irish Speakers	Irish Speakers	Non-Irish Speakers	Irish Speakers	Non-Irish Speakers	Irish Speakers	Non-Irish Speakers	Irish Speakers	Non-Irish Speakers
1851 Gaedhilgeoirí ... Daoine gan Gaedhilg	1,485,050 —	— 3,626,507	59,176 —	— 1,613,562	815,785 —	— 1,041,951	512,849 —	— 497,182	97,240 —	— 473,812
1861 Gaedhilgeoirí ... Daoine gan Gaedhilg	1,077,087 —	— 3,325,024	35,704 —	— 1,421,931	545,531 —	— 968,027	409,482 —	— 503,653	86,370 —	— 431,413
1871 Gaedhilgeoirí ... Daoine gan Gaedhilg	804,547 —	— 3,248,040	16,247 —	— 1,323,204	386,494 —	— 1,006,991	330,211 —	— 516,002	71,595 —	— 402,443
1881 Gaedhilgeoirí ... Daoine gan Gaedhilg	924,781 —	— 2,945,239	27,452 —	— 1,251,537	445,766 —	— 885,349	306,191 —	— 455,466	85,372 —	— 352,887
1891 Gaedhilgeoirí ... Daoine gan Gaedhilg	664,387 —	— 2,804,307	13,677 —	— 1,174,083	307,633 —	— 864,769	274,783 —	— 449,991	68,294 —	— 315,464
1901 Gaedhilgeoirí ... Daoine gan Gaedhilg	619,710 —	— 2,602,113	26,436 —	— 1,126,393	276,268 —	— 799,920	245,580 —	— 401,352	71,426 —	— 274,448
1911 Gaedhilgeoirí ... Daoine gan Gaedhilg	553,717 —	— 2,585,971	40,225 —	— 1,121,819	228,694 —	— 806,801	217,087 —	— 393,897	67,711 —	— 263,454
1926 Gaedhilgeoirí ... Daoine gan Gaedhilg	543,511 —	— 2,428,481	101,474 —	— 1,047,618	198,221 —	— 771,681	175,209 —	— 377,698	68,607 —	— 231,484

By 1881 the total number of Irish speakers had dropped to 920,000 of the 3.87million population. By 1911 only 550,000 Irish speakers remained of the 3.14 million population. (CSO, 2008a).

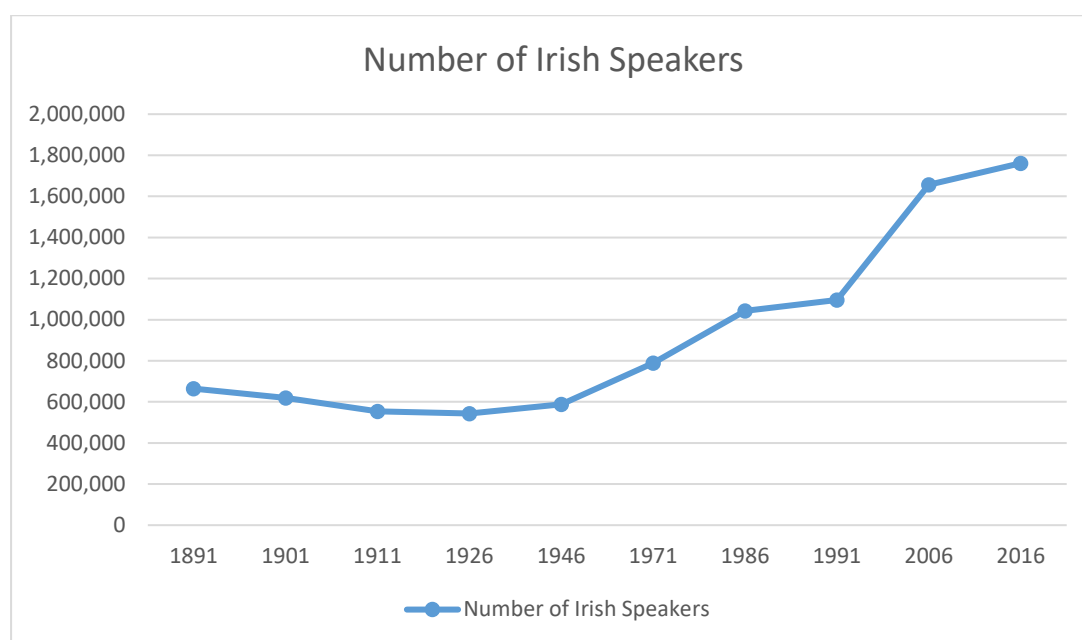
This decline in the use of the Irish language did not go unnoticed. In 1893 the Gaelic League was established with the explicit intention of preserving and promoting the Irish language through the provision of Irish language classes and summer courses.

In 1900, the Education Board consented to the Irish language being taught as an optional subject in primary schools. In 1904 bilingual programmes were introduced to Irish-speaking areas, despite the ‘bitterness of several Board members against the Irish language’, they decided ‘Irish could be used as a medium of instruction in Gaeltacht areas ‘as an aid to the elucidation of English’.’<sup>7</sup>

The Irish language was finally afforded official status (along with English) with the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922. Since then census figures have revealed a gradual and substantial increase in the numbers answering ‘Yes’ to the question ‘Can you speak Irish?’. The table below reveals this increase (based on

<sup>7</sup> Coolahan, J. *Irish Education History and Structure* (Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, 1981) p.21

CSO figures from cso.ie)



In January 1<sup>st</sup> 2007, the Irish language was given recognition as an official working language of the European Union, meaning all key EU legislation will be translated into Irish and council meetings may now have Irish spoken at them.

#### 1.4 The Irish Language in Education

As previously mentioned, the Irish language was at best tolerated by the Board of Education at the turn of the twentieth century. However, the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922 saw the new government announce its policy on Irish in education. The ultimate goal was to have Irish replace English as the medium of instruction. There were two major difficulties to this, as O’Riagain observes, ‘neither the children nor the teachers knew enough Irish to make this an immediate possibility.’<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, from 17 March 1922, ‘Irish was made an obligatory subject for at least one hour per day in all standards in all national schools’<sup>9</sup>, with infant classes being taught entirely through Irish and senior classes being taught history, geography, drill and singing through Irish. 1928 saw 1,240 infant classes being taught through the medium of Irish, 3,570 taught bilingually and 373 used the English language as the sole medium of instruction<sup>10</sup>.

Post-primary level Irish became a compulsory subject for the Intermediate

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<sup>8</sup> O Riagain, *Language Policy and Social Reproduction* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1997) p. 15

<sup>9</sup> Coolahan, *ibid.* p.40

<sup>10</sup> Kelly, *Compulsory Irish* (Irish Academic Press, Dublin, 2002) p 44

Certificate from 1928 onwards and for the Leaving Certificate from 1934. Extra marks were awarded in the terminal examinations for answering in Irish (apart from the English language paper naturally). Learning the language was incentivised and further so by virtue of the requirement of the Civil Service that all prospective employees be qualified in the language. Another initiative aimed at training teachers to teach in Irish was launched with the establishment of preparatory colleges where Irish was used as the medium of instruction. As a consequence, between the years of 1920 and 1930 the number of teachers qualified in Irish trebled (O Buachalla).

However, change began to occur with the relaxation of the rule on the use of the language in infant classes in 1948 by Minister Mulcahy.<sup>11</sup> Followed by Minister Hillery's circular concerning the use of the language as a medium of instruction in all classrooms in 1960, it was finally acknowledged that the emphasis on written Irish and grammatical rules was not conducive to increasing the amount of Irish being spoken. The circular ended the use of Irish as a medium of instruction in 'all but a minority of national schools'<sup>12</sup> which were located in Gaeltacht areas. Instead the emphasis in the Irish language curriculum was to be placed on improving the oral proficiency of teachers and students. Teachers would now be assessed on their oral competency, as would the students.

Another policy change that impacted on the position of the Irish language within the education system occurred in 1973 when Irish was removed as a compulsory subject for the award of the public examination certificates, henceforth an examination candidate did not fail their overall exam if they happened to fail the Irish subject exam. Exemption from taking the Irish exam was permitted to students who had received most of their primary level education outside the state or have a learning disability. More recently the Irish language has been the subject of heated public debate regarding its compulsory status on primary and post-primary curricula, with some claiming it is time to make it an optional subject.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> O Buachalla, *Education Policy in Twentieth Century Ireland* (Wolfhound Press, Dublin 1988) p.352

<sup>12</sup> Kelly, *Compulsory Irish* (Irish Academic Press, Dublin, 2002) p 58

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/education/end-compulsory-irish-says-fg-as-14000-drop-subject-118897.html>

### 1.5 Irish Medium Education: A Brief History

Schools were not permitted to use Irish as the language of instruction until 1904. Since that time there have been a number of significant changes in policy in respect of the Irish language. Initially schools using Irish as the medium of instruction were only established in Gaeltacht (Irish-speaking) areas. But in 1917, Louise Gavan Duffy established the first all-Irish school in Dublin, Scoil Bhríde, which was a private school for boys and girls, subsequently taken over by the Department of Education in 1926.

By 1921-22 a total of 239 Irish-medium primary schools were operating (Kelly, 2002, pp. 6-7). This figure increased to a peak of 643 in 1940 as the chart below (Figure 2) shows. The number of primary schools teaching through the medium of Irish went into decline after this period, reaching a low of 169 by 1980. The reasons for such decline are varied. For example, in the 1950s there was mass emigration and poverty and this saw attitudes towards the Irish language change, as competence in the language was not a necessity to ensure financial security when abroad. Nor was the way the language was being used in education seen as favourable, as ‘teachers’ competence for employment was based almost entirely on their ability to teach Irish, with little regard given to how well they could teach other subjects.’<sup>14</sup> The 1960s saw dramatic changes in education policy with the production of the *Investment in Education* report (1965) This report contained a number of recommendations for the Irish education system, not least of which was making second level education accessible to all, with the removal of fees, the provision of free school transport and the establishment of community and comprehensive schools. Due to this, the demands on the state education system grew as the numbers availing of second level education increased. The number of Irish medium schools began to decline as education policy moved away from the promotion of bilingual education to promoting the Irish language as a stand-alone subject. As seen in figure 2, more than half of Irish medium primary schools were lost between 1960 and 1971. As O Ceallaigh notes, ‘the number of schools that were teaching through Irish fell drastically in the 1960s to the point there were only 11 primary schools and 5

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<sup>14</sup> Kavanagh, *A Mixed Methods Investigation of Parental Involvement in Irish Immersion Primary Education: Integrating Multiple Perspectives* (ph.D University College Dublin, 2013)

post-primary schools teaching through the medium of Irish outside of the Irish-speaking regions at the beginning of the 1970s.’<sup>15</sup>

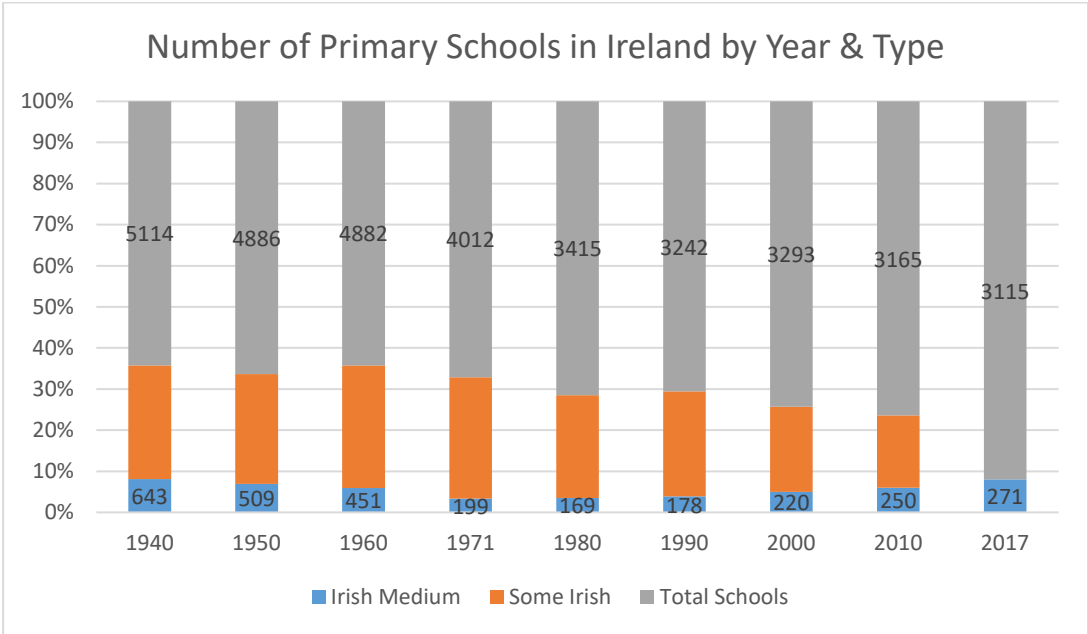


Figure 2

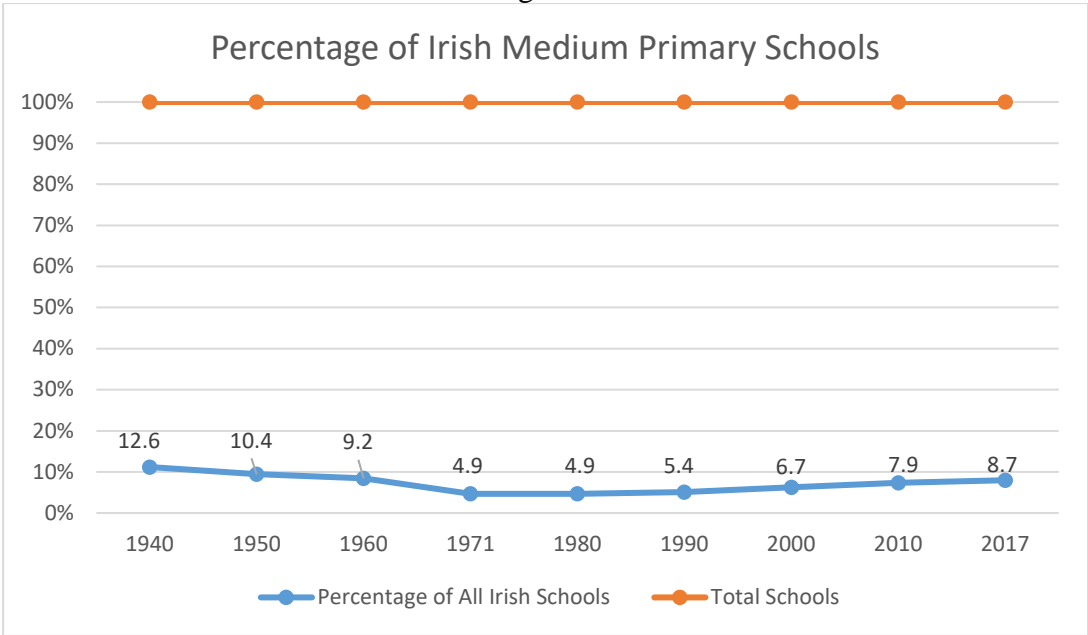


Figure 3

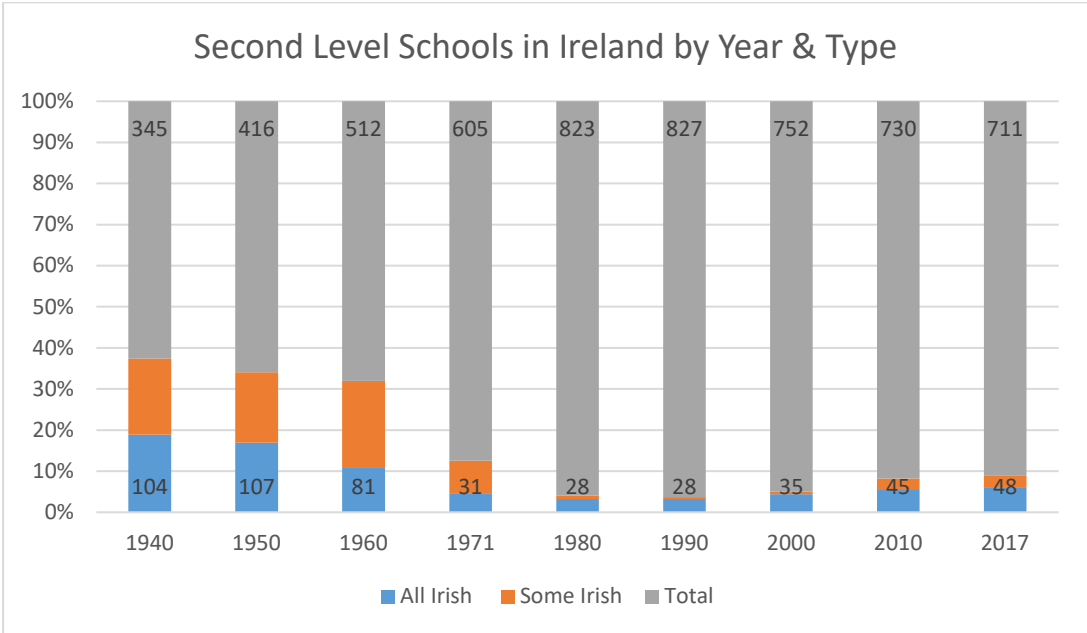
A halt was brought to the rapid decline in the number of Irish medium schools when a movement led by parents and other interested groups actively lobbied the government to provide the opportunity for children to attend Irish medium schools in the 1970s. Gaelscoileanna Teo – a voluntary organisation - was established in 1973 to support the development of Irish-medium schools at primary and post

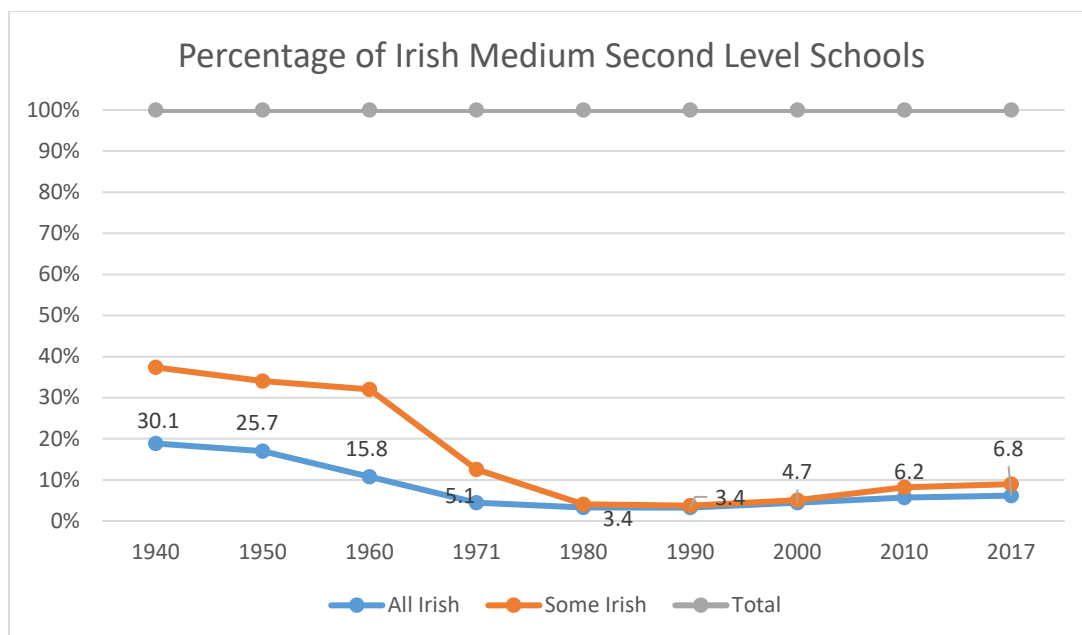
<sup>15</sup> O Ceallaigh & Ni Dhonnabhain, “Reawakening the Irish Language through the Irish Education System: Challenges and Priorities” *International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education*, (2015) 8(2), 179-198. p.183



primary level. Between 1980 and 1990, 46 Irish-medium primary schools were established outside Gaeltacht (Irish speaking) areas. Between 1990 and 2000 this number rose to 48. Since then the number of Irish medium schools (outside of Gaeltacht areas) at primary level has increased year on year; this upward trend is seen at post-primary level also.

At post-primary level the figures tell a similar story, with a large proportion of schools using Irish as the medium of instruction for all (or some subjects) in 1940. With the huge increase in the number of and type of school at second level from the 1960s the percentage of Irish medium schools dropped to a low of 3.4% in 1980 but has since been increasing year on year to a current rate of 6.8% (2017).





In 2017, there are now 72 Irish medium schools/*aonads* (Irish-Medium unit within English medium school) at second level and 305 schools at primary level. These figures represent Irish-medium schools both inside and outside the Gaeltacht, with a larger proportion of Irish-medium schools now being located outside the Gaeltacht.

It is interesting to note the lack of provision of post-primary Irish-medium schools; despite there being a primary level Irish medium school in every one of the 26 counties, this is not the case at post-primary level where only 20 counties of 26 have Irish medium post primary schools or *aonads*. The largest proportion of Irish medium post primary schools outside Gaeltacht areas is found in Dublin, with ten schools currently in existence and plans for further expansion were announced by Minister Bruton in November 2016 when an Aonad Lán-Gaeilge was included in the new secondary school for Carpenterstown/Castleknock.<sup>16</sup>

### 1.6 Irish Medium Students' Use of the Irish Language

Previous studies by Murtagh (2007), Kennedy (2012) and Fleming and Debski (2007) have examined the use of the Irish language outside the classroom by Irish-Medium students at primary level. These studies found that students tend to revert to the majority language, English, once outside the classroom. It was found that students associate the L2 (Irish) with school, both during lessons and at break time,

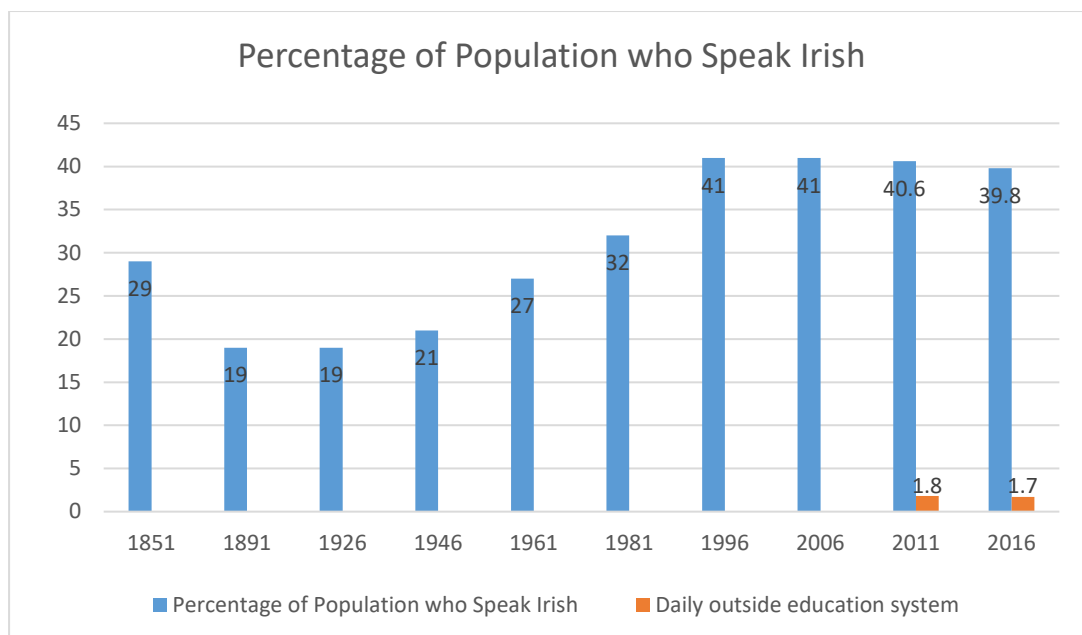
<sup>16</sup> <http://www.erst.ie/news-events/news-article/a-new-edmund-rice-schools-trust-post-primary-school-to-open-in-september-20>

however their use of the language outside school was very infrequent. The current study examines whether this is the case for Irish-Medium students at post-primary level.

### **1.7 Previous Census Data - Irish Speakers**

Given this context, we may learn whether or not changes in the education system with regard to the use of the Irish language and the provision of Irish medium education have had an impact on census figures in relation to respondents stating they could speak Irish, particularly in recent years given the growth of the Irish medium sector. However this has its limitations as an indicator prior to 1996, as census data did not distinguish when, and how often, a person speaks Irish. Since that year, a new question was introduced by the CSO (Central Statistics Office) that sought to record both a person's ability to speak the Irish language and frequency of speaking Irish. This marked a change from previous censuses in which respondents were simply asked to write 'Irish only', 'Irish and English', 'Read but cannot speak Irish' or leave blank. In 2006 further categories were added as to whether the language was spoken within the education system so as to identify those who spoke the language only within the education system from those who spoke the language at home - or indeed those who spoke the language within the home *and* within the education system.

Irish language usage as reported in the majority of censuses conducted since 1851 is difficult to analyse because the questions sought solely to capture a subjective measure of language proficiency (which in all likelihood contained an attitudinal or evaluative element) and no clear description of what an "Irish speaker" is was provided. So, within the census, an "Irish speaker" could be a beginner or a fluent speaker, thus, as Carnie (1995) notes, data purporting proficient Irish speakers are most likely exaggerated. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to have an overview of the use of the Irish language from the first census to the latest one in 2016 as the more recent censuses provide an indication of frequency of use and location.



### 1.8 Previous studies in attitudes towards the Irish language

The earliest survey to examine public attitudes towards the Irish language was undertaken by C.I.L.A.R. (Committee on Irish Language Attitudes Research) in 1973. This was followed by surveys conducted by the newly established *Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann* in 1983 and 1993. The data from these initial surveys was reviewed by O Riagain who found that ‘a majority of the public supports policies to maintain Irish in the Gaeltacht, to provide Irish-language services on the national television channels, to use Irish on public notices etc., to provide state services in Irish, to employ public officials who could speak Irish, and to support the voluntary Irish-language organisations. In all of these matters, there was an increase in public support between 1973 and 1993.’<sup>17</sup> It is clear that the Irish public held the Irish language in high regard as they were prepared to support government policies in relation to making the language more visible, for example on television and public notices etc. They also supported policies to maintain the language in Irish speaking areas however it appears that the public was not questioned whether they would support a policy of language revival as opposed to language maintenance. Had this been the case a clearer public attitude towards the *use* of the language as opposed to the language itself would have been seen.

<sup>17</sup> O Riagain, “Irish-language Policy 1922 – 2007: Balancing Maintenance and Revival”, in *A New View of the Irish Language*, ed. Nic Phaidin and O Cearnaigh (Cois Life, 2008) p. 62

The question of language revival was present in a national survey into attitudes carried out by the ESRI between November 2007 and March 2008. Mac Greil and Rhatigan (2009) analysed this data and found that the majority of respondents wanted the language preserved (52%), revived (38%) into a bilingual Irish/English society, or revived (2.4%) into an Irish speaking community. Nonetheless, the findings also revealed inconsistency between people's attitudes towards the language and their use of the language, with only 47% claiming a reasonable ability in Irish and, of these, only 23% used the language regularly.

A more recent report produced by *Foras na Gaeilge* and the ESRI called *Attitudes towards the Irish Language on the Island of Ireland* used data from the *Irish Language Survey 2001* and the *Irish Language Survey 2013*<sup>18</sup> to examine attitudes towards the Irish language generally, towards Irish language education, towards government policy and towards the future of the Irish language. 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'). Over two-thirds of respondents in the Republic of Ireland (67 per cent) ...indicate they feel positive about the Irish language.'<sup>19</sup>

Of particular interest for this study is the analysis of the information contained in this report in respect of *attitudes* towards Irish in education, with pupils in Irish-medium primary schools more likely to 'always like' Irish (46%), compared to 39% of pupils in Gaeltacht schools and 21% in English medium schools. This question was directed towards the Irish language as a *school subject* rather than the Irish language as a language, therefore it is unsurprising that those in English medium schools liked the subject less than those in Irish medium schools who had some degree of fluency in the language. The current study does not examine attitudes towards Irish as a subject but Irish as a language so these figures are unlikely to correlate to a great extent, given that respondents have attended Irish-medium schools to post-primary level.

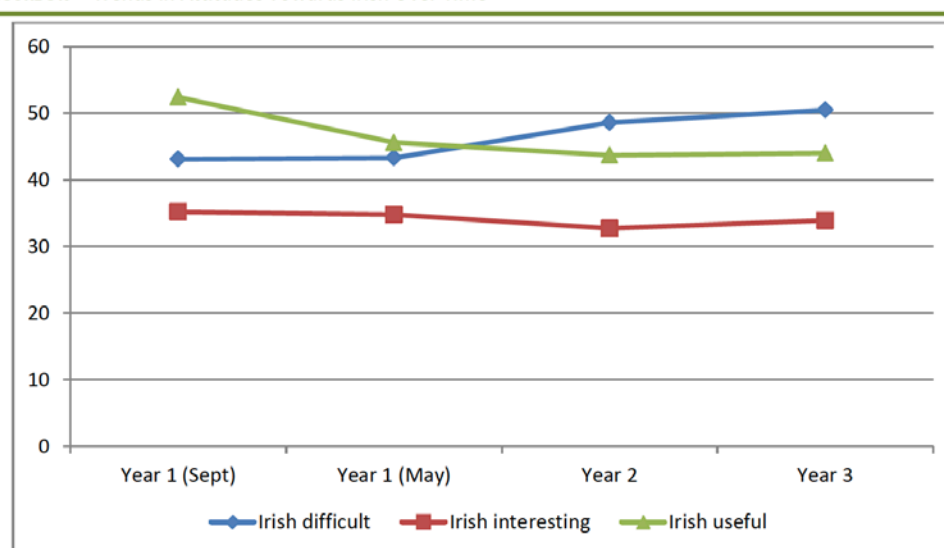
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<sup>18</sup> The *Irish Language Survey 2001* was carried out by Research and Evaluation Services and the *Irish Language Survey 2013* was carried out by Amarach Research.

<sup>19</sup> Darmody & Daly *Attitudes towards the Irish Language on the Island of Ireland* (ESRI & Foras na Gaeilge, 2015) p. 77

At post-primary level the *Attitudes towards the Irish Language on the Island of Ireland* examined data from the *Post-Primary Longitudinal Study (PPLS, 2014)* pertaining to the extent students' attitudes towards subjects change as they move from junior to senior cycle, and the table below (Figure 5.7, taken from the PPLS) reveals a change in students' attitudes between first and third year, with Irish being seen as increasingly difficult and less useful by students in third year. What this study did not clarify was the type of post-primary school these students attended, therefore it is difficult to compare these results with respondents' views from my own research.

FIGURE 5.7 Trends in Attitudes Towards Irish Over Time



Source: PPLS.

## 1.9 General Outline of Dissertation

This chapter has presented a brief history of the Irish language in Ireland, before independence was gained in 1922 and later under the new Irish state's policy of language revitalization. I noted particularly the role of the education system in this revitalisation and its effectiveness - or lack thereof. I described what Irish-medium education is and tracked the existence/emergence of Irish-medium education in the context of the state.

Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature pertaining to language ideologies, attitudes, attitudes towards language and attitudes towards the Irish language in

particular. It also examines bilingualism, bilingual education and immersion education in Ireland and abroad.

Chapter 3 outlines the design and methodology of the study. It describes the instruments used to conduct the study, namely qualitative and quantitative methods. Specifically, an online questionnaire using Survey Monkey was used, this contained opportunities for open-ended and closed responses. This received 360 responses. Semi-structured interviews were used as were focus groups.

Chapter 4 contains the findings and analysis of the study. It describes the results of the survey's closed questions - complete with charts. It shows the overall attitude towards the language and towards the Irish-medium educational experience. It also examines the themes which arose in the open-ended responses and how these themes related to the literature already reviewed, such as how learning one language is beneficial for learning additional languages. Finally, the data collected from the semi-structured interviews and focus groups was coded and analysed, and these results were compared with the data gathered from the quantitative study.

Chapter 5 summarises the study in terms of its design and results. It also conducts a critical analysis of the findings, relates these findings to the literature, draws conclusions and makes recommendations for further study of the Irish-medium sector within education.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### 2.1 Language Ideologies, Attitudes and Attitudes towards Language

#### 2.1.1 Language Ideologies

It is argued that prior to examining language attitudes, it is essential to understand language ideology, as it is within a language ideology that such attitudes are formed. Bernard Spolsky's (2004) examination of language ideologies explains what a language ideology is, he states 'Language ideology or beliefs designate a speech community's consensus on what value to apply to each of the language variables or named language varieties that make up its repertoire.'<sup>20</sup> In principle, in the Republic of Ireland, both English and Irish are given equal value as official state recognition has been given to both in the Constitution (1937). However, in practice, in respect of the daily use of these two languages there is a considerable gap in usage, as seen in the results of the latest census (CSO, 2016) where only 1.7% of the population (3 or over) spoke Irish daily (outside education) in Ireland.

When a large majority within a society share a language ideology it seems 'natural' because it has existed for a long period of time. In Ireland's case it appears that the high percentage of inhabitants speaking English (as per census figures) is suggestive of language ideology.

The language policy that exists in any speech community, according to Spolsky (2004) is suggestive of language ideology. He distinguishes three components in the language policy of a speech community:

1. Language practices
2. Language beliefs or ideology
3. Efforts to modify language practice.

As noted, English is the language practised by the majority of the speech community of Ireland. However, as delineated in the previous chapter, efforts to modify language practice via the language policy adopted by successive governments has met with varying degrees of success. The policies adopted by the

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<sup>20</sup> Spolsky, *Language Policy*, (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 14



English crown over a number of centuries of Irish rule succeeded in increasing the number of English speakers, not least of which was the introduction of a national education system in 1831 which saw students educated through English.

The language policies adopted by the Irish Free State in 1922 were successful to a point, as noted. However subsequent government policies saw the language removed as the compulsory medium of instruction in all schools, the relaxing of the rules in relation to the teaching of Irish grammar and writing, to a focus on oral proficiency in the language. Further change occurred as Hindley notes, ‘In 1973-74 the requirement of a pass in Irish to gain the Intermediate or Leaving Certificates...was abolished and so was the Irish requirement for entry to most public sector appointments’<sup>21</sup>, thereby removing one incentive for students to study Irish – as employment within the public sector was seen as a source of stable employment.

The current policy in relation to the language within the education system amounts to it being a compulsory part of the primary curriculum in all schools. At second level all students, apart from those with exemptions, must study Irish. The government supports Irish-medium education in existing schools and is open to submissions for further new Irish-medium schools.

The most recent policy announced by government is the ‘20 Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010 – 2030’.<sup>22</sup> The stated aims of this policy are 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

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<sup>21</sup> Hindley, *The Death of the Irish Language*, (Routledge, 1990) 39

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/20-Year-Strategy-for-the-Irish-Language-2010-2030.pdf>

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.<sup>23</sup>

The Strategy sets out areas of action under nine key headings:

- Education
- The Gaeltacht
- Family Transmission of the Language - Early Intervention
- Administration, Services and Community
- Media and Technology
- Dictionaries
- Legislation and Status
- Economic Life
- Cross-cutting Initiatives<sup>24</sup>

These nine key areas are indicative of the widespread reach of the policy and the ambitious nature of government policy in relation to the promotion and preservation of the Irish language. The government published a progress report in November 2015 charting the areas wherein progress has been made and there will be further such updates in due course.

However, despite the language policy that exists in Ireland, individuals within its speech community have the choice to practice whichever language they wish, to accept or reject language ideologies and to accept or reject efforts to change language practices.

This is where attitude is important. An individual's attitude towards the use of a particular language is dependent on a number of variables, such as; cultural identity, social use, economic advantage, historic reasons, etc. The next section will examine this question of attitudes towards language use.

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<sup>23</sup> <http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/20-Year-Strategy-for-the-Irish-Language-2010-2030.pdf> p.2

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.chg.gov.ie/app/uploads/2015/07/20-Year-Strategy-English-version.pdf> p.11

### 2.1.2 Attitudes

One of the earliest works to outline or propose a way to measure attitudes was Marvin E. Shaw and Jack M. Wright's 'Scales for the Measurement of Attitudes' (1967). They suggest one way to define an attitude is to see it as a '...characteristic which implies a type of relationship between the person and specific aspects of his environment.'<sup>25</sup> That is to say that a person's environment elicits a reaction from him/her, and this reaction is indicative of his/her attitude towards said environment. A person's relationship with his/her surroundings is therefore filled with a variety of attitudes, depending on what aspect of his/her environment is in question. For example, a person could particularly like the community in which he/she lives and his/her attitude would reflect this predilection, perhaps in terms of keeping the area tidy etc. On the other hand, a person could dislike his/her place of work and his/her attitude towards this would be seen in his/her behaviour in terms of effort or lack thereof. However, there is a complex relationship between attitude and behaviour and to infer an attitude based solely on a behaviour is erroneous. There may be other motivations behind a person's behaviour that are not truly indicative of attitude. Such as the previous example given of a person's lack of effort in the workplace may indicate a negative attitude - however it may *also* indicate that person's lack of motivation could be a result of not seeing eye to eye with their superior and not simply a negative attitude towards the work itself.

Shaw and Wright's definition states an attitude 'implies' a relationship between a person and an object, this is echoed in Baker's work. He too found that an attitude is not a salient or tangible 'thing'. He states that '...attitudes cannot be directly observed.... attitudes are latent, inferred from the direction and persistence of external behaviour.'<sup>26</sup> We can understand this easily given the examples I've provided above, as in each case attitude can be inferred from external behaviour.

Yet, research has also shown that this is not so straightforward, as a person may express an attitude towards an object yet their *behaviour* does not express that attitude towards the object. This can be noted when a person may profess a dislike

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<sup>25</sup> Shaw & Wright, *Scales for the Measurement of Attitudes*, (McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967), 4

<sup>26</sup> Baker, *Attitudes and Language*, (Multilingual Matters Ltd., 1992), 11

of something, yet their behaviour indicates otherwise. Such as, a student may profess a dislike of homework in front of their friends, yet their behaviour at home indicates otherwise. Or a person may be polite and friendly to someone in their company but once that person has left they may speak negatively about that person to others in the room. These are but two very simple examples of how a person's expressed attitude and their behaviour may not in sync with one other. As such, we can see how expressed attitudes may not always translate into behaviour which supports the attitude. Therefore it is important to examine not just an expressed attitude towards an object – in this case a language – but to examine behaviour also to ascertain whether it supports the expressed attitude.

Kendall A. King provides a clear example of the difficulty regarding the case of the Irish language and a person's attitude towards it, she said '....sociolinguistic studies of Irish have found that despite holding high opinions of Irish, few individuals are willing to speak the language regularly and even fewer consistently use the language with their children at home (Benton, 1986).'<sup>27</sup> This implies that an attitude is not something that could be translated straightforwardly into behaviour, as there appeared to be an inconsistency between the affective response and the behavioural response.

Other researchers have examined the concept of attitude in broader terms as multidimensional. Santello (2015) describes the 'ABC model' of attitudes, proposing that attitudes have the following components; A – Affective (emotional response); B – Behavioural (disposition towards); and C – Cognitive (beliefs towards).<sup>28</sup> This model provides for a broad understanding of the term attitude as it is not based purely on emotional response or behaviour but on beliefs also. In examining students' attitudes towards their Irish-medium educational experience their attitudes were measured using each of these components, with the variety of questions used allowing for an interpretation of each. Also the choice of whether to respond using Irish or not was given to respondents and this initial choice in the

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<sup>27</sup> King, "Language Ideologies and Heritage Language Education", *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 3:3 (2000), 167

<sup>28</sup> Santello, "Bilingual idiosyncratic dimensions of languages attitudes", *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 18:1 (2015), 2

survey could be interpreted as revelatory of attitude.

It is also important to appreciate how attitudes differ from opinions, even if they are sometimes taken to be synonymous. An individual can voice an opinion and develop it, whereas it is not so straightforward to verbalise an attitude (Baker, 1992). Therefore, this requires careful interpretation of data provided so as to ensure the attitude is clear. As the more detailed the analysis of data is, in terms of the affective, behavioural and cognitive, the clearer the attitude that is revealed.

Belief is another aspect of attitude that should not be confused with the attitude itself. If an individual holds a belief towards something, it is due to the information the individual has about it. But as Santello (2015) pointed out attitudes are multidimensional and cannot be examined in relation to one component in isolation. All aspects of attitude need to be assessed to understand its formation fully. Therefore the current study examines the affective, behavioural and cognitive aspects of the data gathered in order to gain a clearer picture of attitude and not merely the belief or beliefs held by respondents in respect of Irish medium education.

### **2.1.3 Language Attitudes**

In respect of attitudes towards a language, as underlined above it is important to appreciate that there may be a difference between the *attitude* a person may hold towards a language and their *behaviour* towards it. This is a more complex relationship than one might initially think since, as Ó Laoire (2007) observed, ‘the correlation between favourable language attitudes and language use remains low, i.e. positive attitudes do not necessarily translate into extended use of the language’<sup>29</sup> In this regard, the Irish experience in relation to the disjunction between attitudes towards the Irish language and their behaviour is certainly not a unique one, with studies conducted internationally with regard to minority languages finding similar results. As Paulston observes, Irish ‘people may perceive Irish as having a very high symbolic value for the nation, without at the same time being

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<sup>29</sup> Ó Laoire, “Language use and language attitudes in Ireland.” in *Multilingualism in European bilingual contexts: Language use and attitudes*, ed. D. Lasagabaster et al. (Clevedon; New York, NY; North York: Multilingual Matters, 2007), 172

willing or able to use it in daily discourse' (1994, 86).'<sup>30</sup> King (2000) also observed, 'These findings parallel data from Wales, where one study found that 86% of parents believe Welsh is important and want their children to learn it (Lyon & Elis 1991), but far fewer parents use the language regularly with their children.'<sup>31</sup> In this case, parents had a positive attitude towards the language (affective response) but their behaviour towards the language doesn't necessarily follow.

Studies conducted by Gardner and Lambert (1959) in Canada examined attitudes towards a language and language learning by analysing the role motivation played. They found that an individual's motivation to learn a language was comprised not only of their attitude, but also their interest in learning and the effort that they put in to learning (Coady 2001). Gardner and Lambert also posited that both 'instrumental' and 'integrative' orientations influenced language learning and motivation. An 'instrumental' orientation occurs when a language is viewed as something useful or advantageous, especially socially or economically, whereas an 'integrative' orientation is concerned with whether or not the language affords the speaker the opportunity to become accepted into and belong to a language community. In the current study both 'instrumental' and 'integrative' orientation are applicable in terms of the Irish medium education experience requiring students to learn and to use the language in order to communicate effectively with their peers and teachers and to achieve a sense of belonging to the school community.

## **2.2 Bilingualism, Bilingual Education & Immersion Education**

### **2.2.1 Bilingualism**

In order to understand the situation that exists in Ireland with regard to use of the Irish language, particularly in relation to the Irish-medium education sector, it is worthwhile to examine the area of bilingualism in order to understand the concept and the reasons why someone may choose to learn through the medium of another language.

Bilingualism means to have the ability to use two or more languages. People can have varying degrees of bilingualism as each language does not have to be spoken

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<sup>30</sup> King, *ibid.* 167

<sup>31</sup> King, *ibid.* 167

with the same level of fluency for a person to be considered bilingual. A person is considered to be bilingual when he/she can understand a person speaking to them even if he/she cannot respond in that language. This is called ‘passive’ bilingualism.

‘Partial’ bilingualism is when a person can speak a language but may not be able to read and write that language. Indeed, he/she may not be able to speak the various dialects within that same language nevertheless he/she is considered bilingual.

According to the 2011 Census, 17.5% of all Canadians reported being able to hold a conversation in both English and French.<sup>32</sup> The rate of bilingualism is far higher in Europe as, according to a 2012 Eurobarometer survey, ‘Just over half of Europeans (54%) are able to hold a conversation in at least one additional language, a quarter (25%) are able to speak at least two additional languages and one in ten (10%) are conversant in at least three.’<sup>33</sup> In Australia conversely the picture is quite different as more than 85% of students graduate from high school without a language other than English. In Ireland the percentage of students studying a foreign language for their Leaving Certificate in 2016 was over 70% of all candidates, with over 85% studying Irish.<sup>34</sup> Despite this sizeable figure Ireland still lags far behind the EU average for foreign language learning, with Eurostat figures for 2014 revealing more than 51% of all upper secondary students in Europe study two or more foreign languages, the figure for Ireland was 7%. Had the figures used by the Eurostat study included minority language learning Ireland would have fared better in terms of language learning.

### **2.2.2 Bilingual education**

There are two main ways in which bilingualism occurs: one is when a child has been exposed to two languages from birth, so-called ‘simultaneous bilingualism’; the other when a child begins his/her education, usually from the age of 3 upwards, in an environment where the L2 is used as the medium of instruction. This is called ‘sequential bilingualism’. In bilingual education the language is used as a medium of instruction – not merely as a subject in itself. The additional language used in

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<sup>32</sup> [www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75-006-x/2013001/article/11795-eng.htm](http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75-006-x/2013001/article/11795-eng.htm)

<sup>33</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/ebs/ebs\\_386\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/ebs/ebs_386_en.pdf)

<sup>34</sup> [www.examinations.ie](http://www.examinations.ie)

these instances is not the home language of the child.

There are many types of bilingual education, the exact type depends on the country and area of residence. In certain countries, a 'submersion' approach is used to educate minority language pupils using only the majority language of that society in the classroom for all subjects. This type of bilingual program was used in the United States as a so-called 'sink or swim' approach, typically with children with Spanish as their home language. In these situations, the result is usually a monolingual student body resulting in the loss of the home language to a greater or lesser extent, depending on whether students continue to use Spanish at home with their families.

Instead of the intense approach used in submersion education, another option is for a minority language student to attend a majority language school, be educated in that majority language and, at the same time, have access to language lessons in their home language. Thereby these students become functionally bilingual in a mainstream setting. To what extent a student will have fluency in each language is largely dependent on their environment, whether their school encourages use of both or only one language outside of the classroom, and how supportive parents are at home.

The main focus of my research is immersion education, wherein students receive all of their education in the minority language and receive language lessons only in the majority language. The language of the classroom is the language of the playground in many (if not all) of these types of schools as immersion education demands the students develop competency in their L2 in all domains. Therefore, students become comfortable using their L2 and their attitude towards the language is one of acceptance. However, research has shown that this type of minority language education can result in the L2 being associated with school only and a lack of use in other contexts. My research examines whether this is the case for Irish immersion students at post-primary level.

### **2.2.3 Immersion Education – Minority Languages (Irish, Basque, Welsh, Gaidhlig, French)**

Immersion education, known as 'all-Irish' education in Ireland, is gaining in popularity as documented above. As a small movement begun by parents in the



1970s it has increased dramatically since its origins, for example, the number of ‘all-Irish’ primary schools outside the Gaeltacht jumped from 12 in 1973 to 180 in 2016. This growth in sector is not only taking place at primary level as immersion education now exists from pre-school to third level.

The type of bilingualism on offer in ‘all-Irish’ primary schools is called ‘additive’ bilingualism, whereby a child is educated through a minority language at no cost to the majority language (as the child also receives lessons in the majority language). This is similar to the situation in the Basque country in Spain, where the ‘social predominance of Spanish in the area guarantees children's attainment of a good level of competence in it. On the other hand, the use of Basque as a medium of instruction has an important effect on children's level of competence in this language as it has little presence in the broad community.’<sup>35</sup> This is true of the Irish context also, as the large majority of those students attending Irish-medium schools outside of Gaeltacht areas come from homes where Irish is not the language spoken by the family.

Common to both the Basque and Irish contexts is the status of the language as a minority one which is being re-introduced as a means of communication by the education system. The common history of both of these languages reveals they were to a greater or lesser degree proscribed by forms of internal colonialism or by colonisation. In the case of the Basque language, under Franco’s rule it was prohibited, with Spanish enforced as the language of the education system. In Ireland’s case the British Crown’s introduction of a national education system (English medium) in 1831 brought with it a shift from Irish to English. This was compounded by the Famine and the subsequent decline in native Irish speakers through death or emigration.

In 1978, the Spanish Constitution was introduced, declaring Spanish as the official language of the country and permitting regional governments to choose another co-official language. In 1982 the Basque Normalisation Law laid out the possibilities regarding the use of the two official languages within the education system and the Decree of Bilingualism in 1983 set out the models of schooling. The first model,

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<sup>35</sup> Mas Moury Mack, “Language attitudes of parents in Irish-medium primary schools in County Dublin.” (PhD diss., Université Michel de Montaigne - Bordeaux III, 2013) p.83

model A, is where Spanish is the language of instruction and Basque is a subject. Model B is where both languages are used as languages of instruction within the school, depending on subject choice. Model D is where Basque is the language of instruction for all subjects (except Spanish) and this is the model closest in type to the immersion model in Ireland or ‘all-Irish’ schools, as the majority of pupils speak Spanish and would not encounter Basque at home, therefore they are being educated in their L2, just like the pupils within our immersion system.

Model D is by far the most popular choice for parents with 69.15% selecting this model at primary level in comparison to only 5.49% selecting Model A and 24.67% selecting Model B. At second level Model D’s popularity continues with 61.31% of parents selecting this model for their children compared to only 11.29% Model A and 26.63% Model B (source: Basque Government – Dept. of Ed. 2013/14)

Such an endeavour to bring back a minority language via immersion education is also seen elsewhere, such as Welsh in Wales and Gaidhlig in Scotland. These programmes are also gaining in popularity with 60 primary schools currently offering immersion education in Scotland at primary level ([www.education.gov.scot](http://www.education.gov.scot)) and 435 primary schools in Wales offering Welsh immersion education ([www.gov.wales](http://www.gov.wales)).

In 1939 the first bilingual (Welsh) primary school was opened in Aberystwyth but it wasn’t until 1956 that the first designated bilingual secondary school opened in Ysgol Glan Clwyd (Baker, 1993), but Baker argues that ‘the beginning of the revolution in bilingual education in Wales cannot and should not be dated.’<sup>36</sup> Instead Baker believes we should focus on the growth of these designated bilingual schools in primarily English-speaking areas since the 1950’s and we should appreciate the immense role parents have had as ‘without the pressure, enthusiasm, commitment and interest in bilingual education of groups of parents and teachers, it is unlikely that bilingual education would have begun or advanced as it has.’<sup>37</sup>

Once again this is similar to the case of Irish in Ireland as it was parental pressure

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<sup>36</sup> Baker, Colin, “Bilingual Education in Wales”, in *European Models of Bilingual Education*, ed. Hugh Baetens Beardsmore (Multilingual Matters Ltd., 1993) 10.

<sup>37</sup> Baker, Colin, *ibid.* 21.

and interest which saw the growth in immersion education from the 1970s onwards.

As a consequence, it is surprising that it wasn't until 2003 that a national language strategy for Welsh (Iaith Pawb) was published. Since then a more detailed language strategy *A Living language: a language for living Welsh Language Strategy 2012-17* has been published. Despite the progress within the Welsh bilingual education system a distinct problem still remains, with a 'significant number of students moving from Welsh-medium education to English-medium as they progress from key stage 2 to key stage 3, i.e. from primary to post-primary school.'<sup>38</sup> This is also the case in Ireland as noted in the introduction as there are 271 Irish-Medium primary schools and 66 Irish-Medium post-primary schools.

The situation in Scotland for Gaelic-medium education has gradually improved with the introduction in 1986 of Gaelic-medium education (GME). Initially there were only 24 pupils in two schools but now the system has expanded to sixty primary schools and some GME units within schools. The Education (Scotland) Acts of 1980 and 1981 facilitated parental choice of Gaelic-medium primary education, '...with parental requests for new Gaelic-medium primary provision being negotiated between parents and individual local authorities according to individual local authority processes and criteria.'<sup>39</sup>

This local basis for GME provision was effectively promoted to national level with the passing of the Education (Scotland) Act of 2016. Now if parents wish for their child to avail of GME the local authority must endeavour to facilitate this. In fact the Act requires that each local 'authority 'promote' the provision, or the potential for the provision, of Gaelic-medium primary education within their area.'<sup>40</sup>

In Canada French immersion programmes have been in existence since the 1970s. The 1969 Official Languages Act declared French and English to be Canada's official languages and since this time the popularity of French immersion education

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<sup>38</sup> Ó Duibhir et al., *Education Provision through Minority Languages: Review of International Research* (Department of Education and Skills, 2015)17-18

<sup>39</sup> O'Hanlon, Fiona and Paterson, Lindsay "Factors influencing the likelihood of choice of Gaelic-medium primary education in Scotland: results from a national public survey." *Language, Culture and Curriculum* 30:1 (2017): 49

<sup>40</sup> O'Hanlon, Fiona and Paterson, Lindsay, *ibid.*:50

has expanded. Despite the 2006 Census showing English as being the main language spoken by Canadians (58%) it also revealed that 9.9% of all students are enrolled in French immersion programmes, with 80% of these students beginning their immersion at pre-school level.

## **2.3 Immersion Education in a Bilingual Setting**

There are many reasons why parents choose to place their children in a bilingual education setting. As I have outlined in the previous section there are many different types of bilingual education, with the intensity of approach varying depending on context. The respondents of the current study all experienced the immersion approach. By virtue of being completely immersed in the L2 the students' language-learning experience was very intense. Whether, and how, such an educational experience has influenced the attitudes of the respondents towards their educational experience is the object of this research. Respondents' behaviour in relation to language use and their beliefs concerning the language and towards their Irish-Medium education are examined in order to achieve an overview of their attitudes.

### **2.3.1 Research Literature Claims Concerning Bilingual Education**

Foras na Gaeilge examined the international literature researching bilingual education and found the following results for students who go through the system:

- Better performance academically (Gallagher & Hanna, 2002).
- Easier to learn a third and a fourth language (Cenoz & Valencia 1994).
- An understanding and openness to other cultures (Gallagher & Hanna, 2002).
- Improvement in cognitive functioning in creativity and communication (Bialystok et al. 2005).
- Higher scores in English and Maths (Education Research Centre, 2011)
- Enhanced awareness of identity, culture and sense of community (Baker, 2003)
- Increased Self Esteem (Baker, 2003)
- Bilingual Education enriches academic productivity, creative talents and self-esteem in students (NMABE, 2006; Cummins, 2000)

- Improved communication and social skills (Cummins, 2000)<sup>41</sup>

- **Academic**

Many of the above reported benefits have been seen in students of Irish-medium education. The Education Research Centre, based in Drumcondra, sends out standardised tests to every primary school in the country every year. The evidence of higher performance in Maths and English of those students attending an Irish-medium school has been well documented, particularly by Ó hAiniféin (2008) and Parsons & Lyddy (2009b). Ó hAiniféin (2008) found that Irish-Medium students were “way ahead” (p. 46) of children from English Medium schools in terms of their reading abilities in English in the Drumcondra reading tests. However, these claims must be considered against the idea that Irish-Medium schools are elitist on socio-economic and educational grounds, such theories were put forward by David McWilliams in *The Pope's Children* and by Sarah Carey and Kathryn Holmquist in the Irish Times in December 2008. A study by Vanessa Mas-Moury Mack for Gaelscoileanna of parents from ten Irish-Medium schools located in both working class and middle class areas found that parents of pupils attending Irish-Medium schools did not agree that they were elitist on the basis that they are free, have a good social mix, are underfunded and frequently located in prefabs, etc. However, her study found that the majority of those who volunteered to take part in the study appear to be from a ‘middle class milieu’ and have third level qualifications. In the follow up interviews she found that some parents believed the elitist label was given to gaelscoileanna because ‘having a child attending a gaelscoil requires commitment together with a good educational background to support a child through his/her education. Being both committed and well educated is often associated with being from a certain social class.’<sup>42</sup>

Therefore, the results of studies pertaining to the Drumcondra tests in Irish-Medium schools should be considered in tandem with studies concerning the social background of such pupils.

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<sup>41</sup> <http://www.foras.ie/en/irish-medium-education/advantages/>

<sup>42</sup> [http://www.gaelscoileanna.ie/assets/Introduction\\_Parents-attitude-to-gaelscoileanna-as-schools-for-the-elite.pdf](http://www.gaelscoileanna.ie/assets/Introduction_Parents-attitude-to-gaelscoileanna-as-schools-for-the-elite.pdf)

- **Labour Market**

One area wherein a benefit of having a bilingual education was not observed by Foras na Gaeilge was in the labour market. Watson & Nic Ghiolla Phádraig (2011) and Borooah, Dineen & Lynch (2009) have contrasting interpretations of bilingual education and advantage in the labour market.

Watson & Nic Ghiolla Phádraig take a completely different approach to the question of linguistic advantage in the labour market to the approach Borooah, Dineen & Lynch adopt. Watson and Nic Ghiolla Phádraig posit that those who have PMT occupations (professional, management or technical) are likely to be Irish speakers – whether they use the language regularly or not. They claim the prevalence of Irish speakers in these positions is due to the usually high level of educational attainment that Irish speakers attain, not by virtue of the fact that they can speak Irish.

Whereas, Borooah, Dineen & Lynch examine the prevalence of Irish-speakers in PMT occupations from a different angle. They argue that it is precisely the fact that those who received an Irish medium education, with the benefits that this type of education offers, are in PMT occupations. They argue that those who received an Irish-medium education benefitted from attending schools with high academic reputations which sent a majority of their students on to third level education. They also benefitted from the network of social contacts they formed while in school which are themselves are a form of social capital.

Both of these articles provided much food for thought as to whether those who attended Irish-Medium education achieved success in the workplace by virtue of their Irish-Medium education or simply by virtue of their ability to speak Irish. This study also examines a similar question. Respondents were asked whether they believed their Irish-medium education was ‘useful for job opportunities’ and whether they continued to use the Irish language outside of school with Irish-speaking friends, namely within their social networks. (For results see chapter 4)

- **Motivation to Use the Language**

Lelia Murtagh’s piece on ‘Out-of-school Use of Irish, Motivation and Proficiency in Immersion and Subject-only Post-Primary Programmes’ examined the attitudes of

parents towards their children learning the language. It also examined the attitudes of students towards the language and found, unsurprisingly, that those attending Irish-medium schools were more positively posited towards the language. Murtagh notes that ‘immersion education is successful not only in producing high levels of competence in Irish, and promoting positive attitudes and interest towards learning it, but also in introducing students to Irish language-speaking networks that facilitate maintenance and use of Irish after they leave school.’<sup>43</sup> Murtagh offered the explanation that these students who attended Irish-medium schools had these attitudes towards learning and using the language due to their consistent exposure to the language throughout their education. She observed that, ‘lower levels of anxiety in the Irish class are associated with higher overall motivation to learning the language and greater use of the language outside of school.’<sup>44</sup>

The current study examines similar claims as interviewees were asked if they knew why their parents chose Irish-Medium education for them, which could be interpreted as indicative of their attitude. In addition, in the survey element of the study participants were asked whether and how often they now spoke the language which allows for comparisons with Murtagh’s findings.

- **Executive Function**

In addition to the purported academic benefits outlined previously executive function is another area where it is claimed bilinguals are at an advantage. Bialystok (2007) notes that bilingual children tend to have improved executive function compared to monolinguals. Such executive functions are ‘basic to all cognitive life – they control attention, determine planning and categorizing, and inhibit inappropriate responding.’<sup>45</sup> This means that bilinguals have the advantage of an earlier development of executive function and a later declination of it in old age. Bialystok’s claims are supported by earlier research by Cummins (1976) into the

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<sup>43</sup> Murtagh, Lelia “Out-of-school Use of Irish, Motivation and Proficiency in Immersion and Subject-only Post-Primary Programmes”, *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 10:4, (2007): 450

<sup>44</sup> Murtagh, Lelia, “Retention and Attrition of Irish as a Second Language” (Ph.D Dissertation, Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, 2003) p.154

<sup>45</sup> Bialystok, Ellen “Cognitive Effects of Bilingualism: How Linguistic Experience Leads to Cognitive Change”, *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 10:3 (2007): 219

influence of bilingualism on cognitive growth. Cummins undertook a ‘synthesis of research findings and exploratory hypotheses’ and found;

‘Bilingualism and unilingualism can both be thought of as instruments which individuals use to operate on their environments. Because of its greater complexity, the bilingual instrument is more difficult to master, but once mastered, has a greater potential, than the unilingual instrument for promoting cognitive growth.’<sup>46</sup>

This potential for bilingualism, specifically bilingual education, to promote cognitive growth has long been lauded by advocates of Irish-medium education in Ireland. My research asked respondents whether they believed their bilingual education had helped them in this regard, for example, to learn additional languages.

Bialystok goes on to explain the importance of Vygotsky’s speculation ‘that experience with two languages in which meanings were paired with different symbols would lead children to that insight more quickly: “the child learns to see his language as one particular system among many, to view its phenomena under more general categories, and this leads to awareness of his linguistic operations” (Vygotsky, 1962, p. 110).’<sup>47</sup> This explains how bilingual children have a greater knowledge of language structure (metalinguistic awareness) and thus a greater capacity to apply this knowledge when faced with language tasks. As mentioned, my research responds to this by asking whether respondents found it easy to learn other languages and whether they could apply the skills used in studying through Irish to other areas of their lives.

### **2.3.2 Counter Claims in Respect of Bilingual Education**

Whilst the previous sections outlined claims concerning the benefits of bilingual education it would be remiss not to note the material concerning its limitations. In fact, some respondents did mention what they felt were limitations in their answers (see chapter 4).

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<sup>46</sup> Cummins, James, ‘The Influence of Bilingualism on Cognitive Growth: Synthesis of Research Findings and Explanatory Hypotheses.’ *Working Papers on Bilingualism, No. 9*. Ontario Inst. for Studies in Education, Toronto. Bilingual Education Project. (1976)  
<http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED125311.pdf>

<sup>47</sup> Bialystok, Ellen, ‘The Bilingual Adaptation: How Minds Accommodate Experience’, *Psychological Bulletin*, 143:3 (2017): 247



One potential limitation of bilingual education was seen in studies carried out into verbal fluency, comparing bilingual performance with monolingual performance. It appeared that bilinguals were at a disadvantage as they were less fluent in their answering. In such tasks speakers are ‘typically given one minute to name members of a semantic (e.g. “animals”) or letter category (e.g. “words that begin with s”)’ and bilinguals appear to be at a disadvantage here as ‘only bilinguals may need to simultaneously retrieve target language exemplars while controlling interference from the non-target language.’<sup>48</sup>

Grosjean (2010) also mentions this, saying bilinguals often ‘have to put up with interferences that increase in number as they get tired, nervous, angry, or worried.’<sup>49</sup> It appears that this difficulty occurs within language processing for some bilinguals, though it has been posited that for more capable or proficient bilingual individuals this would not be an issue (Stephens, 2013)

## **2.4 Summary**

The focus of the current study pertains to the attitudes of past-pupils towards their Irish-medium education experience therefore it is necessary to examine the literature in relation to language ideologies, practices, beliefs and attitudes in order to obtain an overview of the salient issues. As research by Spolsky (2004) has shown, the language policy of a speech community is indicative of its language ideology. However, as noted, such ideology does not necessarily translate into practice. The current research shows respondents’ beliefs towards the language (eg. being of benefit/ part of their identity) is in sharp contrast to their practice or use of the Irish language.

Similarly, Santello's (2015) multidimensional model of attitudes -concerning the affective, behavioural and cognitive - can be used to map the current study also, as the research data allows for an interpretation of whether one or more of these elements are at play in respondents' answers.

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<sup>48</sup> Gollan, et. al., ‘What causes the bilingual disadvantage in verbal fluency? The dual-task analogy.’, *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition* 13:2, (2010): 231

<sup>49</sup> Grosjean, Francois, *Bilingual: life and reality* (Harvard University Press, 2010), 103

The term bilingualism has been delineated and the associated terminology explained. For the purposes of the current study it is sequential bilingualism that is of particular interest, as this is concerned with the bilingualism offered by schooling rather than simultaneous bilingualism which occurs at home.

Bilingual education from an international perspective has also been discussed and the similarities between Irish-medium education and bilingual education offered in Canada, Spain, Wales and Scotland are shown, particularly with regard to the role parental pressure and preference played in providing this type of education for their children. The question of parental preference was one which emerged during the current study and was addressed within the interviews and focus groups.

Finally, the perceived benefits and limitations of bilingual education were explored. Previous research by Cummins and Bialystok outlined the advantages in terms of cognitive function and learning additional languages. This is an area the current study examines, as one of the questions pertains to additional language learning, while another enquires about the benefits associated with immersion education.

Murtagh's study examined the benefits of immersion education in terms of providing confidence to students within the immersion language, motivation for further learning and indeed more favourable attitudes to out-of-school use of the language. Her findings will be explored in relation to the findings from the current study in the next chapter.

The sections explored in this chapter, namely language policy, language ideology, beliefs, motivations, bilingualism, international bilingualism, bilingual education and immersion education all provide a context for the current study as will be delineated in Chapter four.

### 3. Research Design and Methodology

#### 3.1 Mixed-Methods Research: An Overview

This study adopted a mixed methods approach to research, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative elements. Cresswell (2014) offers an explanation of some of the main differences between quantitative and qualitative research, saying, ‘Qualitative data tends to be open-ended without predetermined responses while quantitative data usually includes closed-ended responses such as those found on questionnaires or psychological instruments.’<sup>50</sup> In combining these two methods I aimed to gain a comprehensive picture of past-pupils’ attitudes towards their bilingual education experience, and to identify key themes through the use of extensive questionnaire distribution. Cresswell and Plano Clark (2011) explain the benefits associated with mixed-methods; ‘Researchers are enabled to use all of the tools of data collection available rather than being restricted to the types of data collection typically associated with quantitative research or qualitative research.’<sup>51</sup> The value of accessing multiple sources of data collection is it permits of a far more extensive sample than would be possible through interviews or focus groups. In addition, the use of online platforms to distribute the questionnaire widely allowed for the sizeable sample gathered in the current study(360 respondents).

Johnson and Onwuegbuzie have offered a definition of mixed methods research.

Our new “definition” is as follows: Mixed methods research is an intellectual and practical synthesis based on qualitative and quantitative research; it is the third methodological or research paradigm (along with qualitative and quantitative research). It recognizes the importance of traditional quantitative and qualitative research but also offers a powerful third paradigm choice that often will provide the most informative, complete, balanced, and useful research results.<sup>52</sup>

Mixed methods research offered a thorough way of investigating the topic of my research, allowing for triangulation. Denzin (1978) has outlined the benefits of ‘between-method’ triangulation saying that, ‘the bias inherent in any particular data

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<sup>50</sup> Cresswell, *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches*. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2014) 43

<sup>51</sup> Cresswell and Plano Clark, *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*, (Sage, 2011) 12

<sup>52</sup> Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner, “Towards a Definition of Mixed Methods Research”, *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* (Vol1:2 2007)129

source, investigators, and particularly method will be cancelled out when used in conjunction with other data sources, investigators, and methods.’<sup>53</sup> In enabling data triangulation mixed methods research allows for similarities, differences, inconsistencies, contradictions, etc. to be identified and for researchers to form theories surrounding the topic at hand. The reason that this was important for this particular project (especially given it is broadly qualitative in orientation) was so as to provide added depth to the survey by probing the views of focus group and interview respondents.

### 3.2 Research Design

The research questions that drove this project required that a variety of approach to data collection be utilised, namely qualitative and quantitative. The first part of this study utilised a quantitative tool for data collection, namely the online service *Survey Monkey*. This survey design aimed to examine past-pupils’ attitudes towards their all-Irish education using a set of statements that were evaluated on a Likert scale. This survey was primarily quantitative in design but incorporated opportunities for respondents to expand on their answers to open-ended questions, providing a qualitative dimension to the survey. The data from the open-ended questions was analysed using MaxQDA software. The second part of this study was qualitative in nature. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with two focus groups (eight past-pupils in total) and three individual interviews were held that focused on the experiences of past-pupils within all-Irish education and their attitudes towards that experience. The approach was semi-structured, comprising of open-ended questions and the data collected was analysed using MaxQDA software.

### 3.3 Study 1: Online Questionnaire using Survey Monkey

The design of the questionnaire was informed by the research literature that detailed questionnaires previously disseminated within the field of immersion education<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Denzin, N.K. *The research act: A theoretical introduction to sociological methods*. (New York: Praeger, 1978) 14

<sup>54</sup> Dunmore, Stuart ‘*Bilingual life after school? Language use, ideologies and attitudes among Gaelic-medium educated adults*’ (PhD. Thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2014), Kennedy, Ivan *Irish Medium Education: Cognitive Skills, Linguistic Skills, and Attitudes Towards Irish* (Ph.D College of Education and Lifelong Learning, Bangor University, 2012), Ní Dhonnabháin, Aine ‘*An Dátheangachas agus an tAitheantas: Déagóirí Eireannacha sa 21ú haois*.’ (Ph.D University College Cork, 2013)

and by questions from the recent Irish census. Both Irish and English versions of the questionnaire were provided to participants. As indicated above, questions featured a statement followed by a Likert scale response system. There were also occasions whereby respondents could develop their answers further in a ‘free text’ box.

### **3.3.1 Sampling**

As I had the email addresses of many of my own past-pupils I chose to utilise them as in this way they could be easily contacted. As my school has been in existence for twenty years I believed I would access a wide range of age groups. Thereby this would provide for a mixed perspective on participants’ experience over a greater or lesser period of time since graduation.

A database of potential respondents was compiled from the list of past-pupils’ email addresses. A link to the online questionnaire was emailed to them along with a detailed letter explaining the thrust of the current study. They were invited to forward the link to anyone else they knew who attended a second-level all-Irish school. Some responded stating they had done so and had invited others to do likewise. Had this approach been relied upon exclusively the sample would have been limited to those who had attended one post-primary Irish-Medium school, therefore it was important that the sample be widened to include graduates of other post-primary Irish-Medium schools.

Facebook and Twitter were used to post the link to the questionnaire online. A Facebook group was also created and members were added from the list of past-pupils. These were then invited to add additional members to the group who they knew were past-pupils of Irish-medium education. Facebook messaging was used to contact past-pupils whose email address was not to hand. This proved extremely effective in obtaining responses. Many respondents then shared the Facebook post about the online questionnaire to their own personal pages.

Twitter users also followed the link and it was then re-tweeted by them so others could also participate if they so wished.

Every college/university in the country was contacted by email initially, and then a follow-up phone call, and asked to forward the information to interested students. It was also requested that the information be forwarded to the Irish clubs within the institutions (if any). Facebook and Twitter were also used again so as to directly contact these Irish clubs and request their assistance.

Conradh na Gaeilge, Foras na Gaeilge, and COGG were contacted by email and asked if they too would publicise the questionnaire, which they duly did on their websites and/or Twitter pages.

Through this multi-platform approach a total of 360 questionnaire responses were elicited, of which 121 (33.6%) were answered in English and 239 (66.4%) in Irish. Respondents were asked in which county they attended school, how long ago they had left, what their experience of bilingual education was, whether they had continued to study Irish at third level, whether they had found it easy to transition from learning through Irish to learning through English at third level and whether they'd recommend Irish-Medium education to others.

Further questions enquired into the standard of teaching, availability of resources, and their easiest/most difficult subjects. Finally, they were asked about their frequency of use of the language, in what domains they used it, whether they thought it had made learning other languages any easier and whether they believed Irish medium education would still be around in twenty years. The final question asked whether they believed being able to speak Irish fluently was an important part of their identity.

The link to the online questionnaire remained active for two months, by the end of which time the response rate had dwindled. The next step was to arrange for focus groups and interviews so as to provide more qualitative data for the study.

### **3.4 Study 2: Focus Groups and Interviews**

#### **3.4.1 Group One**

The first focus group I conducted was in UCD in February 2017. I was contacted by *Teach na Gaeilge* in UCD and they invited me to attend their monthly breakfast meeting in the college restaurant. At this breakfast I explained what my research was about. In accordance with Maynooth University's Ethics Guidelines, I assured students that their anonymity would be protected and that they could withdraw from the research at any time. I presented them with a plain language statement (in Irish and in English) and I asked them to sign an informed consent form.

A group of five students waited behind to participate in a focus group about their experiences of all-Irish education at second level. This condensed approach was chosen as time-wise it was difficult to arrange for further groups to meet me to take part due to the students' study and employment commitments.

A microphone was arranged centrally on the table between the students and myself. The process I used was to ask a question and then invite one of the students next to me to begin the answering process. The student next to them continued once this student had finished answering. On occasion some students nodded in agreement with answers, or joined in by agreeing.

One limitation of this group was its size, as respondents decided to answer the questions in turn and this approach was not conducive to discussion. In addition, many of these students did not know each other very well and therefore some appeared slightly uncomfortable in answering.

#### **3.4.2 Group Two**

The second focus group I conducted was in TCD in February 2017. I was contacted by a student who had seen my appeal for participants on Twitter. She brought two friends with her who had attended an all-Irish post-primary school. I explained what my research was about. In accordance with Maynooth University's Ethics Guidelines, I assured students that their anonymity would be protected and that they could withdraw from the research at any time. I presented them with a plain language statement (in Irish and in English) and I asked them to sign an informed consent form. Obviously this group was quite small but I had hoped they would provide me with perhaps more detailed answers than the previous group as there were fewer participants in this case. I hoped that their familiarity with each other

would lead to a comfortable exchange of views and an opportunity for further discussion which is not so conducive among a group of strangers.

### **3.4.3 Individual interviews**

The final three interviews were conducted during March and April, once again I explained the nature of the research. In accordance with Maynooth University's Ethics Guidelines, I assured students that their anonymity would be protected and that they could withdraw from the research at any time. I presented them with a plain language statement (in Irish and in English) and I asked them to sign an informed consent form. As these students were answering as individuals and not as part of a group confidentiality was key to anonymity.

Each of the focus groups and individual interviews was recorded digitally and then transcribed. During the data collection I was aware of my own agency in interacting with the participants and the ways in which I might influence their responses so I attempted to be neutral in my tone, facial expression and choice of response. The language used throughout each focus group/ interview was Irish as each respondent chose to address me in Irish when we met so the interview naturally progressed in Irish. This was not surprising given that these respondents had self-selected to be part of a study of Irish-Medium education. Interview/ Focus Group Questions are provided in the appendix.

The degree to which I adhered to these questions varied only slightly, depending on the manner in which the interview unfolded, with certain participants needing additional questions/prompts or clarification. Some questions appeared closed in nature but the subsequent questions asked for additional detail to add depth to the answers.

## **3.5 Data Analysis**

The inbuilt engine in Survey Monkey provided easy access to the quantitative data, however the open-ended questions required thematising and analysis separately.

The data from the interviews and focus groups was analysed using MaxQDA software but prior to this I read and reread the transcripts and formed initial impressions of the data. In this way was I was enabled to code some recurrent



themes which emerged from my reading. The main themes that emerged were: using the language at school, difficulties with terminology, problems recruiting appropriately fluent teachers, opportunities provided by Irish medium education, translating from English to Irish and recommendations for improvement proposed by respondents.

## **4. Research Data Analysis**

### **4.1 Quantitative Research Data Analysis**

The data gathered from the questionnaire is frequently analysed using Santello's (2015) explanation of the 'ABC' model of attitudes in order to frame responses. It is important the multidimensional aspect of attitudes is explored and different question types were used to achieve this. Some questions required an affective (emotional) or cognitive (belief) type of response. Other questions required respondents to give a response in respect of their behaviour (disposition). Using this combined method an overview of respondents' attitudes could be gleaned.

Reference is also made to Gardner and Lambert's (1959) study of motivating factors in relation to language learning – both instrumental and integrative.

- **Choice of Language**

The number of respondents to the Survey Monkey questionnaire totalled 360. The initial question faced by participants was whether they wanted to answer in Irish or in English. 66.4% chose to answer in Irish and 33.6% chose to answer in English.

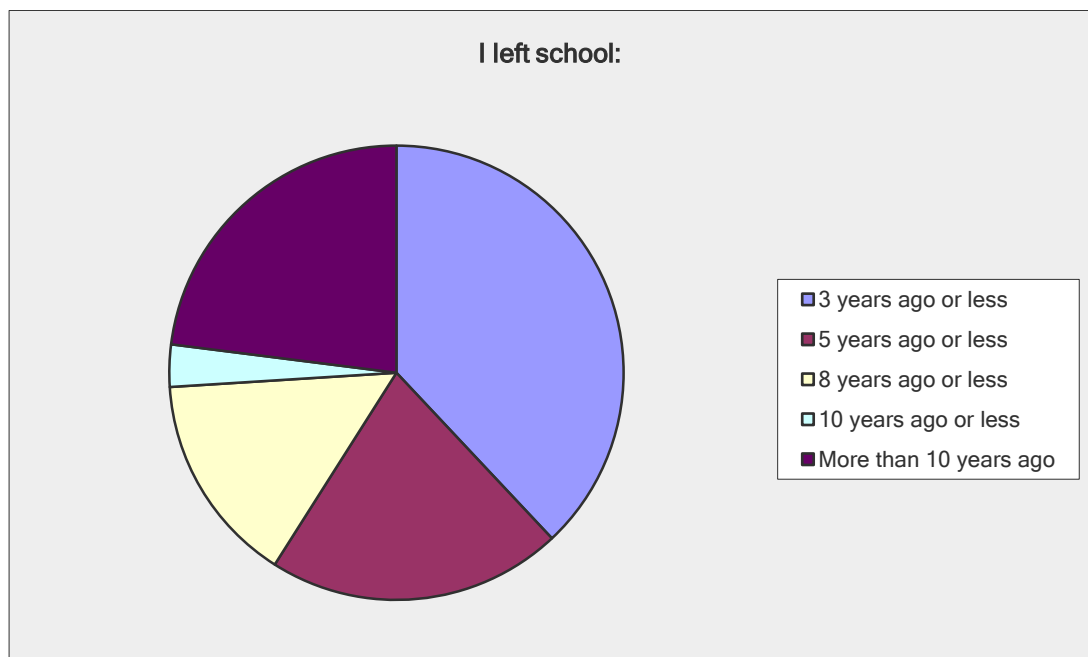
- **About Me**

The first section was titled 'About Me' and began with a question concerning where participants had attended post-primary school. Then participants identified the county in which they attended Irish-medium second level education, with 161 attending a school in Dublin, 16 in Kildare, 14 in Galway and lesser numbers for the remainder of the counties.

It is interesting to note that of the 360 initial respondents only an average of approximately 227 continued with the survey. The reasons for over one third of respondents failing to continue with the survey beyond the initial question(s) is unclear. Perhaps it was simply due to a lack of time, or interest, or perhaps when they accessed the link and read the questions they did not feel they wanted to participate any longer. Therefore, the results of the survey for the remainder of the questions are based on a figure of approximately 227.

When asked to select how long ago they had left second-level education the breakdown was as follows:

I left school:		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
3 years ago or less	38.0%	89
5 years ago or less	21.0%	48
8 years ago or less	15.0%	35
10 years ago or less	3.0%	9
More than 10 years ago	23.0%	53



These results allowed for interesting observations as 59% of respondents were recent school-leavers (5 or less years) and 41% had left school more than 8 years previously. Therefore, the responses given showed the attitudes of recent and not so recent school leavers. It would have been useful had the survey had a functionality which could have drawn a distinction between respondents in terms of the length of time elapsed since graduation. This could have provided further insights into the respondents' attitudes as to whether length of time since graduation was a factor influencing responses.

- **Bilingual Education**

The next question proved to be particularly interesting as respondents were asked about their experience of bilingual education. Those who chose to answer in Irish

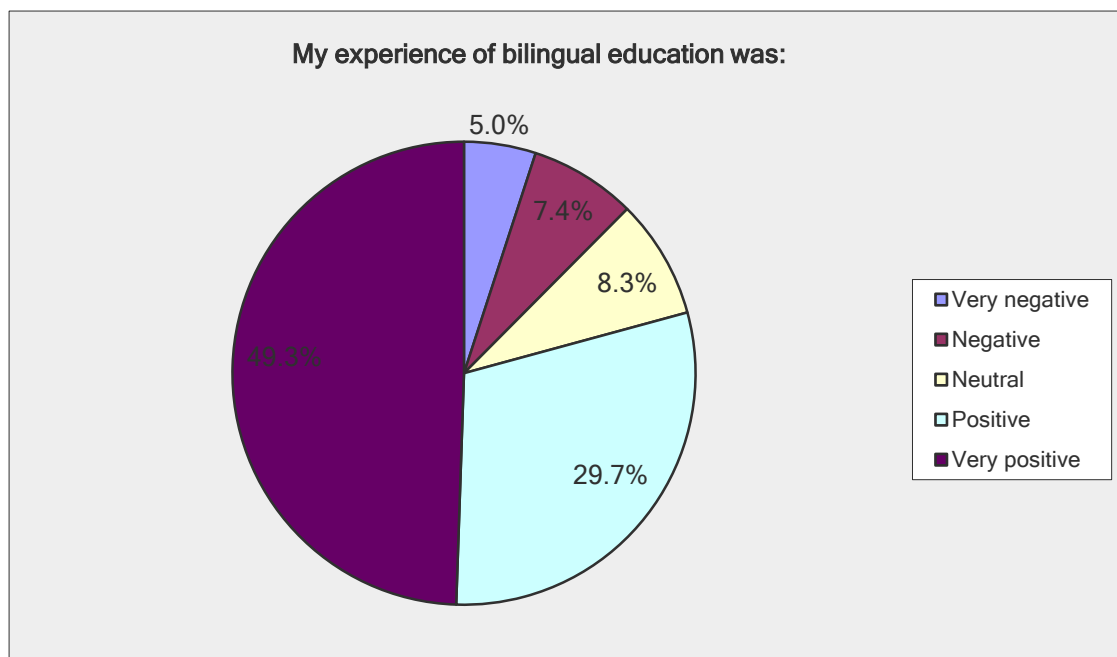
were a lot more negative about the experience than those who chose to answer in English. Of the 360 respondents 229 chose to answer this question.

It is curious that over one third chose not to answer, despite a ‘neutral’ option being provided. Perhaps this is indicative of a desire to avoid casting aspersions on their educational experience or a dislike of the question generally. This was a limitation of the questionnaire as it did not allow for elaboration, as a respondent may have had a poor experience that did not have to do with the bilingual nature of the education. Had a free-flow text box been provided here clarification of this point could have been facilitated. In addition, had I been able to cross-analyse against the length of time elapsed since respondents graduated from post-primary school the study would have benefitted from a broader insight to their experiences.

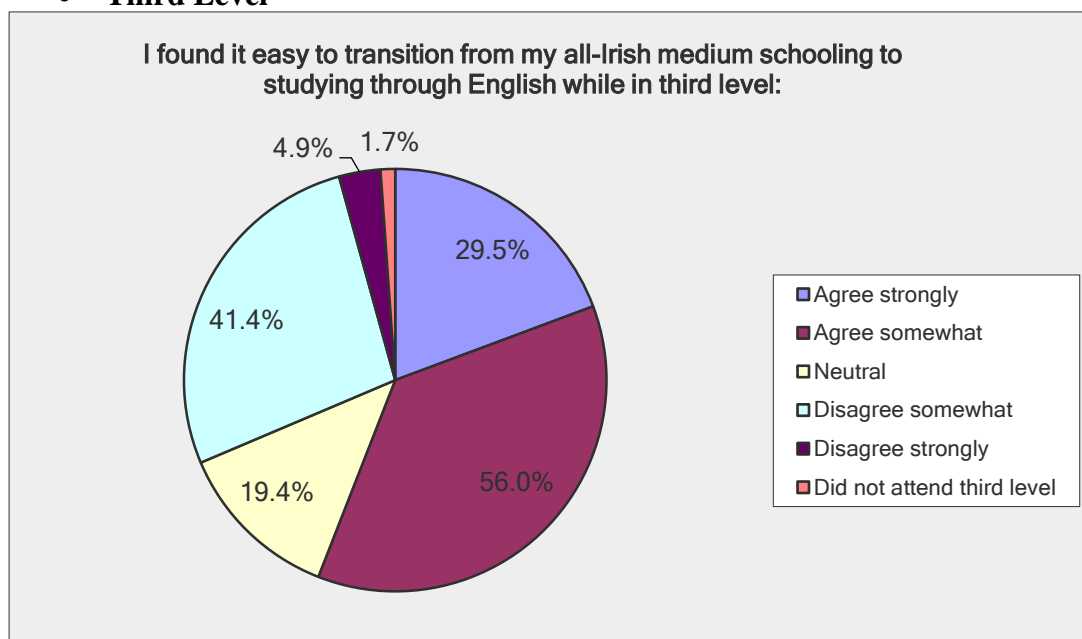
<b>My experience of bilingual education was:</b>		
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Very negative	0.0%	0
Negative	10.0%	6
Neutral	23.3%	14
Positive	25.0%	15
Very positive	41.7%	25
<i><b>answered question</b></i>		<b>60</b>
<i><b>skipped question</b></i>		<b>300</b>

<b>Mo thuairim faoi oideachas dhátheangach le linn dom bheith ar scoil:</b>		
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
An-diúltach	7.1%	12
Diúltach	6.5%	11
Gan tuairim	3.0%	5
Dearfach	31.4%	53
An-dearfach	52.1%	88
<i><b>answered question</b></i>		<b>169</b>
<i><b>skipped question</b></i>		<b>191</b>

When examined together the overall findings were that 79% of respondents perceived their experience of bilingual education to be positive or very positive. These responses were indicative of the affective (emotional) and cognitive (belief) aspects of attitude.



- **Third Level**



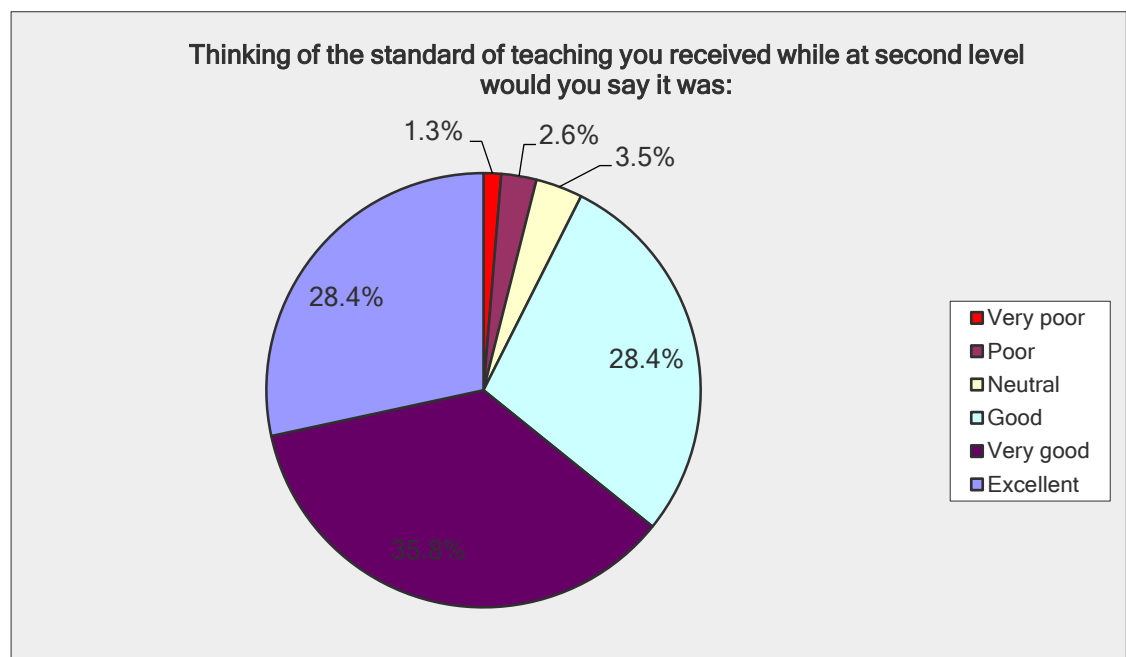
The next section examined respondents' third level experience. 30% of respondents continued to study through the medium of Irish at third level. However not all of them were so positive when it came to the transition from studying through Irish at second level to studying through the medium of English at third level with 46.3% either 'disagreeing'/'disagreeing strongly' to the statement that it was 'easy' to transition. The interviews/focus groups allowed for this to be pursued further and find out why this was so for some of them.

Of the respondents who answered this question there were only 1.7% who did not continue to third level education. Again, it would have been interesting to probe the reasons why this was so. However, the results reveal an overwhelming continuance to third level education by these graduates of Irish-medium education. Obviously it is difficult to state with certainty how representative these results are of Irish-medium education as a whole, given that the sample was limited, consisting of respondents who were contacted via email/Facebook/Twitter. These respondents utilised their own social networks to forward the link to others, thereby limiting the sample to members of a particular peer group. Had a different dissemination mechanism been used it is possible the result would not have been the same.

The finding here echoes claims made by Borooah, Dineen & Lynch (2009) who argued that those who received an Irish-medium education benefitted from attending schools with high academic reputations which sent a majority of their students on to third level education. They also benefitted from the network of social contacts they formed while in school. Therefore, the sample of respondents of the current study is likely to have been limited to such social networks.

- **Second Level**

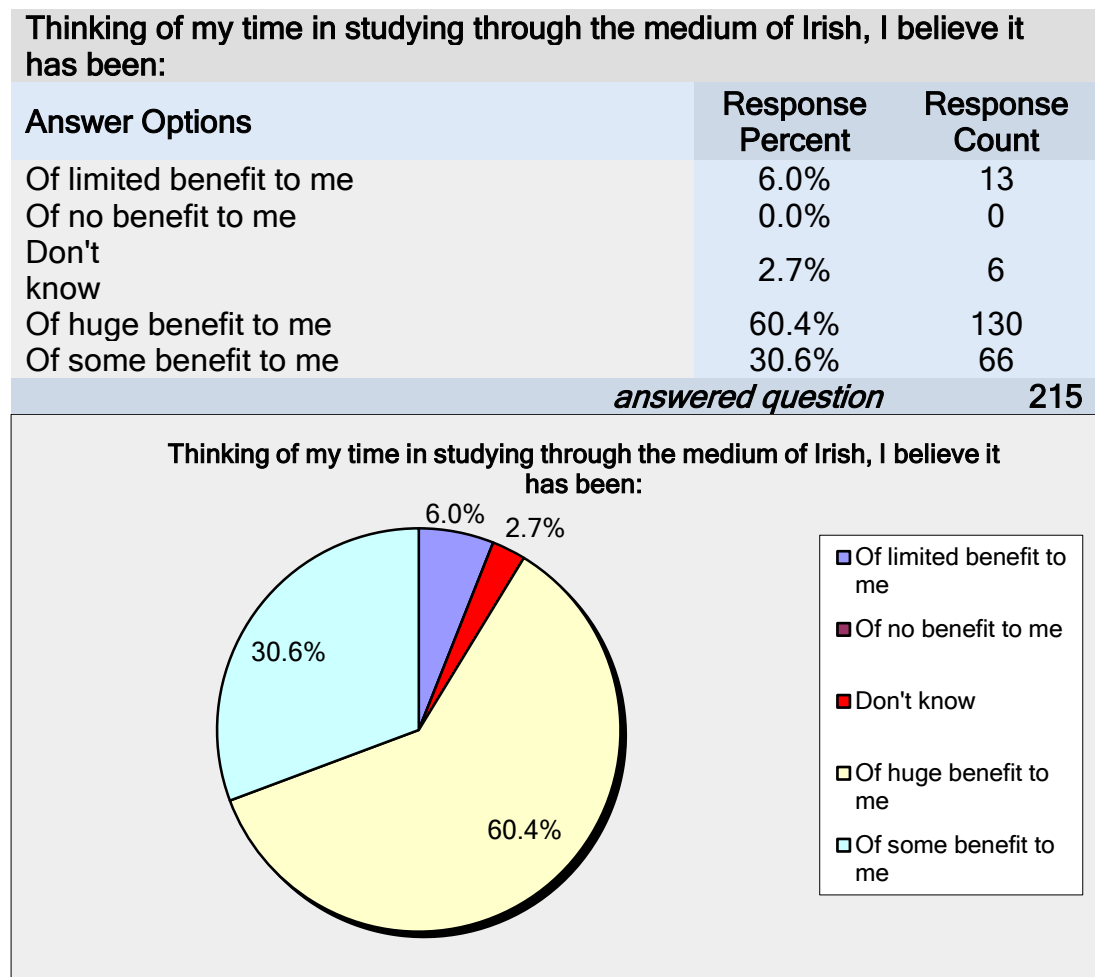
Respondents were then asked about the standard of teaching in their all-Irish second level school. An overwhelmingly positive result is seen below:



Given the type of question asked the responses can be interpreted as both affective and cognitive, with the positive perception of respondents reflective of these aspects of attitude.

### Perceived benefits

The next question was also concerned with the affective and cognitive and a similarly positive picture is painted of the respondent's views concerning whether their time studying through the medium of Irish was of benefit to them, with almost 94% of respondents stating it was of 'some' or of 'huge' benefit to them. Only 6% believed it had been of 'limited' benefit. It is interesting to note that of the 229 respondents who answered the previous question only 215 answered this one.



### Free-Flow Text Box Answers

Further information with regard to this answer was requested and 48 respondents supplied information in the 'free-flow' text box.

### 1. Learning other languages

Of these answers, the main theme which emerged was in relation to the benefits learning through the medium of Irish had provided for learning other languages, with 23 of the 48 respondents commenting on this particular benefit. Comments included:

‘I got very good at switching between languages as needed. This helped when I studied other languages in college.’

‘Chabhraigh oideachas trí Ghaeilge liom leis an leibhéal ard a bhí agam sa Ghaeilge, ach chomh maith leis sin, sna teangacha eile a bhí á dhéanamh agam, mar cabhraíonn líofacht i dteanga amháin chun teanga eile a fhoghlaim.’ (*Learning through the medium of Irish helped with the high standard I had in Irish, but as well as that, in the other languages I was studying, because fluency in one language helps to learn another language*)

‘Níos easca teanganna eile a fhoghlaim. Tá tuaraim agam go bhfuil mé in ann rudaí a obair amach níos tapúla.’ (*Easier to learn other languages. I think I can work things out more quickly.*)

Dunmore’s (2015) study also found this, with 79% of respondents agreeing/strongly agreeing that ‘Gaelic Medium Education (GME) made it easier for me to learn other languages’. It would appear that graduates of immersion education perceive their immersion experience as having made it easier to learn other languages. Therefore, these graduates hold a positive disposition towards their language learning experience however the questionnaire was limited as it did not enquire as to evidence of success in language learning. The respondents’ views are reflective of their attitudes and how they perceived their experience. In this way their responses fit with Santello’s (2015) explanation of the ABC model of attitudes. Respondents’ affective (emotional) and cognitive (belief) attitudes are revealed here.

Some respondents had gone on to study computing in college and stated that studying through the medium of Irish had helped them ‘understand computer languages better.’ Others mentioned how it had ‘helped a lot with problem solving etc. because of the mental challenge involved in learning two or more languages.’ While another stated, ‘being able to transition from one language to another immediately has benefitted me by helping me to think quickly and making me



comfortable and able to deal with rapid change.’ Such executive function (EF) benefits of bilingualism were also mentioned in Kennedy’s (2012) research on Irish-medium education, ‘It is believed that the cognitive and brain processes bilinguals’ use in (i) constantly choosing between two language representations and (ii) their executive control system, overlap resulting in enhanced EF (e.g., Green, 1998) and can have positive effects on linguistic and non- linguistic domains (Bialystok, 2008).’<sup>55</sup> As noted previously, Bialystok (2007) found that bilingual children tend to have improved executive functions such as the ability to control attention, determine planning and categorising. Those who completed the free-flow text box perceived their immersion education as having had offered them these benefits.

## **2. Perceived Difficulties**

However, not everyone was so positive about learning through the medium of Irish, with one respondent commenting, ‘It’s difficult to understand why we add an extra level of difficulty onto the education of any child, if a child only speaks Irish from birth then an all-Irish education is good but why educate a child in their second language?’ But it wasn’t just at primary level that respondents saw difficulty, as another respondent commented, ‘Can prove difficult going on to Third level and being expected to write high academic standard essays having been mostly educated through Irish.’ These individuals obviously saw negatives associated with learning through the medium of Irish but they were in the minority, with less than ten percent of respondents making similar comments. In reading the literature for my research I did not come across any comparable comments in other studies.

## **3. Language as Identity**

The theme of language as identity was another main theme identified by respondents, particularly in relation to the Irish cultural identity and having pride in speaking the language.

‘Is í Gaeilge teanga na hÉireann, muna bhfuil eolas agat faoi, tá tú ag cailliúint amach ar do chuid oidhreacht chultúrtha.’ (*Irish is the language of Ireland, if you don’t know about it you are losing out on your own cultural heritage*)

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<sup>55</sup> Kennedy, Ivan, *Irish Medium Education: Cognitive Skills, Linguistic Skills, and Attitudes Towards Irish* (Ph.D College of Education and Lifelong Learning, Bangor University, 2012) p.84

This point of view was echoed in Ní Dhonnabhain's (2014) research into bilingualism and identity in Ireland, 'Léiríonn torthaí an taighde go gcuireann na déagóirí dátheangacha béim láidir ar ról lárnach na teanga i gcruthú aitheantais an Éireannacha. Is ionann an Ghaeilge dóibh agus samhail d'aitheantas na hÉireann.'<sup>56</sup> (*The results of the research reveal that bilingual teenagers place a strong emphasis on the central role of the language in the creation of Irish identity. To them Irish is a symbol of Irish identity.*)

The ESRI (2015) *Attitudes Towards the Irish Language* study which examined the general public's attitudes (and was not limited to graduates of Irish-medium education) found 'In the Republic, almost two-thirds (64 per cent) believe that Ireland would lose its identity without the Irish language.' This reveals the positive public perception of the link between the Irish language and national identity, this is of interest given the context of the difficult history of the language under successive governments from Cromwellian times to the establishment of the Irish Free State and its survival to the present.

Dunmore's (2015) study of past-pupils of Gaelic-medium education in Scotland found, '86.6% of questionnaire respondents agreed that "Being a Gaelic speaker is an important part of my own Scottish identity" (62.5% agreeing "strongly").'<sup>57</sup> It can be understood from this that those who experienced a Gaelic-medium education were positively influenced as to the language's link to national identity.

#### **4. Language and Pride**

The following comment is but one of the many concerning pride in being an Irish speaker; 'Tá fíor bhród orm go bhfuil mé líofa sa Ghaeilge mar dhuine Éireannach.'<sup>58</sup> (*I'm really proud that I am fluent in Irish as an Irish person.*) This respondent also makes the connection between language and national identity 'as an Irish person'. This is quite a nuanced position as it is not that the language exemplifies Irishness but rather as an Irish person s/he is proud to speak the language.

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<sup>56</sup> Ní Dhonnabháin, Aine, 'An Dátheangachas agus an tAitheantas: Déagóirí Eireannacha sa 21ú haois.' (Ph.D University College Cork, 2014) p.195

<sup>57</sup> Dunmore, Stuart S. 'Bilingual life after school? Language use, ideologies and attitudes among Gaelic-medium educated adults' (phD. Thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2015) p.284

Dunmore's study of Gaelic speakers revealed similarly positive attitudes towards the Gaelic language, with 85.7% agreeing with the statement 'I am proud to be able to speak Gaelic'.

However, there were also those who were happy to have the ability to speak the language yet could not see any benefit to it.

'It's nice to be able to speak Irish, but I never speak Irish.'

'I am glad I am able to speak the language but it is of little benefit to me outside the education system.'

This suggests respondents were, to use Gardner and Lambert's definition, placing an instrumental value on the language rather than an integrative one. According to Gardner and Lambert (1959) an integrative orientation to language learning refers to an interest in learning the language to belong to a language community, while an instrumental orientation to language learning is concerned with extrinsic reasons.

Of the remaining responses given to the question on perceived benefits, the themes which emerged were; the smaller classes in Irish-Medium schools, the lovely atmosphere in such schools, the potential of achieving a high grade in the Irish language to get into teacher training colleges and the uniqueness of being able to speak Irish in today's world - as just 1.7% speak Irish daily outside of the education system according to the 2016 census (CSO). Those who can speak the language have a unique privilege given the difficult history of the language and the language policies adopted by those in power over many hundreds of years.

However, in examining the literature in relation to Irish-Medium education it emerged that the perception of there being smaller classes in Irish-Medium schools warranted further investigation, just as the perception of being guaranteed a high grade in Irish to obtain a college place by virtue of having Irish-Medium education needs investigation also.

### **Frequency and Use**

The next question dealt with a behavioural aspect of attitude as it examined how often respondents speak the Irish language. The overall results to the statement 'I speak the Irish language' were:

Daily within the education system	18.50%	42
Daily outside of the education system	19.38%	44
Weekly	22.47%	51
Not that often	34.36%	78
I never speak it	5.29%	12
		227

Of the 18.5% who claim to speak the language within the education system on a daily basis it is not clear whether those who speak the language are employed as teachers or are in fact still in education themselves at third level. This would have been an interesting additional question to ask. Of those who speak the language daily outside the education system it would have been useful to clarify exactly where this language use takes place.

Of the approx. 40% who rarely, if ever, speak the language - despite their ability to do so - it would have been useful to ask them why this was – a lack of opportunity to do so? Lack of interest? This is certainly an area worth further investigation as it highlights King's (2000) findings that an attitude is not something that can be translated straightforwardly into behaviour. Despite earlier questions in the current study eliciting positive affective responses the results of this question reveal an inconsistency between the affective response and the behavioural response. It was important to examine behaviour in order to include all three aspects of the ABC model of attitudes.

Kennedy's (2012) study of attitude toward the Irish language offered the following insights as to why a person who can speak Irish does not: lack of motivation, limited opportunity for use within a community, limited ability, embarrassment, unawareness of others' skills in the language.

Similarly, Ní Dhonnabháin's (2014) study found embarrassment as being one of the reasons for Irish speakers not speaking the language;

Cuireann siad in iúl nach maith leo aird a tharraingt orthu féin uaireanta i gcomhthéacsanna poiblí lasmuigh de cheantar na Gaeltachta agus dá bharr san, casann siad ar an mBéarla chun a bheith mar an gcéanna le gach duine eile.

*(They make it known that they do not like to draw attention to themselves sometimes in public contexts outside of the Gaeltacht and because of that, they switch to English to be the same as everyone else.)<sup>58</sup>*

<sup>58</sup> Ní Dhonnabháin, Aine, 'An Dátheangachas agus an tAitheantas: Déagóirí Eireannacha sa 21ú

As this part of Ní Dhonnabháin's study dealt with teenagers and their use of language, it is understandable that they felt self-conscious about being 'different' to others, as this period in a young person's life is fraught with the desire to 'fit in' with their peer group.

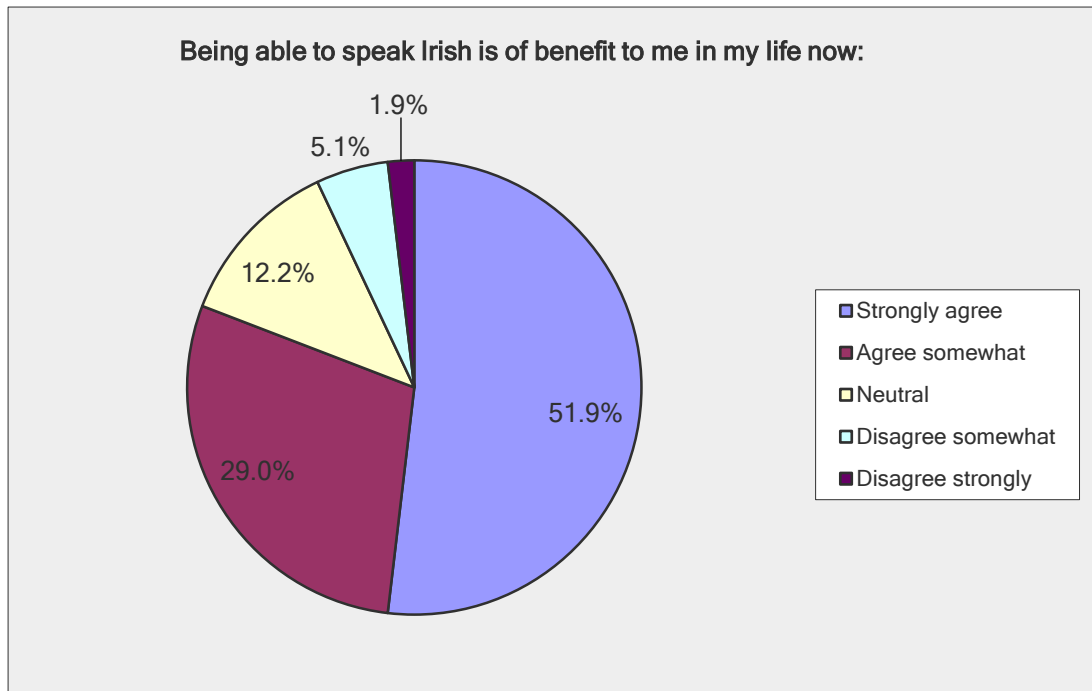
As my research examined past-pupils' attitudes towards the language the age group would have been somewhat older. It would be worth investigating the reasons for this older age group's lack of language use and whether they would provide similar reasons to those in Ní Dhonnabháin's study.

### **Benefits associated with speaking the language**

The next section examined whether respondents thought that being able to speak Irish was of benefit to them now. Almost 80% believed that being able to speak Irish was of benefit to them. The reasons for this were provided by some in a free-flow text box.

This relates to the previous questions which examined beliefs pertaining to bilingual education experience and studying through the medium of Irish, as this too found respondents' perceptions to be largely positive.

<b>Being able to speak Irish is of benefit to me in my life now:</b>		
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Strongly agree	51.9%	111
Agree somewhat	29.0%	62
Neutral	12.2%	26
Disagree somewhat	5.1%	11
Disagree strongly	1.9%	4
Why?		
<i>answered question</i>		<b>214</b>



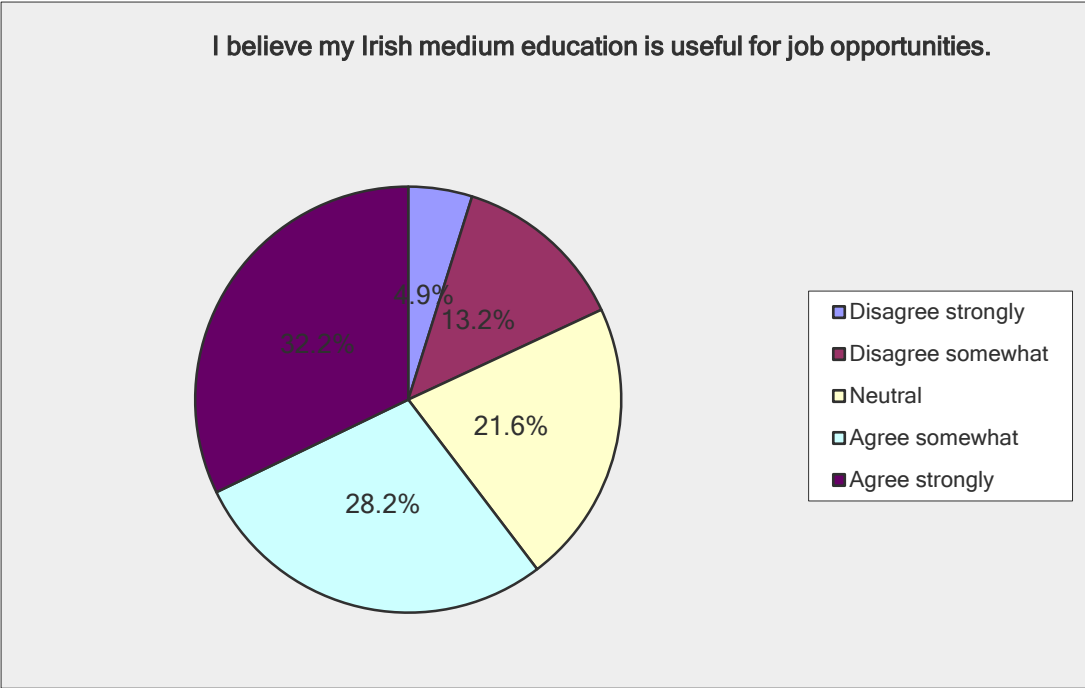
Those who did not see any benefit to being able to speak Irish commented; ‘I am not surrounded by Irish speakers’, ‘Ní bhíonn seans agam Gaeilge a labhairt’ (*I don’t have the chance to speak Irish*) and ‘It is not used at work or socially.’

Those who did see benefit mentioned how they were teachers and used it in their daily lives at work. Interestingly, those respondents who gave negative responses *and* those who gave positive responses both had an ‘instrumental’ motivation to language use. This reveals that the *context* from which the respondent was answering is an important element of their motivation to use the language.

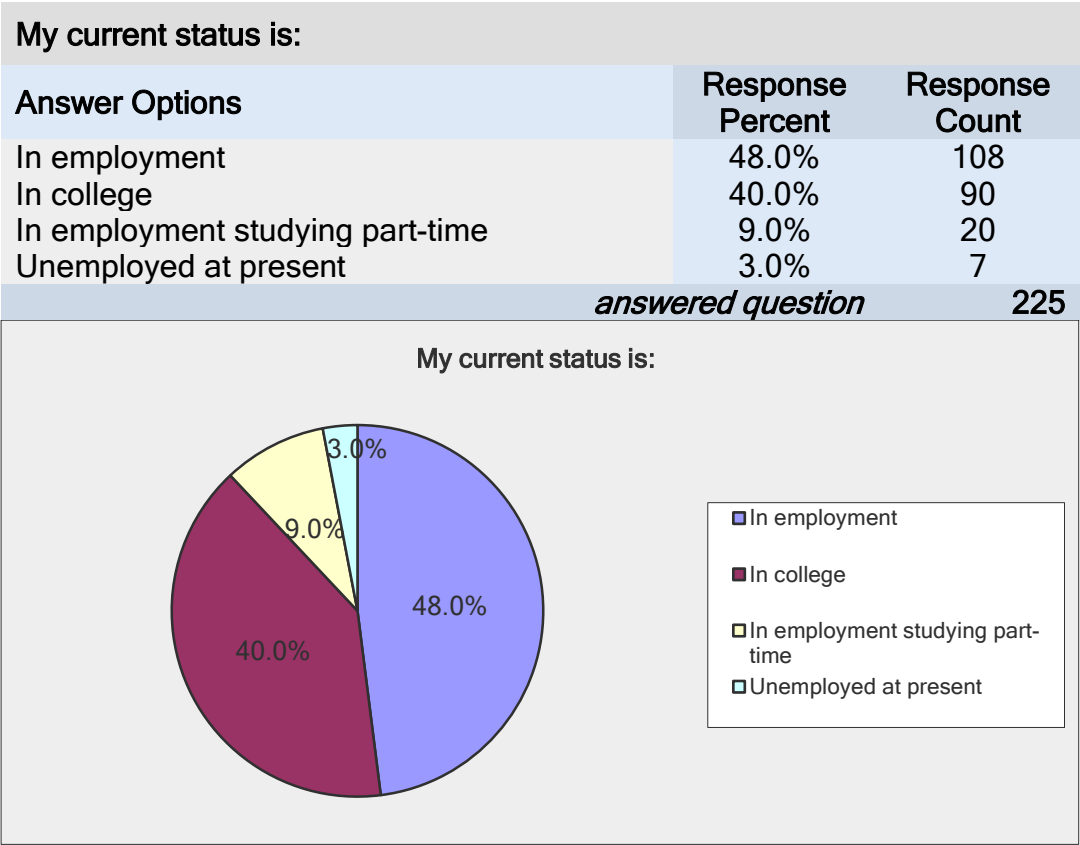
### **Irish-Medium Education and Job Opportunities**

The next section examined whether respondents believed the Irish language was useful for job opportunities, with 60.35% agreeing somewhat/strongly. The literature examined in relation to Irish-Medium education did not provide any insights to this area, so further investigation would be worthwhile.

<b>I believe my Irish medium education is useful for job opportunities.</b>		
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Disagree strongly	4.9%	11
Disagree somewhat	13.2%	30
Neutral	21.6%	49
Agree somewhat	28.2%	64
Agree strongly	32.2%	73
<b><i>answered question</i></b>		<b>227</b>



Of those who answered almost half were in employment (48%) with a further 9% employed part-time while in college. The low figure of those unemployed could be interpreted as a positive reflection on the educational background of respondents, although, as the sample was limited in its respondents it is impossible to hypothesise further.



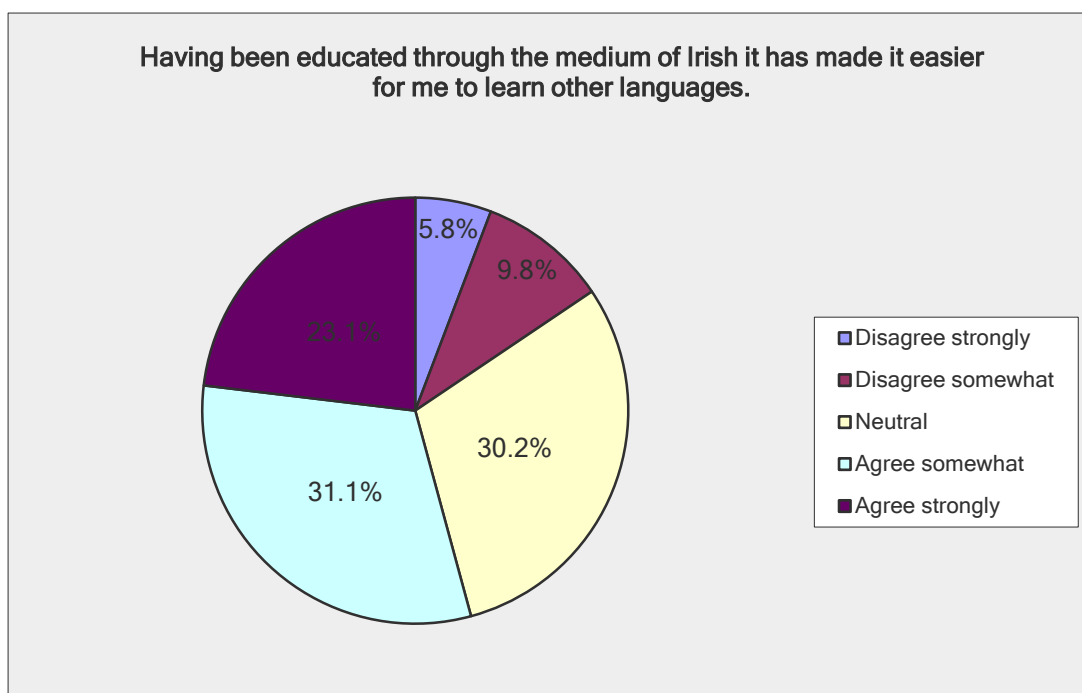
### **Irish-Medium Education and Language Learning**

Respondents were then asked about whether they believed having been educated through the medium of Irish had helped them learn other languages. This topic already emerged after the earlier question asking whether Irish-Medium education had been of benefit to respondents. In the free-flow text box provided many respondents had noted this benefit.

In response to this later question a large number agreed that it had been beneficial (54.2%) however a note of uncertainty is seen with over 30% neutral – perhaps this percentage did not in fact learn another language at school and this option should have been catered for in the responses. As previously mentioned, Dunmore’s study of GME also found respondents held similarly positive beliefs regarding second language learning having received a bilingual education. Again it should be noted that respondents’ perceptions concerned affective and cognitive aspects of attitude rather than behaviour. Further investigation is warranted as to whether having been educated in an Irish-Medium setting actually translates into success in learning other languages.

Having been educated through the medium of Irish it has made it easier for me to learn other languages.		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Disagree strongly	5.8%	13
Disagree somewhat	9.8%	22
Neutral	30.2%	68
Agree somewhat	31.1%	70
Agree strongly	23.1%	52
<i>answered question</i>		<b>225</b>

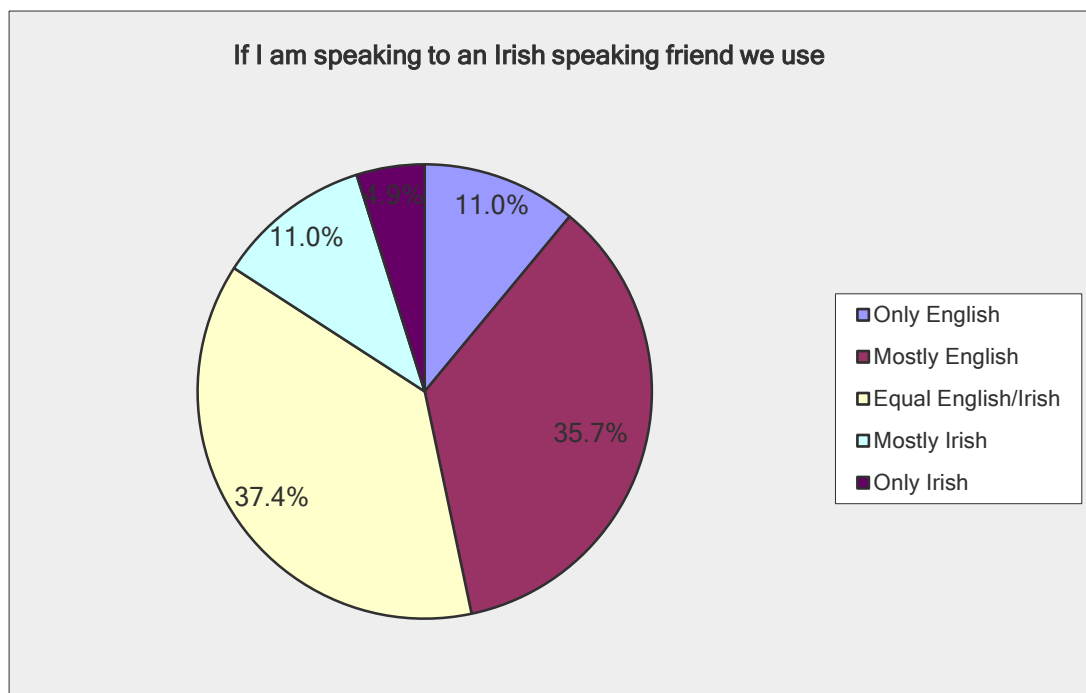




### Choice of language amongst Irish speakers

In the next section I was keen to ascertain exactly where respondents currently use the Irish language in their lives. They were asked firstly about their use of the language with an Irish-speaking friend. The results revealed that only 16% used mostly Irish or Irish only, with 37.4% opting to use English and Irish equally. Almost one in every two respondents (47%) used English or mostly English with their friend instead of Irish. The data here reflects the behavioural aspect of attitude and, once again, there is an inconsistency between the low level of language use and the previous highly positive attitudes seen in responses pertaining to the affective and cognitive. It would have been interesting to probe further as to why this was. It would also have been interesting had the data allowed for cross-analysis to examine the length of time elapsed since graduation from post-primary and the tendency to speak Irish (or otherwise) with friends.

If I am speaking to an Irish speaking friend we use		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Only English	11.0%	25
Mostly English	35.7%	81
Equal English/Irish	37.4%	85
Mostly Irish	11.0%	25
Only Irish	4.9%	11
<i>answered question</i>		<b>227</b>



The results of the current study contrast with those of Fleming and Debski's (2007) study of primary school children's use of Irish in different language settings, which found that 100% of participants who attended an Irish-medium school spoke English to their Irish-medium friends outside of school.<sup>59</sup> Kennedy's study (2012) of Irish-medium pupils' use of Irish with school friends outside of school garnered a very similar response, with 98.9% of respondents using English.<sup>60</sup>

It is interesting to note the difference between this data, concerning children of primary school age and the current study's past-pupil cohort. It would appear that those who continued in Irish-medium education at post-primary had a greater use of the language with their Irish-speaking friends than those who were still attending primary school. This could indicate that the tendency to use the language with peers is solidified by virtue of the additional 5/6 years spent in immersion education at second level.

Dunmore's (2015) study offers further insight on this topic, as his graduates of Gaelic Medium Education spoke Gaelic or mostly Gaelic to each other 26% of the

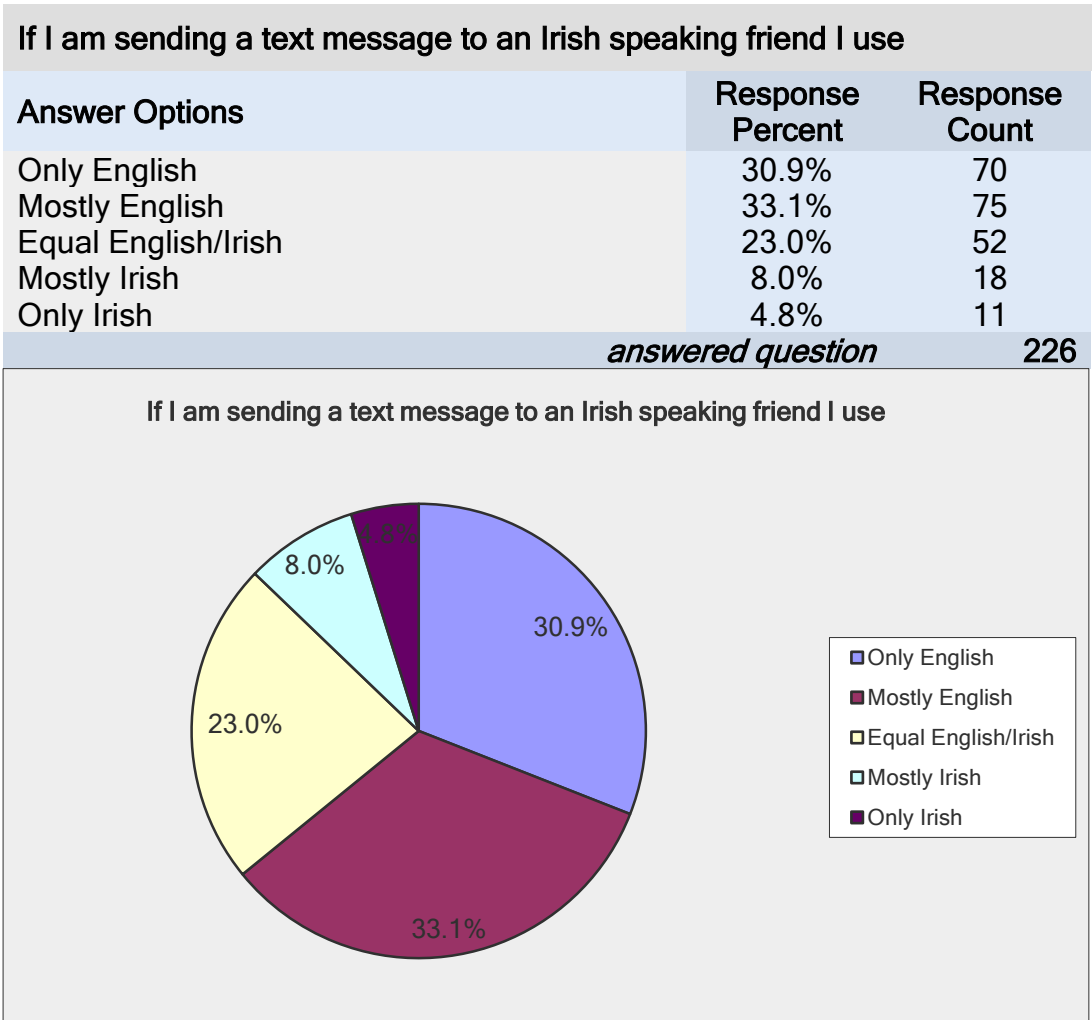
<sup>59</sup> Fleming, Aisling & Debski, Robert *The Use of Irish in Networked Communications: A Study of Schoolchildren in Different Language Settings*, Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 28:2 (2007) p.92 (Table 5)

<sup>60</sup> Kennedy, Ivan *Irish Medium Education: Cognitive Skills, Linguistic Skills, and Attitudes Towards Irish* (ph.D College of Education and Lifelong Learning, Bangor University, 2012) p. 250 (Table 79)

time, which is higher than the results of the current study (16%). 19% spoke equal Gaelic/English whereas the corresponding figure for this study was 37.4%. 65% of Dunmore’s respondents spoke English or mostly English to each other, the figure for this study was lower at 46.7%. Given that respondents from the current study and Dunmore’s study left immersion education at varying times, some graduates of ten years or more and some less than 3 years, it would be interesting to probe the levels of Gaelic/Irish use in relation to the length of time elapsed since graduation.

### Language Use on Social Media

The next section asked respondents which language they used when texting an Irish-speaking friend. The figures were largely similar, with 4.8% using only Irish when texting, compared to 4.9% if communicating orally with a friend.



Fleming and Debski’s (2007) study also found a similarly low figure for texting an Irish-speaking friend in Irish, with no one using Irish all or most of the time. In fact, 35.1% rarely used Irish and 59.5% never used Irish.

Given that texting is but one aspect of modern communication in today's world it is worthwhile to examine briefly the evolution of this type of virtual written communication. In 1995 the internet became fully commercialised, with use worldwide set at 16 million, by 2017 3,835 million users existed. English is considered as 'the language of the internet' with 66.3% of all pages in English.<sup>61</sup> Data on the Irish language's presence online is very difficult to come by however a study on the web presence of 32 primarily European languages in 2000 by Greffenstette and Nioche<sup>62</sup> found Irish 'comprised just 0.083% of content, and Welsh was the least well represented language with 0.013%.' This provides a clear indication of the lack of representation of Irish in the online world. Fleming and Debski's study of primary school children found 'Irish was rarely used with networked communications by the schoolchildren in the study. It is obvious that the children considered English to be the language of networked communications, and they have face- to-face conversations in Irish in and outside the classroom more often than they send emails or chat in Irish or browse Irish websites.'<sup>63</sup> Clearly this tendency to use English for networked communication (ie. Online or via text) begins at an early age, so it is no surprise to find in the current study that graduates are continuing this trend.

However, Fleming and Debski proposed that schools can take this issue in hand if they were to 'incorporate Irish language Internet content into class work, organise collaborative online activities and expose their students to all forms of modern technology through the language. If these children see the language as being alive in these media, then language usage in this modern domain should increase.'<sup>64</sup> In theory this sounds like a great idea, but in practice teachers can find it difficult to find age appropriate material for their students in Irish on the internet.

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<sup>61</sup> [www.internetworldstats.com](http://www.internetworldstats.com)

<sup>62</sup> Greffenstette, G. & Nioche, J. "Estimation of English and non-English Language Use on the WWW" from *Proceedings of RIAO'2000 (Content-Based Multimedia Information Access)*, Paris, April 12-14, 2000.

<sup>63</sup> Fleming, Aisling & Debski, Robert *The Use of Irish in Networked Communications: A Study of Schoolchildren in Different Language Settings*, Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 28:2 (2007) 98

<sup>64</sup> Fleming, Aisling & Debski, Robert. *ibid.* 99

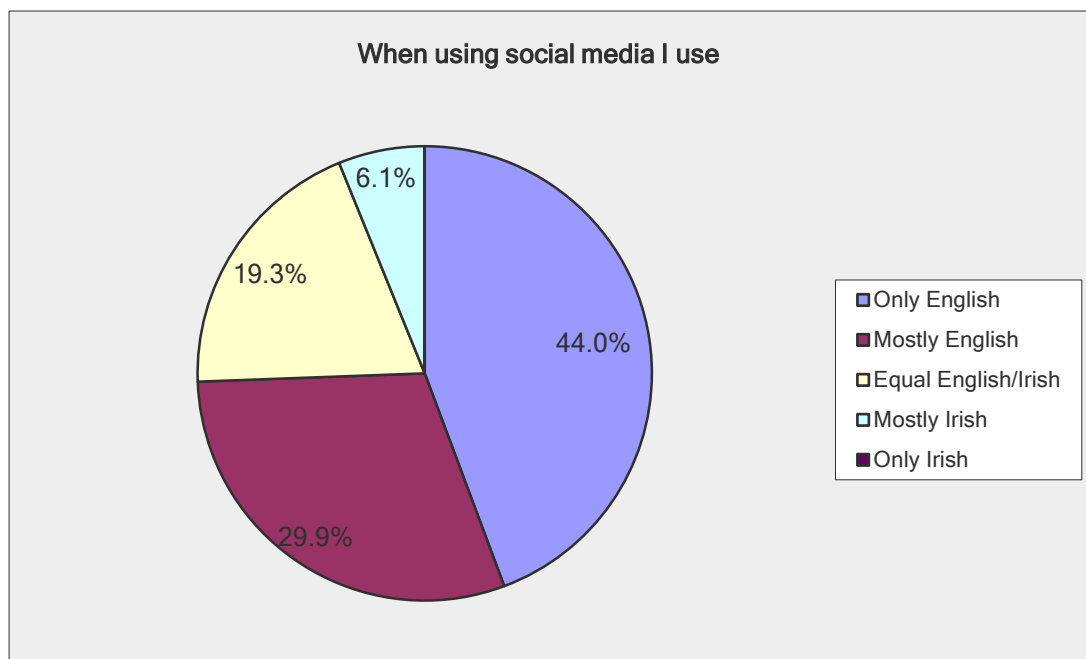
## Use of Irish on Social Media

The next section continued to examine use of the Irish language while using modern technology and methods of communication, in this case the question examined use of the Irish language on social media. These figures were, unsurprisingly, low, with only 15 of the 227 respondents using Irish only. Similarly, Dunmore's study of Gaelic Medium Education's past-pupils found that not a single respondent used 'only Gaelic' on social media, with a mere 6 individuals of the 112 respondents using 'mostly Gaelic'. Such lack of use of minority languages on social media is not limited to Irish and Gaelic, which I will expand on further momentarily. Neither is it surprising as, as previously noted, English is considered to be the 'language of the internet' therefore, as social media exists on the internet, it too is bound to be subject to the same language choices.

The functionality of various social media platforms for the use of a language other than English has been in development for many years. Users can opt to set their language on Facebook and Twitter to 'Gaeilge' and Snapchat recently launched county filters but have yet to offer Irish as a language choice. Given that many people use social media I was curious as to whether Irish language speakers availed of the choice open to them on social media.

The results clearly show that the vast majority of Irish speakers choose to use mainly English when on social media. These results once again display inconsistency between the behavioural aspect of respondents' attitudes and their affective and cognitive attitudes.

When using social media I use		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Only English	44.0%	100
Mostly English	29.9%	68
Equal English/Irish	19.3%	44
Mostly Irish	6.1%	14
Only Irish	0.0%	1
<i>answered question</i>		<b>227</b>



A study of 200 young Welsh speakers (13 – 18 years) via an online questionnaire by Cunliffe, Morris and Prys (2013) found that the language used on social media was ‘an extension of their language use in their daily lives. This is a key research finding, and was seen in all the focus groups....The reason given for using English was that everybody in their social network would understand English status updates.’ They elaborated further on these reasons saying, ‘... it could be argued that some of these pupils feel pressure to conform to the use of English as the language of the internet.’<sup>65</sup> Like the respondents in the current study, these Welsh speakers are in immersion education and they too have similar language preferences for online communication.

A study of Irish language use on social media by Caulfield (2013) found small numbers of active Irish language users online. In the ‘Irish Language Twittersphere’ (ITL) he found 274 Irish language accounts in February 2012. Of these accounts more than half were located in Ireland outside of Gaeltacht areas. (See ‘Table 27’ below)

<sup>65</sup> Cunliffe, Morris & Prys, “Investigating the Differential Use of Welsh in Young Speakers’ Social Networks”, in *Social Media and Minority Languages*, ed. Elin Haf Gruffydd Jones and Enrique Uribe-Jongbloed (Multilingual Matters, 2013) p. 82/83

Location	Gaeltacht	Ireland, possibly Gaeltacht	Ireland, Outside Gaeltacht	Rest of World	Unknown
Users	36	58	138	26	16
Percentage	13%	21%	50.5%	9.5%	6%
Percentage identified	14%	22.5%	53.5%	10%	

**Table 27. Twitter user location.**

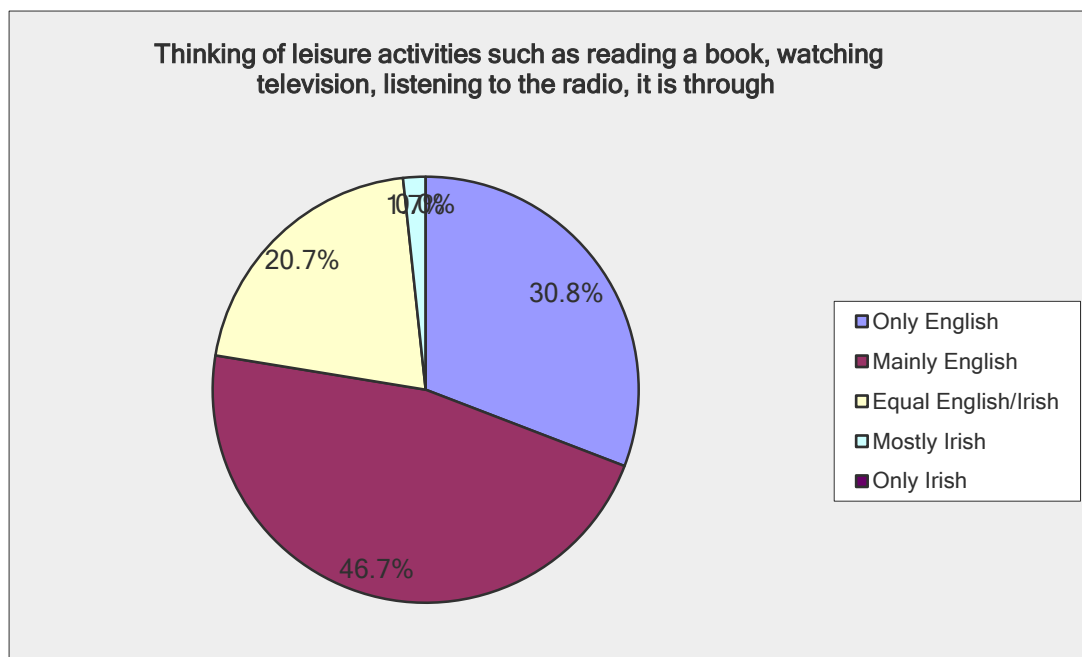
Caulfield's study also found 265 individuals who actively participated in an Irish language Facebook Group 'Gaeilge Amhain' in August 2012. 'The group was created in 2011 with a mission to encourage Facebook users to interact through Irish only. Since then it has attracted over 1,600 members with various levels of activity.'<sup>66</sup> The current study did not enquire specifically into use of Facebook or Twitter in Irish however the results reveal only 15 respondents used mostly or only Irish on social media. Such respondents could have been members of the groups identified in Caulfield's study.

### **Language Use in Leisure Activities**

Following on from this, respondents were asked which language their leisure activities (such as reading a book, listening to the radio, watching television, etc.) look place in. Given the previous answers and also the nature of Irish society with only 1.7% of the population speaking Irish daily outside of the education system, it is unsurprising that not a single respondent stated their leisure activities look place *only* in Irish. 4 individuals of the 227 who answered stated their leisure activities were *mostly* in Irish. With 77.5% using mostly English.

<b>Thinking of leisure activities such as reading a book, watching television, listening to the radio, it is through</b>		
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Only English	30.8%	70
Mainly English	46.7%	106
Equal English/Irish	20.7%	47
Mostly Irish	1.7%	4
Only Irish	0.0%	0
<b><i>answered question</i></b>		<b>227</b>

<sup>66</sup> Caulfield, John, "A Social Network Analysis of Irish Language Use in Social Media" (Ph.D School of Welsh, Cardiff University, 2013) p. 158



What the reason for this was is another area worth probing as we have access to Irish language radio, television and books. Was it to do with variety of choice? Or purely a personal preference?

It certainly reveals a lack of continued engagement with the language, and concurs with Murtagh's study which found 'If school is the only place that Irish is used, then O'Laoire argues that 'when school is out', students tend to forget Irish, seeing it as something irrelevant.'<sup>67</sup> The behavioural aspect of respondents' attitudes in the current study provides support for this theory, but it must be remembered that it is not only due to 'school' being 'out' that respondents' use of the language diminishes, it is also due to other factors outlined previously in relation to using a language such as: motivation, limited ability, limited opportunities within a community to use the language, embarrassment and unawareness of others' ability in the language.

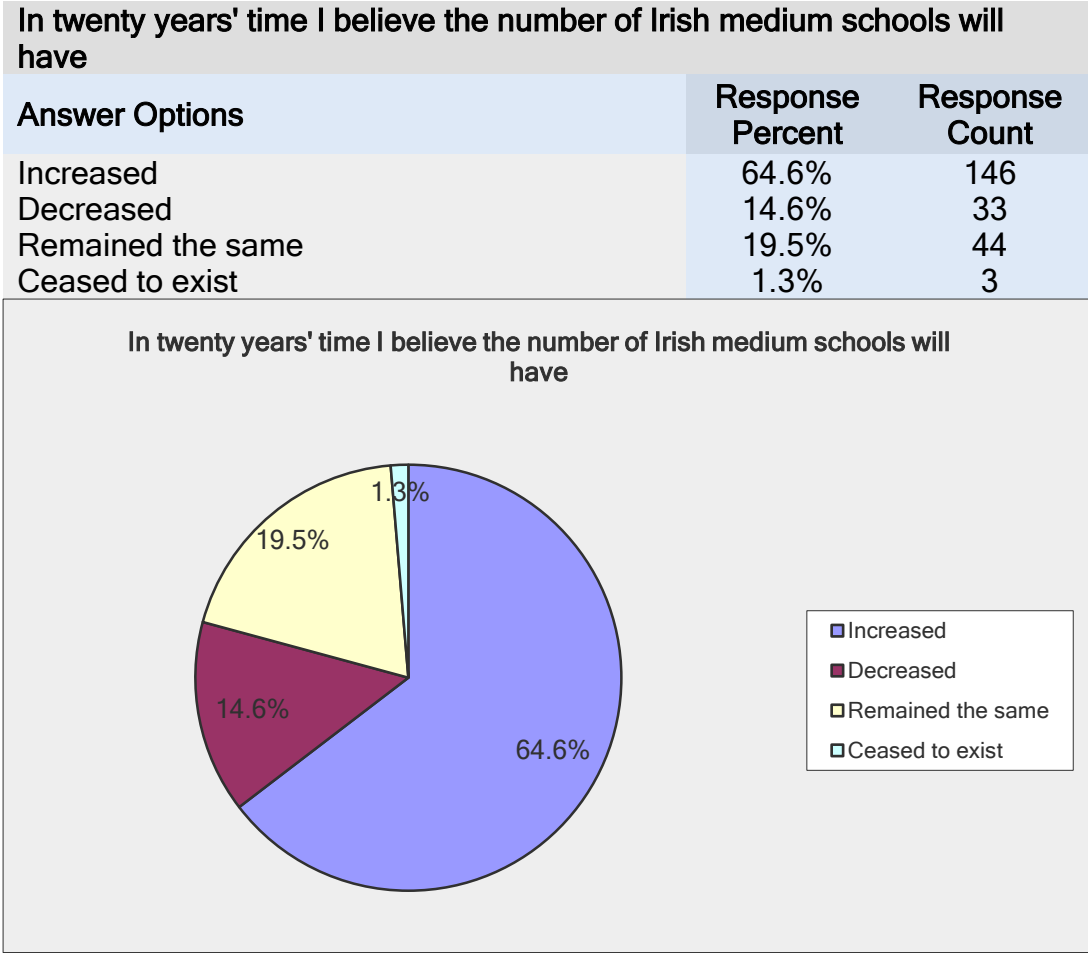
### The Future of Irish-Medium Education

The next section reverted to examining affective and cognitive aspects of respondents' attitudes as they were asked about their views on the future of Irish

<sup>67</sup> Murtagh, Lelia, "Out-of-school Use of Irish, Motivation and Proficiency in Immersion and Subject-only Post-primary Programmes", *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 10:4, (2007) 428-453, DOI: 10.2167/beb453.0 p.450



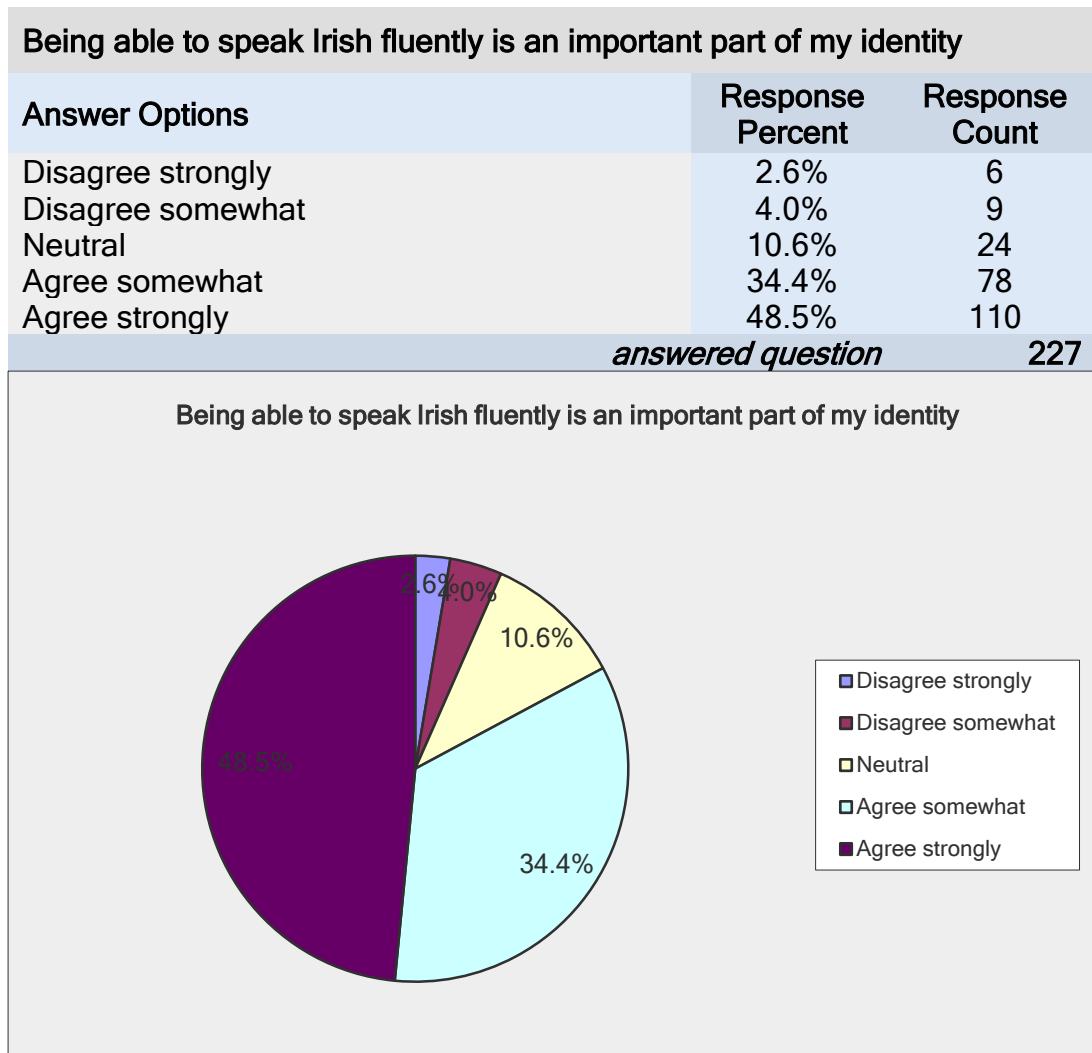
medium education, specifically whether they believed the number of schools would have changed in twenty years' time. The responses were hugely positive (84.1%) with a strong belief in the future of Irish medium schools.



### Language and Identity

As a final question another affective and cognitive aspect of attitude was examined, namely whether respondents believed speaking the Irish language was an important part of their identity. Despite respondents' overall lack of use of the language as revealed earlier, they still believed that speaking the Irish language was an important part of their identity. This echoes similar findings by Ní Dhonnabháin<sup>68</sup>. My survey found 82.82% of respondents agreed somewhat or strongly that speaking Irish was an important part of their identity.

<sup>68</sup> Ní Dhonnabháin, *An Dátheangachas & an tAitheantas* (Ph.D 2014, UCC)



When analysed in terms of the ABC model of attitudes the quantitative data revealed the affective and cognitive aspects of respondents' attitudes were largely positive, however the behavioural aspect of respondents' attitudes did not correlate.

## 4.2 Qualitative Research Data Analysis

Once the online questionnaire link was closed at the end of January I arranged to meet with two focus groups over the February midterm break. This time was chosen as it suited my employment commitments and it also coincided with the monthly breakfast meeting of Teach na Gaeilge students in UCD.

The focus groups consisted of five undergraduate students in UCD (three females and two males) and three undergraduates in TCD (two females, one male). The interviews were conducted with two females, both attending third level, and one

male who completed third level and is now in employment. The focus group in UCD was made up of residents of Teach na Gaeilge, who had been contacted by the Irish officer in college and invited to participate after their monthly breakfast meeting.

The focus group in TCD was formed when one member saw my request online and contacted me directly. She then invited two college friends to join her as she knew they too had attended an Irish-medium secondary school.

The three interviewees contacted me directly upon seeing my request online.

My endeavours to recruit past-pupils outside the education system to form focus groups/ to be an interviewee failed, as I did not have any contact details for many of them and those whose contact details I did have now live abroad. I attempted to arrange a Skype call with a past-pupil in America but this did not succeed due to his work commitments.

It would have been wonderful to speak with those who graduated some time ago as their answers could have provided interesting comparisons, given that they'd be at a different stage in their lives. It proved extremely difficult to contact this cohort of graduates, perhaps because, unlike the current generation of undergraduates who have high levels of internet use, their online presence appears to have been far less. I also asked those graduates who graduated ten years or more to forward my contact details to others within their peer group but this failed to locate more respondents.

In preparing for the focus groups and interviews the content of the online questionnaire was re-visited and the following broad questions were used to cover the same topics with the intention respondents would elaborate further in their answers.

1. Describe your experience of Irish-medium education at second level.
2. What is your view of Irish-medium education now?
3. Has your Irish-medium education effected your life in any way? How?
4. Would you recommend Irish-medium education to another?
5. Describe the quality of teaching and learning you received.
6. Were there any subject areas which you felt were particularly difficult, given that you were studying through Irish?
7. Did you ever consider doing a third level course through Irish?
8. Do you use the Irish language now? If so, in what context?

Having read and re-read the content of the two focus groups and three interviews the data was analysed firstly through highlighting key terms and creating notes by hand. Then MAXQDA software was used to categorise answers and to allow for cross-referencing.

The following themes emerged: teachers in Irish medium schools, translation difficulties, opportunities offered, lack of opportunities, use of the language, recommendations.

### **Use of language**

When asked to describe their Irish-Medium educational experience respondents commented on the need for students to use the Irish language at all times while in school in order to gain the most benefit from it and so as to improve, *'you don't get the opportunities unless you're making an effort to speak it outside of the classes and things like that'*. Motivation is a key here, if students aren't interested they won't try, respondents could see the difficulties in encouraging students to speak Irish with one commenting, *'I felt it was like they were encouraging us to use the language while penalising us/ sometimes there were prizes for those who spoke most Irish but overall it was penalties that we had'*. The techniques employed by schools to increase motivation were instrumental, as Gardner & Lambert (1959) described. Students were being encouraged to use the language for extrinsic reasons rather than integrative ones, as it seemed the desire to integrate with the language community was not always consistent.

When asked about why they thought this was so respondents answered, *'there's a custom young people have in an Irish-medium school to be speaking English because it is the 'cool' thing to do and so on/ everyone was doing it, it wasn't right...'*. Despite the acknowledgement that it is not correct to speak in English while attending an Irish medium school respondents claimed that things only disimproved as they went through secondary school, *'but there was a lot more Irish being spoken when I started in the school in first year than there was when I left in sixth year.'* However, when I enquired as to how schools managed this difficulty, respondents were quick to criticise the methods used. *'They were really strict on*

*people who didn't speak in Irish in school, kind of too strict I think, which is probably the biggest problem/ people that are too strict are a problem, people who are too lazy too... so there's two things.'* So, although respondents did not like the strict manner of teachers they did however acknowledge that it was perhaps laziness on the part of the students as to why they did not converse using the Irish language while in school.

Ni Dhonnabhain's (2014) study found a similar issue, she says, (translated here) *'sometimes this is done (breaking the rule to speak Irish) to purposely go against the 'norm' practised in the community, their parents' wishes and school rules....every young person isn't happy to agree with the image adults have. Because of this, rules concerning hair styles, make-up and clothes, as well as language, are broken because young people want to display their own personal identity.'*

Young people need to create their own identity, Erikson (1972) proposed that identity formation is the key developmental task of adolescence. They need to break rules, to test boundaries. This is likely to blame for the rule to speak Irish in respondents' schools being broken. It would have been interesting to put this theory to respondents.

One focus group contrasted the attitude sometimes seen in Ireland with the attitudes seen in other countries towards native languages, *'Europeans have three or more languages, the Russians don't say 'No, I don't want to learn Russian because English is the language of business..' 'the Italians don't say 'no I'm not learning Italian' and the mindset here in Ireland... we aren't learning Irish because it is 'dead' and I can't understand this at all.'*

O'Reilly (1999) offers an explanation of why this occurs;

*'dead language discourse is important because it forms and expresses an ideology which Gaeilgeoiri in the South must oppose. There is a focus on the lack of utility of the Irish language in this discourse, particularly in light of EU membership. Other European languages are seen as more useful, particularly English which provides certain advantages in many parts of the world.'*<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> O'Reilly, Camille, *The Irish Language in Northern Ireland: The Politics of Culture and Identity* (Macmillan, 1999), p.153

Such an instrumental orientation towards language use has been touched on previously in the quantitative analysis and it is interesting that the same theme emerged from the focus group.

Such ‘dead language discourse’ was also examined in a study by Kavanagh (1999). She found secondary school students did not consider Irish to be a dead language, however when asked if the language could be revived as a common means of communication only a small minority agreed. This attitude is reflective of the responses received in the current study’s online questionnaire, which were positive regarding the benefits associated with Irish-medium education (and the future thereof) and negative regarding everyday use of the language.

### **Opportunities offered**

There was quite a variety of response when respondents were asked about the opportunities they had because of their Irish medium educational experience. One respondent had the view that Irish medium schools try very hard to promote the Irish culture – sports and music as well as the language. *‘the Irish language schools...they make more of an effort to encourage the Irish culture like music and sports’.*

However, promoting all things Irish to the exclusion of the English language did not sit well with respondents, some complained about the lack of opportunities to try things out in Transition Year - as most activities involved English, *‘I had friends in other schools and they were like “Are you doing ‘Model UN’?” “No, that’s not through the medium of Irish.”’* Others bemoaned the lack of debates in English and one group was very disappointed by the experience they had while at the Young Scientist exhibition. *‘When we went to the RDS no one was able to read our poster and everyone was kind of standing in front of the poster saying, “I’m sure your research is very interesting but I don’t understand a word you’ve written”, and you know, that’s a little disheartening when you’ve put in that much work and nobody can understand it.’*

Such experience is indicative of the low levels of Irish of the general public, with only 1.7% of the population speaking Irish daily outside the education system (CSO 2016). These students’ experience at the Young Scientist is also indicative of the uniqueness of the Irish-medium second level experience, with less than 9% of all second-level schools offering such an educational experience, thus their students are

going to be in the minority at such competitions. Whether their use of Irish has an impact on their success/ on how they are judged is another issue I would like to examine.

However, this negative experience was balanced by another respondent's positive experience while abroad at a 'Youth Leaders' event in Brussels. Students from around Europe were invited to attend. *'It made me feel ashamed that everyone else was fluent in two languages, they had English/French and their own language and if I hadn't been attended a Gaelscoil.....I had a kind of 'realisation', if I hadn't had Irish I would've been the only person – apart from England- that had only one language and I felt set apart from Europe in that way, we don't have that mindset in Ireland and I felt...I was kind of ashamed just about the country, the way we look at other languages and learn languages.'* This respondent's comments bring to mind the Eurostat figures for 2014 which revealed more than 51% of all upper secondary students in Europe study two or more foreign languages, the figure for Ireland was 7%.

Respondents were thankful that they were unique in their experience in Ireland, in having been educated bilingually they felt it had benefitted them in terms of learning other languages, *'I thought when we did French in school that it was easy to learn.../I think it was said that it helps you to learn other languages if you already have a second language.'* This mirrors the findings of the online questionnaire and ties in nicely with Dunmore's findings (as previously cited).

However, respondents noticed that when it came to job-hunting having another language was helpful but *'they had far more interest in the level of French I had than the level of Irish I had/ I don't think I'll get a great fabulous job just because I have Irish.'* This is again reflective of the instrumental orientation that some have towards the language.

However, another respondent claimed that having an Irish medium education had helped him in gaining employment as he now teaches in an Irish medium school and firmly believes his own experience was a big plus when it came to getting an interview.

Respondents did appreciate the view that having an education through the medium of Irish does have other benefits, with one saying, *'you get a higher level of*

*education in Irish language schools.*’ It would have been worthwhile to probe what exactly was meant by ‘higher level’ – was the respondent referring to the higher executive function skills developed? Or to the unique experience of Irish-medium education in comparison to other schools?

Another respondent was keen to point out that having been educated through Irish meant he could *‘be in the Cumann Gaelach, to live in Teach na Gaeilge on campus.’* The opportunities for past-pupils of Irish medium education can be seen at third level here as UCD offers ‘Teach na Gaeilge’ or a subsidised form of accommodation for some students who have done very well in their Irish exams. The Cumann Gaelach was mentioned by another in terms of its facilitating the creation of new friendships among Irish speakers, *‘it’s an Irish community to make friends and English speakers would not have the chance to become part of this community, so that’s nice.’* Such Irish language clubs offer Irish speakers a community within which to speak the language, they encourage the continuance of language use beyond the classroom, which, according to MacIntyre et al. (1998) is the aim of second language instruction. This opportunity to use Irish in the context of authentic social communication is also seen in the monthly ‘Pop-Up Gaeltacht’ in Dublin city. This monthly event is proving very popular and, although initially limited to Dublin, there have been ‘Pop-Up Gaeltacht’ events in other counties and indeed other countries. So far events have occurred in Paris, New York, Hong Kong, Perth, Glasgow, Toronto, London, to name but a few. It would have been interesting to enquire as to whether respondents had frequented such events and their reasons for doing so.

The exclusive nature of the Cumann Gaelach UCD was a source of pride for many of the respondents, the idea that ‘this place is ours and ours alone.’ Such an attitude could be interpreted as defensive and exclusive however this is not the case. These Irish clubs at third level welcome anyone with an interest in learning to speak the language and provide classes and conversation groups depending on the levels of interest.

The pride associated with being able to speak the language also came through when asked about the standard of teaching received while in Irish medium education. One respondent who was from a Gaeltacht area commented on the teachers who joined their school from outside the area, *‘the students...have a richness of Irish coming*



*with them from home and then they're looking at the teacher and they don't respect them... like 'they don't have proper Irish, what are they doing here?'* Students expected their teachers to have as good a command of the Irish language as they did themselves, not to be struggling to learn as they taught. *'So, you see it when teachers are coming in, they want to learn Irish when they're teaching and they're very slow when teaching...'* The respondents were clearly frustrated by this type of experience.

It is understandable that a student who has a high level of fluency may become impatient with someone who is not a native speaker, especially considering that that person is there to teach them a subject and is impeded by their level of Irish. Such impatience towards those who are learning a language is not unique to Ireland, with native speakers in continental Europe of German, French and Spanish, for example, frequently switching to English when a visitor approaches them attempting to use their language (I am speaking from personal experience here).

It is human nature to want to communicate as effortlessly as possible (as seen in the rising use of 'text-speak' for example) so when respondents felt impatient it was quite a natural occurrence. Yes, this attitude could be interpreted as judgmental or defensive but considered in the context of the classroom and the desire to gain understanding of a new topic it is understandable.

Another respondent, who attended an Irish medium school in the 'Galltacht' commented, *'There are an awful lot of teachers in that school that have some Irish and their Irish is an awful lot worse than the students' and because of that there's kind of a circle, the students don't respect them because they think 'why can't the teacher learn Irish like we had to?' and that bothers me.'* But respondents were very understanding as to why these teachers were employed, despite their lack of Irish, respondents knew *'schools ...have big problems getting teachers with Irish'*. Some respondents commented on how those teachers with poor Irish would be given non-exam-year classes and then *'the teachers with Irish would have them for third and sixth year'*. They could see why schools had to operate in this manner as schools *'weren't happy to have an English-speaking teacher in the school.'*

It was not all negative however, with one respondent commenting on the positive experience she had with a teacher of Irish, *'she was so in love with the language and*

*because of that everyone was listening to her. You wanted to learn Irish with her.'* Another respondent praised the high standard of teaching he received overall, *'the standard of teaching was actually brilliant for me...'*. It appears that there is no defining Irish medium education experience as respondents greatly varied in their experience with their teachers. It also appears that respondents in some areas did not suffer as much with a shortage of suitably qualified teachers, it really depended on who was available at the time.

Indeed, the Department of Education and Skills is aware of the issue, with a recent report by the inspectorate into teaching in selected Irish-Medium schools finding:

The competence and ability of some teachers in Irish, and consequently in the teaching of the language, is a matter of significant concern. In a quarter of the classes, it was apparent that the teacher was not comfortable with the language. This is significant and impacts greatly on teaching and learning and on the attitude of students to Irish and to those teachers who do not have much Irish.<sup>70</sup>

Similar findings were found by Ó Grádaigh (2015) who surveyed selected Irish-Medium schools. He found 68% of Principals agreed with the statement 'There are some teachers in this school who do not have a satisfactory standard of Irish.' This reveals that the problems mentioned by respondents have been brought to the attention of the Department in recent reports, what will happen as a result of them remains to be seen.

### **Translation Difficulties**

Each respondent interviewed is, or was, a third level student. When asked about how their Irish medium educational experience had effected their transition to third level respondents mentioned a difficulty with translation - however the difficulty was short-lived. *'I think it was a little bit hard for the first few weeks in first year....It's just it was hard to think of something while in the lecture because you were trying to learn things while thinking, 'What's that? What's that?', but after a few weeks it was very easy.'*

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<sup>70</sup> [https://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Events/Gaeltacht-Education-Policy-Proposals/Case-Study-Primary-and-Post-Primary-Gaeltacht-Schools\\_Irish-medium-Educational-Provision\\_2015.pdf](https://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Events/Gaeltacht-Education-Policy-Proposals/Case-Study-Primary-and-Post-Primary-Gaeltacht-Schools_Irish-medium-Educational-Provision_2015.pdf)  
p.10

Others mentioned how their books for their leaving certificate had been written in English anyway so they were already familiar with the terminology in English as well as Irish. Some mentioned science as posing difficulties, *'the terminology in general...some parts were ok, osmosis was called osmosis and other words just had fadas added.'* *'..the only thing I didn't like was when you were thinking of subjects to do in university, such as science or accounting, and you had studied them through Irish, it's very like starting over again, learning the terminology over again.'*

One respondent also felt at a disadvantage when it came to writing in Irish, she said *'I wanted everything to be accurate, in terms of my grammar and everything like that and it's hard to achieve that accuracy in Irish when you're not from the Gaeltacht...'*

Clearly respondents had mixed views on whether their Irish-Medium educational experience had impeded their settling into studying through the medium of English at third level. The respondent who felt at a disadvantage when it came to grammatical accuracy as she was 'not from the Gaeltacht' was under the impression that native speakers' abilities in the written language were superior. Whether this is in fact the case would be worthwhile examining.

## **Recommendations**

Respondents' views concerning recommendations for Irish medium education varied from promoting the language more, to better planning, to more suitably qualified teachers.

One respondent commented on how the 'positive' system in promoting the Irish language works at primary level, *'if you got the most stars you got a trophy'* however she pointed to a difference at second level, *'in secondary school you just don't care about the awards...it's more about being 'cool'...I think a different system is needed but I don't know what it should be.'*

Another respondent stated his belief that we should be promoting the use of the Irish language from a much younger age by establishing more naíonraí (Irish medium nursery schools), *'it's from the ages of 0 to 6 that are the best years in terms of language development so when you wait for primary school at 5 or 6 you're just getting the end of it...'* A similar viewpoint was held at the opposite end of the education spectrum, with one respondent bemoaning the lack of availability of

courses at third level through the medium of Irish, *'it would be much better to have more courses in Irish or half-Irish half-English, much better.'*

This comment is similar to another made by a respondent concerning improvements in the entire education system, he believed *'there should be more things available, more resources, more competitions...'* And it is clear from the previous section that respondents' experiences with some teachers lacking in Irish language skills in their classrooms need to be addressed by those planning for the future of Irish medium education.

The final question in the interviews asked respondents whether they'd recommend their Irish medium educational experience to others. Every respondent said they would recommend it, for varying reasons. One mentioned the benefits of being bilingual, another mentioned being *'really close to the culture'*. The main thrust of the answers received can be summed up neatly by this response, *'I'd recommend it a lot, I think from a cultural perspective it's a great thing, to keep the language alive and that young people are learning through the medium of Irish.'*

As outlined previously, there have been claims made concerning the benefits of bilingualism and some respondents agreed bilingualism was beneficial, particularly in relation to executive function. Respondents believed they could transfer skills learnt to other areas of their lives, which Bialystok (2007) has written widely on. This aspect of attitude was affective and cognitive as respondents felt positively towards their bilingual educational experience. However, the comments concerning keeping the language alive and being close to Irish culture revealed both an integrative motivation to language use and a positive affective/emotional response towards the language. This echoes the findings from the quantitative data concerning language and identity, as respondents here also agreed that being able to speak the language was a strong part of their Irish identity.

## **5. Conclusion**

- **Introduction**

Both the quantitative and qualitative data portrays the Irish medium educational experience as a largely positive one. Most respondents would recommend Irish medium education to others. Although faults were identified within the system, they were not sufficiently off-putting to taint respondents' overall preference for this type of educational experience. The questions asked of respondents in both data sets ranged from whether they believed their Irish-medium educational experience was of benefit to them, to whether they found it difficult to transition from Irish-medium to English medium education at third level, to whether there were advantages to learning other languages associated with Irish-medium education and to whether they believed Irish was an important part of their identity, to name but a few.

On reflection, there are many areas I realise I could have explored further with respondents within the survey and focus groups. One example being *why* they felt they had a 'positive' or 'negative' experience of Irish medium education, what aspects of it influenced their views?

- **Third Level**

When I enquired about the transition experienced by respondents from using Irish at second level to using English while at third level I was not expecting to find only 53.7% surveyed found it 'easy', however while interviewing and conducting the focus groups I found these respondents were a lot more positive about this transition, feeling it was only difficult initially - if at all. This emerged as an area for further investigation.

- **Second Level**

There was an overwhelmingly positive attitude towards the standard of teaching within the survey respondents' answers, with only 3.9% believing the standard was 'poor'. However, the interviewees and focus group members did not share this feeling as strongly, with a large number commenting on the poor standard of Irish of

*some* teachers – however it should be noted they did not comment on the standard of *teaching*, instead it was the standard of Irish teachers had which was of more concern to them, which is a different matter. The Department of Education and Skills are aware of these issues and have commissioned a study into the provision of teachers for this sector.<sup>71</sup>

There were positive views towards the benefit of having passionate teachers who cared for their students but this was balanced with the acknowledgement that Irish medium schools had difficulties recruiting suitably qualified Irish speaking teachers, with some noting the struggles of teachers who were not so proficient in Irish. Another difficulty for teachers without proficient Irish skills was that the students did not respect them as they should have, students felt disappointed that a teacher would not have the equivalent standard of Irish as they did.

Despite this disappointment with some teachers' Irish, interviewees and focus group members, rather ironically, spoke also of the students in Irish medium schools speaking in English rather than Irish in the halls or yard, as it was seen as 'cool'. This finding supports Ní Dhonnabháin's study (2014) as her respondents also spoke of breaking the Irish rule at school. Ní Dhonnabháin hypothesised that those who broke this rule were merely doing what is natural, testing out various identities during the process of growing up.

Respondents of the current survey complained about the strictness of teachers and the penalties imposed if caught speaking English, but when asked as to what solution they'd propose they were unsure. What they were sure of was the system in place in some schools, of little prizes given for speaking Irish well, and the heavy penalties imposed for not speaking Irish, did not work for older teens. It would be worthwhile to investigate possible solutions to this particular difficulty as it appeared to be very common among respondents' experiences.

### • **Perceived Benefits**

The benefits of Irish medium education were addressed by the survey questions and within the qualitative data. The main benefit, as per the survey respondents', was

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<sup>71</sup> Ó Grádaigh, Sean, *Taighe ar Sholáthar Múinteoirí Ábhar do na hIarbhunscoileanna LánGhaeilge & Gaeltachta* (Scoil an Oideachais, Ollscoil na hÉireann, Gaillimh, 2015)

connected to language learning – specifically learning other languages – with almost half of respondents giving this reason.

However, some individuals saw negatives associated with learning through the medium of Irish but they were in the minority in the survey. In the focus groups some respondents also commented on the difficulties in transitioning to learning through English at third level but admitted that these difficulties were short-lived. In reading the literature for my research I did not come across any comparable comments in other studies. This is obviously an area where further research would be valuable.

Cognitive benefits were also lauded, with one respondent commenting that being used to switching between languages had helped him while studying computer programming in college. Another respondent stated that Irish-Medium students receive a ‘higher level of education’ – it would have been useful to probe exactly what was meant by this.

The generally smaller classes of Irish-Medium schools and the friendly atmosphere therein gained mention also, but it would have been interesting to examine the location of such schools wherein such small classes existed and the length of time elapsed since the respondent had graduated, as in my experience today’s Irish-Medium schools are frequently oversubscribed with little chance of smaller classes.

Identity was another theme which emerged with respondents taking pride in knowing their national tongue. This was echoed within the interviews and focus groups too. They too mentioned language learning benefits but many were frustrated by the attitudes of Irish people towards language learning and learning the Irish language specifically. Some expressed frustration at the view the language is ‘dead’ so no one needs to know it.

- **Language Use**

Within the online survey I asked how often respondents used the Irish language, with 60% using it weekly or more often. Of the 40% who were not using the language at all it would have been interesting to ascertain why and whether feeling ‘different’ to others (as per Ní Dhonnabháin’s study) was still a consideration when school was out.

Had I been able to cross-analyse data it would also have been worthwhile to ascertain whether the amount of time which had elapsed since graduation from post-primary school had had a negative impact on language use.

When delving deeper into the use of the language with an Irish-speaking friend 47% chose to speak in English, when texting an Irish-speaking friend 64% using only/mostly English, the figure increased for social media, with 73.9% using mostly/only English and for leisure activities 77.5% chose only/mostly English. A number of questions emerged for further investigation, such as the reasons why respondents chose/ did not choose to use the language – was it because texting in English is quicker? Because followers on social media may not have Irish? Or other reasons?

- **Language and Identity**

Despite the poor use of Irish by these respondents with friends/when texting/when online/when reading etc. they did however feel very strongly indeed when it came to the Irish language and identity. Over 82% of all respondents agreed that being able to speak Irish is an important part of their identity, a feeling shared by respondents within the qualitative research.

During the focus groups a positive attitude towards Irish medium education was explicit, however that is not to say there weren't comments made pertaining to possible improvements. One suggestion was that the government should increase the number of naíonraí (Irish medium nursery schools) so that children would learn the language while at the optimum age. Another suggestion was that more third level courses should be available through the medium of Irish, or at least be bilingual. The supply of suitably qualified Irish speaking teachers was another concern.

The final question on the online survey asked whether respondents believed the number of Irish medium schools would have increased/decreased/remained the same in twenty years' time. This question was designed to assess their attitude towards the future of Irish medium education – did it have a future? Only 1.6% believed it would no longer exist. All of the respondents in the qualitative research



believed in the future of Irish medium education, all of them agreed they'd recommend their experience to others.

- **Attitudes**

In examining respondents' attitudes, I used Santello's (2015) explanation of the ABC model of attitudes – A (affective) B (behavioural) C (cognitive).

I found that the main aspects of this model seen during the data analysis were the 'affective' (emotional) and 'cognitive' (beliefs towards). These aspects of attitude were hugely positive when respondents and participants were asked various questions pertaining to their Irish-Medium educational experience. There was an inconsistency however between these aspects of attitude and the behavioural (disposition) aspect. When questioned as to their language practices it became apparent that respondents' attitude (as reflected in their behaviours) was not positive, with the comment *'It's great to be able to speak Irish, but I don't speak Irish'* being typical of responses given.

Gardner and Lambert's (1959) work on motivation in language learning and use of language provided additional clarity to my research. It was noted that respondents' negative attitudes in relation to using the language were due to lack of an instrumental orientation. Although respondents did exhibit an integrative orientation towards the language in relation to the question on language and identity, with many feeling the language was a key element of our culture. Such an integrative orientation did not translate into motivation to speak the language as the data indicates.

Therefore, there were inconsistencies between respondents' instrumental and integrational motivations, just as there were inconsistencies within the ABC model of attitudes. The survey data reveals positive attitudes towards the Irish-Medium educational experience but negative attitudes in relation to use of the Irish language.

I hope my research has provided food for thought on Irish medium education at second level. There are clear benefits according to respondents but there are areas where improvements can be made. Despite some flaws within the system, respondents were happy to heartily recommend their Irish-medium educational experience to others.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### Interview Questions

##### Bilingual Education Experience

1. Why did you attend an Irish-medium second level school? Did you choose it yourself?
2. Was it important to your parents that you received an Irish-medium education? Why do you think this is so?
3. Would you recommend Irish-medium education to others? What would you recommend about it?
4. Do you think Irish-medium schools have anything unique about them as opposed to English-medium schools? (apart from the language of course)
5. In what ways did your school promote the use of the Irish language? Were they effective?
6. Would you agree that Irish-medium second level education has a future? Why?

##### The Irish Language

1. How often do you speak the language now? (One conversation a day/a week/ a month/ less frequently)
2. How do you feel as a bilingual person – do you feel the same as others or different?
3. Having been educated through the medium of Irish would you say it was of benefit in terms of learning other languages? What other languages can you speak fluently?

##### Third Level Experience (if any)

1. Did you choose to study through the medium of Irish at third level? Why?/Why not?
2. Did you find it easy to transition from Irish-medium schooling to studying through English at third level? Explain how you coped etc.
3. Can you think of any advantages your bilingual education at second level offered you when you were at third level?
4. Did you become a member of any Irish language societies while at third level? Why/why not?

##### Post Education

1. In your view, is being able to speak Irish of benefit to you in your life now? How?
2. Was your Irish-medium education useful when it came to job opportunities?
3. What is your current area of employment (if any)?
4. Would you consider working using the Irish language in any way in the future?
5. Overall how would you describe your attitude towards your bilingual education experience? (largely positive/negative etc.)
6. Finally is there anything you'd like to add? Is there anything you were surprised I didn't ask about?

## Ceisteanna Agallaimh

### Taithí Oideachas Dhátheangach

1. Cén fáth ar fhreastail tú ar iarbhunscoil lán-Ghaelach? Ar roghnaigh tú féin é?
2. An raibh sé tábhachtach dod' thuismitheoirí go gcuirfí oideachas ort trí mhéan na Gaeilge? Cén fáth an gceapfá?
3. An molfá oideachas lán-Ghaelach do dhaoine eile? Cad é faoi a mholfá?
4. An gceapann tú go bhfuil aon rud sainsiúil faoi na scoileanna lán-Ghaelacha seo i gcodarsnacht le scoileanna lán-Béarla? (seachas an teanga dar ndóigh)
5. Céard iad na bealaí a d'úsáid d'iarbhunscoil chun úsáid na teanga a chur chun cinn? Ar éirigh leo?
6. An aontófá go bhfuil todhchaí ag oideachas lán-Ghaelach iarbhunscoile? Cén fáth?

### An Ghaeilge

1. Cé chomh minic a labhraíonn tú an teanga anois? (Comhrá amháin in aghaidh an lae/na seachtaine/na míosa/ ní chomh minic sin)
2. Conas a mhothaíonn tú mar dhuine dhátheangach – an mothaíonn tú cosúil le nó éagsúil ó dhaoine eile?
3. Tar éis d'oideachas a fháil trí mhéan na Gaeilge an dóigh leat go raibh sé mar bhuntáiste agat ó thaobh teangacha eile a fhoghlaim de? Cad iad na teangacha eile a labhraíonn tú go líofa?

### Taithí Tríú Léibhéal (más ann dó)

1. Ar roghnaigh tú staidéar trí mhéan na Gaeilge ag an tríú léibhéal? Cén fáth?
2. An raibh sé éasca ort bogadh ón scolaíocht lán-Ghaelach go staidéar trí mhéan an Bhéarla ag tríú léibhéal? Mínigh conas a d'éirigh leat.
3. An féidir leat smaoineamh ar aon bhuntáistí a bhain le d'oideachas lán-Ghaelach iarbhunscoile agus tú ag tríú leibhéal?
4. An raibh tú i do bhall d'aon chumann Ghaelach agus tú ag tríú léibhéal? Cén fáth?

### Iar-oideachas

1. Dar leat, an bhfuil sé mar bhuntáiste duit bheith in ann Gaeilge a labhairt i do shaol faoi láthair? Conas?
2. An raibh d'iarbhunscolaíocht lán-Ghaelach úsáideach nuair a bhí tú ag lorg poist?
3. Cad é an rannóg ina bhfuil tú fostaithe faoi láthair? (más ann dó)
4. An smaoineofá ar phost a fháil leis an nGaeilge sa todhchaí?
5. Ar an iomlán, conas go ndéanfá cur síos ar do dhearcadh faoi do thaithí oideachas dhátheangach? (Dearfach/diúltach ar an iomlán)
6. Ar deireadh, an bhfuil aon rud ar mhaith leat a rá? An bhfuil ionadh ort nár chuir mé ceist faoi aon ghné eile de?

## Appendix 2

### Informed consent form

**Teideal an staidéir:** Dearcadh na n-iarscoláirí scoileanna lán-Ghaeilge dara-leibhéal i leith an t-oideachas dátheangach agus i leith na Gaeilge.

**Taighdeoir:** Róisín Ní Mhóráin, Coláiste Cois Life, Leamhcán, Co. Átha Cliath

Is é cuspóir an taighde seo ná iniúchadh a dhéanamh ar dearcadh na n-iarscoláirí scoileanna lán-Ghaeilge dara-leibhéal i leith an t-oideachas dátheangach agus i leith na Gaeilge d'fhonn tuiscint níos fearr a fháil ar an ábhar sin.

Reachtálfar agallaimh le h-iarscoláirí scoileanna lán-Ghaeilge dara-leibhéal agus déanfar taifeadadh fuaime orthu ionas gur féidir anailís a dhéanamh orthu ina dhiaidh. Bainfear úsáid as samplaí ó na hagallaimh sa tuairisc dheireanach ar an taighde ach cinnteofar nach bhfuil aon sonraí ann a d'aithneodh foinse na dtuairimí chun do chuid príobháideachas a chosaint. Ní fhoilseofar d'ainm nó ní hinseofar é do dhuine ar bith eile. Coinneofar an t-eolas go léir a bhailítear faoi ghlas i gColáiste Cois Life go dtí 2022 agus scriosfar é ina dhiaidh sin. Faoi mar is eol duit tá tú ag glacadh páirte sa staidéar seo ar bhonn deonach agus tá cead agat tarraingt siar am ar bith. Má ghlacann tú páirt sa staidéar is féidir leat a shocrú gan ceisteanna áirithe a fhreagairt muna dteastaíonn uait. Má shocraíonn gan páirt a ghlacadh ann tuigfidh mé é sin.

Freagair na ceisteanna seo a leanas le do thoil trí tic ( ) a chur sna boscaí cuí

Ar léigh tú an Ráiteas i dTeanga Soiléir? Léigh ☐ Níor léigh ☐

An dtuigeann tú an t-eolas a cuireadh ar fáil? Tuigim ☐ Ní thuigim ☐

An raibh deis agat ceisteanna a chur agus an staidéar a phlé? Bhí ☐ Ní raibh ☐

An bhfuair tú freagraí sásúla ar do chuid ceisteanna go léir? Fuair ☐ Ní bhfuair ☐

An dtuigeann tú go ndéanfar taifeadadh fuaime ar an agallamh? Tuigim ☐ Ní thuigim ☐

Leigh mé an t-eolas ar an bhfoirm seo agus tuigim é.

D'fhreagair an taighdeoir mo chuid ceisteanna agus tá cóip agam den fhoirm thoiliú.

Toilím a bheith páirteach sa taighde seo.

Síniú an rannpháirtí: \_\_\_\_\_ Ainm i mbloclitreacha: \_\_\_\_\_

Finné: \_\_\_\_\_ Dáta: \_\_\_\_\_

Má theastaíonn uait cóip leictreonach den tuairisc dheireanach a fháil, cuir tic sa bhosca agus tabhair do sheoladh ríomhphoist le do thoil. Ríomhphoist:



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### **Informed consent form**

**Title of Study:** An analysis of the views of graduates of Irish Medium Second Level Education towards bilingual education and towards the Irish language.

**Researcher:** Róisín Ní Mhóráin, Coláiste Cois Life, Leamhcán, Co. Átha Cliath

The aim of this research is to examine the views of graduates of Irish Medium Second Level Education towards bilingual education and towards the Irish language in order to gain a better understanding of this subject.

Interviews will be organised with graduates of Irish Medium Second Level schools and these interviews will be audio-recorded so that they can be examined later. Samples from these interviews will be used in the final report however your anonymity will be protected as no details will be included which could possibly identify the source of the opinions. Your name will not be published nor will it be given to anyone else. The information collected will be securely kept in Coláiste Cois Life until 2022 and it will be destroyed after that. As you are aware you are taking part in this study on a voluntary basis and you may withdraw at any time. If you take part in the study you may decide not to answer certain questions if you do not wish to. If you decide not to participate I will understand.

Please answer the following questions by ticking to appropriate box:

Did you read the Plain Language Statement? I did ☐ I did not ☐

Do you understand the information provided? I do ☐ I do not ☐

Did you have the opportunity to ask questions and discuss the study? I did ☐ I did not ☐

Did you receive satisfactory answers to your questions? I did ☐ I did not ☐

Do you understand an audio recording will be made of the interview? I do ☐ I do not ☐

I have read the information on this form and I understand it.

The researcher has answered my questions and I have a copy of the consent form.

I consent to participate in this research.

Signature of the participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Name in block letters: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

If you would like to receive an electronic copy of the final report of the research please provide your email address below.

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

### Plain language statement

**Teideal an staidéir:** Dearcadh na n-iarscoláirí scoileanna lán-Ghaeilge dara-leibhéal i leith an t-oideachas dátheangach agus i leith na Gaeilge.

A Chara

Is múinteoir i gColáiste Cois Life, Leamhcán, Co. Átha Cliath mé. Táim i mbun staidéir don Mháistreacht san Oideachas faoi láthair sa choláiste. Roimhe sin chaith mé sé bliana déag mar mhúinteoir agus mar phríomhoide chunta i meánscoil lán-Ghaeilge. Teastaíonn uaim taighde a dhéanamh le h-iarscoláirí na scoileanna dara-leibhéal lán-Ghaeilge agus tá do chabhair á iarraidh agam. Is í aidhm an taighde ná scrúdú a dhéanamh ar dearcadh na n-iarscoláirí scoileanna lán-Ghaeilge dara-leibhéal i leith an t-oideachas dátheangach agus i leith na Gaeilge ionas gur féidir linn tuiscint níos fearr a fháil ar an ábhar sin. Tá mé ag súil go gcabhróidh plé ar na buncheisteanna a bhaineann leis an ábhar seo le taighde ar an ábhar seo sa todhchaí chomh maith. Iarraim ort an cháipéis seo a léamh agus ceist ar bith a bhíonn agat a chur orm sula dtoilíonn tú páirt a ghlacadh sa taighde.

Má shocraíonn tú a bheith páirteach sa taighde iarrfaidh mé ort labhairt faoi do thaithí i scoil lán-Ghaeilge agus faoi leibhéal do chumas sa Ghaeilge anois. Eagrófar an plé neamhfhoirmiúil seo in áit agus ag am a oireann duit féin. Níorbh chóir go mairfeadh sé níos mó ná 30 nóiméad.

Níl aon bhuntáiste ann duit féin go pearsanta as a bheith páirteach sa taighde seo. Beidh tú ag cur áfach, leis an tuiscint ar an dearcadh atá ag iarscoláirí scoileanna lán-Ghaeilge dara-leibhéal i leith an t-oideachas dátheangach agus i leith na Gaeilge.

Ó tharla gur mise an príomhthaighdeoir, déanfaidh mise an t-agallamh leat. Déanfar taifeadadh fuaime ar an agallamh ionas gur féidir liom é a thrasríobh agus anailís a dhéanamh air ina dhiaidh. Ní roinnfear na taifead den agallaimh le duine ar bith eile. Bainfear úsáid as samplaí ó na hagallaimh sa tuairisc dheireanach ar an taighde ach cinnteofar nach bhfuil aon sonraí ann a d'aithneodh foinse na dtuairimí chun do chuid príobháideachta a chosaint. Ní fhoilseofar d'ainm nó ní hinseofar é do dhuine ar bith eile. Coinneofar an t-eolas go léir a bhailítear faoi ghlas i gColáiste Cois Life go dtí 2022 agus scriosfar é ina dhiaidh sin. Geallaim duit nach mbainfear úsáid as an ábhar i dtaighde neamhghaolmhar amach anseo gan do chead a lorg roimh ré.

Faoi mar is eol duit tá rannpháirtíocht sa staidéar seo deonach agus tá cead agat tarraingt siar am ar bith. Má ghlacann tú páirt sa staidéar is féidir leat a shocrú gan ceisteanna áirithe a fhreagairt muna dteastaíonn uait. Má shocraíonn tú gan páirt a ghlacadh ann tuigfidh mé é sin. Má tá tú sásta a bheith páirteach ann caithfidh tú cead scríofa a thabhairt ar dtús.

Ná bíodh leisce ort ceist ar bith a chur orm nó aon ábhar inní atá ort a phlé liom. Is féidir teacht orm ag: [roisinnimhorain@colaistecoislife.ie](mailto:roisinnimhorain@colaistecoislife.ie)

Is mian liom buíochas a ghabháil leat as ucht do chuid ama agus as smaoineamh faoi pháirt a ghlacadh sa taighde.

Má tá aon cheist agat i dtaobh an taighde nó má theastaíonn uait labhairt le duine neamhspleách faoi is féidir leat dul i dteagmháil leis an tOll. Aislinn O'Donnell, an Roinn Oideachais, Ollscoil Maigh Nuad, Co. Cill Dara. Is í Aislinn an stiúrthóir mo chéime.

Le gach dea-ghuí,

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Róisín Ní Mhóráin

[roisinnimhorain@colaistecoislife.ie](mailto:roisinnimhorain@colaistecoislife.ie)

### **Plain language statement**

**Title of Study:** An analysis of the views of graduates of Irish Medium Second Level Education towards bilingual education and towards the Irish language.

Dear Participant,

I am a teacher in Coláiste Cois Life, Lucan, Co. Dublin. I am studying for a Masters in Education at present in college. Prior to that I have been sixteen years as a teacher and assistant principal in my current school (all-Irish medium second level school). I wish to conduct research with graduates of Irish medium second level schools and I need your help. The aim of the research is to examine the views of graduates of Irish Medium Second Level Education towards bilingual education and towards the Irish language so that we can gain a better understanding of this subject. I hope discussion of the questions asked about this subject will aid further research in the future. I ask you to read this document and to ask me any questions you have before you consent to take part in the research.

If you agree to participate in the research I will ask you to speak about your experience in an Irish medium second level school and about your proficiency in

Irish now. This informal discussion will be organised in a place and at a time of your choosing. It should not take more than 30 minutes.

There is no personal advantage to you in participating in this research. However, you will be adding to the understanding of the views of graduates of Irish Medium Second Level Education towards bilingual education and towards the Irish language.

As I am the main researcher, I will conduct the interview with you. The interview will be audio-recorded so that I can transcribe it and analyse it afterwards. The interview recordings will be not shared with anyone else. Samples from these interviews will be used in the final report however your anonymity will be protected as no details will be included which could possibly identify the source of the opinions. Your name will not be published nor will it be given to anyone else. The information collected will be securely kept in Coláiste Cois Life until 2022 and it will be destroyed after that. I guarantee with this material will not be used in any unrelated research in the future without your prior consent.

As you are aware you are taking part in this study on a voluntary basis and you may withdraw at any time. If you take part in the study you may decide not to answer certain questions if you do not wish to. If you decide not to participate I will understand. If you are happy to participate you must provide written consent first.

Please do not hesitate to ask me any questions you may have or discuss any areas of concern with me. You can reach me at: [roisinnimhorain@colaistecoislife.ie](mailto:roisinnimhorain@colaistecoislife.ie)

I would like to thank you for your time and consideration to participate in this research.

If you have any questions about the research or if you would like to speak to someone independent about it you may contact Prof. Aislinn O'Donnell, Department of Education, Maynooth University, Co. Kildare. Aislinn is my research supervisor.

Kind regards,

-----  
Róisín Ní Mhóráin

[roisinnimhorain@colaistecoislife.ie](mailto:roisinnimhorain@colaistecoislife.ie)

## Appendix 4

### Survey Monkey Questionnaire – English Version

#### Language Choice

1. Céard í do rogha teanga le haghaidh tabhairt faoin suirbhé seo /I would like to answer \* this survey in:

Gaeilge  
English

2. I attended an Irish-medium secondary school in county:

3. I left school:

3 years ago or less  
5 years ago or less  
8 years ago or less  
10 years ago or less  
More than 10 years ago

4. My experience of bilingual education was:

Very negative  
Negative  
Neutral  
Positive  
Very positive

5. I live in:

Ireland  
Abroad

6. Did you choose to study through the medium of Irish at third level?

Yes  
No

7. I found it easy to transition from my all-Irish medium schooling to studying through English while in third level:

Agree strongly  
Agree somewhat  
Neutral  
Disagree somewhat  
Disagree strongly  
Did not attend third level

8. Would you recommend Irish-medium second level education to others?

Yes  
No  
Unsure

9. Thinking of the standard of teaching you received while at second level would you say it was:

Very poor

Poor

Neutral

Good

Very good

10. In your view, what were the main difficulties faced by teachers in Irish-medium second level schools?

Resource availability

Student behaviour

Translation difficulties

Exam preparation

11. Thinking of my time in studying through the medium of Irish, I believe it has been:

Of limited benefit to me

Of no benefit to me

Of huge benefit to me

Of some benefit to me

12. Please provide details regarding your answer to the previous question:

13. The subject which I found easiest at school was:

14. The subject which I found most difficult was:

15. Do you use the Irish language now?

Not often

Sometimes

Never

Regularly

Always

Why?

16. Being able to speak Irish is of benefit to me in my life now:

Strongly agree

Agree somewhat

Neutral

Disagree somewhat

Disagree strongly

17. I believe my Irish medium education is useful for job opportunities.

Disagree strongly

Disagree somewhat

Neutral

Agree somewhat  
Agree strongly

18. My current status is:

In employment

In college

In employment studying part-time

Unemployed at present

19. If in employment, what general area are you employed in? eg. Finance,  
Education, Law, Retail, etc.

20. Having been educated through the medium of Irish it has made it easier for me  
to learn other languages.

Disagree strongly

Disagree somewhat

Neutral

Agree somewhat

Agree strongly

21. What other language(s) can you speak fluently?

22. If I am speaking to an Irish speaking friend we use

Only English

Mostly English

Equal English/Irish

Mostly Irish

Only Irish

23. If I am sending a text message to an Irish speaking friend I use

Only English

Mostly English

Equal English/Irish

Mostly Irish

Only Irish

24. Thinking of leisure activities such as reading a book, watching television,  
listening to the radio, it is through

Only English

Mainly English

Equal English/Irish

Mostly Irish

Only Irish

25. When using social media I use

Only English

Mostly English

Equal English/Irish

Mostly Irish

Only Irish

If only sometimes, when?

26. Do you use the Irish version of your name at present?

Yes

No

Sometimes

27. In twenty years' time I believe the number of Irish medium schools will have

Increased

Decreased

Remained the same

Ceased to exist

28. Being able to speak Irish fluently is an important part of my identity

Disagree strongly

Disagree somewhat

Neutral

Agree somewhat

Agree strongly

### **Survey Monkey – Leagan Gaeilge**

1. Céard í do rogha teanga le haghaidh tabhairt faoin suirbhé seo?

Gaeilge

English

2. D'fhreastal mé ar iarbhunscoil lán-Ghaeilge i gContae:

3. Chríochnaigh mé mo chuid scolaíochta:

3 bliana ó shin nó níos lú

5 bliana ó shin nó níos lú

8 mbliana ó shin nó níos lú

10 mbliain ó shin nó níos lú

Níos mó ná 10 mbliana ó shin

4. Mo thuairim faoi oideachas dhátheangach le linn dom bheith ar scoil:

An-diúltach

Diúltach

Gan tuairim

Dearfach

An-dearfach

5. Cónaím anois:

In Éirinn

Thar lear

6. Ar lean tú leis an oideachas ag an tríú léibhéal trí mheán na Gaeilge?

Lean

Níor lean

7. Bhí sé éasca dom ina dhiaidh sin staidéar trí mheán an Bhéarla ag an tríú léibhéal:



- Aontaím go hiomlán leis an ráiteas thuas.  
 Aontaím leis an ráiteas thuas.  
 Gan tuairim  
 Ní aontaím leis an ráiteas thuas.  
 Ní aontaím ar chor ar bith leis an ráiteas thuas.
8. An molfá an oideachas trí mhéan na Gaeilge do scoláirí meánscoile?  
 Mholfaínn  
 Ní mholfaínn  
 Nílim cinnte
9. Do thuairim uait faoi chaighdeán na múinteoireachta a bhí agatsa sa mheánscoil sin:  
 Ar fheabhas  
 An-mhaith  
 Maith go leor  
 Gan tuairim  
 Lag  
 An-lag
10. Céard iad na deacrachtaí a bhí ag na múinteoirí sa scoil sin dar leat?  
 Rochtain ar acmhainní  
 Iompar scoláirí eile sa rang  
 Deacrachtaí aistriúcháin  
 Oiriúint na ceachtanna chun tabhairt faoi na scrúduithe.
11. Ag smaoineamh siar anois ar mo chuid meánscolaíochta trí Gaeilge bhain mé:  
 Leas mór as  
 Leas as  
 Gan tuairim cinnte  
 Ní raibh mórán fiúntas leis  
 Ní raibh fiúntas ar bith leis
12. Tabhair níos mó eolais faoi do fhreagra thuas.
13. Ba é an t-ábhar ab éasca domsa ná:
14. Bá é an t-ábhar ba dheacra domsa ná:
15. Cé chomh minic a labhraíonn tú an Ghaeilge anois?  
 Go laethúil sa chóras oideachais  
 Go laethúil taobh amuigh den chóras oideachais  
 Go seachtainiúil  
 Ní chomh minic sin  
 Ní labhraíonn riamh í
16. Bainim leas anois i mo shaol as a bheith in ann Gaeilge a labhairt.  
 Aontaím go hiomlán  
 Aontaím  
 Gan tuairim cinnte  
 Ní aontaím  
 Ní aontaím ar chor ar bith  
 Mínigh cén fáth.
17. Creidim go gcabhraíonn oideachas trí mheán na Gaeilge a bheith agam le mo chuid deiseanna fostaíochta.  
 Ní chreidim ar chor ar bith  
 Ní chreidim  
 Gan tuairim cinnte

- Creidim  
 Creidim go láidir.
18. Stádas fostaíochta faoi láthair:  
 Ag obair/fostaithe  
 Ag freastal ar choláiste  
 Ag obair/ag staidéar go páirt-aimseartha  
 Dí-fhostaithe
19. Má tá tú fostaithe faoi láthair cén rannóg lena mbaineann sé? Mar shampla;  
 Fiontraíocht, Oideachas, Dlí, Cursaí airgeadais.
20. Ar chabhraigh oideachas trí mheán na Gaeilge liom agus mé i mbun teangacha eile a fhoghlaim?  
 Chabhraigh go láidir  
 Chabhraigh  
 Gan tuairim cinnte  
 Níor chabhraigh  
 Níor chabhraigh ar chor ar bith
21. Cad iad na teangacha eile atá líofa agat?
22. Nuair atáim ag labhairt le cara liom a bhfuil Gaeilge acu labhraíonn muid  
 Béarla amháin  
 Béarla don chuid is mó  
 Béarla/Gaeilge - meascán  
 Gaeilge don chuid is mó  
 Gaeilge amháin
23. Nuair a sheolaim téacsteachtachtaireacht chuig cara liom a bhfuil Gaeilge acu úsáidim:  
 Béarla amháin  
 Béarla don chuid is mó  
 Béarla/Gaeilge - meascán  
 Gaeilge don chuid is mó  
 Gaeilge amháin
24. Maidir le caitheamh aimsir mar shampla, ag roghnú leabhar le léamh nó féachaint ar an teilifís nó éisteacht leis an raidió, roghnaím  
 Béarla amháin  
 Béarla don chuid is mó  
 Béarla/Gaeilge - meascán  
 Gaeilge don chuid is mó  
 Gaeilge amháin
25. Nuair a bhainim úsáid as na meáin shóisialta úsáidim:  
 Béarla amháin  
 Béarla don chuid is mó  
 Béarla/Gaeilge - meascán  
 Gaeilge don chuid is mó  
 Gaeilge amháin
26. An úsáideann tú an leagan Gaeilge dod'ainm anois?  
 Úsáidim  
 Ní úsáidim  
 Uaireanta  
 Má roghnaigh tú 'uaireanta' mínigh cathain nó cén uair.

27. Creidim go mbeidh líon na scoileanna trí mheán na Gaeilge i gceann fiche bliain:

Méadaithe

Laghdaithé

Mar an gcéanna

Imithe in tag go hiomlán

28. Is cuid lárnach do mo chuid fhéiniúlachta í líofacht na Gaeilge a bheith agam.

Ní aontaím ar chor ar bith

Ní aontaím

Gan tuairim cinnte

Aontaím

Aontaím go hiomlán

29. Más maith leat cóip den taighde nuair atá mé críochnaithe tabhair do ríomhphost thíos: